

ITRA NEWSLETTER
International Toy Research Association
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2nd INTERNATIONAL Toy Research Conference

2nd International Toy Research Conference was held at the University of Halmstad, June 14-19, 1999. Participants from 26 countries all over the world presented more some 90 papers during the Conference. Africa, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, The Netherlands, USA.

A brief limited selection of papers by representatives from the different countries may give a least a sketchy picture of today's international research on children's play and toys. Due to space, no more than one presentation from each country has been chosen. To offer an indication of which issues in the field of play and toys going on in different parts of earth, I will give the cores of every title of presentation from each continent. Very short titles will appear in original. A few papers were cancelled after the start of the conferences. They are included in the record to make the research picture more complete, and because readers

and colleagues may want to contact the authors. For addresses of authors, some can be obtained from the ITRA Secretariat, while others are listed at NCFL, University of Halmstad.

America:

Canada: Toy design, promotional TV and mother reinforcement in 3-6-yr-old males (Kline).

North and Central America: (1) Plush toys (Blocher); (2) Digital tools Borovoy & Martin); (3) Intergenerational toy meanings in the 20th century (Cross); (4) Soc. Behavior during video game play (Holmes & Pellegrini); (5) Quality toys and play on common ground (X); (6) Crossing interface collections (Makkuni); (7) Disney meets Mexican devil - handmade festival toys (Seriff); (8) American teachers' views on toys and play (Johnsen & Weis); (9) A case study of toys and play in kindergarten (Johnsen & Weis). (10) One paper, Towards a theory of toy and game design (Zimmerman) was cancelled.

South America. Brazil: Art representing children's play (Altman); Brazilian preschool toys (Kishimoto);

Africa: Tanzania: Educational play materials (Lwakatare);

Asia

China: Toys in the education of mentally retarded children (Wang); Intervention adapted to autistic nature (Quing) (cancelled)

India: Science communication through toys (Gupta); Educational value of home made toys (Khanna); Toy lives within the body (Panghaal).

Japan: Creating playful learning environments (Ueda & Weintraub);

Korea: Toys in children's pretend play (Cho); Korean children and western dolls (Shin);

Australia: Tamagotchies Varney)

Europe:

Austria: Culture of toys in Viennese kindergarten Hartmann & Wildeis);

Belgium: Soc-semiotic approach in African toys Rossie);

England: Social playground design (Armitage); Playmobil world (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen); Teddy bears (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen); Playing with artificial life (Fleming); Toys in text (Knowles); Images of disability in children's playthings (Pettitt); Designing effective playground space (Armitage)

Estonia: Influencing children through play and toys (Mare);

France, Children's toy collections (Brougere); Building sets in French preschools (Dewolf); Magic, a postmodern plaything and the community meaning (Fontaine & Brougere); The Barbie doll (Hanquez-Maincent); Didactic possibilities for toy and childhood museum (Lejeune-Wenger); New communication technologies for toy industry (Richir), Video games; (Tremel)

Germany: Play and learning with Euro-winner game (Ritter); Postmodernity in toys (Ririer); Toys, mirror of the world;

Toy - user, buyer and communication (Zoels)

Greece: Recreating childhood toys (Argyriardis); Toys as Greekness (Gougoulis);

Holland: The attraction of war toys and violent video games (Goldstein); War toy play vs. family culture (Harinck & Hellendorn); Toys in Medieval Europe Willemsen)

Ireland: Batteries not included (modern toys) (Fernstrom); Children with learning difficulties (Waldmann) (computers);

Israel: Child play in hospital Kling); Diversity and play, culture influence (Shoshana) (cancelled)

Portugal, Literacy play and free play intervention (Pessahna);

Russia: Aestetical computer space for 6-10-yr-old (Khramtsova); Play toys and LEGO therapy (Manevsky & Manevsky); Art lessons at school (Suslova) (cancelled)

Turkey: Communication with children in museum Onur, Celen & Aksel) (cancelled);

