

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, a Member's Profile, the Members' Forum, information on the 2014 BRIO Prize, 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 ITRA website (<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>.) 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 7th ITRA World Congress to be held in Braga, Portugal.

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.

CONTENTS

Prologue.....	1
Greetings from the President of ITRA.....	2
The 7 th ITRA World Conference.....	3
Provisional Congress Program (<i>Subject to Change</i>).....	4
ITRA Congress Progress Report – May 2014.....	11
2014 ITRA-BTHA Prize for outstanding toy research.....	12
2014 BRIO Prize.....	13
Member Profile – Jeffrey Goldstein.....	14
Members' Forum.....	16
Conferences & Exhibitions.....	19
Future Conferences.....	19
Past Conferences.....	20
Current Exhibitions.....	20
Publications & Books.....	22
Miscellaneous News.....	24
ITRA 2014 Fees Notice.....	25
Epilogue.....	26

Greetings from the President of ITRA

Dear ITRA friends and colleagues,



As the Spring issue of our Biennial Newsletter appears at your computer screens, thanks to our fabulous editorial team Mark Allen, Kati Heljakka and Suzy Seriff, we are getting closer to the opening of the 7th ITRA World Congress and preparations are escalating.

Luisa Magalhães and her industrious team at the Catholic University of Portugal are currently putting together the scientific program, which looks very exciting. More than 70 papers and posters and two symposia dealing with several aspects of the relationship between toys, language and communication have been accepted by the scientific committee and will be presented at the conference. Participants so far represent 18 countries. Important highlights of this conference will be the opening by Professor Stephen Kline, who will address the keynote speech, and the two prize sessions: the BRIO prize and the ITRA-BTHA award sessions.

It is my pleasure to announce that the 2014 BRIO prize will be awarded to the French historian, Professor Michel Manson for his lifetime contribution to toy research. The two 2014 ITRA-BTHA prizes for outstanding toy research will be awarded to Marc Steinberg, University of Concordia, for his book *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) (Senior Prize) and to Koumudi Patil, Indian Institute of Technology for her Ph. D dissertation "*Craftsmanly Thinking: Studying the Dilemma of Change and Identity in Banarasi Khilonas (toys,)*" submitted at the Indian Institute of Technology, Powai, India, 2013 (student prize). On behalf of the ITRA Board I would like to warmly congratulate the prize winners. We look forward to listening to their award winning papers in Braga.

There is still time to register for the conference if you don't want to miss this fascinating forée into the world of toy research. Our hosts have prepared a marvellous social program with sightseeing tours in Braga and the historic town of Ponte de Lima and its toy museum. I wish to especially thank Luisa Magalhães and her department at the Catholic University of Portugal for their hard work, their enthusiasm and their persistent efforts to achieve a successful international conference in spite of the economic crisis which has affected toy researchers in many countries. It is thanks to Luisa's fruitful efforts and the generosity of our hosts that the deadline for the early registration fee was extended to June 15. Furthermore affordable, high quality accommodations have been provided for all applicants receiving financial support.

Please don't forget to check our website, www.itratoyresearch.org, for news and important information on the conference. Our able webmaster, Mark Allen, will be continually posting updates until the conference opening on the 23rd July.

I hope to see you all in Braga. Until then, stay playful!

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THE 7th ITRA WORLD CONFERENCE

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



TOYS as LANGUAGE and COMMUNICATION

The 7th ITRA World Congress will be held in conjunction with the Catholic University of Portugal, Faculty of Philosophy in Braga, Portugal, and will take place 23rd - 25th July 2014.

Congress Venue

The Congress will be held at the Faculty of Philosophy, **Catholic University of Portugal** situated in the historic centre of Braga, Praça da Faculdade, 1, 4710-297 Braga.

Conference themes

The dominant theme of the 7th World Congress is “*Toys as language and communication.*” Other topics pertaining to toys will also be welcomed.

All play media and play objects are included in the concept of ‘toys.’ The relevance of toys in the development of language and communication is high. Toys and toy-centred play activities relate to many aspects of establishing human relations and building social interactions and therefore are inextricably linked to the history of human civilization. In fact, it remains an important task to analyse and understand toys as instruments fostering well-being, interaction and knowledge. Thus, the connection between toys and other elements of communication and language can be seen as a particularly fruitful theme for toy researchers.

Language in its different features and modalities is a research subject in communication sciences, in addition to other social and behavioural sciences. Each of these disciplines adopts its own methodology and theoretical approach to address verbal and non-verbal language as a means to foster human intelligence as well as human communicative and social skills.

Toys promote language development as well as communication. Toys and playing with toys are also significant on a practical level, including within the realms of education, health, therapy, art, craftsmanship, design and engineering.

Papers, panels and poster sessions will address one or more of the following congress themes:

- Toys, signs and meanings
- Toys as verbal and non-verbal language
- Toys, narratives and metaphors
- Toys as texts in spatial, historical and socio-cultural contexts
- Toys, creativity and design
- Toys, gender and generations
- Toys, education, health and environment
- Toys and media: production, marketing, advertising and consumption
- Toys, games and new technologies

Provisional Congress Program

Note: Subject to change

23 July 2014

- 09:00 **Registration**
- 09.30 – 10:00 **Opening Ceremony**
- 10:00 – 11:00 **Plenary Lecture:**
Steven Kline
- 11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee break | Poster Session**

Parallel Sessions

• Parallel Session 1.1

- 11:30 – 13:00 **Whitebread, David / Basilio, Marisol**, University of Cambridge, UK
Thinking with your hands: How can toys for infants and toddlers foster early learning and communication?
- Whitebread, David / Basilio, Marisol**, University of Cambridge, UK
3D Thinking: Primary school children representing ideas and narratives within constructional and pretence play
- Magalhães, Luísa**, Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, Portugal
Toys in Kidzania theme park: gadgets for play or tools for work

• Parallel Session 1.2

- 11:30 – 13:00 **Surender, Ekta**, Indian Institute of Technology, India
ADU - HULI A game for visually challenged children
- Liboriussen, Bjarke**, University of Nottingham Ningbo, China
Dolls and avatars as gendered objects of acting and caring
- Thomas, Vicki**, University of Northampton, UK
The creative benefits of play to toy design

• Parallel Session 1.3

- 11:30 – 13:00 **Pennell, Greta Eleen**, University of Indianapolis, USA
"I was more of a Tonka truck girl:" Toy stories that define our lives
- Yagou, Artemis**, MHMK Macromedia University for Media and Communication, Germany
Endless stories from toys: Research findings from the Dandanah glass building blocks of 1920
- Rossie, Jean-Pierre**, Philosophical and Humanistics Research Center – UCP Braga
Communication and transmission between Moroccan children through their toy making and play activities

- 13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch**

Parallel Sessions

• Parallel Session 2.1

- 14:30 – 16:00 **Heljakka, Katriina**, University of Turku, Finland
Playing with words, toying with vocabulary: seizing new meanings related to the things for play
- Pereira, Vânia/ Pereira, Beatriz / Condessa, Isabel**, University of Minho, Braga
The use of spaces, materials and toys at school playground: differences between genders
- Pessanha, Ana Maria**, ESE Almeida Garrett, Portugal
Play materials, toys and literacy in school and family



• **Parallel Session 2.2**

- 14:30 – 16:00 **Teixeira, Sirlândia R. de Oliveira / Campos, Maria Célia Rabello Malta / Panizollo, Claudia**, Brazilian Association of Toy-Libraries ABBri, Brazil
The Toy Library as a place of inclusion for children and socialisation bearers of special educational needs
Teixeira, Sirlândia R. de Oliveira / Santos, Solange Rodrigues Martins Camargo dos Santos / Bomtempo, Edda, Brazilian Association of Toy-Libraries ABBri, Brazil
Intervention with games, toys and play the symptoms of dyslexia in early childhood education
Garcia, Andrea Costa e Nogueira, Maria Efigênia de Andrade Cáceres, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil
Do environment and toys develop child in early education?

