

ITRA NEWSLETTER

International Toy Research Association

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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 a note from our President, a couple of items under Member Profiles, the Members' Forum, various publications, conference and exhibition previews and reviews. Please note that many conference and exhibition organisers have been required to postpone or put their plans in abeyance due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.



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 list of publications, and a catalogue of downloadable newsletters.

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 colleagues and friends,



It has now been almost a year and a half since the Covid-19 virus first made its presence felt. It is hard to believe that the pandemic is still in all the headlines and affecting most of our lives so severely. With that in mind, I trust this finds International Toy Research Association members, both past and present, and Friends of ITRA, safe and well during the current global pandemic.

Across the world over the past eighteen months, communities have experienced unimaginable losses, deaths, and difficulties, institutional plans have been placed on hold, individuals have faced job losses, home evictions, and other insecurities, and lockdowns and social-distancing have reshaped the landscapes of all of our lives. The 9th ITRA World Conference, due to have been held July 2021 in Amsterdam, has been deferred and it is unclear when we may meet again in-person. No firm date or plans for re-scheduling our next conference have been made as all arrangements are dependent on international and institutional lifting of restrictions and new meeting protocols, which seem to change almost weekly. Once travel restrictions have been lifted and it appears to be more financially viable for both attendees and the host institution, we will begin negotiations again for our next conference.

During the process of reaching out by individual email to each registered ITRA member, I learned the sad news that Prof David Whitebread, Cambridge University and PEDAL (Play in Education Development And Learning) member, who had a longstanding and close relationship with ITRA, suddenly passed away in April after suffering a brain haemorrhage. He died peacefully at Addenbrookes Hospital with his wife, Linda, and two daughters by his side. In addition, Kathleen Alfano, a co-founding member of ITRA, and Lieselotte van Leeuwen, current ITRA Board member, both recently lost their respective husbands of many decades. On behalf of the ITRA Board and Editorial Team, I would like to pass on our condolences to David's family, Kathleen and Lieselotte and those others who may have lost family members, work colleagues and friends during this unprecedented period.

A number of ITRA members reported being directly affected by Covid-19, through personally or having close family members infected by the virus. It is a relief to hear of those who have passed through the experience relatively unscathed and best wishes, for a full recovery, go out to those currently suffering poor health, any associated stress, fatigue and uncertainty during this extraordinary time.

On a happier note, I received messages that a number of ITRA students successfully defended their theses and were awarded their PhDs. On the other end of the spectrum, a few others in our ITRA family chose to retire this year, thus completing the inexorable academic 'circle-of-life.' Updates on these events, research activities and much more can be found in this newsletter's 'Member Forum' section.

Do not forget to check out our website, www.itratoyresearch.org, and [Facebook](#) page for updated information on potential conference plans and all other ITRA matters.

I am aware that it remains an uncertain time for most of us, since we do not know what the trajectory of the pandemic will look like in the coming year; however, I trust all ITRA members are taking good care, as we globally and individually navigate through these continued uncertain times.

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MEMBER PROFILE – Uwemedimo Iwokedok



Uwemedimo Iwokedok earned a Master's degree in Oral Literature from the University of Jos, Nigeria, in 1988, soon thereafter taking up a lecturing role at the University of Uyo, Nigeria, in the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages. In 1997 Uwemedimo was awarded a PhD with a thesis entitled “*A Study of Mbre-Nyo: Ibibio-Annang Traditional Comedy*” from the University of Jos. As Head of the Department of English, Uwemedimo taught oral/written literature, childlore, and creative writing; supervised a generation of Masters and PhD students; was advanced to full professor in 2011; and formally retired in 2020.

Uwemedimo is a member of a number of professional bodies including the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL), the International Society for Folklore Narrative Research (ISFNR), the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA), and Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA).

Uwemedimo's publications include: *Childlore, Eco-foetal Discourse Model and African Oral Literature* (2017), *Children and Creativity: A Socio-Literary Appraisal* (2000), *Images in Nigerian Children's Oral Poetry* (2008), *The Role of Ibibio Children's Games in the Development of Nigerian Languages and Culture in the 21st Century* (2001-2004), *Analysis of Lullabic Songs in Traditional African Communities: Some Nigerian Examples* (2009), *A Literary Discourse of Nigerian Children's Accretive Songs* (2009), *Feminism as a Theme in Nigerian Childlore* (2010), and, *Relevance of Nigerian Children's Deterrent Songs to Literature and Society* (2011).

Uwemedimo Iwokedok first came across toy research as a discipline, in 1989, while teaching Oral Literature at the University of Uyo, Nigeria. Her first peer-reviewed research paper examined children's oral poetry in which she observed that Ibibio children accompanied most of their songs with actions and toys. In addition, the toys were not just simply playthings, but also acted as historical and literary records. She observes that national identity and culture may have strong links to toys, especially folk/traditional toys made for and by children.

Asked about her favourite toy, Uwemedimo described a doll, made in 2005, from discarded cloth and sticks by an 8-year-old boy for his one-year-old sister – the sticks were from a shrub in the compound in which Uwemedimo had lived for 21 years. The plant species is now extinct in that part of Jos due to human encroachment and increased urbanisation. The figurine acts as proof of the existence of the plant. The cloth was a ‘rag’ but good enough to craft a doll. Though the boy and his sister have grown up, the toys they created as children remain as ‘historical’ evidence of their artistic and creative values, play space, and play concepts.

In 2000, Uwemedimo attended the *Dimensions of Play* Conference, held at Sheffield University, UK, during which she bought a book by Julia Bishop, introducing Uwemedimo to the term ‘*Childlore*’ – which she adopted and adapted within a Nigerian context. Her ongoing interest in children's lore includes their play life, play space, art, content and the literariness of their play. It was at that conference that Uwemedimo first heard about the International Toy Research Association and subsequently attended the ITRA Conference held 2002, in London.

Uwemedimo describes her ITRA conference experiences as ‘blessed memories’, having occasion to meet in person, Brian Sutton-Smith, Gilles Brougère, Cleo Gougoulis, to name but a few. She remembers the conferences as, “always fun, a time to learn and exchange ideas” regarding humanity, environment, society and culture. She found the financial support offered by ITRA, to attend the conferences in London, Alicante, and Nafplion, particularly helpful and suggested that publishing conference proceedings should be a regular feature. In some academic institutions conference proceedings may garner points during promotion and tenure evaluations and similarly act as an inducement to increase attendance at ITRA conferences.

Although she retired in 2020 from fulltime work, Uwemedimo is quick to note that she is still actively involved in her own child-centred research, including visits to traditional craft shops, observing children at play in playgrounds, writing books which become recommended texts in Nigerian primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, and interviewing people of all ages regarding their views on traditional toys and play.

One of Uwemedimo's dreams is to see the establishment of a National Museum for Childhood in Nigeria – she has been collecting traditional toys for over twenty-one years for such a purpose. Nigerian children have a long history in fashioning toys from everyday objects which incorporate principles of mechanisms, flotation, speed, sound, and vibration. On the basis of these principles she hopes to attract government interest in the idea of traditional toys as an avenue toward popularizing basic principles of science and mathematics for children.

Uwemedimo describes herself as someone who enjoys pushing disciplinary boundaries and argues that it may be ‘honourable’ to chart an unfamiliar path for oneself and develop a template for others to follow. She takes pleasure in helping others recognize the cultural and scientific importance of traditional toys, and the consequent need for their study. She concludes that fun is what keeps a researcher going even in the midst of what might first be perceived as complete failure.

MEMBER PROFILE – Peter K Smith



Peter K Smith is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He has researched extensively in aspects of children's social development, and was Head of the Unit for School and Family Studies there from 1998-2011. He received his BSc at the University of Oxford and his PhD from the University of Sheffield; following his doctorate he continued at the University of Sheffield, obtaining a Personal Chair in 1991, before moving to Goldsmiths College in 1995. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, the Association of Psychological Sciences, and the Academy of Social Sciences. He is a founding member of ITRA. Smith has authored, co-authored or co-edited 38 books, and authored or co-authored 213 journal articles and 140 book chapters. His general works in children's development include the textbook *Understanding Children's Development* (2015), and a co-edited collection titled *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Childhood Social Development* (2021). He is known for his work on children's play, and play-related works include the edited collection (with Tony Pellegrini), *The Nature of Play: Great Apes and Humans* (2005), the book, *Children and Play* (2010), and *The Cambridge Handbook of Play: Developmental and Disciplinary Perspectives* (2018). His most extensive research of late has explored the topic of bullying and violence in schools, where he has led a number of research projects including a COST Action on Cyberbullying. Publications include *The Psychology of School Bullying* (2018), *Making an Impact on School Bullying: Interventions and Recommendations* (2019), and *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Bullying: A Comprehensive and International Review of Research and Intervention* (2021).

Peter K Smith's involvement in toy and play research was through his initial interest in aggression. As an undergraduate student, Peter followed the dispute surrounding Konrad Lorenz' book, *On Aggression* (1966), which argued that aggression was innate in human nature. His PhD supervisor at Sheffield University suggested a study of the origins of aggression in young children, through intensive observations of 2 to 4 year old children in day nurseries. While Peter observed some fighting, mostly the children were engaged in play, generally with toys. Consequently his doctoral dissertation covered types of play, age and gender differences, and toy choices.

Peter's postdoctoral research investigated how resources – space and toys – affected children's behaviour in pre-school playgroups. They discovered that the amount of space, not surprisingly, affected the amount of vigorous physical play such as running around or the use of climbing frames to get some exercise. However the quantity of available toys had a greater effect on social behaviour. Fewer toys meant greater sharing – a positive aspect – though occasionally more fights. For example, fewer tricycles resulted in more sharing – one sitting on the tricycle while another stood on the back – but also more squabbling about whose turn it was to play with the tricycle. This work was written up in Peter's first book, *The Ecology of Preschool Behaviour* (1980).

Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, Peter continued conducting research, mainly on children's play. Nancy Carlsson-Paige and Diane Levin published a book called *The War Play Dilemma* (1987), suggesting that toy guns and similar war toys should be banned in playgroups and schools. This merged into the topic of play fighting, or rough-and-tumble play, and how much that should be tolerated. Peter describes taking a more 'permissive' line, given that children generally discerned what was playful and pretend, while he recognised that overtly aggressive behaviours were not acceptable. He collaborated with Italian colleagues on this subject and contributed a chapter, "The War Toys Debate" in Jeffrey Goldstein's book, *Toys, Play and Culture* (1994).

It was around this time, in 1993, that the International Toy Research Association was formed and Peter was pleased to be involved in this venture, as a founding member. He was not as actively involved as some other founders, as his research was more focused on play generally, rather than toys. Peter was invited to present a keynote talk at the 2011 ITRA conference in Bursa, Turkey. He reviewed the history of views on play and toys, the developmental functions of object and pretend play, and the possible evolutionary history of such forms of play in higher primates and hominid evolution. Focussing more specifically on toys, he examined issues around toys as minders, comfort objects and imaginary companions; toys as indicators of gender stereotyping; toys and imitation; toys as recycling and creative use; toys as commercial objects; and war toys.

In the early 1990s Peter became heavily involved in research on school bullying – a topic which has gained momentum in recent decades and which continues to be his primary focus. He finds satisfaction conducting research which encompasses societal impact, challenge or controversy – which includes commercialization of toys, war toys, rough-and-tumble play and bullying. In the 1990s and 2000s, Peter found it easier to get research funding for school bullying than for children's play or toy research.

He concluded by observing that his school bullying research has been particularly worthwhile, however he has the impression that play and toy research, after perhaps a rather quiet period, has been picking up in recent years. Peter wishes the International Toy Research Association, and toy researchers, productive times in the future!

MEMBERS' FORUM

Please remember when you do submit items for inclusion in the ITRA newsletter to send them in a downloadable form. The views expressed by International Toy Research Association members do not necessarily represent those of the Association.

