

ITRA NEWSLETTER

International Toy Research Association

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ITRA Newsletter Editors

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PROLOGUE

The ITRA Bursa conference may be slowly fading from memory, however, we would like to thank all those involved in making it a success, including the ITRA Board, everyone who presented, our Turkish hosts, especially Professor Handan Asûde Basal and her associates, and those who carried out all of the mundane tasks which ensured the conference passed like a well-oiled toy train.

As the Editorial Team, we would like to welcome Katriina (Kati) Heljakka, Luisa Magalhães and Eva Petersson Brooks as the latest members of the ITRA Board. Similarly, we offer our heartfelt thanks to Jeffrey Goldstein, Helena Kling and Gayatri Menon, as outgoing members of the Board, for all their years of service to the Board and the toy research community.

We would especially like to thank Helena Kling for her years dedicated to the publishing of the ITRA Newsletter and the sense of fun she brought with her. Kati Heljakka has been added as an ITRA Editor, working alongside Suzy Seriff and Mark Allen - welcome Kati to the team.

In addition to the regular information on conference previews and reviews, and general news about members, a new section has been included, in which we profile an ITRA member and highlight their toy related research. The Publications & Books section will include a book review featured by one of our members. Luisa Magalhães has kindly agreed to assist the Editorial Team as our Book Review Co-ordinator.

The Newsletter has been formatted to allow the document to be read in either printed form or as a soft copy, which can be found on the ITRA website: www.toyresearch.org

Enjoy the Newsletter.

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Greetings from the President of ITRA

Dear ITRA Members,



I would like to express my gratitude to all of you and my happiness to be part of ITRA, nowadays as the new President; it is a true honour and an inspiring responsibility, which I will enjoy and try to do my best to take good care of. A guarantee for exciting ITRA years to come is its members, its experienced and skilled board members, including the editorial team for the ITRA Newsletter – I am looking forward to interesting, creative and competent collaborations.

Furthermore, I would like to say thank you to Uludag University, Faculty of Education, Department of Preschool Education in Bursa, Turkey for hosting the recent 6th ITRA World Congress “Toys and Learning in Different Cultures”. This includes the Congress President Prof. Dr. Handan Asûde Başal, the congress secretaries, the social activities organisers, the scientific committee, and last but not least, the previous ITRA president Dr. Cleo Gougoulis – thank you for a fantastic congress, which was a success, both organizational and content wise, and was very well communicating the mission of ITRA, namely to promote, stimulate and encourage toy and plaything research all over the world in order to broaden and spread knowledge about toys and promote the development of good toys for children. All this was achieved in a playful and serious manner!

At the very core of ITRA is to organize and arrange meetings and issue publications concerning the purpose of the association. In this regard, the initial planning of the 7th ITRA World Congress has started. ITRA was founded in September 1993 and, therefore, the next congress will take place already 2013, organised by Aalborg University in Denmark, so as to celebrate the 20th anniversary of ITRA. The next ITRA Newsletter will contain more information about the coming ITRA congress; in terms of Professor Emeritus Brian Sutton Smith, we hope the congress to become a *Carnival of toys and play*.

It is certainly an interesting time and I expect it to be an interesting year ahead of us. We look to enhance the visibility of ITRA and through the Newsletter and website, bringing energy and innovation to research on toys from different perspectives including different areas and bodies of interest. We look to maintain and expand the strong research infrastructure in the field of toys provided by our ITRA members, and to further communicate this through the Newsletter, website, and ITRA conferences. The intention is that this strategy shall be manifested in connection to the next ITRA conference. I encourage all members to tell your ‘stories’ through our Newsletter. We are working on improving the ITRA website to improve our internal functionality and external visibility. Accordingly, we will expand our efforts to keep in contact with all ITRA members, and to inspire more researchers to become members and part of the community. This is also to say, that members are welcome with input so that we can keep on expanding the visibility and public impact of ITRA research activities. Our goal is to keep moving forward. There is much to do, and I look forward to working with all of you these coming years to sustain the quality, camaraderie, and unique culture that define our ITRA community and activities.

I want to dedicate the closing of this Message to Professor Jeffrey Goldstein, one of the initiators of ITRA (together with Professor Emeritus Brian Sutton-Smith, USA and Jorn-Martin Steenhold, Denmark), for his valuable and outstanding contributions to ITRA and the research community. Jeffrey’s contributions have very much formed the toy research community to what it is today, especially ITRA’s collaboration and relation with the industry, and I am sure and hope that he will continue to participate in and influence the future developments of ITRA.

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REVIEW of 6th ITRA CONFERENCE

The International Toy Research Association Congress was held in Bursa, Turkey, 26th – 29th July 2011. The following report was written by Prof. Jeffrey Goldstein:

There were more than 100 participants from 22 countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Palestine, North America and most European countries, plus a great many scholars from the host country, Turkey. The Bursa meeting will be remembered mainly for the warm hospitality of the hosts, Peter Smith's keynote address (his message: play is one way, but not the only way that children learn), the ITRA-BTHA Awards session, and the remarkable mix of nationalities.



Professor Handan Asûde Basal, opening the conference on behalf of the University of Uludag

If a meeting is not very interesting you will feel tired afterwards, but if it is good you will feel energized. People left Bursa promising to stay in touch and to work together on toy projects. One such project is already underway: the Belgian anthropologist Jean-Pierre Rossie, who studies children's toys in Morocco, is working with Prof. Luisa Magalhães on how modern media, such as television and video games, affect the sort of toys that rural children make and how they play with them. A preliminary report of their project was presented in Bursa.



A presentation in progress

Other presentations included the history of toys¹ and the relation of toys to the culture in which they are made and used². Much research focused on toys and learning, for all ages (from prenatal³ to adults⁴ and the elderly⁵) and abilities⁶. Toy design featured prominently in a number of sessions, including toys designed by rural children⁷ as well as mass produced toys⁸. These and other sessions considered toy design education.⁹ Workshops

¹ Maria Argyriadi. European educational toys and games from... 1821-1828.

² Luisa Magalhães & Jean-Pierre Rossie. Toy play of Moroccan children influenced by TV...