• **Parallel Session 2.3**

- 14:30 – 16:00 **Plowman, Lydia / Manches, Andrew**, University of Edinburgh, UK
Looking to the future of digital playthings
Gielen, Mathieu, TU Delft, The Netherlands
Looking into the kaleidoscope of play: a toolkit for play quality observations by designers
Marques, Amália Rebolo, Instituto Piaget, Portugal
Boys and girls play fighting: differences, motives and fantasy behind play fight games

16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee break | Poster Session**

Parallel Sessions

• **Parallel Session 3.1**

- 16:30 – 18:00 **Gurpinar, Avsar**, Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
Lost and found in translation: about design and production characteristics of toys in the globalizing city
Almeida, Danielle, Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brazil
The political values embedded in a child's toy: The case of "Girl Power" in the Brazilian doll Susi
Oliveira, Inês Guedes, University of Aveiro, Portugal
Casa das Brincadeiras (the Play's House) – a place to play, design and create toys

• **Parallel Session 3.2**

- 16:30 – 18:00 **Reis, Miriam**, Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
An app for deaf children: the country mouse and the city mouse
Madeira, Ângela Renso / Kishimoto, Tizuko Morchida, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
Production and use of toys: collaboration between universities, toy manufacturers and the Ministry of Education in Brazil
Myers, David, Loyola University New Orleans, USA
A toy semiotic, revisited

18:00 – 19:30 **BRIO Prize Presentations**
Chair: Cleo Gougoulis

19:30 - **Verde de Honra** cocktail reception

24 July 2014

09:30 – 11:00 **ITRA-BTHA Prize**
Chair: Jeffrey Goldstein

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee break | Poster Session**



Parallel Sessions

• Parallel Session 4.1

- 11:30 – 13:00 **Allen, Mark**, Serious Fun Research Labs, UK
Toys and 3D printing
Marjanen, Päivi/ Sumentola, Henni / Saarinen, Laura, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Fairytales Forest as a method for children's sociocultural learning
Martin, Mariann, Radford, USA
Toys communicate and assist many/multiple things to individuals in an endless array of human conditions.

• Parallel Session 4.2

- 11:30 – 13:00 **Kishimoto, Tizuko Morchida / Eldasi, Giovanni**, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil
LUDILIB – the International Library of Ludic
Kobayashi, Maria do Carmo Monteiro, São Paulo State University, Brazil
My toy is a book
Kobayashi, Maria do Carmo Monteiro / Morales, Celia Cruz Silva/ Oliveira, Maith Martins de, São Paulo State University, Brazil
University library: reading and playing space for toddlers

• Parallel Session 4.3

- 11:30 – 13:00 **Vaz, Oriol**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain / **Manson, Michel**, Université Paris 13, France
Images of toys in Spanish painting (XVI-XIX centuries): An iconographic language to translate into
Sabatin, Ibrahim Mahmud, Hebron University, Palestine
The effectiveness of using toys in developing Palestinian students' communication skills and retention
Kothari, Abhay, Manthan Educational Programme Society, India
Toys as change agent for children (an Indian model)

13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch**

Parallel Sessions

• Parallel Session 5.1

- 14:30 - 16:00 **Symposium Can Design for Play Foster Rebelliousness?**
van Leeuwen, Lieselotte, Chair. University of Sunderland, UK, and
Gielen, Mathieu, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands
Design for rebelliousness in play?
Yagou, Artemis, MHMK Macromedia University for Media and Communication, Germany
Creative or disciplinary? The example of construction toys and their boxes
Leclerc, Rémi, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong
Flipping the town upside-down, designing outdoor play tools to foster rebelliousness

• Parallel Session 5.2

- 14:30 – 16:00 **Farenzena, Rosana / Oliveira, Beatriz Pereira**, CIEC/IE/UMinho, Portugal
Where are the toys? The school for childhood and the restrictions to the generational specificities of childhood
Brougère, Gilles, Université Paris 13, France
Toys' choice: the building up of the children's taste
Segura, Isaac Castañeda, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico
Co-design as a way to improve the design of toys



• **Parallel Session 5.3**

- 14:30 – 16:00 **Kabadayi, Abdülkadir / Bozkurt, Emine**, Necmettin Erbakan University A.K., Turkey
Analyzing preschool teachers' metaphors on toys in a Turkish context.
Ensici, Ayhan, Kadir Has University, Istanbul
Integrating traditional games to outdoor playgrounds
Kline, Stephen / Kaneuchi, Mirai, Simon Fraser University, Canada
Arguing for creative play: On comparing the valorisation of creative playthings in Japanese and Canadian on-line parenting websites and child-targeted TV advertising
- 16:00 – 23:30 **Social Program**
Ponte de Lima
Visit to Toy Museum
20:00hr Dinner
Folklore session
Return to Braga (23:30)

25 July 2014

Parallel Sessions

• **Parallel Session 6.1**

- 11:00 – 13:00 **Symposium: Toys in Times of Crisis**
Seriff, Suzanne, Chair, University of Texas, USA
If these toys could talk: Toys as tools of propaganda, protest, provocation, and education in times of crisis
Gougoulis, Cleo, Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Greece
Working class children's toys in times of war and famine: work, play and the agency of children in Athenian neighborhoods during the German occupation of Greece
Wade, Mariah, University of Texas, USA
You are what you eat: toying with/in the process of becoming 'other'
Argyriadis, Maria, Curator, Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece
Toys in Greece during the German occupation in the 2nd World War
Kouzas, George, Athens, Greece
Toys collected from rubbish bins: Reusing and granting a "second life" to toys thrown away to rubbish

• **Parallel Session 6.2**

- 11:00 – 13:00 **Navidi, Ute**, International Independent Consultant, UK
Playing with the media
Gummer, Amanda, Fundamentals, UK
Age differences in the use of toys as communication tools
Ferreira, Carla / Agante, Luísa, Nova School of Business and Economics, Portugal
In what extent can toy premiums promote healthy eating habits? A study with school-age children
Ansong, Amy, George Mason University, USA
Colouring outside the lines of racial disparity in Crayola llc product packaging

• **Parallel Session 6.3**

- 11:00 – 13:00 **Lopes, Maria José**, UCP Braga - Portugal
Playing the gods, teasing the humans: dressing and cross-dressing as diui among Roman emperors – ritual or perverse play?
Van Langendonck, Michel, High School of Brussels, Belgium
Indian games, a study case about social interactions
Gulden, Tore, Oslo and Akershus University College of applied Sciences, Norway
Controlled experiences through by trans-media storytelling.

