

**ITRA NEWSLETTER**  
**International Toy Research Association**  
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This ITRA Newsletter chiefly contains the usual issues, such as Member Forum, conference announcements, Book publications, New Members, NCFL News, News from Toyland, and Children’s Corner.

It also includes a Brief Book Review or rather, one reader’s momentary concerning a new book about literacy in children, by Roskos and Christie, *Play and Literacy: Research from Multiple Perspective*. A bibliography by Don Nilsen, *Play, Games, and Sports*. Revised in June 2000 will be found separately. You will also read a few letters found in the secretariat’s mail box, one from a Dr Toy and two from hopefully coming play- and toy researchers.

Last page of the present Newsletter is an ITRA Membership Application form.



## MEMBER FORUM

From The Netherlands, **Jeffrey Goldstein** reports:

On 18 May, ITRA members Kathleen Alfano, James Christie, and Jeffrey Goldstein were in London to give a seminar on toy research at the annual general meeting of the Preschool Learning Alliance.

Jeffrey Goldstein summarized computer games research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Massachusetts) conference, 'Computer and video games come of age: A national conference to explore the state of an emerging entertainment medium.'

The February 2000 conference was chaired by Henry Jenkins of MIT's Comparative Media Studies Department.

Jeffrey Goldstein also submitted testimony on violent entertainment to the United States Senate hearing on 'the impact of interactive violence on children,' convened on 21 March 2000 by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

From Austria, **Waltraut Hartmann** reports that after three year of work, a new curriculum for preschoolers has been successfully terminated.

A summary of the book is given under Book publications.

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From Greece,

**Cleo Gougoulis** reports:

The Hellenic Association of Toys and Carriages Manufacturers has launched a quarterly journal under the title *Toys and Sales*. The journal appeared in September 1999 and has so far published 3 issues. The journal Toys and Sales

addresses members of the Association. It is published in Greek and deals with trade issues (best sellers, toy export reports, interviews with toy manufacturers, new releases), and wider issues such as toy safety and advertising.

2. New Books (I have written briefly about this in the previous Newsletter, but now the book is out.)

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Cleo also tells us that:

The heat wave has cooled down so we can work without melting. Between thesis chapters, I am working with Maria and other colleagues (historians, sociologists, and archaeologists) on a new collective project on the History of Greek Toys. A bilingual edition will be the result of this collaboration and I am looking forward to it. I will write about it as soon as we sign the agreement with the Hellenic Archives for History and Literature who will sponsor the project.

The book is announced further down in this Newsletter, under heading Book Publications.

**Linda Hughes**, Ph.D, TASP Coordinator for *Alternative Routes to Certification*, Delaware Center for Teacher Education at the University of Delaware, Willard Hall 213, Newark, DE 19716,. forwarded a mail to [PLAY@LISTSERV.VT.EDU](mailto:PLAY@LISTSERV.VT.EDU), from ODA Kanae so that "those of you with similar interests can establish contact with a new colleague.

ODA Kanae is interested in sport anthropology and looking for the scholars who have an interest in this field. I threw this topic on the list serve (Sport history) Is there any society or research group for sport anthropology in your country? If so, please contact. Kanae ODA, E-mail: [oda\\_kanae@hotmail.com](mailto:oda_kanae@hotmail.com)



**Kathy Roskos**, John Carrol University, and **Jim Christie**, Arizona State University, have co-edited the book *Play and Literacy: Research from Multiple Perspectives*, published 2000 by Lawrence Erlbaum (LEA) Mahwah, NJ, and London. ISBN 0-8058-2965-2. 278 pp.

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Foreword **Margaret Meek**

#### PART I: A COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

1. Bringing Books to Life: The Role of Book-related Dramatic Play in Young Children's Literacy Learning. **Deborah Wells Rowe**.
2. The Narrative Connection: Stories and Literacy **Greta G. Fein, Alicia E. Ardila-Rey, & Lois A. Groth**
3. Symbolic Play, Phonological Awareness, and Literacy Skills at the Three Age Levels, **Doris Bergen** and **Daria Mauer**.
4. COMMENTARY – Cognitive Development, Play, and Literacy: Issues of Definition and Developmental Function. **A.D. Pellegrini** and **Lee Galda**,

#### PART II: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

5. Incorporating Literacy Resources Into the Play Curriculum of Two Icelandic Preschools. **Johanna Einarsdottir**,
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7. Reading is Source of Entertainment: The Importance of the Home Perspective for Children's Literacy Development. **Susan Sonnenschein, Linda Baker, Robert Serpell, and Diane Schmidt**
8. Through the Bioecological Lens: Some Observations of Literacy in Play as a Proximal Process. **Kathleen A. Roskos**
9. COMMENTARY – Play, Literacy, and Ecology: Implications for Early

Educational Research and Practice.  
**James E. Johnson**

#### PART III: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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11. "It Would Be as Good as Snow White.": Play and Prosody. **N. Amanda Branscombe and Janet B. Taylor**
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14. COMMENTARY – Constructing Sociocultural Approaches to Literacy Education. **Artin Göncü and Eleni Karsarou**

Afterword, **Kathleen A. Roskos** and **James F. Christie**

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#### Brief Review

*Play and Literacy: Research from Multiple Perspectives* is a book that I have been looking forward to read from the first time when I met Kathy Roskos and Jim Christie at a conference somewhere in Europe several years ago. If not as an obvious part of everyday life, literacy as a research field was at the time unknown to me. Observing little children scribbling not only on a sheet of paper or – to the annoyance of a parent – on almost any surface, not least wall paper, makes you understand that communicating by writing messages is essential for a human being. In my opinion the scribbling is the beginning of literacy in very young children.

