

ITRA NEWSLETTER

International Toy Research Association

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<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>



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PROLOGUE

The International Toy Research Association newsletter is designed to keep members up to date with research in the fields of toys and play. In this issue, readers will find a note from our President, information for the 9th ITRA Conference, to be held in Rochester, USA, 2023, a conference progress report, the Members' Forum, various publications, conference and exhibition previews and reviews. The newsletter has been formatted to allow the document to be read in either printed form or as a soft copy, which can be found on the ITRA website.



The ITRA website (<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>) covers the following: a description of ITRA, a brief history of the association, how to become a member, 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,



Recent international news, scientific reports and numerous updates from ITRA members indicate that many regions across the world may be transitioning from a pandemic into an endemic phase of the Covid-19 virus. In the short-term we simply get on with finding new patterns for daily life while continuing to deal with, in many cases, individual, communal and economic after-effects which may have permanently changed what we previously considered normal. With that in mind, I reach out to you in this holiday season with an even stronger conviction and hope that this finds International Toy Research Association members, both past and present, and Friends of ITRA, safe and well and able to navigate whatever hurdles life seems to invariably put into our sometimes meandering paths.

Similarly, updates from some of our association's membership speak to an increasing concern and impact of the cost of living/energy crisis. My heart goes out to those who have written about the difficulties in just going about daily routines, let alone the added constraints on their teaching and toy research activities. I sincerely trust this energy and cost of living issue is expeditiously resolved and a spirit of normality returns. It may ultimately require a resolution to the conflict in the Ukraine which rapidly inflated energy prices, subsequently increased cost of living, though this is not to diminish the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in the region. Here in the UK and right across Europe, many Ukrainian families, who have had to leave their homes due to the Russian invasion, have been housed with local families - I happen to bump into neighbouring groups each week. It is difficult to really comprehend what they may have experienced over the past 300+ days, but I have found, perhaps as a toy researcher and designer, their stories of toys and play in the midst of crisis both fascinating and poignant. Indeed, we are hearing daily of new studies and research emerging from Ukraine on the impact and importance of toys and play in times of war. The inimitable Brian Sutton-Smith and many others have had much to say on the nature of play, even in the dark times, and the important function of toys to pull us through, bring people together, provide perspective, and offer a bit of levity and even fun in our homes, families and communities in times of tension and crisis.

Talking of Brian and fun, I am delighted that we are able to look forward to seeing one other again, after a four year hiatus since our last stimulating conference in Paris in 2018. On the anniversary of our 30th year, it gives me great pleasure to remind everyone of our upcoming meeting, our very first meeting on the North American continent. We will meet for this 9th ITRA World Conference on the 9th – 11th August 2023 in Rochester, New York, USA, at The Strong National Museum of Play. The conference theme is *TOYS MATTER: The Power of Playthings*. ITRA Vice President and Conference Chair, Greta Pennell and her organising committee have been hard at work and the conference promises to be another brilliant opportunity to meet old research colleagues, make new acquaintances, update and share experiences regarding all things toy, with passionate, fellow-minded toy researchers and friends. A conference progress report is included in this newsletter highlighting various events – a Fisher Price lab trip, gala dinner and much more.

Do not forget to check out our website, www.itratoyresearch.org, and [Facebook](#) page for updated information regarding ongoing conference plans and all other ITRA matters, and remember to get your paper, symposium, poster or prize entry submitted by the 31st December 2023. Just a week away - No panic!

I would like to wish you all a memorable festive period and a bright outlook in 2023!

Hope to see you in Rochester next August.

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INTERNATIONAL TOY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION 9th WORLD CONFERENCE

TOYS MATTER: The Power of Playthings

The Strong National Museum of Play
Rochester, New York, USA, 9th – 11th August 2023



The 9th World Conference of the International Toy Research Association will be held in collaboration with the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, USA.

The **International Toy Research Association (ITRA)**, founded in 1993, will celebrate its 30th anniversary during the 9th World Conference. ITRA is an interdisciplinary organization devoted to the scientific study of toys in all their facets, bringing together toy researchers from around the world to discuss research, collaborate on international projects and exchange information with other researchers, students and leaders in the toy industry (see www.itratoyresearch.org for more information). More than 80 international delegates attended our 2018 meeting in Paris, France.

The Strong National Museum of Play (www.museumofplay.org/) is a highly interactive, collections-based museum devoted to the history and exploration of play. It is one of the largest history museums in the United States and one of the leading museums serving families. The Strong houses the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of historical materials related to play and is home to the International Center for the History of Electronic Games, the National Toy Hall of Fame, the World Video Game Hall of Fame, the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play, the Woodbury School, and the *American Journal of Play*. Together, these enable a multifaceted array of research, exhibition, and other interpretive and educational activities that serve a diverse audience of adults, families, children, students, teachers, scholars, collectors, and others around the globe.

CONFERENCE THEME

The overarching theme for the 9th ITRA World Conference is ***TOYS MATTER: The Power of Playthings***.

From ITRA's beginning, the idea that toys mattered was a fundamental principle that put the toys themselves on centre stage. During the first world conference, ITRA co-founder Brian Sutton-Smith highlighted the importance of toy research, quipping that, "we're not just toying around here." Rather, he argued that toys and toy research mattered because it was only by carefully examining the contexts in which we find toys, the worlds of discourse created from them, and their power to shape our private and collective imaginations that we could comprehend the power of the toys with which we play.

As the tools of serious fun, toys have the power to inspire, to promote learning and skill development, to forge and maintain connections with others, and to open new worlds of possibilities. At the same time, it is not always fun and games in Toyland. Toys are also used to grieve, to console, and to cope. They can afford comfort during lockdowns or in the aftermath of natural and human-made disasters.

In the face of social unrest or geopolitical turmoil, they can be transformed into instruments of protest and resistance. The power of playthings is multi-layered and multi-faceted. Toys empower and heal. However, they can also oppress and harm. From safety concerns, to environmental and psychological impacts, to the question of who is represented and how, the quality and characteristics of toys matter.

The 9th ITRA World Conference provides opportunities to not only reflect on the last 30 years of toy research but to also look forward in order to broaden the scope of what counts as a toy, and to expand our understanding of the power of playthings and the many ways they matter – for both children and adults. This conference is a timely opportunity for toy researchers, designers, inventors, advocates, archivists and other toy professionals to discuss the role toys play in our individual and collective identities, and the various ways they reflect and shape our worlds (both positively or negatively), as well as the impact of technology, environmental concerns and societal/cultural crises on toy design, manufacture and use. We invite work that examines the power of playthings both historically and in our ever-changing worlds, especially as we navigate these precarious and even perilous times.

All play objects, whether physical, digital or hybrid, are included in the scope of toys to be discussed at this conference. This includes games, as well as indoor and outdoor play spaces.

The scientific committee encourages submissions of abstracts that relate to the main conference theme from all disciplines, as well as other toy related topics including but not limited to:

- Art & Artistry of Toys
- Collecting, Collections & Preservation – from Toy Boxes to Exhibitions
- Indigenous and Folk Toys
- Intersectionality, Inclusivity and Intergenerational Toys
- Games and Gamification
- Multi-modal Toys, the Metaverse and Hybridization
- Outdoor Toys, Playspaces, and Toys in Nature
- People behind Playthings
- Socialization, Identity, and Development through and with Toys
- Toy Advertising, Markets & Trends
- Toys As and Through History
- Toy Design, Safety & Sustainability
- Toy Innovations, Transitions, and Subversions
- Toys for Teaching, Learning, and Social Justice
- Toys and Technology including Digital, Electronic and Virtual Toys & Games
- Toys Throughout the Lifespan
- Trauma Responsive and/or Therapeutic Toys

We welcome abstracts of completed research, case studies and development projects, including those in process or development, as well as ideas for future research in order to generate discussion and feedback.

CONFERENCE DEADLINES

Proposal/Abstracts Submission Deadline for all papers, posters, symposia, & workshops – **31st December 2022**

Request for financial assistance – **31st December 2022**

Response from review committee – **1st March 2023**

Early registration until – **1st May 2023**

Late Registration until – **1st July 2023**

Cancellation Deadline for full refund – **1st July 2023**

Hotel Reservation for special conference rate until – **15th July 2023**

Contact us

Email Conference Chair, Greta Pennell: gpennell@uindy.edu

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/itra2018/>

And on the web at: https://www.itratoyresearch.org/2023_Rochester.php

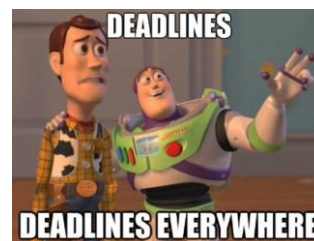


2023 ITRA CONFERENCE PROGRESS REPORT

by Greta Pennell (Conference Chair)

Tis the season for toys, games galore, and wrapping things up for 2022. Topping my to-do list this year has been planning and preparing for our 2023 World Conference to be held at The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, NY, USA. Thanks to the invaluable input and assistance from our organizing committee, the meeting is shaping up nicely with engaging sessions, opportunities to network, entertainment, and of course time to explore the world's largest, most comprehensive collection of toys, dolls, traditional games, and electronic/video games. I'm happy to provide this update about meeting logistics and a quick peek at some of the special things we have in store.