Junior, Wagner Antonio / Kishimoto, Tizuko Morchida / Kobayashi, Maria do Carmo Monteiro, USP, Brazil
Child and games in non-formal education spaces: mediation in virtual space
Debattista, Marina / Molina, Magdalena, Consultant to the Story Museum, UK
Language and Communication as Toys

• **Parallel Session 6.4**

- 11:00 – 13:00 **Campos, Maria Celia Rabello Malta / Teixeira, Sirlândia Reis de Oliveira**, Brazilian Association of Toy-Libraries – ABBri, Brazil
Games workshops and teachers education
Morante, Miriam, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia & AIJU, Spain
Babies playing with apps: considerations for their design and use
Leclerc, Rémi, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong
Think, make, Polyplay
Maggio, Todd / Phillips, Kerri / Madix, Christina, Louisiana Tech University USA
LMNObeasts: using typographically inspired toys to aid development of language and communication skills in early childhood
- 13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch**
- 14:30 – 16:00 **Plenary Lecture:**
Teresa Almeida d'Eça
- 16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee break | Poster Session**
- 16:30 – 18:00 **ITRA General Meeting and Closing Ceremony**
- 18:00 – 19:30 **ITRA Board Meeting**
- 19:30 **A walking visit to Braga's historic city centre**

Registration and fees

You may register by filling-in the registration form available below and sending it to itra2014braga@gmail.com. Registration is limited, so register early. Early registration ended 15th June 2014. After this date, registration fees increase. No refunds will be provided after 30th May 2014.

Registration for the congress includes coffee breaks, lunches, a reception and a walking guided tour of Braga - 25th July 2014. An excursion is planned for the evening of 24th July 2014 to the historical town of Ponte de Lima, its toy museum, a folklore performance and dinner at a local restaurant. A separate registration of €25 is required for this event (see Social Events section).

Late registration after 15 th June 2014	€280
Registration at the congress	€300
Student (status confirmation needed) until 30 th April 2014	€150
Student (status confirmation needed) after 1 st May 2014	€175
Student (status confirmation needed) registration at congress	€200
Accompanying person	€100
One-day registration (space permitting)	€120

Payment may be made by bank transfer to the following account number.

Beneficiary:

UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

BANCO ESPÍRITO SANTO

NIB: 0007 0602 00484150000 81

IBAN: PT50 0007 0602 0048 4150 0008 1

SWIFT/BIC: BESCPTPL

Registrants must have their name mentioned in the bank transfer to provide identification of the sender. Bank expenses should be covered by the registrants.



Accommodation

In order to make your reservation safer and more comfortable the Organization and the Abreu travel agency have selected a list of hotels with special prices for the congress participants. Please contact **Catarina Aguiar** (Agência Abreu) in case you have any further queries concerning the reservation process.

Please send your reservation directly to the email address indicated below:

VIAGENS ABREU S.A. A/C Catarina Aguiar

Phone: 351 253 200540

e-mail: caguiar@abreu.pt

website: www.abreu.pt

Name	Star	Type	Extras	Cost per Night
Melia Hotel & Spa	5	Single	Breakfast	€89
Hotel Mercure Centro	4	Single	Breakfast	€64
Hotel Bracara Augusta	4	Single	Breakfast	€63
Hotel do Elevador	4	Single	Breakfast	€60
Golden Tulip Hotel	4	Double	Breakfast	€57
Hotel do Templo	4	Single	Room only	€60
Albergaria Sra a Branca	3	Single	Breakfast	€36
Ibis Budget	3	Single	Breakfast	€35
Youth Hostel Braga ⁽¹⁾	-	Double	Breakfast	€27

⁽¹⁾ Please note that Agência Abreu is not making bookings for the Youth Hostel. Bookings should be made via the Pousadas de Juventude website.

Note: Prices quoted are subject to change without notice.

Social Events

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

Social events include the following:

- Reception and Verde de Honra offered by the Faculty of Philosophy (glass of our traditional white wine and some hors d’oeuvres). Terrace of the Faculty of Philosophy, 23rd July 2014, 18:30hr
- Guided tour in the historic city centre (separate registration required). Meeting point: at the Hall of the Faculty of Philosophy, 23rd July 2014, 19:30hr
- Half Day Excursion to Ponte de Lima and guided tour of local toy museum (separate registration required), 24th July 2014 (16:30hr- 23:30hr).
 - 16:30hr - Bus Departure from Faculty of Philosophy
 - 17:30hr - Arrival at Ponte de Lima and guided tour of toy museum
 - 20:00hr - Optional dinner at Confrade restaurant. Live folk music and dance (expected cost of meal: €25).
 - 23:30hr - Return to Braga.
- Closing Ceremony (under arrangement), 25th July 2014. Traditional music and songs performed by the students’ traditional choir and the Coimbra University Orfeon (orchestra and choir).



Scientific Committee

Mark Allen, Brunel University, London, UK
Gilles Brougère, Université Paris Nord, France
Jeffrey H. Goldstein, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
Cleo Gougoulis, Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Nafplion, Greece
Stephen Kline, Simon Fraser University, Canada
José Luis Linaza, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Spain
Luisa Magalhães, Catholic University of Portugal, Braga, Portugal
Rosario Ortega Ruiz, University of Cordoba, Spain, Faculty of Education.
Manuel Pinto, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal.
Minna Ruckenstein, National Consumer Research Centre, Finland.
Suzy Seriff, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Brian Sutton-Smith, Prof. Emeritus, University of Pennsylvania, USA.
Ana Tomas de Almeida, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal.
Lieselotte Van Leeuwen, University of Sunderland, UK

Organizing Committee

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- Members:
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Cleo Gougoulis, ITRA president, Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Greece
José Cândido Martins, Catholic University of Portugal, Braga, Portugal
Jean-Pierre Rossie, associated researcher of the Musée du Jouet de Moirans-en-Montagne, France
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ITRA Congress Progress Report – May 2014

The Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Portugal, Braga, looks forward to warmly welcoming toy researchers from around the world to *The 7th World Congress of the International Toy Research Association*, to be held 23rd – 25th July 2014. The theme of the conference is “*Toys as Language and Communication*.” The Faculty are honoured to host the congress and to contribute to both the development of toy research and the role of toys in developing human language and communication systems. The congress will stand as a milestone in the history of the Faculty of Philosophy, here in Braga.

The three day event offers informative lectures, workshops and poster presentations, cultural visits to Braga and the surrounding area and other social events. The congress will serve as an opportunity to hear about the latest toy research, exchange ideas and meet interesting fellow researchers from around the world. Tasty buffet lunches and relaxing coffee breaks will be served outside in the faculty’s tree-lined yard and the Braga weather promises to be warm and sunny. Catering will be provided by a famous Ponte de Lima guesthouse.

The first day of the congress will include a small welcome cocktail, hosted by the municipality at the picturesque city hall (this is yet to be confirmed). On day two, the highlight of the social program, will include a trip to the charming Ponte de Lima, visit their toy museum, enjoy a pleasant dinner at a traditional Portuguese restaurant, entertained by a local folklore music group – and for the brave, the opportunity to dance to a number of time-honoured Portuguese songs, and much more!

Regarding accommodation, there are still a wide variety of hotel rooms available. Delegates, on a tight budget, are able to make use of a special arrangement with the university to use student’s college rooms at minimal cost. The student halls are located about a ten minute walk from the congress facilities.

The Braga municipality has graciously agreed to sponsor the congress by granting delegates a free pass on the local buses – which includes routes up into the surrounding hills, the Bom Jesus do Monte sanctuary, the Monastery of São Martinho de Tibães (an interesting Benedictine monastery) and around Braga - just for the pleasure of sightseeing.

