

Behind the Scenes

with Kurt Hertzog



All American Crafts Publishing

Did you ever wonder about the magazine you are reading right now? Where does it come from? How was it created? Who decides what gets published and when? Who are the people behind it all? This installment of "Behind the Scenes" is dedicated to All American Crafts (AAC) Publishing, the parent company of *Woodturning Design*.

More than thirty years ago, Jerry Cohen, a longtime circulation business and publication specialist, was working as a consultant with no strings on his future. His twenty years of experience had well prepared him to start a publishing company, so he cofounded his first magazine, *Fashion Knitting*. A year later, *Crochet Fantasy* was added. Within ten years, there were ten magazines—all of them in the women's crafting area.

Some of the other titles (as they were founded) included *PaintWorks*, *Quick & Easy Painting*, *Craftworks* (today *Create & Decorate*), *Creative Woodworks & Crafts*, and *The Quilter Magazine*. All were largely focused on women's crafting (except the woodworking magazine). Branching into the men's (and women's) arena led to the creation of *Carving Magazine* and, soon after, *Woodturning Design*.

Over the years, the company has grown from just a few employees to forty-eight—forty-one local and seven out-of-house employees make up the core business that has twelve titles in its stable. Most of the AAC employees are based in the Stanhope, New Jersey offices; however, Joe Herrmann of *Woodturning Design*, for example, is remotely located. Just about everything is done at the New Jersey facility (except printing and distribution).

The printing of the current twelve titles is done by the R.R. Donnelley Company, and the subscription and newsstand distribution is handled by outside companies as well. The largest retailers of AAC titles are the who's who of craft retail, including Walmart, A.C. Moore, Michaels, Hobby Lobby, Home Depot, Lowe's, Barnes and Noble, and Borders. Even with the printing and circulation being handled by outside contractors, the creation of these twelve titles from within this one facility is an amazing process to see. From the advertising, to content, to artwork and layout, to promotion, to planning of future titles, it all happens in a quiet-looking building in Stanhope, New Jersey. As you drive by, you'd think it was a doctor's or dentist's office; however, once inside, you see a publishing

facility in operation with craft specialists who have the necessary skills that enable them to produce high-quality magazines.

As the world becomes more and more digital, is there going to be growth in the publishing business? AAC has two new titles in the planning stage, even as it continues to branch into the book publishing business. Though the owners do see the publishing business changing, the crafting publication readership is still very comfortable with the printed version of their magazine. But AAC will continue to look to the future by expanding into the electronic distribution model and recently added staff who specialize in that area.

Even with forty-eight employees, the operation of AAC is still run like a family business. The environment in the office is efficient and professional, yet comfortable and business casual. With his son Darren as CEO, Jerry has been stepping back from the day-to-day operation, but he still comes into the office a few days a week.

The current titles in their family of periodicals are *Christmas 365*, *Woodturning Design*, *The Quilter Magazine*, *Knit 'n Style*, *Creative Woodworks & Crafts*, *Create & Decorate*, *Carving Magazine*, *Fabric Trends*, *Scrapbooking & Beyond*, *Bead Unique*, *Paper Creations*, and *PaintWorks*. Their largest circulation magazine is currently *The Quilter Magazine* with each issue's circulation of 200,000 plus. With new magazines in the works, it appears that All American Crafts will continue to be a force in the craft publishing arena for some time to come.



Fig. 1. From the road, this unassuming building appears to be a dental or medical office, not the publishing facility of twelve specialty craft magazines.



Fig. 2. When you walk into the lobby, there is a stunning 1000 gallon aquarium that fills the entire back wall.



Fig. 5. The company is truly a “family” operation with Darren Cohen, Jerry’s oldest son, as CEO.



Fig. 3. Adjacent to the receptionist’s desk is a display showing the recent issues of the family of magazines that AAC publishes.



Fig. 6. Brett Cohen, Jerry’s youngest son, is the Advertising Manager for Woodturning Design.



Fig. 4. Jerry Cohen founded All American Crafts in 1980.



Fig. 7. Like most businesses, there is the requisite conference room; but other than that, the office has a comfortable, home-like feel.



Fig. 8. The beauty of All American Crafts is the feel of the business casual.



Fig. 11. Because the “true” color of many of the crafted items is so important, there are areas of the building with special lighting for examination and photography.



Fig. 9. Some of the editors, such as Joe Herrmann of *Woodturning Design* magazine, work from home.



Fig. 12. The importance of accurate color rendition requires printing sample sheets, so special printers are used.



Fig. 10. Throughout the offices, there are samples of the various crafts that AAC publishes.



Fig. 13. The employees not only work in the publishing business, but are crafters themselves. Samples of crafts from the magazines are on display in their work areas.