

# ITRA NEWSLETTER

**International Toy Research Association**

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<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>



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# PROLOGUE

The International Toy Research Association Newsletter is designed to keep members up to date with research in the fields of toys and play. In this issue, readers will find an overview of the 2014 ITRA World Congress to be held in Braga, Portugal, the Members' Forum, information on various publications, conference previews and reviews. 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.



The editorial team would like to announce that the ITRA website is back! Please note that the ITRA domain name has changed, consequently the website may be found at: <http://www.itratoyresearch.org>. The website covers the following: a description of ITRA, a brief history of the association, how to become a member, a catalogue of downloadable newsletters, and details of the forthcoming ITRA World Congress.

Those of you who promised material that never arrived... send it again. For those who made contributions, without which there would be many more blank spaces, a massive thank you.

Enjoy the Newsletter.

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## Greetings from the President of ITRA

Dear ITRA friends and colleagues,



I am honoured to address you as the new ITRA president! Spring is a season traditionally associated with change, hope and regeneration, a spirit that embraces our organization this season. Sparked by an unforeseen change in both the date and the location of the 7<sup>th</sup> ITRA Congress, the ITRA board has generously invited me to spearhead this transition until the date of the next Congress, in 2014, at which time a new president will be elected. It is my honour to be able to serve our members during this period.

I am pleased to announce, first of all, that we have a new website address. Our previous domain expired and we have a new domain name thanks to the efforts of our webmaster, Mark Allen. You can now find ITRA on the web at the following address: <http://www.itratoyresearch.org>

Secondly, it is my pleasure to announce that the 7<sup>th</sup> ITRA World Conference will be hosted by the Catholic University of Portugal and will take place in the charming town of Braga, Portugal, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2014. Luisa Magalhães and her team at the Faculty of Philosophy are already in business organizing the preparation details with great enthusiasm and very promising preliminary results.

Our initial plan of holding our Congress in Denmark to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ITRA in 2013 was compromised by the inability of the Danish team to meet the strict deadlines involved in the preparation of a world conference in a fairly brief time span. The board eventually decided to cancel the Denmark conference last week and Eva Petersson resigned from the positions of conference chair, ITRA president and ITRA board member. The ITRA board subsequently assigned me the task of serving as ITRA president until our next conference in Portugal. Furthermore, Lieselotte van Leeuwen, Department of Psychology, University of Sunderland, was appointed as new board member following the standard procedure described by our statutes.

Lieselotte has been with us at many ITRA conferences while those of you who attended the 6<sup>th</sup> ITRA conference in Bursa will remember that she organized and chaired the Symposium, "Found in Translation: Social Science as a Tool for Idea Development in Design for Play." On behalf of the ITRA board I would like to warmly welcome Lieselotte to her new position as board member and thank her for accepting the invitation to offer her services to ITRA in a period demanding hard work from all board members.

I wish to thank our members of the Secretariat Mark Allen, Kati Heljakka and Suzy Seriff for joining their efforts once more for the production of the Spring issue of the Newsletter with news from the world of toy research and some interesting information about the conference.

It is a great honour to serve ITRA from the position of president and I am grateful to my colleagues on the board for this important assignment and their support. Last but not least I wish to express my gratitude to Jeffrey Goldstein for offering his continual support and guidance in many ITRA issues despite the fact that he left the board in Bursa after having served as board member since ITRA's foundation in 1993.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter and I look forward to seeing you all in Braga in 2014.

The Secretariat will keep you up to date regarding the conference preparation and you should expect the Call for Papers this summer.

Until then, stay playful and imaginative!

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## THE 7<sup>th</sup> ITRA WORLD CONFERENCE

The Association holds international conferences every three years. So far six international conferences have been organized in Halmstad, Sweden (1996 & 1999), in London, England (2002), in Alicante, Spain (2005), in Nafplion, Greece (2008), and in Bursa, Turkey (2011).

The venue of the 7th ITRA conference has been confirmed. It will be held at the **Catholic University of Portugal**, in Braga, Portugal, and will take place **23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014**.



To whet your appetite, **Luisa Magalhães** has provided a snapshot of the beautiful city of Braga: Braga, situated in North Portugal, 50 km from Porto, is a fine city for holding a Congress because it is rather small with less than 200,000 inhabitants, has a well developed infrastructure, a historic and charming atmosphere and much to offer to visitors on a historical, architectural and gastronomic level as well as on the level of leisure and entertainment. It is nice wandering around the centre of Braga with its many historical buildings and churches in Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo style and this without having to use public or private transport. There are also some fine gardens such as the “Santa Barbara Gardens” which are within walking distance of the medieval walls of the Archbishop’s palace. In the large pedestrian area one finds inexpensive yet inviting restaurants with open air service featuring the local cuisine, with full bodied, locally produced wine such as the famous Vinho Verde. Even the bookshops have a special old-world charm as they not only sell books but also serve homemade coffee and cakes. A remarkable fountain in the Praça da Republica offers a light and music show each evening.