First, and foremost, a reminder that 31st December 2022 is the deadline to submit proposals. Many thanks to all of you who have already sent in your work. To date, we've received a wide range of intriguing proposals from scholars across four continents. We can already tell that there will be something of interest for everyone, whether you are an academic researcher, industry professional, activist, designer, museum curator, educator, or entrepreneur. Your help in spreading the word about the deadline and encouraging colleagues to submit proposals is very much appreciated. Remember that proposals must be submitted through our online portal at: <https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/3899/submitter> I highly recommend previewing the submission form to be sure that you have all the requisite information. While the system allows you to save a draft of your work, only complete proposals will be reviewed. Symposia and panel proposals should be submitted as a single package by the lead or primary organizer of the session.



Please note that the 31st December date is also the deadline to request financial assistance and to submit nominations for the junior and senior ITRA Prize recognizing Outstanding Toy Research. More information is available at: https://www.itratoyresearch.org/prize_general.php. The goal is for all notification letters to be out as early in 2023 as possible (and no later than 1st March) so that everyone has as much lead time as possible to confirm travel plans. If you have any questions about conference logistics or the submission process, feel free to contact me at gpennell@uindy.edu

SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE

Turning to some of the special events we have in store for the conference, I'm excited to announce a special pre-conference excursion to Fisher Price Headquarters and Play Lab in East Aurora, NY on Tuesday, 8th August. We will travel by bus from The Strong to Fisher Price. Our day there will include a tour of their corporate campus, a visit to their Heritage Center (a company specific Toy Museum), and their world class Playlab where "Great Minds Think Like Kids" (<https://shop.mattel.com/pages/fisher-price-play-lab>), along with an interactive session with some of their key designers. Thanks to the generosity of Fisher Price and the British Toy and Hobby Association, this pre-conference event will be open to all pre-registered conference attendees at no additional cost.

We'll also be commemorating the 30th anniversary of ITRA's founding during the conference starting with a gala dinner at The Strong on the opening evening of the conference, 9th August. In true ITRA fashion this will be a fun-filled celebratory event with time to explore (and play) in the museum, including The Strong's brand new 90,000 sq.ft. (i.e., >8300 sq. m) expansion featuring the World Video Game Hall of Fame, an immersive video game space called "Level Up," and the innovative Play Garden ([see video](#)). In addition, participants will have the opportunity tell their toy stories and are invited to bring a special toy/game from their home country or childhood to donate to The Strong's collection. The cost of the gala dinner is included in the conference registration and there will be options to purchase additional guest dinner reservations through the online registration system once it becomes available. As a bookend to the opening gala, I'm pleased to share that plans are underway for a closing reception at Witmer House on the University of Rochester campus after our last sessions on Friday 11th August.

ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

Complementing the wonders of The Strong Museum, we have secured a block of rooms at just \$159.00 USD/night +taxes at the soon to open Hampton Inn & Suites, right across the street from the museum in the Neighborhood of Play. In addition to an ideal location, the hotel offers many amenities such as free hot breakfast, free parking, and free shuttles to/from the Rochester airport, restaurants, and other local attractions. All rooms are equipped with a

small refrigerator and microwave and coffee/tea maker and come in the following configurations (at the same special room rate):

- 1 King size bed
- 2 Queen size beds
- 1 King with 2 twin bunk beds (perfect for those travelling with kids and are described as being “super fun.”

NOTE: there are only five rooms with this configuration

ROCHESTER AND TRAVEL UPDATE

Rochester, New York is a family friendly city with a rich history of innovation, social justice and activism. Located in upstate New York, USA about 75 miles (120 km) east of Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York. Its airport, the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC; <https://roairport.com>), is served by American, Delta, Frontier, Southwest, JetBlue, United, and Allegiant Airlines with nonstop service to major hubs in the USA including Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Atlanta.



For travellers coming from outside the USA you may find less expensive fares by flying into Boston, Chicago, Denver or Toronto Canada and then making separate travel arrangements to Rochester. However, please remember as you plan your travel that distances are great in the United States and public transportation between cities may be limited or timely. For example, New York City is 8 hours from Rochester on train or bus and 6 hours by private car.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As you can see, there is already a lot in store for our 9th World Conference. However, what inspires and excites me most are the creative and informative sessions that are only possible because of YOU! I can't wait for us to be together again, to learn about the latest research in toys and material culture, to reflect on our Association's 30 years of research into toy design, curation and use, and to imagine the great places we will go from here.

2023 ITRA PRIZE FOR OUTSTANDING TOY RESEARCH

The ITRA Prize has been established with generous support from the British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA; www.btha.co.uk/). The first ITRA-BTHA Prize was awarded in July 2008 during the 5th ITRA conference in Nafplion, Greece.

ITRA expects to give two awards at each ITRA World Conference. One award of US\$650 will be given for the best student research on toys and one award of US\$1,300 to a senior scholar or practitioner on the uses, design and effects of toys.

The Prize recipients will also receive a travel stipend of US\$600 each toward the ITRA Conference and will present their research at that conference.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the ITRA Prize is to recognize outstanding research in the field of toy research. To qualify for the Prize, the work must have been conducted or published since the previous ITRA Conference in 2018 and be submitted by the researcher or nominated by a member of ITRA.

ELIGIBILITY

Papers, either published or unpublished, in any area of toy research, are eligible. Submissions should be in English (original or translation). Research on the uses, design, and effects of toys in child development, education, science, and medicine will be considered for the awards. Theoretical and historical papers will also be considered as long as these are linked to potential research.

Submissions of postgraduate dissertations or books are also welcome. These should be accompanied by a summary of 2500-3000 words. Hard copies of books should be provided to each prize committee member upon request.

SUBMISSIONS

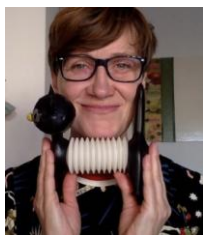
ITRA Prize papers should be submitted directly to Greta Pennell (gpennell@windy.edu) as a PDF attachment before **31st December 2022**. The Awards Committee consists of Mark Allen (UK), Barry Kudrowitz (USA), Koumudi Patil (India), and Lieselotte van Leeuwen (Sweden).

EVALUATION

The Awards Committee of ITRA will evaluate applications on the basis of originality, the significance of the work, creativity, methodology, clarity of presentation, and importance.

The 2023 ITRA prizes will be awarded at the 9th ITRA World Conference in Rochester, New York USA 9th – 11th August 2023.

MEMBER PROFILE – Daniela Pelegrinelli



Daniela Pelegrinelli is an independent researcher, toys and dolls curator, teacher, and consultant. Since 1998, she has taught toy history, play theory, children in museums, play spaces, and childhood culture at a number of colleges and universities in Argentina, including FADU-UBA, FLACSO Argentina, UNCAUS, and Normal School. She is a consultant on play projects in museums, schools, and the government and curated several toy exhibitions in Argentina.

In 2010 she published a comprehensive dictionary about the Argentine toy industry, in which she assembled data about more than 400 toy companies, combining life stories, immigration policies, technical information, and pedagogical, political, and social analysis. In 2021 she won the First Ampersand Prize for Fashion Studies, for her project: “*Prodigiosa Marilú. Muñecas, moda y educación femenina 1932-1961.*”

During Daniela Pelegrinelli’s studies in Educational Sciences at Buenos Aires University, she wrote a paper on the role of toys in childhood policies during the Peronist government. It was at this point that Daniela’s interest in toys began, and she realized there was little published research on the history of the Argentinean toy industry. At the same time, she had become fond of antique dolls and toys. She was captivated by the topic. Reinforcing the interest was a visit to the V&A Museum of Childhood in London (1997) and reading Brian Sutton-Smith’s book ‘*Toys as Culture.*’ To broaden her understanding of toys, Daniela became more involved with collectors, artisans, and toymakers, and buying books and magazines on the topic both at home and abroad. After her comprehensive dictionary was published in 2010 (*Diccionario de juguetes argentinos. Industria, infancia y educación 1880-1965*), Daniela shifted her professional orientation toward toy curation and museums.

