

# **ITRA NEWSLETTER**

The International Toy Research Association  
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ITRA NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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### **Editor's Prologue**

This is the fifth ITRA Newsletter since the first one Fall 94, and as far as I can judge from letters from the members, the information is appreciated. But if the secretariat shall be able to keep up with this member information, it is necessary to obtain some financial support.

In ITRA Newsletter, Fall 96, I gave an account of decisions made at the ITRA meeting in Halmstad, June 1996. One decision was to appeal to the ITRA members to help finance the Secretariat by sending 50 dollars to a Bank account in the name of ITRA. First, however, ITRA must be properly registered as an international association which has not yet been done but is a priority. Some positive news is that, as soon as ITRA is registered and presents a program for its activities, Jorge Lafitte of the Bertrand van Leer Foundation has promised 5,000 dollars to help finance ITRA

When I began composing this Newsletter not much material had been sent in to the secretariat, so I guessed everyone had been hibernating through the Winter, or were sitting in their dens planning projects, editing or writing books, or hunting grants. But in the last two months a lot of material has been sent in. Together with Billy Enz and Carol Vukelich, James Christie has published a new book on Literacy, Brian Sutton-Smith has written a review of a book about past-time toys, and Gisela Wegener-Spohring has written chapters for two different books. At NCFL Krister Svensson and staff have been composing the report from the International Toy Research Conference of Halmstad, last June.

Unfortunately, the ITRA LOGO contest, announced in the ITRA Newsletter Fall 96, has not resulted in even one suggestion, so let me repeat: *Please sit down and start creating a Logo that we can use in the Newsletter and other official writings to show our profile.*

## ITRA MEMBER ACTIVITIES

### INDIA

**Sudarshan Khanna**, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India, has had an industrious life since we met in Halmstad in June 1996; August 2-4, 1996, he presented an invited paper entitled *Children as Consumers of Products*, in the National Workshop, jointly organized by the Consumer Education and Research Center in Ahmedabad, India. August -November 1996, Sudarshan was engaged in Product Design and Community Development, a course project carried out in his own class of System Design, and to be published by the National Institute of Design, Paldi, Ahmedabad, India., and in January 1997, he was appointed member of the Advisory Committee of 'a non-government organization for assisting underprivileged children, and uses children's creativity for economic and social development of socially deprived children. January 11-14, 1997, **Sudarshan** presented an invited paper entitled *Seedlings of Creativity and Innovation: Indigenous Toys*, at the International Conference on Creativity and Innovation at Grassroots for Sustainable Natural Resource Management, organized by Indian Institute of Management, in Ahmedabad. For the abstract of Sudarshan's paper, see Member Papers and Articles.

### FRANCE, HOLLAND, AND SWEDEN

October 23, 1996, **Birgitta Almqvist**, University of Halmstad, Sweden, **Gilles Brougere**, Universite Paris-Nord, France, and **Jeffrey Goldstein**, University of Utrecht, Holland, were invited to a panel debate arranged by Toy Manufacturers of Europe (TME), and Association des Jouets de Marque (AJM).

The debate took place in Hotel Georg V in Paris and was based on **Jeffrey Goldstein's** study *The Value of Play and Toys*. The

French child psychiatrist Doctor **Julien Cohan-Solal**, completed the panel and, the President of AJM, **Raymond Lefevre**, and the President of TME, **Graham Benison** gave an introduction to some 80 toy trade representatives, journalists, practitioners, and representatives of the French National Department of Culture.

**Gilles Brougere** began the debate with an account of the purpose of and activities within ITRA and the research activities at the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) where the ITRA Secretariat is hosted, and presented his view on the toy as a bearer of social and cultural values, and also the social value of play related to the toy.

Doctor **Cohen-Solal** gave his professional view on the value of play and toys for child health and development, **Jeffrey Goldstein** presented his review of research indicating positive impact of play and toys on child development, and **Birgitta Almqvist** described social factors influencing children's gender role apprehension as reflected in boys' and girls' toy preferences and play behaviors.

### GERMANY

**Gisela Wegener-Spohring**, has now settled down at the Universitat Wurzburg after her move from Gottingen, and is hoping to return to the subject of play and toys. Meanwhile she has written two book chapters, both on play and aggression. Gisela's book chapters are announced further in this Newsletter.

### GERMANY AND SWEDEN

*Foerdern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug fur Behinderte Kinder*, Berlin, organized the 4th UNESCO Symposium, Workshop and Exhibition Toys for Children's Rehabilitation, in Duren, Germany September 21 - October 6, 1996.

**Krister Svensson**, NCFL, one of about 40 participants from five countries at the 2-day Symposium, gave a presentation of the center and its current and future work, and **Bjorn Sterner**, Media teacher at the University of Halmstad and colleague at NCFL, was one of 20 participants in the 12-day Workshop, a creativity seminar following on the two-day Symposium.

**Siegfried Zoels** Project Leader at *Foedern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug für Behinderte Kinder* reports from the Symposium:

At the opening day of the Fourth UNESCO Symposium speakers from five countries discussed aspects of rehabilitation, integration and therapy of people with special needs, and several designers presented innovative examples of design-solutions in this field. This compound of participants gave an interesting three-dimensional picture of theoretical aspects, possibilities of design applications, and experiences of practical work in the 'normal' everyday life of children and adults with special needs. After the Symposium, a group of 20 designers, psychologists, therapists, and teachers from 14 countries participated in a 12-day creativity seminar. As the participants lived and worked together at rehabilitation centers, the disabled children were partners in the process of developing new toys and the first to test them.

The resulting prototypes will be duplicated and tested by children and their teachers in several rehabilitation and integration centers. These tests will be accompanied and analyzed by highly qualified staff members of the institute. Afterwards, the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of the book *Toy Workshop: Toys You Can Make Yourself For Handicapped and Nonhandicapped Children*, will be published containing explanatory drawings, photos and descriptions of the toys.

Summary of a personal perspective of the UNESCO Workshop given by **Bjorn Sterner** in NCFL Newsletter *Gyroskopet*: We started the Workshop by visiting

different types of institutions where we learned about the work with and the needs of the handicapped children. Each evening we gathered to discuss the day's experiences and exchange ideas for new toys and games for handicapped, and devoted the remaining time to outline, construct and manufacture prototypes of toys that could be of help in the habituation of handicapped children.

The workshop was concluded by a well attended exposition arranged in the Townhall. This Workshop was very informative and offered many meaningful future contacts for myself personally as well as for NCFL where we consider toys for handicapped children a matter of great importance. If you would like to have more information about my participating in The Fourth UNESCO symposium, please Fax +46 35 157387, or E-mail: bjorn.sterner@isb.hh.se.

October 14-20, **Krister Svensson** participated in a week-long seminar in Beijing, China, on Children's Play and Early Childhood Education. See Krister's report under "NCFL NEWS".

October, 1996, **Lars-Erik Berg**, participated in a conference on the theme *The Sociology of Play and Toys*, arranged by Museum Director Dr. **Jozef Kriston**, and Museum Superintendent **Maria Vaczi**, at the Toy Museum Szorakatenusz in Kecskemet, Hungary. From a perspective of social psychology, Lars-Erik presented a paper on *The Good Toy*, speculating on the qualitative aspects that a toy should have to be used in a creative way.