In 2012 Braga received the title of European Youth Capital. While the population is young and engaged, the town itself boasts ancient roots dating back to 250 BC, when it became the capital of the Roman Galicia region. Braga is located 35 minutes by shuttle from the airport of Porto. It enjoys an easy and efficient public transport system and ample public facilities for tourists. In the town centre one finds the TURISMO or public tourism office helping tourists with information and even guides. Those who like to hike and discover the magic of nature’s wonders should visit the hilly Bom Jesus Sanctuary and its park. To reach the 400m high area there are many stairs to climb but one can also take the Hydraulic Elevator—an experience in itself!—and walk down the stairs. From Bom Jesus the visitor can enjoy a splendid view of Braga and the surrounding region.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braga>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bom\\_Jesus\\_do\\_Monte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bom_Jesus_do_Monte)

## MEMBERS' FORUM

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

### GREECE

**Artemis Yagou** writes:

I would like to inform you about two new play-related papers of mine.

1) Artemis Yagou, "Is everyday technology serious or fun? Reflections on emotional styles in product design." *ICON*, vol. 17, 2011, pp 40-56. While this is officially the 2011 issue of *ICON*, the Journal of the International Committee for the History of Technology, <http://www.icohtec.org>, it has only recently been published.

2) Artemis Yagou, "Modernist complexity on a small scale: The Dandanah glass building blocks of 1920 from an object-based research perspective." *Deutsches Museum Preprint*. This paper results from the research I carried out on the *Deutsches Museum* toy collection as a scholar in residence (September-December 2011) and is available on the museum's website (<http://www.deutsches-museum.de/verlag/aus-der-forschung/preprint/>). The paper is freely available to download.

### USA

#### **International Play Association**

*Promoting the Child's Right to Play*

#### **UN STANDS UP FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO PLAY, ARTS AND LEISURE IN A LANDMARK MOMENT FOR CHILDREN**

GENEVA - (1 February 2013) Today the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child announced the adoption of an official document, or "General Comment" (GC), that clarifies for governments worldwide the meaning and importance of article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 31 ensures that "*States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities...and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*"

Article 31 has long been considered "the forgotten article" of the Convention. The General Comment adopted today, however, will right that wrong by clearly defining the responsibilities of governments that are implicit in the article.

The stated objectives of the General Comment are:

- a) To enhance understanding of the importance of Article 31 for children's well-being and development, and for the realisation of other rights in the Convention.
- b) To provide interpretation to States' parties with regard to the provisions, and consequent obligations, associated with Article 31.
- c) To provide guidance on the legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures necessary to ensure its implementation for all children without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity.

The International Play Association (IPA), which since 2008 has led an international group of co-signatories in the request for a GC, has been closely involved in its development. Theresa Casey, President of IPA, warmly welcomed today's adoption of the General Comment:

Play, recreation, rest, leisure and involvement in cultural and artistic life are all interrelated and critical to a happy, healthy childhood. Problems arise when such activities are considered luxurious or frivolous. They are all fundamental rights of children and IPA will do its best to continue supporting policy makers and practitioners who turn these rights into concrete actions. We are delighted by the Committee's decision to emphasize the importance of Article 31 in a General Comment, and are honoured to have assisted in the effort.

IPA's work was supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

#### **About The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):**

Adopted in 1989 by the UN General Assembly, the CRC is a treaty that defines and illuminates - in 54 separate articles - a wide range of human rights due to those under the age of 18. In a statement in 2000, Nelson Mandela described the CRC as "that luminous living document that enshrines the rights of every child without exception to a life of dignity and self-fulfilment."

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by its State parties.

(For more information, please visit <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/>)

#### **About International Play Association (IPA):**

International Play Association (IPA) is a non-governmental, voluntary organization founded in 1961. It has members in 50 countries and active groups around the world. IPA is an interdisciplinary organization bringing together people from all professions who work for and with children. IPA holds triennial conferences in



different countries. The next conference will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2014. (For details see [www.ipaworld.org](http://www.ipaworld.org))

A global survey in 2009 conducted by IPA and regional supporters in eight locations worldwide identified significant barriers to children's play. The Global Consultation was integral to establishing the need for the development of the General Comment on article 31.

'There isn't an age to stop playing because playing never dies inside us!' child participant in IPA consultation in Brazil 2011.

'Governments have to remember that you were children and you had dreams to play freely in the past' child participant in IPA consultation in Lebanon 2011.

#### **About Bernard van Leer Foundation:**

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international grant making foundation based in The Hague. Its mission is to improve opportunities for children up to age 8 who are growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. The Foundation sees this both as a valuable end in itself and as a long-term means to promoting more cohesive, considerate and creative societies with equal opportunities and rights for all. (For more information, see <http://www.bernardvanleer.org>)

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**Stevanne Auerbach** sent the following article from Wall Street Journal (16<sup>th</sup> July 2012) on high tech toys for young kids:

#### **Physical Toys Going Tech to Capture Kids' Imagination** by John Kell

- Toy makers offering a slate of traditional toys that can interact with digital elements in tablets and smartphones
- Tech innovations hitting retail shelves at a challenging time for the toy industry
- Child-development experts say technology-handling skills are important but are cautious about the play pattern.

