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WELCOME TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE CRAFTSMARTS E-ZINE FOR Y2K, OR -- OOPS! -- WHERE DID THE TIME GO? SORRY TO HAVE LEFT THIS UNTIL END OF THE FIRST QUARTER....

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1. THE IMPACT OF CRAFTS ON THE NATIONAL ECONOMY  
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Beginning right now the Craft Organization Directors Association (CODA) is fielding the first ever rigorous economic impact survey of the arts and crafts community. With a whooping budget of \$150,000 funded by major corporations and the crafts industry itself, this survey is designed to quantify this elusive animal that we're all part of. You'll see these survey forms show up in your mailbox, as pull-outs in The Craft Report, and elsewhere. Even if you live on the top of a mountain in the Rockies or in a "holler" in West Virginia, you can't escape -- you'll probably get a phone call from a surveyor. You can even download the survey form as a worksheet from my website -- just click on the Weekly Tip menu bar. FILL OUT AND RETURN THIS FORM! To complete the survey online, go to [www.cbr.appstate.edu](http://www.cbr.appstate.edu).

What's in it for you? For starters: knowledge, and we all know that knowledge is power. When the survey results are published in early 2001, take your copy down to the bank to help support a loan or obtain credit card services, or use it to qualify for a home mortgage -- that isn't mud you are slinging any more, you are now a card carrying member of a legitimate component of the national economy. CODA wants to use the results to obtain an official SIC code, a precursor to all kinds of government help. Government help, you say? For starters, there are subsidized export distribution programs available for industry groups with SIC codes. And I firmly believe that even its most vociferous proponents will be astounded by this industry's robustness. Crafts are not just the two or three billion a year business that has been bandied about for years -- that's chump change compared to the real economic impact of what we do. CRAFTS RULE in the new economy marketplace.

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2. WINTER SHOWS WRAP  
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We're still waiting for the figures, but it's safe to say that exhibitors in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore had some of their best winter shows in years. America feels good about itself right now, and the trinkets we produce are a way of rewarding itself for a job well done. Just look at the stock market today: Greenspan announces another interest rate hike, but instead of dropping, the market takes off to yet another high. The Roaring '90's just gave way to the Opulent Oughts! Here's a little factoid for you: the average family in this country now has as much money invested in stocks, bonds and mutual funds (primarily through employer funded retirement plans) as it does in real estate (the family home)! Let's hope that Average Consumer continues to feel good about him/herself for the foreseeable future.

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3. SOME THOUGHTS ON HAVING YOUR OWN WEB SITE  
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Don't have a web site? Afraid to "compete" with your gallery accounts? Feel that getting and sending email is about as far as you want to take your ride on the Information Highway? You're not alone, but you may be missing the boat here. More than a million web site names are registered per month right now. This rush to stake a claim in cyberspace is akin to the Oklahoma land rush of the past century. When all the smoke clears, will you have a viable presence on the Internet? Will you have a presence in the virtual marketplaces (both retail and wholesale) of the 21st Century? Guild.com and Wholesalecrafts.com are but prototypical harbingers of the future. You will be able to go to market without leaving your studio. You will be making money in your sleep. Customers and prospects will download your catalog and price sheet, saving you literature costs and endless trips to the post office.

While the storefront retailer will never entirely disappear in this touchy feely industry, just as they didn't with the advent of catalogs in the late 20th Century, still you will be doing more direct to consumer business than ever before. And that isn't bad for your bottom line. Any time a manufacturer can generate a four time markup on his/her craft widgets is a time to smile.

So what's the route to take here? All of you have been approached at shows by folks wanting to (a) set you up with a "booth" on their site or (b) develop a web site of your own for you. The solution is simple: if you are timid about the Internet, hang with the folks who will do most of the work for you in return for a percentage of your sales. If you want to be a mover and shaker in the electronic crafts industry, then obtain your own high level domain name from Network Solutions (\$70 to register your name for two years), buy MicroVision's Web Express (another \$70), which is the easiest and most intuitive web editor I've come across, and find yourself an Internet Service Provider to host your site complete with shopping carts and credit card services (another \$20 to \$50 a month, depending on the services you require).

I'm not talking about the future; I'm referring to the here and now. 1998 was the last year I was active in Santa Fe Stoneworks. We had had a web presence since 1996. I estimate that our 1998 sales attributable to the web site was \$80,000 -- most of it consumer direct.

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4. END OF THE FREE SNAIL MAIL CRAFTSMARTS NEWSLETTER  
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All good things must end. Last year I spent nearly \$4,000 producing and distributing my paper newsletter, and I can't begin to tell you how much time was consumed in sorting by Zip codes, stuffing envelopes etc.. I can't afford to continue to do this. There will be one more this Spring, during which I will ask for contributions and/or subscriptions to continue it. I estimate that 350 paid subscriptions at \$20 each would allow me the funds to produce the newsletter on a quarterly basis. We'll have to see just how valuable a resource it is perceived to be by the crafts makers.

Regardless of what happens to the paper newsletter, I intend to concentrate my efforts on this E-zine. You will be getting it more frequently, and it will contain much more information pertinent to running the business side of your studio than you've seen here before. Issues will be posted on my web site in PDF format for convenient download. Why not? Production costs are zero and distribution costs are zero. This is just another example of how the Internet is changing the way we work and live.

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That's it for Issue No. 1 for this year. If you don't want to receive any more of these, you know how to get hold of me. Surf on over to the web site and take a look around. I added a lot of new content earlier this month, particularly in the Frequently Asked Craft Questions (FACQs) section.