The main purpose of the conference was to become acquainted with international research on the social functions of play and toys, and to obtain contacts with researchers from other countries. The majority of the 40 participants were Hungarian and only a few came from other countries.

Among other people who attended the conference some were educationalists and some were toy trade representatives. Accordingly, the 21 sessions given at the conference focused on questions concerning sociology, social sociology and culture analysis related to play, games and toys.

**Lars-Erik** explains: *The old traditional toys are still highly valued in Hungary. But in toy shops where the shelves are filled with LEGO and many American toys I could also see that the "new time" is beginning a steady march into Hungary.*

## USA

**Anthony Pellegrini** and **Steven Kline** are in the process of two studies, one where they are looking at pro- and anti-social behaviour in kids playing with different sorts of video-games (i.e. gender  $\chi$  social behavior), and one administering Steven's measures of aggressive and non-aggressive behavior in adolescents.

**Gary Cross**, Pennsylvania State University, writes that he has just put his toy history 'to bed', and that it is now in the hands of Harvard University Press where it will be published in September or October 1997 as *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*. This is the same book that was announced in the ITRA Newsletter, Fall 1995, at that time with the 'working title' Toys in Making the American Childhood. June 1, Gary Cross was invited to participate in a conference in Esbjerg, Denmark, on the theme *Children's Culture*.

**Greta Pennell**, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, has finished her doctoral thesis and is now the most recent Ph.D. in ITRA. On behalf of the ITRA group I want to express our warmest congratulations. Her doctoral thesis is presented on page 7.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

**Christie, J., Enz, B., & Vukelich, C.** *Teaching Language and Literacy. Preschool Through the Elementary Grades*. NY: Longman, 1997. ISBN: 0-673-98553-9. (451 pp.)

The book encompasses teaching of language arts from pre-school through the upper elementary grades. Three themes running throughout the five parts divided into 12 chapters of the book are: A constructionist perspective on learning, Respect for diversity, and Instruction-based assessment.

Contents (Parts and Chapter titles)

Part 1. Introduction, with Chapter 1: Views of Learning, Language, and Literacy.

Part 2. The Beginnings of Oral and Written Language, with Chapter 2: Oral Language Development, and Chapter 3: Emergent Literacy

Part 3. Promoting the Language arts: The early years, with Chapter. 4: Facilitating Oral Language Learning, and Chapter 5: Encouraging Emergent Literacy Development.

Part 4. Promoting the Language Arts in the Elementary Grades, with Chapter 6: Best Practice in Reading Instruction, Chapter 7: Embedded Within Reading Workshop: teaching Meaning and Skills, and Chapter 8: Teaching Writing the Workshop Way; Chapter 9: Embedded Within Writing Workshop: Teaching Skills and Meeting Special Needs; and Chapter 10: Using Literacy to Learn: Integrating the Curriculum.

Part 5. Special Topics, with Chapter 11: Portfolio Assessment: Determining What Children Know and Can Do; and Chapter 12: Parents as Partners in Language Education.

**Munch. J. (1997).** *Hugo Kugelhaus und das Spielzeug Allbedeut.* Soest: Hugo Kugelhaus Gesellschaft e.V.Abb., 2 farb. Tafeln. (ISBN 3-9805003-0-6). The following is a summary of the narration of the book that the author himself wrote for ITRA Newsletter.

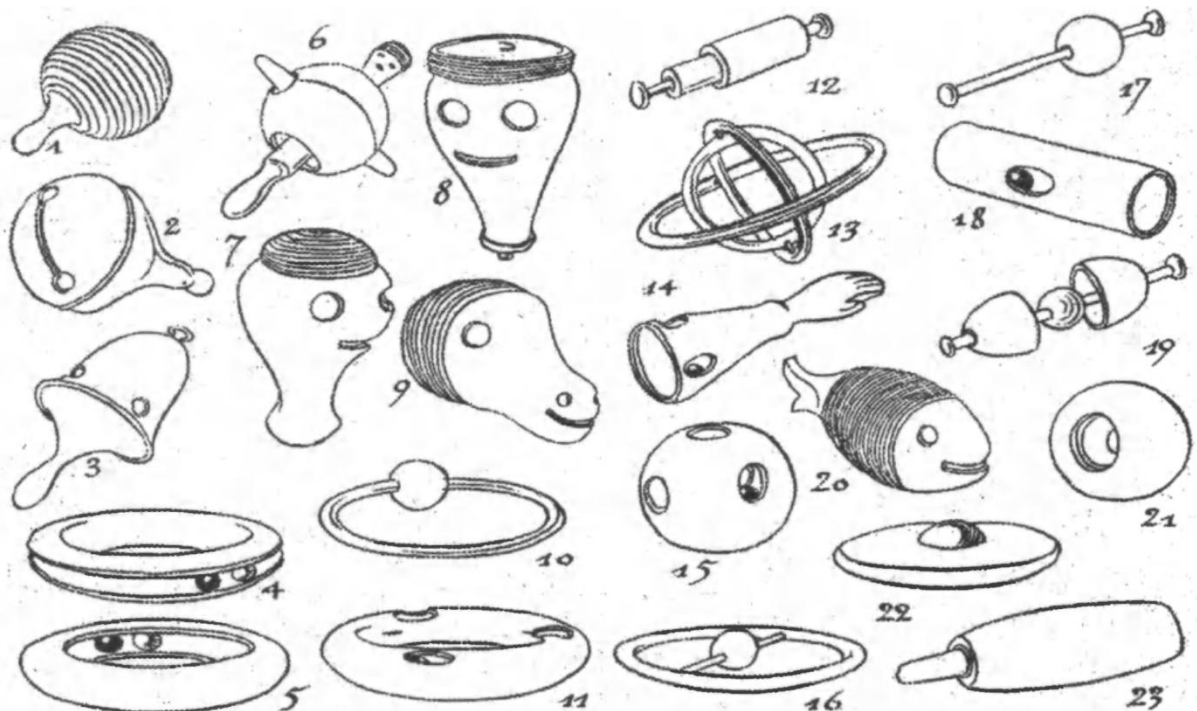
With the aim of giving a contribution to the architect, artist and philosopher Hugo Kugelhaus (1900-1984), whose "Spielzeug Allbedeut" (Meaning of playthings) was designed in 1939, Munch describes Kugelhaus as the bearer of the cultural change of such toys, and explains the Kugelhaus toys against the background of pedagogical, developmental, and psychological questions, designs, economical problems, and the consequences of the CE-standards for toys.

The first of the two main questions that the author discusses is what the motive was for an architect to develop toys for grasping. The answer is that Kugelhaus was occupied with the exterior conditions for human beings which must be complied with the requirements needed to develop with all their possibilities and talents. Kugelhaus analyzed the pedagogy of Froebel and his

education of children in the play with the elementary solids of the "system of developing/educational play-things", suggested by Froebel-researcher Erika Hoffmann and by observation of his own children's play. In addition, he occupied himself intently with the Psychology of Early Childhood, by William Stern, and started with seven models (NO 1, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, and 22) illustrated below:

The second question that Munch discusses in his book is what importance the Kugelhaus-toys had - and still have - for the domain of playthings for babies. The answer the author suggests is that *The Allbedeut-Greiflinge* were the first playthings of this type on the market. Up to the point of time of their development, there were just clappers and rattles, well known for babies by all folks, and sounding playthings for calming children. Because of the demands of the technical world to make use of psychology and pedagogy in manufacturing toys, the development of such toys as those designed by Kugelhaus was "in the air".