³ Ahmed Abdelhalfiz. Toys for the unborn baby...

⁴ Katriina Heljakka. Learning to/from play...in adult life.

⁵ Despina Paspala. ...traditional children's toys in a centre for the elderly.

⁶ Siegfried Zoels. ...the computer and youngsters with special needs.

⁷ Suzanne Seriff. Traditional toys in a global marketplace.

⁸ Alexandra Ferreira. Superpowers, emotions, and the princess stereotype.

and presentations described a wide range of uses and applications of toys and games, including education¹⁰, health and well-being¹¹. A few games and toys developed for these purposes were shown.¹² Museum toy collections were described and analysed in several presentations¹³.



Karagoz shadow puppet theatre performance

ITRA Board 2011

Eva Petersson Brooks (Denmark, President)
Cleo Gougoulis (Greece, Treasurer)
Susan Seriff (USA, Secretary, Newsletter Co-editor)
Mark Allen (UK, Editor-in-Chief; Newsletter and Website)
Gilles Brougere (France)
Katrina Heljakka (Finland, Newsletter Co-editor)
Luisa Magalhães (Portugal)
Miriam Morante (Spain)
Jean-Pierre Rossie (Belgium)

The 2013 ITRA 20th Anniversary Congress will be in Denmark, at Aalborg University, Esbjerg (a brick's throw from Lego).

The ITRA-BTHA prizes were awarded during the 6th World Congress of ITRA on 28th July. The Senior Prize was awarded to Dr. Minna Ruckenstein, University of Helsinki, Finland, for 'Toying with the World: Children, Virtual Pets and the Value of Mobility.' *Childhood*, 2010, 17, 500-513. The Student Prize was awarded to Vasanti Jadva, University of Cambridge, U.K., for her paper with Melissa Hines & Susan Golombok (2010), 'Infants' Preferences for Toys, Colours, and Shapes: Sex Differences and Similarities.' *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 39, 1261-1273, based on her doctoral dissertation at University of Cambridge.

⁹ Vicki Thomas & Friedemann Schaber. ...Preparing designers for the global market. Lieselotte van Leeuwen. Social science as a tool... in toy design.

¹⁰ Artemis Yagou. Learning with toys...

¹¹ Yesim Taneli. Preoperative toy preference in children as compared to surgical parameters...in patients and parents.

¹² Paivi Marjanen. The board game Konkaronkka as a learning method.

¹³ Peeranut Kanhadilok. Technical toys... in science museums.

MEMBER PROFILE – Dr Minna Ruckenstein

Dr. Minna Ruckenstein is an anthropologist, currently employed as a Senior Researcher at the Finnish National Consumer Research Centre in Helsinki. Her research contributes to the study of childhood, consumption, technology and innovation by combining a study of children's uses of toys and technologies with anthropological research questions focusing on reciprocities and processes of cultural transmission and reproduction. Recent articles on these themes have been published in *Childhood*, the *Journal of Consumer Culture and Information*, and *Communication and Society*.



Minna Ruckenstein presenting at the Bursa Conference

As a Finnish Academy Fellow at the University of Helsinki, Dr. Ruckenstein, studied virtual pets, Bratz dolls, and explored the socializing discourse between teacher and student in Finnish kindergartens during 'toy days'. During the ITRA conference organized in Bursa, Turkey last July, she received the ITRA senior award for her research, published in the journal *Childhood*, which discusses virtual pets in children's play and demonstrates how interactions with toys and technologies shape children and childhood.

Children playing techno-toys

One of Ruckenstein's areas of research interest centres on an exploration of children's responses to new technologies in toys and media. Media research has emphasized ways in which media encourages and promotes certain actions and behaviours in children. One example involves an exploration of the ways in which children are socialized through video gaming and the use of mobile phones. From the perspective of well-established ideals of childhood and play, new technologies are often considered to be "cold" and uninviting, perhaps even damaging to children. According to Dr. Ruckenstein's research, based on studies of children between the ages of 5 and 7 in Helsinki, schools, new technologies may be of some cause for concern sociologically, but as media they do not limit children's play or imagination. On the contrary, Ruckenstein found that video gaming and play consoles offer children almost unlimited platforms for communication—both intended and invented-- that are deeply satisfying. In her studies, Ruckenstein focuses on specific and individualized analyses of individual toys, paying particular attention to what exactly children do with technologies, not what technologies might do to children. Ruckenstein's work particularly contributes to a growing scholarship on children's responses to the technologically evolving world through the lens of play

From gifts to social play

Another area of scholarly interest for Ruckenstein involves peer performance and communication for children through an analysis of the distinct types of peer-based communication afforded by different toy types. Personal toys such as soft toys, famously described as transitional objects, have been analysed as offering security and belonging to the child, thus promoting self-development. Toys that Ruckenstein has studied promote ideas of sociality of play, communication and sharing. In her analysis, the toy includes a powerful invitation that children present to each other: "Play with me!" The toy selections of children for toy days in Finnish kindergartens are important as children consider carefully with whom they want to play during these special days.

Toys are used in building relationships – they remind children of other children and toys are also borrowed and given to peers. Parents are much more concerned about questions of ownership, also in terms of toys. A toy is often a gift from the adult to the child, but the child's perception of the gift might differ from that of the giver. Contrary to adult expectations, a child might be inclined to give away an expensive birthday gift, if it satisfies a more immediate or seemingly important need of establishing or cementing a relationship with a peer.

Ruckenstein has found that children follow specific, self-articulated rules as to which toys they want to have, which they are willing to share or give away, and what they want to do with them. Desires at the toy store are often fleeting, but more lasting toy desires tell of children's social lives and daily communications with others.