In her role as curator, and later, the first director of the Museo del Juguete de San Isidro (San Isidro Toy Museum) Daniela developed a new set of guidelines and the museographic script for this museum, the first toy museum in Argentina. Her responsibilities included the development and implementation of a set of criteria for designing educational programs and visitors’ experiences. At the same time, she has been training teachers, museum educators, and professors on play theories, the history of toys and games, public policies on childhood and play. Her primary focus has been to study and spread the ideas and work of Brian Sutton-Smith and Gilles Brougère on toys and the material culture of childhood.

In 2010, Daniela was involved in the conception and organization of an international event which took place in Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentina: Primer Seminario Internacional “La infancia, el juego y los juguetes” (FLACSO Argentina). Gilles Brougère was invited to give the opening conference address. Sudarshan Khanna and Jean-Pierre Rossie were also invited to give workshops and talks. It was a particularly groundbreaking event as academics, teachers, toymakers, and researchers from different disciplines - history, anthropology, social studies, and industry - had an opportunity to share their experiences and research, some for the first time.

Daniela’s first encounter with ITRA was at the Nafplion Conference, in 2008, where she presented a paper, ‘*Toy industry, childhood imageries and policies in Argentina during the Peronist government (1946-1955).*’ She described the conference as ‘a great and memorable experience’ as it united researchers from across the globe, and offered her a chance to meet many scholars whose work had guided her own.

Daniela describes toys and toy research as giving her a focus, ‘moving’ her, and offering her a number of life-changing encounters, including travel to different countries, meeting people from all walks of life, and reinforcing her personal identity. During the period in which Daniela conducted the research for her book, Argentina suffered a serious economic crisis and uprising. Many toy companies went bankrupt (owners cried in the interviews) and others suffered loss of employees, financial crises, and other unprecedented hardships. In order to preserve and amplify the voices of toy makers, entrepreneurs, and consumers during this difficult time in Argentina’s history, Daniela felt it was vitally important to record the stories of those companies most impacted, their workers, designers, and the daily life of the people who made the toys.

Daniela is equally committed to recording the stories of the toy industry in times of creativity, innovation, and joy. In 2019 she had the opportunity to work in Medellín, Colombia, with a beautiful and unusual collection of toys made from trash and sold by local urban recyclers. The collection belonged to a local artist, Rafael Castaño, who took Daniela to meet the recyclers in the street market, in a relatively neglected zone of the city, where they sell the “trash” they collect. His toy collection discloses a sensitive way to view the city of Medellín and its people. It is thanks to toys that Daniela is able to have these amazing life experiences with toymakers, vendors, and collectors throughout South America.

Daniela says that Argentina's political instability and unpredictability have made it a challenging place to live and work, even despite its beauty and rich cultural and toy traditions. When she started in the professional academic field, it was nearly impossible to secure an academic university position because toy studies were considered "too left-field." Consequently, she has developed her professional career in museums, private collections, teaching, and writing. Along the way, she has continued to deepen her fondness and intellectual interest in toys, the history of toys and childhood, and especially the field of antique dolls.

Daniela found the Covid-19 lockdown sad and stressful; however, it allowed her to concentrate on finishing a new book (due to be published in 2023) about an Argentine-German doll called Marilú. The study focuses on the relationship between fashion dolls, constructions of femininity in childhood, education, and the toy industry. Marilú is a kind of Bleuette doll that became a huge hit in Argentina between 1932 and 1960. Daniela hopes to attend the 2023 Rochester Conference and introduce her work on Marilú dolls.

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.

AUSTRIA

Christoph Kühberger, Professor of History Education and Civic Education at the University of Salzburg wrote: In October 2022 The Salzburg Museum opened an exhibition, which I co-curated, on the representation of history in toys, titled *Playing with History/ Mit Geschichte Spielen* (Salzburg Museum, 14th October 2022 to 12th February 2023)

The exhibition sheds light on the history of toys and play for visitors of all generations. Toys reflect societal beliefs of past periods of time. In most children's rooms, knights, princesses, dinosaurs, musketeers and more can be found, each of which interprets and displays history in a specific way.

<https://www.salzburgmuseum.at/ausstellungen/aktuelle-sonderausstellungen/mit-geschichte-spielen/>

I also published a scientific book on the exhibition: Kühberger, Christoph (Hg.): *Mit Geschichte spielen. Zur materiellen Kultur von Spielzeug und Spielen als Darstellung der Vergangenheit*. Bielefeld (transcript) 2021.

<https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-5358-8/mit-geschichte-spielen/>

The curators of the exhibition included me and Mag. Peter Husty (Salzburg Museum)

FINLAND

Katriina Heljakka, Play Expert at Mannerheim League for Child Welfare wrote:

In this issue, I'd like to share a tribute written by Dr. Jackie Fulmer on the passing of Dr. Toy, Stevanne Auerbach, who sadly passed away in October of this year, 2022. Stevanne was a dear friend and mentor to me, and someone I interviewed for my doctoral thesis. Jackie has shared this tribute with the toy industry in the US and UK, but shared it with me so that it could be featured in the ITRA Newsletter as well.

Looking very much forward to The Strong/Rochester.

Best, Kati

Tribute for Dr. Stevanne Auerbach (22nd September 1938 – 19th October 2022) by Jacqueline Fulmer, Ph.D., Omnidoll Research

Pioneering mass media toy reviewer and early childhood studies author, Stevanne Auerbach, Ph.D., known to her readers and viewers as "Dr. Toy," passed away in San Lorenzo, CA, on Wednesday, 19th October 2022, at age 84, due to complications from a stroke.

Stevanne Auerbach was an accomplished speaker, consultant, and author, who had trained in child development and special education. Her title, "Dr. Toy," dated to her first assignment with Creative Playthings in 1968, where she developed its first education marketing program. She became one of the first mass media "toy reviewers," evaluating toys, publishing articles and guidebooks, and appearing on radio and television in American markets from coast to coast, from 1986 to 2018. When her distinctive gold foil "Dr. Toy Award" stickers appeared on retail products, consumers would know that they were purchasing a quality toy that would enrich their children's lives. Stevanne was born to Jeane Sydney Rosen Stockheim and Nathan Carl Stockheim on September 22, 1938, in New York City. She was raised in Juniper Park in Middle Village, a newly developed neighborhood in the borough of Queens in New York City. Stevanne was a competitive swimmer in her youth. She graduated from Queens College, Flushing, NY, with an A.B. in Education in 1960. After graduation, she taught elementary school for the New York Public School District. In 1961, Stevanne married a designer, Arthur Auerbach, in November 1961, and they moved to Maryland. One of Stevanne's earliest career accomplishments took place during this period: She approved the first grant for the Children's Television Workshop show, *Sesame Street*. Also during her time in the D.C. area, she produced the first report on the necessity of physical education for the developmentally disabled for the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, research which contributed later to the development of the Special Olympics. During the 1960s, Stevanne experienced the joy of giving birth to her only child, Amy Beth, in 1966, and the dissolution of her first marriage to Arthur Auerbach in 1968. Armed with an M.A. in Special Education from George Washington University (1965), Stevanne and Amy Beth headed to San Francisco. She completed her Ph.D. in Child Development in August 1973. In 1987, Stevanne founded and served as director of the San Francisco International Toy Museum at Fisherman's Wharf. In 1990, financial difficulties exacerbated by the Loma Prieta earthquake forced it to shut its doors. Working with her daughter Amy at the interactive toy museum was a special time in both their lives. Stevanne would try to reopen the toy museum in later years, as the International Toy Museum of Oakland.

In the late 1980s, she began writing the toy advice columns and reviews that would make her famous as "Dr. Toy," which were featured in parenting magazines, newspapers, and as a weekly syndicated column. In 1994,



“Dr. Toy’s Guide” became one of the earliest toy review websites on the Internet. Fledgling toy makers expressed gratitude to her over the years for the many occasions when she had shown a spotlight on their creations. One of her favourite honours received during her career was when she received the 2007 Women in Toys entrepreneur “Wonder Woman Award.”

In 1996, Stevanne married Ralph Whitten, a forensic analyst for the San Francisco Police Department, and she also became grandmother to Amy’s son Josiah. She often brought Ralph along on toy-related conferences and work trips as her droll “photographer.”