In December 1939, he got a registered Patent for his toys. Kugelhaus wanted to express, by the choice on forms and the use of



possibilities of motions, that above all the most important sensory impression of babies originated from the sense of touch and that there is in the course of development a close connection between the sensibility of the fingers and the functions of the brain.

But, like all toys produced by craftsmen, the Greiflinge have great problems to survive on the market, because the cost is too high. Another aggravation is the CE standard for toys, obligatory for the European market, and with consequences for the possibilities of experiences and designs. Due to the demands on the materials, especially toys made from natural grown materials are prejudiced against those made of synthetic materials.

The history of the "Allbedeut-Greiflinge" is a good example for the field of tension in which toys are moving between pedagogical demands, the demand of good design, and the economical frame. There is a conflict between play-value, execution and profitable production since toys are produced in bulk.

If you wish to read the article in full, in English or German, please contact Jurgen Munch. Fax (+49) 521 21336

**Cleo Gougoulis** sent a presentation of *Dolls and toys 1996. A collection of texts by Plutarch, Kleist, Rilke, Eco, Baudelaire, Chesterton, and Benjamin*. Athens. Agra (in Greek) 121 pp.

Due to time and space, this presentation is not included in the present Newsletter but will appear in full in ITRA Newsletter, Fall 1997. If you want to read her presentation before that, please contact Cleo on Fax number: +30 1 883 40 20, or order a copy from the ITRA Secretariat.

## BOOK CHAPTERS

1) **Wegener-Spöhring, G.** Spiel und Aggressivität. Ihr Wechselverhältnis in den

Theorien des Spiels und in einem Beispiel. [Play and Aggression. Their Relationship in the Theories of Play, and an Example], In: **Fritz, J.** (Hrsg.) *Computerspiele – Medienalltag von Kindern und Jugendlichen*. Computer games in the Everyday Life of Children and Youths],

2) **Wegener-Spöhring, G.** (1997). Gespielte Aggressionen. [Playful Aggression] In: **S. Hoppe-Graff & ROerter** (Hrsg) *Spielen und Fernsehen in der Erfahrungswelt von Kinder*. [Television in the Experiences of Children.] Weinheim/München, 1997.

## Doctoral Dissertation

**Pennell, G.** (1997). *Doing Gender with Santa: Gender-typing in Children's Toy Preferences*. Rutgers, State University of New Jersey.

## Table of Contents (chapters only)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Gender-typing and Toy preferences

Chapter 3: Laboratory and Naturalistic Studies of Toy Preference

Chapter 4: A Comparative Study of Adults' and Children's Toy Gender-Typing

Chapter 5: Children's Letters to Santa Claus

Chapter 6: Visiting Santa at the Mall

Chapter 7: Wrapping Up

The dissertation is not yet formally published. If you want to order a future copy, contact the author for information. E-mail: pennell@everest.rutgers.edu

## Abstract

The world of children's toys can be readily subdivided into toys for girls and toys for boys. This investigation is comprised of three studies examining this phenomenon and its relationship to children's toy preferences. The first study established nomothetic indices reflecting the gender-typed character of more than 100 different toys. 34 college-age adults, 48 kindergarten

and 62 first grade children selected the toys they felt girls would like to play with and those they felt boys would like to play with. Comparisons across the three age-groups of respondents revealed considerable agreement about who (boys, girls, or both) liked to play with what. However, while adults only sorted the toys on the basis of gender, children used other criteria as well (e.g., age-appropriateness, fun). Using the indices from Study 1, children's gendertyped toy preferences were assessed in two naturalistic contexts, letters to Santa Claus (Study 2), and face-to-face interaction with Santa (Study 3). 296 letters obtained from two post offices were analyzed. Data for the third study was collected at three shopping malls.

The author, under the guise of "Chief Elf," recorded the age, sex and toys requested for 359 males and 417 females. Toys suggested by Santa were also noted. Results of both studies revealed a strong pattern of gender-typing in children's toy requests -- especially for boys. Boys asked for male-typed or neutral toys almost exclusively. Their gender-typed preferences were strong across all ages, whereas a curvilinear pattern, peaking at age 5, was found for girls. Although girls' requests were also gender-typed, girls were more likely to include boy toys on their list. Girls' requests were more strongly gender-typed when made in person than when expressed in a letter. No differences were found in the gender neutrality of boys' and girls' requests.

In terms of adults' influence on children's expressed toy preferences, letters written by adults for girls were more gender-typed than were letters written by girls themselves. Conversely, letters written for boys were less gender-typed than letters written by boys. Santa's toy suggestions to boys and girls were found to be equally, highly gender-typed.

## PAPERS AND ARTICLES

**Sudarshan Khanna**, India: *Indigenous Toys: Learning more from less*. In Annual Journal of Indian Council of Child Welfare, June 1996.

### **Abstract:**

Every society has a great deal of knowledge and insights. These are shared with children effectively through tales and toys. While all types of toys and toy makers are useful, the indigenous ones have a special significance. These are excellent examples of community based creativity and innovations. Most of us know that no-cost or low cost ingenious toys made by children or artisans provide a lot of fun. Some of us may also think that such toys and toy makers would provide children with some good introduction to science, technology and design. But do we agree that our indigenous toys and toy makers can be a good resource for imbibing some significant socio-culture concepts of our time?

I will show some examples of our popular toys created by children or artisans, and explain how these can be used as an excellent resource for teaching concepts related to science, technology and design and culture. Some of the socio-cultural concepts/ideas that can be communicated include:

- a) Old and new: 'The traditional & modern can co-exist;
- b) Interdependence is fun and a virtue;
- c) Failure and difficulties in our work may lead to deeper understandings;
- d) "Making the most of the least" is fun and educative; and
- e) Learning from each other is deeply purposeful. Innovations and creativity have wider meaning if others are involved.

How can such concepts be linked with creating, making and playing with tiny toys and "ordinary" toy makers? This area of work provides ample opportunity and scope for creativity and innovations and to work together in the cross-cultural context.



### Booklets

Two booklets sent from India to the ITRA Secretariat are: *Little Science*, and *The Toy Bag*, both written by **Arvind Gupta**, with layout and illustrations by **Avinash Deshpande**, and published by Eklavya, 1995.

*What is discovery? - Not answering the questions, but question the answers.* (Quotation from "Little Science"). *The best thing a child can do with a toy is to break it* (Quotation from Toy Bag). Truly somewhat provoking to parents, but probably suggested with a good purpose as the idea is that the child is supposed to put it together again.

**Greta Pennell** sent me a charming article entitled *What I learned from Spying on Santa*. "As an undercover elf, I saw a different side of kids *and* their parents" s story she had told Ellen Seidman who wrote it down. Did you know that the approximate number of Santas employed by malls in the nation amounts to 7,460? Not surprising, the number one request from girls is Barbie, while boys have Video games as number one. Greta confesses that: "My friends think I'm nuttier than a fruitcake because I love malls during the Christmas season - the glittering store displays, the sound of holiday music, and, especially, the sight of kids visiting Santa".

What she found most intriguing, however, was the parents' engagement in the Santa phenomenon. Once kids had taken their turns, plenty of parents seized the opportunity to put in requests for diamond rings, raises, Porsches, or paying off credit card bills. Giggling teenager girls got their kicks asking for new boyfriends. One shoppingworn mom wanted an all-expense-paid trip to Florida, "with no husband and no kids".

