

Let's talk about socks



Adam Rollins

No, it's not a typo in the headline. Yes, this is a column about socks. Wait, just hear me out!

You might think to yourself, "A sock is a sock. What's there to talk about?" But that's the point — no one thinks about socks, so we don't realize what a big deal they are.

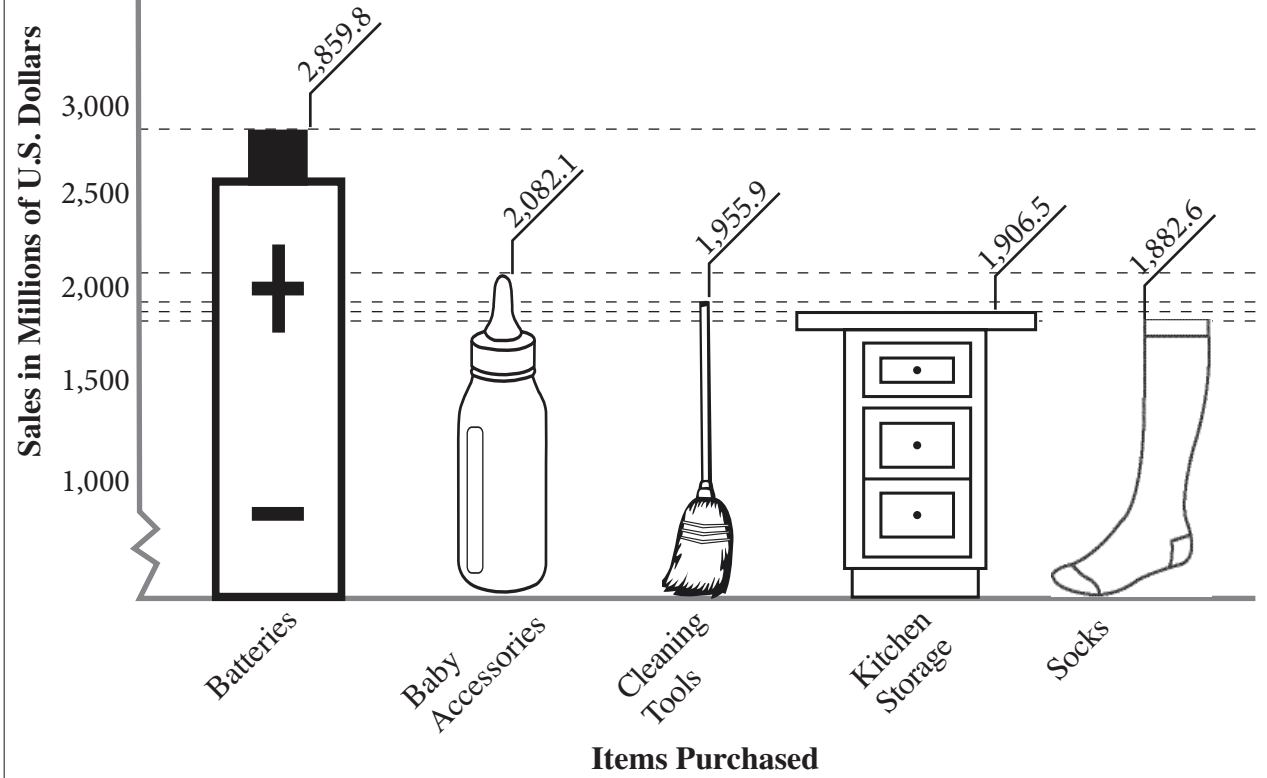
Socks have been around for a long time. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has a pair of bright red Egyptian socks estimated to be over 1,600 years old. A Smithsonian Magazine article about the socks noted their split-toed design, made to be worn with sandals — a fashion choice human society has been struggling with ever since.

These days, socks are a cotton and polyester blended gold mine. According to a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission, Hanesbrands Inc. alone sold \$2.3 billion worth of socks and underwear during 2012.

But they're more than a financial powerhouse — modern socks are a feat of engineering. Companies own trademarks on "sock technology" intended to absorb and evaporate moisture from the feet, balance body temperature and maximize comfort. One Wisconsin sock company, Fox River Mills, Inc, has a website that includes a description of their sock manufacturing process, which involves specially designed machines for knitting, seaming and steam-pressing footwear of all varieties. This equipment wasn't just cobbled together — there are engineers and entire companies dedicated to designing and programming sock machines.

Ignoring their hidden complexity, socks are more noticeable as a fashion statement — and I'm not just talking about people who walk around in flamboyantly striped Dr. Seuss stockings. Some sock aesthetics even have historic roots. Argyle, perhaps the classiest design for socks — or any woven fabric, for that matter — is derived from Scottish clan

Most purchased general merchandise items in the U.S. during 2013



Source: statista.com/statistics/192625/leading-us-general-merchandise-categories-in-2010-and-2011/

markings. According to Merriam-Webster, Scottish clans dating back to the 1500s used unique woven patterns called "tartan" to identify clan membership. The argyle pattern was adapted from the tartan of the Campbell clan, who resided in the western Scottish region of Argyll.

Humans aren't the only animals who wear fashionable socks. Some horses are born with "socks," white-colored hair that covers the lower portion of a dark horse's leg. The term is commonly used to describe similar coloration on household animals, and seems to be a popular basis for naming a pet cat.