ARGENTINA

Stela Maris Ferrarese, sent us an update from the “Allel Kuzen” Ethnic Toy Museum:

In March 2020, the Ethnic Toy Museum proposed a display of jewels from the different cultures of the world in a temporary exhibition entitled “Jewels Count.” The exhibit included jewelled objects that are parts of children’s games. It was inaugurated on the 8th of March, the day of the woman, in tribute to all little girls of the world. But we did not foresee what would happen globally and how it would affect our institutions. On the 19th of March, the museum had to be closed, at first, for two months, but then for an indefinite period.

The emotional situation of the people of Neuquén gave rise to a rethinking of the Ethnic Toy Museum’s role in the region; hence we decided to use the existing technology to bring the Museum closer to the people. This is how the Museum’s YouTube channel arose, and the ability for audiences to view the exhibition on that medium. The link was also shared on social networks and the mobile phone WhatsApp. Working together with the Provincial Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Cultures, we conducted a training to create QR codes, a system that we applied by placing photos of the different samples with the respective code on the door of the institution. Visitors who virtually pass by the sidewalk of the museum could thus view individual objects from the exhibit through their respective QR codes.

A surprise outcome for us was that philatelists from the city contacted each other and offered to jointly hold an exhibition that allowed us to learn about jewels from different cultures through postage stamps. Thus the virtual exhibition “Stamps that are Jewels” was created.

The second sample allowed more people from the philately area to join the proposal to hold virtual samples. This is how we approached the world of toys through the invitation to play with the exhibition “Playing with stamps.” Thus we successfully managed to walk through the pandemic year virtually, even adding an additional virtual exhibition, “Traditional Games of the World.” This program then gave way to a series of interviews transmitted by Zoom and Facebook with researchers and bearers of the world’s playful culture, while we joined in giving talks in pedagogical institutions of the different levels of education and national and international congresses. In this way, we were able to take advantage of the situation to use our technologies to bring us closer to physically inaccessible spaces, taking into account the prohibitive costs of travel and accommodation.

The Museum that traditionally ends a guided tour with a story told by the storyteller Blanca, also transferred that emotional action to the virtual world, where Blanca narrated stories by zoom and videos that were then made available, along with all of the other programs, on the YouTube Channel of the Ethnic Toy Museum “Allel Kuzen.”

Parallel to this, older adults offered to build toys with recycled material for the Museum, an action that was accepted since it favoured the use of these people’s free time in the face of the situation of confinement, and helped to address their emotions by not being able to see their relatives. Balls, *ta te ti*, tops, dolls, etc., were made with recycled material, and distributed by the Museum in vulnerable sectors so that infants and young children would receive a toy of their own.

The year of 2020 ended with the much awaited publication of an ethnographic research study about the *haichol* dice and the games played by children throughout the Inca. This book will make known the work of a number of scientists who have studied this type of game for many years.

In addition to these accomplishments, we also dedicated ourselves in 2021 to working on the records of the toys entered in that period, while also making physical improvements in the facilities. We resume the museum year with a restricted protocol of visits, which motivated us to start the year with a small sample of pieces that can be visited personally. These pieces are part of a game transmitted along the Main Inca Trail called *Qhapac Ñan* in the Quechuan language.

We resumed visits to schools that, due to the both physical safety and economic reasons, cannot visit us. We take our “travelling suitcase” of toys which are appropriate to a “bubble” group of 10 students which had invited us.

Another action that we will take up is the intervention of public spaces with public paintings on the side of the museum and other places and various hop-scotch games, which are the delight of every childhood.

And in this way, between virtual and in person acts, we will spend this year trying to be close to our community as we navigate this current emotional journey together.

www.museodeljugueteetnico.com

Facebook: Museo ETnico (Del Juguete)

YouTube: Museo del Juguete étnico Allel Kuzen

Email: museodeljugueteetnico@gmail.com / originandojuegos@yahoo.com.ar

Daniela Pelegrinelli, Director, Museo del Juguete de San Isidro, wrote:

As I expected, the general situation in Argentina is quite sad. The vaccine rollout has been slow, daily life is quite restricted and hospital admissions are complicated. Elementary schools and kindergartens have bubble classes. At the university level, many classes have been converted onto digital platforms. The general mood is one of sadness, discouragement, and uncertainty about the future.

Children and older people - as always - were forgotten at the beginning of the lockdown, though recently, the State Channel introduced a number of programs for children. However, there is some good news across South America, as many people have started taking virtual courses, so teachers and other professionals from different places are able to train themselves in new, vital and exciting experiences.

Some toy companies tried new things, for example, RUIBAL Games (<https://ruibalgames.com>) joined C3 (Cultural Center of Science) and together held a virtual playful encounter that brought together about 100 players from all over the country. It was a novel experience that had an unexpected response, which we are trying to understand more. Obviously, as in other countries, the use of virtual games grew. My participation in this has been minimal, although I followed it closely because I am working with them as a consultant. For some reason, the interest in learning about games and toys has also grown. The National Secretariat of Social Development (SENAF) will launch a virtual training on play games and toys (which we are designing with a team of several colleagues under my direction) for play coordinators from all over the country.

A new master's degree in play and society is going to commence in Córdoba Province. In the neighbouring city of Montevideo (Uruguay), a Specialization in the Design of Toys and Products for Children, which is the first in South America, will begin this year. I will lead some seminars.

In 2020 the first Spanish translation of Gilles Brougère's book *Education and Play* was published. Both good and bad news; good, because any translation of Brougère work is welcome, even if it is twenty-five years after publication, and bad, for the same reason. The delay reveals the difficulty we have due to the lack of translations. Personally, the pandemic helped me move forward with the writing of my new research paper, which is about a doll made in Argentina between 1932 and 1960 called *Marilú*. It was similar to the French *Bleuette* doll and was highly relevant in terms of the relationship between parenting, female childhood, specific publications, fashion, socialization, female work, etc.

Best wishes to all the members of ITRA.

Daniela

AUSTRIA

Christoph Kühberger, Professor at University of Salzburg, sent the following:

I am fine and the developments of the pandemic are going in the right direction, at least in our country. There are a couple of publications on my project "*Historical Culture in Private Play Spaces*" (Geschichtskultur im Kinderzimmer"), which could be mentioned:

- The anthology "*Mit Geschichte spielen. Zur materiellen Kultur von Spielzeug und Spielen als Darstellungen der Vergangenheit*" [Playing with History: On the Material Culture of Toys and Games as Representations of the Past], with more than 370 pages, will be published in June 2021.

Other contributions are:

- Kühberger, Christoph: *Toys Mediate Pasts – das Kinderzimmer als Ort der Geschichtsvermittlung*. In: Christoph Bareither/ Ingrid Tomkowiak (eds) *Mediated Pasts – Popular Pleasures: Medien und Praktiken populärkulturellen Erinnerns (Kulturen populärer Unterhaltung und Vergnügung)*. Würzburg 2020, 141-153. Open access: <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/22257>

- Kühberger, Christoph: *Informelles Lernen mit Spielzeug? Ethnographische Beobachtungen zu Geschichtsdarstellungen im Kinderzimmer*. In: Sebastian B. & van Norden, J. (eds). *Historisches Lernen und Materielle Kultur. Von Dingen und Objekten in der Geschichtsdidaktik*. Bielefeld 2020, 111-124. Open access: <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/media/pdf/9d/f0/bd/oa9783839450666.pdf>

- A more theoretical paper is published on "toys" (Spielzeug) in the handbook on historical culture: Kühberger, Christoph: *Spielzeug*. In: Felix Hinz/Aandreas Körber (eds). *Geschichtskultur - Public History - Angewandte Geschichte..* Göttingen 2020, 282-303.

- An ethnographic research on playing with knights' castles by children in an Austrian kindergarten and its connection to historical learning was also published:

Kühberger, Christoph/Karl, Kristina: *Die Ritterburg im Kindergarten. Ethnographische Annäherungen an den Umgang mit einem geschichtskulturellen Produkt*. In: Ch. Kühberger (ed). *Ethnographie und Geschichtsdidaktik*. Frankfurt/Main 2021, 180-211.

Best

Christoph

BELGIUM

Jennifer Pearson, Senior Policy and Communications Advisor at Toy Industries of Europe (TIE) wrote:



We launched our Play for Change Awards last year to celebrate progressive toy companies that are producing innovative products or running initiatives that help to empower children (i.e. toys/initiatives focused on equality, inclusion and diversity), are focused on future skills development (i.e. toys/initiatives designed with building so called “21st century skills” specifically in mind), as well as sustainability (in terms of products, packaging and manufacturing processes, as well as toys/initiatives that educate children about the environment and sustainability).

More information can be found here: <https://playforchangeawards.eu/>

BRAZIL

Danielle Almeida, Associate Professor at Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB), wrote:

Toys first and foremost appeal to our affective reactions, and that has to do with their interpersonal meanings, which most of the time are associated with toys’ material qualities.

Whether they are made of metal, plastic, wood or soft materials, they reveal cultural references and produce affective reactions.

My main interest as a linguist is to expand the agenda of childhood studies from a linguistic perspective by constructing a multimodal framework – which I have called toy literacy – to analyse toys in their three-dimensional features, with a view to discussing some of the roles provided by toys’ multimodal messages and reflecting upon the kind of childhood that has been constructed through toys’ material representations.



I have been creating a framework that may be of help to different social sectors – from the academic to the more general public – to show how toys end up communicating and reinforcing stereotypes and social behaviours through the verbal and visual choices behind their design, packages and campaigns. In providing a systematic language to talk about toy choices, I hope to promote reflection on the social structures pertaining to toys’ gender and cultural representations, which have long been kept concealed.

With a view to understanding the process of artisans’ material choices while manufacturing a toy, our Brazilian Semiotics and Multimodality Research Group (GPSM) has invited three very talented artisans from Northeastern Brazil to talk about the production of their handmade toys in an online event titled “*Dialogues on Multimodality and Handcrafted Toys.*”

I have invited three of my colleagues – Claudia Ponciano, José Maria de Aguiar Sarinho Júnior and Keila Leal to share with the ITRA community their research experiences investigating the toy world in Brazil.

Warmly,

Danielle

• **Cláudia Ponciano**, Professor at Instituto Federal da Paraíba (IFPB) wrote:

First, I hope this finds you and your family well and safe from Covid-19.

As a member of the Brazilian Research Group on Visual Semiotics and Multimodality (GPSM), coordinated by Dr. Danielle Almeida, my PhD research is related to the spatial semiotic configurations of Brazilian children’s birthday party scenarios that take place at party houses (party venues for children, involving many guests), which are commonly rented for that purpose. These scenarios are generally based on narratives related



to Disney Princesses or The Little Prince, as these photos illustrate. In this sense, one aspect worth noticing is that during this pandemic period, due to prohibitions against in-person gatherings, these children’s parties have happened basically in three ways: virtual, drive-in, or drive-thru. In any case, the scenarios have been put on the family’s houses or in front of the Party Houses. And what for? Are they like toys? In order to share other members’ ongoing research, José Maria de Aguiar and Keila Leal have also been invited to write a paragraph about some aspects of their research objects. (Photograph from: <https://pt-br.facebook.com/Popotamusbuffet>)

• **José Maria de Aguiar Sarinho Júnior** wrote:

What about discussing disability, inclusion and difference in toys? Taking these approaches into consideration, we have been investigating how handmade inclusive toys may motivate, through their representational, interactive and compositional meanings, sensory and emotional aspects, beyond social and communicative interactions. In this way, my PhD study attempts to investigate not only the composition of these playful artefacts and their affordances, but also aims to take a look at the children’s narratives while handling toys with disabilities fore-grounded by a linguistic perspective. In the context of handmade inclusive toys, this



year, on May 11th, our research team organized an online conference focused on handcrafted toys made by three artisans from north-eastern Brazil. We were particularly interested in learning about the materials they use to make their toys as well as in knowing about children's reactions while playing with them.