**Cleo Gougoulis** sent a newspaper clipping with a picture of a smart and youngish-looking Santa Claus posing on his carriage

from which he seems to be waving to an imaginary gathering of people awaiting his visit. Cleo translated the article and wrote a brief in English so that the amazing story of the patented Santa of Italy could be told herer.

A clever Neapolitan managed to obtain a patent for Babbo Natle (the Italian Father Christmas), a fact which created some trouble for the Italian Post Office. When they decided to launch stamps portraying Santa Claus, they were forced to ask for royalties from Narcisso. Since Armando Narcisso was nominated the official Italian Santa Claus, he has been invited to talkshows as Babbo Natale and has received over a million letters from Italian children. This is how Narcisso describes Bobbo Natales's identity to protect his logo: Man wearing white beard and mustache, dressed in red with white lining, red cap with tassel and black shoes.

Believe it or not Narcisso, but in Scandinavia, where it is normally cold when Santa he arrives, he wears a thick fur-coat, and heavy boots. Perhaps the Narcisso Santa is a southern cousin of the real Santa who, by tradition, lives high up north?

### BOOK REVIEW

**McClary, A.** *Toys With Nine Lives. A Social History of American Joys.* Linnet Book, 1997. ISBN: 0-208-02386-0 (alk. paper).

Contents:

Part I: Toy Landscapes

- 1 Dorothy's World: Toys 100 Years Ago
- 2 Machine-made Toys
- 3 Indoor Toys and Changing Play
- 4 Model Kits: Modern Homemades
- 5 Tournament Toys and Organized Play
- 6 Fad Toys, Marketing, and Invention
- 7 Toys That Relive the Past

Part II: Eight Toy Family Histories.

- 8 Tops
- 9 Marbles
- 10 Propeller Toys

- 11 Noisemakers I
- 12 Noisemakers II
- 13 Hoops
- 14 Dolls
- 15 Shooters
- 16 Blocks

### **Review by Brian Sutton-Smith:**

This is an outstanding popular history of toys. Its value lies in its fascinating descriptions and illustrations, and in its fair minded accounts of the inventors and controversies that surrounds the toys, as well as the remarkable historical changes that have occurred to them over the past 200 years.

The book is in two sections of which the first is largely historical. It uses Dorothy's World (Prentice Hall, 1977) covering the years 1902-1910, as an anchor illustration for an older era of home made toys. Dorothy Howard was an originator in the field of children's folklore scholarship in America. The time line takes us from the traditional and homemade toys, to craft toys, to the novelties of machine made toys, indoor toys, model kits, urban street games, television consumer toys, collections of nostalgic toys, and the beginning of the world of the computer as a toy. We are reminded that the rural world of yesterday was largely a world of work and chores, of small uncomfortable homes, and of considerable isolation.

Dorothy had about 15 home made toys. Contemporary children have about 100 commercial toys. Machine toys first changed childhood away from the traditional and the home-made, into a marketing inspired concern with novelty and the status of ownership. Their place in turn was taken by the plastic toys of the 1940s when there was a war time shortage of metals.

But the biggest change in the century, for the middle classes, was the move indoors to larger and air conditioned homes, bathrooms, playrooms, electricity and

ultimately computers. Toys came indoors and psychological theories about the importance of learning in the earliest years, as well as increasing consumer incentives, led parents to provide ever increasing legions of these new kinds of toys.

Perhaps the biggest ever indoor success until the video game, were the scale models of air-crafts, cars and boats which occupied 50% of all boys during the 1930s. Then there were the blocks, Lincoln, Erector, Meccano, and finally Lego, that have paralleled their importance, ever since.

The newer immigrants and less fortunate children, however, were still there outdoors, but on the streets, not in the romanticized countryside. Their vigorous and improvised street games and associated delinquencies created cultural level anxieties and a changing sense of what was dangerous for children, causing Scout leaders, the Playground Movement, and Organized Sport and Tournament enthusiasts to propose multiple counter measures.

Play which was a neglected area of children's minimal spare time in the 1800's was increasingly brought under adult control in the nineteenth century, whether through the toys that were offered or the sports that were organized. Since the 1970's the market place has evolved a child consumer culture which now dominates adult thinking about child play life as well as some of the behavior of most children.

Throughout these changes, however, there have always been popularist voices bemoaning the loss of the home made and the outdoors, the dire effects of metal and plastic, the bodily deterioration caused by so much indoor play, the loss of creativity with consumer toys, and more recently, the politically incorrect affects of violent, racist, and sexist toys. None of these match the medical misanthropes of the last century who believed that too much bicycle riding would cause the strained face or the child

riders to become their permanent facial features; and that the practice of playing with string puppet dolls would cause the fetuses of pregnant mothers to develop similar uncontrollable sloppy limbs.

What is amazing about all this is how rocky this historical road of toys as play has been. Toys have been very much of a novel cultural territory and children themselves, depending on their location and their circumstances, still live to some extent within many of these attitudes and play-worlds that have claimed them these past 200 years. Possibly we will some day be able to assess the socialization effects of these mixed and irruptive media with which we have so variously assailed the multitudes of passing children.

The second part of the book is about toys that have seven lives. Those discussed are tops, marbles, propeller toys, noisemakers, hoops, dolls, shooters and blocks. Obviously the final three have lasted better than the first five, but in any case they all have brilliant lives and its worth reading about them. I found particular interest in the toys which were originally connected with religious or festival behavior, as were bullracers, rattletraps, rattles, dolls and kites. Uncontrollable noises apparently had an importance in earlier times which they can hardly have today in urban worlds which are constantly noisy. Though thinking of Heavy Metal concerts makes one think that perhaps the change is only relative.

An equally impressive fact for me is the millions of modern adults who treasure or collect toys as a personal and sometimes valuable hobby. Given the speed of change, and the cultural attitude to toys as a relatively childish occupation, we are inclined to wonder what is going on here.

Given the rate of cultural change, why would adults wish to hang onto these memories of their relatively ephemeral childhood play with toys? Are these indeed

the toys they played with or the toys they wished they could have? Or are we dealing rather with some useful static that childhood memories have in a modern society of considerable flux? Are these memories like Wordsworth's theory of poetry, important because they represent the enduring genesis of the imagination in the minds of the players. He believed that his capacity to be a creative adult derived from his early memories and fantasies of childhood. So the creativity of modern adults begins with a sacred litter of toys? It's an awesome thought.

In conclusion, there are hundreds and hundreds of books about toys but most are simply toy descriptions without any historical context. The present author has worked hard on the lives and circumstances of the inventors to give us an account that brings this arcane subject more fully into scholarly discourse. He worries, however, that the future of child fantasy might be so extended by the simulated play of today and tomorrow's virtual toys that the children might be ill prepared for the real world. Perhaps he has Dorothy's real world in mind. The virtual world of the Internet and almost every other modern occupation are clearly making today's "real" world increasingly synonymous with tomorrow's virtual world. The loss will be for children who are still on the street, not for those heavily invested in video games, computer play and Internet.