When a talking bear named Teddy Ruxpin hit retail shelves in 1985, his ability to read audio cassettes forever changed how children could play with a stuffed animal. While Teddy Ruxpin's popularity peaked many years ago, a new play pattern emerged when an old-fashioned toy was infused with the latest technological development. That hybrid model of tech and toy, seen later in Mall Madness and Tickle Me Elmo, exists today and is changing rapidly as tech-focused innovation within toys heats up.

This year, toy makers are ramping up efforts to cultivate the soaring popularity of app-driven play by offering a slate of traditional toys--including race cars, board games and figurines--that can interact with digital elements in tablets and smartphones. The apps are often downloadable for free, while the physical components that engaged with the devices are sold by retailers.

And while millions of U.S. children have access to an iPad and other hot gadgets that often are shared among family members, child-development experts are cautious about how that form of play can affect cognitive and social abilities.

Child-development experts say that while young children need opportunities to develop early technology skills, akin to literacy comprehension, they caution tech-focused play shouldn't come at the expense of physical activity, face-to-face social interactions and creative play.

Dr. Stevanne Auerbach, a child-development and education-psychology expert, said that in the case of Teddy Ruxpin, the electronic bear encouraged children to read a book, adding beneficial educational value. But Dr. Auerbach warns that from a child-development standpoint, when tech takes over the toy or game, "some of the traditional play value often is removed, and there can be repercussions that are detrimental to children."

According to Dr. Karen M. Hopkins, clinical associate professor of pediatrics at New York University, "Many young children can use these devices effortlessly. This is something that's going to be with us forever, and we have to learn to adapt to it and learn to adapt our expectations, but not put too much stock in it."

Dr. Michael Shore, vice president of consumer insights at Mattel Inc. (MAT), says app play often incorporates existing play patterns but gives children another platform to use. For example, pushing a Hot Wheel on the floor or on a track set reinforces elements that make play fun, like speed control and action. The Apptivity platform, according to Dr. Shore, allows kids to still control a physical component by pushing a car that engages with a virtual game course on an iPad.

"Kids are gaining more control over what they want from their play experience, and more control of the different platforms that exist--physical and digital," said Dr. Shore.

Jonathan Berkowitz, vice president of marketing for Hasbro's gaming, said one of the challenges facing toy makers when developing hybrid toys is that mobile games are often consumed in short spurts. As a result, Hasbro's "zAPPed" games allow for quick play but need some depth, Mr. Berkowitz said.

For Hasbro Inc. (HAS), Mr. Berkowitz said it took some time to make sure the gaming steps were intuitive for users. He said Hasbro also has discovered the development cycle is shorter for mobile play, which should help Hasbro offer more relevant content and lead to faster upgrade cycles.

LEGO Group's Life of George, an interactive game that combines physical LEGO bricks with apps for Apple Inc. (AAPL) devices and select Androids, hit retail shelves last fall but is being repackaged as part of a national rollout.

Initially, LEGO intended to market Life of George to an older audience, but after finding it was equally appealing to younger users, the company created new packaging that suggests usage for ages 8 and up, which is half the original target age.

Mattel's Appitivity Hot Wheels are currently sold exclusively in Apple stores, with a wider distribution planned for August. Hasbro's zAPped edition of the Game of Life and Monopoly are also available, and both toy makers have more physical-digital hybrid games hitting shelves later this year.

Needham & Co. analyst Sean McGowan said as play has been increasingly digitalized the past few decades, and it can be hard for older brands with established play patterns to replicate consumer satisfaction in the digital world. Mr. McGowan said toy makers need to figure out what it is that makes that historic play pattern enjoyable "and transfer that into the digital world."

Still, "apps, although useful and wonderful, can't replace crayons, puzzles and teddy bears," said Dr. Auerbach. "I want to see children entertained and well-informed, but apps and technology shouldn't replace reading books, playing board games and active outdoor play experiences."



## CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

This section covers 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

#### July 2013

**Making Sense Of: Play**, will be held at Mansfield College, Oxford, England, UK, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

The interdisciplinary project Making Sense Of: Play seeks to examine the various meanings of “play,” elucidate their inter-relationships, and trace the origins of the patterns of play and their place in the human condition.

Variations in cultural conditions naturally impact on play, its meanings and its forms, as do, often in a different way, economic inequalities both within and between different cultures. Our deliberations will necessarily take this into account. Throughout its etymological history, “play” has been closely connected to the world of children and make believe. Academic study of play, too, deals predominantly with various aspects of children’s play and its importance in development. There is, in fact, a lack of balance between the study of play in relation to children and childhood, on one hand, and “play” more generally, as outlined above, on the other. For this reason our project explicitly emphasizes the comparatively under-explored aspects of play in linguistic, literary, philosophical, historical, psychological and evolutionary frames of reference. For further information see the following website:

<http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/making-sense-of/play/>

E-mail: [turgeon@optonline.net](mailto:turgeon@optonline.net)

#### October 2013

**The 7th European Conference on Games Based Learning - ECGBL 2013**, will be held at Instituto Superior de Engenharia do Porto (ISEP), Porto, Portugal, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

Games have been shown to promote learning and the development of personal and social skills such as socialization, teamwork, leadership, decision making and collaborative learning. Games have been successfully used in three distinct areas: training (professional and social context), formal education (classroom and school context), non-formal education (outside the school context). However, there is still limited use of game-based learning. This has mainly to do with social concerns and stereotypes about the relation of games and education. But this limited use is also related to the lack of extended evidence of effective application. Throughout the years, ECGBL has been addressing this issue by providing a forum to exchange ideas and best practices among researchers and practitioners, therefore contributing to a wider adoption of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Europe.