Techno-play at an early age

Contemporary toys demonstrate that technology becomes part of human experience at an early age. Ruckenstein, who has conducted her work among Finnish children, sees that children in Finland are drawn to technologies, because their environments are saturated with digital influences. Toying with technologies is not seen as unlikely as it might be in many other countries where mobile phones are not an integral part of children's possessions. In their daily lives children approach phenomena between the 'real' and the virtual – mediated by toys such as virtual pets – in creative and eloquent ways. Since Finnish children become familiar with technologies at an early age, it is not surprising that toys such as the Tamagotchi caused a boom. Yet, Finnish children have their own ways of integrating Japanese-designed toys in their worlds. In general, the Japanese have a more intimate relationship to technology – even adults may be seen caring for virtual pets and experience them as a means to escape the harsh and demanding realities of everyday life. Virtual pets are seen as taking care of people, in such an environment.

In Finland, however, virtual pets are only really considered toys for children—not adults--and caring for them is not necessarily the prominent mode of interaction or meaning. Rather, Ruckenstein found that preschool children use virtual pets as gaming platforms that teach children how to expand their spheres of influence.

Minna Ruckenstein continues her research into the world of techno-toys by examining children's interactions with the most current forms of virtual media, such as the Nintendogs game and Habbo Hotel. She found that the theme of virtual pets carries over in the game of the Habbo Hotel, as well as earlier single pet forms. As in the earlier forms, Ruckenstein found that children anthropomorphise the digital media and thus come to create new forms of play, in even unforeseen dimensions.

In addition to her toy research, Ruckenstein is finishing a book project on the topic of *Childhood and Economy*, in which she discusses children as both producers and consumers. Economy and issues related to money are also closely tied with playthings: Toys are always investments and the decision to buy them might be based on a long forethought, or a sudden impulse.

Interviewed by Kati Heljakka



MEMBERS' FORUM

Please remember when you do send items for inclusion in the Newsletter to send them in a downloadable form.

BELGIUM

Jean-Pierre Rossie was sent the following e-mail from Amy Dickenson, entitled *Prescription for Play*, and thought readers may be interested:

“The Alliance for Childhood and KaBOOM! have produced a ten-minute video, [Prescription for Play: Physicians Speak Out on the Importance of Play for Children’s Health](#). It features interviews with Dr. Ken Ginsburg, pediatrician at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and author of *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings*, and Dr. Marilyn Benoit, Chief Clinical Officer at Devereux Behavioral Health and former president of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

The video deals with some truly important issues facing children and families today – rising levels of stress and anxiety, skyrocketing obesity-related health problems, dramatically reduced time for free play and play outdoors, hectic and overscheduled family life, and a lack of safe places to play, to name a few. We’d love for you not only to view the video but to share it as a resource among your networks. If you could embed it on your blogs or websites, send it to your email lists, post links on Facebook, tweet about it, share it with your newsletters, forward the link to friends, or arrange viewings in your community that would be wonderful.

We believe this film contributes to the movement to defend childhood and can serve as an important educational resource and advocacy tool for physicians, parents, educators, parks and recreation officials, government officials, and all community members as they work to restore childhood play. Please help us spread the word in any way you can!”

FINLAND

Kati Heljakka writes regarding *Brand Licensing Europe 2011(Through the Licensing Looking-Glass)*:

Licensing has a huge impact on the world of mass-manufactured toys. During three days every October, London functions as a focal point for the European licensing industry. The Brand Licensing Europe fair attracts visitors all over Europe and exhibitors from countries as far away as Korea.

The licenses presented during the event range from already well-established brands to characters yet unknown to the wider audience. Most of them are related to other fields of entertainment than toys, such as television series and cinema films. Sometimes a licensed character may make its entry into the world of toys through other areas such as graphic design or comics. In other words, a drawn character could find its way to 3D as the outcome of toy design. Thus, an event like this gives consumers and manufacturers an idea of possible future developments in the realm of toys.

One of the most noteworthy of trends that could be seen this year in London was the ‘Asian look’. The look of designer toys is having an impact on the visuality of contemporary characters including products such as figurines, dolls, stationery and other gift-related articles.

Star Wars: The Legend Lives

Besides providing the launching site for new products, the licensing fair also functions as a meeting-and-greeting point for old time licensing classics. Star Wars, the most successful toy license ever, was present in London through an interview session in the *Licensing Academy* with the leader of Lucas Licensing, Howard Roffman. Star Wars still shines as one of the brightest stars in the licensing universe. The brand has topped the list for the past three years as the most profitable license related to the entertainment sector, including toys. The value of Star Wars in terms of its capability to entertain, its mythic qualities, and its potential to bond generations, all contribute to the continued success of the George Lucas legend. Another reason for the continuing popularity of the Star Wars toys is the fact that the myth is constantly reinvented. For instance, the Clone Wars television series has brought the Star Wars brand to a new generation of young audiences, who might not have yet familiarized themselves with the original films. The recently launched BluRay versions of the classic films and the upcoming cinematic 3D release of the Episode I movie during year 2012 are already topics of discussion in the business of toys. A new 3D movie version (based on the original films) will be launched each year. So the legend lives on in the form of various products related to entertainment and it seems as though it will continue to do so. Roffman claims that one reason for the popularity of Star Wars is its marketing as a family-oriented license.

ISRAEL

Helena Kling, was sent the following, and forwarded the message for inclusion in the ITRA Newsletter. It seems that there may be room for specific contributions from our members regarding ethical issues related to toys and playthings for children. If you feel your work fits into this broader area of research, please consider writing a blurb on your research for our next Member’s Forum, and let us hear about your work:

“We are writing to invite you to contribute to an important international initiative aimed at improving understandings and practice in relation to ethical research with children and young people. This work, under way for the past two years, will culminate in an International Charter and Ethics Guidelines.

By way of brief background, Childwatch International convened a meeting at the University of London in July 2011 to discuss ethical issues and approaches to research with/on/for children and young people. This was attended by leading international child and youth researchers and managers in the fields of ethics philosophy, policy and practice. Participants at this meeting reviewed work previously undertaken by Childwatch International that included findings from an international survey exploring ethical issues in research with children in different international contexts and a comprehensive international literature review identifying key developments in this area (see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/project-of-the-month/2010/research-ethics>). The meeting agreed that while the importance of ethical research with children and young people is now widely accepted, the tension between universally agreed principles and situationally applied practice needs considerably more thought.

