My Favorite Spinning Tool: The Computer

BY ALANNA WILCOX

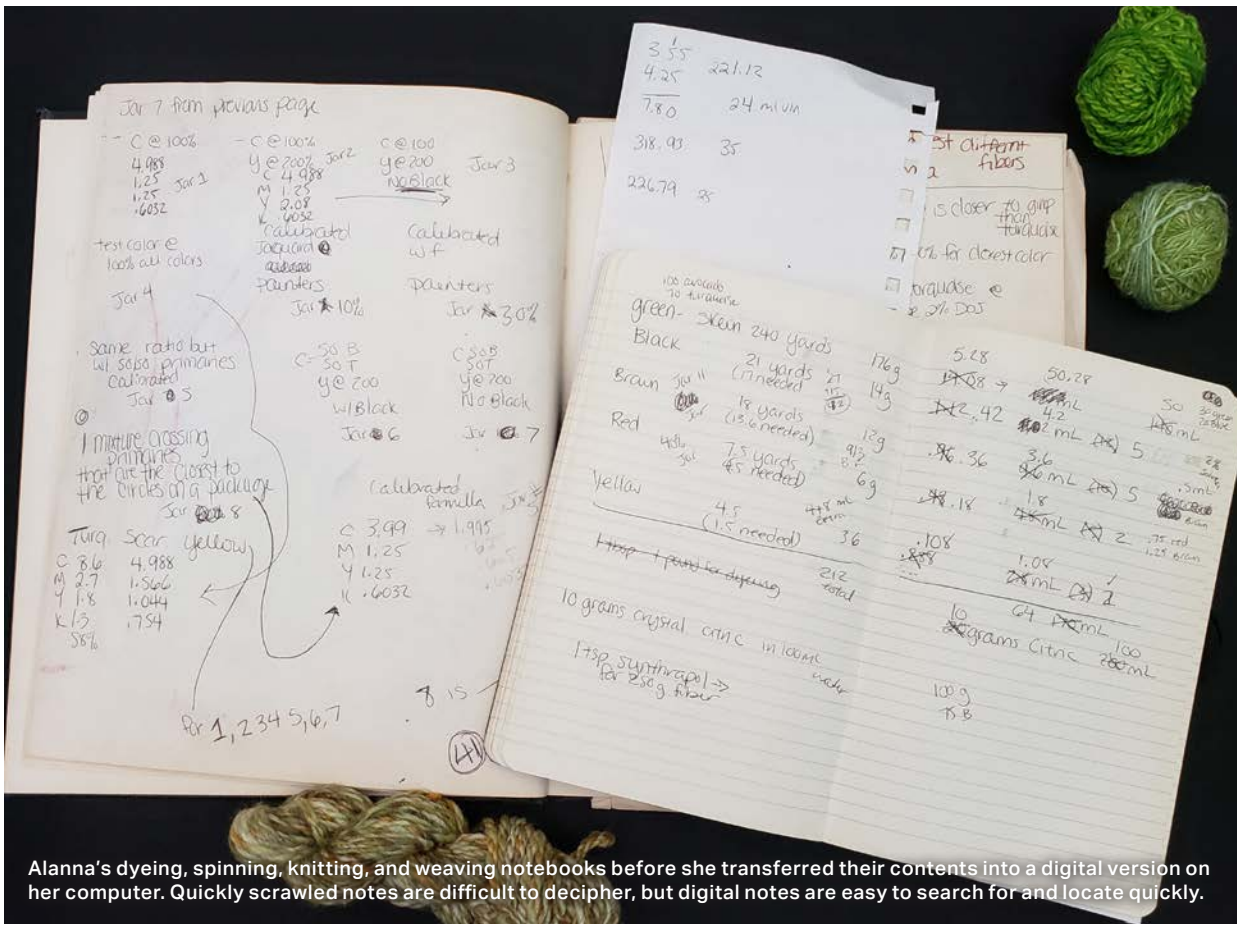
Ask me what my favorite spinning tool is, and you might be surprised to hear that it's my computer. Obviously, I couldn't spin yarn with a laptop (although if you presented me with this challenge, I'm sure I would try to figure out a way to do so!), but using my computer enhances everything I do when it comes to spinning. Here are four reasons why.

1. Organization.

I love to use digital spreadsheets to track project information and notes. I'm a forgetful person when it comes to remembering words and numbers, so having project-based spreadsheets allows me to access key information both in my home studio via my laptop and when I'm using my smartphone on the go. Whether at a yarn shop or fiber festival, I can create a note whenever an idea pops into my head. I don't need to spend time rummaging through my bag for a notebook or frantically trying to locate a sticky note that contains both a dye formula and my grocery list. Everything is organized and easy to find.

2. Quick, accurate math.

If I'm trying to calculate the amount of fiber needed for a project, how much dye to add for a given weight of fiber, or anything else that requires math, the computer is a lifesaver. I'm great at thinking I can do simple math . . . until I get to the sleeves of a sweater and realize I ran out of yarn because I didn't multiply the sleeve yardage



Alanna's dyeing, spinning, knitting, and weaving notebooks before she transferred their contents into a digital version on her computer. Quickly scrawled notes are difficult to decipher, but digital notes are easy to search for and locate quickly.

Photos by Alanna Wilcox

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by two. Oops. While I could use a calculator, seeing all the math on my computer, along with written notes next to it, helps create a much clearer picture of what all the numbers mean and how to use them to my advantage. Before I began using my computer, I scrawled notes and numbers on blank paper and was later confused by my own notes, what order the pages went in, and what I was trying to calculate in the first place.

3. Search function.

If I wanted to remember a specific fiber, vendor, pattern, or even a needle size I used 10 years ago, I had to look through pages of notes. No more! With my computer, I can do a digital search much quicker than manually searching through binders and notebooks. I've spent the last few years scanning in all my notes and projects to make them easier to locate—which was time well spent—while also clearing out shelves for much-needed fiber space.

4. Quick transfer of information.

If I am doing a project that uses a dye recipe, I can easily copy and paste it into a new document for an alternate project, then use my spreadsheets to modify the recipe based on the weights and fiber types being used. This allows me to quickly jump into the creation process because the planning time was cut down dramatically. Everything is so much more streamlined when using my computer this way.

Not everyone is tech oriented, but a computer can really be the best tool in your fiber toolbox! It saves you time, eliminates unnecessary papers, helps you do math, keeps track of your inventory, and so much more.

Alanna Wilcox is a master spinner and expert fiber arts instructor who loves sharing her passion with others and is constantly creating, especially with projects focusing on color. She wrote and self-published the popular book *A New Spin on Color* and has developed a method for creating dye formulas to match digital colors. You can learn more about her workshops and books on her website at alannawilcox.com, or follow her on Instagram @spinnybuns.

Alanna documents each step of the creation process in spreadsheets on her computer, and she teaches workshops on how to stay organized.

Keeping dye formulas on her computer helps Alanna match her color every time.

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