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1000 Great Knitting Motifs

By Luise Roberts

Rating: 4 sheep (very good)

I've always had a weakness for stitch dictionaries. Just as I enjoy "reading" cookbooks, drooling over each delectable recipe, I find all those luscious stitch patterns intoxicating and filled with possibilities for my own knitting. Since most of my projects in the last twenty years have been created around a stitch pattern, I find myself owning almost a shelf of these books, including this recent offering by Luise Roberts.

It is organized in an ingenious manner into three groups: traditional stitch patterns, traditional pictorial motifs and modern pictorial motifs. Under the first heading we find patterns from many areas of the world, for example, Fair Isle, Western Europe, Asia and South America. The second group presents motifs from various cultures like Native American, Aztec, Celtic and African. The modern pictorial group includes topical elements such as animals, birds, floral, zodiac and toys. Throughout there is a great deal of help in choosing colors, positioning motifs in the garment and planning with stitch repeats, even how to turn a motif 90 degrees to change its orientation, i.e. from horizontal to vertical or vice versa.

Each section builds from small motifs to larger, an approach I find to be excellent for those attempting color work for the first time. What I especially like is that the author shows an abstract or geometric motif -- Fair Isle for example, in 3 or 4 different color combinations, showing how different the pattern looks and how the emphasis changes as a result of color choice. In this her book is somewhat unique and extremely helpful. Everywhere there are numerous choices of motifs for both horizontal and vertical borders, central medallions and all-over patterns. At the end she presents some essential color techniques. But the real pleasure to be found in the book is the gorgeous, joyous color. It would, in addition, be a practical addition to your library.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginia P.

101 Designer One-Skein Wonders

Edited by Judith Durant

Rating: 5 Sheep (excellent)

Usually I do “wonder” at one-skein knitting books but this one surprised me enough to buy the book! There are quite a few cute, clever projects. The designs are grouped by type of yarn: lace-weight, fingering-weight, sport-weight, DK/light worsted-weight, mohair, worsted-weight, heavy worsted-weight, bulky-weight and novelty yarn. Skill level isn't stated but I think mostly beginner to intermediate, just jump in. Abbreviations and a glossary of techniques are at the back along with short bios about the eighty designers (including Lily Chin, Lorna Miser, Barry Klein, Myrna Stahman, and Laura Militzer Bryant).

Patterns are mostly knit but there are a few crocheted projects and several felted items. Besides hats, scarves, shawls you'd usually think of to use up one skein how about a dresser scarf, nano nanny, three-season lace vest, guilty pleasures socks, scallop-edge beaded necklace, “garterlac” bath rug, cabled baglet, an eyelet “shruglet” (for a slim teenager!) or scrunchy hand warmers?

Cute baby items include a “blanket buddy” (diagonal washcloth with shaped bunny head and knotted paws), Kat's Hat, feather and fan baby sweater, blue-wave (ripple lace) sweater, wave jumper, Ostrich plume baby bonnet, and a baby squash hat (with i-cord stem).

For felting aficionados: a darling little monster bear, ruffled bag, bowls, flowers, etc. Also a few beaded projects to try your hand at – scallop-edge beaded necklace, tiers-of-waves beaded scarf and ring-bearer pillow.

I truly liked most of the designs – I could do without the obligatory garter-stitch tie or granny square tie (ick! Retro isn't always a good idea), the belt patterns (can't imagine any man wearing a plaited cable belt with plastic belt buckle!) likewise the knitted toy centipede. I'm not sure who needs egg-cozy hats to keep their eggs warm though they do suggest using them as decorations or as doll hats (maybe big enough for preemies?).

This is a wonderful book of ideas for community service knitting or gifts for family members (or you!). A great purchase for a knitter (beginner or otherwise) who'd like to try new skills without investing in a lot of yarn (you can always work up to that big yarn stash). Knit up Elizabeth's perfect hat - a provisional cast-on, knit side-ways with Noro Silk Garden yarn (beautiful!), join with three-needle bind-off then pick up stitches on the top edge to knit the crown then top it off with knotted i-cord! Go from beginner to expert at the drop of a hat!

Grab some oddball skeins or a new yarn you'd like to try and thumb through this book, I'm sure you'll find several designs to love! Check the book website for some free patterns not in the book!

www.oneskeinwonders.com

Respectfully submitted,
Candy Grastorf

30 Min-Knits: What Can You Do in Half an Hour or Less?

By Carol Meldrum

I recently bought a book called 30 min – knits: What can you knit in half an hour or less? By Carol Meldrum, published in 2012. A wide variety of fun little projects are offered that supposedly can be made in 30 minute time slots, depending on a knitter's basic knitting speed and familiarity with pattern techniques. I personally think 30 minutes is a bit minimal for the majority, if not all of the projects, but they are still quick and easy ones.

They are divided into 40 Easy Projects and 20 Intermediate ones. The easy ones include a cute chick, a mug cozy, round coasters, little birds, a baby pixie hat, teddy bear baby hat, a tiny teddy bear, an ear warmer, fingerless gloves, a set of three finger puppets, and a small cat pillow. The intermediate ones include two types of baby booties, baby mittens, a string of birds, and a set of tumbling leaves, a dog bone key ring, and a set of four different flowers. These are some of my favorites.

The book is 128 pages long and sells for \$16.99. I really like the book. I imagine there are times when even the most advanced knitters would like to make some quicker and simpler projects, and this book has 60 projects to choose from. Instructions appear to be well written, and photos are bright and appealing.

Submitted by Jean Rosenfeld

A Treasury of Knitting Patterns
A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns
A Third Treasury of Knitting Patterns
A Fourth Treasury of Knitting Patterns

Author: Barbara G. Walker

Currently published by: Schoolhouse Press

There are many books containing knitting stitch patterns, but the Treasury series by Barbara G. Walker is the most authoritative and comprehensive. If you are a designer these volumes are a must have. Even if you don't think of yourself as a designer get your hands on one of these books and simply insert a stitch pattern into a basic sock pattern recipe or cast on and knit a number of repeats until you have the length of a scarf, or repeats of an edging until there is enough to edge a pillowcase – voila – you are a designer!

Design inspiration can come from anywhere – colors, nature, architecture, other crafts such quilts, etc.

But my best design inspiration comes from swatching and understanding how various stitch patterns work. Of all the stitch pattern books that I own (I have quite a few), I find that after hours of flipping through all of them the one I come back to more often than not is A Treasury of Knitting Patterns (originally published in 1968, reprinted in 1998 and currently published by Schoolhouse Press).

This book is not as pretty (not in color) as more recent books and contains no charts (unfortunately) but it does have more than 550 of the most commonly used stitch patterns broken down into categories: Simple Knit-Purl Combinations, Ribbings, Color-Change Patterns, Slip-Stitch Patterns, Twist Stitch Patterns, Fancy Texture Patterns, Yarn-over Stitch Patterns, Eyelet Patterns, Lace, Cables, and Cable Stitch Patterns. It also has a lot of charming commentary by Ms. Walker sometimes giving the history or alternate names for a particular stitch pattern, often suggesting optimal uses for a particular pattern, and properties of a pattern such as 'looks good on the wrong side too' or 'this pattern has a lot of lateral stretch'. For example, of Lace Rib, page 48, she states, "Either side of this delicate ribbing may be used as the right side, though they are different in appearance. This pattern makes a lovely finish on lace-stitch blouses or dresses".

If you enjoy lace stitch patterns then you must also have in your library A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns (1970, reprint 1985, Schoolhouse Press Edition 1998). This book has 700 more Knit-Purl Combinations, Slip-Stitch Patterns, Slip-Stitch Color Patterns, Mosaic Patterns, Fancy Color Patterns, Fancy Texture Patterns, Twist-Stitch Patterns, Cables, Cable-Stitch Patterns, Yarn-Over Patterns, Eyelets, and last but certainly not least: Lace, Lace Panels and Insertions, Borders and Edgings. I believe (but cannot find substantiation) that this book is a compilation of The Craft of Lace Knitting (1971), The Craft of Cable-stitch Knitting (1971), and The Craft of Multi-color Knitting (1973).

It's fun just to read Ms. Walker's introductions in the beginning of these two books. In the first book the introduction gives some knitting history, discusses swatching, and encourages the knitter not to "just knit something. Knit something beautiful." In the Second Treasury she further explains why these pattern collections are a great resource for even beginning knitters, gives details about how to adapt the stitch patterns to circular knitting, and provides a short discussion on continental style knitting. There are also (generally) very clear written instructions on performing various maneuvers such as P2 tog-b (purl two together through the back loop) or LT (left twist).

Between these two books there are enough stitch patterns to keep you busy for many years - but wait – there's more!

Charted Knitting Designs, A Third Treasury of Knitting Patterns (copyright 1972, reprint 1986 and 1998). In this collection Barbara Walker included 350 charted stitch patterns that she personally created (plus a few created by others) together with [at that time] new techniques for working the patterns that she also developed. Did you know that Barbara Walker is known as the inventor of ssk (slip slip knit) which most today use in place of skp (slip knit pass)? This book also introduced a system of charting stitch patterns and gives a very clear explanation of how to read the charts. It is a bit confusing to utilize the charts because they are not as pretty as the charts we use today and it is necessary to flip back to the beginning pages to find the symbol key.

A Fourth Treasury of Knitting Patterns (1973, republished in 2001 by Schoolhouse Press). This book of nearly 200 charted patterns includes those from Sampler Knitting (1973). Ms. Walker gives us her knitting autobiography as the introduction of this book. Then the book is broken down into chapters. In the first she discusses and exhibits basic shapes created in garter stitch; next are examples of mosaic, lace and cable sampler projects. Finally she presents 82 'new' stitch patterns in 'knit, purl and texture', 'cables and traveling', 'lace' and 'uncharted miscellany'. The charts in this book are much improved over those in Third Treasury and particularly the cable charts are very useful as well as easy to use.

Other knitting books written by Barbara G. Walker include: Learn-to-Knit Afghan Book (1974); Mosaic Knitting (1976), (revised 2006); and Knitting From the Top (1972).

Barbara G. Walker later discontinued knitting and went on to write well-known books about feminism and mysticism. For a complete list of books written by Barbara G. Walker see:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_G._Walker.

Together with Elizabeth Zimmerman, Barbara G. Walker is the most well-known and influential knitting author. There are 8,340 matches if you search "Barbara Walker" in the Ravelry Forums. In 2009, she was an honored guest at Sock Summit. The story goes that when Stephanie Pearl-McPhee (YarnHarlot) phoned and asked this most famous knitter to attend she said "but no one will know who I am"!
-Reviewed by Robyn Diliberto

After Dark: Uncommon Knits for Night Time

by Jil Eaton

Rating: 4 sheep (very good)

This book is new and is available from the St. Louis County Library System. Jil Eaton is a knitwear designer primarily under the Minnow Knits label. She has published previously and can be found in Vogue Knitting International and other publications.

