



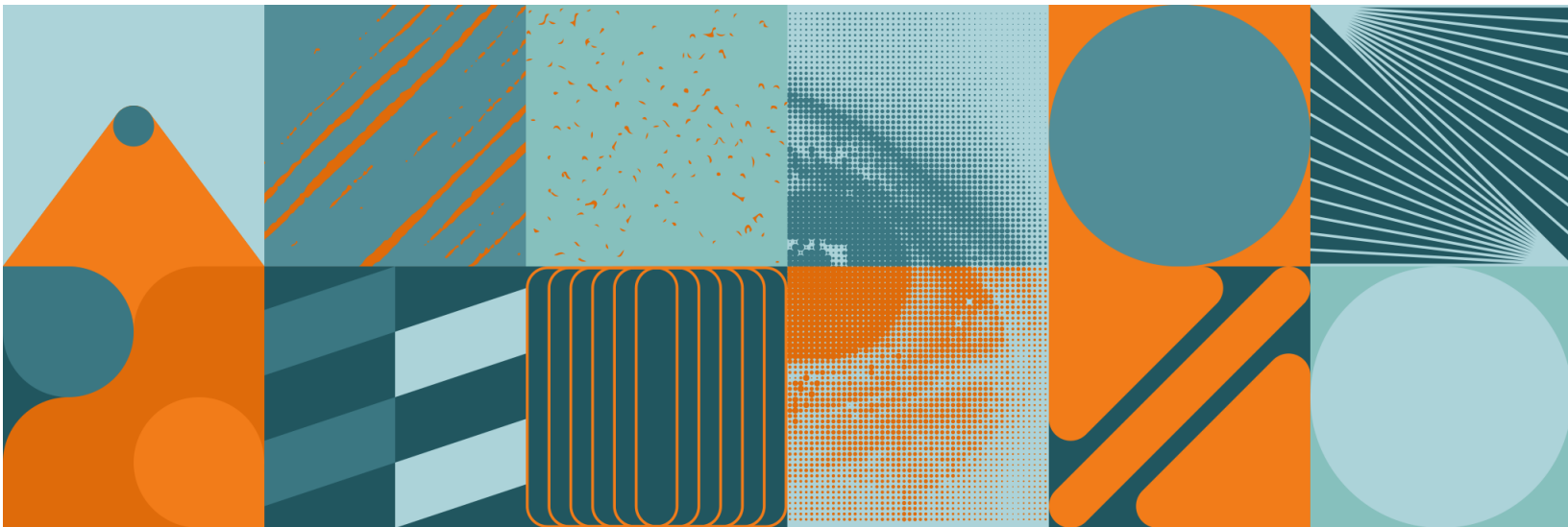
**Global Craft Markets**  
NAVIGATING PATHWAYS  
TO SUCCESS



Canada Council  
for the Arts  
Conseil des arts  
du Canada

**DIGITAL STRATEGY PROJECT**  
CRAFT ALLIANCE ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION

# Makers



PREPARED BY REBECCA HANNON  
SEPTEMBER, 2020  
REVISED: OCTOBER, 2021

# About Global Craft Markets

**Global Craft Markets: Navigating Pathways to Success** is a comprehensive two-year, progressive study on Digital technologies and developing digital strategies for makers, galleries and the broader community. Individual consulting reports will be compiled with other consultants' work into a larger strategy document and will then be used to develop new directions and processes in further study and recommendations as the project moves forward. As research is completed, we will be sharing results and doing further consultation for discovery to inform decisions on future direction.



It is important to note that this research initiative has not been developed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is intended primarily, as described in the following pages, to offer insights into the developing digital economy for craft & art work worldwide. We recognize however that the pandemic is an important force affecting the worldwide economy and may affect findings.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Craft Alliance Atlantic Association supports the growth of craftspeople working on the ancestral and unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Wolastoqiyik, Beothuk, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut, and the Innu of Nitassinan. We support the upholding of the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1752 and 1761 which re-affirmed the land, hunting and trading rights of this land's original people and encourage clients and partners to explore the fundamental impact of First Nations craftsmanship on the current craft traditions enjoyed here today.

