

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, 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,



The next exciting International Toy Research Association (ITRA) conference is soon to be upon us. Greta Pennell and her organising and scientific committees have been hard at work and the conference promises to be another wonderful 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. The 9th ITRA World Conference is due to be held 9th –11th August 2023 at The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, USA, the main theme being *TOYS MATTER: The Power of Playthings*.

The Strong Museum of Play is a magnificent facility which promises to be a memorable venue for our forthcoming conference. The conference organisers have also been working tirelessly on arranging the two keynote speakers, completing the symposia and presentation program, updating the financial aspects of the event and registration processes, and coordinating a stimulating schedule of toy-related social activities to accompany the scientific program.

Do not forget to check our website, www.itratoyresearch.org, for updated information on the conference and although the submission deadline has closed, there is still time to book a place, as the 9th ITRA Conference in Rochester will be an event that simply cannot be missed!

Hope to see you in Rochester in a few months!

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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

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



MEMBER PROFILE – Stephen Kline



Stephen Kline moved to the UK in 1970 and taught at the Hornsey College of Art while working on his PhD in Social Psychology at the London School of Economics, UK. His thesis, entitled “*Structure and characteristics of television news broadcasting: their effects upon opinion change*”, was approved in 1977. In 1975 he returned to Canada and taught at York University, Toronto, until 1989. In 1990 he was appointed Associate Professor in the School of Communications at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada, where as Director of the Media Analysis Laboratory he taught and researched advertising and promotional communication, applied media analysis, audience research, and children’s media cultures and play. He was promoted to Professor in 1993 and became Professor Emeritus in 2018 upon retirement. Stephen held editorial board positions on five journals and visiting professorships at Kansai Gakuin University in Japan, Paris XIII in France, University of Florence in Italy, Roskilde in Denmark as well as at Centre Européen des produits de l’enfant (CEPE), University of Poitiers, in France. He was awarded the BRIO Prize in 1996 and in 2011, and named the Marshall McLuhan Centennial Scholar at the University of Toronto. Having overseen and collaborated on many interdisciplinary research projects Stephen has written on a range of topics besides play-media and children’s culture; including, promotional communication, environmentalism, and public health. Books include: *Social Communication in Advertising* (1986), *Out of the Garden* (1993), *Digital Play* (2003), *Researching Audiences* (2005) and *Globesity: Food marketing and Family Lifestyles* (2011).

Although Stephen Kline’s PhD thesis focused on TV news coverage of the anti-war protest movements, through a comparative analysis of USA, Canada and UK news, his research underlined the impact of commercialization bias within mass-mediated culture. This interest in the political economy of the mediated marketplace led Stephen to concentrate his ensuing cultural historical research on marketing communication and the emergence of mass consumer culture.

Critically interested in the deregulation of the mass mediated market economy, while teaching and researching in Japan in the early 1980s, Stephen was struck by his son Daniel’s fascination with *action toys* as promoted with animated TV programmes as well as advertising. The deregulation of children’s TV in North America meant that, on their return to Canada in 1984, Transformers and Voltron had become enormously popular. Fathering this time refocused his broader interest in mediated markets on ‘*TV marketing directly to children.*’

Out of the Garden (1993), which discussed the implications of America’s natural experiment in deregulated children’s media, not only repositioned Stephen as a children’s media culture critic but heightened his concern with new media, play and social change. Some critics accused him of nostalgia for traditional toy and game play-forms and pre-consumerist lifestyle; however Stephen, like Brian Sutton-Smith, believes that critical thinking about social change requires comparison of early modern play experience with those emerging in the vortex of the contemporary discourses on play media. He continues to believe there is no critical analysis without historical perspectives on generational change. His books, *Digital Play* (2003) and *Globesity* (2011), may be read as continuing meditations on changing cultural-economic dynamics associated with the emergence of video gaming and naturalization of consumerist lifestyles respectively.