Scandinavia/Nordic Countries

Denmark: Virtuality of toys (Hangaard Rasmussen); Playfulness and cultural symbols in play areas of today (Hendricks); Play culture and interactive toys (JessenChildren narrating age by means of objects (Kjaer); Toy stories – toy and narratives; Girls and boys life in media culture (Tuft) (cancelled)

Finland: Toys and picture-books (Laukka);

Norway, Family daycare assistants use of toys as a means of communication (Due); Play and learning in school (Lillemyr); Play in primary school; Play in primary school - demands for space and materials (Trageton)

Sweden: Teaching with toys in school (Alingfeldt); Children's Santa letters a communicative process (Almqvist); Older preschool children's play (Berg); Child world in toy departments (Brembeck); Child concepts of play (Brodin); Parents evaluation of toys (Eckert); Young school children's anticipation of toys from a gender perspective (Falkstrom); Preschool meeting with Barbie, MC-mice and computers (Fredricsson); Preschool Children about play and toys (Brodin); Method and result from inventory of home toys (Nelson&Nilsson); Interactive multimedia (Petersson); Social representation of toys (Selander), Froebel in our time, the eternal toy (Oman); Play centers for disabled childr.(Brodin); Child thought about play and toys in preschool setting (Hjort).

AFRICA

Elisa Lwakatare, Tanzania, presented *TOYS: The Educational Play Materials*, explaining that "One of the most delightful experiences for an adult is to observe the spontaneous interaction/involvement of children with toys". The author expressed his regrets that, while toys in spite of their significance in a number of societal aspects in contemporary communicative cultural process, so far no thorough research has been conducted in Tanzania.

AUSTRALIA

Wendy Varney, University of Wollongong, Australia, focused on one particular toy, in her *paper Tamagotchies: No Bark. All Byte* indicating a toy category displaying signs of postmodernism, ultra com-modification, and the blend of old and new Japanese society from where it emanates, and popular in most western countries throughout the 1980s and the 1990s.

AUSTRIA

Waltraut Hartmann, University of Vienna, presented hers and colleague **Nina**

Wildeis stuey of *The Culture of Toys and Toy references of Children in the Viennese Kindergarten: A contribution to the research on the culture of toys in European childcare.*

BELGIUM

Jean-Pierre Rossie, University of Ghent, continues his valuable work to put a light over African toy culture. Beside unfolding the materiality of North African and Saharan toys, his paper, entitled *A Social Semiotic Approach to North African and Saharan Toys*, took up the technology as well as the cognitive and emotional aspects of these toys.

BRAZIL

Tizuko Morchida Kishimoto from Faculty of Education of Sao Paulo University, is to our knowledge the only researcher outside of Europe doing research on preschool toy culture. Accordingly, the title of her paper was *Toys and Pedagogic Materials: Uses and meanings.*

CANADA

Stephen Kline, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, met up to the theme of the conference by discussing what we really know about how toys communicate. In his *paper Toys as Media: The Role of Toy Design, Pro-social TV and Mother's Reinforcement in the Young males (3-6) Acquisition of Pro-social Play Scripts for Rescue Hero Action Toy.* The paper also took up aspects of the war toy debate.

CHINA

Yan Wang, China, gave a seminar entitled *Implication of Toys in the Education of the Mentally Retarded Children*, within the theme 'Intertextuality', advocating the importance of toys in the development of several abilities in the mentally retarded and increase their cooperation possibilities with non-retarded children.

DENMARK

In his paper *Toy Stories - Toy and Narratives*, **Flemming Mouritsen** described three aspects on toys: as adulthood's formative or commercial project with children and childhood, as artefacts, and as play culture.

ENGLAND

Theo van Leeuwen, University of Cardiff, presented *A Semiotic Study of Toys* with the aim of show toys as a number of representations of social actors and using the categories to inventorize Playmobil suitable for the youngest preschool age children.