For questions or comments, please contact Brian, either at his address: Brian Sutton-Smith, Professor Emeritus, University of Pennsylvania, 4074 Via Mirada, Sarasota, 34238, USA, or via E-mail: [SUTSMITH37@AOL.COM](mailto:SUTSMITH37@AOL.COM)

## **TOYS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The registered Association and Institute *Foerdern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug für behinderte Kinder e.V.* founded in March 1991, combines aspects on toy design and rehabilitation in order to meet the special needs of children with handicaps. The main object of the Institute is to support young handicapped children and to integrate them into community.

The work of the association focuses on the following main points:

### **UNESCO Workshops**

In cooperation with UNESCO, the institute regularly initiates international creativity workshops for designers, therapists, teachers etc., the result of which are completely new playthings.

### **Creativity Seminars**

The employees at the institute have ten years of experience organizing and holding creativity seminars. We would like to share some of this experience and knowledge on an international and interdisciplinary basis. Similar seminars and workshops in other parts of the world are being prepared. This exchange of experience will help us to further develop the integration of people with special needs in a practical way. We welcome any kind of cooperation, advice and support in this field of work.

### **Evaluation of Toys and Play materials**

Many new prototypes have been developed and tested in our creativity seminars. Presently we are interested in gaining more experience in toy testing to qualify the test results on a broader basis. Therefore, we are interested to get in touch with people who have experience of toy testing. At the moment, the institute are forwarding the reintroduction of the (former East German) seal of approval "Therapeutically Valuable",

based on a catalogue of criteria. The integration of handicapped people requires recognition and self-realisation. The institutions where people in need of special support have a specific task to fulfill. In times of low funding and reduced subsidies, it is essential to support these sheltered workshops and other comparable institutions to build up a stable range of products. The complexity of this task requires specialists. Having established a wealth of long term and in-depth experience in the field of design and rehabilitation, the institute can offer consultations, advice and assistance for institutions and workshop where people with handicaps are working.

### **Lectures and practical workshops for teachers and parents**

Playing and learning are closely connected with the development of a child's sensory perception. In everyday life, fundamental sensory experiences are more and more pushed into the background. However, our institute offers workshops for children, parents, teachers, students etc., in which the senses are deliberately stimulated and trained.

Furthermore, we organize workshops in which we together with the participants create toys that stimulate several senses. We are in the position to enrich teacher training course syllabuses.

During 1997 we will organize workshops and lectures in Germany, Hungary, Italy and China. A student of India will do a period of practical training to analyze and adapt the innovative toys made at the creativity workshops to the special conditions of India. Please inform us if you know of someone who might be interested in any of these incentives. We appreciate all kinds of assistance.

Siegfried Zoels

Address: Foerdern durch Spielmittel,  
Spielzeug für Behinderte Kinder,  
Immanuelkirchenstrasse 24, 10405 Berlin,  
Germany.

## NCFL NEWS

For brief information about what is going on at The Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media please see the NCFL Homepage on Internet:

[http://www.hh.se/dep/ncfl/index\\_eng.html](http://www.hh.se/dep/ncfl/index_eng.html)

### Conference Report

The report from the International Toy Research Conference June 1996, at the University of Halmstad will be available as soon as it is published by the SUNY press. If you wish to order it beforehand, please contact NCFL Secretary **Eva Petersson**, E-mail address: [secr@ncfl.hh.se](mailto:secr@ncfl.hh.se)

### Ongoing Projects at NCFL

*The World of Play - A Film Project*, is a production of nine short video films illustrating children's play, play materials, and play environment. For further information, please contact Project leader **Bjorn Sterner**, Media specialist, at NCFL. Fax : +46 35 157387, E-mail: [bjorn.sterner@isb.hh.se](mailto:bjorn.sterner@isb.hh.se)

*Toddlers' Play Materials in Daycare Centers*. The project is to be terminated in September 1997, but there are plans to involve other counties and make it a crossnational project. If you are interested to collaborate - and know where to find financial support - please contact project leader **Inger Hellstrom**, NCFL. Fax: (+46) 35 157387, or E-mail: [Inger.Hellstrom@ncfl.hh.se](mailto:Inger.Hellstrom@ncfl.hh.se)

*BRIO-MEK - a multidimensional device in teaching and learning of mathematical and scientific conceptions*, aims at using play and toys in the compulsory school, and is carried out in cooperation between NCFL and BRIO TOY. For further information, please contact project leader **Lars-Peder Alingfeldt**, Fax: +46 35 157387, or E-mail: [lars\\_peder.alingfeldt@isb.hh.se](mailto:lars_peder.alingfeldt@isb.hh.se)

## A NEW NETWORK FOR TOY RESEARCH

During the Fall 1996, European Network of Research Organizations for the Toy Sector, has been initiated by Instituto Tecnológico del Juguete (AIJU) in the south of Spain. Members, so far, are NCFL, University of Halmstad, Sweden, and testing institutes in France, Portugal, England, Denmark, and Finland. The first meeting, in which NCFL Secretary, **Eva Petersson**, and **Anders Nelson** participated, was held at the end of October 1996, when rules were decided, and working groups established. The latter are to produce applications for grants to carry out research, and developmental projects. It was decided that the working groups should start up the activity within the following areas:

- 1) Standardization,
- 2) Quality mark,
- 3) Definition of the criteria for companies,
- 4) Establishment of a Data Bank on toys.

The Swedish work-group was given the task to initiate projects within the area. *Definition of the quality requirements for toys*.

For more information and/or for suggesting projects, welcome to contact Eva Petersson or Anders Nelson, either on Fax +46 35 15 73 87, or E-mail: [sekr@ncfl.hh.se](mailto:sekr@ncfl.hh.se)

### NCFL Develops Contact With China

October 14, NCFL Director **Krister Svensson**, arrived in Beijing to participate in a week-long seminar on *Children's Play and Early Childhood Education*. Krister reports:

After a long journey by air from Sweden, I arrived in Beijing, the capital of China, early in the morning of October 14, to meet with lecturers from China, Japan, and USA to participate in a week-long seminar with the

theme *Children's Play, and Early Childhood Education*. Participants from China, Japan, USA, and Sweden, presented papers about play, toys, and early childhood education.

Professor **Shigeru Mori**, Japan, gave a speech entitled *The Theory and Practice in the area of Early Childhood of Japan*, and professor **Tetsujun Tamaki**, also of Japan, gave one session on *The Development of Pretend Play from Birth to the age of Six Years*, and one entitled *The Four Spirits of Play*. Two sessions specifically focusing on the role of play in preschool education were *Play and Early Childhood Education: Theory and Practice in China*, by Professor **Liu Yan**, China, and *Protecting Children's Rights and Teaching Methods*, by professor **Emiko Hannah Isigaki**, Japan. American Museum Lecturer **Nancy Jones**, gave a speech about *Educational Environments that Foster Learning Through Play*, whereas my paper *The Potentials of Toys as a Multidisciplinary Field of Research*, offered a 'toy perspective' on education and play.

All during the seminar week play was given a prominent place in the development of preschool education. The audience were preschool teachers and preschool authorities from all over China, as well as representatives from the Chinese National Educational Department, and the Beijing Normal University. Discussions of Chinese preschool education standards resulted in an agreement that future preschool policy should concern the individual child, and that play was a fruitful way to reach the goal of such a policy. It was also emphasized that the preschool teachers should "take a step back" from organized activities towards giving the children free play opportunities in good play environments.