• **Keila Leal** wrote:

2020 will always be remembered as a crisis year evidenced by Covid-19, triggering many health disasters not only in terms of physical and mental issues, but also economic, social and cultural aspects in Brazil. In this challenging context that we are still facing in 2021, to investigate aspects of childhood becomes something pleasurable as a way to understand the importance of playfulness from children's earliest years. In this sense, my PhD study aims to contribute to the research on multimodality, especially in the field of reading and playing. Therefore, my contribution as a researcher is based on the investigation of toybooks' materiality and children's interaction while holding this object, claiming the ludic aspect of play in the discovery of reading. In this way, we perceive the toybook as a support for playful reading practices and as a potential for multiple experiences in a child's universe.



FINLAND

Mattia Thibault, postdoc researcher within the Gamification Group at Tampere University, wrote: Things in Finland are slowly getting better, even if the situation is still far from normal. Due to Covid-19 I had to put aside, for now, my urban toyification projects. After the session of Jurassic Tampere in December 2019 (<https://webpages.tuni.fi/gamification/2020/02/01/1703/>) all plans to play again had to be put aside. However, some teaching involving toys and toyification still happens. In particular, while not explicitly related to toys, I will be teaching a summer course at Tampere University entitled: *Design from the future - Critical, speculative and fictional design* (<https://www.tuni.fi/en/study-with-us/design-future-critical-speculative-and-fictional-design-tampere-summer-school-2021>). The course, which I will teach with Oğuz 'Oz' Buruk, involves a lot of hands-on work and prototyping... and what are "fictional prototypes" if not toys in a research-through-design setting?

Finally, the Final Report of my project ReClaim is ready. You can find it here (<https://bit.ly/ReClaimFReport>). In it, there is also some of my work on toyification.

Hope that all the members of the ITRA community are well despite these trying times: a hug to all of you!

All my best wishes,

Mattia Thibault

FRANCE

Gilles Brougère, Professor of Education Sciences from the Université Sorbonne-Paris-Nord, ITRA founding member and current ITRA Board member, wrote regarding recent research and articles in progress:

What is making play? The design of a playful application based on a cartoon.

During research on the conception of a cultural product intended for children (a comic strip and the cartoon which was adapted from it), we studied an application derived from the same universe which was a promotional tool ordered by the co-producing television channel. We analyzed the place of the action proposed to the child through various interactive devices, including the game itself, as well as the discourses produced by the designers. Despite the central place given to the game itself, we found that the game is only a limited element of the many participatory channels that capture the child's engagement and imagination. The game appears as a parenthesis that must not call into question the logic of the cartoon that largely guides the development of the application. It appears as a different way of viewing a cartoon. Beyond this example, we explored the tension between the content of the game and what makes the game a game, the relationship that is maintained with the content. The fixation on the content leads to limiting the dimension of the game itself.

Student or tourist: what the children experience and say about their seaside classes?

Based on ethnographic observation of two seaside classes in two Finisterian sites (lasting eight to ten days), as well as interviews with groups of children and teachers, this article attempts to grasp the seaside classes from the children's point of view: what is their experience? To what extent does this experience relate to the school situation or serve as an escape from it? Do the children see themselves as tourists, believing that they are confronted with an otherness that encourages questioning and learning? Do they feel they are learning? The focus here is on rethinking the often divergent discourses made by the adults involved in this system, valuing seaside classes as much as they devalue tourism.

Paper chases and exploration: tourism, games and fiction

From the study of six examples, this article proposes to analyze the playful character of paper chases by moving away from the notion of gamification, which is not relevant in this case. The aim is to understand how these games articulate mechanisms, often linked to the presence of enigmas and investigation – a more or less important but always present fictional dimension – and a relation with a space to be discovered and explored. It

is this combination that contributes to make them explicitly entertainment-oriented games while associating a learning dimension in a more or less formal way, at least for five of them. But as far as games are concerned, the balance between these different aspects is fragile and the playful attitude is never guaranteed.

Vincent Berry, Senior Lecturer from Université Paris 13, wrote:

Everyone is doing well despite a family outbreak two months ago (without many symptoms). Regarding the health crisis, we are currently working on a survey on the effects of lockdown on family play practices. The survey is in progress but no results are yet published. However, we have just published a special issue of the journal *Sciences du Jeu* on board game practices in general (but it's in French):

<https://journals.openedition.org/sdj/2784>

I'll keep you informed as soon as we have more concrete results from our investigations.

Best Regards

Vincent

Thomas Bonnacarrere, from Université de Poitiers, wrote:

To start with the best news, I presented my PhD on the 12th January, so I am now officially a Doctor in information-communication.

I am now pursuing the research-action work I introduced in my thesis (about how to facilitate collective intelligence to cope with ecological collapse) and plan to finish it at the end of the year. Then I will work on a simplified version so that anyone can learn how to use my tools as easily as possible (such as with a card game version).

I am also currently writing some articles that should be published in different academic journals covering a variety of topics (as I love working on a trans-disciplinary way) such as graphic design for facilitating epistemology, self-governance of cultural data by local communities of practice working together to feed a global epistemic common pool, and territorial intelligence to help citizens strategically protect the integrity of their territory against forces with ecocidary tendencies.

And, finally, I am trying to federate a community of people who appreciate my work with a crowd funding platform, in order to keep working on my research-action project (which is clearly aimed at mid and long-term) as an independent researcher, as it is more and more difficult to get a stable job in French universities nowadays, and as I also want to spend time teaching people living in precarity (I do not want my research work to exclude them).

I wish everyone a nice day, take care of yourselves, and see you in future ITRA events!

Best Regards,

Thomas

Quentin Gervasoni, from Université Paris 13 (EXPERICE) and LabEx ICCA, wrote:

All is well on my side however the situation in France is hard to gauge at the moment.

As for academic updates, I have published a chapter on a collective book edited by (among others) by Gilles Brougère and Pascale Garnier.

Here is a link: <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/72446>

The chapter is only partially linked to ITRA though. As for the effects of Covid-19, I planned to conduct at home interviews this year for my PhD thesis, which would have been an opportunity to explore the material culture of Pokémon inside people's homes and online spaces. Alas, it has been impossible, so I conducted online, vocal/visio interviews instead. This means the material culture/toyish part of my research, which is already secondary to my PhD, has been harmed a bit. I've been able to gather data regarding this topic by asking specific questions on the matter and asking for pictures of people's Pokémon objects at their home, though. On a side note, working on lockdown has been hard, but now that I can go back to a university library it's getting better.

Best wishes

Quentin

Emilie Thibaut, Research Associate at the University of Amiens, wrote:

My family and I are doing well, but we are often afraid for our little girl who is only 5 months old.

As for my current position, I am still a Research Associate at the University of Amiens. Three of my articles will appear this year. They include:

- "*De la femme à l'enfant allaitant en Italie préromaine*", in Foehr-Janssens (Y.), Dasen (V.), Maffi (I.), Solfaroli Camilocci (D.), *Allaiter. Histoire(s) et culture d'une pratique*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021.
- "*Women and Weasels: a Medico-Religious Approach to Maternity in a Republican city of Lazio*", in *Actas del Congreso Magia y Medicina en el Mundo Antiguo*, 2021.
- "*Quand les Etrusques s'occupaient de leurs monstres*", in Guittard (Ch.), Wolf (E.), *Monstres et monstrosité*, L'Harmattan, 2021.

I also participated in a webinar in autumn entitled "*Toys as Cultural Artefacts in Ancient Greek and Roman Cultures*," organized by Véronique Dasen, 4th November 2020 on "*Offrandes miniatures pour les dieux étrusques, des jouets pour grandir?*"

A conference is also planned on this subject in June and a publication will also take place. I will also write an article from a conference that took place in 2019 on "*Les religions et la constructions des espaces.*"

Best regards,
Emilie

GERMANY

Artemis Yagou, Research Associate at the Deutsches Museum, wrote:

An updated list of my (recent and forthcoming) play-related activities.

Conference Presentations

- "*Playfully Rebuilding the Past: Construction Sets Inspired by Greek Antiquity*,"

International Conference: Imagines VII – Playful Classics, 5th – 6th March 2021, Göttingen University (online event).

- "*Politics Shaping Childhoods through Construction Toys*," International Conference: Understanding Childhood and Construction of National Identities in Central and Eastern Europe from 18th Century until the Beginning of the Second World War, 17th – 18th June 2021, Vilnius (hybrid event).

- "*Play, Design, Science: Spinning Tops, Crossing Spaces, Understanding Physics*," XL Symposium of the Scientific Instrument Commission, 25th – 31st July 2021, Prague (online event).

For more information, see: www.yagou.gr

Looking forward to physically reconnecting with the ITRA community in 2022. Until then...

Stay safe and all the best.

Artemis

GREECE

Cleo Gougoulis, Assistant Professor at University of Patras, ITRA co-founding member and current ITRA Treasurer, wrote:

Here is a site of play activists playing to change the world which I found interesting. They are called The Global Play Brigade <https://www.globalplaybrigade.org/> and constitute a community of play activists who have been offering free workshops for adults all over the world since the beginning of the pandemic.

Domna Kakana, Professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, wrote:

As for the newsletter, I have been involved in some research, but not in child play during the pandemic. In particular, we have studied the effect of Covid-19 on university staff, on pre-school education in general, but we have not yet processed the data. Also, I have a new PhD student that she will study the educational inequalities in times of crisis: Investigation of the views and experiences of teachers, students and their families during the Covid-19 in Greece...but she just started.

Best regards

Domna

Vassiliki Riga, Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, wrote:

The situation in Greece is getting better, the vaccination programme progresses quickly so as to enable receiving tourists!

Regarding the Covid-19 situation, we are currently working hard to prepare our Children's Festival of DESECE from a distance! Our students took the initiative to experiment with distance learning activities for every preschool child. If everything goes well, from 7th to 11th June, on our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUtQIciFYEs3LOHdF5RWiDw>) we will run live-streaming activities for preschool children who are at home or at school.

Concerning my academic toy research, I developed, with my PhD student Aimilia Rouvali the potential for a scientific- and classroom-based psychomotor education programme aiming to enhance the attention skills in children during their early years who are attending inclusive education programs through engaging, fun, and meaningful activities and games. The programme is interactive, lasts seven weeks, and aims to support young children's executive functioning development (working memory, inhibition, cognitive flexibility) as a means of training attention skills in a more holistic way.

I wish everyone all the best,

Vassiliki

HONG KONG

Rémi Leclerc, Founder of the PolyPlay Lab and current ITRA Board member, wrote regarding a paper and workshop presented during *Design for children with focus on 'Play + Learn'* conference held at the IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay, Mumbai, India, 28th – 30th Jan 2021:

• *Paper: Play, Design, Education: a Mutually Beneficial Ménage à Trois. A Model of Epistemology and Ontology for Designers, Educators, and Players.*

The paper introduces a model of epistemology and ontology for designers, educators, and players, elucidating intrinsic value of each activity as a 'principle' in the light of its relationship with the other two. Informed by professional, research, and educational practice in each field, the model demonstrates the value of this conceptual ménage à trois for generating communication, product, and environment systems for children. Weaving trans-disciplinary functions and purposes, the model proposes a unitary conceptual platform allowing multiple narrative configurations for practitioners from each field to inform and expand future practice. Acknowledging play's ambiguity, design's uncertainty, and education's ambivalence, the model allows print (static) and digital (dynamic) media output.

Link to paper: https://www.designingforchildren.net/Full_Final-Submissions/papers/Remi%20Leclerc/Remi-Leclerc-Play-Design-Education-a-mutually-beneficial-m%C3%A9nage-%C3%A0-trois-A-model-of-epistemology-and-ontology-for-designers-educators-and-players.pdf

• *Workshop: I, We, You, Play, Design, Learn: Mapping play, design, and education's mutually beneficial relationships to enhance children's educational design.*

The 90 minute workshop was facilitated online with students, faculty, and professionals interested in exploring the mutually beneficial relationships connecting 'principles' of Play, Design, and Education, and leverage their combined socio-cultural agency to inform educational design for children. Groups mapped reciprocal dynamics to ascertain value of the triad's combined epistemic and ontological agency for application in education. They were encouraged to consider conditions for participation and enjoyment (Play), creation and realisation (Design), and knowing and emancipation (Education). Identifying STEAM, botany, and agriculture in India as subjects to teach, and guided by an interaction design framework, they tabled specs for educational interventions, exemplifying how the conceptual ménage à trois enhances design for children. Participants welcomed the trans-disciplinary perspective and the opportunity to harness design and play to generate educational strategies from scratch.