Amidst the heightened concern about marketing to children and children’s consumer socialization in the 1980s, Stephen was delighted when Brian Sutton-Smith invited him to present at a small conference in Utrecht where he was introduced to the circle of mostly international researchers who were later to establish ITRA. He describes meeting Brian as a career changing event. Not only did he now have a circle of academic friends from whom he could learn and argue, but they were the most convivial group of researchers he ever had the pleasure of meeting.

Although ITRA has grown considerably since that first meeting, Stephen highlights three important perspectives which inspired this group: firstly interdisciplinarity, ITRA has not been constrained by the preoccupations of a single field of scholarship; Secondly, the recognition of play as a ‘paradoxical communication’ which highlights ‘plays ambiguity’ such that ITRA researchers remain open to both instrumental and broadly cultural perspectives on play media. And thirdly, the acknowledgement that as consumer objects designed for and played with by children, the toy industry must be party to the multi-layered discourses on playthings and social change.

As a retired academic now, Stephen reports that “jammin” in a geezer jazz ensemble has become his paradigmatic playful preoccupation. This activity, he observes, combines all the elements of social playfulness he theorized in his career – creative exploration, skills training, spontaneous social interaction informed by historical traditions but seasoned with individual imagination, harmony (team cooperation) not exclusive of dissonance (even agonistic elements), psychological engagement in flow tempered by artistic role-play, complex learning (jazz theory) applied as flexible strategy (improvisation) resulting in a total engagement in deep fun – which Stephen has argued for throughout his illustrious academic career – proving the mundane observation that play should never just be about or for children.

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.

FRANCE

Gilles Brougère, Professor of Education Sciences at the Université Sorbonne Paris Nord and ITRA founding member wrote:

The Musée national de la carte à jouer in Issy-les-Moulineaux in the suburbs of Paris is holding an exhibition entitled *Magic, Pokémon et Co.* I contributed to the catalogue with an article entitled: “*Le rôle des cartes au sein de l'univers transmédiatique Pokémon*” [The role of cards in the Pokémon transmedia universe]. The article may be accessed at <http://sorbonne-paris-nord.hal.science/hal-03905297v1>.

Best regards
Gilles

Émilie Thibaut-Fréville, from Université de Picardie Jules Verne d'Amiens wrote:

During 2022, I participated in a seminar at the University of Lille about, “*Le religieux au féminin dans les sociétés étrusco-romaines*” on the 3rd of June 2022.

I wrote a chapter entitled, “*Quand les Étrusques s'occupaient de leurs monsters*”, in Guittard, C., Wolf, É. (eds.), *Monstres et monstruosité de l'Antiquité à nos jours en Occident et en Orient*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2022, pp. 81-106.

Sincerely,
Emilie

GREECE

Cleo Gougoulis, retired Assistant Professor at University of Patras, ITRA founding member and current ITRA Treasurer, wrote a summary of a book edited by Véronique Dasen and Marco Vespa, *Toys as Cultural Artifacts in Ancient Greece, Etruria and Rome* (reviewed in the 2022 Winter ITRA newsletter):

The publication is part of the Locus Ludi program directed by Véronique Dasen and supported by the ERC (European Research Council) under the EU Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement #741520). Among the 20 contributors to the volume we find a number of ITRA members who submitted chapters to this fascinating interdisciplinary collection of articles.

Cleo Gougoulis discusses political, economic and cultural issues involved in the choice of linguistic terms designating “toy” in Modern Greek, from the 19th century to the 1980s, in her article, *From athyrma and paignion to paichnidi. Defining toys in Modern Greek*. The need for the use of a specific term denoting the objects of play is associated both with the development of a toy market in 19th century Greece and perceptions of childhood and play. This in conjunction with a long standing debate over the adoption of Modern Greek registers linked to ideas of national identity since Modern Greek is a direct descendent from Ancient Greek culture. Michel Manson traces changes in the perception of childhood and the meaning of the hobby horse from antiquity through to the Renaissance. Our modern perception of this emblematic plaything, as a symbol of early childhood, especially boyhood, may be traced back to the Renaissance. In earlier periods, the hobby horse was associated with notions of wisdom and folly.