Simultaneously to Stevanne becoming more deeply involved in the world of toys, she founded the environmental group, San Francisco Butterfly Lovers. In 2015, Stevanne published a collection of illustrated essays titled, *My Butterfly Collection*. She then achieved a Guinness World Record in 2017 for the “World’s Largest Collection of Butterfly-Related Items.” The bulk of this collection was acquired in summer 2022 by the Bohart Museum of Entomology, University of California, Davis. In May 2022, an artist who had helped move the collection, Isabella “Izzi” Niewiadomski, created an interactive exhibit that honoured Stevanne’s love of butterflies. Many other institutions benefited in 2022 from Stevanne’s donations of collections that she has put together through the years: the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester, NY; the Museum of Computer History; the Internet Archive; the SFO Museum; the Latimer Quilt and Textile Center in Tillamook, Oregon; the Henry Miller Memorial Library; and a new “Dr. Toy” archive that is being set up in Finland by the renowned play theorist, Dr. Katriina Heljakka. The documentary filmmaker, Jonathan Ruchlis, is currently working on a project about Stevanne’s career and collections.

Even through her later days, though bedridden due to paralysis from the neck down, she would dictate emails, texts, and new ideas with her iPhone’s voice-to-text function. Her passion for bettering the world really knew no bounds. During her later struggles, she was comforted by the constant support and companionship of her husband Ralph.

To have known Stevanne was to experience her enthusiasm for the value of play in everyone’s lives, as well as her generosity in helping people at every stage of their lives. Stevanne is survived by her husband Ralph Whitten, daughter Amy Beth Auerbach, grandson Josiah Metz, and sister Judy Schwartz (Martin Schwartz).

GERMANY

Steffen Wittig, Research assistant in the field of general educational science Universität Kassel, wrote: Below is a description of an exciting new working group with which I am involved, and list of contributions which specific members of our working group around games, digitality and gamification, have produced: *Games and Play - Dissolution of Boundaries in and through the Digital?* Both games and the discourse about them are undergoing an undeniable transformation in the course of digitization. Often, reflections from educational science are limited to feasibility considerations and attempts to methodize the use of games in pedagogical fields of practice. The subject of this working group, on the other hand, involves reflections on the consequences and side effects of ludification or gamification that can be grasped in terms of educational theory. Among other things, moments of creativity, sociality, autonomy/heteronomy and (in) reality are the ones that become places of dissolution and reinterpretation. In the working group, the object will be questioned and discussed in terms of its circular connection between play and the social, the boundary between the real and the unreal, its function as an experimental space of power, and its creative potential. The common goal is to re-theorize (post-digital) play in specific pedagogical terms.

Games and Play - Dissolution of Boundaries in and through the Digital? The focus of the working group is the question of whether and to what extent play - as a form of life, as a practice, as a pedagogical tool - is undergoing a transformation in the course of digitization. To this end, we approach the problem primarily against the background of considerations of educational theory. This includes, for example, questions as to whether there are demarcations between serious games and didactic/pedagogical practices and whether and to what extent a gamification of pedagogical practice can be ascertained and how this can be evaluated. In doing so, we take up previous attempts to define the game conceptually as well as pedagogically (Bilstein/Winzen/Wulf 2005; Parmentier 2004; Stenger 2013), and discuss how in digitalized life-worlds pedagogical tasks as well as social relations change due to ludification processes. Undoubtedly, processes of change present themselves differently for different pedagogical fields of action; however, this working group will focus on general and generalizable observations and consequences for theoretical considerations.

Current research on play is dominated by two perspectives: a media pedagogical perspective addresses - often in the mode of affirmation - feasibility considerations and the transformation of pedagogical and instructional practices. This threatens to neglect the stock of media theory in the same way it neglects moments of processuality, experientiality, and human formation (cf. Waldmann/Aktaş 2017).

The school-theoretical perspective, which predominantly methodizes the game, thereby rarely problematizes processes of economization of education as well as the subjectification of pupils as players (Macgilchrist 2019) and their pedagogical consequences.

Both, moments of didactic feasibility considerations (in the form of immersion and in the medium of practice), which are increasingly pointed against the background of gamification and serious games, and educational theoretical approaches, in which the game is presupposed as an educational moment of engagement with the

world, culminate in the game. Game as such a culminating point thus requires a double general pedagogical reflection, on the practice of the game itself as well as its discourse, in which different semantics and pedagogical functionalizations are articulated. It is moments of creativity, autonomy/heteronomy, and reinterpretation (of play as well as of the pedagogical) that become immediately visible as border zones and (among others) are subjected to a theorizing reconsideration in this working group.

• Contribution 1: Gabriele Weiß (Siegen)

Gamification - the removal of boundaries from the pedagogical as well as the game. Pedagogization of the game or ludification of the pedagogical? Even the definition of "gamification" as a transfer of game elements into non-game environments presupposes a boundary and at the same time transgresses it. This paradox underlies the phenomenon of game itself. As a mode of "saliency" (Huizinga 2009), i.e., demarcation from ordinary (serious, real) life, every game sets itself a framing boundary within which other rules (norms, values) can, but need not, apply. The shifting of the boundary between play and non-play, without abolishing it, takes place through the conscious and unconscious application and subversion of rules and rules of play. Post-digital life-worlds are changing the relationship between play and pedagogy, primarily through the dissolution of spatial and temporal boundaries. Much more interesting, however, seems to be the view on the players. If game elements motivate people to perform boring or laborious activities (brushing their teeth, working, learning, saving the environment), the question arises anew beyond a psychology of motivation: Why do we (like to) play? A closer look at the concrete game elements used in gamification again reveals a circle, because much of it, such as comparison, disguise, and group membership, was previously imported from the social into the game.

• Contribution 2: Steffen Wittig (Kassel)

Experimental Spaces of Power. On the dialectical promise of play to suspend power in (digital) play there is a promise from which pedagogy has repeatedly tried to strike sparks in various dimensions: in play things become possible that are impossible in 'real' life (Huizinga 2009): One can suspend seemingly powerful, subjective situatedness (Thiedeke 2010). Play thus appears as an "oasis of happiness" (Fink). Yet potentials for the pedagogical are repeatedly attached to this promise of the 'reality of the unreal'. Since the 1930s, central thinkers of game theory (Huizinga 2009; Fink 2010) have been pointing out that such an idea of enabling the (pedagogically) impossible in the game itself is only a (game-destroying) imagination.

However, play is not to be considered from the side of an assumed potential for the pedagogical; it is to be called upon in its dialectic between the promise of the possibility of suspending power and the permanent reference to the constitutive dimension of this powerful location of play in the social. "The game is a struggle for something or a representation of something" (Huizinga 2009, p. 22) and "world symbol" (Fink 2010). The game is, according to the thesis of the article, experimental space of power.

• Contribution 3: Cornelia Zobl (Graz)

Digital play spaces - Fortnite and Super Mario Bros. as a design framework and opportunities at the interface of digital and analogue lifeworlds. If (analogue) play is understood by Schiller as the highest form of existence and as the starting point for aesthetic educational processes, this is often called into question in the case of digitalized forms of play. The process of dissolving the boundaries of playfulness into life, which is being driven forward by digital games, goes hand in hand with concerns about the tendencies toward the mechanization and economization of society and pedagogy. Under the headings of gamification, ludification, digitalization, etc., these problems are dealt with from the perspective of educational theory. However, such extremely important critical approaches do not take into account the digital game as an aestheticized space of experience and its implications for educational theory (Mitgutsch/Rosenstingl 2008). Accordingly, this article takes a systematizing-comparative look at exemplarily selected digital games such as Fortnite (2017) and Super Mario Bros. (1983), which are understood as specific spaces of experience for players. The guiding question here is the possibilities of ego, other, and world experiences in and through gaming, which are influenced by conscious design processes of the digital-analogue interfaces as well as the digital environment. Especially the correlation of game design and game experience can subsequently be the starting point for media pedagogical and didactic considerations of a creative-poietic kind.

• Contribution 4: Miguel Zulaica y Mugica (Dortmund)

The (Un)reality of Learning through Play - Digital Play and Learning Technologies in the Focus of General Pedagogical Questions. In the current educational system, specific ludifications of the social are experiencing a boom due to persuasive technologies such as gamification and serious gaming. Gamification as the ludification of everyday practices and serious gaming as the ludic design of practice settings are in the tradition of both automation utopias of didactic practices and cultural studies theories of play. It will be worth pointing out that the significance of digital play in learning arrangements is misunderstood if the ludic is reduced merely to its motivational quality. It is the mediality of play, in which an "unreality" (Schäfer/Thompson 2014) is created that is as free as possible from real consequences, that is accessed by both instrumental perspectives but also educational theoretical approaches that consider the 'unreality' of play as a space of possibility for experiences of autonomy, creativity, and contingency. The question is how the mediality of play relates to pedagogical mediality. The ludification of the social is questioned with regard to a dissolution of the boundaries of pedagogization, and digital game and learning technologies are confronted with the educational-theoretical claim to do justice to the matter in order to lead over to a general pedagogical reflection.