INDIA

Surabhi Khanna, designer, educator and consultant based in New Delhi, wrote:

1) I am sharing a recent item which a national newspaper covered in which I observe that traditional toy clusters have great potential but lack innovation. Furthermore, playing trends have changed, and toymakers must too.

The full article may be found at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/art-culture/clusters-have-wonderful-and-rare-skills-says-toy-designer-surabhi-khanna-101618581735609.html?fbclid=IwAR23gYImNIDN-MKZWYl9tIcT6AJawMKrMI3DxtQdoHqdsHw5gaH2XPcA0rU>.

2) At NIDH, I was involved in an institutional project called "Kilkaar - Earning and Learning through Design." It is a Design Intervention program for women of Self Help Groups of Panipat District that was conceptualised by the National Institute of Design Haryana (NIDH) in collaboration with Haryana State Rural Livelihood Mission (HSRLM). The outreach program from 1st – 5th February 2021, was led and conducted by Faculty myself. The 15 participants went through an extensive tutelage of design processes to develop a new range of play products for Early Learning for the age group 3-6 years.

The full article may be found at: <https://www.nidh.ac.in/news/Kilkaar%3A-%E2%80%9CEarning-and-Learning-through-Design%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93a-Design-Intervention-program-for-women-of-Self-Help-Groups-of-Panipat-District->

Warm regards,

Surabhi



THE NETHERLANDS

Joyce Goggin, Senior Associate Professor at University of Amsterdam, wrote:

Like pretty much everyone else, I am looking forward to social gatherings again, being able to teach in person and enjoying conferences, hopefully quite soon. In the meantime, I have published a blog post on Poker in *Critical Gambling Studies* - 'The Holy Game of Poker': Gambling, Religion and Neoliberalism." 24th December 2020. <https://criticalgamblingstudies.blogspot.com/2020/12/the-holy-game-of-poker-gambling.html>.

I have also published an article on the sponge which is just out (“Sexing the Sponge: Luxury, Trade and the Female Body”) and am now looking for references, information - basically anything on sponge toys, as I am working towards an article on an imaginary children’s book entitled *Soapy Sponge*, which comes up in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), and Robert Smith Surtees’ *Mr. Sponge’s Sporting Tour* (1853). Here’s hoping we all have a great summer and can meet again soon for an annual conference!

I hope this finds everyone well!

Joyce

Jeffrey Goldstein, founding member of ITRA and current ITRA Board member sent us a list of a few publications in the recent past that may be of interest to ITRA members:

- Jeffrey Goldstein. (2021). Humor and comedy. In Peter Vorderer & Christoph Klimmt (eds.), *Oxford handbook of entertainment theory*. (pages 439-462). N.Y.: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780190072216
- Jeffrey Goldstein. (2019). Safe gaming. In Agnieszka Wrońska, Rafał Lew-Starowicz, & Anna Rywczyńska (eds.), *Education – relationships – play: Multifaceted aspects of the Internet and child and youth online safety*. (pages 254-283). Warsaw: Foundation for the Development of the Education System. ISBN: 9788365591777
- Willibald Ruch & Jeffrey Goldstein. (2018). Humor across the lifespan: Theory, measurement, applications. Festschrift in honor of Paul E. McGhee. Special issue, *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 31 (2), 167-449. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2018-0031>

THE PHILIPPINES

Jean-Pierre Rossie, socio-cultural anthropologist and co-founding member of ITRA, wrote:

Finally my big book is available online and at the same time the updated commented bibliography (all published in February 2021). Both issued as English and French versions and may be found on Academia.edu.

- Rossie, Jean-Pierre, Jariaa, Khalija, Daoumani, Boubaker & Fassoulas, Argyris (2021). *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Make-believe play among Amazigh children of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas*. Foreword by Luisa Magalhães, Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Catholic University of Portugal, 2 volumes, 739 p., 638 ill.

Available on Academia.edu

Volume 1: <https://www.academia.edu/42967387>

Volume 2: <https://www.academia.edu/42968584>

- Rossie, Jean-Pierre, Jariaa, Khalija, Daoumani, Boubaker & Fassoulas, Argyris (2021). *Cultures Ludiques Sahariennes et Nord-Africaines. Jeux de faire semblant des enfants amazighs de l’Anti-Atlas marocain*. Préface de Luísa Magalhães, Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Catholic University of Portugal, 2 volumes, 750 p., 638 ill.

Disponibile sur Academia.edu

Volume 1: <https://www.academia.edu/42968426>

Volume 2: <https://www.academia.edu/42976037>

- Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2021). *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Commented bibliography on play, games and toys*, Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Catholic University of Portugal, 81 p. – Available on <https://www.academia.edu/6486087>

- Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2021). *Cultures Ludiques Sahariennes et Nord-Africaines. Bibliographie commentée des jeux et jouets*. Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Catholic University of Portugal, 84 p. – Disponible sur <https://www.academia.edu/6486121>

I wish ITRA colleagues good health and all the best,

Jean-Pierre

POLAND

Dorota Michulka, Associate Professor in the Department of Methodology of Teaching Language and Literature from the University of Wrocław, wrote:

The toughest part of the pandemic is the need for isolation – fortunately, I am healthy and vaccinated, so at the moment all is well. Perhaps two volumes of our journal "Filoteknos," which were published last year, may be of interest to ITRA members: One volume (nr 9, 2019) is "Child and Play. Imagination - Expression - Education" and volume nr 10 "Reading - Experiences - Emotions. Books for children and young Adults - Theory and Practice of Reception" (2020).

https://www.ifp.uni.wroc.pl/wp-content/uploads/Filoteknos/Filoteknos_09.pdf

https://www.ifp.uni.wroc.pl/wp-content/uploads/Filoteknos/Filoteknos_10.pdf

With best regards,

Dorota

SWEDEN

Lieselotte van Leeuwen, Senior Lecturer from the University of Gothenburg and current ITRA Board member wrote the following piece:

What we can do – Research on Toys and Play in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Children and young people are affected greatly by the pandemic due to disruptions in family life, education, physical and social activity (United Nations, 2020). What families experience and what support systems are available to them, differs greatly between countries, socio-economic, political and individual circumstances. Adversity due to extremes of hunger as well as obesity, lack of access to digital technology as well as too much screen time, unemployed as well as overworked parents became more pronounced. The everyday systems in which children grow up are disrupted at many points simultaneously which compromises development, health and wellbeing.

Toy research under those circumstances seems no priority. However, when the fabric of social life changes, so does the role of toys and play. What contributions can toy researchers and toy designers make? We would like to invite the worldwide ITRA community to discuss with us and develop strategies of research.

I collected questions which emerged in dialogue with the MA students in Child Culture Design at the Academy of Arts, Design and Craft at Gothenburg University in Sweden. Design students in this course aim to empower children to explore and invent their own situated child culture. The pandemic deeply affected the ways of studying. The topics we discussed with 18 students from many countries after they had met families and children in Sweden. Many questions emerged which are a mirror of and reaction to the situation. They are challenging our research results and practice and demand a reaction regarding the role of toys in times of the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Does the role of and need for toys in everyday life change or merely intensify in times of the pandemic?
- Do children and adults have different expectations of toys and play in times of a pandemic?
- Can toys be made to keep children busy in a responsible way while parents are working?
- Can toys have any role in dealing with emotional problems?
- Should we design toys for improvisation in order to support adaptation to changing circumstances?
- Does informal learning through toys become more important – should we design tools rather than toys?
- Can toys harm children or prevent them from learning?
- What does a lack of access to toys mean under current circumstances in different cultures?
- How can we design so that different generations are engaging and truly at play with each other?
- Are the huge number of toys that are owned by children in affluent countries used more and/or in different ways now?
- What ‘non-toy’ objects are used in play – should that be supported and develop more?
- Due to the pandemic, the lines between play, work and learning are much more blurred. Conditions and needs for play therefore have changed dramatically and will not completely turn back to what we knew as ‘normal.’ What role can toys play in facilitating this shift?

If we want to have an impact, these questions (and many more) need to be answered quickly and robustly. Cooperation between disciplines and between adults and children will be required.

Collecting more questions and then trying to categorize them is our proposed first step.

Please send us the questions regarding toys and play that you find urgent to be answered in the current situations you meet.

Contact: lieselotte.van.leeuwen@gu.se

References cited:

Benner, A. D., & Mistry, R. S. (2020). Child Development During the Covid-19 Pandemic Through a Life Course Theory Lens. *Child Development Perspectives*, 14(4), 236-243.

United Nations (2020). Policy brief: The impact of Covid-19 on children. New York, NY: Author; Retrieved from <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-COVID-19-children> [Google Scholar]

SWITZERLAND

Véronique Dasen, Archaeologist and Professor in Classical Archaeology and Art History at the University of Fribourg, wrote:

Despite the pandemic, which has dramatically changed our academic lives, the team of the project *Locus Ludi - The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity* funded by the European Research Council (ERC AdG # 741520) based at the University of Fribourg has been very active this year 2021.

First, we pursued our weekly webinar via Skype with presentations of the team’s latest results, and many guest speakers. Worldwide listeners joined us (ca. 30-40 per session, from Europe, USA, Africa, etc.) with rich and constructive discussions.

For the list of talks, see <https://locusludi.ch/locus-ludi-webinar/>

- 3rd Feb 2021. Christophe Picod, Mélanie Bessard (Musée du jouet, Moirans-en-Montagne): *About an unusual Egyptian ‘doll’ and its reconstruction*. Discussants: Marie-Lys Arnette / Michel Manson.

- 10th Feb 2021. Alexandra Attia (ERC Locus Ludi, Fribourg): ‘*Chacun sa croix.*’ *Retour sur une énigme de l’iconographie grecque.* Discussant: François Lissarrague.
- 17th Feb 2021. Elodie Paillard (Bâle/Sydney): *Jeux scéniques grecs à l’occasion de triomphes romains: philhellénisme ou forme de violence culturelle?* / Marco Vespa (ERC Locus Ludi, Fribourg): *Les limites du plaisir et les contours de l’humanitas: la violence sur les animaux dans le contexte des jeux romains à partir de Pline, Hist. nat. VIII, 20-21.*
- 17th Mar 2021. Marie-Lys Arnette (ERC Locus Ludi, Fribourg): *Le jeu de senet entre deux mondes: un cas de transfert culturel?* / Cleo Gougoulis (Patras): *Children’s toys and games 1940-2010 in the area of Aitolokarnania, Greece.*
- 24th Mar 2021. Véronique Dasen, Chiara Bianchi (ERC Locus Ludi, Fribourg, séminaire de Francesca Prescendi, Paris EHESS): *Pupae, sigillaria: figures du rite et du divin.*
- 31st Mar 2021. Jean-Pierre Rossie, *Vegetal material in Moroccan children’s toys and play.* / Henri Duda (Bordeaux): *Information sur des billes de calcaire et de bronze trouvées dans la nécropole méridionale de Mégara Hyblaea (Sicile, fin VIIIe – début Ve siècles av. J.-C.)* / Stéphane Benoist (Lille): *Boni et mali principes, un empire en jeu(x): discours, figures et postures impériales, de la norme à l’excès.*
- 21st Apr 2021. Claudia Lambrugo, Andrea Scala, Chiara Torre (Milano): *A Turning World: a Multidisciplinary Approach to the Spinning Top.*
- 28th Apr 2021. Isabelle Bertrand (Chauvigny), Bernard Farago-Szekeres (Inrap), Coralie Garcia Bay (Poitiers): *Still a child, already a young lady? (Naintré, FR)* / Daniela Costanzo (Reggio): *Jeux et jouets en contexte: problèmes et méthodes d’interprétation en Grande Grèce et en Sicile.*
- 5th May 2021. Lesley Beaumont (Sidney): *Kids, Carts and Canines: The iconography of the choes revisited* / Walter Crist (Maastricht University, ERC Digital Ludeme): *Material Considerations for Board Games in Bronze Age Cyprus.*
- 12th May 2021. Oliva Menozzi (Université “G. d’Annunzio” de Chieti et Pescara): *A Roman Sarcophagus from the Tomb C of Cyrene with Representation of Toys.*
- 19th May 2021. David Bouvier (Lausanne), Stephen Kidd (Browne): *The Cultural Meaning of Paidia in Ancient Greek Literature* / Claudia Lambrugo (Milano): *Playful Children and their Creations: New Insights on Infants’ Spontaneous Play in the Ancient Greek World.* 26.5.2021. Mont Allen (Southern Illinois University): *Play on Roman sarcophagi* / Oriol Vaz (Barcelone): *Jouets d’un artiste ‘post-antique’: recherches et créations autour d’un objet polysémique.*