In order to progress this agenda, Childwatch International has partnered on a project with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre that will:

- a) Develop an *International Ethics Charter* for research involving children and young people (also linking to the values embedded in the spirit of the UNCRC).
- b) Develop *Ethics Guidelines* that can be applied within and across different international (research, policy, practice and disciplinary) contexts. These need to reflect universal principles and have relevance within diverse cross-cultural contexts.
- c) Identify cost effective, flexible *approaches to training / capacity building* for organisations and disciplines seeking to adopt more ethical child and youth research practice in a range of contexts.
- d) Develop a *web portal* to provide a repository of information, publications and resources relevant to child and youth research, as well as a discussion board for advice and support around ethical issues and dilemmas encountered by researchers, policy makers, practitioners and ethics governance bodies.

In progressing this project, we are mindful of the excellent work that has been undertaken in different international contexts, much of which we have already incorporated through the consultations and activities related to our previous survey, literature reviews and resource mapping exercises. We are conscious, however, there may be recent initiatives we're not aware of in relation to:

- 1) Child/youth research ethics initiatives, resources or activities that you would like to draw to our attention;
- 2) Training programs, modules or initiatives informing and/or supporting either new or more experienced researchers.

We would appreciate your further input on these two matters, particularly. More importantly, however, we would warmly welcome your ongoing engagement with this initiative as we are very committed to ensuring the development of the Ethics Charter and Guidelines continues to involve those in the child/youth research, policy, NGO and ethics governance communities with expertise and experience to contribute.”

Our contact details are:

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Professor Anne Graham

Director, Centre for Children & Young People, Southern Cross University, Australia

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Kati Heljakka writes regarding her experience at the *From Rags to Apps* Conference, held at the Shenkar College in Tel Aviv, Israel on the 10th November 2011:

Shenkar College in Tel Aviv offers a toy design course for its students. The school is most known for its talented students in the area of fashion design. This past November, a multinational group of toy and game designers were brought together by toy and game designer Yoav Ziv, who was largely responsible for the toy design course offered at Shenkar.

After Shenkar College President Yuli Tamir's opening remarks, the group of some 300 conference guests consisting of students and industry professionals enjoyed the presentations of eleven speakers all working in the area of toy invention, toy design, the toy industry or other creative realms where playfulness is in some way integrated in the designing and delivering of experiences.

The conference theme was inspired by ongoing developments in the area of contemporary playthings – how toys are, on the one hand, still the product of handicraft and communicate historical values associated with play, and how, on the other hand, toys merge with new technologies in order to create novel playful experiences. One of the key points made throughout all the presentations—whether they focused on handmade traditional toys or mass produced high tech toys-- was that toys bring people together and therefore cannot be seen as artefacts that solely promote solitary play. As toy designer Adam Shillito noted, technology toys used to have a static and anti-social status, but there is now a move toward a more down-to-earth attitude in interactive/technology toys. In the words of designer and researcher, keynote speaker in the conference, Hayes Raffle, interactive toys reveal ideas through play and co-evolve with the child.



Professor Shudarshan Khanna entertained the audience by showcasing traditional Indian toys. The topic of traditional Indian toys was further discussed by designer Efrat Shaked, who has worked in India documenting the disappearing tradition of hand-made objects for play. Simple toys not only capture both sound and motion, but carry a certain value system in them, as Shudarshan Khanna noted in his presentation. They represent an area of material culture that should be preserved in a time where recycled materials are also introduced.



Professor Yuli Tamir, Shenkar College President.

Toy and game inventor Haim Shafir highlighted the borderline between toys and games. According to Shafir, the answer to the question of whether a plaything is a toy or a game lies in the attitude of the player rather than the object itself. Toys are games that come with no rules or no premeditated patterns that children must follow. In other words, toys are objects used voluntarily for playing and should be designed with a 'feel good' factor in them to evoke and satisfy curiosity and to provide a sense of control in the mind of the player. The inventor further suggested that adding "toyish" qualities to games might make them more playable/successful products. In toy design, the adult designers reflect on their childhood memories and nostalgia when designing toys for children. As Yoav Ziv said "we put a lot of our memories inside the toys". The designers, in fact, influence and have an impact on the next generations view on (toy) play. Seen from another perspective, toys are not only played with by children as certain toys have an appeal to adults as well.

Oded Friedland, who, in his words, 'designs products for infantile adults,' thinks that the creative energy that the designer possesses can be seen in the final products as the player receives that energy in play. Yuli Tamir asked whether toys should be designed to have instrumental value or for the pure pleasurable effects that playing with toys evoke. In other words, should we design for pleasure or for learning? The question was further deliberated in many presentations ranging from the design of children's toys to the more adult oriented products from the gift market. Ultimately, as toy and activity product designer Alex Hochstrasser said, "children decide what is a good toy". The fact that children often are content with playing with 'non-toys' such as cardboard boxes could offer inspiration to designers. In Hochstrasser's thinking, children are the true inventors when getting in contact with a plaything. By paying attention to this, designers are able to learn more about play.



Sato Hisao showing examples of his toys.

Speakers and conference guests were also invited to attend an exhibit of toy designer Sato Hisao, from the world-renowned lifestyle product company Muji. Hisao's toys are designed for happiness and players of all ages. In the words of the designer, in order for a toy to communicate play value, it should be simple and clear, attractive and have a good quality. The exhibit added another interesting layer to the conference experience at Shenkar: The playthings of the designer were displayed for the first time outside of the shops and Japan.

UNITED KINGDOM

Tara Woodyer, wrote:

“I wonder if you might consider including details about my forthcoming knowledge exchange workshop - Playability: exploring material connections - in the next Newsletter.



In brief, Playability is a one-off workshop to explore the role of material connections in play, specifically those between children and traditional/digital toys and games. By bringing together play practitioners, play and toy industry representatives, games designers and academics, it aims to address two key challenges: 1) how to produce 'good' and/or successful play-related products; and 2) how to understand the role of material connections in play if we are to use play as a force for wider social good.

I'm happy to provide additional information as required.”