The designs are very chic and most appropriate for evening affairs. The book begins with a section of basic knitting instructions and materials needed. The patterns consist of formal-type tops, gloves, and a purse.

The men are not forgotten with a vest appropriate for evening affairs and a few very dressy children's items. She closes with a section containing an Obi style belt, a shawl, a halter top and more.

The yarns used in the patterns make the items special as they are all luxurious. Jil specifies the exact yarns the samples were made from and the directions appear very complete with excellent charts for each piece of clothing with measurements --- no guessing.

I really enjoyed looking at this book. If you are looking for a pattern to make an extra special gift for someone who would enjoy a very dressy item, check it out!

Respectfully submitted,
Hareth McNally

At Knit's End: Meditations for Women Who Knit Too Much

By Stephanie Pearl-McPhee The Yarn Harlot (www.yarnharlot.com)

Pearl-McPhee is a self-confessed obsessive knitter. She also has a great sense of humor. This little book contains gems of anecdotes, advice for knitters and little tips. This book is a humorous look at life as a knitter, including such sayings as, "Did you ever experience palpitations when passing a yarn shop? Sneak new yarn purchases into the house? Utter the words "just one more row"? Plan your vacation around yarn store locations? Secretly scope out new spots to store your stash?" This small book can easily fit into your pocket or purse. The book is filled with little essays about the life of a knitter and each is headed by a quote from someone famous. Each vignette is short enough that you can finish one quickly and get on with your knitting! There is no plot thread so you can read one story, put the book down, pick it up again days later and continue with your reading. Pearl-McPhee can relate to knitting error frustrations, ignoring gauge, and the addictions to buying stash yarn "aka SABLE (stash acquisition beyond life expectation)." This is a delightful little gem that must be read.

copyright 2005, Published by Storey Publishing

Reviewed by Kathy Schonlau

Book of Fair Isle Knitting

Author: Alice Starmore

Originally published in 1988, and out of print for a few years, Alice Starmore's Book of Fair Isle Knitting was updated and re-issued in 2009 by Dover Publications. This comprehensive collection of patterns and techniques offers unlimited inspiration.

Starmore begins with a bit of history about the Fair Isles and the hardy inhabitants who developed this style of knitting. Beautiful photographs enhance the introduction. She delves into theories of symbolism and design origins, and offers her own opinion of how patterns developed.

For a pattern to be considered true Fair Isle, it must meet two requirements. First, there must be just 2 colors used in each row and they must interchange frequently, with unused color stranding across the back, at intervals of not more than 7 stitches. If longer runs occur in the pattern, the stranded yarn must be caught up to avoid long floats. The second requirement is for the pattern to contain diagonal lines. Tension is created where the yarn color changes occur, and diagonal lines distribute the tension on successive rows by shifting the changes. This allows the fabric to remain elastic. Additionally, most Fair Isle patterns have an odd number of rows and are symmetrical.

Starmore presents 32 pages of pattern graphs which can be used singly, or in combinations, to produce an endless variety of designs. Color is an essential element of Fair Isle, and patterns of background and design colors are illustrated in charts and photographs. Knitters are encouraged to swatch with a broad spectrum of colors.

The technique chapter covers stranded knitting in the round, weaving in strands, and how to knit with one color in each hand. There are detailed instructions for steeking and grafting.

The Wardrobe of Patterns has instructions for knitting nine sweaters of various styles, two vests, a tam, mittens and gloves. The last chapter is devoted to creating your own design. Starmore takes the process step by step from design idea to working pattern, employing measurements, gauge, and some knitter's mathematics to get all the designs in place.

A Fair Isle sweater is my ultimate knitting challenge, and I know I'll consult Alice Starmore when I begin the journey.

-Review by Karen Fogle

Cast On Bind Off: 54 Step-by-Step Methods

By Leslie Ann Bestor

The pictures in this book are great, something I always find helpful in instructions. There is a close up as well as a perspective photo of each method, and the step by step photos are also very good. The accompanying written explanations are clear, and the 4 or 5 I've tried turned out to be just as pictured and easily accomplished. There is often a "getting it right" section which has additional tips and watch outs for the method described.

The book has a firm semi-flexible cover. It's a small book -at 6"x7", has a sturdy wire binding, and has summary page pictures also – e.g. all the stretchy cast ons are on a single page to make it easier to choose at a glance the right one for your project.

I've bought many how-to books over the years, this is the only one I keep on my beside-the-knitting-chair table for quick reference when I want to try something different on a charity hat or whatever. It's listed at \$16.95, but can be found in various locations for about half of that. It is such a good value I wanted to write a review of it. I think you'll agree!

Submitted by Jenne Ahlgrim

Cast On, Bet's Off: A Lisa & Max Devereaux Sit and Knit Mystery

By Jack Olesker

Rating: 4 sheep

This book is a fun read. Don't expect any knitting patterns or tips, just a well-written mystery with interesting characters and a nice chunk of romance thrown in for fun.

Lisa and Max Devereaux are a married couple who own a yarn shop in a small resort town on the shore of Lake Michigan called Indigan. When a local casino developer named Gunther Hoffmann is found dead after being stabbed by a pair of size 19 Addi Turbos, the town goes into an uproar. Suspects abound, starting of course with Gunther's wife, who happens to frequent the Devereaux's yarn shop, to members of the Indian tribe who don't want the new casino to compete with theirs. The Sheriff, who is also Max's brother, deputizes Max and Lisa so that he can utilize their knowledge of their neighbors to help the investigation. There are many exciting twist and turns along the way to solving the mystery and learning some other deep secrets about the apparently idyllic town in which they live.

The author, Jack Olesker, follows the first rule of writing - write what you know. He and his wife, Kim Olesker are the co-owners of three yarn shops called Sit & Knit, A Yarn Café and Jack has written extensively for television. Kim also has a long history in the entertainment industry, so these two really know how to spin a good yarn! (Sorry, I could not resist the pun)

One note to the more sensitive reader – while there are a few scenes of mild violence as would be expected in a murder mystery, there are also a couple of fairly passionate scenes between Max and Lisa that I feel compelled to mention. If that sort of thing makes you uncomfortable, this book might not be your thing. For that reason, I give four and a half sheep to this fun book.

Special thanks to Nancy Quade, owner of [The Weaving Dept.](#) in Florissant, MO for providing a copy of the book.

Respectfully submitted, Ginny Zschau

Cool Socks, Warm Feet

By Lucy Neatby

Socks Socks Socks! If you're already a sock knitter, you know the convenience of carrying a small portable project that magically becomes a useful article of clothing. If you have wanted to knit socks but haven't, you need to learn. With today's "self-patterning" yarns, you can have funky, beautiful and fun socks with little effort beyond Socks Basic 101. And a nice place to start is Lucy's book.

Lucy writes like she talks and is very generous in her explanations. The book begins with several pages of explanations, Tips for Great Socks and Helpful Notes.

Although I believe that everyone should have a mentor to assist and ask questions too for that first pair of socks, if you only know how to knit in the round, Lucy's instruction on the first pattern will have you knitting socks as if that mentor was sitting with you. The pictures, graphics and drawings are very detailed and understandable. She progresses you from a basic sock, Level: Beginners, to adding details, changing heel and toe techniques, Fair Isle coloring and ending with the sock "Chequerboard Socks" at Level: Sock Goddess.

The patterns comprise of half of the book, and other half is devoted to "Techniques, Tactics and Tools of the Trade". She encourages you to choose colorful yarns and to take the time to swatch - the swatch is to your benefit to be able to use any type of yarn and knit a perfect fitting sock for a loved one. It is truly a valuable book of information that should be in any sock knitters' library.

As always, check your local yarn shop for this book. If you can't find it there, visit amazon.com through our web site.

Respectfully submitted, Robin Connolly-Medici

Dying to Knit

By Elaine Eskesen

Rating: 4 sheep

I purchased this book on a whim without really knowing what it was supposed to be about. I have some interest in dyeing yarn, so that was all I needed to hit the "send" button.

The book is broken into 4 basic sections. First, there's a pretty good primer on color, describing the different types of color schemes and how to use a color wheel. It's easy to understand and has great photographs demonstrating different color schemes using knitted swatches.

Next up are the actual dyeing process instructions. Although the instructions are very thorough, I was disappointed that only one type of acid dye and only protein fibers are covered. Based on her instructions, this is not a home kitchen operation. You need a separate space with good light, a stove and a sink. The third, and most impressive section of the book is on designing projects around hand dyed yarn. Looking at art and nature are themes the author uses to design projects and develop color schemes. She also demonstrates ways in which to use variegated and space dyed yarns to their best advantage. Even if you have no interest in dyeing yarn, or just don't have the space for it, this section of the book can help a lot in creating your own color schemes and figuring out how to use those multicolored skeins that look so beautiful in the shop. I will no longer shy away from them now that I know how to use them. Again, great photographs of swatches showing off the qualities of these yarns.

The last section of the book is the patterns. I was underwhelmed with these very simple and basic shapes. Granted, the purpose of the book has more emphasis on showing off the yarn, but with few exceptions, the patterns were uninspired.

I read this entire book in just a few hours, admittedly skimming through the pattern section. As I was reading, I had to laugh a bit at the prose. For you Seinfeld fans out there, parts of this book read as if they were written for the J Peterman Catalog.

Overall, I give this book a thumbs-up for inspiration in creating color schemes and using some of the great yarns that are available today.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Mueller

Finger Knitting Fun: 28 Cute, Clever, and Creative Projects for Kids

By Vickie Howell

Vickie Howell, host of HGTV's Knitty Gritty, published Finger Knitting Fun in April of this year. As its title indicates this book contains projects geared toward children. Most are fairly simple and can be finished quickly with a few more difficult projects for older kids. The 28 projects are rated as level 1 (the easiest, 13 projects), level 2 (13 projects) and level 3 (2 projects). The easiest projects would be good for younger children who don't have the manual dexterity to work with needles. The more difficult, involved projects would appeal to the junior high crowd.

The photographs and instructions are excellent. Having never finger knitted myself, I thought I should give it a try. I'm happy to report that I was successful. For others who are not familiar with finger knitting, you use your fingers to make 2 to 4 stitch i-cord that is then joined or seamed to make larger pieces of knitted fabric. The projects range from the very simple and expected - bracelets and necklaces to more complex projects such as flowers, a hat, a panda pillow, and a market bag. Most can be completed fairly quickly. One of the things I liked about the book was the wide range of materials used including yarn, ruffle yarn, leather lacing, parachute cord and yarn made from t-shirts.

She also includes a small felted project, a bracelet, and includes instructions for felting. There's enough variety that I think it could definitely spark a child's creativity. ("I wonder if I could knit with this? What could I make?")