We also organised six international workshops and conferences to continue constructing new concepts, a common methodology and vocabulary, as well as to allow flows of ideas:

- 21st Jan 2021. *The Archeology of Play and Games*, organised by Véronique Dasen and Alessandro Pace (https://locusludi.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Flyer_ERC.21.1.2021.archaeology.boardgames.pdf)
- 24th Feb 2021. *Autour de Louis Aimé Becq de Fouquières*, organised by Véronique Dasen
- 8th Mar 2021. *Jouer dans l’Antiquité. Contextualisation et interprétation du mobilier ludique*, organised by Thomas Daniaux (<https://locusludi.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Programme.workshop.8.3.2021.pdf>)
- 26th Mar 2021. *The Archaeology of Play and Games II* (<https://locusludi.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ERC.Archaeology.Play-Games-Programme.26.3.2021.pdf>)
- 14th Apr 2021. *Images et imaginaire de la chance et du destin* (in collaboration with EHESS) organised by Véronique Dasen and Fr. Lissarrague (<https://locusludi.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/14-avril-V2.pdf>)
- 28th May 2021. *Warriors at Play*, Universidad de Alicante, Museo Arqueológico de Elche, University of Fribourg, organised by Alessandro Pace, Raimon Graells i Fabregat, and Miguel Pérez Blasco (https://locusludi.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ERC.Warriors-at-Play_program.2021..pdf).

Members of the *Locus Ludi* team also took part in many scientific events and seminars related to ludic culture:

- Marie-Lys Arnette
- 31st Mar 2021. *Playing with the other: the game of senet in the 1st millennium (and beyond)*, Colloquium IFAO/PCMA, *Meeting the Other: Transfers and Cultural Interactions around the Nile Valley*, Cairo, organised by par Elena Panaite. Hybrid.
- Alexandra Attia
- 5th June 2021. *À table ! Les plaisirs du banquet dans l’art, de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, Round-table with Nicolas Boulard (Artiste), Yohann Chanoir (EHESS), François Lissarrague (EHESS), Isabelle Marchesin (INHA) and P. Morel (University Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne), *Festival de l’Histoire de l’art*, Fontainebleau. Hybrid. Véronique Dasen
- 25th May 2021. *Toys and Games in funerary contexts*, La necropoli di Opitergium. Giornata di studi intorno alla mostra *L’anima delle cose*, Oderzo, Museo Archeologico Eno Bellis e della Pinacoteca Alberto Martini, organised by Marta Mascardi. Online.
- 25th Mar 2021. *Enfances en jeux: sanctuaires et pratiques ludiques*, About Héraclite : le temps est un enfant qui joue (D. Bouvier, V. Dasen éds, Liège, 2020). Paris EPHE Seminar *Anthropologie religieuse de la Méditerranée ancienne*, organised by Gabriella Pironti. Online.
- 24th Mar 2021. Chiara Bianchi (FNS), *Pupae, sigillaria: figures du rite et du divin. Textes, images et archéologie.* Paris EPHE Seminar *Les divinités romaines, leurs invocations et les autorités religieuses*, organised by Francesca Prescendi. Online.

- 19th Mar 2021. *Les ambiguïtés du plateau : jeu, vote, divination, comptage...*. Paris EHESS Seminar *Anthropologie et images*, organised by Nikolina Kei, François Lissarrague, Alain Schnapp. Online.
- 10th Mar 2021. *Acrobates et circulation des jeux*. Paris EPHE Seminar *Déplacements et circulations dans la Méditerranée antique*, organised by Cecilia d'Ercole. Online.
- 15th Feb 2021. *Hybrider les savoirs, anthropologie de l'Antiquité, autour de l'agôn et de Roberte Hamayon*. Paris EPHE Seminar *Anthropologie du jeu*, organised by Camille Riverti and Thierry Wendling. Online.
- Ulrich Schädler
- 13th Apr 2021. *Catacomb Games: reused game boards or funeral inscriptions?*, Board Game Studies Colloquium 23, Paris Sorbonne University, Game in Lab. Online.
- 30th Mar 2021. *Ephesos: Die spätantike Stadt als Spielraum*, Zurich, Workshop of the *Vereinigung der Freunde antiker Kunst*. Online.

Marco Vespa

- 10th June 2021. *Architecturer le visible : réflexions autour de Palamède et de la puissance des jeux*, Research seminar of the Chaire de philosophie antique, University of Fribourg. Organised by Filip Karfik and Maté Herner. Online.
- 15th Feb 2021. *Les apports bénéfiques du dialogue entre disciplines : le cas du combat de coqs en Grèce ancienne*, EHESS research seminar *Anthropologie du jeu : soumettre l'épistémologie à la question ludique*, organised by Thierry Wendling and Camille Riverti. Online.

Finally, our team had intense editorial activities! The full list is here: <https://locusludi.ch/team-publications/>
We are currently working on the following collective works, which are in press for 2021:

- Dasen, V., Vespa, M. (eds), *Play and Games in Antiquity: Definition, Transmission, Reception*, Collection Jeu/Play/Spiel, Liège, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2021, in press.
- Dasen, V. et Lissarrague, Fr. (eds), Dossier *Éros en jeu, Métis. Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 19, 2021, in press.
- Dasen V., Haziza Th. (eds), *Violence et jeu, de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Caen, PUC, 2021, in press.
- Dasen V., Haziza Th. (eds), Dossier *Jeux, normes et/ou transgressions, Kentron. Revue pluridisciplinaire du monde antique*, 37, 2021, in press.

Locus Ludi members have participated in collective books and journals. For example :

- Arnette, M.-L., *Deux jeux, un astre, les yeux : sur un plateau de senet biface inédit, BIFAO*, 121, 2021, in press.
- Pace, A., *I soldati e il gioco nell'impero romano*, in Tibaldini, M. (ed.), *Giochi & Civiltà*, Bononia University Press, 2021, in press.
- Schädler, U., *Some Misconceptions about Ancient Roman Games, Board Game Studies Journal*, 15/1, April 2021, 79-97.
- Vespa, M., *Knucklebone faces and throws. Play, rules, and rhetorical discourse in Julius Pollux, Mnemosyne*, 2021.

Books to download are here: <https://locusludi.ch/the-project/>

Kind regards,
Véronique

TURKEY

Handan Asude Başal, from Uludag University, wrote:

Last week, a 19-day quarantine period was held with our religious holiday and our national holiday. Therefore, there has been a slight decrease in the incidence of the disease. As of this week, the process of normalisation has been entered gradually.

University lecturers teach their lessons on line from home. According to the information given by the Ministry of Health, everyone will be vaccinated by the end of August.

Nowadays, I want to do research covering the Covid-19 period, investigating what kind of games and toys children, who stayed at home during the pandemic, have designed.

Also, we organized a conference for our online students on the occasion of world game day on 28th May.

I hope ITRA members are well.

Sincerely

Handan Asude Başal

Meral Taner Derman, from Uludag University, wrote:

The vaccination process for Covid-19 continues. Our courses at the university continue online. However, in some departments, lessons are held in a hybrid way. Unfortunately, our work on our academic publications has been hampered. Kindergartens are run face-to-face education. Education is conducted online in primary, secondary and high school.

Sincerely

Meral

UNITED KINGDOM

Anna Borzenkova, from Wolverhampton University, awarded the *ITRA Student Prize for Outstanding Toy Research* at the 8th ITRA Conference held in Paris 2018, wrote:

The only update is that, as of January, I am working as a research associate at Heriot Watt University on a project "*Empowering Brazil's impoverished communities through critical decision-making: a communitarian communicative strategy.*" This project is about developing a communitarian communicative strategy to address the issue of fake news in impoverished areas of Brazil (Favelas, homeless communities and low-skills workers) that undermine the efforts to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, using gamification and persuasive design - in collaboration with UFG, Brazil. As a part of this communicative strategy we developed a freeform tabletop role-playing game, where participants take on the role of some of Brazil's folklore characters, with a facilitator leading these characters through a story. Through empowering both group and individual decision making, as well as encouraging the usage of information while making decisions, this game seeks to impart and enable critical thinking skill within a relaxed environment.

Kind regards,

Anna

Amanda Gummer, Founder and CEO of the Good Play Guide, wrote:

We've noticed that a lot of families are looking for educational toys to help with home schooling and whilst this trend is likely to decrease now that children are back in school, parents have become more involved in their children's education and so educational toys and games that support and engage their children in learning are likely to continue to be popular. This is reinforced by the idea that children have missed out on education and therefore educational toys are being used to help children 'catch up.'

Tech toys are popular and the family battles over screen time seem to have reduced as the need for children to use devices for home learning or to keep in touch with family members. Outdoor toys have been popular as parks and playgrounds were closed and parents were keeping children within family bubbles.

As lockdown is easing, we're seeing a focus on toys that encourage social and emotional skill development.

For more information see: www.goodtoyguide.com

Best,

Amanda

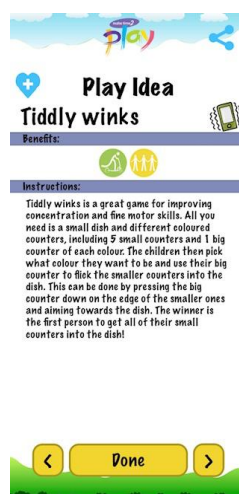
Rebecca Deeming, Public Relations and Events Manager, Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA), sent us the following BTHA update:

With what was a challenging year for the whole world in 2020, the British toy industry was also hit hard by Covid-19. Despite the unprecedented conditions, and with the UK leaving the European Union, the toy manufacturing sector dealt with the considerable challenges the best that it could. Since the initial impact of Covid-19, UK toy manufacturers worked diligently to get back on track and sales of board games and puzzles were a particular shining light, showing a 19% increase. Toys and games proved popular in lockdown for not just children but adults too for entertainment and also a welcome distraction from negative news in lockdown, with puzzles and board games acting as a positive tool to lift spirits and bring some positivity in horrible circumstances. The toy industry did well in general with families turning to toys and games for comfort and joy over the past year, which saw the market value increase by 5% with a total market size of £3.3billion. Other forms of entertainment were not available, routines were drastically changed, and communities and families spent more time in restricted circumstances – and it was helpful to have toys and games for entertainment, and in the absence of schools, to assist in exploration and discovery.

The BTHA's consumer campaign, Make Time 2 Play, proved to be a big help for parents and carers across the country, with its multiple free play resources helping to keep children entertained during the multiple lockdowns. Make Time 2 Play provides hundreds of free play ideas, tips and information and research on the various benefits of play, which consumers can access on its website (www.maketime2play.co.uk), Facebook and Instagram.

There is also a free app available to download worldwide, which provides more than 450 play ideas that parents and carers can filter through depending on age of child, number of children and either an indoor, outdoor or travel activity. We are always looking for more play ideas so if you have any that you would be willing to share with us, we'd love to highlight the ideas, and credit you, on our app.

Please contact Rebecca@btha.co.uk with any play ideas. It would be nice to have some suggestions of games from your experience in your own culture to add to the ones we have already accumulated. Children in the UK I'm sure would find that very interesting. Above are examples of how the app looks.