Back at the congress, the reception desk will be staffed by a group of enthusiastic student volunteers who have secured sponsorship for cute t-shirts (so that delegates can be identified in and around Braga – if they so wish). At the end of the congress, any remaining t-shirts will be sold as souvenirs (the proceeds shared amongst the volunteer staff as a means of thanks for their efforts). Other small surprises are in the pipeline, however these will only be revealed to those who attend the congress.

A number of delegates will be invited to attend the Braga FNAC bookshop forum, to assist in presenting the photo essay “*Braga a brincar / Braga at play*”, a bilingual publication which is sponsored by the Fundação Bracara Augusta. Author of the book?.. to be revealed (sorry!).

So, everyone welcome!

Luisa Magalhães



2014 ITRA-BTHA PRIZE FOR OUTSTANDING TOY RESEARCH

The **ITRA-BTHA Prize** has been established with generous support from the British Toy and Hobby Association (www.btha.co.uk). The first ITRA-BTHA Prize was awarded in July 2008 during the 5th ITRA conference in Nafplion, Greece. There were a number of interesting and high quality submissions both for the senior and the student prize, an indication of the high importance, visibility and esteem that the prize is gaining in the community of toy researchers. After examining all submissions the committee unanimously decided to award the senior and junior prizes to the following candidates:

The senior prize goes to **Marc Steinberg**, assistant professor of film studies at the University of Concordia, Canada for his book *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2012.

The book is a study of the anime character “Astro Boy” and its various persona and licences in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s. Drawing on media theory, consumption studies, marketing and anthropology, Steinberg’s work adopts a historical approach to character licensing across media, illustrating that it is almost impossible to look at contemporary commercial toys in isolation. Toys are, literally, at the centre of the book as chapter 3 deals with character toys and their links to other media in an approach that is rich in detail. Although the study focuses on a particular historical period, the trans-media approach adopted by the author is equally applicable to current technological developments in toys and games.

The student prize goes to **Koumudi Patil** for her doctoral thesis “Craftsmanly thinking: Studying the dilemma of change and identity in *Banarasi Khilonas* (toys),” submitted at the Indian Institute of Technology, Powai, India, 2013.

The study documents the process of change in toy design in Banaras, India, a renowned traditional toy production centre. Toys in Patil’s work are examined as means used by local craftsmen to negotiate their identity in the face of a changing global context exemplified by the growth of the tourist market. Banarasi craftsmen incorporate changes in the form of toys by assigning different uses to them. Counter to dominant perceptions of traditional production methods as conservative, Patil argues that the structure of the traditional toy assembly line in fact leaves scope for change and innovation.

Both authors have agreed to give papers during the prize session and Koumudi Patil will travel to Braga to receive the prize. A Skype session will be arranged for Marc Steinberg, who will deliver his paper from Japan, where he will be running a summer seminar which could not be postponed.

2014 BRIO Prize

The Lennart Ivarsson Foundation was established in 1990 by BRIO AB, a Swedish company founded in 1884 as recognition of Lennart Ivarsson's lifelong work for BRIO AB. The aim of the BRIO Prize is to promote scientific research and development with a focus on children and toys. This scholarship is given either to an individual distinguished toy researcher or to a non-profit organization with a focus on children and their play.

It is ITRA's pleasure to announce that the Lennart Ivarsson Foundation has chosen **Michel Manson** for the 2014 BRIO prize. Michel will present his research and receive his award at the BRIO prize session during the 7th ITRA World Congress in Braga, Portugal. This will be a conference featuring four award winning papers on toy research and two prize sessions, a fact attesting to the growing prestige and importance of ITRA meetings.

Michel Manson is a social historian who has published extensively on the history of children's material culture, children's literature and toys in Europe (e.g. *Jouets de toujours: de l'Antiquité à la révolution*, Editions Fayard: 2001, *Histoires des jouets de Noël*, Tetraèdre: 2005). His approach to the history of toys is in line with important interdisciplinary theoretical developments in the study of children's culture, as it combines the history of toy making, retailing and consumption with more general issues regarding economic history, the history of education, the history of family structures and the history of childhood in Europe from Medieval times to the present era. Michel Manson's research topics include portrayals of toy play in children's books with regard to educational ideals and conceptions of childhood, while he has recently extended his research to historical aspects of children's fun food ("A history of candy and of children's food culture in Western children, 16th century to the present," *Young Consumers: Insights and Ideas for Responsible Marketers* 2010 vol. Vol. 11: 2, pp.131-137).

MEMBER PROFILE – Jeffrey Goldstein



Jeffrey Goldstein received a PhD in psychology from Ohio State University. He was professor of psychology at Temple University (Philadelphia) until 1991, and in the Department of Social and Organizational Psychology, Utrecht University, The Netherlands, from 1992-2006, and at University College, Utrecht University, until 2010. In 2010 he became a research associate at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Utrecht University.

He is author or editor of 16 books including *The Handbook of Computer Game Studies* (with Joost Raessens. MIT Press, 2005); *Toys, Games and Media* (with David Buckingham & Gilles Brougère. Erlbaum/Taylor & Francis 2004); *Toys, Play and Child Development* (Cambridge University Press 1994); *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment* (Oxford University Press, 1998), and *The Psychology of Humour* (Academic Press 1972).

Goldstein is a fellow of both the American Psychological Association and the Association for Psychological Science. He is chairman of the National Toy Council, London, and chairman of the Experts Group of PEGI, the European video games rating board. He is co-founder of the International Toy Research Association. In 2001 he received the BRIO Prize (Sweden) for research ‘for the benefit and development of children and young people.’ He is on the Editorial Board of *Humour: International Journal of Humour Research*, *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*, and *Entertainment Computing*.

The ITRA Editorial Team caught up with Jeffrey at the London Toy Fair earlier this year.

“I am not finished yet,” Jeffrey jokingly interjected in response to the question, “Now that you are retired, how...” Jeffrey is warm and affable, whose enthusiasm for toys and research is quite infectious - the type of person you could listen to for hours. Jeffrey seamlessly engages in conversation and is clearly well read on a broad range of subjects. He speaks frankly about toys, play research, politics, travel and the like; however, a witty aside is not far away.

“Originally I wanted to do a PhD in humour,” Jeffrey explained, “but one of my professors wisely suggested that I do something that wouldn’t put me out of the job market. In order to establish my serious credentials I ended up doing research on aggression and violence and have written a number of publications on that subject. People will take you seriously if you study violence, but not if you study anything fun.” Jeffrey maintains this is still very much the case today and he continues to advise his students, as he was advised.

Jeffrey’s interest in toys started from his original research into play and leisure activities. One of the first books he edited *Sports, Games and Play*, investigated whether social psychology had anything to offer on the subject - most work until then was in the hands of educational psychologists. This interest inevitably led to toys and subsequently to the founding of ITRA.

The formation of ITRA has its humble beginnings in a most unlikely series of events. In 1987, shortly after Jeffrey had moved to London, a mass shooting occurred in Hungerford, a small market town in rural Berkshire. The Hungerford Massacre shook the heart of the nation as it was the first occasion in the UK that a lone gunman had gone on the rampage. Jeffrey takes up the story, “I wrote my one and only letter to a newspaper in response to an article that noted that the murderer had ‘never played with war toys as a kid.’ The article also asserted that ‘had he played with war toys, he would have gotten aggression out of his system and not committed this crime.’ I wrote to them, saying that though I do not know much about this situation, I do know that playing with war toys is not a way to get rid of your aggression. Playing with war toys may reduce your energy level at that moment, but as it is fantasy play and not really aggression in the first place, it cannot get rid of aggression. After I wrote that letter, I was contacted by David Hawtin (the then Director-General of the BTHA (British Toy and Hobby Association)), who said, ‘I saw your letter in the newspaper, can I talk to you about war toys?’ So we made an appointment and he asked whether there was any research on war toys. I looked into it and found a number of studies and wrote a review on aggressive toys for the BTHA. David asked if I would be interested in talking about it at a meeting, which I did. Eventually I ended up writing research reports for the BTHA, summarising whatever research there was on a particular subject and I have been doing that for 25 years.”

