



THE FUTURE OF WOODWORKING

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"We all decide the place of woodworking, cooking, and everything else in the lives of all future generations. It's not like there's a mystical box opened at each future point that tells the generation at that moment how things have developed. We do that. Every generation wants to do something new, get away from here, make more money. I think the future generation is going to appreciate working with their hands in direct proportion to what they saw and learned growing up. We are the ones who determine the future."

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"I think woodworking will bifurcate along two paths. Some will pursue more traditional hand tool work, while the growth of technology will bring CAD/CAM capabilities to the amateur. There will still be a sizable majority in the middle, but I can already see technology causing a split in the way woodworking is pursued."

"At least for hobbyists, the most marked changes will occur according to the path toolmakers blaze with new technologies: better accuracy, more ease of use, and the addition of ever more bells and whistles. While the wood supply may diminish in the future, wood will remain as inviting and challenging to work as ever. Regardless of cultural or technological developments, wood will continue to cast a near-magical spell on those who take time to pursue it."

"I hope woodworking and craft-type skills will see a renaissance as a reaction to the increasing electronic nature of business and personal life. Hopefully, we'll value doing things by hand and by feel, as opposed to by machine. We'll probably see more electronic gadgets on tools: angle displays and laser indicators similar to miter saws and drill presses."

"Woodworking has matured with the introduction of man-made materials and the digitalization of machines. It's rapidly approaching the point where there will be no difference in the output of one company from another. Digitalization will open new opportunities in business. A person will be able to form a company, design new products, manufacture them, and sell them worldwide from their home computer-with no capital investment, no knowledge of business, no inventory, no shop, and no equipment. Companies that own the real estate and hardware will compete for these fabricate on demand micro-jobs, and competition will be global, with profits razor thin. The artistic side will benefit, and handmade unique pieces in natural materials will be perceived as increasingly valuable-the process more valued than the product."

"As Will Rogers said about land, 'they ain't making any more of it.' The scarcity of land spells scarcity of wood. Woodworking will survive a long time on the industrial level, and substitute wood products will become standard. There will be artificial species introduced, very similar to natural ones. Our kids and grandkids will be standing

behind a Powermatic Plastic Extruder Machine squeezing out multiple spindles formed of simulated-real Cherry. I hope they remember to adjust the grain pattern dial for appropriate variation and character."

"In America, the interest in creating things from wood, and the tools used to create them, is cyclic in nature. We are currently near the apex of the cycle and will see interest decline. In Europe, the cycles are of less magnitude, and hopefully, they will continue to keep the craft tradition alive as our interest wanes. The coming century will see wood becoming scarcer. Wood objects will become smaller and more intricate. Our children are already questioning our values and what we've done to the planet. I hope that they will conserve its wild places, then interest in woodworking will follow the supply of raw materials so our great great grandchildren can gaze in awe at a dining table crafted from a single plank of 22nd-Century Walnut." "I see my son and nephews totally immersed in computer gaming. My concern is that they won't have the patience for anything as slow speed as woodworking. I haven't observed this phenomenon in my daughter or niece. Perhaps woodworking needs to be marketed more toward women than men. My daughter is more of a handy person than her husband."

"Having taught woodworking for a number of years, I know men and women learn differently. The more men are willing to help women learn and recognize that women process information differently, the better the future of woodworking for both genders. Another fact of life is that women have less disposable income than guys, so their shops are more modest. You can help by mentoring them, so they will be better educated. Truth is, the more people that find enjoyment in our world, the healthier our world is."

"We returned our 14 year-old grandchild back to his parents, after he had spent 2/2 days turning Christmas presents. He has been sucked into the vortex! He is learning skills that will hopefully provide an income, even if the electronic world doesn't. He is also learning that his projects only have the quality that he puts into them. This is an important lesson that everybody need to learn."

"Customers who buy my custom designed and handmade work are usually not considering big box factory furniture as an alternative. More and more furniture is being made overseas, especially in China. Perhaps if the quality of factory made furniture continues to decline, there might be some strengthening in the handcrafted furniture market. The tools may evolve over time, but the basics of woodcraft should remain timeless."

"Woodworking has already transformed from creating items of necessity to items of semi-art and novelty. In a world being overrun by plastic, we will see substitutes for wood, and there will be a smaller demand for woodworking, save items of art. Technology will creep in, and it will be possible to create some pretty wacky items. The term woodworker will be about as far removed from my great-grandfather, the cabinet maker, as anyone could imagine."

"I have two adult offsprings who grew up in their old man's studio/ shop. Neither expressed any real interest in woodworking until recently, when each happened to go shopping for furniture for their apartments. Both then ambled down to the shop to see how to make serviceable furniture that will last longer than the next move. They came to it out of practical need coupled with a rejection of the quality of increasingly high-tech factory-made items available, but the personal value of working this unique material has taken hold. They are both still tied to their Blackberries and PDAs, but those are left in another room when they walk into the shop. Methods may change, but the basic relationship of the person to the material and the outcome will remain the same."

"My sons only want to know the basics for now. They say when they get old like me, they may want to do more. Each time that I win a show, they get more motivated though, Hang in there. In due time, rewards will come if we do not faint."

"in Thomas Friedman's The World Is Flat, he dedicates a chapter to how to educate for the future. He uses Georgia Tech as an example, as that school is taking into consideration the issue of teamwork. I am very interested in collaborations done by numerous turners. Learning how to play together seems important."

"We have evolved into such a microwave society. There are many woodworking techniques and specialties that are falling by the wayside, just because very few of us seem to have the time to learn them. I believe that future artisans and artists who put out quality work are going to be few and far between. It's going to take concentration, as mentors and instructors, for any of us old timers to convince members of the younger generation to give it a go. If you get a chance at a good student, work them for all they're worth. The reward will be worth working for."

"Our current mindset about schools is that they turn out test takers, with a knowledge tailored to take the series of standard tests required for graduation. It is one thing to fascinate a kid with woodwork- ing/woodturning and another for them to choose it as a future for themselves. The problem will always be that the market is pretty dependent on disposable income and space in the marketplace for your wares. If the economy holds up and disposable income needs a place to go, the next 20 to 30 years may prove to be a goldmine for craftspeople."

"Park your kids in front of the TV and feed them McDonald's, and they will become mindless zombies with weight problems. Spend time with them in the shop, and they'll want to make things later in life. The future will always have people interested in craft and craftsmanship. I think, that much like the Arts & Crafts movement was a rebellion against Victorians, there will be a rebellion against technology. Automation can always make things better and cheaper, but most people will pay for one or the other, not both. Plus, ca change, pluse la meme chose (The more things change, the more they stay the same)." Participate in future surveys at WoodCentral.com Send suggestions for survey topics to webmaster@woodcentral.com Thanks to our Editioal Assistant Barb Siddiqui