Speaking of which, did you know for the duration of his presidency, Bill Clinton owned a cat named Socks? This cat was so well-known that various media outlets — including the Washington Post and New York Times — followed Socks' life from his adoption during 1993 until his death during 2009. Former Republican congressman Dan Burton once questioned the use of White House personnel to answer children's letters addressed to the cat, according to a March 1997 Washington Post article. Socks had a well-documented and bitter feud with Buddy Clinton, the family dog. According to a transcript

from a Jan. 2001 CNN televised segment, President Clinton saying he had better results resolving conflict between Palestinians and Israelis than he ever had with Socks and Buddy.

Other celebrities named after socks include Philadelphia Athletics pitcher Harry "Socks" Seibold, who played with the team from 1916 to 1919. Not to be confused with Ralph "Socks" Seybold, who played outfield for the Athletics from 1901 to 1908 and set the American League home run record during 1902, which went unbroken for 17 years.

Isn't it odd some people and/or cats who become famous can be named after items of clothing we stop thinking about right after we put them on? I hope my discussion of all things sock-related has held your interest, and perhaps sparked your curiosity toward other taken-for-granted items. If so, I'll leave you curious-minded folk with a challenge — write a letter via the TMN website and tell us something interesting about a mundane, everyday object.

Adam Rollins is a senior communication major from St. Charles, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

Do you feel safe while using crosswalks on Truman State's campus?

Yes, I do. The lighting makes me feel safe because I know cars can see me.

Jasmine Henry
Senior



Not really. If you're waiting to cross, half the time [cars] don't even let you.

Emma Weis
Sophomore



Yeah, I feel safe. I always look both ways before I cross the street.

Qui Bui
Sophomore



Yes, except when some jerks don't stop until the last minute.

Tori Spain
Sophomore



The median should not have a fence



Ummekulsoom Arif

Last year, as a part of campus improvement, Truman State decided it would be a good idea to install dividers on Franklin Street between Centennial Hall and the Student Union Building. While the dividers technically have been built to deter jaywalkers and, presumably, to keep big gray trucks from swerving and hitting unsuspecting freshmen, they serve another, grander, purpose — to look nice and infuriate every driver on campus.

Don't get me wrong, the dividers do look nice. Well-maintained grass and sleek black fences connected to brick-and-stone pillars give the campus a very regal appearance, like entering castle grounds. However, having pillars and a fence on the dividers creates more risks than benefits for Truman students.

The median itself is a great thing. Had it existed when I was a fresh-

man, I likely wouldn't have turned into a massive news story just a few months into my college career.

Do you remember getting an e-mail about a girl who was hit by the same car three times during the span of just two hours? That was me.

I first got hit while walking from Barnett Hall to McClain Hall — slapped in the face by a side-view mirror — and again when walking across the visitor parking lot entrance — struck in the shin. During both cases, I saw the truck come barreling toward me and tried to move out of the way, but I never could seem to move fast enough.

The third time, I was crossing between Centennial and the SUB, at a time before the dividers and fences were built. I heard the car coming again, but I was nearly on the other side of the road, and figured I could make it. I guessed wrong. He nearly broke my laptop when he hit my backpack.

If the dividers had existed then, I could have stayed in the middle of it to evade the truck and wait for it to pass. I still would be a news story, but I wouldn't have been struck the third time.

The dividers can help prevent accidents by giving pedestrians a safe area in the middle of the street, but the fences on the dividers are a different story. When you're go-

ing 25 mph past the SUB, trying to get home, those fences all mesh together into a nice black half-wall, and I have yet to meet a pedestrian tall enough to be visible over that blockade. More than once, I've had to slam on my brakes because some pedestrian just randomly appeared from behind a stone pillar.

Sure, jaywalkers can't just walk across the street wherever they please, but erecting a fence that blocks drivers' view of the crosswalk — because trust me, you cannot see the other side of the street until it's too late — only causes greater problems. Inattentive drivers, as horrible as they are, exist. And a pedestrian popping up out of nowhere is a lawsuit walking on two legs.

But don't just think I'm ranting about this for the drivers. Pedestrians aren't helped by this much either. Yes, we can't jaywalk, which keeps us safe, but neither can we clearly see the cars coming toward us. Seeing the car coming toward me was how I was able to escape with minor injuries from my run-in with the truck. Trust me when I say visibility for pedestrians is important.

Crossing from Centennial to the SUB — and vice-versa — is suddenly like playing the worst game of Frogger ever, involving a process of looking both ways on one side,

trying to see a car through the fence that — depending on the angle — still looks like a black wall, running across to the other side while having a small heart attack because a car just screeched to a stop 2 feet away from turning you into a hood ornament, and trying to wave apologetically to the very irritated driver.

And what happens when the weather gets icy? Or when it's raining and visibility already is really low? Sure, with good enough brakes you can screech to a stop and avoid hitting someone, but that's only during good weather. Even the best brakes take longer to stop in the rain or snow, and that could be the difference between a new hood ornament and a relieved sigh.

A good divider with a bad fence is just a bad divider, and that's a fact. I don't know about anyone else, but I prefer not having a near heart attack every time I need to drive on or walk across Franklin Street.

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