In the early stages, Jeffrey discovered that writing summaries on toy research could be quite problematic as there was no easily accessible central repository. Toy research was hidden away in education, language and various other journals – Jeffrey added, “...this was in the days before the internet. So I decided to ask for funding from the BTHA, the Toy Manufacturers of America and Toy Industries of Europe to have a meeting of toy researchers in Utrecht, with the purpose of setting up an organisation to collect and do toy research. There were a lot of key players there.” Jeffrey reeled off the names of those who had attended as though the meeting had taken place yesterday. “Cleo Gougoulis was pregnant at the time and was unable to come to that meeting...” Jeffrey paused,

then chuckled saying, "...so I know exactly how old her son is." Still musing, Jeffrey continued, "Toy researchers from thirteen countries came to Utrecht in 1993 and we established ITRA. The idea was for toy research to be easily accessible to people who are interested and to support that area of research."

As one of the founding members of ITRA, Jeffrey was asked to reflect on what changes, if any, whether positive or negative, he had observed in toy research over the past 21 years that ITRA has been in existence. Jeffrey responded without hesitation, "The first thing that none of us would have imagined at that time, was that we would have meetings in Turkey, Greece, Spain and Portugal. There were thirteen of us - we could not find any more of us who studied toys than that - and the fact that the organisation has over 100 members at any one time, in however many countries, was completely beyond our abilities to foresee. Now the interest is not broad - there are not many people interested in toy research - but is certainly widespread. Our international meetings are more international than most organisations that call themselves international. We have people from every continent - Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Americas. It absolutely exceeded our expectations. We knew, at that time, that most new organisations do not last 10 years and so we never expected this to last as long as it has and it seems to be stronger each time."

On being asked what he meant by becoming stronger, Jeffrey replied, "It has become stronger because the base of researchers is stronger, it is more widespread and people come from disciplines where I would not have imagined the interest in toys. We have people who study design and technology, engineering, education, educational psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and I see that as strength. We have fingers in lots of different pies and that is a strength of ITRA, not only international..." at which point another twinkle appeared in Jeffrey's eye, "...most international meetings I go to mean there is a Canadian there." After the laughter died down, he continued, "...but this really is international and as multidisciplinary as any organisation I know."

While ITRA continues going from strength to strength, did Jeffrey have anything that he would like, if possible, to have changed or improved? Jeffrey candidly replied, "I would like to see the quantity of toy specific research increased, so that we don't have to scamper around looking for entries for the student prize. Similarly, it would legitimise toy research in a number of academic disciplines, so that it would be something that students thought to study. My guess is that many toy researchers have very little outside support for what they wanted to study, because people would ask, "Why would you want to study that?" Also, I would like to see more participation by the toy industry and people in toy design departments. There were very few toy designers and toy company representatives at the Turkey meeting. However, in Spain, there were quite a number and when we had our meeting in London, in 2002, there were really a lot of people from the toy industry, who came along for a day, or half a day, and I assume it was interesting enough for them. I would like to see the interaction between toy researchers and business people strengthened."

"One of the important functions of ITRA is, because you have very few colleagues at academic institutions with whom you can talk about toys, you have to go to a specialist meeting. The great thing about these ITRA meetings is that you have common knowledge and you can start your conversations at a higher level, than if you were talking to a novice who has no background in toy research. So the function of these meetings is that you can talk about your passions and research interests and have fascinating conversations."

Returning to the subject of Jeffrey's current activities, he jokingly balked at the use of the word 'retirement'. While chuckling, Jeffrey started, "Retired but doing lots. I am still affiliated with the university and a research institute for the study of games - it means mainly video games - there is a big games development centre in Utrecht with all kinds of outside support including Government support. Our research institute feeds personnel into this games development centre. The institute is called ICON, the Institute for Cultural Inquiry. My interest in video games started because of toy research and I thought, 'These are toys, people play with them.' But I could not convince anyone in the toy business that video games are toys." Jeffrey paused and reflected, "I became interested in video games as I saw it simply as another form of play. The same sorts of theory should apply, so that was my interest in video games. Because video games grew so quickly from 1990 to 2000, I ended up summarising research for the video game industry as well as the toy industry."

Jeffrey continued talking about his research with ESA (European Space Agency) studying the potential use of video games on a manned flight to Mars; the toys used to research altitude effects on mountain climbers; the efficacy of games and toys in medical training; the ways in which basic toys can transcend play and entertainment; potential shortcomings of lab based play research; genetic imprinting and the effects on gender toy choice; what toys can do beyond simple pleasure, to list but a few - perhaps more of these another time.

Jeffrey has been an integral part of the rich tapestry of ITRA, from co-founding the organization to serving on its Board, its Prize Committee and Scientific Committee, to raising funds for the organization, to working tirelessly, now often behind the scenes, on behalf of toy researchers around the world. Someone once said, "Old academics never die, they just lose their faculties." This person clearly had not met Jeffrey - he is still going strong.

MEMBERS' FORUM

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

GREECE

Cleo Gougoulis forwarded the following *Playthings Staff -- Gifts and Dec* article:

NPD Reports Decline in Toy Sales in 2013

PORT WASHINGTON, NY - Overall toy sales may have hit a slight dip in 2013, according to the NPD Group, which found that the 2013 U.S. retail dollar sales of toys declined by one percent in comparison to 2012.

Although, 2013 had a shorter holiday shopping season, the weeks of Black Friday and Cyber Monday saw respective sales increases of four percent and 24 percent (compared to the same time periods in 2012); the remaining weeks of 2013 experienced softer sales in comparison to 2012, while fourth quarter sales-Oct. through Dec.- were down one percent.

"It's clear that toy shoppers responded during the peak Black Friday and Cyber Monday weeks, but six fewer shopping days may have impacted overall holiday toy sales," said Russ Crupnick, senior vice president, industry analysis, The NPD Group.

Across categories, youth electronics and arts and crafts experienced the most growth at 18 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Building sets and plush saw respective revenue increases of one percent and two percent, while action figures and infant and preschool toys experienced the largest dollar sales declines in comparison to 2012 at six percent and four percent, respectively.

Crupnick says that the growth in youth electronics was from new introductions in robotic and interactive toys like Zoomer and Flutterbye Fairies.

In addition to the core categories, licensed toys also experienced an increase of three percent in 2013, and represented 31 percent of total industry sales, in comparison to 2012. Some of the top properties were Disney and Nickelodeon. Disney's Doc McStuffins, Sofia the First, and Disney Planes were in the top five dollar growth, while Nickelodeon's Ninja Turtles and Lego Legends of Chima fit in the top 5 growth properties. Overall top properties for the year (based on total dollar sales) were Barbie, Disney Princess, Monster High, Nerf and Star Wars.