Since I don't have children myself, I talked to some moms to see if they thought their daughters/sons would like this book. I was met with a resounding, "Yes!" The projects could be used for a party activity, classroom activity or for working with groups like the scouts. So, if you want to pass along your knitting passion (obsession?) to children this may be the book for you.

Published by Quarry Books

Reviewed by Kate Brehe

Folk Socks: The History & Technique of Hand Knitted Footwear

By Nancy Bush

As many of you know, we had an inspirational program in October about Socks! One of the books Candy mentioned was "Folk Socks" by Nancy Bush. I have a personal affinity for this author because she taught me how to knit a sock via this book.

My first pair of socks should be framed and labeled "How NOT to knit socks". I had help from someone but neither the explanation nor the demonstration were really sinking in - and it didn't help that the knitter was left handed so things got a bit backwards - for both of us. My first sock - a very narrow and anemic looking thing was... well...ok. Maybe. It was meant for my daughter but I seriously wondered if I knew a six year old it might actually fit. The second sock somehow looked different....like... the purl side was facing me but than it would change back to stockinette. (Time and experience reveal that I HAD knit the sock inside-out!). I'm a big believer in reading for pleasure and instruction and the Knitting Goddess guided me to this book, my first sock book. Nancy gives a very nice history on socks from various countries - Great Britain, Norway, Estonia and more. In chapter 5 she gives thorough and 'almost' idiot-proof instructions on the construction of a sock. By following her instructions and clear drawings I made my first pair of serviceable socks. I was thrilled!

In chapter 6 she presents the "Classic Sock" with several variations on Heels and Toes. The reader is given options and choices that range from the simplest to more complex construction. I found this chapter so valuable that I wrote up a "summary" that consists of the basics and I carry it with me in my tote to have handy if I ever had a memory lapse. You may want to do the same!

Chapter 7 than presents over a dozen individual sock patterns. Again they range from simple to complex. She coaxes the reader into trying the heel and toe variations by dispersing them throughout the patterns but also assures you that you are free to use whatever method you are most comfortable with. How nice. No pressure.

If you've attempted knitting in the round and have looked enviously at another member's hand knit socks - you're ready for Nancy Bush and Folk Socks. It will become a wonderful addition to your library for both the patterns and as a practical reference book.

Respectfully submitted, Robin Connolly-Medici

Fun Fashions—Contemporary Outfits to Knit For 18” Dolls

By Andra Knight-Bowman

I recently learned that my great-niece Eloise received an American Girl doll for her 7th birthday. When I was in Jo Ann's trying to find something to use my 50% off coupon on, I saw this book which has 3 American Girl dolls on the cover in different hand-knit outfits. The cover says "Quick-knit designs that today's fashion-conscious girls will love!" The 8 outfits are very cute looking, and hopefully easy enough for me. There is one with a cardigan, skirt, and matching shoulder bag; another with a long winter coat, scarf, mittens, and matching hat; one with a party-type dress with ruffled hem; one with capris and a moebius scarf; one with a swimsuit, hooded coverup, headband, and ankle bracelet; one with pants and kimono belted top; a ballerina outfit; and last a farmer-type overall and hat. They all look very cute and appealing! Best of all, the book was really reasonable at \$9.95, and I got it for half off! If any of you have American Girl dolls in your families, I recommend this book even though I have not yet tried any of the patterns.

Submitted by Jean Rosenfeld

Gorgeous Sweaters for the Brand New Knitter

By Catherine Ham

This is a nice book and one that would give the beginning knitter something "pretty" and stylish to work on because of the yarns that the author has chosen for her patterns. Ms. Ham does assume that you have mastered the knit and purl stitch and are ready to try a sweater.

The Introduction includes an explanation of tools and supplies, different yarns and how to store them. The first sweater is a simple garter stitch pattern of four rectangles and easily shaped sleeves. The instructions are quite detailed with specifics about 'swatching' for gauge and sizing, and finishing.

After the first simple sweater the author has chapters on cardigans and jackets with different collars, vests of several designs, and tops with different finishing touches. A chapter devoted to 'kids' has some very colorfully detailed sweaters. She concludes with a chapter on Embellishments even showing the reader how to cover a damaged sweater with an embellishment.

What makes the patterns so appealing are the lushly designed yarns that Ms. Ham has chosen to use. The book is truly for 'beginning knitters' as the patterns are simple with excellent instructions and schematics. Altogether a good book that would be useful to anyone teaching someone to knit or as a gift to a beginning knitter. It is one that the Knitting Guild might consider having in its library.

Respectfully submitted, Hareth McNally

Handknit Style II: More Contemporary Sweaters from Tricoter

By Linden Ward & Beryl Hiatt

Rating: 4 sheep

Handknit Style II, a sturdy spiral-bound volume published in 2006, contains 16 patterns by the authors, who opened the Tricoter Shop in Seattle in 1993. The shop seems to be prospering. The book opens with a section on yarn arriving at the shop, on getting started, with information on yarns used and resource yarn companies with addresses. Many special tips and techniques are included, along with 16 patterns.

While I haven't yet seen Handknit Style I, I really liked this one. My main impressions are:

- Glorious photos and yarn colors;
- Perfection of knitted stitches;
- Refreshing, elegant, whimsical design features.

Some of these design features are a rose pocket, elegant fringe edging on a Chanel jacket, a bulky cable that encompasses almost an entire sleeve, fine cable detailing around an arm scye, across the yoke and up the front, and a wide ribbon belt drawn through knitted loops. In every case the yarn for these elegant designs is exquisite. Many of the patterns use a solid color; about 6 display creative use of stripes and other color combinations.

Not every design appealed to me (one a bit quirky, one so absolutely plain it seemed not to fit with the others), but then many were so elegantly unusual that it was a joy to simply look at it over and over, and how many pattern books can make that claim?

It's a fairly expensive book but one that will satisfy and move the imagination.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginia Piacentini

Hat Heads: 1 Man + 2 Knitting Needles = 50 Fun Hat Designs

By Trond Anfinnsen, aka KNITKID

Did you add colorwork to your list of knitting goals for 2011? If you did, this book is the perfect jumping off point. It gives you a chance to try a small color project, nothing too daunting. This is an easy, interesting read – giving you knitting instructions, history/geography lessons, biographical information, and a couple hours of enjoyment looking at his beautiful creations. This is not only a book of patterns, but it is an introduction to the family, friends, and neighbors who inspired these beautiful designs. Each hat was designed to match the personality, warmth, and essence of the recipient.

The book contains chapters discussing, yarn, sizing, tools, and help techniques. The designer also included a chapter on designing and another that explains, in detail, how to decrease the crown using his formula. The decrease formula is: the number of stitches minus twelve divided by six equals the number of stitches between each decrease. Did you get that? The book is also indexed. The patterns are simply written, each with a chart and a color picture of the completed project. I was impressed with the size of the book---large enough to easily read and see the pictures, but small enough to fit into your knitting bag.

Trond says, “The purpose of this book is to inspire you to knit one of the hats presented or-even better- to design one of your own.” He achieved one of his purposes with me. I immediately got yarn, needles, etc. and began my project. I decided to try Torunn, page 56. Trond said during his “knittingmania period”, he admits to knitting three hats a day. So I decided to see what I could do. I cast on at 1:00 PM. By 5:00 p. m. it was apparent that I was not knitting at 3-a-day speed, so I took a break. I had done a lot of knitting, but the small needles did not produce much fabric.

Because our Guild donates so many hats, I decided this book would be a good resource for our library; we have one copy. It is especially appropriate at this time because of our 2011K12K Challenge. It will provide you with additional ideas for hats and it will help you to meet your goal of attempting a colorwork project.

You can view Trond's projects on [Flickr](#); he's KNITKID. You can also browse the book on [Amazon.com](#).

-Review by Reola Boyd

Inspired Cable Knits: 20 Creative Designs for Making Sweaters & Accessories

By Fiona Ellis

Rating: 4 1/2 sheep

Let me start this month's book review with a bit of a digression. Any of you who know me well are aware of my awesome and much adored niece, Emily. Emily and I are two peas from the same pod, thirty years apart. She looks like me, thinks like me and likes many of the same things I do. So as you can imagine, a sweater for her must be amazing. I promised her one for her last birthday and have been mulling it over in my mind since February. YUP. February. I finally decided to do a denim blue turtleneck with a very interesting cable pattern up the center front. I found just the right things to inspire the cables in this fantastic book. Ms. Ellis' designs are simultaneously classic and up to the minute trendy. The charts and explanations make cables and twisted stitches appear to be easy and are not difficult to follow.

My favorite project in this book is the Practice Makes Perfect Scarf. It takes a beginning cable knitter from a simple four-stitch cable to fairly complex ones. One drawback is that you make two pieces that go through the simple to hard progression and then graft them in the middle, although if you like to graft you will like that part as well. This makes the cables match on both sides. There is also a nice jester-shaped hat that coordinates with the scarf. All the directions for this pattern are given in both chart and text form. There is a great selection of sweaters, but also more unusual items such as the pillow cover that evokes sand dunes and the yoga mat carrying bag. The photography is well done and shows fairly good detail of each garment. Ms. Ellis introduces each chapter and each garment with a short discussion of her inspiration. While unnecessary to the pattern they are pleasant to read and make the patterns come a bit to life. This book is a bit on the pricey side with a retail of \$35.00. (Recommended with four sheep and a lamb with the price being the only thing preventing the full five sheep).

Respectfully submitted, Ginny Zschau

Jean Frost Jackets: Fabric, Fit and Finish for Today's Knits

By Jean Frost

Anyone who knows Coco Chanel will want to at least glance through this book. If you have a shape that can handle the classic Coco Jacket, this is your book. Jean Frost never hides the fact that her influence is Coco and what is often referred to as Classic Cuts for women.

The word "Jacket" is a bit deceptive. These designs can be worn as jackets and/or sweaters as additions to or part of the total outfit. The yarns vary from fingering weight to worsted with the majority being sport or worsted weight yarns. The patterns are simple and understated.

I think most of us understand that we're not going to like every pattern in a book, but this one comes darned close. I admit I bought it for the sweater "Siobahn," the only lace pattern in the book using linen yarn. It's a lacy leaf pattern and is marked Advanced. I had never knitted a lace pattern when I purchased this book, but that pattern inspired me to learn. It's just simple elegance that would look wonderful on figures of many shapes and sizes.

If you're a subscriber to Knitters Magazine, then you'll be familiar with the format of the patterns and instructions. They're generally good, but certainly not long on detail. As much as I enjoy Knitters and their sister-publications, I don't think they are "beginner knitter" friendly. But that could just be me... there are times I know that the expression "somewhere a village is missing their idiot" applies to me. So, if you're more of an intuitive knitter, you'll be fine.