For further information see the following website:

Web: <http://materialsensibilities.wordpress.com>

E-mail: T.L.Woodyer@exeter.ac.uk

USA

Suzy Serif writes of her involvement, for the past five years, as head of the artist selection committee for the International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This Market, which takes place over two and a half days on the second weekend in July in Santa Fe, New Mexico, brings over 150 traditional folk artists from over 40 countries around the world to sell their craft. Over 90% of the proceeds of the sales go back to the artists. Serif is particularly interested in spreading the word of this phenomenal opportunity to those in our Association who work with traditional toymakers and might be able to help them apply for this highly prized and selective Market. The application process has already passed for 2012, but start thinking about 2013!

You can learn more about the Market and the application process on the website: www.folkartmarket.org, or contact Suzy for more details at seriff@aol.com.

CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

This section has been split into two sections covering both up-coming and past conferences and exhibitions. Hopefully mentioning past events will not induce depression as to what you may have missed, while we trust previews of future events will whet your appetite to attend. Previews and reviews of conferences are sought for the next edition of the ITRA Newsletter.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

January 2012

Rethinking the History of Childhood: Narratives, Sources, Debates will be held at the University of Greenwich, Centre for the Study of Play and Recreation, London, UK, 14th January 2012.

The history of childhood is now ripe for re-evaluation. Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* (1960, translated 1962) although roundly criticised, stimulated an interest in the history of children and the social construction of childhood which has grown exponentially in recent years. Childhood Studies has become a respected subject area embracing a range of academic sub-disciplines.

Yet the field is fragmented. The grand narratives of the 1970s have rarely been replaced with other interpretations of the *longue durée*. More recent paradigms, for example by Postman (1982) and Zelizer (1985), are also limited to the Anglo-American and/or Western European context. Specialists in sub-disciplines such as crime, labour history or policing frequently produce one book on childhood and youth and then return to studying adults. Yet there is a wealth of new research which calls for new models for interpreting childhood experience. The conference will debate existing paradigms while welcoming the work of new scholars and exploring collaboration with related sub-disciplines.

Themes include, but are not limited to: recent research on childhood and adolescence and youth; challenges to or revisions of the existing historiography; contributions from sociology, anthropology, literary studies, psychology, philosophy, geography; history of areas outside North America and Western Europe.

The conference coincides with an exhibition at the Stephen Lawrence Gallery entitled "Junk Playgrounds"

For further information see the following website:

<http://www.history.ac.uk/events/event/3395>

Food Networks: Gender and Foodways will be held at the University of Notre Dame, Paris, France, 26th – 29th January 2012.

The Conference organisers are seeking papers from a wide range of disciplines and approaches and hope to get papers that consider gender and food in relation to children - such as childhood obesity, eating disorders, representations of children, advertising, children's cookbooks, food toys, etc.

For further information e-mail:

Pamela.Wojcik.5@nd.edu

April 2012

Game Studies: 2012 PCA/ACA National Conference will be held at the Boston Marriott Copley Place, Boston, MA, USA, 11th – 14th April 2012.

The Game Studies area of the National Popular Culture Association and the American Culture Association Conference invites proposals for papers, panels and completed papers on games and game studies for the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference. Possible topics include but are not limited to: new game mediums and platforms, representation or performance of race, class, gender and sexuality in games; gaming culture, game specific cultures, and multicultural and cross-cultural issues; game development, design, authorship and other industry issues; game advertising, reviews, packaging, promotion, integrated marketing and other commercial concerns; political and legal entailments such as regulation, censorship, intellectual property; ludology, textual criticism, media ecology, narratology, etc as paradigms for games studies; player generated content in MUDs and MMORPGs, Mods, maps and machinima; game genres, platforms, consoles, console wars and connections to other media; serious games for education, business, healthcare, (military) training, etc; space and place in games, play spaces, virtual/physical communities, mobile gaming and localization; digital literacy, discourse practices, social norms and norming, the politics of play; and, public discourse/controversy over violence, militarism, sex, criminality, racism, etc in games.

For further information see the following website:

<http://pcaaca.org/areas/games.php>

Board Game Studies Colloquium will be held in München-Haar, Germany, 17th – 21st April 2012. The International Society for Board Game Studies holds yearly colloquia in which scholars, university professors, museum curators, historians, archaeologists, psychologists, mathematicians, game inventors, collectors and others share their research results on board games.

Mr. Tom Werneck will host the colloquium.

For further information see the following website:

http://www2.spiele-archiv.de/board_games.html

June 2012

The 26th ICCP World Play Conference, “Providing Play: Applications for Policy and Practice from Research,” will be held in Tallinn, Estonia, 18th - 19th June 2012.

Jan van Gils, President of the International Council for Children's Play writes: “Abstracts can be submitted online at our website www.iccp-play.org and more details about the conference will also be posted there. Even if you are not able to join us in Tallinn, please do visit our website for ICCP news and to download previous conference papers - and don't forget to leave your details so we can keep you updated in the future. Play is provided and organised in many different shapes and forms, from educational activities for pre-school children to childcare services for school-aged children, from play work settings to youth services for teenagers, from role-play to play in the virtual environment for all ages, from sports and leisure activities for young and old, and many, many more. This conference will explore what can be learned from research about providing play across the life-span and across cultures from a practical, philosophical and historical perspective.”

For more information see the following website or e-mail:

Website: <http://www.iccp-play.org/conferencetallinn2012.htm>

E-mail: info@iccp-play.org

Frode Svane is organising three more of his popular study trips in 2012:

1) Nordic Study trip (Week 25), 19th – 23rd June (5 day program) - Oslo, Copenhagen, Malmö/Lund (including an evening conference on the boat Oslo - Copenhagen), School grounds, kindergartens, parks, public places, and adventure playgrounds.

2) Berlin Study trip 1 (Week 26), 27th – 30th June (4 day program) - School grounds, kindergartens, parks, public places, adventure playgrounds.

3) Berlin Study trip 2, 15th – 17th September (3 day program) - focus on kindergartens outdoors, but also visiting parks and public playgrounds.

Please ask for more details, if you are interested.