Jean-Pierre Rossie focuses on a category of toys which are often absent both in archaeological excavations and in museum displays – fragile toys. Those toys made by children many years ago, exhibit an almost ephemeral quality, having been fabricated from natural and delicate materials. I have faced the dilemma of how one should exhibit such toys. Exemplified back in 2017, when I arranged, in collaboration with undergraduate students and colleagues, an interactive exhibition of 1940 to 2010 toys from the Aitolokarnania Prefecture in Western Greece. One of the popular materials, used by boys and girls throughout the 20th century from that prefecture – as in many parts of the world – were plants. In the exhibit we presented a doll bed and a sailboat made out of zucchinis. Zucchinis tend to shrink after a couple of days, so we had to invite the participating makeshift toymakers, from Agrinion, to remake the toys three times over the course of the 10 day exhibition! Rossie has systematically researched and documented Moroccan and Tunisian children's toy play and in this article discusses, *Vegetal Material in Moroccan Children's Toy and Play Culture*.

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

In June 2023, we organise the 14th Children's Festival of DESECE (Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education) at the University of Patras, Greece. The Children's Festival is organised by the students of DESECE in collaboration with their departmental teachers. Every year, at the end of spring and for a

week, about 2000 preschool children visit the Children's Festival, together with their teachers or parents, in order to participate in creative activities and educational orientation workshops – which take place on the premises of the Department.

For more information, visit the Festival's site <https://childrenfestival.gr/en/>

INDIA

Surabhi Khanna, designer, educator and consultant based in New Delhi, wrote regarding two events she was involved in recently:

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) organised a nationwide competition *Kala Utsav*, from 3rd – 7th January 2023, involving the performing and visual arts. I was invited as one of the National Jury members for state level winners – students from the 9th to 12th Standards – for the category Indigenous Toys, at the Regional Institute of Education (RIE), Bhubaneswar City, Orissa State, India. It was particularly heart-warming to see so much talent on display and the infectious creativity of children from all the states of India, to bring together such a rich exchange of ideas of toys, materials, techniques, and regional play. Children made toys using local materials like; leaves, regional clay, wood from their local area, bamboo, cloth, seeds, baby coconut, grass, coconut fibre, palm seeds, dried gourd, metal wire, paper, and steel utensils. Examples of the ideas created were; shooting toys, decorative dolls, sound toys, rattles, moving birds, carts, cradles, playful raincoats, and many more. Participants on the last day enjoyed a display of each other's creations. This was a mutual learning experience for students and jury members. A special thanks to Dr. Pawan Sudhir, Head of Department of Education in Arts and Aesthetics (DEAA), NCERT and the *Kala Utsav* team for organising the special initiative under auspices of the Ministry of Education, in India.



From 20th February through to 3rd March I conducted an Open Elective "*Khel-Yatra- travelling with Playfulness.*" The concept was to construct a link between the journey of life and play. Students of industrial design, communication design, and textile-apparel design from the National Institute of Design Haryana (NIDH) collaborated to invent games, over the course of this two-week module. Learning outcomes included; co-creation, conceptual understanding and playfully learning design process. An exhibition was organised – open to all visitors – where children, adolescents, adults and elders were encouraged to play together as a means to promote community bonding. The designed game ideas were based on emotions and experiences of students while visiting a nearby Karna Lake. Examples of the novel design outcomes were; a strategic board game based on the lake, a toy snake trying to catch a mouse, and a skill-based game involving moving a stick through intricate patterns on a tortoise, duck and snake. Children competed with one another, older visitors reminisced about games from their childhood, and adults appreciated the variety of concepts and the thought involved in the designed games. Happiness with *Khel-Yatra* (play journey) was the lasting memory for all those involved.