The one tip I found absolutely invaluable and have used ever since I purchased the book is Jean's seaming instructions. For those of you who absolutely hate seaming in mattress or kitchener stitch - this is for you! She shows a simple seaming technique using a slip stitch crochet that I have used exclusively ever since I learned it. (I hate kitchener, hate kitchener... I know, my father always said never to use the word "hate" because it is a strong word. So. I really, really, really, dislike the kitchener stitch. And for those of you that have no problem with it. Well. Good for you. 'Nuf said.)

Browse the book at Amazon and see what you think - it's a good purchase if these styles interest you and flatter your frame.

Respectfully submitted, Robin Connolly-Medici

Knit and Crochet Ponchos, Wraps, Capes & Shrugs!

Edited by Edie Eckman

This book, edited by Edie Eckman in 2005, captured my attention on the county library shelf because it was cut in the shape of a cape. It surely couldn't have failed to be intriguing.

Each pattern seems very classic and creative. The author gives clear, easy-to-read instructions. Various steps of the procedure are set off in boxes to separate one from another. Included are close-up photos of each stitch pattern and schematics.

Almost one-third of the seventeen patterns are crochet, but they are some of the most beautiful, including a capelet in two different colorways, an openwork mesh cape and a shirred neck scarf. Most can pretty easily be changed into knitting since the crochet stitches don't seem to be very complicated. Also included are a set of rainbow leggings and a pair of gauntlets. There are lots of detailed instructions on making fringes and flowers as well as various special crochet stitches. The collection concludes with a splendid knitted Aran poncho with complex stitch patterns.

Designers whose work is represented include Lorna Miser, Beth Walker O'Brien, Kathleen Power Johnson, Jill Wolcott, Therese Chynoweth, and the author. This is a worthwhile collection of a variety of the lovely "wraps" that continue to be very popular.

-Review by Virginia Piacentini

Knit One, Felt Too

By Kathleen Taylor

I discovered this book by accident, while doing a Google search for felted earmuff covers. One of my customers had asked me if I could knit new ear pads for her favorite pair of earmuffs using her pet's fur. I'm not one to make up knitting patterns, so I went online to see if there was some pattern that I might be able to convert to an earmuff cover. I thought it would be even better if the earmuff covers could be felted. You can only imagine my surprise when I found that Kathleen Taylor's book KNIT ONE, FELT TOO had a pattern for "Fluffy Earmuff Covers." I ordered the book the same day. It turned out to be one of the best impulse purchases I have ever made.

Knit One, Felt Too

ISBN 1-58017-497-3

Published: November 1, 2003

Media: paperback, 176 pages

Manufacturer: Storey Publishing

Amazon.com \$13.27

The book's contents are listed in numbered sections:

1. Honey, I Shrunk Your Sweater
2. It's All in the Bag
3. At the Drop of a Hat
4. Getting on Your Feet
5. Felt Around the House

Each section listed above includes a grouping of the 25 patterns in the book. As described in the chapters, these patterns include a creative assortment of bags, hats, slippers, pillows and other accessories...and of course that Fluffy Earmuff pattern!

The book begins by explaining the felting process in 7 easy steps, illustrated, and in a basic and friendly way. The author also describes mistakes she's made, so the reader can avoid frustrating pitfalls. Illustrations on swatching and shaping are clear and easy to understand. I haven't done much felting, so this was a great way to get started.

All the patterns have a page-sized color photo of the finished item, and on the facing page, a section that describes the yarns and colors, needles/gauge, other supplies and abbreviations used, and the number of wash cycles it takes to achieve the sample size. Measurements before and after felting are also listed.

The actual patterns take you step by step, with each row or round in paragraph form, so you don't lose your place, and each section is highlighted, so you know what part of the pattern you are working on.

For the earmuff covers, I used a German Shepherd/merino wool blend (50%), which I knew would shrink because of the wool. I followed the directions, and it knit up easily and quickly. I felted them in the washing machine, using the technique described in the beginning of the book, and they fit perfectly on the ear frames. I placed a little bit of foam padding between the metal frame and the earmuff cover. It "felt" great!

There are several other projects I would like to try from this book, including the "Wine Sack" (a cover for wine bottles) and the "Bunny Hopper" slippers that I can make using my angora fiber. There is a shoulder

bag that is nice too, and a teddy bear...

Submitted by Fran Pike

Knitting 24/7: 30 Projects to Knit, Wear, and Enjoy, On the Go and Around the Clock

Author: Véronik Avery

I chose to review this book for two reasons. One, it was just recently published so it was likely that most of you would not have already purchased it to add to your endless collection of knitting books, and two, because it reminded me of so many of you that I have met – I feel everyone must just knit 24/7 to get done all the amazing projects I have seen! If you are not one of those knitters who has already figured out every last bit of time where you can fit in more knitting, then this book will give you ideas for when you can slip a row in here or a section in there. The projects have been designed to be portable, but I personally don't think a pattern that uses a chart is called portable. There are many patterns that don't use charts though and they do seem to be quite portable for all of you knit-in attendees. There are colorwork mittens, scarves, twisted-stitch-pattern socks, mitts, hats, an oversize shrug, a stole, a shawl, a purse, a market bag, a pillow, a bookmark, and slippers. Patterns use all types of yarn but it looks like all are gauged on size 2 – 4 needles.

There are 30 patterns in this book with most be very suitable for gift-giving. Of those 30, there is one that is truly worthy of a Véronik Avery design, the "elemental pullover". Most of the items are one-size fits-most, which is great for me, although the pullover is sized from 30 3/4" to 48" finished circumference. It is "minimal and elegant", a seamless and yoked project that is perfect to wear just about anywhere. It's the kind of sweater I can imagine seeing one of you knitting in a cashmere or alpaca blend. There is also a vest that goes from 32" to 52".

I have requested this book to be purchased by the St Louis County Library system so when it comes in, everyone be nice and share. They already own several copies of Véronik Avery's, Knitting Classic Style : 35 modern designs inspired by fashion's archives and if I were only going to be able to purchase one Avery book, I would purchase Knitting Classic Style to get the most for my money since it is excellent. Avery is a gifted designer.

-Review by Amanda Yancey

Knitting Around

By Elizabeth Zimmermann

As Elaine Rowley said in the foreword to Elizabeth Zimmermann's *Knitting Around* "I knit today because of Elizabeth". Like Elaine, I too, learned to be in control of knitting and thus, enjoy it when I stumbled upon EZ's "Busy Knitter" show on my local public TV station in 1970-something. She had a way of making knitting make sense. I no longer had to slavishly count rows and follow somebody else's written instructions. EZ's percentage system freed me to create something that fit while using the needles, yarn, and stitches of my choice. Using basic math I learned how to knit to fit!

Elizabeth Zimmermann was my guru! I didn't miss a single segment of "The Busy Knitter". Her casual, comfortable, chatty style made me feel as though I was sitting with my favorite neighbor. In *Knitting Around*, EZ continues in the same tone and also adds wonderful, colorful information about her personal history. She alternates pattern instructions and techniques for socks, mittens, sweaters, shawls and more, with stories (she calls them "digressions") about how she grew up and how she was influenced by the schools she went to and by her family and friends, as well as how she learned to knit. She shares her romance with Life, including how she met her husband and their adventures together before they were married. There are also lots of pictures to further enhance her story. Did you know Elizabeth went to art school and was an accomplished watercolor artist? Examples of her delicious, watercolor paintings are generously sprinkled throughout the book.

In short, *Knitting Around* is a fascinating personal journal, combined with specific knitting technique that I found difficult to put down. Do yourself a favor and spend a few hours with Elizabeth. She passed away a few years ago. I regret that so many of today's knitters were unable to see her public television series, but this book is even better! It lets us really get "up close and personal" with Elizabeth Zimmermann.
Submitted by Judy Paulsmeyer

Knitting Rules! The Yarn Harlot Unravels the Mysteries of Swatching, Stashing, Ribbing & Rolling to Free Your Inner Knitter

By Stephanie Pearl-McPhee

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

Stephanie Pearl-McPhee's third book is not just anecdotes and amusing notes, but also actually has some tips for knitting!

If you're looking for some simple patterns, you'll be disappointed. However, if you want to actually understand how Hats, Socks, Scarves and Shawls, and Sweaters can be constructed (and there are several ways for each), then this will certainly help, and to my mind, understanding the construction will make you a better knitter.

Stephanie starts the book by helping you determine what kind of knitter you are, letting you know why non-knitters just don't "get it", and by giving you some material to help you defend your hobby/obsession. She also helps you understand yarn, and how to identify the ball whose label was lost years ago, and gives information on other knitting tools you will need.

Then she describes the importance of gauges and swatching! I know, I'm sure you've heard it before, but the included "cautionary tale" not only demonstrates just how important it is, but also had tears rolling down my cheeks, I was laughing so much!

Then comes the real meat of the book, starting with Hats. Hats are, she says, the best thing for a beginner to learn with, because there's not nearly so much stamina needed as there is for a scarf. The scarf, for a beginner, can be pretty tedious, and goes on entirely too long once the basics are mastered. Not just that, but many scarves these days use eyelash yarn, or similar, which is not the best yarn for seeing the stitches.

Having said that, the first style of hat is for someone who's started a scarf, but just can't see themselves overcoming the tediousness of it. The solution is simple - turn this scarf into a hat!

Next up are the socks. With these, as with the other items, she lists 10 reasons why you should knit them. These reasons are not only quite sensible, but also amusing in some cases. Again, she describes the process without getting hung up on a pattern, which is particularly ideal for sock knitting.

Then it's the turn of the Scarves and Shawls. With several different construction styles for each, she gives you some good ideas to get different looks, pretty simply.

Lastly, but certainly not least, comes the Sweater. Many people think that's a pretty big task, but really, it still just comes down to two stitches - knit and purl. It can all be broken down to smaller tasks to make things manageable.

With a little, very amusing, glossary of knitting terms to round it out, this book has excellent tips, has improved my understanding, and given me a number of ideas for future projects. It's also very readable, and I couldn't put it down. I know I'll be coming back to it when I want my memory refreshed on some of the project ideas.

Respectfully submitted,
Timothy Hunt

Knitting Vintage Socks: New Twists on Classic Patterns

By Nancy Bush

Rating: 4 sheep

I've made three pairs of socks from Knitting Vintage Socks and know already that this book will be the one I turn to more often than any other sock book. Bush has taken old patterns from Weldon's Practical Needlework, checked them for errors, updated the gauges for modern needles and yarns, and created a wonderful resource for sock knitters and needlework historians.

The book begins with a brief essay on Weldon's, a very popular monthly needlework magazine published at the turn of the last century. Bush also includes information about the general history of knitting, and stockings and socks in particular.

For knitters interested in history, Bush discusses the evolution of knitting patterns and gauges during the nineteenth century. She will quote an extensive passage from Weldon's (say on how to make a gusset) and then follow it with her explication and explanation.