### **Preschool Practice in Beijing - An Example**

A visit was paid to Nursery NO. 5 in the center of Beijing, to study preschool education in practice. Of the 400 children registered in the center, 200 stay and live in the nursery 24 hours a day the week long, sleeping together at night in large bedrooms, one for each nursery section. In groups of three or four, the children are given access to activity stations for construction play, drama and music, games etc., while the adults moved from group to group to give the children the help and guidance they needed.

### **Five-year-old entertainers**

A group of 45 five-year-old children entertaining the seminar participants with song and music gave an impression of discipline combined with true joy and spontaneity. However, the "free play" we were talking about at the seminar could not be found in this preschool center, but the leaders of Nursery NO. 5 did ensure us that the children's spontaneous play was to be given more space along with the methodological education of the staff.

### **Posterior of the Beijing Seminar**

For the Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) at the University of Halmstad, Sweden, the Beijing seminar offered a future opportunity to organize exchange programs for students and researchers, and to develop cooperative applicants for research grants. Of particular interest for future cooperation is the apprehension of play and its function. It will, therefore, be of great value to be able to follow, and to take part in the development of play theory and childhood education, two interrelated issues that researchers in China as well as Japan are continually working on.

*Krister Svensson*

## CONFERENCES

### - past and forthcoming

The first two conferences below have already taken place when this Newsletter reaches you, but are announced to give an overview of conference themes around the world.

#### **June 5-6, 1997 in France:**

*The European Toy and Childhood Congress Tradition and Territorial Identity: Toys, Childhood and Father Christmas through Europe*, was held in Moirans-en-Montagne, Jura, France.

The congress is a result of an initiative between the Toy Museum of Moirans-en-Montagne, the Provincial Museum of Lapland in Finland and the Museo Valenciano del Jugete in Spain in order to establish a network of Toy and Childhood Museums. Among the invited lecturers were ITRA President **Gilles Brougere** who presented a paper on *Childhood sociology: development and mutations*), and ITRA Secretary **Birgitta Almqvist**, whose paper was entitled *Childhood seen through children's desires for toys: The letters to father Christmas.*)

From the program: The aim of this European Congress is to gather museum executives, researchers and collectors around the themes of toys and childhood, to explore the developmental aspects of the museum association and opportunities for the future.

The first topic approached will be childhood, the basic concepts, and its evolution through toys. Secondly, the role of mythical figures such as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, and the Three Wise Men will be explored for their significance to forge imaginary links in childhood. Lastly, the congress will look into the toy as a product of industrial culture and its relationship to local economies.

In ITRA Newsletter, Fall 97, Birgitta and Gilles will report the proceedings and outcomes of this congress.

#### **June 9-12 in Norway**

The international, interdisciplinary conference *Urban Childhood*, held in Trondheim, Norway, was organized by The Norwegian Center for Child Research in cooperation with Childwatch International, The City of Trondheim, The Norwegian Commissioner for Children, the Norwegian Research Council, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

The implications for the conference were: The majority of the world's children will soon live in cities. Many of these children are living under conditions that fail to support their basic needs, while others can enjoy all the advantages offered by a wellfunctioning urban environment. The conference *Urban Childhood* sets out to discuss various aspects of children's living conditions in cities, which will be related to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The conference comprised a mixture of small specialized seminars as well as large plenary sessions, *Urban Childhood* will present an international forum for researchers, politicians, planners and practitioners, and will offer a unique environment for those interested in scientific discussions concerning children growing up in cities.

#### **Conference topics:**

Street children: The street as a working and living environment for children

Child labor

Children in urban war zones and violent environments

Physical environment and health

Media ecology: The influence of modern media on urban childhood

Urban life quality: Children's perspectives

Urban play

Regrettably the ITRA secretariat doesn't know if any of our members attended this conference, but if you who read this were there, please get in touch with the secretariat so that the proceedings of the conference can be related in ITRA Newsletter, Fall 1997.

Meanwhile I suggest you take a look at the organizers home page on Internet: [www:http://smulen.smu.unit.no/ewh/noseb/noseb.htm](http://smulen.smu.unit.no/ewh/noseb/noseb.htm)

### **Sept 20-Oct 5 in Bavaria**

The Fifth UNESCO Workshop and Symposium *Toys for Children's Rehabilitation* - *Spielzeug für behinderte Kinder '96* will be held from September 20 to October 5, 1997, in Hilpoltstein, Bavaria. It is being prepared and organized by the Institute "Fordern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug für behinderte Kinder e.V., Berlin, in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO and with the Town of Hilpoltstein, Bavaria.

About 20 designers, therapists and pedagogues will participate in this creative workshop. They will visit places where people with handicaps live, play and work, and develop completely new playthings suiting the special needs of handicapped people. The resulting prototypes will be shown to the public in a final exhibition October 4.

On an opening Symposium, September 21 and 22, international experience concerning the relationship of design and education will be discussed and new design solutions in this field will be presented. We invite anybody interested to send in an application for participating in the Symposium and/or the Workshop. For further information and applications, please contact: "Fordern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug für behinderte

Kinder e.V." Immanuelkirchstr. 24, 104 05 Berlin, Germany  
Telephone: (+49) 30 442 92 93 or: (+49) 443 59 213  
Fax: (+49)30 443 59 214

### **October 13-15 in Portugal:**

*International Council for Children's Play (ICCP) Conference.* ICCP President, Prof. Dr **Rimmert van der Kooij**, and ICCP Secretaries, Dr **Hsbil.E. Schmuck**, and Prof. Dr **Karl-Heinz Otto** gives the following invitation to members of ICCP and others interested in play:

*Dear Play Friends*

*It is a pleasure to announce the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of the ICCP, which takes place in Lisbon (Portugal) in the Gulbankian Foundation Building, October 13,14, and 15, 1997. The Faculty of Human Movement of the Technical University of Lisbon together with the Gulbankian Foundation offered the facilities for the exchange of opinions and information in relation to play. Prof. Carlos Neto and his committee will be in charge of the organization:*

Address: Faculdade de Motricidade Humana, Universidade Tecnica de Lisbon, Estrada da Costa- Cruz Quebrada, 499 Lisbon Codex, Portugal  
Phone: 351 1 4149 129  
Fax: 351 1 4151 248  
E-mail: Cneto@fmh.utl.pt

Included in the conference fees of 30 000 Escudos (170\$ or 270 DM) are::

- costs or the simultaneous translators
- conference documentation
- three lunches
- two dinners
- refreshments during conference breaks
- excursion to the historical city of Sintra (Morning of October 16)

Reduced hotel prices in the neighbourhood of the Gulbankian Foundation (breakfast



included) vary from 8,500 - 10,000 Escudos. Participants can make hotel reservations simultaneously with their subscription. Scientists and practitioners are kindly requested to send summaries of paper presentations before July 1<sup>st</sup> to Prof. Neto. Intended are sessions of 30 minutes and short paper presentations of 20 minutes. Also offers to workshops are welcome!

The Portuguese Committee plans the edition of the proceedings before the end of this year. Speakers are kindly requested to offer their complete manuscripts (incl. floppy disk) in English during the conference.

We hope that many play friends will find their way to the most charming city of the South of Europe with in October still an attractive climate.