## EQUITY STATEMENT

We also acknowledge the diverse communities in our region that make up our population, including Indigenous Peoples, the many descendants of African Nova Scotians, the Black Loyalists and other racialized individuals including immigrants and refugees; individuals from the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community; and physically and intellectually disabled persons. We recognize that the lived experiences of these groups can often vary dramatically, and that considering the intersectionality of those lived experiences is also an essential factor when discussing issues pertaining to them.

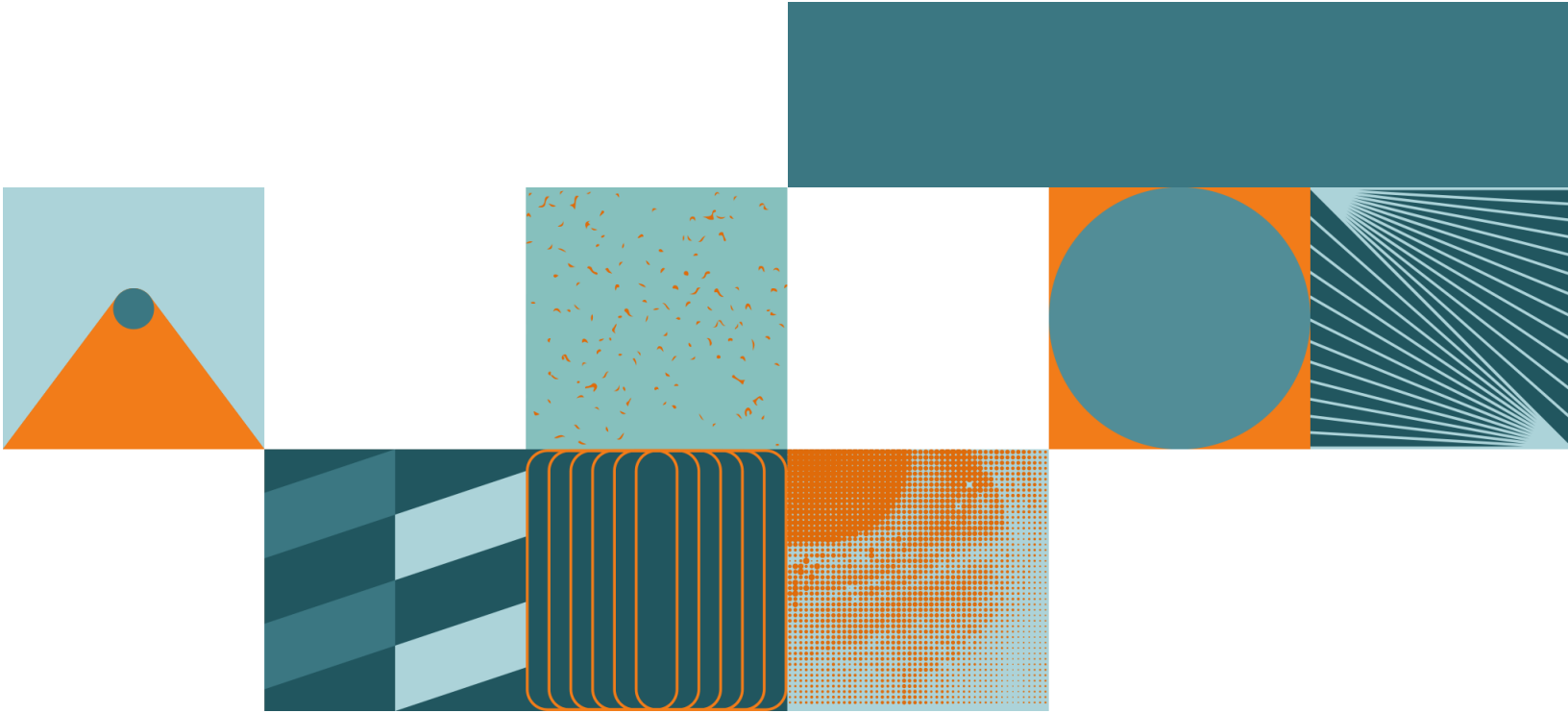
# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary** ..... 1
- Overviews, case studies and interviews explore:..... 2
  - 1. Digital Tools ..... 2
  - 2. Digital Research and Innovation ..... 2
  - 3. Museums, Galleries, Trade Fairs, and Festivals ..... 3
  - 4. The Public (Clients) Broadening Understanding of Craft Through Digital Interface ..... 4
  - 5. Promotion and Marketing ..... 5
  - 6. Future Digital Developments ..... 7
- Conclusion ..... 8