FINLAND

Kati Heljakka writes regarding her look at this year's toy trends:

Two of the international toy industries' main events, the toy fairs in Nuremberg and New York, highlight key trends of the year in various ways. At the Spielwarenmesse in Nuremberg, the trend committee, consisting of an international panel of experts, reports their findings in a Trendbook and chooses products to represent main trends in a Trend Gallery exhibition. At the American International Toy Fair in New York, the trend experts of the Toy Industry Association (TIA) publish their findings at an annual Toy Trends Tea event, where chosen toys demonstrate each trend. Personalization and an interest in toys that encourage open-ended play were given a special focus.



DIY miniatures at the Nuremberg Toy Fair Trend Gallery.

According to the team of experts reporting for the Spielwarenmesse organization – a group of toy trade journalists and consultants from Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Poland, India, and the USA – the main four trends for 2014 are Fit 4 Life, Retro Mania, Mini is King and Tech Toys. The criteria for the trends chosen by the Nuremberg trend panellists are that their 1) trends are already being discussed in innovative media, 2) trends are those which are grasped before they are available on a mass scale market, 3) trends are transnational and 4) trends have the potential for mass sales.

Marek Jankowski writes about the Fit 4 Life trend having its roots in the do-it-yourself (DIY) movement, popular in adult lives because of its emphasis on individualization and self-realization, as well as sustainability. The category of toys referred to as “Retro Mania” includes those products that refer in one way or another to the past. In many cases they are given modern makeovers. Axel Dammler brings up the examples of popular characters such as Maya the Bee and The Smurfs. He claims that it has been imperative that the “DNA” of the characters and their worlds continue to evoke reminiscences of previous generations of users, while continuing to meet the expectations of children today. The Mini is King! trend relates to the ideas of urbanisation and shortage of space. Attributes such as foldability and portability in toys reflect the increasing interest in miniaturization. Finally, the Tech Toys trend, from a researcher’s point of view, evokes a mega-trend of past years: hybridization and convergence of digital and physical toy attributes. According to toy journalist, John Baulch, by delivering ‘tech toys’ to children, companies are ensuring that children will stay with the toy market for longer.

The trend experts working for the Toy Industry Association inspect hundreds of toy novelties in order to grasp the most relevant trends of the year. Adrienne Appell says that toy companies are giving the players more freedom than ever by offering products that one may customize and build upon in many ways. Customizable (action) figures made from a plethora of materials such as paper, ceramics, and do-it-yourself kits allow players to give their own finishing touch to the toys. “Larger than Life” represents another trend in toys on the market this year: After a few years break, larger scale character toys, building sets, and doll houses are again found in the toy market. Toys seem, in this way, to become elements of interior decoration. Radio-controlled toys stand for a third trend in toys this year. The continuously developing technical features make the toys fly in previously unseen manners. The fourth trend reported, known as STEAM (Science, Technology, Arts and Mathematics), refers to educational playthings connected with technologies and storytelling and targeted to school-aged children. Retro/Back-to-basics parallels the theme of Nuremberg’s Retromania, but highlights American-born brands such as My Little Pony and Turtles. The sixth trend – Monsters, Zombies and more – demonstrates the continuing interest in fantasy characters. Novel ideas in toy design come together with this thematic trend in products such as a scooter with a zombie handlebar.



Zombies at the Nuremberg Toy Fair Trend Gallery.

A critical view on current toy trends reveals a well-known fact: Products which many of the reported trends are based on represent macro-trends that are not that different from past years. What is of real interest for toy researchers and, perhaps most of all, toy designers, is the changes in toy design on the micro-level—such as shapes, colours, themes and rhetoric –which may develop into something bigger in the future.

INDIA

Surabhi Khanna writes regarding toy design workshops conducted in Barranquilla, Colombia:

“One to Many” – The power of toys to inspire creativity was the focus of a series of workshops conducted in Barranquilla, Colombia in April 2014. Sudarshan Khanna and I have been involved in conducting “Toy Design and Education” workshops worldwide. We were invited by the Mayor’s office of Barranquilla, Colombia, South America, to conduct workshops and reflect on their social and early education program, known as “Infancia De Primera – Atencion Integral a la Primera Infancia” (“Integral Attention to Early Childhood”). The week-long event, “Juega Barranquilla,” translated as “Play Barranquilla,” was part of the program.

The city of Barranquilla has taken a very unique approach to its early-inclusive education development program. The project has teams of teachers, artists as well as community mothers, who work in 200 child development centres located in different parts of the city. Our program started with an interactive workshop with a large group of 300 people, consisting of child psychologists, therapists, artists and teachers.

One of the workshops was titled, “One to Many” Toy Workshop with Community Mothers. Until now, community mothers have been mainly involved in the areas of children’s health and nutrition. Through this workshop, they were given hands-on experience in creating playthings with simple materials, something to

which many hadn't been exposed before. From the moment they made and played with their first paper toy, their joy knew no bounds.



From left to right: Diana Palaez, director of Tiempo Feliz, Lianna, Team Member, Surabhi and Sudarshan Khanna, Bibian, director, and Leonardo, Team Member.

“One to Many” Toy Workshop with Teachers: Though the teachers have been doing activities using waste material, but for them creating toys was a new direction. The large groups of teachers were excited to create new ideas and stories, using paper as the main material to develop simple toys with themes & graphics. Oh! What a delight it was to look at the participants making a range of sounds, chattering like children and showing off proudly their toys made in the session. The program ended with a session with children of all age groups in a large open space. These workshops are organized every week, in a different part of the city, to make parents aware of the program and to connect them in an active way.

As design educators, we were very inspired to be a part of this meaningful program, conducted with community participation. The workshops gave an effective platform to show Toy making, developing and creating play for child development can become interesting approach for early education. “One to Many”, was the key method: How One toy idea can give rise to Many exciting explorations, creating Design & Culture resource for early-April, which is celebrated as Children’s Day in Colombia. Such fairs are an inclusive education & development!

The Colombian national and local media was very inquisitive and made a vast coverage. Links to Articles & Interviews with Sudarshan Khanna & Surabhi Khanna in Colombian Media (in Spanish, but can be translated online)

- 1) <http://www.elheraldo.co/local/cuando-juegas-con-ninos-cualquier-sitio-es-aula-de-clases-150290>
- 2) <http://diarioadn.co/barranquilla/mi-ciudad/importancia-de-jugar-en-la-infancia-1.105485>
- 3) <http://ape.com.co/educacion/item/611-el-guru-que-quiere-rescatar-la-calidad-de-la-educaci%C3%B3n-a-traves-del-juego>
- 4) <http://www.eltiempo.com/estilo-de-vida/educacion/sudarshan-khanna-el-maestro-de-los-juguetes/14002716>
- 5) <http://www.elheraldo.co/local/hindu-experto-en-creacion-de-juguetes-estara-en-juega-barranquilla-149987>

UNITED KINGDOM

Amanda Gummer wrote to the Editorial Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our news with the ITRA community.

The *Good Toy Guide* is going from strength to strength and is supporting play and good toys within communities in the UK. Our play clubs give us the opportunity to carry out active research with children in natural settings on a daily basis and I’m looking forward to presenting my paper on age differences in the use of toys as communication tools. I’d be interested in discussing any potential collaboration with ITRA members and would be happy to share our Play club resources where appropriate. Our big news is that we’re launching (or will have just launched by the time we all see each other) the Good App Guide and are housing this and the Good Toy Guide under a new umbrella website - www.fundamentallychildren.com that provides expert advice and independent information on play, toys, children’s tech and child development.

I’d be delighted to hear from anyone interested in collaboration or who has any questions or feedback on any of the above.