One of the best things about Knitting Vintage Socks is the section on heels and toes. Bush covers four different heels and six different toes. For each, she explains the characteristics and offers detailed instructions. That way, if the reader wants to make a ribbed sock with a welsh heel and a french toe, all that's necessary is to mix and match to make a unique sock. Each of the actual sock patterns tells how long to make the leg before starting the heel and the foot before starting the toe, allowing the knitter to adapt any sock pattern as desired.

Before getting into the fancier socks, Bush begins with four basic sock patterns, letting the knitter feel comfortable with those before moving on to more complicated socks. In addition to the basics, there are 8 patterns for men, 10 for women, and 2 for babies. There's enough variety in the patterns to keep the sock knitter occupied for years--shaped calves, different ribbings and stitch patterns, creative stripes, intarsia, lace, clocking, graphs, and more.

Each reproduction sock is beautifully photographed, and Bush provides the original engraving from Weldon's to let the reader compare. She likewise mentions date of publication and the yarn and needles specified in the original. A few notes introduce each pattern with comments on any changes and special features. As one would expect with any pattern, Bush provides a recommended yarn, needle size, any notions, yardage requirement, finished size, and a gauge.

True sticklers for historical accuracy may want to know that Bush has converted many children's socks into women's sizes by substituting larger needles and modern yarns. Rather than knitting with what must have been a fine thread on 00000 needles, Bush chooses a sock-weight yarn and size 0. On the plus side, the book is filled with photographs of antique knitting tools: a bell gauge, ivory needles, sock stretchers, needle cases, and more.

Across the bottom of many pages runs an interesting timeline of events that happened during the dates of Weldon's publication, letting the knitter's imagination take hold. If you are knitting an 1898 sock, x-rays have been invented, but aspirin has not. The facts on the timeline are the same throughout, but an arrow points to the relevant date.

I have knitted two of the patterns and used Bush's opening notes to adapt a third. I found her instructions very easy to follow and the end results were beautiful. Each part of the sock (leg, heel, gussets, foot, and toe) gets its own section heading, and any special stitch patterns are clearly spelled out in text boxes. It's easy to see why Bush's books are so popular and I give this one my heartiest recommendation. I look forward to spending more time with its patterns.

Respectfully submitted, Deborah Hyland

Knitting Without Tears: Basic Techniques and Easy-to-Follow Directions for Garments to Fit All Sizes

By Elizabeth Zimmermann

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

I first discovered Elizabeth Zimmermann (or EZ as knitters affectionately call her) on public TV in 1972. Her weekly program on the public broadcasting channel was called *The Busy Knitter*. EZ was happily sitting in a rocker surrounded with shelves of yarn and with a large basket of yarn balls on either side of her. Her kitty wandered on and off the set, sometimes curling up in her lap or in one of the baskets of yarn. She just calmly knitted on, explaining whatever technique was the focus for that week.

Knitting Without Tears evokes that same calm atmosphere. EZ has a common-sense approach to knitting and a wonderful sense of humor. She encourages the knitter to be in charge of her knitting, rather than to blindly and slavishly follow someone's written pattern.

The first chapter starts with a discussion of wool yarn (her bias!) and proceeds to necessary supplies and tools. It then moves on to a thorough discussion of basic knitting techniques, including good illustrations.

The second chapter is devoted to stitch gauge. That's how important she believes it is to establish a thorough understanding of this element of knitting. However, when it comes to row gauge, EZ says, "I have yet to find a good use for a vertical row gauge, since vertical measurements are much easier to handle in inches."

The information that changed my knitting life was EZ's percentage system for knitting sweaters in the round, which is based on the yarn and needles of your choice and your swatch. From the swatch the knitter is instructed how to find her gauge and use that information to design her own sweater. With that gauge she can figure out how many stitches to cast on. For instance, to start the lower edge with ribbing, cast on 10% fewer stitches, increasing that 10% on the last row of the ribbing in order to knit the body of the sweater with 100% of the stitches. Another percentage of stitches gets bound off for the underarm (10%). Sleeves are begun at the bottom with 20% of the body stitches. The neck opening is usually in the 30% range. Complete instructions are given, but you are encouraged at every turn to deviate from them in order to make your sweater-to-be fit its intended wearer and reflect the knitter's particular taste.

EZ's favorite method for knitting sweaters is "in the round", seamlessly. Details are given for knitting a ski sweater with a dropped shoulder, raglan sleeve shaping, or a yoke or saddle shoulder all on circular needles requiring a minimum amount of seaming. This was a real eye-opener for me! Another revelation was how to knit using two colors, carrying one color in each hand.

Later, EZ shows how to knit caps, socks, slippers, mittens, scarves, shawls, and afghans. She explains three different heels for socks including the "afterthought heel". You'll want to check that one out to learn how your favorite knitted socks with holey heels can be given a whole new life.

The book is filled with useful tips and hints for knitting and caring for the finished garment. I found that I enjoyed reading *Knitting Without Tears*. More than a book about knitting techniques, it exudes EZ's special approach, attitude and sense of humor (she used to write a column called "The Knitting Curmudgeon"!). She changed my attitude about knitting and was the primary influence that allowed me to actually relax and enjoy knitting for the first time in my life. I have referred to this book so many times that my copy is now tattered and stained. I particularly recommend *Knitting Without Tears* to beginning knitters because Elizabeth Zimmermann has a way of teaching knitting that puts new knitters at ease. EZ passed away in

1999 at the age of 89 but her spirit lives on in her books and inspires knitters everywhere.

Respectfully submitted, Judy Paulsmeyer

Mary Thomas's Knitting Book
Mary Thomas's Book of Knitting Patterns
By Mary Thomas

Rating for each: 5 sheep (excellent)

My knitting life divides neatly into B-1980 and A-1980. During the B-1980 era I owned no knitting books - only pattern booklets and a few magazines like the original Vogue Knitting and two others long out of publication. My only reference was my ten cent copy of the Learn How Book bought at Woolworth. Although I had made 3 afghans, a coat, 2 suits, numerous sweaters, 3 pairs of socks and some baby items, my stitches and techniques were quite basic. I had not tried lace nor color work. While I had been inspired by Elizabeth Zimmermann's knitting series shown on channel 9 in the 70's (?), I had not really applied her ideas to my knitting.

It was around 1980 that I started buying the knitting books that were now appearing in the market. Because of them my knitting began to be transformed. I devoured them cover to cover and was inspired, or compelled, to try all the "new" techniques and approaches revealed in them and my education still continues. I'd like to tell you about two of those books that initiated my collection of knitting references.

[Mary Thomas's Knitting Book](#), Dover Publications, 1972 (first published in England in 1938).

Mary Thomas is deservedly the first guru of knitting. She covered basics, lace, color work, shaping, construction, knitting with beads, embroidery, socks, mittens, shawls, even frame or rake knitting (think "machines"). Although cables were not mentioned, she had great chapters on shaping, selvages and the movement and characteristics of different knitted fabrics and stitches. Best of all is a multitude of drawings of every possible technique you'd like to see. This book was a revelation to me and ranks as a prize possession.

Her companion book, [Mary Thomas's Book of Knitting Patterns](#), followed in 1943 (reprinted by Dover in 1972).

This book is a delight. Every conceivable type of stitch is included with several good examples of each, and frequent digressions on where and how the stitch might be used. There are lots of clear photographs of the fabrics and innumerable, absolutely wonderful drawings of the completed stitches, as well as the needles shown in the process of making the stitch, -- all in black and white. This was 1943 and they look exactly as if they might have been done on a computer! They are superb. She also includes charts for all the stitches; they use her own set of symbols - not anything we would see today, but they are surprisingly clear.

This was the first time I had seen anything resembling a stitch dictionary with all the great step-by-step instructions. I was truly "blown away" and even now, for a book 63 years old, I'm still impressed.

If you ever chance to find either of Mary Thomas's masterpieces, don't even hesitate - just grab it, and run home with it.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginia P.

Mason Dixon Knitting

By Kay Gardiner & Ann Meador Shayne

Rating: 5 sheep

I first read about this book on the Yarn Harlot's website. She confessed to reading it front to back in two days - completely neglecting her knitting, which is a remarkable statement from Stephanie. I had visited Kay and Ann's blog (<http://www.masondixonknitting.com/>) infrequently and enjoyed their style of blogging in the form of writing letters back and forth to each other - only via the web. Ok, I know. Stop justifying why I purchased - yet again - another knitting book.

The book is written much the way the blog is - both women "talk" to each other with acknowledgement that they are addressing other friends in the room. This isn't just a patterns book. It is very entertaining to read - just read. It became my nighttime treat just before turning off the light. The ladies give a brief history of how they met on-line, and how they each have grown in their knitting. The whole purpose of the book is to then invite you in on the fun of knitting.

The first chapter extols the benefits and practicality of the Wash Rag - or as they refer to it - the WARSH Rag. My very first project was a Wash Cloth and I admit, I thought I had grown beyond that "kind-of-knitting". Ann and Kay remind us how gratifying it is to do a quick project that has an immediate use in your home. They want to dispel the feeling that we all succumb to, that our knitting is sacred and must be treated with reverence. Shot! It's just knitting, ladies - pick a pattern, get yourself some inexpensive "Peaches and Creme" cotton yarn and start knitting up a stack of washrags! I was hooked.

The chapters are broadly labeled: Chapter 1 Being a Beginner; Chapter 2 Knitting around the house; Chapter 3 Log Cabin Knitting; Chapter 4 Family Projects; Chapter 5 Over the Top or True Artists; ending with Chapter 6 Community Knitting. Each chapter covers the patterns in a conversational tone with plenty of wise cracks and giggles.

The projects are all straightforward from simple (the majority of the patterns) to more intermediate patterns such as the "Mason Dixon After Dark Nightie". They offer a wide variety of patterns from home (piano seat cover and a linen curtain) to infants (Baby Kimono and burp bibs) to Log Cabin Knitting (rugs and blankets). Most patterns are garter stitch or plain stockinet; although they continue to encourage everyone to explore stitch patterns that you want to do.

The book is good eye candy in that the pictures are colorful, detailed drawings and the instructions are written clearly - and with humor. In one pattern Ann remarks - "then continue knitting for about three years..." - which is what knitting a blanket often feels like to me!

My strongest recommendation for reading this book is that it is just plain out inspirational. I found myself thinking - "Hey! I could do a curtain for my kitchen window with that new linen yarn I just picked up". And it isn't that I want to do the curtain pattern in the book, but it was the nudge I needed to broaden my projects from sweaters and socks to home. My favorite line from the book was when one of the ladies decided that knitting for her house was where she was going to concentrate...because the house never complained about the yarn being itchy or tight, never whined about the color choice and would wear the article until such time as she got tired of looking at it. Wow. What a thought. I was free of worry over criticism or rolled eyes - I'd make that curtain and the house will like it - and if it doesn't - why would I care?