Lydia Plowman, Professor and Co-Director of Research at the University of Edinburgh, wrote: Lydia reports that *Digital Play* is a free downloadable resource (62pp) for the many people who tell us that they would like to know more about the role of digital media in the lives of young children. It focuses on young children aged up to five or six and is intended to be useful for educators, students, childminders and others working with parents and caregivers at home or in early childhood education and care settings. The resource builds on many years of research on the use of digital media by young children and their families, looking at research findings afresh and providing an overview of some of the information that's available, including on internet-connected toys. Our aim is to support professionals and caregivers to feel more confident about developing strategies for integrating digital media into family life. Just to add that I've now semi-retired (since April 2021). I'm continuing my work for the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science until the end of July and will then start to tail off academic activities. Best wishes
Lydia

USA

Kathleen Alfano, child development and play specialist, co-founding member of ITRA and profiled in the 2019 Winter edition of the ITRA Newsletter, wrote:

I haven't recently spent much time observing or researching how children are fairing during the pandemic. However, my observations from a distance, such as seeing children play outside or watching social media posts from parents and/or teachers, the resilience and adaptive creativity of children to the current locked-down, socially-distance situation we are all experiencing, is amazing. And, I'm not surprised. Children have always found ways to incorporate what they see and experience into something playful that helps them cope, adjust to and understand their surroundings in their own way.

Many of the Covid-19 restrictions have just recently been lifted here in the USA, as infections have been declining, so it will be interesting to see how children adapt to the new (to them) social situations they will encounter.

Sincerely,
Kathleen

Christopher Bensch, Vice President for Collections, at The Strong, Rochester, USA, wrote:

The Strong National Museum of Play is encouraged that, as of 19th May, New York State will no longer require capacity limits on all sorts of indoor venues, including museums (masks and social distancing will still be required, however). That's good news since The Strong's attendance has been climbing each month and we attracted nearly 90,000 visitors in the first four months of 2021. Even more exciting, The Strong formally broke ground on 21st April for a 90,000 square foot (SF) expansion to the museum (currently 285,000 SF) that will include new admission and collection storage areas as well as a major gallery space. The gallery will house *Digital Worlds*, an exhibit that not only tells about the history and cultural significance of video games but also allows guests to feel as though they are actually experiencing challenges inside a video game. Related enhancements to The Strong's building will feature an indoor high adventure ropes course and an outdoor exhibit that supplies kinetic fun that's themed for classic board games (think of riding on a supersized spinner from The Game of Life). The project will be complete in the summer of 2023.

Best,
Chris

Judith Iacuzzi, Executive Director, USA Toy Library Association (USA-TLA) wrote:

The last year was a hard time, with parents needing toys and play materials more than ever and many toy libraries closed. I have no concrete research to report regarding toy lending in the pandemic other than USA toy libraries were doing the best they could to provide their clients with curb-side toy lending. Just now institutions are opening up, and some toy libraries are allowing several children entry to play – with masks and social distancing protocols continuing.

Our organization, the USA Toy Library Association, has been offering twice-weekly posts on Facebook since April 2020 with ideas for playful "Parenting in the Pandemic." These posts dispatch as one video and one print or "still" each week.

Continuing outstanding contributors include toy librarians and USATLA board members, Nina Hillery, Rebecca Nutter, Rhoda Redleaf and Joanne Oppenheim and outstanding teacher Michele Poulos. Some posts have reached more than 1,000 viewers.

Below are the topics we have addressed to date and plan to continue through the summer.

Introduction of Series (21st Apr 2020), Kitchen Play (23rd Apr 2020), Shoes Galore (28th Apr 2020), Big Bad Wolf Challenge (30th Apr 2020), Crafty Ideas (30th Apr 2020), Add It Up (5th May 2020), Play Dough Fun (7th May 2020), Sound It Out (12th May 2020), Three Billy Goats (14th May 2020), Structure (19th May 2020), Still Chores (21st May 2020), Boxes (26th May 2020), World Play Day (28th May 2020), Soap and Food Colouring

(2nd Jun 2020), Make a Mess (4th Jun 2020), Object Permanence (9th June 2020), Scavenger Hunt (11th Jun 2020), Water Play (16th Jun 2020), Make Binoculars (18th Jun 2020), Making Words with Cups (23rd Jun 2020), Helping Around the House (25th Jun 2020), Using Scissors #1 (30th Jun 2020), Puzzlemania (2nd Jul 2020), Using Scissors #2 (6th Jul 2020), Sidewalk Chalk (15th Jul 2020), Good Egg! (21st Jul 2020), Puzzle It (23rd Jul 2020), Using writing tools #1 (28th Jul 2020), Planting your Beanstalk (31st Jul 2020), Using writing tools #2 (4th Aug 2020), Rock Painting (6th Aug 2020), Taking Turns (11th Aug 2020), Guessing Scents (13th Aug 2020), Superheroes (18th Aug 2020), Jump & Count (20th Aug 2020), Balloons (25th Aug 2020), Make name tags (27th Aug 2020), Star Gazing (1st Sep 2020), Make a Backpack (3rd Sep 2020), Shaving Cream/letters (8th Sep 2020), Making a Pounding Post (10th Sep 2020), Tape #1 (15th Sep 2020), Write It, Act It (17th Sep 2020), Making Funny Face Book (22nd Sep 2020), Make a Special Album (24th Sep 2020), Tape #2 fine motor skills (29th Sep 2020), Talk About It! (1st Oct 2020), Salt Painting (6th Oct 2020), Cut out life-size puppet (10th Oct 2020), Tape #3 tape/games (13th Oct 2020), Animal/Doll hospital (15th Oct 2020), Tape #4/cognitive (21st Oct 2020), Very Kool Playdough (23rd Oct 2020), Tape #5/social distancing (27th Oct 2020), So you want to be president? (29th Oct 2020), Chart for at-home parents (4th Nov 2020), The Maestro Plays (5th Nov 2020), Making holiday cards (10th Nov 2020), String Painting (12th Nov 2020), Candy corn Creatures (17th Nov 2020), Making holiday envelopes (24th Nov 2020), Character Craft (1st Dec 2020), Alphabet Soup (3rd Dec 2020), Gifts for the Holidays (8th Dec 2020), Making The Eyes of God (11th Dec 2020), Wrapping for the Holidays (15th Dec 2020), Colour Towers/Play a Pattern (17th Dec 2020), Mystery Box (22nd Dec 2020), Pipe cleaner play (28th Dec 2020), Finding someplace special (7th Jan 2021), More pipe cleaner play (12th Jan 2021), Vegetable Salad Game (14th Jan 2021), Paper Plate Fish Bowls (19th Jan 2021), Make a Celebration Cake (21st Jan 2021), Site Word Game (26th Jan 2021), Mirroring Others (28th Jan 2021), Leaf Bugs (2nd Feb 2021), Paste It Taste It/Make Menu (4th Feb 2021), Compound words (9th Feb 2021), Dress Up (11th Feb 2021), Fun with ice cubes (16th Feb 2021), Flower Garden Games (17th Feb 2021), Fun with snow and paint! (23rd Feb 2021), Cracker Game (25th Feb 2021), Making objects with snow (2nd Mar 2021), Magic Number Trick (4th Mar 2021), Shadow-drawing (9th Mar 2021), Bury the Treasure in the cube (16th Mar 2021), Chicka Chicka Go BoomBoom (18th Mar 2021), Making a Butterfly (23rd Mar 2021), Storytelling (25th Mar 2021), Parts of Speech (30th Mar 2021), Look Some More! (1st Apr 2021), Playing Cards #1 (6th Apr 2021), Making Water-Play Kit (8th Apr 2021), Water Surface tension play (13th Apr 2021), Playing Cards #2 (20th Apr 2021), Finding/Painting Rocks (11th May 2021), Wild Thing creatures (13th May 2021), and Marshmallows/toothpicks (19th May 2021).

<https://www.facebook.com/USA-Toy-Library-Association-118012331559912/>

<https://www.usatla.org/>

Kind regards,

Judy

Greta Pennell, Professor Emeriti from the University of Indianapolis and current ITRA Vice-President, sent us the following:

Zooming Around the World to Develop Students' Understanding of Research

When the world shut down last year due to Covid-19, I scrambled to patch together what I hoped was meaningful learning for the remainder of the semester. Like so many, Zoom was an entirely new four-letter word for me. Sure I had used Skype and WhatsApp before and even conducted an action research project on Skype as a pedagogical tool (Pennell, Thakore, & West, 2015). However, my experiences were limited to using these tech tools for one-time guest lecturers or to informally connect with colleagues far, far away. But this was different and required transforming everything I knew about teaching and in-person instruction for an entire course into effective online pedagogy. And, do it in a week.

Like so many of us, I muddled through. My students were troopers, we did our best making it to the end of the semester, bolstered by visions of a summer reprieve and hopes for a quick return to normal. It soon became clear we were in for a much longer haul and that teaching students remotely would be the new “normal” for the foreseeable future. While the shift for some of my classes was relatively straightforward, I confess feeling lost as I wondered what to do with my class “Doing Gender in Toyland.” All field trips for the class were off the table, no excursions to the Children’s Museum or independent toy stores, nor actual physical play with toys to directly consider what they afforded in terms of children’s development. Conducting an intersectional extension of Clark & Clark’s (1939) famous doll study with children at a nearby elementary school was also deemed impossible. How could I meet the learning goals related to qualitative research, data analysis, and project management without these experiences?

And then it hit me – with my class being taught entirely remotely, we were freed from the expectation of course assignments being done with people in the same physical space and Indiana time zone (UTC-4) where and when our class met. Rather than remote teaching as a constraint, the whole world opened to us. Here was a chance for my students to not only learn from the very best toy designers and researchers, but to really have to think globally! It is at this point that I found myself once again thankful for the wonderful colleagues and friendships forged over the years both directly and indirectly through ITRA. For me, this has always been one of the attractions of smaller professional organizations. ITRA isn’t just some host of an international conference to build one’s resume, like other organizations can be. ITRA is a community – small but mighty. And, it is the

commitment and support for one another that comes from the in-depth conversations our meetings and newsletters afford that makes it invaluable; but I digress.

From Hong Kong, to Amsterdam; from Brazil to Finland, from Germany to Israel fellow ITRA members and other toy experts signed onto my germ of an idea. In late September, my first year college students went through an iterative process to identify their common wonderings about toy research and design that had been raised through their readings and class discussions. Among them were:

- What are the greatest challenges of toy design (or toy research)?
- What makes something a good toy or game? How do you know?

Students were assigned in teams of two or three to create an exact script for conducting their particular interview, with the idea that they would need to tailor some questions based on what they could find out their interviewee's work prior to the interview. From there they had to figure out the logistics of how they would conduct an interview with someone who might be in a time zone eight or more hours different from their own. Although today's students are frequently described as being "digital natives," they (and I) quickly learned how much they didn't know about technology and the challenges of engaging others through electronically mediated forums. There were other lessons learned along the way, like how to use email as a formal means of communication (e.g., greetings and word choices) and cultural differences in terms of what constitutes sufficient notification. The students prepared Flipgrid video presentations (see: <https://info.flipgrid.com>) to share with the class. These videos became the data for the students to identify common themes, to critique their interviewing technique, and apply concepts of data trustworthiness. Through this experience the students were introduced to qualitative research. More importantly they were able to think about toys within broader cultural contexts and break out from their USA-centric understandings of toys, play, and gender. The impact of this experience was clear from the end of course evaluations. Students indicated that the opportunity to interview toy experts was one of the aspects of the course that contributed most to their learning during the semester. As one student wrote, "Meeting and interviewing a toy researcher was one of the biggest highlights of the class where I gained very important new knowledge on a topic of interest of mine."