We gratefully acknowledge the funding support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)



© Copyright Craft Alliance Atlantic Association 2023  
craftalliance.ca



# Executive Summary

This report focuses on digital tools currently being used by “**Makers**” to design and create work, run their studios, market and share their story, build community, sell work, and grow their creative practice. 30+ artists, makers, designers, gallerists, and arts administrators were interviewed between July and October 2020. Their responses were combined with research done during this period. This new executive summary completed October 2021 takes into account evolving changes in the sector.

Sample questions posed include:

- *What digital tools are you using to create your work, share it, and sell it?*
- *Are trade fairs, craft shows, face-to-face events still important to you or the venues that sell your work?*
- *Are buyers changing the way they understand and purchase work through digital interfaces?*
- *What digital/online opportunities do you see as emerging or exciting for future growth?*

This report establishes the data-set for the initial research phase, (*pre-Sector consultations*), and identifies areas of success and emerging opportunities for makers that warrant further research.

The study seeks to find better practices, to be in a position to advise on the best use of resources for making and promotion (ROI), and ultimately to endeavor to advise makers (and the community) on best practices for career development and financial returns, as it moves through progressive development and conclusion over two years.

**Keywords:** Digital tools, digital platform, makers, artists, designers, sustainability, accessibility, inclusion, events, creative sector, innovation, local, community, software, marketing, *ROI*

**OVERVIEWS, CASE STUDIES AND INTERVIEWS EXPLORE:**

**1. Digital Tools**

---

**Digital tools** for designing, prototyping, and fabricating work most often include the *Adobe Suite* for 2D design, tools for modelling such as *Z-Brush* or *MeshMixer*, and studio organization/file-sharing programs like *Notion*, *Slack* and *Dropbox*. All makers reported use of digital tools in their workshops. Those that did not incorporate digital forms of fabrication, still use these tools to generate ideas, keep their workshops/business running smoothly and as a communication tool. “Community” was mentioned by most makers as being of utmost importance. International makers reported slightly different software and platforms they use which warrants further research for comparison of ‘best tools’.

**A selection of Software for Designing/Making**

Name	TOPIC	Website
ADOBE suite including Illustrator, InDesign, Photoshop, Premiere	Vector drawing, Layout, Photo editing, Video editing	<a href="https://www.adobe.com/">https://www.adobe.com/</a>
Adobe Spark	making captioned images	<a href="https://spark.adobe.com/">https://spark.adobe.com/</a>
Fiberworks PCW	Weaving liftplan	<a href="http://www.fiberworks-pcw.com/">http://www.fiberworks-pcw.com/</a>
Dropbox	Image storage and sharing	<a href="https://www.dropbox.com/">https://www.dropbox.com/</a>
Anarkik3d	Haptic 3D Modelling	<a href="https://anarkik3d.co.uk/">https://anarkik3d.co.uk/</a>
Dragon Frame	Stop motion animation	<a href="https://www.dragonframe.com/">https://www.dragonframe.com/</a>
Rhino	3D modelling	<a href="https://www.rhino3d.com/">https://www.rhino3d.com/</a>
Z-Brush	High-res 3D models	<a href="https://pixologic.com/">https://pixologic.com/</a>
V-Carve Pro	Software to drive Shopbot CNC Mill	<a href="https://www.vectric.com/products/vcarve-pro">https://www.vectric.com/products/vcarve-pro</a>
Procreate	Digital Illustration app	<a href="https://procreate.art/">https://procreate.art/</a>

**2. Digital Research and Innovation**

---

**Digital Research and Innovation** happens at academic and research-based organizations. Multi-disciplinary collaborations have positive outcomes for the maker community including aggregated information about sustainable materials and “waste-led” and “regenerative” design. Both makers and buyers’ value authentic, local, and sustainable. Collaborative research keeps creative practice relevant and “future-proof”.

Where does this happen?