Next time you're in at your favorite yarn shop or Borders, take a look at this book. It's delightful and I'm sure you'll enjoy reading it.

Respectfully submitted, Robin Connolly-Medici

Mason Dixon Knitting Outside the Lines: Patterns, Stories, Pictures, True Confessions, Trick Parts, Whole New Worlds and Familiar Ones, Too

Authors: Kay Gardener and Ann Shayne

Rating: 5 Sheep (excellent)

Kay and Ann follow up their first book (Mason Dixon: The Curious Knitters Guide) and reveal the Secret of Knitting and what makes knitting fun. They guarantee there is nothing in this book you cannot do and find fun. I love their sense of humor and playfulness.

The Decorating Yourself chapter has two “Coaty Coats”, a flappy scarf in Muench Touch Me (the Flapotis!), two seminars disguised as projects help you learn techniques – errant socks (cables), and your first top-down sweater. “Margaret” is a beautiful, romantic wide ribbed A-line long sweater with knitted quotes chain-stitched on the bodice. Cool idea, though I probably wouldn't want someone reading my chest – I'd probably replace it with a geometric pattern or cables (or leave plain). There are some great items playing with the sheerness of mohair – “a haze of knitting”. A translucent Cardi Cozy (see-through wrap to wear tied over your store-bought sweater). Belinda is a plaid mohair wrap where the plaid is created by overlapping two layers of solid color crisscross geometric lace. I have a small stockpile of mohair I could see doing four wrap pieces and swapping them out – seeing how the colors play with each other & how the look changes depending on which color is over or under another.

The Fairest Isle of All chapter introduces Fair Isle knitting along with steeking via a rug, baby dotty blanket and working your way up to a wonderful blanket based on Liberty of London wallpaper.

Covering the Small Human chapter has great knits for kids along with tips on what to avoid when knitting for “children who have reaches the age of reason”. If you have kids in your life to knit for, there is a unisex denim sweater with interesting construction, a cute dress for your “young Avenger” – the Emma (Peel), a Jane Austen dress – knitted bodice and a simple skirt made by gathering & seaming a length of fabric, I think even I could do that. Or make a Jane Austen shrug to layer over it, cute and quick knitting. There is a beautiful striped long sweater for a toddler with embroidered ferns which Ann had entered in the TN state fair (her confession about the Perils of Competitive Knitting). I absolutely love the “heartbreakingly cute pilot cap” which is knit in a zig-zag strip of Koigu then sewn up.

The Occasional Knitting chapter has some holiday gifts – knit Christmas stocking, felted Christmas Advent Trees (which remind me of hats for garden gnomes) and a striped shortrow kippah (skullcap), a poached wool picnic bag, table runners, a knit market bag, a paper lantern cover!

The Sophisticated Kitchen has their kitschy kitchen items – dishcloths, mitered hanging dishtowels reminiscent of Mom's, and in the new “green” style of living – “the Swifty” reusable mopcovers (go wild and make it into a doggy coat!), super thick hotmitts and some crazy dishwashing gloves with knitted cuffs attached! It all goes along with their philosophy of “MUST use the knits”.

My husband tells me if he'd looked through this book to see if I'd like it, he'd have put it back. He couldn't imagine me making anything in it. I have a lot of knitting books that I haven't made anything out of, but I still admire. Actually, I could see me making the mohair wraps easily. The pilot cap or “blu jeans” would be great for a friend's baby. A top down sweater is on my list too.

I also love to read knitting books, Kay and Ann's sense of humor..... I love the treatise on the independent knitter (where have you gone Elizabeth Zimmermann?) – taking charge of my knitting, being inspired by their knitting mojo and hoping some of it rubs off on me from owning this book.

Respectfully submitted,
Candy Grastorf

Morehouse Farm Merino Knits: More than 40 Farm-Fresh Designs

By Margrit Lohrer

Rating: 4 sheep (very good)

You've gotta love a knitting book that starts "Morehouse Farm began with a Voodoo Chicken"! Margrit Lohrer and her husband Albrecht Pichler were living in Manhattan in the late 70's and escaping to their upstate farm on weekends. The rescued chicken was the start of their livestock collection. They decided to farm in earnest and settled on raising sheep - merino sheep in particular for their fine wool with the goal of becoming a "Mecca for knitters".

In the early 80's, merino sheep were hard to find and out of favor with American sheep farmers who considered them "greasy, wrinkly and dirty" (speaking of wrinkly, check out the ram on page 14 - I swore it was wearing a thick turtleneck sweater!). The couple's dream was to grow the finest wool and bring merino sheep back to their once-popular status.

After some complications along the way, the two were able to import some Australian merino whose fleece was the most beautiful they'd seen. In 1990, Margrit began sheep farming full-time. Morehouse Farms spins their merino yarn in various weights from bulky to fine in over 60 colors.

As a lifelong knitter, Margrit's approach to knitting is meditative. She loves to absorb the day's events while knitting for hours on uncomplicated knitting. Scarves, shawls and blankets are favorites for lots of soothing knitting time. The sweaters are simple classics made more interesting by stitch texture and color. They're quick and easy, knit in the round with sleeves knit right in - great for those of us who hate finishing and like to knit then be done with it. In addition to women's sweaters, there are several kids' sweaters, a jacket plus two sweaters and a vest for the guy in your life along with accessories for you and your home.

The simpler knitting is great for beginners moving on from basic scarves maybe to some felted accessories for the home, basic socks or first sweater. They can step up their skills a bit but not be overwhelmed. Margrit suggest using the patterns as a starting point and making it your creation. This is a nice book for knitters looking for a relaxing break from other projects that require more concentration.

Some of the projects that caught my eye were molas mittens (appliquéd with felt & embroidered) and the buggy mitts which offered opportunities for fun and creativity. Both would add enjoyment to your community service knitting. How about a foulard (small scarf) with case to tuck in your purse until needed for a sudden chill? Fringe-binge mini muffler adds bling to your scarf fringe with beads and funky embellishments.

There are several lightly felted projects to try for your first felting attempt. Check out the striped blanket and matching pillows - all knit in the round and lightly felted. The blanket is cut open once completely dry. A baby blanket is treated the same way making it machine-washable. She adds booties and hat for an extra surprise for a new mom. The tufted chair mat (or cat pad) is another felted project that was colorful and appealing.

All in all, an enjoyable book with lots of warm knitting, some lacy scarves and wraps plus a few projects to spark the playful spirit of the creative child you once were. The book is peppered with charming photos of sheep, the "dogs of Morehouse Farm" and their other animals. If you're looking for complex sophisticated patterns to test the mettle of your knitting abilities you'll probably want to look elsewhere. But if you want to take a breather and relax into the knitting zone and have something attractive to show for it in the end - you'll enjoy this book and come back to it again.

Respectfully submitted,
Candy Grastorf

My Little Knitting Book - A Quick Reference

By Joan Sheridan Hoover

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

How many times have you bought a new set of needles only to get home and realize that you already had a set in that size? Or the opposite problem - you are SURE you have a set of #4 dpns, but you get home and there are no 4s, just 5s and 6s? Well, here is the solution - MY LITTLE KNITTING BOOK - A Quick Reference compiled by Joan Sheridan Hoover. This may be the best \$3.00 you will ever spend on knitting tackle. This book is only 3x5 inches - small enough to live in your purse or knitting bag without weighing you down.

My favorite features are the charts that allow you to keep an inventory of your needles - a page for DPNs, straight and circulars minimizes confusion. There is also a page for your crochet hooks. This little gem has already saved me an unnecessary needle purchase once.

Other very helpful information includes needle size conversion table, yardage estimates for sweaters of infant to large adult sizes and a foot length to shoe size list. It also has suggestions about building a library and stocking a knitting bag. Information about those mysterious care symbols that appear on ball bands and garments plus basic and more advanced tips round out the usefulness of this terrific little booklet. Ask your favorite LYS for it. You will be glad you did!

I give it five happy little sheep!

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Zschau

No Idle Hands: A Social History of Knitting

By Anne L. MacDonald

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

"No Idle Hands" is available in our Guild Library as well as the St. Louis County Library or [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Please do not let the sub-title, "a Social History of Knitting" dissuade you from reading this delightful book. The author, Anne L. MacDonald, is an enthusiastic knitter as well as a highly educated historian. In her introduction, the author gives you a sample of the tenor of the book when in acknowledging her five children and six grandchildren, she says, "Grandmother will shortly return to her knitting". This book was published in 1988 - well before the current knitting craze started.

A better subtitle for this book would be, "a Social History of American Knitting" because it begins with knitting in Colonial America. The title "No Idle Hands" derives from the Puritan ethic of that sentiment. Using such diverse sources as magazines, newspapers, brochures, letters and diaries from libraries as well as personal collections, the author traces knitting from the colonial period to the modern era. She discusses at some length knitting in ordinary homes and its effects on daily life. One quote has a Colonial child writing in her diary that she had to knit an inch at her stocking before going out to play.

Knitting for the troops is a concept that dates to the Revolutionary War. Did you know that Martha Washington and her cadre of officer wives' who joined their husbands at winter camp knit socks and underwear for the troops? Knitting through all the wars is related right up to Eleanor Roosevelt's "Knit for Defense" in World War II.

Knitting while traveling may have originated with our frontier sisters who wrote in letters and diaries about knitting while traveling (sometimes on foot) and trading yarn and patterns with others when in wagon train camps at night.

The male gender and knitting was not ignored in this book either. Several pages were devoted to what men have said about knitting through the years and goes on to illustrate the many times and examples in which gentlemen have knit. Ogden Nash added his opinion in saying "show me a man who talks to himself and I'll show you a man whose wife knits".

Another chapter discusses the influences of the modern knitting gurus, Mary Walker Phillips, Elizabeth Zimmerman and Barbara Walker. Hollywood was not ignored either with tales of movie stars of the past who helped popularized knitting.

Lou Henry Herbert, wife of President Herbert Hoover, sums up all our feelings about knitting. When she noticed a friend ripping something out, she said, "Don't rip it out. You and I are too busy to rip. Make the same mistake in the next row and make a pattern of it". I heartily recommend this entertaining and informative book.

Respectfully submitted,
Hareth McNally

Norwegian mittens and gloves: Over 25 Classic Designs for Warm Fingers and Stylish Hands

By Annemor Sundbo

This book contains more than the 25 classic designs for warm fingers and stylish hands. The author tells her story about how she came into possession of tons of wool garments scheduled to be shredded into "shoddy" or recycled wool. Those garments became her inspiration for this book and the knitting history she seeks to preserve. The pages on personal and Norwegian knitting history are both informative and humorous. The Basic techniques chapter are thorough and give a Norwegian approach to methods of construction. The patterns are delightful and colorful. My favorite is the "Dancing Grannies Mittens". I gotta knit myself a pair.

