“We kick China out of the house on a dark Monday, two days after Christmas, while the children are asleep upstairs. I don’t mean the country, of course, but pieces of plastic, cotton, and metal stamped with the words Made in China.” So begins A YEAR WITHOUT “MADE IN CHINA”: One Family’s True Life Adventure in the Global Economy (Wiley; July 2007; $24.95; Hardcover), a thought-provoking and lively account of what happened when the author’s family began a yearlong boycott of Chinese goods on January 1, 2005, as a way to test their personal connections to China’s vast and booming export economy.

Readers will vicariously experience the small human dramas that resulted when the Bongiornis tried to outrun China’s reach into their lives. For the author, boycotting China meant scrambling to keep her rebellious husband in line, battling her skeptical mother, and disappointing her young son. Shopping trips for mundane items like birthday candles and toys became grinding ordeals. Broken appliances brought mini-crisis. The Bongiornis hunkered down with dogged determination to find creative ways to do without everything from Chinese shoes to Chinese mousetraps. Friends and strangers alike had strong opinions about the boycott, and nobody was shy about telling the author what they thought.

Fast-paced and often funny, this memoir also sheds new light on serious and timely questions about China’s place in a fast-changing global economy and what U.S. corporations may face in the future. Bongiorni encounters retailers wary of their dependence on China, investigates Chinese merchandise on
Wal-Mart’s shelves and meets an American lamp manufacturer who has watched competition from Chinese factories decimate his industry. The author makes surprising discoveries about China’s push into new markets—from wedding dresses to discount candies—and learns first-hand the ways in which China is quickly changing the world for consumers and corporations alike.

The engaging story in this unique business book will hit home with every consumer or business person who has ever worried about American job losses or the nation’s massive trade deficit with China, which hit a record $233 billion last year. At the same time, A YEAR WITHOUT “MADE IN CHINA” challenges the assumptions of those calling for new trade protections and highlights real-life issues surrounding Americans’ dependence on a presumed economic steamroller. As the Bongiorni family navigates the costs and hassles of daily life without Chinese goods, readers will find themselves asking if they, too, could live a year without Chinese imports—and if they would really want to try.

As the narrative unfolds, China’s economy moves off the business pages to become real and personal to the Bongiorni family. With gentle irony, this slice-of-life story upends misconceptions about China’s place in consumers’ lives to show how China is both limiting and expanding their choices. And in a vast and slippery global economy of infinite complexity, A YEAR WITHOUT “MADE IN CHINA” homes in on the complex moral questions American consumers face with each trip to the shopping mall. Equal parts economics and Erma Bombeck, this unconventional adventure in globalization will forever change readers’ views of their own connections to modern China and the global economy.

About the Author
Sara Bongiorni is an award-winning journalist who has worked at daily newspapers and regional business publications in California and Louisiana for the past decade. Her beat has been international trade and its impact on local economies. Bongiorni graduated from the University of California, San Diego, and holds a master’s in journalism from the University of Indiana at Bloomington.

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