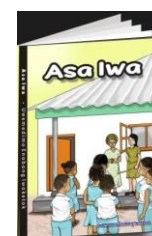
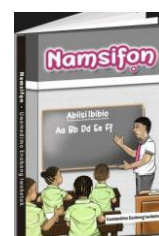


Warm regards,
Surabhi

NIGERIA

Uwemedimo Iwoketok, former Head, Department of English, University of Jos, wrote:

The past nine months were hectic but rewarding, because two months ago I took delivery of my new plays titled *Namsifon* ('Do what is right, be just and fair') and *Asa Iwa* (The title is taken from one of the traditional dishes of Ibibio people – a porridge made from grated cassava). Both plays were written in Ibibio – which is the fourth largest language spoken in Nigeria. Ibibio is taught and examined at all the levels of education in Nigeria. *Namsifon* is set in a secondary school and highlights hard work and reward. *Asa Iwa* is set in a primary school and addresses the gradual erosion of our traditional lifestyle, and by implication, our traditional Ibibio identity. The play also notes the socio-cultural changes/bi-tribal modern lifestyle in Ibibio society. Both plays are taught and examined at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, since Ibibio is an examinable subject in Nigeria. I also translate some Ibibio children's folk drama/ folktales into English. My main interest is the preservation of Ibibio childhood tradition (especially) and the preservation of Ibibio language, culture, belief and identity.



I also have a couple of further pieces due to be published, the first a play entitled *Utan Ided* ('Hair-making') and the second a short story entitled *Ikid mme Akiko-Unen* ('The Tortoise and the Cockerel').

My retirement is busy while satisfying – just as I had wanted it to be. I am still making a great effort to see that children’s traditional toys are given recognition. These toys deserve in-depth study, not just as playthings, but as documents that bear the image, history, art, philosophy, beliefs, science, etc of the people who own them. In Akwa Ibom – my home state – childlore is receiving an incredible level of attention now as a viable area of research, particularly at the tertiary level of study and in the media houses. It was not so some years ago.

UNITED KINGDOM

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

FUNdamentally Children and Dr Gummer’s Good Toy Guide has developed a framework for assessing STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) toys on behalf of the US Toy Association. The framework is freely available to download from the Toy Association’s website and is designed to help toy manufacturers understand how to make good STEAM toys with age-appropriate learning through play opportunities across the 4 STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). It is divided into three parts (Being a ‘Good Toy’, an assessment of 6 prime STEAM attributes, and having aspects of at least 2 of the 4 STEM subjects). Toys must pass all three aspects to be accredited. Due to the success of the framework, the Toy Association asked Amanda Gummer and her team to run the STEAM Toy Accreditation Program on their behalf as an independent third party. This accreditation runs alongside the other Good Play Guide accreditations for toys, apps, baby products and educational resources. Companies with accredited products are using the stamp on their packaging and marketing materials, as well as being featured in specially curated STEAM toy pages on Amazon. The strict criteria for awarding the STEAM accreditation (multi-disciplinary, meeting requirements for real world relevance and creativity, age appropriateness, and being fun and engaging) mean that failure is not uncommon. However, the framework is designed to support the industry in raising standards so products that do not meet the criteria for accreditation first time, can be resubmitted for free within 12 months. With all the fake reviews around, the independent framework and associated accreditation program seem to be very popular with the industry and consumers alike.

CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

This section covers current, up-coming and past conferences and exhibitions. Previews and reviews of conferences are sought for the Winter Edition of the ITRA Newsletter. More information will be published once it becomes available.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

June 2023

The International Play Association Conference, will be held at Glasgow Caledonian University, UK, 6th – 9th June 2023.

The 22nd International Play Association Triennial World Conference is going to Glasgow. Scotland is recognised as one of the world's leading nations for its support and practical action for children's play. The right to play is backed by policy and practice across all sectors. The conference will examine how UN General Comment No 17 on article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has impacted policy and practice in Scotland, and worldwide, to improve children's right to play and to create possibilities for the future. As Scotland is setting out to implement and integrate children's rights into all parts of Scottish life by making the Convention on the Rights of the Child part of the law, we have the opportunity to explore what this means for the right to play. We will also explore how play reduces pressure and increases resilience in children's lives, supporting their positive mental health and wellbeing.