- Submitted by Rose Heim

Oddball Knitting: Creative Ideas for Leftover Yarn

By Barbara Albright

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

I checked this book out from the St. Louis County Library and now I intend to buy it. The book has a wealth of information on how to use stash yarns. The introductory chapter includes information on "keeping critters out", too much stash, and a definitive chart on yarn sizes, substitutions and suggestions for reducing your stash. (She calls it a yarn stash yarn party).

The patterns include chapters of 'little things' like sachet bags; socks and hats; home items, small children's items; and my favorite, scarves. The patterns are well written and the use of stash yarn is well explained with many suggestions and ideas for changing them.

I found the book to be a complete book of using stash in that it includes yards needed for each project, comparisons of yarns, novel ideas and color combinations. When you are contemplating a project, you will find all the resources in this book. For example, there is a chart with the number of yards for each project and another on how to measure how much yarn you have.

Ms. Albright has a very easy writing style that flows well and is fun to read because she inserts much humor into the writing.

At \$19.95, I think this book is a real bargain and a good addition to a knitting library.

Respectfully submitted,
Hareth McNally

One Skein: 30 Quick Projects to Knit & Crochet

By Leigh Radford

Rating: 5 sheep

This is a book of 30 quick projects to knit and crochet. Most use less than one skein or “stash” yarns. It has the normal gloves, scarves and hats, plus things for baby and the house.

There are a variety of techniques: four needles, felting, and short rows. As an experienced knitter, no directions seemed new. For the beginner, this book could stretch your knowledge comfortably.

The directions are easy to follow and in large print too.

A variety of yarns are recommended from silk & mohair, to nettle plant fiber.

A good book for a beginner or advanced looking for quick projects.

Respectfully submitted, May Webster

Poetry In Stitches

By Solveig Hisdal

This book is authored by Solveig Hisdal and is a Fair Isle Knitter's dream. The patterns are based on traditional Norwegian Folk Costumes and everyday clothing. The photos are beautiful and this is definitely an "Eye Candy" book.

There are 22 patterns, primarily sweaters and cardigans. The knitter must be familiar with steeking and be a fairly experienced to advanced knitter. The instructions are bare-boned and the author writes assuming you are already experienced.

If you are an adventurous intermediate knitter or experienced in Fair Isle, check this book out – you'll love the bright but conservative patterns.

Submitted by Robin Connolly-Medici

Sally Melville Styles

I imagine many of you are familiar with Sally Melville. She is an innovative knitting designer/writer/teacher from Ontario, Canada. Maybe you've even been among the fortunate people who have attended her classes and workshops.

The book *Styles* (ISBN 0-9646391-4-9) was published in 1998 by XRX (Knitter's Magazine).

It is mainly a book about working through your leftovers and "stash" to create something beautiful. She uses artistry and creativity to develop ideas and designs from single balls that she's bought on sale...with no idea of what it would be used for in the future.

Sally talks about how to separate your stash and catalog it so that you know what you have in your closets and drawers. She teaches the color wheel and how to put colors together for the most pleasing effect.

The chapters are entitled:

First Considerations

Good ol' Garter

Simple Fairisle

Not-Your-Usual Intarsia

Tweed Stitch Square

Tweed Stitch with Cables

Knitting as Warp

A total of 27 projects for men, women, and children that will make your mouth drop open. Such wonderful use of color...that is what inspired me most! The book ends with basic pattern drafting. In my opinion, every knitter should have a copy of this book in their personal library. Thanks Sally for this wonderful resource!

reviewed by Carol Hurt

Scarf Style: Innovative to Traditional, 31 Inspirational Styles to Knit and Crochet

By Pam Allen (editor)

Thinking about knitting another fur scarf? Before you put too much thought into it, take a look at "Scarf Style," by Pam Allen of Interweave Knits. Allen has put together in this soft-cover book a collection of 31 scarves designed by noted knitting designers.

The masterpiece of the collection is Color-On-Color by Katherine Alexander. Imaginatively designed and knitted in numerous colors of Paternayan Persian Yarn in shapes, stripes, Fair Isle and I-Cord. There are nineteen sections of the 11-inch X 62-inch scarf. Directions come with a color schematic. Kits are available from several sources at a wide range of prices, so shop first before making a purchase. Perhaps, those of us who plan on knitting Color-On-Color will start a knitting support group.

This is a fabulous piece of work. Fair Isle Jazz designed by Mags Kandis is a 54-inch delight of multi-color Fair Isle connected by a solid swath of cables and baubles in bright pink. (Check your stash to see if you might have enough yarn for this one.)

Vintage Velvet by Lisa Daniels is a straightforward scarf knitted in cables of one of the most luscious yarns available: Muench Yarns Touch Me. Another one to add to my list.

I have already purchased the yarn for Ruffles by Amanda Blair Brown. I just need to figure out how the short-rows pattern works.

The Floral Trellis Scarf by Ann Budd knitted in red-rose-hued yarns of cotton chenille by Crystal Palace is another favorite. This scarf will be a perfect costume accessory for a special occasion.

On the INTERNET, several bloggers are working on scarves from this book, and one in particular is enchanted by the Lady Eleanor stole. She is searching for a less expensive yarn alternative.

Just put "Scarf Style" in the search box, and the computer screen fills up with information. Scarf Style is not just another knitting book. It is loaded with an intriguing and stylish collection of scarves some of which might prove a challenge to knit, but fabulous to own and wear or as a gift.

SCARF STYLE by Pam Allen/Editor of Interweave Knits.

(c) 2004 by Interweave Press, Inc. Loveland, Colorado

152 pages, \$21.95 U.S.

Respectfully submitted,

By Janet McNichols (c) 2005

Sensational Knitted Socks

By Charlene Schurch

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

This book lives up to its title. It is chockfull of information and should satisfy all levels of sock knitters from beginner to sockmeister.

Her section on sock yarn not only discusses reinforcement yarn, yarn care symbols, yarn weight/suggested gauge/yardage amount but also the quality of wool and which varieties of wool producing sheep are best for spinning your own sock yarn!

Sock basics include the sock anatomy for top-down sock with heel flap, toe-up sock with heel flap and top-down sock with short-row heel. A photo of each version was knit in different colors for the toe, heel-flap, heel turn, gusset, etc. to make it easy to identify the structure & understand the “sock lingo”. This chapter also covers knitting needles, gauge swatch & foot measurements/sizes. The great size charts for women, men & children giving foot circumference & sock length are based on shoe size (that alone is probably worth half the price of the book!). Advice for making your socks durable and adjusting for “not your average” feet are included here.

Ms. Schurch provides options galore – all the patterns (except cable patterns) include instructions using four double-points, five double-points or two circular needles.

Troubleshooting gives tips to avoid “ears” on heel turn & avoiding holes at top of gusset plus helps you understand how to use and adjust stitch pattern charts.

A mini-class sock helps beginners get comfortable with technique before embarking on a full-size version.

The rest of the book provides a multitude of patterns to launch your sock-knitting obsession. She's grouped 4, 5, 6, 8, 12 stitch patterns, cabled patterns, chevron patterns for self-striping yarns, fair-isle, 4 stitch reticulated patterns (allover “netlike”) and mosaics. Each is ranked easy, intermediate or experienced. The groupings have stitch dictionaries with charts and written patterns. Stitch tables in each section give you the number stitches to cast-on in gauges from about 5-10 stitches per inch and foot circumference of 5-12”! Step by step instructions spell it out for you. Short-row toe, star toe (my fave) short-row heel, in-place afterthought or forethought heel, round-toe, short-row toe, easy toe and standard toe (grafted).

This opens up unlimited variations for you to play with while still having guidance on how to accomplish this feat for your feet – an amazing pair of socks! She helps you understand how to adjust a pattern for a variety of sizes and gauges so you're not stuck following a pattern for a “medium woman's sock” in “x” brand yarn.

It is a combination sock-size guide, stitch dictionary, and sock formula all in one. Well-organized, thorough and worth the price. If you only could own one sock book, this would be an excellent choice. I highly recommend it!

Respectfully submitted,
Candy Grastorf

Sock Innovation: Knitting Techniques & Patterns for One-of-a-Kind Socks

Author: Cookie A.

I love sock patterns designed by Cookie A. I've often found myself drooling over her socks on Ravelry because, in my mind, they are designed the way I would design socks – knitted from the cuff down, most have a heel flap with gusset, and a wedge toe. As a newer sock knitter, this was the way I learned to knit socks and what I am comfortable with. So when I found Cookie's latest book, *Sock Innovation*, at the same book store for which I had received a gift certificate, I knew I had to have it so I could knit up some of those wonderful patterns. The book contains 15 beautiful top-down sock patterns of varying difficulties, including some patterns that a novice like me can follow without too much difficulty.

What I didn't know when I purchased the book was the number of other wonderful ideas and hints the book contained. Cookie describes the techniques she uses to create her unique designs. She details sock construction and how to create different types of cuffs, heels and toes. An entire section is devoted to reading, translating and writing pattern charts. In addition, she encourages the reader to design her own socks and describes ways to determine the best design layout for those socks.

I found this book to be very resourceful and I've already used quite a bit of the information provided despite starting only one of the sock patterns. It may not be appropriate for someone who has never knitted socks before, but a basic understanding of the structure and construction of a sock would be all that is needed to begin the easier patterns. While I don't quite feel ready to tackle the more challenging socks, I'm confident that I could create my own basic sock design using Cookie's information as a reference.

-Review by Beth Brookshier

Sweater Quest: My Year of Knitting Dangerously

Author: Adrienne Martini

This is an engaging memoir of the author's year-long quest to knit the "Margaret Tudor" cardigan from [Tudor Roses](#), by Alice Starmore. There is background on the Alice Starmore 'issues'. Martini details problems tracking down the book, the correct yarns — yarns specified in the pattern being no longer available — all the while teaching English, working as a freelance writer, and being a wife, and mother of two small children. I enjoyed the accounts of the author's visits to Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, Ann Shayne of the Mason-Dixon Knitters, and Amy R. Singer from [Knitty](#). Martini succeeded in completing this complicated project within the allotted year. After all that work, the sweater doesn't fit her, but I can relate (sort of!) to the author's conclusion, "...I didn't knit it in order to have a new sweater. I knit it because I was fascinated by it, because I thought it was a beautiful object and a challenge for my skills". She also has an entertaining and thoughtful book to show for her year's efforts.

-Review by Elizabeth Link

The Knitter's Handy Book of Patterns: Basic Designs in Multiple Sizes & Gauges (Interweave)

By Ann Budd

Amazingly, this book was published in 2002 and I've only recently discovered it. While I've been knitting for almost 3 decades (gasp!), the one thing that has always given me the most trouble is “gauge”. It's not that I can't do it, I just don't trust myself. Since “swatching” has never been my favorite thing, when I'm trying to re-do a favorite pattern with a different yarn I end up in endless tester pieces, trying to make sure that my “math” was correct; and as I knit up the pattern, I become obsessed with measuring to see if I somehow calculated wrong.