E-mail: frode.svane@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.barnas-landskap.org> or <http://www.barnaslandskap.blogspot.com/>

September 2012

The Fourth International Games Innovation Conference will be held in Rochester, New York, USA, 7th – 9th September, 2012.

Conference Theme: Designing for Play

The IEEE Consumer Electronics Society is pleased to announce the Fourth International Games Innovation Conference. Continuing the tradition that began in London 2009, to Hong Kong in 2010, and extended to Orange, CA, USA in 2011, this conference is a platform for disseminating peer-reviewed papers that describe innovative research and development of game technologies. Participation from academia, industry and government are welcome. We are soliciting short papers (4 pages), long papers (5-8 pages), posters and panels.

For further information see their following website:

<http://ice-gic.ieee-cesoc.org/2012/index.htm>

November 2012

International Conference on Children and Youth in a Changing World, organised by the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Commission on Anthropology of Children, Youth and Childhood at the KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, will be held in India, 26th – 30th November, 2012. The conference will examine childhood cross-culturally and historically to gain the richest and best informed perspective for looking at children in the present and moving forward. The overall aim of the conference is to offer a common platform for anthropologists in academia, government organisations, non-governmental organisations and agencies working on and with children from different parts of the world to address various issues relating to children and childhood.



The conference is also open to non-anthropologists such as, but not limited to, aid workers, medical personnel, representatives of national, international and NGO intervention programs, as well as those working with immigrant, refugee and displaced communities. The conference will examine childhood cross-culturally and historically to gain the richest and best informed perspective for looking at children in the present and moving forward.

More information contact Prof. Deepak Kumar Behera by emailing behera.dk@gmail.com

PAST CONFERENCES

July 2011

Playing into the Future – Surviving and Thriving: the 50th Anniversary World Conference of the International Play Association (IPA), was held in Cardiff, Wales, 4th – 7th July 2011.

Speakers included; Dr Brian Sutton-Smith, Bob Hughes, Wendy Russell, Stuart Lester, Dr Sudeshna Chatterjee, Professor Marc Berkoff and Professor Lothar Krappmann.

For further information see their websites:

<http://www.ipaworld.org>

<http://www.playwales.org.uk>

October 2011

The Toy Library Nowadays, XII International Toy Library Conference, was held at the Fundação Memorial da América Latina, São Paulo, Brazil, 11th – 15th October 2011.

The concept of toy library, like any other, has been going through a continuous transformation over time, both in theory and in its practical application. This Congress aimed to create conditions for a broad reflection on the trajectory of the toy libraries, analysing all that has been achieved, the accomplishments, challenges and difficulties, in order to preserve its genuine contribution to the dissemination of the importance of play. Topics covered during the conference included; History and Present Prospects, Toy Libraries and the Digital Environment, and the Toy Librarian Formation.

For further information see their website:

<http://www.itla-toylibraries.org>

The 5th European Conference on Games Based Learning was held at The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, 20th – 21st October 2011.

The Conference offered an opportunity for scholars and practitioners interested in the issues related to Games-Based Learning (GBL) to share their thinking and research findings. Papers covered various issues and aspects of GBL in education and training: technology and implementation issues associated with the development of GBL.

For further information, please see their website:

<http://www.academic-conferences.org/ecgbl/ecgbl2011/ecgbl11-home.htm>

November 2011

ICERI 2011 - 4th Annual Education, Research and Innovation International Conference, was held in Madrid, Spain, 14th - 16th November 2011.

The objective of ICERI 2011 was to share experiences in the fields of Education, Research, Innovation and New Learning Technologies. ICERI is an International Forum for lecturers, researchers, professors, engineers, educational scientists and technologists.

Website: iceri2011@iated.org

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

The Arts of Survival: Folk Expression in the Face of Disaster, an exhibit at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, 4th July 2011-10th May 2012.

Curated by ITRA's Board Member, Dr. Suzanne Seriff, the exhibit explores how folk artists help their communities recover from four recent natural disasters: the Haitian Earthquake of 2010, Hurricane Katrina on the US Gulf Coast in 2005, 2010 floods in Pakistan and the recent volcanic eruptions of Mt. Merapi in Indonesia. Included among the folk arts are toy puppets, carnival masks, and found children's toys—all of which were made to provide comfort, council, prayer, beauty, resources and hope to rebuild and renew the lives of those affected by the disaster, one day at a time. As tragic events and terrible forces become part of these pieces, the events are memorialized and the pain they brought is brought to a manageable state. When the force of the Earth

breaks the world into pieces, the pieces can be collected and sold to bring an artist a step closer to economic recovery. This exhibit is the second exhibit in the Museum's newly inaugurated Gallery of Conscience, a Gallery that explores social justice, human rights, economic and environmental issues facing folk artists in the 21st century. Look for upcoming exhibits on toys and toymakers in the Gallery, which will be under the direction of Dr. Seriff.

On July 16th the **San Isidro Toy Museum** first opened its doors. Placed in the northern area of Buenos Aires, this museum is the first of its kind in Argentina.

This ten year-old project has a varied collection of toys that goes from the 1930's up to 1990's. It also offers a place where children and adults are able to play, to interact and to make full use of their imagination.



Play domestic scene



Games in the Garden

The different rooms have different topics such as popular and traditional games, inheritance of culture, games from around the world, the right to play, technological games and toys, war games and toys, the right of being cared, and other subjects related to childhood.

Their website is: www.museodeljuguetesi.org.ar (website under construction)

Of Toys and Men, a new exhibition at the Grand Palais, in Paris, opened 14th September 2011 to glowing reviews. It will remain open through 23rd January 2012, and will travel to the Helsinki City Art Museum from 21st February to 20th May 2012.