For further information see the following website:

<http://academic-conferences.org/ecgbl/ecgbl2013/ecgbl13-home.htm>

### PAST CONFERENCES

#### June 2012

**The 26th ICCP World Play Conference, “Providing Play: Applications for Policy and Practice from Research,”** was held in Tallinn, Estonia, 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

The conference explored what could be learnt from research about the provision of play by adults in the light of the widely-held view of children’s need for undirected time and space in their lives from a practical, philosophical and historical perspective.

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

**Frode Svane** organised three more of his popular study trips in 2012:

1) Nordic Study trip (Week 25), 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June (5 day program) - Oslo, Copenhagen, Malmö/Lund, School grounds, kindergartens, parks, public places, and adventure playgrounds.

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

3) Berlin Study trip 2, 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September (3 day program) - focused on kindergartens outdoors, also visited parks and public playgrounds.

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

## September 2012

**The Fourth International Games Innovation Conference** was held in Rochester, New York, USA, 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

Conference Theme: Designing for Play

This conference was a platform for disseminating peer-reviewed papers that described innovative research and development of game technologies.

For further information see the following website:

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

**Child in the City 2012: 6th International Conference** was held in Zagreb, Croatia, 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

This conference considered how best to involve children in a city's network, in its economic and social life, though play – since children are experts at playing.

Further information can be found at:

<http://www.childfriendlycities.org/>

## October 2012

**The 6th European Conference on Games Based Learning** was held in Cork, Republic of Ireland, 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

Attendees had the opportunity to learn more about the topic of Games-Based Learning, by attending keynotes, presentations, workshops, and showcases, all delivered by experts in the field.

Further information can be obtained at:

<http://academic-conferences.org/ecgbl/ecgbl2012/ecgbl12-home.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, was held in India, 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

The conference examined 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 was to offer a common platform for anthropologists in academia, government organisations, non-governmental organisations and agencies working with children from different parts of the world to address various issues relating to children and childhood.

For additional information contact Prof. Deepak Kumar Behera by emailing [behera.dk@gmail.com](mailto:behera.dk@gmail.com)

## February 2013

**2013 Conference on the “Value of Play: Taking Action!”**, was held at Clemson University, South Carolina, USA, 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

The Conference on the Value of Play attracted a wide range of attendees, including medical professionals (including doctors), educators, parents, play professionals, people working in parks and recreation, landscape architects, psychologists and many more. The conference also attracted attendees from across the globe.

Topics covered included:

- New research from leading academics in the field.
- Information on why play is such a crucial part of our life regardless of our age or ability
- Actions and strategies to help incorporate play into our daily lives.
- New connections with others focused on increasing awareness of the value of play.

Further information can be obtained at:

<http://usplaycoalition.clemson.edu/conf2013.php>

## March 2013

**The 39<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Association of the Study of Play (TASP) on Play as a Pathway**, was held at the University of Delaware, in Newark, Delaware, USA, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2013.

Play has been a pathway to connect those who study play from multiple disciplines and those who advocate human rights across the life span. This year's theme, “Play as a pathway,” addressed the topic of play from various research, theory, or advocacy perspectives, which facilitated the examination of various views of play as pathways and connections to one another.



## April 2013

**The child's room as a cultural microcosm: Space, Consumption and Pedagogy**, was held at the National Museum of Education, Rouen, France, 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

'The child's room as a cultural microcosm' aimed at gathering knowledge on the subject of children's domestic material culture and stimulating the development of research along three main axes. These axes were chosen to have a better understanding of the child's room historically, as well as in the contemporary world, in its materiality as well as in its representations. The first axis examined the child's room from an architectural-spatial point of view, as well as a well-defined space within the house specifically intended for the child. It may be characterized by technical specificities (shape, volume, etc.) as well as cultural ones. The second axis investigated the child's room as a privileged place for his or her belongings. The idea was to focus on children's consumption and material culture, examining how objects actually belong to a child in a child's room. Finally, the last axis considered the child's room as an educational place that sits at the intersection of both pedagogical and recreational uses and, as such, of both adults' and children's points of view. The organisation of this room thus may contribute, in turn, to the education of taste, to an aesthetic education or to the education to consumption.

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## PAST EXHIBITIONS

### January 2013

*Kids@Play* exhibition was held at the **2013 International Consumer Electronics Show** in Las Vegas, USA, 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

Today's kids have grown up in a digital world. Babies cut their first teeth on tablets. Toddlers bang on mobile phones before they can walk. By the time they reach high school, these kids will likely dabble in video production, explore virtual worlds and own a drawer-full of prized personal consumer electronics. From storybooks to Facebook its how they learn, communicate and entertain themselves. Explore how being digital today creates a smarter world tomorrow.