Artemis Yagou, Research Associate at the Deutsches Museum (Munich), wrote:

Although toys and play are no longer my main research focus, I am still involved with construction toys in different ways. In the last weeks of 2022 I had the chance to deliver two online lectures, invited by the Department of Industrial Design, Bilgi University (Istanbul) and by the Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly (Volos, Greece). The topic was the Dandanah glass toy designed by the architect Bruno Taut, a fascinating example of the complexity of modernism. My research on the Dandanah is available (open access) through this link:

<https://www.deutsches-museum.de/museum/verlag/publikation/modernist-complexity-on-a-small-scale>

Greetings from Munich,

Artemis Yagou

GREECE

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

I received this Call-for-Papers from TASP in honour of Brian Sutton-Smith - the deadline is early February: *Play & Culture Studies – Volume 17. Our Playful Friend: A Special Issue Honouring the Centennial of the Birth of Brian Sutton-Smith.*

In a joint effort, the editors of the *International Journal of Play* invite you to contribute to a special issue of *Play and Culture Studies* in honour of the centennial (almost) of Brian's birth. No serious play scholarship please.

Well, Okay, if you must. We also seek: original poems, images, graphic novel excerpts, essays, maps, memories, puzzles, and lyrics. If you are inspired to hold an event in his honour, send pictures. Details: Proposals due 14th February 2023.

Please include your name and contact details, a paragraph describing your content, intent, and momentum, plus an idea of proposed word length and/or number of images. Depending on how many offers we receive, we may need to go through a peer review selection process, or place items in a hat. We would fish them out with a bow tie, in honour of Brian. For questions or to send submissions contact Anna Beresin (aberessin@uarts.edu).

With great respect,

Anna Beresin, Fraser Brown, and Michael Patte

Guest Editors, *Play & Culture Studies, Volume 17*

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

I recently co-published a chapter on the educational value of Serious Games on middle childhood in the edited volume titled, "Research on E-Learning and ICT in Education." My chapter was based on the results of a multi-dimensional study about the perceptions of Greek primary school teachers on the educational value of serious games and their impact on cognitive, social and emotional development of children in middle childhood. A literature review, conducted prior to the study, led to 7 hypotheses, which formed the basis for the design of a quantitative research study and the development of a structured electronic questionnaire. This research tool was comprised of five sections, addressing demographics, digital skills, perceived impact and educational value of serious games and identified barriers to their application in the classroom. The questionnaire was deployed to 110 primary school teachers. Results indicate a high prevalence in the use of serious games (83.6%), but with low frequency. Participants rated positively the educational value of serious games and their effect on children's development in middle childhood. A positive correlation was observed between perceived value as a motivation, collaboration and instructional tool, and amongst their perceived effect on cognitive and on social-emotional development. Statistical significances were calculated between the perceptions of teachers who had used serious games at least once, and those who had not. A positive correlation was observed between self-reported ICT skills and serious game usage.

Megagianni, P., & Kakana, D. (2021). *The Educational Value and Impact of Serious Games in Cognitive, Social and Emotional Development in Middle Childhood: Perceptions of Teachers in Greece*. In: Tsiatsos T., Demetriadis S., Mikropoulos A., Dagdilelis V. (eds) *Research on E-Learning and ICT in Education* (pp. 129–145). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64363-8_8

Best regards

Domna

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

This semester I have been engaged in research regarding two thematic areas:

- a. Physical literacy, where I have created a Network in Greece (<http://epee.upatras.gr/kinhtikos-grammatismos>), as Country Lead from the International Physical Literacy Association, to enhance physical literacy in my country, and
- b. Physical play breaks in the classroom, the implementation of which affects positively the concentration of children and prevents physical inactivity and long-term physical illness.

Every child has the right to live in a safe environment and to play freely. I truly wish peace for all and happy holidays.

With warm regards,
Regards,
Vassiliki

HONG KONG

Rémi Leclerc, Founder of the PolyPlay Lab and current ITRA Board member, wrote regarding a paper he wrote with Brian McCarthy which expanded on the PolyPlay War & Toys project presented at ITRA 2018 and a preface published in a publication informed by the 2021 Play Lives exhibition which Rémi designed and curated along with Lee Chi Wing:

• *War, toys, play to heal: priming designers to create playthings promoting resilience in children in war zones.* Rémi Leclerc & Brian McCarty (2022). International Journal of Play, Volume 11, Issue 1, Special Issue on Play: Resilience and Vulnerability in Difficult Circumstances, Part 2.

This paper expands on the “PolyPlay War & Toys - Play to Heal Project Design to Provide Solace for Children Affected by War” presentation delivered at the 8th ITRA World Conference July 2018 in Paris.

Abstract: Trauma-related psychiatric disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are highly prevalent in children in war zones; yet professional care is scarcely available. This leaves children and their families, often also affected by trauma, to live with unaddressed psychopathologies. This paper presents a framework for designing toys promoting resilience and support healing in children potentially traumatized by war. Structured around several workshops, it was introduced to undergraduate students within a toy design course in an East Asian university and facilitated by a transdisciplinary team consisting of the authors, a designer, and an artist, and expressive and play therapists working in war zones. Analysis of outcomes demonstrates that a short design workshop, albeit disconnected from the context of use, may appropriately redesign toys available in war zone markets as play therapy-inspired transitional or comfort objects supporting healing from war-related trauma. Feedback from therapists provided keys for further elaboration of the framework.

Link to the paper: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21594937.2022.2042938>.

• Play Lives, *Play Lives*

Rémi Leclerc (2022). Preface to the 日日好玩--玩好設計 (“Everyday play -- play good design”), follow-up publication to Hong Kong Design Centre’s Design Spectrum 2021 *Play Lives* exhibition). Joint Publishing HK and the Hong Kong Design Centre.

Preface to a publication based on the 2021 *Play Lives* exhibition on Hong Kong ‘designed play’ curated and designed by Rémi Leclerc and Lee Chi Wing, and organised by the Hong Kong Design Centre’s Design Spectrum public outreach unit. The preface links the *Play Lives* exhibition curatorial content and sociocultural context to the publication, which features interviews of Hong Kong play industry companies and designers.

Link to the book (in Chinese): <https://www.jointpublishing.com/bookstore/chinese-books/art-and-music/art-design/other/9789620449536.aspx>

Links to the exhibition:

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

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

INDIA

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

Dear ITRA family,

Many greetings and wishes for a happy, healthy and “happening” 2023.

The year 2022 has been filled with some good changes and opportunities. This year, I was offered the position of Associate Senior Designer, along with the task of coordinating the Industrial Design discipline at the National Institute of Design Haryana (NIDH), Kurukshetra city (near New Delhi, India).

My department at NIDH successfully held the first collaborative online workshop as a part of our MOU with King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand (KMUTT). I look forward to more such exchanges with various organizations.

I have been happily busy doing the field research for my ongoing PhD on weekends. My topic is the *Role of toys in middle school education*.

As part of this research, I interacted with a number of student groups and teachers in Kurukshetra City. Children enjoyed the toy making process and discussions so much that they claimed that they did not want to return to their regular classes, insisting that they hoped I could continue my class on toy making. I was



touched with the love I received from the students and teacher. This helped me to connect with local people. Teachers invited me to their homes as they wanted to extend their hospitality and have more conversation over teaching-learning and how I could help them through design. The teachers and principals also connected me to other schools. I was thankful that I could know more people and well-meaning educators in the city.

The pictures depict my interaction with students and teachers of the Government School, Samani Village, Kurukshetra, India, 2022

The institute conducted a residential summer camp on design for school children of 9th to 12th standard. I got the chance to interact with this lively group by conducting a 2-hour workshop on Toy and Game Design. It was interesting to see how children of this age group valued such an interaction, despite having so much exposure to information and technology. The group got a glimpse of design stream, as a way to help them choose a path that was right for them as they prepare to finish their high school education and continue their educational and professional journeys. The second picture depicts me with the group of students and teachers at the Toy and Game Design workshop at NIDH, Kurukshetra, India, 2022

I look forward to collaborating on various activities with ITRA members in the coming years.

Warm regards,
Surabhi



SWITZERLAND

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

We are happy to have managed to make it through 2022. There is a lot happening here, including number of papers, four collective volumes, and a little book on a scene of a play which included a special toy, knucklebones!

