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Project 2

For my XML project, I chose to create a database of my yarn stash. A yarn stash is a collection of yarn a knitter or crocheter plans to use for projects at some point in time. My stash has grown to fill a 50-gallon plastic tote since I moved to Texas three and a half years ago, and I forget what yarn I have on hand. Many of my friends are starting families, and I wanted to find out what yarn I already have that is soft for babies but also machine washable before heading to the yarn store without having to dig the tote out of the closet. If I have a particular pattern I want to use, the pattern requires a specific weight or thickness of yarn to get the correct final size. I want to know that the soft, machine washable yarn I have will knit into a sweater to fit a toddler and not a teenager or a newborn. Based on my needs, I decided to use tags for the yarn name and brand for each skein (ball) of yarn, the color(s) of the yarn, the total length of yarn in that color, the thickness, what projects the yarn can be used for, what type of fiber it’s made of, and the abbreviated washing instructions for the yarn.

I decided to tag the yarn name and brand for a couple of reasons. One, the brand of yarn and the name of yarn are the first things I see when I look at the label on the skein. When I dig through my tote for a specific skein, I’m going to be looking for the name on the label. Two, I know from experience that yarn manufacturers tend to specialize in certain types of yarn. For instance, Red Heart mostly makes 100% acrylic or acrylic blend yarns that are machine washable, but tend to be rougher in texture.

The next characteristic I use to identify a skein of yarn when I dig through my stash is the color. If I’m knitting something that requires multiple colors, like a patterned sweater, I need to see if I have any colors that coordinate with one another. In addition, yarn manufacturers like to give their colorways (color or colors of a yarn) imaginative names that don’t give much of a hint as to what the yarn actually looks like. For instance, I have a skein of yarn that is a mix of pastel colors that the manufacturer called “Candied.” That name doesn’t tell me what colors the skein really is. Therefore, I broke down the “color” tag into “colors” with the child tag “color” so I could list all the colors in variegated yarns and give more detail than just the manufacturer’s colorway “Candied.”

When I decide to knit something, I need to know how much yarn (length) I need to get the size I want. However, I have multiple skeins of the same color yarn, so I decided the best way to mark up an entry would be to add up the total yardage of all the skeins in the same color. For example, instead of marking up six separate entries for each skein of bulky wool in teal at 125 yards each, I had one entry with a total length of 750 yards. I did this so I wouldn’t have a larger table than needed.

I need to know what fiber the yarn in made from for several reasons. First, I need to use a yarn with the same or similar fiber to the type specified in the pattern to get the right shape and wear. The fiber also determines how the finished garment be washed. Wool needs to be hand washed and laid flat to dry while an acrylic blend can be machine washed and dried. Lastly, the fiber type tells me its texture. Wool blends tend to be scratchy and therefore good for outerwear that doesn’t come into direct contact with skin. Merino, silk, and cotton blends tend to be soft and therefore good for skin contact or babies.

In case the fiber type isn’t enough to tell what projects the yarn would be good for, I also tagged entries for “projects” and “project type.” I did this because some acrylic blends are rough and good for hats, sweaters, and other outerwear garments while others are silky soft and good for babies.

Finally, I marked each entry with the abbreviated washing instructions for the yarn. Washing instructions aren’t always intuitive with mixed fiber yarns. If the yarn is a mix of wool and acrylic, I don’t know without checking the yarn’s label whether it’s machine or hand washable.

I’m happy with my final table, but I plan to add a few more details later. I didn’t have time with other commitments to learn how to make the table sortable in JavaScript. I may also add pictures of the skeins to the table later, so I can see what the yarn looks like before I go digging through my stash. I may replace the color data with pictures for this reason.

As an aside, I mentioned this project to my friends. Several of them also knit or crochet and thought it was a great idea to make a yarn stash into a database. One said she was going to try it herself, so I’ll ask her to see what tagging system she used. This was a fun project to work on, and now I have a usable database I can add to and subtract from as I buy yarn and finish projects.