Many thanks and I hope to see you all in Portugal.

e-mail: amanda@fundamentalsuk.com

website: www.fundamentalsuk.com

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 2014

The **26th International Society for Humour Studies Congress**, will be held at the University Hall of Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 7th -11th July 2014.

The conference stands in a long tradition of humour studies conferences, held all over the world: Boston, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Krakow, Williamsburg and many others.

See the following website for details:

<http://ishs2014utrecht.nl/>



September 2014

The **24th Conference of EECERA** (The European Early Childhood Education Research Association) will be held at the Creta Maris Conference Centre, Crete, Greece, 7th -10th September 2014.

The primary theme of the conference is “*Us, Them and Me: Universal, Targeted and Individuated Early Childhood Programmes.*”

For further information see the following website:

<https://www.eecera2014.org>



October 2014

The **Play for Life**, *Exploring the Lifelong Benefits of Inclusive Play*, will be held at the Chicago Marriot O’Hare, Chicago, USA, 18th – 19th October 2014.

Past symposiums have been extraordinary opportunities for participants and presenters to bond over their mutual belief in the power of play to positively impact people of all ages and abilities.

For further information see the following website:

<https://www.facebook.com/InclusivePlaySymposium>



ECGBL 2014 8th European Conference on Games Based Learning will be held in Berlin, Germany, 9th – 10th October 2014.

The Conference offers an opportunity for scholars and practitioners interested in the issues related to GBL to share their thinking and research findings. Papers can cover various issues and aspects of GBL in education and training: technology and implementation issues associated with the development of GBL; use of mobile and MMOGs for learning; pedagogical issues associated with GBL; social and ethical issues in GBL; GBL best cases and practices, and other related aspects. We are particularly interested in empirical research that addresses whether GBL enhances learning. This Conference provides a forum for discussion, collaboration and intellectual exchange for all those interested in any of these fields of research or practice.

The conference committee welcomes contributions on a wide range of topics using a range of scholarly approaches including theoretical and empirical papers employing qualitative, quantitative and critical methods. Deadline for submissions: 14th July 2014.

More details available at:

<http://academic-conferences.org/ecgbl/ecgbl2014/ecgbl14-call-papers.htm>

February 2015

The 27th ICCP World Play Conference will take place in Brussels, Belgium in February 2015.

The theme is ‘*Researching Play – Challenges and Opportunities*’, and abstracts would be welcome on this theme.

For more information about the conference and how to submit an abstract, please visit the conference website

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/27th-iccp-world-play-conference-tickets-10509031797

PAST CONFERENCES

APRIL 2014

The 40th Annual Conference of The Association for the Study of Play (TASP), *Play: Connecting the Past, Present, & Future*, was held at the Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY, USA, 23rd -26th April 2014. The 40th Annual Conference celebrated a benchmark in the organization. Time was taken to recognize and honour the truly amazing understandings and sometimes divergent perspectives play scholars have shared during previous conferences.

For further information see the following website: <http://www.tasplay.org/about-us/conference/>

May 2014

The International Digital Storytelling Conference, *Digital Storytelling in Times of Crisis*, was held in Athens, 8th -10th May 2014.

The *Digital Storytelling in Times of Crisis* conference was organized by the Laboratory of New Technologies in Communication, Education and the Mass Media and the University Research Institute of Applied Communication of the University of Athens with the collaboration of the Hellenic American Union.

For further information see the following website:

<http://www.media.uoa.gr/ntlab>

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Until AUGUST 2014

Photoplay in toy portraits: An exhibition at the Toy Museum Hevosenkentä, Espoo, Finland.

Hevosenkentä offers a unique toy experience in relation to Russian toys. Finnish visual artist Katja Tukiainen's exhibit, *Toverit* (Comrades) presents six works of mixed media, each of which is a portrait of a different Russian Doll toy.



Gymnast - toy portrait by Katja Tukiainen.

Comrades introduces six toy friends of the artist, depicted with the techniques of photography and collage. In these toy portraits the characters seem to address the viewer with full frontal poses. In a way they seem to convey a certain air of innocence, as if appealing to something that may not be completely lost in our times, after all. *Toverit* [Comrades] continues until the end of August.

Until JANUARY 2015

Toys of the '50s, '60s and '70s, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, USA.

Gumby. Barbie. Slinky. Mr. Potato Head. Wham-O. Spirograph. Hot Wheels. The names of popular toys from the 1950s, '60s and '70s capture the craziness, the joy, the sheer fun of being a kid. But beneath those nutty names are rich veins of nostalgia, memory and history. The stories of the kids who played with these toys, the adults who bought them, the child-rearing experts who judged them and the people who invented them, reflect the rhythms of American life. Experience the toys and their stories through three imagined living rooms that bring the decades back to life.

For further information see the following website:

<http://www.minnesotahistorycenter.org/exhibits/toys-of-50s-60s-and-70s>



Until MARCH 2015

”*Miška and I*”: exhibition at Toy Museum Hevosenkenkä, Espoo, Finland.

Many adults living in countries bordering Russia have memories of Sovjet-age toys. At a time when the contemporary, commercial toy culture becomes globally unified and our experiences of dolls, soft toys and action figures are decidedly transnational, it is refreshing to take a look at the recent history of Russian toy culture.

The Finnish Toy Museum Hevosenkenkä showcases Russian toy treasures in an exhibition which runs through spring 2015. *The Miška and I* exhibition features character toys, play sets and toy vehicles with a special focus on various types of dolls.

The design of the toys in the Hevosenkenkä exhibit is intriguing, especially in light of the history of Soviet toys. A toy research institute was founded in Zagorsk in 1932. The institute offered a forum for pedagogues and artists of its time to discuss the best and most accurate qualities of Soviet toys. In these Soviet times, a committee regulated toy production and controlled the availability of excess materials from other industries from which many toys could be manufactured.



Entrance to the Finnish Toy Museum - Hevosenkenkä.

In the Hevosenkenkä exhibition, one may admire toys like the wobbling doll Nevaljaška, Tšeburaška (from the series Gena, the Crocodile) designed by Eduard Uspenski and the iconic Miška bear, which has inspired many Finnish artists born in the 1960s and 1970s. The designer of this character is Viktor Tšizikov.



Character toys from the Sovjet Union/Russia.

The foamy, fuzz-covered toys are a category of their own. Many of these toy curiosities are coveted treasures for collectors and adult players alike. The *Miška and I* exhibition features both an astronaut and a seemingly shy girl gymnast. The idea of transmedia storytelling was also familiar in the Sovjet days. Popular characters from animated series and books were often used as a starting point for toy design.

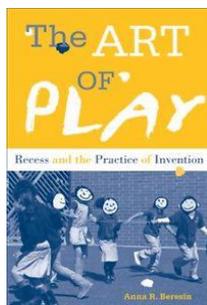
Miška and I runs until the 8th March 2015

Kati Heljakka

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, or to the Editorial Team at itraneWSltr@gmail.com. This edition also includes calls for papers on upcoming publications.

Anna R. Beresin (2013). *The Art of Play: Recess and the Practice of Invention*. Pennsylvania: Temple University Press. 189 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4399-1093-1 (hard cover), 978-1-4399-1094-8 (soft cover).



For centuries there have been battles and there have been wars. In our time, wars rage across the world: the Middle East, Crimea, Vietnam, just to mention a few. At home we have a war on poverty and a war on drugs. And then there's the war on children and their expressive culture. This war has been scaled into battles against one of the most important of activities, recess, where children's culture forwards physical and behavioural development, where the child learns, through being a child, to be a member of society.