The most important for ITRA:

- Dasen, V. Vespa, M. (eds), *Toys as Cultural Artefacts in Ancient Greece, Etruria, and Rome*, Monographies Instrumentum 75, Dremil-Lafage, Mergoil, 2022. The first scientific volume dedicated to toys in antiquity. We send it to press this week!

- Dasen, V., *Le Cannibale. Enquête sur une sculpture antique*, Collection DITS, Paris, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, 2022.

- Daniaux, Th., Dasen, V. (dir.), *Locus Ludi. Quoi de neuf sur la culture ludique antique ?*, Pallas, 119, 2022.

<https://pum.univ-tlse2.fr/~no-119-Locus-Ludi-quoi-de-neuf-sur~.html>

More to come.

Kind regards,
Véronique

THAILAND

Apirom Kongkanan, King Mongkut University of Technology, Thonburi, wrote:

Growing up during the pandemic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, both young and older children have spent most of the time at home for all activities. Online classes have been the only option from the youngest children (kindergarten years) to those at the university level (18-22 years old). In Thailand, as in other Asian countries, the over-emphasis on academic achievement, starting at a very young age, has seemed to be either out of control or over controlling among Thai parents. Admonitions to “study hard” are the norm, even in times of crisis such as the pandemic.

We all know that online class room teaching has been the main approach to teaching and learning since 2020.

Yet we seem to have plunged into the online mode as if it is our sole mode of survival without knowing whether it is good for our children in the long run. Face to face class rooms, where friends and teachers physically interact with each other, have not been available in these crisis times. Yet we are learning that skill-based content cannot be effectively taught online. Even so, we have persisted in teaching everything online.

One of the issues that families face is that studying at home needs parental contribution. While parents may have been working from home, they were also facing other issues brought on by the pandemic such as economic uncertainty. A certain level of stress seemed to be unavoidable among all family members. In Thailand it seems

that parents were even stricter to their children when they were all forced to spend prolonged time together under one roof. Children were under their parents' surveillance almost every hour, 24/7.

Were all young children/ students psychologically fine? I do not think so. Was it really an appropriate time to study? Might it have been better to do something else besides requiring our children to stare at the computer screen day in day out?

As we move from the most severe stage of the pandemic, it is appropriate to ask if we tackled our children's education in the best possible way over the past three years. I cannot speak for the younger age group since I did not teach them, but for the university students, I witnessed a large number of problems and issues during the Covid-19 years. First among these issues included strict parental supervision of their children's online screen time and criticism of how and what they were learning. Students reported that their parents accused them of playing games online when they seemed to be "staring at the monitor" rather than studying the required courses. Other university students reported that they suffered from having to move back home to live with parents again, especially when love and understanding were lacking in the family environment. Frequent conflicts arose between students and their parents, and students spoke of experiencing increased depression, which largely went unnoticed by their parents. Students thus spoke of feeling helpless and in need of finding professional psychological help on their own. The Covid-19 situation not only intensified student depression, it also created more obstacles for effective study habits and for student motivation to learn.

Second among the issues reported by students was that parents were expecting their children to participate more fully in household chores. Quarrels and conflict arose in many families as a result, with the psychological burden falling on students who were without resources or outlets for their emotions and energies during the strictest lockdown times.

While returning to their parents' homes was quite challenging for some students, others reported their time of studying at home to be quite comfortable and cosy. What we have found more recently is that student's motivation to learn after the peak of the pandemic has continued to be low through 2022. It seems as though online learning and isolation has bombarded students to the core. They seem numbed with online classes whether they are aware of it or not. While students did not like learning online, they were given no other options during the pandemic, and as a result, they now are bearing the brunt of problems arising from this period of difficulty. Some of the behaviours that have remained during this difficult time of online learning include the following:

- The monitor remains turned off; I am here but not here.
- Teachers report a decrease in class room interaction and engagement.
- Students are quick to utilize pandemic era excuses such as "my internet signal is lost," "the computer broke down," etc.
- For some young children, needing access to a computer and internet service was a real financial burden for the family.

• Students have gotten used to literally learning from anywhere, any time: including while driving, shopping, etc. Over the past year, we have witnessed an increase in students dropping out of school and university as well. Financial instability has become a main concern for many families, even more than health issues, with many parents finding themselves without a job, or with businesses that are failing or low on cash flow and customers. The aftermath. The new normal in 2022. Although onsite classroom teaching has been back since August 2022, some students still feel that they should have an option of online or onsite classes. Questions repeatedly arise about whether today's class is online or onsite or hybrid? This kind of class choice seems to have become the new normal. While it is becoming safer to go out in public spaces, and some are happy to return to onsite classes, others favour online classes still. We are left wondering if the pandemic will have left a permanent change in our way of teaching and learning. I believe so.

In Bangkok, another contributing factor to continued online learning is the infamous traffic jams that plague the city. For this environmental issue, online learning seems to be a good alternative to wasting gas, time, and money in daily commuting. It is thus understandable why many students and working people would love to shift from onsite to online classes and work.

Whatever happens in the future, I know for sure that 2020, 2021, 2022, and probably 2023 as well, have been very strange years. It would be nice to know how other children in other countries have been coping with the pandemic and its aftermath - especially now when we are experiencing such crises as inflation, soaring energy prices, war, environmental disaster, political turmoil, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts. What else awaits us and how will our children grow and survive among all these threats?

What kind of future are we adults creating for our children to grow up in?

UNITED KINGDOM

Anna Borzenkova, Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University, wrote:

This year I was working on the project called 'Eliciting attitudes to sustainable transport policies with gamification in collaboration with Dr. Agnessa Spanellis, Joanne Craven, and in partnership with the Lake District National Park. It is focused on the design of a gamified approach to citizen engagement in policy making in order to facilitate public consultations on sustainable transportation in the Lake District National Park. In this project we propose an alternative approach to conventional citizen consultations, using gamification to facilitate



a structured discussion around the topic. To test the proposed approach, we developed a game in the context of sustainable transport of national parks, called 'Otter Power.' This game helps to facilitate consultations with local communities, and it was tested in the Lake District National Park. The game provides a template for eliciting citizen's attitudes, and it can be tailored and adapted to other contexts.

The link to the project page with more information about it is <https://glas.site.hw.ac.uk/2022/08/06/eliciting-attitudes-to-sustainable-transportation-with-gamification/>



Also, I am happy to share that I received a Wellcome Early-Career

Award and started my fellowship at Manchester Metropolitan University a month ago. The research project is 'Peer2Peer: Designing for Peer Social Engagement and Social-Emotional Wellbeing of Children with Cerebral Palsy' (<https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/people-and-projects/grants-awarded/peer-2-peer-designing-peer-social-engagement-and>). The aim of the proposed research is to investigate how design-based relational play can be used to empower and encourage children with cerebral palsy, aged 7 to 10 years, to engage pro-actively in peer social interactions to support the development of peer social skills and social-emotional wellbeing.

The motivation to address social inclusion and social-emotional wellbeing of children with cerebral palsy through design strategies in this project arose from my doctoral research, which investigated designing play environments for encouraging peer social interactions amongst children with cerebral palsy, aged 4 to 6 years, as a means of developing their social competence. Findings indicated that the development of social competence in children with cerebral palsy can be effectively addressed through design interventions in children's physical environment, in particular through specialist play equipment that engages children in relational play (Borzenkova 2021; Borzenkova et al. 2018). This work further indicated that this area is significantly under-researched and that research with and for children aged 7 to 10 years is urgently needed because it is the most important time for children's socialisation.

This project will therefore research and develop new understandings of how relational play can be used to enhance peer socialisation, and how to design innovative relational play solutions using evidence-based child-friendly design strategies, to help children with cerebral palsy develop peer social skills. The benefit of this research will be to promote their social inclusion and social equality through levelling the playing field, and by extension improve the social-emotional wellbeing of these children.

Warm wishes,

Anna

Kayleigh Kerr, from the Good Toy Guide, wrote:

Here at the Good Play Guide we have had a fantastic few months, from multiple trade fairs to awards ceremonies and seminars! Here are a few of our highlights:

Our CEO Amanda Gummer was in the US in June and enjoyed seeing new trends in toys at the ASTRA Toy Show. Inclusion and accessibility were key themes.

We have noticed a growing awareness of the benefit of doing research when making things for kids - with the increase in supply chain costs. Amanda spoke at the Educational Summit about educational businesses adopting a child-centred approach and was thrilled to help judge and present the award for the Future Skills category of the "Play for Change Awards" at the Toy Industries of Europe. The innovation in toys is really encouraging to see.