ESTONIA

Kart Mere, Estonia, gave an initiated overview of the process of *Influencing Children Through Play and Toys, and Children's Literature in Soviet Period in Estonian Educational System*. The 50 years of Soviet occupation of Estonia has left many traces in Estonian life, and now "it seems unbelievable that " such artificial ideology could serve people so long time.

FINLAND

Maria Laukka XXX, participated in symposium "Intertextuality" by presenting a multi-facetted view on *Toys and Picturebooks*. One aspect discussed was classical theme when toys come to life and turning up in children's dreams, and another how playthings in picture-books can wake up empathy by way of helping the child in the identification process.

FRANCE

Gilles Brougere, Universite Paris-Nord, , *A Study of the Make-Up of Children's Toy Collections* carried out by Group for Research into Educational and Cultural Resources (GREC). The study takes into the mind of the consumer, e g the parents which, to judge from the data, by more toys to their four-year-old child than they do when the child is under four.

GERMANY

Gisela Wegener-Spohring, Universitat Wurzburg, gave a session called *Toys: Mirror of the World, and the world of Children*, and took us back all the way to 1639 in Nurnberg, where the foregoer of the modern doll house was created. The paper revealed that past toys were "everywhere" to be found, even in the cathedral altar in Braunschweig, dated 1505, illustrating "a scene of Christ's suffering is depicted, the children, painted in the foreground of the work, act as the torment of martyrs".

GREECE

Cleo Gougoulis, Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Athens, Greece, gave an interesting insight in "the Hellenist side of Greek National consciousness". In her presentation of *Toys as Greekfiess: Search for Cultural Continuities in Greek Folk-Play studies*.

HOLLAND

Jeffrey Goldstein, University of Utrecht, discussed and shed light on the intricate question why at all violent entertainment attracts an audience The paper was entitled *The Attraction of War toys and Violent Video Games*, and stated that an audience "not necessarily experience pleasure at seeing blood and gore". Instead there are many other reason for consuming media violence, such as for example to be supported in the establishing of identity, and in managing emotional and physical states.

INDIA

Childern learn by doing is the motto by **Arvind Kumar Gupta**, New Dehli The purpose of his paper *Science Communication Through Toys* was to illustrate how children learn scientific concepts embodied in a toy.

IRELAND

Mikael Farnstrom, Ireland, titled his paper *Batteries Not Included*, to discussing the both physical and computational affordances in modern toys. In his study, within a framework of ecological interaction design, six children were asked to report in a diary his or her exploration of a particular toy.

ISRAEL

Helena Kling, xxx, gave an insight in the value of *Children's Play in Hospital*, by relating an ongoing project in which medical students are playing with hospitalized children. Family, staff, teachers and caregivers should be exposed to the benefit of play for children in medical care.

KOREA

Dongju Shin, 1999 BRIO Scholarship winner, presented a paper describing a study of *Korean Children's Use of Western Style*. Aim of the study was to find out how Korean children would accommodate to the dolls, and experience the different appearance between Korean people and the western looking dolls.

NORWAY

A paper by **Ole Fredrik Lillemyr** from Queen Maud's College of Early Childhood Education in Trondheim, *Play and Learning in School, A student autonomy perspective* was based on a Norwegian project "Transition preschool-school" included aspects of students' interest in play and learning.

PORTUGAL

Ana Maria Pessanha. Lisbon, focused on disadvantaged children in her presentation of the study *Literacy Play and Free Play Intervention in School Settings*. Purpose of study was to consider the role of play for development of several capacities among disadvantaged children.

RUSSIA

Elena Khramtsova, from Liberal Art, Centre "Theatre ", Computer department of Cultural and Educational Establishment in Ekaterinburg, recapitulated and explained the *Communicative Possibilities of the Playing aesthetic computer space for the children: An analysis of the pictures of 6-10-aged participants of European School communication*

SWEDEN

Jane Brodin Stockholm University, gave presented an account of *Children's Concepts of Play* reporting a cross-national study conducted in Brazil, Korea, Sweden, and the United States. In each country interviews were carried out with 13 four to 12-year-old children of which three in each country had a physical or mental or sensory impairment. The result of the study indicated differences of cultural as well as gender- and age related nature.