The exhibition focuses attention on the history of toys, from antiquity to the present day. With over 1,000 toys on display, the exhibit aims to go beyond a simple timeline of toy types, to look at some of the larger humanities themes which toys represent and reinforce. Through the display of antique dolls, royal dolls, Barbie dolls, trains, planes, boats, bears, mechanical toys, war toys, videogames, lead soldiers, flying saucers, Noah's arks and Father Christmas, the toys explore major humanities themes such as war, heroes, celebrations, gender roles, transportation and the globalization of the media age. "More than mere diversions, toys also tell us about the relationship between adults and children," said Bruno Girveau, a curator the exhibition, "of the world they want to offer them and the way they want to prepare them for it." The exhibit was co-curated by Dorothee Charles, curator, toys department, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris. Our ITRA Board member, Gilles Brougere, contributed an article to the excellent 328 page catalogue, *Des Jouets et des Hommes*, which was published by the Grand Palais in conjunction with the opening of the exhibit.

PUBLICATIONS & BOOKS



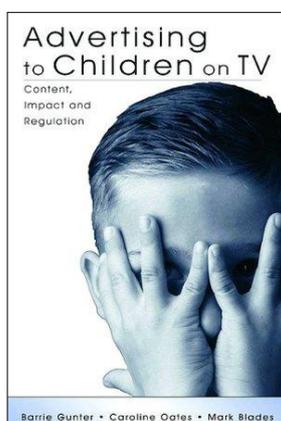
In each ITRA Newsletter, Luisa Magalhães, features a review of a toy related publication or book. In the current issue of the newsletter, Luisa considers a book which is closely related to her research into the relationship between children and TV advertising.

Luisa Magalhães obtained her PhD in 2009, and holds the position of *Full Professor* at the Catholic University of Portugal, Braga, lecturing graduate and undergraduate courses in Communication Sciences. Luisa is a leading expert in media and the effects on children and has been invited to present her research at a number of international scientific conferences. In 2011, Luisa launched a research project focusing on how children view television program content, specifically, toy advertising.

Book reviews, or book recommendations, are sought for the next edition of the ITRA Newsletter. Please submit these, either to Luisa at luisamagal@gmail.com, or, to the Editorial Team at itraneuwltr@gmail.com.

Advertising to Children on TV Content, Impact and Regulation

An inspiring book by Barrie Gunter, Caroline Oates and Mark Blades, published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates in 2005, this volume represents an honest and relevant attempt to understand the current field of research towards children and television commercials in the Western world.



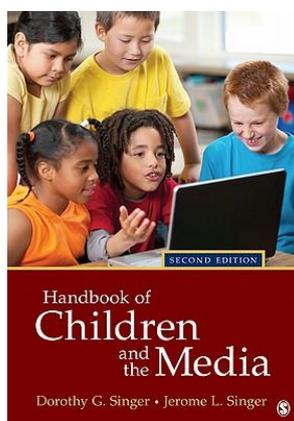
Most of the existing research is based on academic pilot studies that share a concern with understanding the love-hate relationship between children—and adults—and television advertising. I would personally recommend the chapters in which the authors discuss the effects of advertising on children's consumer behavior, desires, and demands. These chapters go a long way toward filling in the gap in the scholarly literature which, up until recently, has failed to provide a solid theoretical framework, relying instead on "common sense" inquiries into children's behavior—largely garnered through the eyes and ears of adults. Before proceeding with my review of this volume, allow me to state right up front my personal perspective on this issue, which colors my valuation of this burgeoning field of studies on children's consumer behavior and children's response to both the content and the intent of child-directed television advertising. First of all, I am aware that we need researchers to find a way to give a 'voice' to children. The quest for documented influence of advertising on children's consumer patterns must be framed in terms of an understanding of the different layers of children's cognitive development, in order to accurately grasp the actual position of children concerning current market endeavors. Next, it is important to examine and analyze the full scope of motivations for various purchasing behaviors, including the motivations of adults, who are the direct consumers of children's toys targeted for children under the age of 10 or 11. As research has shown, this is the age at which children may begin to purchase their own toys, or more directly influence the purchase of toys, because this is the age when they begin to have access to currency and an understanding of the consumer system. The fact that, until this point children can be viewed as 'second hand' consumers, advocates for the importance of studying the effect of advertising in ADULT purchasing behaviors, not in children's. Finally, I feel strongly that the key to unlocking this knowledge is through a careful preparation of research methods which appropriately and accurately assess the voices of primary school children so that research does not rely solely on adult testimonies to understand the real relationship between television advertising and consumption patterns by and for children. At the end of the day, if we think of the actual relevance of television advertising, as compared to internet advertising, product placement or peer group interchange, we may find that television advertising may lose its

fearsome power; perhaps, as the authors of this volume attest, it will be found to be astonishingly far from the most secure way to influence buyers. Instead, television advertising can regain some of its originally intended power: as a fantastic source of entertainment – as it surely is for most of us.

Luisa Magalhães (PhD)
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Catholic University of Portugal
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4710-297 Braga
Portugal

Singer, D.G. & Singer, J.L. (eds) (2012). *Handbook of Children and the Media*. Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Bringing together an interdisciplinary group of renowned scholars from around the world, the *Handbook of Children and the Media* is an all-inclusive, comprehensive analysis of the field for students and researchers. This book summarizes the current scope of research on children and the media, suggests directions for future research, and attempts to provide students with a deliberate examination of how children use, enjoy, learn from, and are advantaged or disadvantaged by regular exposure to television and other electronic media.



The new edition examines the proliferation of new forms of electronic media such as video and Internet enabled mobile phones, iPods, iPads, and Kindle that are accessible to even some of the youngest children, as well as the introduction of blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Skype and texting as forms of communication among young people and adults.

Fully revised and updated, this Second Edition of a popular text is:

Authoritative: The respected experience of Dorothy and Jerome Singer, coupled with an outstanding team of contributing authors, makes this the most authoritative volume available on this topic.

Comprehensive: More than 30 chapters in 3 sections examine the psychological, health, and social effects of media on children and their development, the media industry and environment, and policy issues and advocacy.

Cutting Edge: Debates surrounding important policy decisions in this area are often largely uninformed by empirical evidence. This text reviews diverse research and is a touchstone work in this area.

Nureh Esfahani, from the University of South Australia, recently submitted her PhD thesis entitled, *'Dresses are annoying. I like to design them myself': A post-phenomenological exploration of everyday artifacts*.