We have developed our own on-site Good Play Zone, which is going from strength to strength - the hands-on play area designed for children and we have had great feedback from clients who have used it for: conducting research, brand activations, content creation, and experiential marketing.

We are delighted to welcome a new Play Champion, Emma Lockard to our team. Emma is a Developmental and Therapeutic Play Specialist with extensive experience in education, EdTech, CEx and start-ups, and brings a wealth of knowledge to the role.

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. More information will be published once it becomes available.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

March 2023

The **Game Developers Conference** will be held in San Francisco, California, USA, 20th – 24th March 2023. The Game Developers Conference (GDC) brings the game development community together to exchange ideas, solve problems, and shape the future of the industry across five days of education, inspiration, and networking. Attendees include programmers, artists, producers, game designers, audio professionals, and business leaders. Some key features of GDC include:

- A comprehensive selection of lectures, panels, and roundtable discussions.
- A GDC Expo showcasing the latest game development tools and services from leading technology companies such as Amazon, Epic, Google, Intel, Nvidia, Oculus, and Sony.
- Dedicated community spaces where GDC attendees can take a break from all of the learning to relax and meet new people in themed areas for playable indie games, retro games, alternative controllers, and more.
- Two awards ceremonies recognizing the creativity, artistry, and technical genius of the finest developers and games:

The Game Developers Choice Awards is the leading peer-based video game awards show celebrating the industry's top games and developers. The Independent Games Festival honours the most innovative and exemplary projects in indie game development. GDC also hosts semi-annual instalments of the GDC Masterclass program, which is comprised of day-long or multi-day, small-group virtual workshops that deliver in-depth, hands-on training around some of the most important challenges facing game developers today.

See the conference website: <https://gdconf.com/conference>

PAST CONFERENCES

September 2022

The **Play Creators Conference 2022** will take place within the Play Creators Festival, at Twickenham Stadium, London, 6th September 2022.

With a line-up of exciting speakers from across toys, games, tech and the wider worlds of design, the conference sessions will unite the global toy and game inventor community and leave your creative juices flowing. The live event will take place at London's Twickenham Stadium on Tuesday, 6th September alongside the other Play Creators Festival in-person events including the Play Creators Summer Party, Play Creators Awards and the Mojo Pitch.

For more information see: <https://playcreatorsconference.co.uk/>

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

January 2022 – December 2023

Turn, turn, carousels, is currently on display at ASBL Musée du Jouet et de l'Enfant, Ferrières, Belgium

The Toy Museum offers more than a thousand games and toys dating from the end of the 19th century to the 1970's.

The carousels of your childhood and rides of all ages will be featured. In brightly coloured tinplate, finely machined or hand-assembled wood, mechanical rides and "steam" attractions will immerse you in a festive atmosphere. Don't miss this amazing collection of carousels, rides, gallops and other unique attractions.

Also find a trunk filled with a panoply of modest street toys from the time when cars were not yet competing with children... yoyos, diabolos, pogos, yatagos, bilboquets, osselets, marbles, jump ropes and other stilts, as well as a girl sleigh...

Museum website: <https://www.museedujouet.info/en/biennial-exhibitions>



October 2022 – October 2023

Playing is an Art: the reserves reveal themselves, is running at the Toy Museum in Colmar, France until 1st October 2023.

Starting on 19 October 2022, the Toy Museum in Colmar is offering a new temporary exhibition entitled *Playing is an art: the reserves are revealed*. This is an opportunity to discover numerous pieces from the museum's collections, some of which have been taken out of storage for the first time. Included in the exhibition are more than 200 toys from different eras and styles, set in resonance around nine artistic fields: architecture, creative arts, sculpture, music, children's literature, performing arts, cinema, comics, and video games. The exhibition will approach its different themes in a way to observe the impact of toys and games on the way we grow up and see the world. It is an opportunity to learn more about popular toys from childhood such as Meccano, the Teleran or Star Wars licensed toys. But it is also an opportunity to show the links between art and toys, whether explicit or more subtle. The toys presented in a thematic and playful way are designed to initiate and develop creativity in children, using various and varied methods.



From musical toys to stimulate the ear, puppets and hero figures to catalyze stories, optical toys and construction games such as *Kapla* and *Lego*, the toys are rich in teaching and fun for children. The artistic is present in many fields, from the most obvious such as cartoons and the circus where visitors can find automaton toys and even *Dinky Toys Pinder* and the less obvious, such as video games where some are true works of art. Whether for educational, pedagogical or simple entertainment purposes, toys provide an opportunity for visitors to renew their view of the world of childhood.

An invitation to all children, young and old, not to be missed!

Museum website: <https://www.museejouet.com/en/exhibitions>

November 2022 – March 2023

May the Toys be with You, is being held at the Banbury Museum & Gallery, Banbury, UK, 19th November 2022 - 19th March 2023.

The force is strong at Banbury Museum & Gallery...

From a galaxy far, far away comes an absolute must see for fans of Star Wars and the silver screen. One of the UK's finest collections of vintage Star Wars toys and original cinema posters is on display in a stunning exhibition at Banbury Museum & Gallery. The toys of Star Wars took the world by storm and became the must-have playthings for an entire generation. From 1977 – 1985 an estimated 300 million action figures were sold, allowing children to re-enact the adventures of Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and Han Solo.



May the Toys be with You is both a celebration of the now highly collectable vintage toy line and also of the iconic design work and art of the Star Wars movies. From X-Wing Fighters to lightsabers, these fantastical designs have fired our imaginations and stamped their place on our cultural landscape.

Perfect for 'big' kids as well as 'little,' you will have the opportunity to view rarely seen Star Wars treasures, dress up and wield a Lightsaber!

More information: <https://www.banburymuseum.org/events/may-the-toys-be-with-you/>

November 2022 – April 2023

Toys: The Way We Play, is being held at the Susan Naylor Center, San Antonio, Texas, USA, 19th November – 2nd April 2023.

Take a walk down memory lane and play along the way. In *Toys: The Way We Play*, relive cherished memories from your childhood with retro toys - such as Cabbage Patch Kids, G.I. Joe, Teddy Ruxpin, Kewpie dolls, Care Bears, Star Wars, Transformers and more— alongside early toys, all revealing that how we play has been the same for generations. From clay rattles to stone dolls, archaeologists have uncovered evidence of thousands of years of play from around the world. In this special exhibition, you'll discover how we've played over time, the ways play helps us learn skills for everyday life and how toys can ignite our imaginations. Then, explore how technology and innovation have revolutionized how we make and think of toys.



Museum information: <https://www.witemuseum.org/exhibitions/toys-exhibition/>

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

February 2023

Bricktastic, will be held at Manchester Central – Central Hall, Petersfield, UK, 25th – 26th February 2023.

This exciting new Lego extravaganza will have over 100 exhibitors from the UK and beyond with original LEGO creations. Everyone's favourite LEGO themes, from City, Star Wars, Space, Friends, Harry Potter, and Great Ball Contraptions – and even more! – will be on display. The



Bricktastic experience offers a chance to speak to the model creators to find out how they came up with such incredible things. *Bricktastic* isn't just about looking at LEGO. Everyone loves to play and at Bricktastic you can. Build a section of a LEGO mosaic containing over 100,000 bricks. Get into our brick pits and create whatever you like! Playing is for the entire family, and not just for the kids!

All of the proceeds from *Bricktastic* will be used to fund more LEGO deliveries to children in hospital. From a single hospital donation in 2012, Fairy Bricks now delivers sets to nearly 300 hospitals per year worldwide, reaching over 50,000 children facing the most difficult of circumstances.

So not only will you have a great day out, you will be enabling more children in hospital to feel a little better. More information: <https://bricktastic.org/>

PAST EXHIBITIONS

September 2021 – September 2022

Dangerous games: Treacherous Toys We Loved As Kids, was held at the Napa Valley Museum, Yountville, USA through the 25th September 2022 (extended from 13th February 2022 by popular demand).

It's hard to believe so many of us survived childhood, given the treacherous, toxic, yet tantalizing toys we played with as kids! We dove head-first onto slippery sheets of plastic called the Slip 'N Slide, plucked bugs (sometimes edible) called Creepy Crawlers out of plastic goop in searing hot moulds, dodged skull-piercing flying arrows called Lawn Darts, and played with explosives, molten hot glass, dangerous dyes – even radioactive material – all in the name of good clean fun. The exhibition offered a chance to enjoy a blast from the past – literally – as you and your friends and family were able to explore those wild, wacky, “whammo” wonders that were our childhood toys. Children and adults alike were invited to amuse themselves with a “Back to the Backyard” collection of Hula Hoops and other hands-on toys – safely of course. No dart guns or Red Ryder Rifles were allowed because “you'll put your eye out!”