I'm very appreciative for the support, co-teaching, and candour from those who agreed to be interviewed, especially in light of all the other challenges and demands the pandemic placed on all aspects of our lives. Hopefully, things will begin to return to normal in the coming year, that we will once again be travelling to in-person conferences and teaching beyond the confines of our living rooms. With that in mind, I'm already thinking of our next ITRA conference and how we might take the opportunity to share other teaching successes and ways that we can support one another's work in preparing the next generation of toy researchers. To that end, for anyone interested in developing a panel proposal around Toy-based pedagogy for our next ITRA conference, please email me at gpennell@uindy.edu

Works cited:

Clark, K.B. & Clark, M. (1939) Racial identification and preference in Negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology*. 10. pp. 591–599.

Pennell, G. E., Thakore, B.K. & West, R. J. (2015). Wonderful when it works: A case study of electronically mediated guest lectures. *Humanity & Society*, 39, 156-169.

Jim and Greta Pennell, Emeriti from the University of Indianapolis, forwarded us the following update: Drs. Greta and Jim Pennell were awarded the rank of Professor Emeriti from the University of Indianapolis (UIndy) in May, 2021. They are retiring after 24 and 23 years respectively at the university. The School of Education also awarded Greta a Lifetime Achievement Award for her teaching and service. Jim and Greta will continue engaging in their scholarly pursuits and look forward to travelling again. As emeriti faculty their email addresses will remain the same.

Suzanne (Suzy) Seriff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin and current ITRA Secretary wrote: Two folklorists will be editing a multidisciplinary academic volume on Covid-19 Toys and Play and are seeking submissions for chapters. They are particularly interested in a range of cultural voices that address the toys and play of children, youth, or adults in a variety of countries during the pandemic. Topics of interest include: resilience, creativity, and resourcefulness in play during this time, Covid-19 related themes in play, use of public playgrounds and public spaces during the pandemic, and creative uses of online play and techno mischief. Send expressions of interest to Dr. Anna Beresin aberesin@uarts.edu, and Dr. Julia Bishop j.c.bishop@sheffield.ac.uk Dr. Anna Beresin is professor of psychology and folklore in critical studies at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the US. She serves as co-editor of the *International Journal of Play*. Dr. Julia Bishop is research associate in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield in the UK where she studies children's folklore, past and present. She is on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Play*.

On a related front, my students and I at the University of Texas at Austin have been involved in a "rapid response recovery" project to document, archive and exhibit the words and works of folk and traditional artists from around the world who are drawing on their arts to educate, engage, aid, and activate their communities around issues of justice amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Included in this documentation project are any handmade toys, and/or images of toys included in street art murals, global health pamphlets, or other Covid-19

related ephemera. If you have any such toys or images to contribute – or if you might be interested in joining a panel for our next conference on handmade toys in the times of Covid-19, please email me at sseriff@austin.utexas.edu.

Leon Wang, from Firebird Design Lab, wrote:

2021 is another difficult year for our community as we grappled with the aftermath of the murders of George Floyd and Daunte Wright. The Covid-19 epidemic still has a significant impact on our youths even as our K-12 schools begin to reopen. Our local public schools are still struggling with a 30-40% rate of failing grades and student absentees. Against this backdrop, I have been working on a pilot curriculum for a high school International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This is an intensive studio course that uses play and toy design as a hook to engage the students, and to model a rigorous process of purposeful creativity. This 8-week course will culminate in large scale public art/message based on the students' voice.

During one of our planning meetings back in January, the school staff were overwhelmed with the incessant challenges and uncertainties of this academic year. I suggested that we should consider postponing the project to the following year. The immediate and resounding response from the school staff was: “it is exactly in moments like these, that our students and community need it more than ever!”

We are now halfway into the implementation of our studio program. The classroom experience is still challenging for all and a shadow of pre-pandemic schooling. But the students have responded well to developing and playing with a personal arcade project. The arcade project will serve as a springboard for taking on the challenge of creating art/design for a large, civic-level platform. Above are images of a sample arcade project by a student, and an e-flyer about our pilot program.

Thanks again.

Leon



CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

This section covers current, up-coming and past conferences and exhibitions. Previews and reviews of conferences are sought for the Spring Edition of the ITRA Newsletter. Due to the current international Covid-19 pandemic many conference organisers have placed their conference plans on hold. More information will be published once it becomes available.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

June 2021

Toys as Cultural Artefacts in Ancient Greek and Roman Cultures: Anthropological and Material Approaches, will be online and hosted by Fribourg University, 22nd – 24th June, 2021.

The international conference *Toys as Cultural Artefacts*, organised by the research team of the European Research Council (ERC) Project *Locus ludi*, in collaboration with the Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past (SSCP), invites experts from different disciplines - anthropologists, archaeologists, philologists, art historians – to share reflections on the cultural notion of toy and playful experience in ancient Greece and Rome in a multidisciplinary and diachronic perspective.

Contact: veronique.dasen@unifr.ch, marco.vespa@unifr.ch

For more information: https://locusludi.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Call.Conference-Toys.ERC_.LocusLudi.2020.pdf

July 2021

Time to Play: Research, Policy and Practice, 28th ICCP World Play Conference will take place online, 8th – 9th July 2021.

The conference is organized by International Council for Children's Play in cooperation with the University Autonomous of Madrid and the Spanish Education and Development Foundation.

Play is an activity that humans practice throughout their whole lives and in all cultures. Ludic activities vary in relation to children's capacities and to what is valued in each society. Sports were the product of industrial societies. Videogames are the new ludic practices of our technological culture. Therefore, play is an activity studied from many academic disciplines with very different methodologies. Play is a need for all human beings. The UN has recognized play as a child's right, and it has been ratified by more than a hundred countries. However, every day it is more evident that many children have enormous difficulties in being able to exercise this right.

The theme of the 28th World Play Conference will focus on questions like:

- Do children have enough time to play?
- How could we both increase our research on play and disseminate it more?
- Do we need to analyse our social policies in relation to play?
- And how could we improve our play practices?

Factors like the concentration of population in large cities, urban speculation and the progressive disappearance of public spaces, the difficulty of children to be able to move autonomously and with security—these are all factors that contribute to a progressive disappearance of traditional games and the places in which they could be played.

More information may be found here: <https://eventos.uam.es/62962/detail/28th-iccp-world-conference-on-play.html>

PAST CONFERENCES

March 2020

The Necessity of Play, the 46th Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Play (TASP), was held virtually, 20th March 2021.

By Vicki Thomas

“The Necessity of Play” was the theme of the conference meeting. It soon became clear that many speakers were responding to the events of the last year with regard not only to Covid-19 but also Black Lives Matter and the benefits of play on mental health. For example, there were several concerns voiced about home schooling in some areas in the USA in which children seemed to be passively watching their teachers on-line for hours with little allowance for physical or even interactive learning. Kerry-Ann Escayg gave a keynote entitled, “Hope, Truth and Play: An anti-racist approach to play based pedagogy.”

The technology seemed to work well. In fact, I came away feeling positive about virtual events. I'd like to have been able to access recordings and uploaded papers for longer and there were concurrent presentations. One can feel one has gone to a very different event to others.

It was amazing how individuals worldwide have been play acting and creating together on-line during Covid-19. One need only see the success of TikTok to get an idea of how play is developing to suit a world where we share and work with others on screens.

I enjoyed the event; it did have a wider remit in some ways than in person TASP events, attracting more educators, psychologists and performance artists.

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

June 2021

The Summer Farm Toy Show, will be held at the National Farm Toy Museum in Dyersville, Iowa, USA, 5th – 6th June 2021

By Greta Pennell

The Summer Farm Toy Show will be featuring a parade of actual working tractors on Saturday night and contests for the best toy farm display. The museum (<https://www.nationalfarmtoymuseum.com>) features several special exhibits including Ertl Land, celebrating 75 years of farm toys spanning some of the original toys Fred Ertl, Sr. first made in 1945 from molten war surplus metals (a video preview of the exhibit is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agFZI-GWcVI>). Another special exhibit currently at the museum celebrates the 100th Anniversary of John Deere's entrance into the tractor business, via the history of farm toys and miniature replicas to trace the evolution of John Deere's iconic green and yellow tractors.

PAST EXHIBITIONS

February – April 2021

Play Lives exhibition was held at the Hong Kong Design Centre's Design Spectrum, hosted by Rémi Leclerc (PolyPlay Lab) and Chi-wing Lee (Milk Design), 23rd February – 30th April 2021.

By Rémi Leclerc

Design Spectrum's call for proposals invited candidates to curate and design a series of events on Design for Play for the general public, in Chinese and English. Play Lives balanced interaction and information to celebrate how HK designers toy with play, showcasing over 200 exhibits from 70+ exhibitors across five spaces in a heritage tenement building in HK's Wan Chai District.

Play Lives, Play Lives: Was this really a time to design play – or play with design? Over 5000 visitors of all ages felt so, welcoming the exhibition's statement on 'designed play' and retrospective on Hong Kong play stories. A feedback survey on the exhibition fielded by Design Spectrum and returned by 1119 visitors yielded an average 99.5% (!) positive response to questions on "overall comment," "content," and "format." Given the double political and hygienic crisis engulfing the region since 2019, this celebration of HK's unique take on play lives, how play lives in HK, and affirmation of its rich cultural identity, was a timely feat.

Play attention: in Room 1, interactive play fixtures demonstrated ipso facto attributes of play and playing, and design and designing. A Plaything DIY DNA system of icons enabled visitors to make sense of design play, starting with one of four plaything (design) categories, prompting one or a combination of eight ways of playing (play types), to facilitate up to seven cultural practices reinventing the world (rhetorics of playthings, after Sutton-Smith). A joker icon allowed visitors to create new categories. In linking play to design, the room contended there is no designing for play without playing for design.

Showtime: Room 2 showcased the value of played lives through a post-war, post-97 retrospective of HK designed play (1997 is the year the UK retroceded HK to China). IMAGE, OBJECT, BODY, SPACE design/plaything exhibits illustrated play's sociocultural agency – how instances of play generate life stories. Four display units embodied each Play Lives histories in increasing scale: IMAGE a street newspaper stand, OBJECT a toy store front window display, BODY a two-tiered circular catwalk, SPACE a skyscraper open to the environment.

Cabinet of Design Play Curios: Culture is an outcome of play, design shapes culture. Can play design the future? In Room 3, seven critical playworks straddling art and design enticed visitors to ponder how play, as a conceptual Trojan hobby horse, enhances designers' speculative practice. The Cabinet's 'Curios' demonstrated 'Design Play's' value in addressing contemporary issues such as identity, information, technology, environment, corporate culture, and food, thus offering clues in the present to inform 'desirable futures.'





Rooms 1, 2, 3. Photos Rémi Leclerc, Lam Siu Wai, HKDC.

Playtime: In the final room, a Toymaking Playbench integrated the design and play notions presented in the exhibition. With a Play Lives coin, visitors obtained clips from a capsule vending machine to assemble one of 3 toys for keeps – a fishing pole, a streamer, a pinwheel – on the adjacent playbench, which was stocked with paper parts, colour markers, strings, ribbons, and scissors. Also in Room 4, outcomes from 6 pre-exhibition public playshops facilitated by HK designers were displayed on a lab-like shelving unit, relaying an appreciation of play... by Hongkongers for Hongkongers. Playshops' curation ensured a comprehensive exploration of design processes and play types.

Playground: Social research and design unit Making on Loft created the Rolling Community Playground with the Wan Chai community for the Public Outdoor Space, immediately claimed by the neighbourhood's children and adults. Linking expo to community, it included active and contemplative 'Wave' and 'Tube' play zones and fixtures, a kiosk stocked with playthings to create and share new games, and infographic displays disseminating project research findings.



Room 4, Public Outdoor Space, promotional tram. Photos Lam Siu Wai, HKDC, Kammy Lam.

Play Lives. Organisation: Design Spectrum, Hong Kong Design Centre. Curation and design: Rémi Leclerc (PolyPlay Lab) and Chi-wing Lee (Milk Design). Visual communication: Benny Lau. Translation: Elaine Yau. Public Outdoor Space playground design: Making on Loft

<https://www.designspectrum.hk/play-lives/>

<https://www.designspectrum.hk/exhibitors-stories-play-lives/>

May 2021

'Meet Kaya', an American girl doll inspired event at the North Carolina Museum of Dolls, Toys & Miniatures in Spencer, North Carolina, USA was held 8th May 2021.

