

# Fiber Optics and Yarns

BY DIANE MULHOLLAND

**W**hen I was very little, my mother taught me how to spin and knit. She taught me many other skills, but these are the two that have endured through years of dabbling in new crafts and activities. Over the years, our love for crafts has been a special bond. Mum and I talk to each other when we need to let it all out about a new hobby, an exciting project, or problems that need an expert solution.

When I lived at home, it was easy to keep in touch. It required no technology to walk into another room and show off a success story. Together Mum and I proudly displayed crafts around the home and taught visiting exchange students to spin. We made baby clothes for my new sister and went along to the local spinning group together. At the age of eighteen, however, I left the little country farm near Bairnsdale, Australia, to head for studies and a new, independent big-city life in Melbourne.

In the mid-1990s, staying in touch meant many long-distance telephone calls and posting parcels. I was still finding my feet and would constantly call Mum for recipes, advice, or just to chat to relieve a lonely evening. Soon I realized how much I had taken it for granted that Mum was always right there if I had a problem with technique or a question about a pattern. I visited home frequently, often knitting or crocheting on the long train journeys. I borrowed equipment, prompting Mum to include craft supplies and tools in Christmas and birth-

day packages, and I remember proudly taking back to the city my first very own spinning wheel, a present from Mum that drew quite a few odd looks on the crowded train.

E-mail was a breakthrough. Suddenly, instead of posting samples of spun yarn or trying to describe patterns on the telephone, we had a faster, easier connection. Return wasn't quite instant as Mum had to use the Internet at the local library, but it was a much quicker turnaround than snail mail, and our keyboards and scanners were busy. Over the years, Mum's computer skills gradually improved, and she became hooked on the Internet. We each had digital cameras, and Mum taught me how to resize the photos before sending them, so she didn't have to wait for hours for her dial-up connection to produce the latest picture of my work. Soon our e-mails were being heralded by text messages on our cell phones. "Have sent latest pic of socks—check your e-mail." Finally we had instant access. It was almost as good as being at home.

These days I live in London, which is just about the farthest away from the little country farm in Australia as you can get. But with today's technology, Mum and I are only a hair's-breadth apart. We keep in touch mainly through our blogs and instant chat programs. We load plenty of photos on our blogs and always leave comments to let each other know what we think. Text messages still fly back and forth on our cell phones, although we need to check



time zones. "Have blogged Paris—have a look." Strangely, we have returned to snail mail. Perhaps the longer distance means we feel the need for a more tangible connection. We send magazines with articles underlined and patterns bookmarked and notes scrawled on the pages: "Think you should knit this." We have spin-alongs and send links to each other of interesting sites spotted while Internet browsing. We still e-mail each other for advice, as we are each specialists in slightly different fields.

I wonder what the future has in store for our relationship. I know it won't be long before we both progress to camera phones and picture messages will be our instant communication tool. One day, we may have only to press a single button to connect and share our latest ideas and inspirations. Whatever happens, I know that Mum and I will always be in touch in some way, sharing our hopes, dreams, failures, and successes in yarn and in life. ♫

Diane Mulholland had the very good fortune to grow up on an Australian sheep farm, and a love of all things fiber-related was a natural result. A long way from home now, she tries her best to fit as much wool as possible into her tiny London flat. Read about what she's been up to at [www.kurrajonghandcrafts.com/blog](http://www.kurrajonghandcrafts.com/blog).