USA

Edgar Klugman, Wheelock College, Boston, talked about *Quality toys and play for Children: How do we find common ground?* He presented a number of perspectives on "toys"; first that of the "experts", such as parents, historians, inventors/designers, manufacturers, child development specialist etc.

If you want a full record of all presentation may contact Anders Nelson, NCFL, University of Halmstad. NCFL Internet home page also includes a record of announced papers.

The staff of NCFL was much appreciated for their excellent organization. The scientific as well as the social program went smoothly, and even the weather - which in Sweden is not very trustworthy in the middle of June - showed its best face for the afar coming participants.

The 1999 BRIO Scholarship

At a special ceremony June 15, the BRIO scholarship 1999 was handed over to **Dongju Shin**.

Press release:

Professor **Dongju Shin** at the Department of Early Childhood Education, EHWA Womans University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, has been appointed as the receiver of the 1999 BRIO Scholarship from **Lennart Ivarsson Scholarship Fund**.

Professor Dongju Shin is awarded the BRIO Scholarship in the amount of SEK 21.000 as being one of the most prominent toy researchers in Asia regarding children's play with toys and playground equipment. Preschool children's play with toys and playground equipment is to a large extent an image of the adult world in the contemporary society. Professor Shin's research and publications clearly indicate that children of today share the need of playing with toys and playground equipment. Her research on children's play shows that the cultures of the East and the West are closer and closer joined.

Professor Dongju Shin has taken a special interest in doing research on traditional toys and on playground equipment. Among her publications can be mentioned the books "Multiple perspectives on play in early childhood education", and "Physical environments and children's play". She has also published a number of articles in the educational press about children's play with toys and playground equipment.

On the threshold to the 21st Century, BRIO wants to attract attention to the development of our world into a more global unit than ever before. By awarding Professor Dongju Shin with the 1999 BRIO Prize, we want to emphasize the value of her research showing that children through their play with toys and playground equipment make us realize that East and West are not so far from each

other as sometimes claimed. In that sense our world is shrinking to be meeting in a mutual commitment to create safe, good and developmental toys and playground equipment that can contribute to a good physical and mental development of children around the world.

Osby June 9th 1999

Dag Ivarsson

Chairman of the Board of "Lennart Ivarsson Fund".

BRIO Scholarship 1998

At the same ceremony, the BRIO scholarship 1998 was handed over to the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media [Nordiskt Centrum for Forskning om Leksaker och Pedagogiska Media (NCFL), represented by Krister Svensson. Beside the prize money, the winners received a Diploma and a large "BRIO Man".



Free translation of the 1998 Press Release:

The main purpose of giving NCFL the 1998 BRIO Scholarship is to encourage its promising group of young doctoral students to fulfil their ambition to finance their studies to reach a Ph D focusing on toys. The second purpose is no less important, namely to recognize the prominent role of NCFL as the headquarter for toy researchers in all parts of the earth.

By arranging the 1st first "International Toy Research Conference" in 1996, NCFL obtained world reputation within the global

field of research on toys and their meaning for children's development and social competence. June 1999, NCFL at the University of Halmstad "The Second International Toy Research Conference", an initiative which will further confirm the leading role of NCFL in the midst of International toy Research. By giving NCFL the 1998 BRIO scholarship, we wish to call attention to the successful way the center at the University of Halmstad has managed to profile its toy research so that NCFL has become widely appreciated as the distinguished head quarters for International toy research.

Dag Ivarsson
Chairman of the Board of "Lennart Ivarsson Fund".