By offering three over-bridging perspectives of which the first highlights the most widespread assumption about literacy solely being associated to printed text, this book very clearly demonstrates

the complex nature of literacy, in but also far beyond anticipating it as connected to reading and writing skills only.

Any object, e.g. a sculpture, can may be regarded, studied and partly understood if you look at it from one angle only, but if you turn it around and look at it from different angles you will be able to perceive the object altogether. You can apply perspective such as material, color, form, utility etc, which at the end of the day will make you appreciate the entire creation. This is the opportunity that this anthology gives the reader, a kind of Open Sesame! And Sesame opens.

It is an intriguing picture Roskos and Christie offer in this anthology with prominent scholars from a various disciplines. One of many things that hit me is that the adult role in developing literacy in children, e.g. by offering a literacy-rich environment, is highlighted. Adults are, indeed, significant agents within the play arena, and can arouse the child's interest and curiosity for written material, just as when exposing the child a new toy.

On the other hand, one between-the-lines message at least, of this book is not to underestimate children's ability to transfer any kind of object to literacy tools if they really want to just like they so often do with non-toy objects when turning them into playthings.

Part I presents a cognitive perspective which seems logic as "abilities of the brain", or school related skills, are what most people regard as literacy. Therefore, it is the more refreshing to read how books and stories can inspire to dramatic play which in turn can nourish the interest to know more about how printed text connects with spoken stories. The importance of helping the child to phonological awareness in the early preschool ages is stressed, and to many a reader this is news, or something that has

not been seen neither as a basis for future learning, nor literacy development.

It gives me a feeling of "the good life of yesterday" to find that reading fairytales, bed-time stories and nursery rhymes may be the very foundation in inspiring the child to take the step to fantasy land by means of symbolic play, the magic "if so" in children's play.

Part II maintains that ecological circumstances have a vital bearing on the development of literacy in the home and school milieu respectively. Chapters in

Part III shows how literacy is intimately related to the social culture in which the child forms large parts of his or her personality and social interaction skills. It is pointed out that literacy is not a fenced-in matter but must be conceptualized and exposed to people in the social subculture to which they belong to in the community.

Children play their everyday life and the characters they meet in the environment, although in dramatic play they often illustrate plots and characters from distant imaginative sites that they have picked up while listening to stories, or looking at pictures in story books. Or from watching television I'd like to add. There is some research on how televised commercials influence children's play contents and toy preferences.

What appears to me to be wanted after this book is some research on the impact of televised cartoons on children's literacy. Programs such as Cartoon Network and Children's Channel are often not translated into Swedish. I don't know about for example German or French, or any other languages. The consequence is that our little Swedish TV-viewers must stick to the pictures to follow the plot, and must guess what the "actors" are saying, or what is written on signs in the scene of the story. This in turn might well lead to







## Coming play- and toy researchers?

Sometimes the Secretariat receives letters from young students, like these two from the United Kingdom. Let me present 15-year old **Beverly Sharp** and a year 10 student **E.J. Saunders**, both living in Selby, North Yorkshire, U.K. I have for some time now been corresponding with Beverly, apparently a young lady, but I don't know whether E.J. is male or female. Maybe I will find out when I write back.

Both Beverly and E.J. are studying child development for a GCSE course, and both wrote to ITRA secretariat to obtain information about their field of interest, which is "The Value of Play". Beverly is studying what she calls "Intellectual play", whereas E.J. studies "Benefits of imaginative play".

Beverly is specifying her questions: What toys are manufactured to encourage the child to learn the alphabet, numbers and colours? Do you think these toys work and add to the value of play? How do you know/research if the toy will encourage the child to learn whilst playing? Do you think some toys improve the child's intellectual knowledge? and, What toys are now being made to improve the child's intelligence, is there any specialist companies that do this?

If you have some information to offer to these two ambitious young people who are sharing our interest, please contact:

[besha9699@hotmail.com](mailto:besha9699@hotmail.com)

## NCFL NEWS

ITRA Secretariat announces that **Eva Petersson**, former Secretary of NCFL is now appointed Director of NCFL. Many of you have met Eva either at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Toy Conference in Halmstad in 1996 and/or at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Toy Conference in 1999 and got to know her as a very competent and pleasant person.

The ITRA Secretariat wants to congratulate Eva and wish her good luck on her new position. You can contact Eva on mail: [Eva.Petersson@ide.hh.se](mailto:Eva.Petersson@ide.hh.se)

Among several projects going on at the NCFL is KidsLab, which is presented below.

### KidsLab

One and a half-year ago KidsLab started as a working group for child-centered design methods within a European Union project initiative called ESE (Experimental School Environments, see <http://www.i3net.org/schools/>)

The group is co-ordinated by NCFL in Sweden. Members of Kids Lab come from different professional backgrounds being:

- Pedagogics, Developmental Psychology, Perception - Action research
- Technology development, Interface Design, Usability

And from different countries:

- Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland

10 projects try to develop high-end early learning tools. KidsLab provides support to those projects by organizing workshops on specific problems related to design and children as users. Members of KidsLab are involved in several other industrial and research projects focusing on design for children.





## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME:.....

PROFESSION:.....

HOME ADDRESS.....

WORK ADDRESS.....

PHONE.....

FAX.....

E-MAIL.....

PUBLICATIONS: .....

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PERSONAL COMMENT:

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Please mail your application to ITRA Secretary: [birgitta.almqvist@friba.se](mailto:birgitta.almqvist@friba.se)