Moms are technology's biggest adopters and most vocal users. MommyTech focuses on the innovations, intelligence and tools of the trade needed to reach this coveted \$90 billion market. It's about establishing trust, building relationships and creating stylish, functional products. From house cleaning to wearable fashions, mobile smarts to keeping the family safe and engaged, Mom is the household's CEO. Empowering them with technology helps them juggle priorities, stay connected and savour their multiple roles.

E-mail: [summitinfo@kidsatplaysummit.com](mailto:summitinfo@kidsatplaysummit.com)



## PUBLICATIONS & BOOKS

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](mailto:luisamagal@gmail.com), or, to the Editorial Team at [itranewsltr@gmail.com](mailto:itranewsltr@gmail.com).

Bruno Girveau and Dorothée Charles, eds, **Des Jouets et des Hommes**. (2011). Paris. Editions de la Rmn-Grand Palais.  
ISBN 978-2711857951

Book review by: Cleo Gougoulis, *Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplion, Greece*

\* A longer version of this review was published in the *American Journal of Play*. Vol 4, No.4, Spring 2012.

This comprehensive and extremely attractive book was the companion volume to what must have been a fascinating and well-documented international exhibition on the history of toys made for Western children from antiquity to the present, with an additional glimpse of twentieth-century toys from Japan. Bearing the same title as the book, the exhibit *Des Jouets et des Hommes* (Of Toys and Men), was organized by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux Grand Palais in collaboration with the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and was co-organized by the Helsinki Art Museum. The exhibition was first mounted at the National Galleries of the Grand Palais in Paris, France from the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 till the 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2012, and subsequently in Helsinki, Finland from the 21<sup>st</sup> February through to the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2012.



The volume consists of two parts. The second part of the book, the catalogue, focuses more closely on the themes of discrete exhibit sections: toys and gift giving, animals, automata, simulation of grown-up occupations, gender differences in toys, the impact of media on toys, and the emotionally-fraught issue of what happens when children outgrow their toys. Each of these themed sections features brief introductory essays and then expands on the relevant theme in sections illustrated with images of French and international toys and dolls. An appendix to the book contains a complete list of the 745 displayed items, alphabetical indexes of the inventors, designers, artists and manufacturers who created the toys, and an impressive bibliography that attests to the international scope of the book. While the catalogue provides important historical information on numerous toys and toymakers, this review focuses mainly on the content of the first part of the book.

Part one features an introduction and nine articles written by sociologists, communication scientists, archaeologists, historians, and museum curators who draw on the exhibit for inspiration to discuss important theoretical issues related to the history of toys from an interdisciplinary perspective.

In their introductory article, Dorothée Charles and Bruno Girveau, curators of the exhibit and editors of the volume, clarify the exhibit's goal: to shed light on the complex relationships between toys, children and adults from antiquity to the present while emphasizing how all toys educate and socialize children, from the moment children first acquire them to the point at which they outgrow them. The large time-span of the exhibit, according to the authors, does not aim towards a historical periodization or the presentation of watersheds in the history of toys. Instead the exhibit highlights enduring themes in the form, content, and symbolism of children's playthings, from ancient rattles to contemporary electronic toys and games, as they evolve over time.

Gilles Brougère's important theoretical contribution to the volume attempts to untangle an old question about the relationship between human agency and the "agency of things." Scholars of material culture and cognitive and developmental psychology have, in recent years, increasingly explored the affordances of objects, including toys. Brougère makes the point that, even if children may use playthings in unexpected ways during make-believe play, toys are objects that are crafted by adults in forms that encourage certain possibilities of play, while simultaneously embodying historical conceptions and discourses of childhood and play. Brougère's article systematically analyzes the multiple ways in which toys address children to convey messages about contexts,

meanings and possible uses in play by inscribing in their form and design particular affordances (their playability), images (representations of the world) and rhetorics (discourses and persuasion techniques). Stephen Kline's critical analysis of the growth and transformation of the modern toy market offers an invaluable complement to Brougère's essay. For Kline the collection of toys presented in the exhibit tells a story about the changing industrial economy in which they were produced and consumed. The huge number of beautifully crafted dolls, doll accessories and toys on display attests to the growing seriousness that toy making represented in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The French Department Stores' catalogue illustrations of Père Noël dropping toys from an inexhaustible sack speaks of the commercial discourses that wove together Christmas celebration, gift-giving and toy-making in the invented tradition of the gift-giving Santa. They also allude to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century associations of modernity with cornucopia, as modern children were promised access to a range and quantity of toys once only available to children of the aristocracy. Kline's analysis, by tracing structural transformations both of capitalism and the toy industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, usefully calls attention to key turning points in the *long durée* of toy history.

Michel Manson explores the history of French commercial toys from the medieval era through the present day. Though his discussion of French toy making in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is brief, he notes the increasing predominance of German, American, and Japanese manufacturers over French companies. Throughout, he identifies structural parallels in the development of socioeconomic and ideological phenomena in different historical periods. For example, he notes that the emergence of a professional toy trade in both Ancient and Roman Greece and late Medieval France testifies to the presence of a "sentiment of childhood" (a term coined by Philip Ariès to convey both feelings for and an awareness of childhood) and a view that play is a legitimate source of pleasure. Manson concludes his article by pinpointing the need for a detailed study of the 20<sup>th</sup> century French toy market in conjunction with a cultural history of childhood.