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Editor's apropos

"East is east, and west is west, and never the two will meet", is an old saying. Today it is not quite true. My experience is that the ITRA members have managed to make our globe seem smaller both horizontally and vertically. One good indication of this is the superb way in which **Dongju Shin** has carried out her research on how little Korean girls are playing with Western looking dolls. This rendered her the BRIO Scholarship in 1999, and we all put our hands together for her. Dongju Shin has shown that children do pay attention to the looks of a face, but perhaps not as we think. Her study of Korean girls playing with western looking dolls, reminded me of a holiday visit to Barbados:

The only toy store on the island is placed in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados and there I found the Caribbean equivalent to Barbie. She was larger than Barbie and had the most exquisite outfits. The customer could choose between a white and a black lady-doll. Anyone could have guessed that the little West-Indian girls would be very pleased to have a doll with same skin-color

as the girls themselves. I was wrong; the shopkeeper told me that the brown-faced girls preferred the fair-faced doll. I wasn't too surprised, because I remembered that as a little doll-player, I would not want a doll with stragglng hair and plain clothes. I wanted a doll as unlike myself as possible, a doll with black curly hair and lovely dresses. A doll to weave dreams around. But in my girlhood there were no doll-ladies at all.

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The Association for
The Study of Play (TASP)

What is TASP?

TASP is a multidisciplinary organization whose purpose is to promote the study of play, to support and cooperate with other organizations having similar purposes, and to organize meetings and publications that facilitate the sharing and dissemination of information related to the study of play. TASP publishes a regular, extensive Newsletter, which includes book reviews, research updates in different disciplines, and other information. TASP also publishes *Play and Culture Studies* on a regular basis.

TASP's broad focus includes many disciplines and scholarly interests, including anthropology, education, psychology, sociology, recreation, history, folklore, dance, communication, the arts, kinesiology, philosophy, cultural studies, and musicology.

TASP is organizing its 26th Annual Conference April 16-19, 2000, in Baltimore, Maryland. Although too late for papers (deadline December 3, 1999), you might want to become a member. If so, please contact **Dr. Dorothy Justus Sluss**, 70548 Human Development and Learning, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614. Phone: 423-439-6342,

Fax: 423-439-4439, E-mail:
sluss@ACCESS.ETSU-TN.eju

If you have written material that you want to be included in TASP Newsletter, contact **David Lancy**, Email: dlancy@cc.usu.edu

For more information about TASP, look up website <http://www.usti.edu/~anthro>

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Comite European de Normalisation(CEN) [European Committee for Standardization.

The first International Conference on the safety of toys, to be held in Valencia, 9 and 10 February 2000, Conference on the theme *Play it safe in Europe: Anticipate the changing European toy market.* Information about latest trends in technical developments in standards will be given as well as the tougher surveillance of toys on the market in different countries, and forthcoming European and other international developments.

The conference is aimed at manufacturers and their designers, importers and retailers. Manufacturers' federations, consumer organizations and testing laboratories. National authorities will also attend the conference, as well as specific issues given by experts who work daily on technical matters related to all kinds of toys and the European decision-makers on legal issues. For more information about the program, or would like to book your place at the conference, please go to www.cenorm.be/news/conferences/toys.html

What is CEN?

CEN is a network of members who have been working together for more than twenty years to develop common, agreed technical practices and procedures across Europe for industry, services and the social infrastructure.

CEN is preparing voluntary technical recommendations to support the directive concerning the safety of toys adopted by the European Union in 1988. The recommendations are designed to help manufacturers achieve the complex process of meeting the requirements of the directive.

CEN is supported and recognized as a critically important body by the institutions of the European Union, notably the Commission and Parliament as well as EFTA.

Although it is by now probably too late to apply for a place at the conference, you may obtain information about the organization and perhaps apply for membership. The membership comprises: National Members - the national standards bodies from the European Union, EFTA and the Czech Republic. For more information you may contact Kristien Van Ingelgem. Phone: + 322550 09 58 or E-mail kristien.vanigelgem@cenorm.be

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BOOK PUBLICATIONS

Cross, G. *Kids' Stuff. Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood.* Harvard University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-674-89830-3. 283 pp. incl Index.