Fortunately, I've always been a relatively true-to-gauge knitter, so if the yarn is 5 stitches per inch on size 8 needles, I'm usually right there; but the obsession with calculating my own gauge frequently takes some of the joy out of the knitting.

This book has been invaluable! It has basic patterns for almost every article of clothing and has them done for multiple gauges and sizes – all in simple, easy-to-read charts.

Ann Budd has also put in some tips and suggestions for putting your own spin on the items. So the gloves have been painlessly converted into fingerless gloves using the yarn that a friend picked out. Even adding my own color patterns or cables are less daunting because the “hard” part (math !) has already been done!

I think this book is going to help me work through my seemingly endless stash of yarn much quicker – because I no longer have to fuss about finding a pattern to match the yarn or spend hours & hours re-working a favorite pattern so that I can use some fluffy mohair that the pattern didn't call for....

-Review by Kristi Hill

The Knitting Experience I: The Knit Stitch

By Sally Melville

This book has a subtitle which says "inspiration & instruction". How true...because this book is NOT just for new knitters. Sally has taken the basic knit stitch and designed patterns you have to see or execute to appreciate.

Her inspiration goads the knitter to try and go out on your own. Bend the rules, and knit outside the box. I'm certain that most knitters, of any level, can identify with her forward that talks about "how knitting can change your life". The meditations that she's included will be a delight to knitters of all ages.

There are 25 projects in the book for men, women and children and it includes many size ranges. It includes the skills you may need, and the details that are important. She constantly is coaching and guiding you through.... and even provides rescue techniques should you need them.

A great many seasoned knitters have marveled over the Einstein Jacket. You won't believe how Sally took garter stitch and architecturally designed this jacket. There's also a Baby Einstein. The Shape-It scarf is a beautiful pattern and so much fun to make.

Her choice of colors and yarn are beautifully reflected in the amazing photography.

The Knit Stitch is the first of a series of 5 books. The second book, The Purl Stitch, recently became available. The last three books planned for her series will focus on: color, texture and design. I project that every passionate knitter will want all 5 in the series.

I have taken my 2 books to Office Depot and had them spiral bound for only \$1.50 each. That way they lie open while you're working :)

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Hurt

The Knitting Experience Book 2: The Purl Stitch

By Sally Melville

The Purl Stitch is the second in a five book conglomerate by Sally Melville. Sally is recognized as a foremost authority in the knitting world. This fact is proven in Book 1: The Knit Stitch and fortified in The Purl Stitch.

This book is filled with beautiful photography and pictures about techniques. Again, this newest book is not just for beginning knitters, but should be a collectible in advanced knitter's libraries also.

Sally addresses The Flow Experience and how knitters are blessed with their craft and don't have to deal with boredom. She mentions that it's like teaching an "old dog new tricks".

This edition covers more advanced techniques that show reverse shaping, short rows, carrying the yarn around your neck for even tension, various buttonholes, assembly, and many other hints and tips. She covers many items that create successful garments.

The chapters are interspersed with pages on "Meditation" and ends with Sally's 10 Tricks. I love the picture of Sally playing the drums.

Of course, one of the biggest benefits of this book is the 25 projects. She offers guidance, rescue techniques and constant coaching.

Thanks, Sally, for this wonderful book. I, for one, am eagerly awaiting the third book in this series, which will be on color and photographed in Greece.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Hurt

The Knitting Experience Book 3: Color

By Sally Melville

Sally Melville's first 2 books were on The Knit Stitch and The Purl Stitch. Number 3 in the series is Color! And....if anyone knows anything about color, it's theories and it's uses, it's Sally Melville. This third book is about twice the size of the first two. It has 40+ projects. Her constant coaching, friendly advice, and skills of wardrobe-building are beautifully written in this book, along with beautiful photographs of Greece.

There's a meditative page about "seeing color" where Sally talks about seasons of color, how age affects the color we choose, and even our moods can dictate a certain color. Very interesting...

The techniques in this book cover simple stripes, not-so-simple stripes, the 2-color tradition, knitting with panels, intarsia, and plaids. She goes into fixing common mistakes, also.

Sally goes into extensive review of the colorwheel, something every knitter needs to know.

I highly recommend this book as an addition to your knitting library.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Hurt

The Shop on Blossom Street

By Debbie Macomber

Rating: 4 sheep (very good)

This book is one that I like to call a 'feel good' book. Keep this on your bookshelf and re-read it whenever you are down or not feeling well. There are many problems in the lives of its cast of characters, but they pretty much work them out.

The book opens with Lydia Hoffman who sinks all her savings into the purchase of a yarn shop. Lydia has twice survived bouts of cancer and has many issues as a result of this. She decides to give lessons as a way of luring customers to her new store. First we meet Jacqueline, a well to do matron, who is having family problems but decides to learn to knit to make a baby blanket for an expected grandchild. Carol Giraud joins the class to knit a baby blanket for a hoped for pregnancy. Alix Townsend comes into the learning class to knit a baby blanket for Project Linus as a way of fulfilling her Court ordered Community Service project. The interaction of these ladies and Lydia, and their developing common bond through knitting is the main theme of the novel.

Debbie Macomber's love and knowledge of knitting shines throughout the book and her understanding of how knitting is a great common denominator is very evident.

A big bonus of this book is the baby blanket pattern developed by Anne Norling for this book. An added bonus is that many chapters are introduced with quotations from well-known knitters and add a degree of humor to it all. I liked this book and heartily recommend it and I intend to purchase the sequel.

Respectfully submitted, Hareth McNally

Victorian Lace Today

By Jane Sowerby

photography by Alexis Xenakis

Rating: 5 sheep

Knitters, clear off your coffee tables!!! You'll need room to put out this amazing book on lace knitting. The title, Victorian Lace Today, barely scratches the surface of what is inside this book. Of course there are lovely patterns for lace scarves and shawls of all skill levels. The patterns range from simple to elaborate, but all of them are beautiful.

Well-written patterns combined with clear charts and instructions make even the most challenging of these patterns accessible to most knitters. What makes this book even more special is the exhaustively detailed historical information about the mothers of lace knitting and their patterns. This historical information combined with a discussion of the social climate of Victorian society and the rise of knitting as a leisure activity for ladies of the middle and upper classes add an unusual dimension to this book.

I especially enjoyed reading the background of how changing Victorian fashion and social rules influenced the styles of shawls and scarves. The photography by Alexis Xenakis ranges from detailed shots of the knitted items to incredibly beautiful interior and exterior shots of locations around England.

The "Techniques, Tools and Talk" section at the end of the book explains the various skills needed for the patterns with good diagrams and understandable instructions. A section on charts, another on design principles and guidelines for blocking make this fantastic book a one-stop shop for everything you need to start and master lace knitting. I recommend that you check this book out, even if you are still hesitant to try lace. Jane Sowerby's book might be the little push that you need to get into the joy of knitting lace.

Respectfully submitted, Ginny Zschau

Vintage Baby Knits: More than 40 Heirloom Patterns from the 1920s to the 1950s

Author: Kristen Rengren

St. Louis County Library New Acquisition!

This charming book is well on its way to becoming a classic. Anyone who is interested in either knitting for a baby (as the book's pattern range in size from 1 to 3), or seeing how the old becomes new again, would absolutely love this book. The author and Chicago native, Kristen Rengren, is a long-time collector of vintage knitting patterns and a former vintage clothing dealer. She has written patterns for Interweave Knits, Vogue Knitting, Blue Sky Alpacas, and Vermont Organic Fiber Company. She now designs knitwear for her own label and her patterns can be found on her website, Retroknit.net.

This book brings the classic charm of knitting's past to a brand new generation of knitters. Vintage Baby Knitspacks in more than forty patterns that make heirloom gifts.

Kristen found that the patterns of yore used different sized needles and different yarns than we have available today. She painstakingly reworked these patterns into ones with modern language and modern techniques. There are darling sweaters and cardigans, shrugs, toys, soakers, blankets, hats, and more, all with thorough diagrams.

These patterns appeal to a modern audience since they are presented in modern yarns, but always keep the true vintage style. Each is still knit in a fine gauge with traditional motifs portraying all the elegance, delicacy, and charm as they did when they were originally designed and created.

I was captivated by this book and I think you will be too.

-Review by Amanda Yancey

Wendy Knits: My Never-Ending Adventures in Yarn

By Wendy D. Johnson

Rating: 5 sheep (excellent)

New knitters will often ask the question - What's the ONE BOOK I should buy? Well, my answer just changed. WendyKnits is a great book for the novice knitter because Wendy talks the novice through the basics and explains things in a breezy, conversational style that makes you feel like your big sister or best friend is teaching you. The patterns range from a square stockinette stitch dishcloth to lovely sweaters with lacy borders and Wendy's own "recipe" for a toe-up sock. Her humorous recounting of her adventures in yarn are hilarious, but very informative to the new knitter. The new knitter will learn and understand why gauge and an ample supply of yarn in one dye lot are important and those of us with more knitting history are likely to see ourselves in Wendy's anecdotes.

Wendy's patterns are directed to both the novice and knowledgeable knitter. She uses a fairly small amount of knitting jargon so patterns are accessible to all skill levels, although drawings of techniques would be helpful to the "visual" learners. Throughout the book is a feeling that Wendy is telling you "Come on!!! You can do this! It's EASY!" She even helps you get over the guilt of buying expensive luxury fibers and having a stash that takes over the living space in your home. And if you are contemplating lace projects but feel intimidated by shawl patterns you've seen (like I am) take a look at the Grape Arbor Shawl - it is lovely and Wendy has provided both written out directions row by row and clear charts. This isn't just a terrific knitting book, it's also a terrific read.

For more about and from Wendy, please visit her blog: [Wendy Knits!](#)

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Zschau

Yarn Harlot: The Secret Life of a Knitter

By Stephanie Pearl-McPhee

Rated: 5 Sheep

This is a book about knitting that was really fun to read. It's a collection of short essays about the joys and frustrations of being a Knitter - that's "Knitter" with a capital K as opposed to knitter (pages 162-163). Stephanie is a popular blogger - you can find her weblog at [The Yarn Harlot](#). I heard that some of these stories appeared on her blog but that most have not.

If you are a Knitter (even if you are a knitter) you will nod your head in agreement as you read this book - some of the subject matter includes stash, socks, gift knitting, designers, unfinished projects, tape measures, moths, crochet, steeking, wool allergy, and thieving squirrels. You will definitely laugh out loud. You probably will cry.

I usually read best sellers for 'can't put it down' reads and was surprised to find a knitting book that I was compelled to read cover to cover with hardly a break. My favorite story is the last one - she's in a complete panic when she can't find her very favorite dpns - what happened was....never mind - you'll have to read it to see how it turns out.

Respectfully submitted,
Robyn Diliberto