Anna P. Beresin wrote *Recess Battles*, exploring this lock-down on children's expressive culture due in part to fears of playground violence. She now writes *The Art of Play* to examine what children who do have recess will do if offered, at no cost to the school, "traditional urban play materials: . . . jump ropes, balls, hoops, and chalk." These were offered to nine "resource poor schools to enrich children's time and support children's expressive culture." Students at four of the schools participated in an art activity "where teachers asked the children to paint what they do at recess and how it makes them feel." Art about play became *The Art of Play*, focusing on 155 seven, eight, nine, and ten year olds from ethnic groups across Philadelphia: African American, Asian American, Latino, and white, with assistance from students at the University School of the Arts where Beresin is Associate Professor.

Beresin's question is circular: "What can the art of play teach us about the art of play?" To answer the question, Beresin has organized the book into three parts: 1, Erasing Children's Expressivity; 2, Master Players; and 3, Balancing Acts. Part One deals with the fact that so many schools have either suspended or eliminated recess for a sense of safety or have meted it out as gift or punishment for adult-perceived transgressions. In Part Two, master players are introduced through ruminations by fine artists on play in their professions as artists, dancers, and musicians. In *Balancing Acts*, the exploration becomes most technical as Beresin and her assistants perform statistical analysis on the children's art work and on their physical activity, using pedometers to measure how many steps each child takes over a period of time; they also analyze activities, as well as commentary from the children, the teacher, and the researchers.

While the use of children's art in exploring development is nothing new, the use of the pedometers is rather novel. While the pedometer can gauge such things as calories burned, Beresin chose to stick with the number of steps the students made in recess. When the children were introduced to the pedometers, most accepted them fully, even with a sense of competition, wanting to know if one child made more steps than another.

A novel approach was used to get around release forms, though Beresin was somewhat successful in negotiating with her university's Internal Review Board. But permission was important, and it was not easily gained as most of the parents worked and were unavailable when it came time to give or refuse permission. In light of that, Beresin had students draw their faces to create an overlay face that would be attached to the child when creating the publication of *The Art of Play*. Of course it would have been great to see the facial expression as it corresponded to the play. But since it could not be done, this was going to have to suffice as a creative response to a difficult situation.

The Art of Play is slender in size but dense in content. Beresin claims it is a folklore book, but nowhere in the text does she define folklore. The interludes are interesting, but I wonder if they would have been more powerful had she selected Philadelphia folk artists, who speak regularly about the sense of humour and play in their respective arts. The points of view expressed by the artists Beresin has chosen seem to stand alone, their talk not connecting and interacting with the children's activity.

In her analysis of the paintings, which she calls "paintlore," Beresin points out that whereas the young children draw lone activity, the older children draw themselves playing with others. Some paint words into their art work, while others don't. Beresin does not include the titles or comments on the art work.

Creativity and imagination are heavy hitters in this book. Play is a powerful force in children's lives, and like an eternal flame, it won't be snuffed out. But I wonder if Beresin might have stumbled in what she wanted to say, and her case might be over-complicated. She speaks of invention by way of the paintlore, but how long will particular inventions endure, since the children, if it hadn't been for Beresin's contributions of paint, brush, and paper, would not have had the opportunity to invent?

Despite some of its wrinkles, *The Art of Play* is a must read for those interested in children's expressive culture and in how society might deal with the constant threat of children losing the playground as their theatre of development through play. Beresin introduces us to the playful child who, through depictions, is also an artful child, a documentarian of his or her play activities, as a reflexive anthropologist might be. The study reveals a tenacious human, one who makes do with what he or she has in the name of play. Children are great communicators among themselves, and they have great strategies for doing so, first outlined by Brian Sutton-Smith in the 1970s and still with us today.

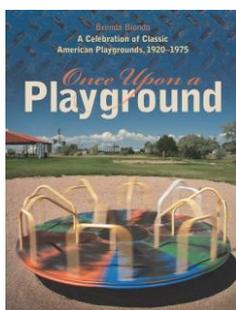
Beresin's project is over for now, but we must keep a keen eye on the playground situation. As advocate, Beresin explores play action and artful representation with the hope that children, the ultimate victims of playground battles and culture wars, will retain these spaces for creativity, and that we will find ways of making their play accessible and meaningful.

(Reviewed by Jan Rosenberg)

Re-printed from the Journal of Folklore Research Reviews:

<http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/jfr/index>

Brenda Biondo *Once Upon a Playground. A Celebration of Classic American Playgrounds 1920-1975* published by University Press of New England in May 2014.



The book takes a nostalgic look at American playgrounds and comprises 160 contemporary photographs and many vintage images of playgrounds in USA.

More info and a video tour of the book can be found at the following link:

<http://www.onceuponaplayground.com/onceuponaplayground/Home.html>

Jeffrey H. Goldstein (2014) "Toys." In Heather Montgomery (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Childhood Studies*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199791231-0133

This new review article on toys compiled by Jeffrey Goldstein and published on-line by Oxford University Press examines classic studies and more recent scholarly works on toys. The entries are classified in four useful categories General Overviews, Making Toys, Using Toys and Studying Toys. The introduction to the article is available on line at the following address.

<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/childhood-studies>

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1) Children Can Tell When You Omit Information - The study builds on a 2011 paper which investigated how children behave when a teacher explains only one function of a toy that can do four different things.
<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/children-can-tell-when-you-omit-information-541460>

2) Nintendo is showing off the first of its *amiibo* toys at the E3 video games expo in Los Angeles.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27790059>

3) Young recyclers change gear for the Tour de France
http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/sport/11226839.Young_recyclers_change_gear_for_the_Tour_de_France/

4) How did GI Joe become the world's most successful boys' toy?
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26196760>

5) Lego spinoff *Ninjago* dated for September 2016
<http://variety.com/2014/film/news/lego-spinoff-ninjago-dated-for-sept-2016-1201187505/>

6) Do children's toys influence their career choices?
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25857895>

7) Waste-to-toys: the growing market for eco-friendly, high-quality toys
<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/jun/16/eco-friendly-sustainable-toys-growing-market-waste-recycling>

8) Toy firms aim to get children hooked on brand loyalty
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25832798>

9) Teletubbies set to return with DHX Media reboot
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/teletubbies-set-to-return-with-dhx-media-reboot-1.2676765>

10) Inspired by one girl, two designing women set out to make toys more inclusive for all
<http://www.pandagon.net/2014/05/inspired-by-one-girl-two-designing-women-set-out-to-make-toys-more-inclusive-for-all/>

11) Teddies take the plunge at charity parachuting event in Bingham
<http://www.nottinghampost.com/Teddies-plunge-charity-parachuting-event-Bingham/story-21239775-detail/story.html>

12) Construction toy firm Lego has blended the real and the virtual with bricks that can be built and then transferred to online games.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27939683>

13) Do we need to rescue our kids from the digital world?
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27501984>

ITRA 2014 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 through to 2014.

Annual membership: €50

Retiree// Student membership: €25

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, when you send your fees to the bank. It is important to mention what amount and in which currency you paid.

EPILOGUE

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 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 Magalhães, at luisamagal@gmail.com, with either a book review or recommendation. We intend to publish a Winter edition in December 2014. In the meantime, the editors of the newsletter would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue of the ITRA newsletter.

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.

Remember the ITRA Conference to be held in Braga! You won't want to miss the conference!

Regards
Suzy, Kati & Mark

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