Contents:

- 1. *Their Toys and Ours*
- 2. *Modern Childhood, Modern Toys*
- 3. *Shaping the Child's Future*
- 4. *Freeing the Child's Imagination*
- 5. *Building Blocks of Character*
- 6. *The Boomers' Box of Toys*
- 7. *Making Sense of the Modern Toybox*

Being a professor of history, the author maintains that only by knowing our past we can understand today. The book offers

Journals and Organizations For the Benefit of Children

Now and then the ITRA Secretariat receives interesting journal announcements and information about different kinds of organization or institutes working for children.

PLAY ACTION: FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN is an English journal which has been presented in a previous ITRA Newsletter. Present issue, Autumn, a 30pp. is a multicolored magazine printed on thick paper, looking very sophisticated. Among several articles and short notes, quite a number concern the protection and safety of children, not least in the playground.

In a section entitled "Play Around, is announced The first London Play Conference which was held last October. The conference was announced by The Secretary of States for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, and held at the London voluntary Sector Resource Centre under the theme *Working for a capitol where children can play*. If you are interested in what came out of the conference, you might try Fax to Kate Wanstall, (020) 7 6097260.

To apply for membership in Fair Play for Children, you can also use E-mail. Fairplay@arunet.co.uk

Web site is
<http://www.arunet.co.uk/fairplay>

We don't usually congratulate organization anniversaries, but the leader of BDS **Giinther Griesel** eagerly asked the ITRA Secretariat to recognize that the *Bundesarbeit-gemeinschaft Deutscher Spieliotheken e. V.* is celebrating its twentyfifth years of activities. As an exception let us congratulate from the ITRA secretariat, wishing the German organization all best over the next 25 years.

Member Forum

From Cleo Gougougolis, Athens, Greece:
A book I co-edited with the Greek art historian **Afrodite Kouria** some time ago which was sponsored by the Foundation for Research in Childhood *Spyros Doxiadis*, will soon be published by the Greek publishing company Kastaniotis, as the sponsors and the publisher finally reached an agreement last May. The book, entitled *Children's Play in Modern Greek Society (19th – 20^t centuries)* is a multidisciplinary edition covering issues concerning Greek society's attitudes towards play during the last two centuries. Contributors draw from ethnographic research on contemporary children in Greece, historical sources (literature, paintings, educational curricula) and other documentary material (e.g. Preschool educational policy on play, TV toy advertising legislation) to discuss questions such as:

*How is play related to work in contemporary rural Greece?

* Under which conditions was play associated with pleasure, creativity and child development in rural and urban Greek society?

*Which are the consequences of the inclusion of play in the preschool educational curriculum?

*How have the Greek State and Public opinion responded to the toys and global toy advertising?

*How do Greek children use global toys in their play?

For more material concerning new books on toys cf. announcement of new Sage publications book "Barbie Culture" in a previous E-mail (22.4.1999) of mine.

ITRA board member **Sudarshan Khanna** recommends four "fellow-friends who are interested in Toy Research from development aspects". The new members are:

Ms Mandira Kumar, E-mail:
sutra@vsnl.com

Mr Jogi Pangaal, who attended the 2nd International Toy Research Conference in Halmstad, June 1999, and gave an interesting show on traditional home-made Indian play things in the poster session.
Email:
pangaal@hotmail.com

Ms Gayatri Menon, E-mail
gayatrimenon@yahoo
Gayatri Menon was participating in the NCFL-Unesco-Toy Workshop in Halmstad May 99.

Ms Manju Gregory, who is director of the Puppet-theatre co and Authur, also conducting workshops on Tales and Toys in England. E-mail: kabutar@linone.net

On her own initiative comes Irini a new member in Greece:

Irini Karadimitri, Financial Director at the Hellenic Children's Museum in Athens.
Tel:+3001.331.2995 E-mail:
hcm@compulirik.gr

From the U.S. came this letter to the ITRA Secretariat

Hello Birgitta
My name is Harv Ebel. I'm a Ph.D. in Engineering Psychology, and the Senior Project Leader for TOY studies at Consumer Reports magazine.