- **“Fab Labs”**- shared makerspaces offer creators access to analog and digital tools for fabrication that would be unavailable at the individual level. The rise of “Fab Labs” in bigger cities around the world experienced growth in tandem with the DIY movement.
- **Residencies**- concentrated time and space in a new place/facility allows creatives to develop a project or practice.
- **Universities**- continued training, collaborations, development of new tools
- **Research Grant Collaborations**- Research teams often seek creatives to bring a different vantage point and enrich projects

Additional inquiry on this topic could reveal how makers are applying research, and the impact it has on shaping their work. It has been observed within Canada that those who have been successful in securing ArtsNS, (*for example*), or Canada Council grants are required to submit final reports of the “outcomes” of their proposed projects. These outcomes/final reports are not shared, so potential knowledge or best practices often remain in the files of the granting agency.

### 3. Museums, Galleries, Trade Fairs, and Festivals

---

**Museums, Galleries, Trade fairs, and festivals** have quickly learned to “pivot” during the COVID pandemic and develop accessible and engaging versions of their face-to-face offerings. Most exciting is the wildly expanded reach these institutions can have, and many of the advances developed quickly will have lasting impact on the way creative work is displayed, celebrated and sold. Accessibility has been greatly expanded. Following the ‘Makers’ relationship to these changes, and continuing to assess the sweet spot for *ROI* in trade and craft fairs, events, and gallery representation will be important.

- **Makers perspective:** in light of the pandemic and retail closures/event cancellations, makers reported building commerce into their sites, or working through online platforms such as *Instagram* or *Etsy* to sell work.
- **Events:** With two years of cancellations some events were not strong enough to survive. Slowly, and with stricter protocols, events are starting to happen again. New York City Jewelry Week being an example with “In-Real-Life” and online content. There appears to be “pent up demand” from participants and buyers.
- **Trade Fairs/Craft Shows:** Only the strong, or those able to pivot to a compelling online event, have persisted. Makers have reported that personal relationships developed with buyers attending shows is important, so a return to “In-Real-Life” is desired. Direct contact with the buying public is invaluable for makers at any scale/or time in their career.

## Selection of Events

Event	Website
Renegade Craft Fair	<a href="https://www.renegadecraft.com/">https://www.renegadecraft.com/</a>
Etsy- online craft sales platform	<a href="https://www.etsy.com/">https://www.etsy.com/</a>
Goldsmiths Fair	<a href="https://www.goldsmithsfair.co.uk/">https://www.goldsmithsfair.co.uk/</a>
SOFA-Intersect Show	<a href="https://www.sofaexpo.com/">https://www.sofaexpo.com/</a>
Munich Jewellery Week	<a href="https://munichjewelleryweek.com/">https://munichjewelleryweek.com/</a>
Art Basel Miami	<a href="https://www.artbasel.com/miami-beach">https://www.artbasel.com/miami-beach</a>
NYC Jewelry Week	<a href="http://nycjewelryweek.com/about/">http://nycjewelryweek.com/about/</a>
Smithsonian Craft Show	<a href="https://smithsoniancraftshow.org/">https://smithsoniancraftshow.org/</a>
Collect Fair	<a href="https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/">https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/</a>

## 4. The Public (Clients) Broadening Understanding of Craft Through Digital Interface

---

**Buyers perspective:** Craft enthusiasts often buy fine craft when travelling, as a memory of a place. Buyers also reported having experience of craft work in real life, which made understanding of 3D works possible through the screen. This level of comfort is enough that work is purchased without viewing/touching. A competitive intensity also develops for buyers who have more time working from home for scrolling, following, and “snagging” works from their favorite *Instagram* makers as soon as they drop.

**Gallery perspective:** Interestingly, the gallery owners surveyed said the majority of their sales still come from personal relationships with clients and (real life) visits to the gallery. This makes sense as they are doing the work of developing relationships, that some makers have taken on themselves by developing their story/brand through social media.

**“Conscious Buying” and “Conscious Living”:** are the ethos that buyers believe they are engaging in. Handmade work continues to be seen as a “sustainable luxury”. Sharing (often online) community with makers whose core values one aligns with is important to consumers. The [Black Lives Matter](#) movement caught fire in Spring 2020 and brought to the fore the violence, systemic bias and racism experienced by black, indigenous, and peoples of color, (*BIPOC*). Sheltering at home, a largely white demographic who had developed some experience in protesting/advocacy in the wake of the 2016 American election, became aware of their bias, uneven levels of access, and barriers that have existed in plain sight. Looking at craft as just a small piece of a huge movement, well-known creatives shared their [platform](#), actively highlighted artists of color, auctioned off art/craftworks or organized themed [exhibitions](#) that benefited [black advocacy](#) groups, businesses and scholarships. Consumers made targeted [purchases](#) where they believe their acquisitions would support [black makers](#) and [businesses](#).