Helmut Schwartz presents the history of toy production in Nuremberg, a city known as "the capital of toys" for the last 600 years. The rise of toy making in Nuremberg was linked to the economic importance of the city during the medieval era, when a favourable environment for innovation and technological advances contributed to the establishment of Nuremberg as a production centre of renowned craftsmanship. Technological innovation and the growing division of labour also contributed to the structural changes in the economy during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which made Nuremberg the centre of famous metal toy producing companies. Schwartz makes an important link between production and consumption: the cheap prices of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial toys were not only the outcome of mechanization but also of long hours of underpaid outwork labour performed at home by women and children employed to hand paint toys for the factories of Furth and Nuremberg. Schwartz, further, cautions visitors of the exhibit against nostalgic feelings that the beautiful metal toys on display might invoke by reminding them of the exploited child labour that produced them.

Veronique Dasen's article relies on excavation materials and written sources to emphasize the importance of toys to both adults and children in Ancient Greece and Rome. Interpreting objects of the past has never been straightforward, and Dasen highlights the importance of the context in which we find toys as one of the keys to understanding their possible meanings. Some of the toys Ancient Greek and Roman parents gave their offspring bear striking similarities to well-known classic modern toys such as rattles, animal-shaped pull toys, carts, and dolls. Dasen argues for the need to go beyond similarities in form to interpret the meaning of toys over time. Toys have historically been more than playthings, carrying multifarious meanings and functions. Dolls in girls' tombs representing adult females with marked bodily features were not merely everyday playthings but aimed to introduce girls to religious and matrimonial life and perhaps to fulfil in the afterlife the promise of maternity, that had been rendered impossible by the child's premature death.

Dorothee Charles explores the continuities and changes in the use of toys as means for gender socialization by focusing on the historical trajectories of gender dichotomies in more contemporary children's playthings. Her approach is innovative. Rather than taking the gender divide between girls' and boys' toys for granted, she highlights semantic shifts and boundary crossings of gender stereotypical toys, such as dolls and horses, as well as changes in the specific ways gender stereotypes are expressed. Charles' investigation of gender stereotypes in the world of toys takes into account the historical development of contemporary colour codes denoting gender.

Most western adults and children associate pink with girls and blue with boys. What is less known, however, is that the use of pink and blue to denote the gender of girls and boys originated in the clothing industry of the 1920s which originally used pink for boys and blue for girls. It took more than 30 years for the current colour symbolism to solidify, as the pink shades in boys' and the blue shades in girls' pages of the 1955 catalogue of the Au Bon Marché Department store indicate! Jo Paoletti and Carol Kregloh, Julia Grant, Daniel Cook, and Eva Nwokah, have linked the development of colour coding in the US with changes in the perception of infancy, childhood and child rearing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Charles reaches similar conclusions about the social construction of gendered colour codes by relying on her own research of 20<sup>th</sup> century toy catalogues from French Department stores. She also draws on the work of the colour historian Michel Pastoureau for the presentation



and interpretation of the semantic shifts involved in the use of colour symbolism to denote femininity and masculinity.

Jeanne Damamme explores how children and manufacturers have used legends, fictional stories, and historical events to inspire both play and toys, from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to today's media-saturated age. Damamme's discussion of the ways in which real individuals have inspired folk imagination and children's make-believe is particularly interesting. It highlights how the varying experiences and cultural narratives of participants situated on opposed sides in the same historical event have been variously reflected in toys. For example, whereas French children's toy soldiers and dolls depicted and celebrated Napoleon, in the aftermath of the French invasion of Russia in 1812, Russian toymakers manufactured wooden miniature figures that commemorated the heroism of Russian peasants. Damamme concludes her article optimistically, noting that contrary to the concerns of some contemporary toy critics children remain the masters of their play, using the media to their own ends.

Vincent Berry attempts an "archaeology" of video games that challenges the usual description of video game culture as a major rupture in the history of play and childhood. Video games first arose in the late 1950s, and a number of factors such as hacker experimentation by students of leading USA technical universities, the development of a science fiction youth culture, and research funding by the military industry in a Cold War context contributed to the rapid development of these games in the 1970s. Where we find turning points usually depends on how we define our analytical categories, and Berry presents a number of possible genealogies based on different definitions that link video games to a variety of classic toys and games (e.g. yo-yos, automata, and pinball machines) as well as common cultural themes such as science fiction and fantasy play. Berry sheds light on the parallel importance of science fiction in the world of toys.