By Greta Pennell

Held over zoom this junior collector adventure was co-sponsored with The Rowan Doll Society as a precursor to an in-person larger event to be held in September, 2021. The museum itself features a comprehensive array of dolls, miniatures, model Lionel trains, and toys, including their two largest collections: The Shirley Temple Doll Exhibit and the Schoenhut Humpty-Dumpty Circus Figures and Schoenhut Dolls.

For more info: <https://www.ncmdtm.com>

Meet the Experts: Women in STEM Virtual Panel discussion, was held at The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures in Kansas City, Missouri USA, on 16th May 2021.

By Greta Pennell

Meet the Experts Women in STEM Virtual Panel discussion explored the impact of STEM toys on a child's perception of gender roles and career choices. Included on the panel were featuring Dr. Shelley Cooper SureShow Inc. CEO and founder, Dr. Kellyann Joens-Jamtegaard US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Biological Sciences Specialist and Amy McKune T/m Curator of Collections. This event was held in conjunction with the special exhibit *Bridging the Gender Divide: Toys That Build STEM Skills* that runs through the 5th of September, 2021 at The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures in Kansas City, Missouri USA

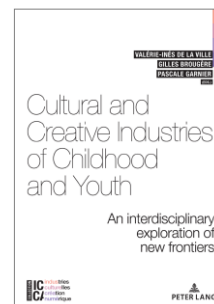
(<https://toyandminiaturemuseum.org>)

PUBLICATIONS & BOOKS

Book reviews, or book recommendations, are sought for the next edition of the ITRA newsletter. Please submit these to the Editorial Team at itraneWSltr@gmail.com.

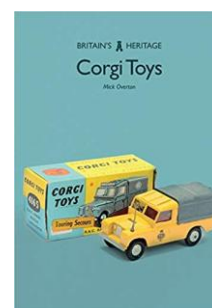
Cultural and Creative Industries of Childhood and Youth: An interdisciplinary exploration of new frontiers (2021). **Valérie-Inés de La Ville, Gilles Brougère & Pascale Garnier** (eds.). Brussels, 2021. 298 pp. Peter Lang Publishers. ISBN 978-2807616011

- General introduction – *Valérie-inés de la Ville*
- Part 1 Children as Prosumers: moving borders around children’s social value and emerging ethical issues – *Valérie-inés de la Ville*
 - Forecasting through the rear-view mirror: Ethical storm clouds over children’s cultural industries – *Stephen Kline*
 - Entertainment or advertising? YouTube channels displaying content created by kids – *Esther Martínez Pastor, Patricia Núñez, and Florence Chérigny*
 - Superfans and evangelizers: Young people’s creative entanglements with promotional culture – *Natalie Coulter and Mary Grace Lao*
 - Masterpiece: Thinking about children and creative industries with values – *Yelyzaveta Hrechaniuk*
- Part 2 Insights into the social construction of childhood by cultural and creative industries – *Pascale Garnier*
 - Enacting global digital parenting... Alleged joint benefits for the “child-parents” consumer cluster – *Valérie-Inés de La Ville*
 - Münster’s Inc. – Children as influencers balancing celebrity status, play and paychecks – *Stine Liv Johansen*
 - An expanding luxury land: A journey through the magical world which TV series are offering to their teenage audience – *Ève Lamendour*
- Part 3 Circulating and enriching Content aimed at Children: Transmedia/Media mix... – *Gilles Brougère*
 - Is Pokémon for children? How fan participation and transmedia practices transform age boundaries of audiences – *Quentin Gervasoni*
 - Maintaining an author’s position during media circulation: The case of an animated cartoon created from a comic strip – *Gilles Brougère*
 - The creation of cultural value in children’s media: Studying the production and circulation of a quality TV cartoon – *Sébastien François and Pascale Garnier*
 - Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire’s graphic narrative *Secret Path*: Analysis of a transmedia adaptation – *Alison J. Halsall*
- About the authors
- Index



Overton, N. (2019) *Corgi Toys (Britain's Heritage)*. Amberley Publishing. ISBN 978-1445688084

The Corgi model of James Bond’s Aston Martin DB5 is the best-selling toy car ever produced and found a place in the hearts of children of all ages around the world. Corgi Toys was founded in Swansea in 1956 and was always highly innovative, introducing many new gimmicks that children loved. Corgi became the first maker of zinc die-cast toy cars to compete successfully with Dinky Toys and the Matchbox 1-75 series made by Lesney. Author Mick Overton provides an informative introduction to Corgi Toys, illustrated with beautiful, previously unpublished photographs that show the most desirable variants worth collecting when spotted in an antique store or at a car-boot sale. He also covers the pitfalls of Ebay, fakes and customs. This book is part of the Britain’s Heritage series, which provides definitive introductions to the riches of Britain’s past, and is the perfect way to get acquainted with Corgi Toys in all their variety.



Simpson, P. A. (2021). *The Play World: Toys, Texts, and the Transatlantic German Childhood* (Max Kade Research Institute: Germans beyond Europe). Penn State University Press. ISBN 978-0271086996

The Play World chronicles the history and evolution of the concept of play as a universal part of childhood. Examining texts and toys coming out of Europe between 1631 and 1914, Patricia Anne Simpson argues that German material, literary, and pedagogical cultures were central to the construction of the modern ideas and realities of play and childhood in the transatlantic world. With attention to the details of toy manufacturing and marketing, Simpson considers prescriptive texts about how children should play, treat their



possessions, and experience adventure in the scientific exploration of distant geographies. She illuminates the role of toys – among them a mechanical guillotine, yo-yos, hybridized dolls, and circus figures – as agents of history. Using an interdisciplinary approach that draws from postcolonial, childhood, and migration studies, she makes the case that these texts and toys transfer the world of play into a space in which model childhoods are imagined and enacted as German. With chapters on the Protestant play ethic, enlightened parenting, Goethe as an advocate of play, colonial fantasies, children’s almanacs, ethnographic play, and an empire of toys, Simpson’s argument follows a compelling path toward understanding the reproduction of religious, gendered, ethnic, racial, national, and imperial identities, emanating from German-speaking Europe, that collectively construct a global imaginary. This foundational and deeply original study connects German-speaking communities across the Atlantic as they collectively engender the epistemology of the play world. It will be of particular interest to German studies scholars whose research crosses the Atlantic.

Children’s Folklore Review

I write to you as the new editor of Children’s Folklore Review. This year, I have taken over the editor position for Brant Ellsworth, whose excellent and important work included among many other highlights a special issue dedicated to Simon K. Bronner and the publication of Children’s Folklore Review’s first-ever completely digital, open-access issue. Let me begin by saying, “Thank you, Brant!”

With this note, the American Folklore Society’s Children’s Folklore section (<https://americanfolkloresociety.org/our-community/sections/childrens-folklore>) and I happily announce the publication of Children’s Folklore Review, Vol. 40: <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/cfr/index>.

Formed in 1977, Children’s Folklore Review is an online, open-access journal published once a year by the Children’s Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society. Previous issues can be found here, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/cfr>. CFR’s archives – all open-access – are filled with a wealth of important scholarship written by the best children’s folklorists.

CFR is accepting submissions. Given its specific focus on children’s folklore, our journal is truly one-of-a-kind. We regularly publish articles on all aspects of children’s traditions: oral, customary, and material culture. In addition, CFR will consider articles dealing with the use of folklore in children’s literature, children’s folklore and popular culture, children’s folklore and the internet, play studies, and similar topics. Articles are peer-reviewed and indexed by the MLA and other major bibliographies.

CFR is currently very interested in manuscripts that deal with one or more of the following sub-topics:

- Children’s folklore, social diversity, and social engagement
- Children’s folklore in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Changes in children’s folklore as a result of changing communicative technologies
- Children’s folklore in the contexts of human development studies
- Children’s folklore in the contexts of cognitive studies

Please, submit manuscripts to <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/cfr/about/submissions>. All article inquiries are welcome and can be sent to me at barkerbr@indiana.edu, if you are interested in reviewing a book, film, or exhibit for the journal, please contact the book reviews editor, Spencer Green (slg310@psu.edu).

Sincerely,

Brandon Barker

Assistant Professor

Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology

Indiana University, Bloomington



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- 1) The gender biases that shape our brains
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210524-the-gender-biases-that-shape-our-brains>
- 2) More than 14% of kids are selling their toys online
<https://www.fool.co.uk/mywallethero/your-money/learn/more-than-14-of-kids-are-selling-their-toys-online/>
- 3) Barbie manufacturer Mattel launches plastic toy send-back service
<https://inews.co.uk/news/consumer/mattel-barbie-plastic-toys-old-unwanted-dolls-send-back-recycle-996772>
- 4) Toys in quarantine, paper test kits: Covid-19 has changed the way children play
<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2021/03/05/covid-playtime-toys-quarantine-pretend-vaccines-normal/6873543002/>
- 5) Infants prefer toys typed to their gender, says study
<https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2016/07/infants-prefer-toys-typed-to-their-gender-says-study>
- 6) Over 100 chemicals of concern in children's toys
<https://newyork.legalexaminer.com/legal/study-over-100-chemicals-of-concern-in-childrens-toys/>
- 7) Playing with thin dolls may affect young girls' body image
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-03/du-pwt030921.php
- 8) The LEGO Foundation details support of play in anticipation of World Autism Awareness Day
<https://www.toynews-online.biz/2021/04/01/the-lego-foundation-details-support-of-play-included-ahead-of-world-autism-awareness-day/>
- 9) Stanford-led study highlights the importance of letting kids take the lead
<https://news.stanford.edu/2021/03/11/study-reveals-impact-much-parental-involvement/>
- 10) Using math toys as teaching tools during the pandemic
<https://toybook.com/math-toys-as-teaching-tools/>
- 11) These 7 AI-powered 'smart toys' are designed to protect your child's data and privacy
<https://theprint.in/tech/these-7-ai-powered-smart-toys-are-designed-to-protect-your-childs-data-and-privacy/663228/>
- 12) Half of UK parents think lockdowns have made them a better parent
<https://highlight.pr.co/197240-half-of-uk-parents-think-lockdowns-have-made-them-a-better-parent>
- 13) Why toy renting is set to take off in 2021
<https://kidscreen.com/2021/01/18/why-toy-renting-is-set-to-take-off-in-2021/>
- 14) Scary fun: Why kids should play in the dark
<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/family/2021/01/scary-fun-why-kids-should-play-in-the-dark>
- 15) What I learned when I recreated the famous 'doll test' that looked at how Black kids see race
<https://theconversation.com/what-i-learned-when-i-recreated-the-famous-doll-test-that-looked-at-how-black-kids-see-race-153780>
- 16) Popping toys, the latest fidget craze, might reduce stress for adults and children alike
<https://theconversation.com/popping-toys-the-latest-fidget-craze-might-reduce-stress-for-adults-and-children-alike-158746>
- 17) Cases of children ingesting high-powered magnets soar nearly 450%, study shows
<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/21060-cases-of-children-ingesting-high-powered-magnets-soar-nearly-450-study-shows>
- 18) Too much family togetherness might be stressing kids out
<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/family/2021/03/why-too-much-family-togetherness-might-be-stressing-out-kids>



ITRA 2021 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 8th ITRA conference in Paris, France, 2018 have been exempted from paying ITRA dues for the years 2019 through 2022.

If you were not able to attend the conference in Paris, you must submit your annual membership fee for 2021 to remain an ITRA member in good standing.

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.Phaleron
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 you have read, events or research you would like to recommend, or if you would like to propose an ITRA member we could profile, do not hesitate to contact either Suzy or Mark, via itranwsltr@gmail.com. We intend to publish a Winter edition in December 2021. 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.

The Editorial Team would like to wish all ITRA members a pleasant summer.

Regards
Suzy & Mark

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