Many makers have taken the entire commerce cycle into their own hands. Additional research could ask makers to identify studio time given to the commerce cycle, and collect concrete data if this labor provides a worthwhile ROI.

## 5. Promotion and Marketing

---

### Instagram

Most used social media platform mentioned by almost every maker. *Instagram* is only 10-years old, so its ubiquity reminds us that makers need to be aware and nimble as platforms evolve.

- **Data Mining** involves business tracking your search habits and purchase history to offer personalized marketing. Small maker business have reported some success using Google business products for this.
- **Traceability and “Blockchain”** technology can show consumers the origin of raw materials, transportation to design and manufacturing and ultimately the retail location where the goods are found. This can be expressed through a QR pull-tag or a link to more information on a website.

“Blockchain” technology is not widely used, but does offer makers an opportunity to ensure their products are local, sustainable, and methods of manufacture are transparent. This ties in with consumer interest. Craft is often linked to tourism, culture, and agricultural landscape in Canada, so it would be a ‘value-add’ if makers could include this “certification” to their work. Systems of traceability and certifications of authenticity exist in Canada in relation to the Nunavut seal market and Inuit communities of makers, and offers in addition, the possibility of these communities to “tell their own story”. More indigenous vantage points should be sought in this area.

- **Marketing through Social Media Platforms:**  
Finding your niche and creating a compelling story is core for successful community building, connection with your market, and sales. Without exception, every maker mentioned [Instagram](#) as important to the business. Makers who have been successful in cultivating followings through compelling images, and short texts and hashtags, have turned their creative work into full-time business. Some makers use *Instagram* to market, and build community while other also sell direct through Instagram embedded with [Linktree](#). In August 2020 more than a billion people posted photos on Instagram. It’s important to note Instagram is only 10 years old.

Jess Cartner-Morley writes in the Guardian,

“Twitter is about your tribe, Facebook is about home and family, but Instagram is a romance between just you and your phone.”



Influencers have depth of knowledge in an area, are entertaining, often have large following, and are powerful enough to significantly impact sales of products. ([Colleges](#) are even hiring students influencers to make fighting the COVID-19 pandemic on campus cool.)

Instagram viewers thrive on “discovery”, one click/tiny dopamine hit leading to the next. [IG Live](#) puts the power of producing any kind of show, presentation or informal chat in the hands of a makers, (for free!).. [NYC Jewellery week](#) has invited established jewellery industry insiders, (often focusing on BIPOC creatives), for informal, almost gossipy chats which offer advice, are engaging, and almost feels like overhearing the conversation at the next table.

If the product promotion was subtle in early day of IG, it has matured as consumers spend more time on their phone seeking infotainment. From niche makers to well-known celebrities, anyone who has carved out their community has the potential to make sales through direct selling or affiliate links.

- **Tools for completing a sales transactions:**

Makers reported success with platforms such as [Linktree](#), [GooglePay](#) and Shopify as having successful e-commerce sales capabilities.

Digital Marketing consultant [Liz Kantner](#) advises small and large creative business and says:

“Just make it really easy for the consumer. It does not matter what platform you use- just an easy click, or you can DM someone who expresses interest, offer to send an invoice, or offer payment through [Venmo](#) or [Paypal](#). Find what works best for the buyer.”

Additional sector research could include polling makers to identify the scale of their business, their type of work, and their markets, to compile a resource of recommendations.