Children's experience is woven through the conference, with presentations of visual media, papers, projects and research. Delegates can find out about children's experiences in Scotland first-hand through our programme of facilitated visits. The conference will also have five sub-themes: Play and the realisation of other rights, Play and the creation of environments, Play and the quality of childhood, Play and children's entitlement to optimum development, and Play and resilience.

More information is available at <https://www.ipaglasgow2023.org/>



The Play Creators Conference 2023, will be held at London's Stamford Bridge Stadium, London, UK, 28th June 2023.

Focusing on creativity, innovation, inspiration and design, *The Play Creators Conference 2023* is taking place within the Play Creators Festival. 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 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: <https://playcreatorsconference.co.uk/>



PAST CONFERENCES

March 2023

The **Game Developers Conference** was held in San Francisco, California, USA, 20th – 24th March 2023. The Game Developers Conference (GDC) brought 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 included programmers, artists, producers, game designers, audio professionals, and business leaders. Some key features of GDC included:

- A comprehensive selection of lectures, panels, and roundtable discussions.
- A GDC Expo showcased 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 were able to meet new people in themed areas for playable indie games, retro games, alternative controllers, and more.
- Two awards ceremonies recognized the creativity, artistry, and technical genius of the finest developers and games.

The Independent Games Festival honoured the most innovative and exemplary projects in indie game development. GDC also hosted semi-annual instalments of the GDC Masterclass program, which comprised of day-long or multi-day, small-group virtual workshops that delivered in-depth, hands-on training around some of the most important challenges facing game developers.

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

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 from your childhood and rides of all ages are featured. 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>



FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

July 2023

Young V&A, at Bethnal Green, London, UK, will reopen 1st July 2023.

After seven intensive years of dedicated planning and design, Young V&A will open its doors in Bethnal Green. Co-designed with children and young people, Young V&A is a free, national museum designed to showcase the power of creativity in children's lives as they build new skills and develop the creative confidence needed to thrive in our fast-changing world. Young V&A will be a 'doing' museum – a joyful, buzzing, and optimistic place underpinned by the power of design and creativity. Some of the amazing hands-on experiences audiences can look forward to, include sensory landscapes, a finger skateboard park, an 'Imagination Playground' construction zone, a performance and story-telling stage, and an open design studio for children and young people. These elements – and more – will help to celebrate playful learning through creativity and create multigenerational activities and experiences. The museum's three permanent galleries – Imagine, Play and Design – will showcase around 2,000 objects from across the V&A's vast collection of art, design and performance in surprising and inspiring ways. Highlights include a sensory environment for pre-walkers in the Play Gallery, alongside a range of new commissions, co-designed and co-curated projects and live programming. Every aspect of Young V&A has been developed with a rigorous eye to childhood developmental theories and practice, interwoven with the expertise of our curatorial, interpretation and learning teams to create experiences that will be social, relevant and inspiring.

For more information visit: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/young>

ArtPlay and the Future of Toys Exhibition will be held at Birarrung Marr, Melbourne, Australia, 30th – 31st July 2023.

Hosting more than 300 workshops, events and performances every year, ArtPlay brings together children – from babies to 13 years of age – and artists to cultivate the next generation of Melbourne creatives. Since 2004, ArtPlay has been offering imaginative encounters that are by, for and with children to explore and create innovative arts experiences that encourage self-expression and playful exchange. As part of Open House Melbourne, the venue in Birarrung Marr will open its doors to the public to showcase *The Future of Toys* exhibition and showcase the inventive nature of events they offer to the children of Melbourne.