I just discovered ITRA and I'd like to get involved with you folks. Is anyone from the group going to attend the "Toy Fair 2000" in New York City (Feb 12-18)? I'd also like to participate in some technical

discussions about strategies for testing toys.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
Harv

I guess Harv is a male and his apparent interest in technical strategies for testing toys made me forward his mail to Toy Center at NCFL. University of Halmstad.

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WHAT IS ITRA?

Grants from the Toy Manufacturers of America (TMA), New York, and Toy Manufacturers of Europe (TME), Brussels, enabled 16 researchers from 12 countries invited by Professor Jeffrey Goldstein, University of Utrecht. September 10, 1993, to meet at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, to form an International Toy Research Association.

The meeting decided that one ambition of the organization would be to enable scholars to:

1. exchange the latest research,
2. collaborate on multi-cultural studies of toys,
3. be a source of expert opinion about toys for the media, consumers, and the toy industry, and
4. to contribute to public understanding of the importance of toy play.

The purpose of ITRA

It seems that 1993 came to mean the break through for a long neglected side of the everyday life of children all over the world, namely toys. The purpose of ITRA is to make toy research progressive all over the world in order to broaden and spread knowledge about toys and promote the development of good toys for children.

The Secretariat of ITRA is hosted by the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media [Nordiskt Centrum for Forskning om Leksaker och Pedagogiska

November 29 is officially the International Rights of the Child Day. It may be regarded a jungle to walk through the 54 Articles, but as UNICEF has organized them in special categories, I can present a collection of Articles that I find particularly significant for our possibility to work for the future generation. For a summary of the convention, look up <http://www.unicef.org/voy/meeting/rig/convsum.html>

The following Articles are taken from: <http://www.unicef.org/voy/meeting/rig/righome.html>

The Right to Protection from Harmful Work

Article 31: Children have the right to rest, leisure, play, and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

Article 32: Children have the right to be protected from having to participate in work that threatens their health, education, or development.

The Right to a Safe and Healthy Life

Article 6: Every child has the right to life, and the government must do everything possible to make sure that children survive and develop.

Article 24: Children have the right to the best possible level of health, and to access to health and medical services.

Article 27: Children have the right to a decent standard of living.

Article 33: Children have the right to protection from the use of drugs, and from being involved in their production and distribution.

The Right to Protection from Discrimination

Article 2: All rights apply to all children, and children shall be protected from all forms of discrimination.

Article 30: Children have the right, if members of a minority group, to practice their own culture, religion and language.

The Right to Protection Against Abuse

Article 11: The government must do everything possible to prevent the kidnapping or holding of children abroad by a parent or other person.

Article 19: Children shall be protected from abuse and neglect. Governments shall provide programmes for the prevention of abuse and treatment of those who have been abused.

Article 34: Children shall be protected from sexual abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

Article 35: The government shall take appropriate measures to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

The Right to Special Care for the Disabled

Article 23: Disabled children have the right to special care, education and training that will help them to enjoy a full and decent life.

The Right to an Education

Article 28: Children have the right to education. Primary education should be free and all children should be required to attend. Secondary education should be accessible to every child.

Article 29: Education should develop the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities. Children should learn to respect their own culture and that of others.

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Article 19: Children shall be protected from abuse and neglect. Governments shall provide programmes for the prevention of abuse and treatment of those who have been abused.

Article 34. Children shall be protected from sexual abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

Article 35: The government shall take appropriate measures to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

The Right to a Family

Article 5: The government must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to provide proper guidance for the children at different ages.

Article 9: The child has the right to live with his or her parents unless this is not in the child's best interests. The child has the right to maintain contact with both parents if separated from one or both of them.

Article 10: Children and their parents have the right to leave any country or enter their own country to be reunited.