Bruno Girveau, in his concluding article of Part 1, offers a historical perspective on the ritual occasions by which children acquire - and abandon- their toys. In antiquity part of the rites of passage to adulthood involved renouncing one's toys before marriage or the age of majority and dedicating them to particular deities. Today, the transition to adulthood no longer calls for formal rituals—except those marked by school grades and academic degrees—and yet giving up childhood toys can become a kind of modern secular rites of passage. In fact, the separation of modern kids from their toys constitutes the central theme of the *Toy Story* trilogy, a point made also by Kline and Brougère in their essays. Girveau draws on *Toy Story* to trace the trajectories of the unused toys of our childhood. Some of the outgrown toys, in the USA and more recently in France, are re-commoditized and are sold to other children in garage sales. Others are stored by parents or children as nostalgic mementoes of childhood and yet others are donated to museums, *in memoriam*, such as two dolls displayed in the exhibit, one from a girl killed in a 1904 New York shipwreck and another from a girl who died in the 9/11 tragedy respectively. Abandoning childhood toys does not mean giving up play altogether, as adult preoccupations with toy models or the formation of toy collections attests. Girveau concludes by agreeing with the happy ending of *Toy Story*; toys represent the imaginative potential of reconceptualising the world, a capacity not compromised by the act of leaving our toys behind as we grow up.

This book makes an important contribution to the scholarly literature on toys. I think it overemphasizes adults' perspectives of children's playthings giving the meaning children make of their toys no real analytical importance, which is unfortunate in light of the growing archaeological, historical, anthropological and folklore literature on children's active participation in cultural production and reproduction. Children's perspectives are not altogether absent—as the section on children's pretend play of future professions and the whimsical artistic installations of Pierrick Sorin suggest. Still, they remain marginal. I do not mean to diminish the value of the volume or the quality of its interdisciplinary contributions, but more to point to the need for high-quality exhibits and books that incorporate children's views more actively.

The strength of the book lies in its successful combination of copious details about the toys in the exhibit—a large number of which are beautifully portrayed in full page illustrations—and an exciting interdisciplinary analysis of the toys' historical contexts. The volume is an invaluable reference book for scholars, laymen, and practitioners interested in historical approaches to childhood, toys, play, education and material culture.

**Miguel Sole, Jenna Watson, Rita Puig & Pere Fullana-i-Palmer.** (2012). "Proposal of a new model to improve the collection of small WEEE: A pilot project for the recovery and recycling of toys." *Waste Management Research*, vol. 30 (no. 11, November), 1208-1212.

[The authors are at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Igualada, Spain]

A new collection model was designed and tested in Catalonia (Spain) to foster the separate collection and recycling of electronic toys, with the participation of selected primary and secondary schools, as well as waste collection points and municipalities. This project approach is very original and important because small



household WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) have low rates of collection (16–21% WEEE within the EU, and 5–7% WEEE in Spain) and no research on new approaches to enhance the collection of small WEEE is found in the literature.



The project was successful in achieving enhanced toys collection and recycling rates, which went up from the national Spanish average of 0.5% before the project to 1.9 and 6% toys during the two project years, respectively. The environmental benefits of the campaign were calculated through a life-cycle approach, accounting for the avoided impact afforded by the reuse of the toys and the recycling of the valuable materials contained therein (such as metals, batteries and circuit boards) and subtracting the additional environmental burdens associated with the establishment of the collection campaign.

**Kourti Evangelia & Giannis Bistikas** eds. (2012). *Paigniothikes: Horoi Epikoinonias kai Psyhagogias (Toy Libraries: Places for Communication and Recreation)*. Proceedings of the International Conference “Toy Libraries: Places for Communication and Recreation,” Athens 11-12 November 2011, Athens: Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Athens. (in Greek), 151 pages.



As stated in the introduction to the book by Evangelia Kourti and Yannis Bistas the publication “...aims to make the concept of toy libraries known in Greece, to disseminate information on the objectives, function and the services of toy libraries to communities, and to acknowledge and promote the value and importance of play in contemporary life.” This useful and informative little book for anyone interested in toy libraries in the Greek and International context includes three articles by ITRA members Evangelia Kourti (Introduction), Dimitris Gouscos (Toy libraries and technology: towards a concept of digital toy libraries), Despina Karakatsani ( From creative learning to educational toys: the place of toys in Greek education (1950-1970).

For more information on the book and its distribution please contact Prof. Evangelia Kourti  
email: [ekourti@ecd.uoa.gr](mailto:ekourti@ecd.uoa.gr)

### **The International Journal of Play**

The third issue of the *International Journal of Play* in 2013 will be a Special Issue devoted to the role of play in human well-being. The journal invites papers that enlighten our understanding of how play adds to human resilience and functioning. Since play is a topic of interest across a broad spectrum of contexts, the journal welcomes papers drawn from any cultural or social setting.

Theme: Play and Well Being

Manuscript deadline: 1st May 2013

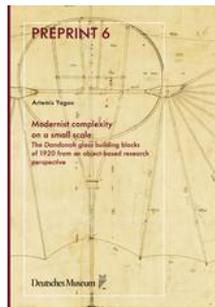
Issue Editor: Cindy Dell Clark

For more information on how to submit your paper, see the official Call for Papers [here](#).