Included in the exhibition were an original audio tour narrated by “The Voice of Disney” Bill Rogers, and written by Laura Rafaty for the Napa Valley Museum Yountville, adapted in part from: “Wham-O Summer: Back to the Backyard.”

See the exhibition website: <https://napavalleymuseum.org/exhibition/dangerous-games-treacherous-toys-we-loved-as-kids/>



February – June 2022

Our Toy Story was held at the Connaught Theatre, Worthing, UK, 12th February – 19th June 2022.

An exciting exhibition using our wonderful toy collection to tell the story of how children and adults alike have entertained themselves through the years. From 18th century board games and Victorian clock-work insects, to Playmobil knights and castles, this display charted the development of toys over the last two centuries. Visitors were able to see rare Hornby train engines, classic Airfix soldiers, traditional farm models and even some Teletubbies!

Exhibition website: <https://wtm.uk/events/exhibition-our-toy-story/>



Black Dolls Exhibit was held at the New York Historical Society Museum & Library, New York, USA, 25th February – 5th June 2022.

The exhibit explored handmade cloth dolls made primarily by African-American women between 1850 and 1940 through the lens of race, gender, and history.

More information may be found at: <https://www.nyhistory.org/exhibitions/black-dolls> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prNuSUjWa00>

February – September 2022

The Art of the Brick was held at the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago, Illinois, USA, 10th February – 5th September 2022.

The Art of the Brick, a captivating exhibition, featuring over 100 incredible works of art made from millions of LEGO® bricks re-imagining famous artistic masterpieces into LEGO form by renowned contemporary artist Nathan Sawaya.

Sawaya's original pieces and re-imagined pieces were displayed in the exhibition including:

- Fan favourite "Yellow," a life-size sculpture of a man pulling his chest apart with thousands of yellow LEGO bricks flowing from the cavity.
- Van Gogh's *Starry Night* and Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.
- A multimedia collection of LEGO brick-infused photography produced in tandem with award-winning photographer Dean West.



To celebrate the exhibition's Chicago debut, Nathan Sawaya created several new pieces including a replica of Chicago Artist Hebru Brantley's "Flyboy."

The Art of The Brick was the first major museum exhibition to use LEGO bricks as the sole art medium. Sawaya transforms bricks into tremendous and thought-provoking sculptures, elevating the toy to the realm of art. Sawaya's ability to transform this common toy into something meaningful, his devotion to spatial perfection and the way he conceptualizes action, enables him to elevate a toy beloved by generations into contemporary art. For more information see: <https://www.msichicago.org/press/press-releases/the-art-of-the-brick/>

May – October 2022

America's Monsters, Superheroes, and Villains: Our Culture at Play was held at The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures, Kansas City, USA, 21st May – 2nd October 2022.



Monsters, superheroes, and villains have always been part of America's cultural fabric: they scare us, thrill us, and help guide us through the most terrifying and exhilarating moments of our lives. More than simple "pop culture," characters such as Wolfman, Dracula, Wonder Woman, Luke Skywalker, the Joker, and others create a lens to examine complex subject matter in twentieth-century American history including the Cold War, rapidly accelerating possibilities of science and technology, and America's portrayal of women and people of colour in our popular media.

Comprised of more than 350 exceptional objects from the private collection of David Barnhill, the exhibition included vintage toys, posters, packaging, TV commercials, and movie trailers. Visitors of all ages were able to enjoy the nostalgic visual survey of American Identity in the 20th century.

More information may be found at: <https://toyandminiaturemuseum.org/event/supermonstercity/>



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.

Dasen, V., Vespa, M. (eds.) (2022). *Toys as cultural artefacts in ancient Greece, Etruria, and Rome*. Editions Mergoil. ISBN 9782355181290

The research led by the ERC AdG project Locus Ludi. The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity has focused on the cultural dimension of toys in ancient Greece, Etruria, and Rome. This multidisciplinary book brings together twenty articles that encompass the perspectives of philologists, archaeologists, historians, semioticians and anthropologists in order to provide a new way of considering toys as cultural artefacts in Classical antiquity. A first series of contributions, mainly textual, proposes a detailed analysis of discursive contexts associating toys with various terms and cultural experiences that relate to the sphere of pleasure and emotion, but without defining materiality. The second series of articles examines the archaeological traces of playthings, often very modest. They invite us to deconstruct a modern vision of toys and play too narrowly reduced to objects manufactured by adults for children. Finally, historians, semiologists and anthropologists propose a different way of thinking about the categories of the past, inscribed in a long period of time made up of continuities and discontinuities.

Hopkins, D. (2021). *Dark toys: Surrealism and the culture of childhood*. Yale University Press. ISBN 9780300225747.

We all have memories of the object-world of childhood. For many of us, playthings and images from those days continue to resonate. Rereading a swathe of modern and contemporary artistic production through the lens of its engagement with childhood, this book blends in-depth art historical analysis with sustained theoretical exploration of topics such as surrealist temporality, toys, play, nostalgia, memory, and 20th-century constructions of the child. The result is an entirely new approach to the surrealist tradition via its engagement with 'childish things.'

Providing what the author describes as a 'long history of surrealism,' this book plots a trajectory from surrealism itself to the art of the 1980s and 1990s, through to the present day. It addresses a range of figures from Marcel Duchamp, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Hans Bellmer, Joseph Cornell, and Helen Levitt, at one end of the spectrum, to Louise Bourgeois, Eduardo Paolozzi, Claes Oldenburg, Susan Hiller, Martin Sharp, Helen Chadwick, Mike Kelley, and Jeff Koons, at the other.



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- 1) Playtime: Is it time we took 'play' more seriously?
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-59950823>
- 2) How do you make the perfect toy?
<https://thewalrus.ca/how-do-you-make-the-perfect-toy/>
- 3) The mystery ancient toys puzzling archaeologists
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220816-the-worlds-oldest-toys-what-toys-were-used-in-the-past>
- 4) 5 Fascinating toys fit for any ancient child
<https://www.discovermagazine.com/the-sciences/5-fascinating-toys-fit-for-any-ancient-child>
- 5) The traditional British toymakers still crafting wooden tops, rocking-horses and teddy bears
<https://www.countrylife.co.uk/luxury/in-focus-the-traditional-british-toy-makers-still-crafting-wooden-tops-rocking-horses-and-teddy-bears-250481>
- 6) They want toys to get their children into Harvard: have we been getting playthings all wrong?
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/nov/24/have-toys-got-too-brainy-how-playthings-became-teaching-aids-young-children?mibextid=Zxz2cZ>
- 7) Moving boxes can be easily converted into toys to keep children busy
<https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/uk-world-news/moving-boxes-can-easily-converted-25741144>
- 8) With toys, it's not the kids who are changing, it's the parents
<https://www.israel21c.org/with-toys-its-not-the-kids-who-are-changing-its-the-parents/>
- 9) Wooden toys are not just about sustainability
<https://designwanted.com/wooden-toys/>
- 10) Parents beware: Dangerous, recalled toys are still on sale
<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/17/business/dangerous-toys-pirg-2022/index.html>
- 11) Toxins in old toys an obstacle for circular economy
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/09/220902090637.htm>
- 12) Want your child to grow up smart? Limit their screen time to an hour a day, study says
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-11274299/Want-child-grow-smart-Limit-screen-time-hour-day-study-says.html>
- 13) Fun and learning: How technology, tradition changed India's toy story
https://www.business-standard.com/article/pf/india-toy-story-how-technology-is-changing-the-way-children-play-122080500445_1.html
- 14) Why AI companies should develop child-friendly toys and how to incentivize them
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/ai-children-friendly-smart-toys/>
- 15) LEGO Play Well - the importance of play for children
<https://www.fortressofsolitude.co.za/lego-play-well-the-importance-of-play-for-children/>
- 16) The best dolls
<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-dolls/>
- 17) Here's the U.S.'s favourite toy, study proclaims
<https://www.pennlive.com/life/2022/12/heres-the-uss-favorite-toy-study-proclaims.html>
- 18) Recalled toys still available for purchase
<https://www.sudbury.com/spotlight/recalled-toys-still-available-for-purchase-6245658>
- 19) Time to end Santa's 'naughty list'?
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20221124-should-you-tell-your-child-the-truth-about-santa>



ITRA 2023 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 2023.

If you were not able to attend the conference in Paris, you must submit your annual membership fee for 2023 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 Spring edition in May 2023. 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 festive period and New Year.

Regards
Suzy & Mark

We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)