Article 18: Parents both have responsibility for raising the child, and the government shall support this.

Article 20: Children without a family must be given special protection.

Article 21: Where adoption is allowed, it shall be carried out in the best interests of the child.

The Right for Special Protection in Times of War

Article 22: Children who are refugees, or seeking refugee status, are entitled to special protection.

Article 38: Children under the age of 15 shall not take part in armed conflict.

Children who are affected by armed conflict are entitled to special protection and care.

Article 39: Children who have experienced armed conflict, torture, neglect or exploitation shall receive special treatment to help them recover.

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My humble reflections

In my view, our society neglects many of these articles. By offering my personal reflections I am hoping that the readers of these articles make their own. My suggestion is that we who are dealing with the everyday life of children, either it is as a researchers, child professional or

practitioner. Every day we can read in the newspaper about children being maltreated, sexually abused, physically battered and even killed. We read about starving children in warfare countries, refugee children screaming in their sleep because of nightmares caused by having been forced to witness family members being tortured, mothers being raped and homes burned down to the ground. Believe me, I have met several of these children.

Several reports reveal that children are discriminated, rejected or beaten up because their skin has another color than the one dominating the nation in which they live. We also know that in certain parts of the world children receive but very poor education either because they must work hard for their living, or that schools in their country cannot afford decent learning materials.

Our society is construed to meet the demands of healthy young people. Children with a handicap, be it blindness, hearing impairment other physical disabilities are often discriminated; often hampered in an effort to enter a playground or a building in which other children gather and play with each other. Mental retardation in children is too often met by irony from other children in our elitist society.

In what way can we as play- and toy researchers all around the world help fulfil the Child Convention? What can we do to prevent children from abuse, neglect, discrimination and poor education?

Through our work, we can at least help making groups of adults in the society see the importance of play for every child.

Perhaps that may help a bit so let us cooperate to make the 2000 characterized as a year of warmth, love and care for Children of the World.

Editor's Epilogue

With this double issue of ITRA Newsletter I am saying goodbye as ITRA Newsletter Editor. It is the second time I do this, but the first time at a board meeting in connection to the 2nd International Toy Research in Halmstad in July 1999, the ITRA board kindly asked me to stay on for some time.

The concept at the time was that the ITRA Newsletter Fall 1999 was to be the last in my career as ITRA Newsletter Editor. However, due to several obstacles, a delay became unavoidable. I have held the post as Secretary of ITRA all since the start of the association in 1993

I composed and edited the first ITRA Newsletter ever in 1994, and now I have had the privilege, not only to edit the last issue 1999, but also the first of 2000. It is high time that somebody will be taking over this post and refresh the ITRA Newsletter in her or his personal way.

I will however, be at your service as secretary until a new secretary is appointed at the next ITRA board meeting. Until my successor is ready to take over the post as editor of the ITRA Newsletter, you are welcome to send me any information you want to spread, ongoing or planned projects, book reviews, conference announcements, membership applications, in short, all kinds of written material fitting the ITRA profile.

When the time comes I will cooperate with the new editor and forward material for the Newsletter. I can promise you a very competent colleague as the next Editor of the ITRA Newsletter, only there are still some issues for us to confer about. In any case my hope is that the ITRA Newsletter will continue to be the network it has hitherto been.

I intend to at least gather material for the spring version of ITRA Newsletter and forward it to my successor. As soon the new ITRA Newsletter Editor starts working you shall have immediate information about who and where to find the Editing office.

Birgitta Almqvist

Stop Press!:

"we are in contact with Samsung Foundation to organize seminar next October. It's for a part a seminar for Korean Preschool teacher. But we want also to organize a scientific seminar with Asian researchers about toys. If you are interested or if you know somebody who may be interested, please contact ITRA secretary*. We shall soon give more information via E-mail to the people who are interested"

Gilles Brougère

Secretary's E-mail: birgitta.almqvist@friba.se

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