Why not check out some of the Most Read articles (free access) from *International Journal of Play*:

- What is the state of play? *David Kuschner*
- Children and Social Change: Memories of Diverse Childhoods *Hannah Henry Smith*
- Beyond the gaudy fence *Penny Wilson*

**Yagou, Artemis** (2013). *Modernist Complexity on a Small Scale: The Dandanah Glass Building Blocks of 1920 from an Object-based Research Perspective*. 61 pp. Contents, figures, bibliography. Available as a free download from the Deutsches Museum in Munich website:  
<http://www.deutsches-museum.de/forschung/publikationen/preprint/>



This publication provides a detailed documentation of “Dandanah,” the name of a construction set consisting of glass building blocks designed and made by the modernist architect Bruno Taut and stored among the toy collections of the Deutsches Museum in Munich, a museum dedicated to science and technology. The author records the history of the particular construction set, compares it with similar construction toys in other German museums and discusses the ideas encapsulated in the particular choice of coloured transparent glass as a building material. Dandanah, an Indian word denoting a bundle of rods or pillars, is the name given by the designer to a Fairy Palace, one of the proposed construction patterns for the glass blocks. An informative book for toy museum curators, historians of design and architecture, toy historians and toy designers.

#### **The American Journal of Play**

The latest issue of American Journal of Play (vol. 5(2) Winter 2013) includes the following articles:

- The why, how and what of a museum of play: an interview with *George Rollie Adams*
- Children's thinking styles, play, and academic performance, *Robin M. Holmes, Sharon Liden, and Lisa Shin*.
- Playful learning and Montessori Education, *Angeline S Lillard*.
- The use of play materials in early intervention: the dilemma of poverty, *Eva Nwokah, Hui-Chin Hsu and Hope Gulker*.
- Play and the Avant-Garde: aren't we all a little Dada? *Philip Prager*.

## MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- 1) “Smart building blocks let kids engineer tech creations with ease.”  
<http://www.nbcnews.com/technology/gadgetbox/smart-building-blocks-let-kids-engineer-tech-creations-ease-1C7501602>
- 2) “Let the Children Play, It's Good for Them!” A leading researcher in the field of cognitive development says when children pretend, they're not just being silly—they're doing science.  
Read more: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/Let-the-Children-Play-Its-Good-for-Them.html>
- 3) The BBC website has a section dedicated to the history of toys during Victorian Britain.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian\\_britain/toys\\_and\\_games/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian_britain/toys_and_games/)
- 4) Ever since some bright spark decided that tethering a cup to a ball with a bit of string would be a fun idea, toymakers have always sought to use the latest technology to ignite children's imaginations.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19947073>
- 5) Chile bans toys in children's meals to try to fight obesity.  
<http://news.yahoo.com/mcdonalds-burger-king-kfc-accused-violating-chilean-law-051101434.html>
- 6) When kids play across gender lines:  
<http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/27/living/harrods-gender-neutral-toys/index.html>
- 7) Not to forget toys in space, finally a train has ended up in the stratosphere and returned safely to earth.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoMN-zg7r3M&noredirect=1>
- 8) Perhaps, as 3D printers become more affordable, thereby more commonplace, we may be making our own toys at home, or e-mailing our toys around the world.  
<http://3dprintingindustry.com/2012/12/15/cnn-video-printing-toys-in-3d/>
- 9) Visit the *Children's Play Information Service* (CPIS) website: <http://www.ncb.org.uk/cpis>  
The Children's Play Information Service is the national information service on children's play, part of the National Children's Bureau (NCB) Information Centre. CPIS holds information on all aspects of children's play, including play theory, research and practical guidance.  
Services include:
  - enquiry service
  - reference library
  - literature searches
  - databases of play consultants, play designers, and play researchCPIS is funded by Play England and the Association of Play Industries (API).  
The Children's Play Information Service publishes the monthly e-Newsletter *Children's Play Update* in coordination with Play England (<http://www.playengland.org.uk>).



## ITRA 2013 Fees Notice

*Please note that according to the ITRA Board's decision in Alicante, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2005, conference fees cover ITRA membership fees until the following conference. This means that conference participants who paid full registration fees for the 6<sup>th</sup> ITRA conference in Bursa, Turkey 2011 have been exempted from paying ITRA dues for the years 2011 through to 2014.*

**Annual membership: 50 EUROS**

**Retiree// Student membership: 25 EUROS**

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 the ITRA treasurer, Cleo Gougoulis, by sending an e-mail to: [cleogougoulis@yahoo.gr](mailto:cleogougoulis@yahoo.gr), when you send your fees to the bank. It is important to mention what amount and in which currency you paid.

## 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 had planned to release a Winter issue in December 2012, with information on the proposed ITRA Conference to be held in Denmark, but with unforeseen delays and the change in venue, we felt it best to withhold the newsletter until we had confirmation regarding the ITRA Conference situation.

We are pleased to be able confirm the venue and dates of the 7<sup>th</sup> ITRA World Conference in this issue of the Newsletter. The announcements of the Call for Papers and the Conference Scientific Committee will be sent out as e-bulletins, to ITRA members, as well as posted on the ITRA website (<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>). We would also like to thank Cleo Gougoulis for her leadership and vision through this transition, and for her generosity and commitment to lead our Society through to the next Congress in July of 2014.

If you attended a conference 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 [itrnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:itrnewsletter@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](mailto:luisamagal@gmail.com), with either a book review or recommendation. We intend to publish a Winter Newsletter, in December 2013.

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 from contributors.

Regards  
Suzy, Kati & Mark

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