#### **November 7-9 in Finland**

*The Nordic Child Cultural Research Network (BIN-Norden)* is organizing the 5<sup>th</sup> Nordic Child Cultural Research Conference *Barndommens kulturalisering. Nya teorier och perspektiver i nordisk barnkulturforskning* [The Culturalizing of Childhood. New Theories and Perspectives in Nordic Research on Child Culture] November 7-9, 1997. The conference takes place at Hanaholmen, near Helsinki, Finland.

The Finish Minister of Culture, **Claes Andersson**, will open the conference, and one of the invited speakers is ITRA member Stephen **Kline**, Simon Fraser University, Barnaby, Canada. See also Web side <http://dmmh.no/BIN-Norden/>

#### **November 9-14 in France**

*Colloque International Sur le jouet — International Toy Seminar* in Angouleme, France., is organized by the GREC-UPN (Groupe de recherche sur les ressources educatives et culturelles, Universite Paris Nord, LUDOLAND and the Center Universitaire de la Charente, under the

surveillance of Conseil General de la Charente, ITRA (International Toy Research Association), Universite de Pitiers, and the Federation Francais des Industries du Jouet.

The purpose of the seminar is to present and stimulate all possible dimensions of toy research in France (psychology, sociology, pedagogic, economy, etc.), and to confront it with international research in this field. By presenting their research, participants from other countries will contribute to the debate.

#### **Organization committee:**

Gilles Brougere, Universite Paris-Nord, President of ITRA, Martine Dumas and Jean-Jaques Syoen, Ludoland Bernard Dogneton, Conseil General de la Charente, Alain Magnan, Agence de developpement de la Charente, Ines de la Ville, Universite de Poitiers, Daniel Aboaf, Federation Frangais des Inindustries du Jouet.

#### **Scientific committee:**

Birgitta Almqvist, University of Halmstad, (Sweden), Joel Broe, Universite Paris-Dauphine, Gilles Brougere, Universite Paris-Nord, Jeffrey Goldstein, University of Utrecht (The Netherlands), Philippe Moati, Universite de Poitiers, Georges Redde, Universite de Bordeaux, Catherine Tourette, Universite de Poitiers.

The seminar will take plade at the Centre National de la Bande Dessinee et de l' Image, and the seminar languages are French and English with simultaneous interpretation.

For more information, please contact Colloque International sur le jouet, Centre Universitaire de la Charente, La Croix du Milieu, 16400 La Coronne, France.

Fax: (+33) 5 45 91 60 21

## NEW ITRA MEMBERS

The secretariat is pleased to note that applications for membership in ITRA is dropping in from time to time. In some cases persons who has heard and read about our work write a letter asking for more information about the association, and declare they would want to join us. In other cases an "old" member recommends the ITRA Board to receive a person as a member. This way, the network is rapidly growing.

### INDIA

**Sudarshan Khanna** recommends two new ITRA members, **Sonya Dhruv**, "designer, educator and mother", graduated in Product Design at the National Institute of Design Ahmedabad, Indi, 1979. Sonya participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> International UNESCO Symposium in Nassau, Germany in 1995, and designed toys from vinyl gloves and empty yogurt cans, recognized by the local press in Nassau, and

**Arvind Gupta**, New Delhi, India, also a designer working to create good toys for handicapped children. Arvind has received half a dozen awards, e.g. the National Award for Science Popularization amongst children by the government of India, 1988, National Association for the blind (NAB) for designing teaching aids for blind preschool children. (Two booklets by Arvind Gupta are announced in section Papers and Articles.

### TURKEY

The ITRA Secretariat had a letter from Prof. Dr **Bekir Onur**, Director of Ankara University, Turkey, telling about a new center for research on child culture at Ankara University: "The center aims to study childhood experiences from a variety of perspectives such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, folklore etc. It is expected that the social history and the cultural features of childhood, and child

plays and games will receive a special emphasis in these endeavors. The realization of the center's purposes entails maintaining contact with resembling institutions, gathering and exchanging information and publications. We would like to know about your association and to have your publications and other published material and also documents for ITRA membership."

Written information material has been sent from University of Halmstad where NCFL staff is always ready to give the ITRA Secretariat a helping hand. If you want to take personal contact with **Professor Onur**, here is the address: Dr. Bekir Onur, Ankara University Center for Research on Child Culture, Faculty of Educational Sciences 06590, Cebeci, Ankara-Turkey. Fax: 312-353 61 45.

### USA

Warmly recommended by Brian Sutton-Smith is Dr **Susan Seriff**, Folklorist-Anthropologist, of Austin, Texas. According to Brian, Dr. Seriff has "a better sense of the role of toys in child life around the world than anyone else I have met".

On behalf of the ITRA Board, the Secretariat wishes the four new members welcome. As soon as the new members have sent me their Fax number and/or E-mail addresses, the information will be forwarded to all the other ITRA members.

## NEWS FROM TOYLAND

The Swedish member of the International Toy Magazine Association (ITMAj, *Leksaksrevy* [Toy Review] reports that Toy Manufacturers of Europe has taken as its mission to fight plagiarism and copying, a business that is becoming an increasing problem for the producers. During the last Nuremberg fair a seminar was held to discuss the problem and seek solutions to it.

It is often difficult to define and to prove whether a product is a direct piracy, and even if there is evident proof, hard to take legal measures against it. Some countries even lack a law against plagiarism. Piracy lowers the producers' profit; the French representative estimated the loss at some 7%, but TME records talked about 12%.

Whichever figure is right, the loss strikes in a very uneven way. Many small, innovative companies become totally "sunk" with the consequence that their staff will be out of a job.

Not only do manufacturers make piracy copies, but also large toy store chains have made a system of sending products they find in Europe to the Far East to order cheaper copies which is devastating for the serious toy trade.

The rhetorical question is: Who would want to put money in product development when knowing that every good idea might be stolen?

### Plagiarism

In Germany, a man by the name of Busse, has taken the initiative to an organization which each year distributes a little black "Smurf-like" figure named *Plagiarism* to those engaged in plagiarism.

The worst of the piracy copies are then pilloried in mass-media channels to warn consumers hoping that they will realize that it is in everybody's interest to support the original product. The "ban" is not only on toy piracy but on a variety of other products as well.

The Director of the Swedish National Toy Retailer Association, and Editor of *Leksaksrevy*, **Per Sparre**, proposes a corresponding "anti-prize" also in other countries.

### Safe Toys - Unsafe Children

Safety standards for toys do not mean that there is no risk for injuries when playing with them. *Leksaksrevy* relates a tragic story about a 9-year-old boy who choked to death when sucking the plug of the arrow to a plastic toy gun.

A sudden breathing in and the thin side of the plug went down the boy's throat and literally plugged his respiratory organs. The plug could not be removed in time to save the 9-year-old's life.

The question is how such accidents can be avoided. The gun and arrow met the official safety standards. The sucker plug of the arrow was small enough to pass through the "test-throat", but got stuck in the boy's throat in a way that could not be foreseen in the testing laboratory.

The rhetoric question the editor of *Leksaksrevy* asks is how accidents like this can be avoided in the future. No one can really blame the toy manufacturer if a toy is handled in a way it is not supposed to be handled, and parents cannot always be near the child. Boys do have a tendency to avoid parental control when playing, particularly if the toy is labeled "war toy", a kind of toy that many parents and teachers do not approve of.

Toy play accidents typically starts toy safety debates, but in this case not very much was said in the newspapers. Maybe because it was hard to find a specific scapegoat. For the under-three there are warnings for "small objects, because it is well known that little children like to put things in their mouth. A nine-year old, however, is not expected to put objects in his mouth and swallow them.