**Selected links from this section:**

Name	Topic	Website
Patagonia	Online retailer	<a href="https://www.patagonia.com/our-footprint/traceable-down-standard.html">https://www.patagonia.com/our-footprint/traceable-down-standard.html</a>
Provenance	Blockchain app	<a href="https://www.provenance.org/">https://www.provenance.org/</a>
Sealing Nunavut	Inuit culture and products	<a href="https://www.sealingnunavut.ca/">https://www.sealingnunavut.ca/</a>
Link Tree	Social media, commerce	<a href="https://linktr.ee/">https://linktr.ee/</a>
Shopify	Web, commerce	<a href="https://www.shopify.ca/">https://www.shopify.ca/</a>

## 6. Future Digital Developments

---

The last section explores **Future digital developments** for makers, and throws the net wide to explore new online events & spaces, live-streaming and gaming, offering expertise through “*Rent-a-Pro*” services and *Air BnB “Experiences”*.

Through research and direct conversations with makers, the following emerging areas show promise for artists, designers, and craftspeople.

- **Online Events & Accessibility:** Organizations, museums, design/craft fairs, benefit auctions, craft schools exhibited creativity and resiliency when creating online experiences that engaged their communities, provided value-add (in cases where institutions were shuttered), and welcomed in newcomers with increased accessibility. Live captioning and recordings increased access, but more can be done to insure digital/online content can be accessible to all. Apps such as [\*Clipomatic\*](#) allow content creators in 40 different languages to add live captioning to videos.

Co-creator of New York City Jewelry Week Bella Neyman says,

“For me, the most exciting thing that is happening in the digital realm is comfort level and ability to push decentralized exhibitions on to the web.”

- **Physical Spaces Online:** One of the finest virtual reality experiences of a museum exhibition space can be found in the [Danner Rotunda](#) at the [Pinakothek der Moderne](#) in Munich, Germany. Makers are also using platforms like [Kunstmatrix](#) to embed their work into a high-resolution virtual exhibition spaces that can be shared online.
- **Gaming & New Venues:** IRL Fashion shows, for example, are resource intensive. Platforms such as [The Fabricant](#), [TikTok](#), even the game [Minecraft](#) have hosted designers and expanded understanding of how art, craft, and design can be experienced. New audiences are being reached.
- **Live Streaming:** Tangential to the gaming industry, perhaps the best-known live streaming platform is “Twitch” which is increasingly being used by makers to connect with community, earn revenue though “subs” and cultivate interest in work being made live while viewers chat and feel they are part of the process.
- **YouTube:** Hiding in plain sight, one of our most familiar platforms is also a place where creatives with engaging content can earn income. From farmers who don’t sell any produce, but beautifully document the daily rituals of farming, to outrageous nail art tutorials with affiliate links, [Youtube](#) is an established platform for learning and for earning revenue from creative content.
- **Online Teaching & Mentorship:** Creating and teaching online classes is a **growth area**. From online schools with shorter classes like [Outschool.com](#) to the rapid transition to online teaching

at the University level, makers with specialized knowledge have the opportunity to teach (increasingly) anywhere in the world, from right where they are located.

- **Licensing:** Avenues for earning revenue from designs are increasing and start-ups like [ApplyStickers](#) or [Print all Over Me](#) compensate artists for the use of their designs in the work the platforms produce.
- **Air BnB online “Experiences”:** In the past few years *Air BnB* has developed “experiences”, capitalizing on their reputation as a trustworthy source for travel. This fills a need in our current era of reduced travel worldwide, and one can learn to [Shibori dye](#) or ‘craft’ beer from a location we’d like to be.
- **Craft Research:** Aggregated online research and forums for engagement such as the [Slow Factory Foundation](#) or the new [Black Craftspeople Digital Archive](#) “brings together scholars, students, museums and archives professionals and the public to collaborate and spread the story of black craftspeople”. Community contributions enrich these sites.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, ‘makers’ already have a number of digital tools in use to make, share and sell work. Collaboration at every level leads to growth, so this should be encouraged and facilitated by craft organizations. Canadians did not report any challenges with American-based platforms to market/sell work, (*Square, Wordpress, Shopify*), so this does not indicate a need for a Canada-specific platform. Identity and sustainable cultural production are important (and specific) for Canadian makers, so digital tools and literacy to support this is recommended. Reaching and growing new audiences is important to the craft sectors, and emerging digital opportunities can help makers facilitate this. Conscious buying and conscious living are the ethos behind much going on in today’s marketplace. Makers utilize digital tools, platforms and research that ensures their practice continues to grow, and has the capacity and engagement to reach buyers, international markets, and the next generation in particular.