Abstract:

This research has been motivated by my personal experience as an Iranian industrial designer questioning how Barbie dolls could be examined as carriers of American culture. I became increasingly interested in this topic as the Iranian government banned the import of American toys because they were seen to be 'destructive culturally and a social danger.' Barbie dolls were accused of being 'American missiles' that teach girls to reject their Iranian cultural values.

As a consequence of my personal experience and cultural background, I decided to study the role of Barbie and Bratz dolls in Iranian immigrant families in Australia. I chose their homes as the sample of a non-western context which is a part of a globalised and western context.

My design background and my interest in applying design theories led to my decision to test the interaction between artefacts and users. In turn, this interest led me to the work of Peter Paul Verbeek, the Dutch post-phenomenologist. His work has been particularly interested in unravelling the close connections between the lived worlds of everyday human life and the artefacts around us. A lack of practical applications of post-

phenomenology motivated me to test this framework to examine the role artefacts play in the relationship between human beings and their world.

Thus, the great majority of the work of this thesis is anchored in the materiality of everyday life, in particular the worlds of children living in diasporic, global economies. This research has tested the efficacy of this post-phenomenological framework in an important contemporary context, one that crosscuts cultural boundaries and acknowledges the everyday diasporas in which young people are organising their identities and building their lives. It does this by:

- (i) Setting out a detailed overview of Verbeek's theoretical framework, paying particular attention to the concepts that carry most relevance to this particular piece of research;
- (ii) Applying this framework in an ethnographic study of engagement with an everyday artefact—Barbie and Bratz dolls—used by a group of young Iranian girls living in a regional Australian capital city; and
- (iii) Informed by the data generated in this ethnographic fieldwork, extend the scope of Verbeek's conceptual frame so that it can account for the complex everyday interactions between technology/artefact and human use in the creation of identities and everyday realities.

The International Journal of Play



Routledge will be launching the first edition of this journal in April 2012. *The International Journal of Play* is an inter-disciplinary publication focusing on all facets of play. It aims to provide an international forum for mono- and multi-disciplinary papers and scholarly debate on all aspects of play theory, policy and practice from across the globe and across the lifespan, and in all kinds of cultural settings, institutions and communities.

We welcome:

- Reports on research projects
- Review work across an area of research
- Papers concerned with theory-practice links
- Policy critiques and expositions
- Reviews and analysis of contemporary and historical publications
- Essays, memoirs, and other forms of reflective writing
- Writing that builds on the experience and voices of children and young people
- Theoretical position papers.

For further information, and to submit a contribution, please contact an editor:

Professor Pat Broadhead: p.broadhead@leedsmet.ac.uk

Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

Dr June Factor: j.factor@unimelb.edu.au

University of Melbourne, Australia

Associate Professor Michael Patte: mpatte@bloomu.edu

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, USA

The deadline for submissions for the first issue of the journal is 9th October 2011, with a revision date no later than 9th January 2012. All submissions must be made electronically to the editors for this first call. Papers must be between 6-7,000 words.

All papers submitted to *The International Journal of Play* undergo rigorous peer review based on initial editor screening and anonymised refereeing by at least two referees.

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1) The space shuttle program may have sadly come to an end a couple of months ago after several decades, but three wee astronauts are slated to go where no man or toy has gone before.
<http://www.inquisitr.com/132608/lego-figures-to-jupiter/>

2) Report of extremely expensive research - *Can bored pigs benefit from toys inspired by IKEA?*
<http://www.treehugger.com/green-food/can-bored-pigs-benefit-from-toys-inspired-by-ikea.html>

3) See *Play England, Making Space for Play* website: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/>

4) Each fall, public safety experts from U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), the Federation of State Public Interest Research Groups, browses toy stores across the country looking for potentially dangerous toys. Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2011/12/15/most-dangerous-toys-2011/>

5) Hamleys, the famed toy store on London's Regent Street, after accusations of sexism, has stopped grouping toys by gender.
<http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/12/15/british-toy-store-scraps-sexist-sections-for-boys-and-girls-toys/>

ITRA 2012 Fees Notice

Please note that according to the ITRA Board's decision in Alicante, 8th August 2005, conference fees cover ITRA membership fees until the following conference. This means that conference participants who paid full registration fees for the 6th ITRA conference in Bursa, Turkey 2011 have been exempted from paying ITRA dues for the years 2011 and 2012.

Annual membership: 50 EUROS/ US Dollars
Retiree// Student membership: 25 EUROS/ US Dollars

Payments may be made;

a) through bank transfer to the following account number

International Toy Research Association,
National Bank of Greece, Pal. Phaliro branch 175
Account number: 175/480074.53
IBAN Number: GR16 0110 1750 0000 1754 8007 453
SWIFT: ETHNGRAA

b) by sending an International Money Order, payable to ITRA, to the treasurer at the following address:

Cleo Gougoulis
73 Terpsihoris St.
P.Phaleoron
17562 Athens
Greece

Please notify me by sending an e-mail to: cleogougoulis@yahoo.gr, when you send your fees to the bank. It is important to mention what amount and in which currency you paid.

*Regards from,
Cleo Gougoulis
ITRA Treasurer*

EPILOGUE

The editors of the newsletter would like to thank everyone who contributed, and especially all those who will be contributing in the future - as editors we are the eternal optimists. We are planning to release another Newsletter, in Spring 2012.

If you attended a conferences this year - toy related preferably - have anything to say, whether about yourself, publications, events, research or just anything, or would like to propose an ITRA member we could profile, do not hesitate to contact either Suzy, Kati or Mark, via itraneewsletter@gmail.com. If you have read a book recently - again, preferably toy related – which you think may be of interest to ITRA members, make a point of e-mailing Luisa, at luisamagal@gmail.com, with either a book review or recommendation.

We would encourage you to feel free to send the editors articles, which we can share with the rest of the ITRA members. If English is not your first language, please do not let this be a hindrance to contacting the Editorial Team, we are more than happy to assist in editing items with contributors.

The Editorial Team would like to wish all ITRA members a fun festive period and a peaceful New Year.

Regards
Suzy, Kati & Mark

We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.
Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