The sense morale of this story is that no toy is safer than the child who handles it. Furthermore, we must pay if we come upon a child using a toy in a way that may cause harm when used in a wrong way.

Per Sparre, father of five, use to say: *All children are our children*, meaning that our responsibility is not our own offspring only, but yours and others' as well".

## Trend Toys

*Trendleksaker* [Trend Toys] is the title of an article written for *Leksaksrevy* by Lasse Rade, Swedish journalist and specialist oners to know which of all new toys will be the Toy Story characters when the movie half a year after the release of the movie became most profitable from one season to another.

Last year, Buzz from *Toy Story* was the unbeatable favorite. Far from all toy retailers in Sweden had foreseen the popularity of the accessible also on video, and were taken by surprise when the dolls Buzz, Hank and the other Toy Story characters were sold out in every toy store long before Christmas. Buzz became so popular that, although seven toy manufacturers in the South of China worked at highest possible pressure, they could not produce enough to meet the demand on the toy market. The author of the article reports that the latest celebrity on the toy market is *Tamagocchi*, an egg-shaped device with an electronic picture in which a bird develops from a newly-hatched to a grown-up bird. The change comes when the owner takes

care of the bird by feeding, it caressing it and cleans its nest by pushing certain buttons. Since November last year the producer, Bandai has sold 350,000 Tamagocci.

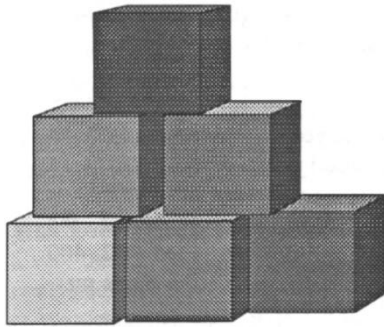
Unknown to Swedish toy buyers, a very popular toy last year in the U.S.A. was the *Elmo* doll, described by the author as "a monster with a read curly fiir-coat". It is said that the week before Christmas, the prize for an Elmo doll amounted to 2, 400 SEK (350 US dollar) ~ on the black market.

Judging from a recent report from the toy fair in Hollywood, the best sellers in the U.S.A. today are dinosaurs from the follow-up of Jurassic Park, Disney's Hercules and characters from the new Batman movie.

However, as the author states, prophesies of toys' popularity are hard to make – nobody knows which toy will be the most within only half a year from now.

One such example is Monchichi in the 1980s. From being enormously popular when first appearing on the toy market, their popularity suddenly vanished and left many a toy retailer with a huge stock of unsold sweet-ugly little "trolls".

As The author of the article states, being a toy retailer cannot be easy. I would add that being a child choosing among the constant flow of novelties on the toy market cannot be easy either. Ultimately, though, it is the customer, be it a child or an adult, who decides the success of a certain toy.



## CHILDREN'S CORNER

### **Baby Delivery**

Children of today are much more informed about life than were past generations. Already by the age of five many of them know how babies are "made", and like to mock parents who try and make them believe otherwise. Kids are realistic and don't appreciate rubbish talk. Like this one: *Know something, Jimmy?* said the proud father. *Last night an angel came here with a little sister for you - want to see her?* No, said Jimmy, *but I would like to see the angel.*

Cannot help wondering at what age little girls discover that the peculiar birth of Barbie's baby is a falser. If they don't it could happen that a little girl who gets a little sister of brother, out of jealousy, orders mum to put it back in again...

### **Family Economy**

Children of today are also fairly aware of economic matters, and well acquainted with modern techniques in photographic picture production. This is one story to exemplify this:

The female teacher gave her first grade class a lesson about the birth of Jesus Christ. She held up large paintings of the family gathered around baby Jesus lying on hay in the cradle. Tears were in her eyes when she told the story about the poor, poor family who could not afford to stay in a proper inn like the others who had come there to be taxed. Her deep expressions of grief were soon interrupted by one little boy stating: *Well, seems like they were rich enough to have their picture taken.*

Internet is a rich source of information about children, children's toys, children's museums etc. Try for example <http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/oucl/users/jonathan.bowen/children.html>  
And if you want to take deal of kids' own jokes, you will find plenty on Children's Joke Page <http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/oucl/usersjonathan.bowen/children/jokes.ht>

I recently found this one: *My horse is very polite. Whenever we come to a jump he stops and lets me go first!* And this one: *Why do witches use brooms for flying? Because vacuum cleaners are too heavy!* My 7-year old grandson highly appreciated both of them. On the other hand, his 12-year-old brother did not find them particularly amusing. How about you?

## Epilog

When I started with this Newsletter in March, there wasn't much material to fill the pages. During April and May, however, material dropped in almost every day, and made me think of the sudden flow from the ketchup flask that the minute before wouldn't let a drop out. In Sweden we rightly call it "the ketchup effect". Thanks all of you who have made the Secretariat busy. I like that. What we do miss, however, are suggestions, be they written, sketched, painted pictures and/or prototypes, of an ITRA logotype. Therefore this announcement from ITRA Newsletter is once more included:

*You are hereby invited to participate in a contest for the creation of a logotype illustrating the means and goals of the International Toy Research Association (ITRA). Please send your entry to the ITRA Secretariat, NCFL, University of Halmstad, Box 823, 301 18, Sweden, before December 20, so that there is time enough for the ITRA board members to study and discuss all entries and choose the most appropriate logo and have it included in the ITRA Newsletter, Spring 1997. Prize: A T-shirt from the Halmstad Conference.*

Is it the plain prize that puts you off? Please, don't let it - the honor of having been the creator of our official profile will be all the better! It might also be possible to print a sticker with the logo on it, or - even more sophisticated - an emblem to wear on your jacket to show off a bit and perhaps remind you that you are a member of ITRA and as such accountable for filling the Newsletter with written material. Please don't hide yourself and your genius in the closet - come out and tell the world about your valuable contributions in the field of toy research (and play for that matter, because play and toys go together "like horse and carriage").

If you have written material to be included in ITRA Newsletter, Fall 1997, I would be most grateful if you send the manuscript by E-mail, or on a floppy disk, which will save the Secretariat hours of work rewriting the texts.

Mainly due to the earlier mentioned "ketchup effect" at the end of the work with the composing of the Newsletter, I ran out of space and time so that some material could not be included in full in the present Newsletter. Please send in your written material as soon as possible - the ITRA Secretariat is manned all through Summer and welcomes all information to be spread among the members and other readers of the Newsletter. The sooner the better.

If you are on E-mail, and would like to take part in what is up on the play research field, perhaps you would want to be a member of the PLAY@LISTSERV.VT.EDU, created by TASP members. If so, send a mail to Linda Hughes, Department of Educational Studies, College of Education University of Delaware, Willard Hall 213, Newark, DE 19716 302-831-4598, (fax) 831-4445, hughesla@udel.edu

Another list that might be of interest for some of you is the mailing list, ETNOPEDE@LISTSERV.UU.SE, a network for Nordic researchers interested in ethnographic studies in pedagogic contexts. For further information, contact Pia-Maria Ivarsson, E-mail: <pia-maria.ivarsson@PED.UU.SE>.

Finally, please check your own Fax number and/or E-mail address on the last page and tell me if it is correct or not. If not correct, please inform me so that I can send the correction to other members of ITRA.

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