Featuring artists Ben Paul and Catherine Sewell, *The Future of Toys* invites kids to reflect on their lives, their city and their futures, and question consumer choices associated with toys, plastic and play. Leading up to this exhibition, children at ArtPlay worked with artists and industrial designers; they have pulled apart pre-loved toys and re-purposed the raw materials to create original designs that offer philosophies on a new way of life. Using emerging sustainable technologies, including 3D printing, children have created 20 unique inventions to exhibit, all with their own stories to tell. Constructed in 1916/17 and prior to becoming a unique child-based arts space, the building was designed for the practical training of railway employees in preparation for the electrification of the railway network. It remains highly intact to clearly demonstrate this uncommon building type in the City of Melbourne.

For more information see: <https://openhousemelbourne.org/event/artplay-and-the-future-of-toys-exhibition/>

PAST EXHIBITIONS

February 2023

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



This Lego extravaganza had 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! – were on display. The *Bricktastic* experience offered a chance to speak to the model creators to find out how they came up with such incredible things. *Bricktastic* was not just about looking at LEGO. All of the proceeds from *Bricktastic* were 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.

More information: <https://bricktastic.org/>

November 2022 – March 2023

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



The force was strong at Banbury Museum & Gallery... From a galaxy far, far away came 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 was 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 was 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,' it was an 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, was held at the Susan Naylor Center, San Antonio, Texas, USA, 19th November – 2nd April 2023.



In *Toys: The Way We Play*, relived cherished childhood memories 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 played 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, visitors discovered how we've played over time, the ways play helped us learn skills for everyday life and how toys could ignite our imaginations.

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



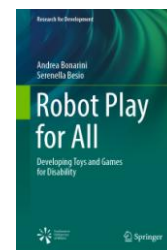
PUBLICATIONS & BOOKS

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.

Bonarini, A., Besio, S. (2022). *Robot Play for All: Developing Toys and Games for Disability*. Springer. ISBN 9783031050411.

This book presents a comprehensive guide to the design of playing robots and the related play experiences. Play is a natural activity for building and improving abilities, and it reveals important particularly for persons with disabilities. Many social, physical and cultural factors may hinder children with disabilities from fully enjoying play as their peers. Autonomous robots with specific characteristics can enhance the ludic experience, having implications for the character of the play and presenting opportunities related to autonomy and physical movement, the very nature of robots. Their introduction into play thus provides everybody, and in particular persons with disabilities, new possibilities for developing abilities, improving general status, participating in social contexts, as well as supporting professionals in monitoring progress.

This book presents a framework for the design of playful activities with robots, developed over 20 years' experience at AIRLab - POLIMI. Part 1 introduces the play concepts and characteristics, and research results about play of children with different kinds of impairments. Part 2 focuses on implementing robots able to play. The design of playful activities is discussed, as well as the necessary characteristics for them to be useful in both general play and activities involving disability-related limitations. In Part 3, the defined framework is used to analyze possibilities involving robots available on the toy market, robots developed at research labs, and robots to be developed in the next future. The aim of the book is to give developers, caregivers, and users a set of methodological tools for selecting, exploring, and designing inclusive play activities where robots play a central role.

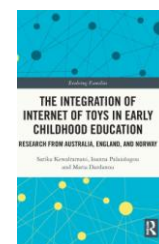


Dardanou, M., Kewalramani, S., Palaiologou, I. (2023). *The Integration of Internet of Toys in Early Childhood Education: Research from Australia, England, and Norway*. Routledge. ISBN 9781032029245.

This book offers a fresh look at recent developments in policy, curricula and pedagogical discourse around children's play with Internet of Toys (IoToys). By expanding the notion of digital and smart play perspectives in early childhood education, the authors critique and develop the broader subject area of IoToys play to better serve its end users.

The book brings together research from across three different countries: Australia, Norway and England. It offers tangible examples of how one can use IoToys to build children's social skills, emotional intelligence, sense of achievement, collaboration and aspects of STEM and design play thinking processes. The learning stories of children's IoToys play will deliver a comprehensive review of how practitioners and parents can come together to build communities of practice for (re)enhancing children's learning and growth using evolving technology-based play and engage in paradigmatic debates. Readers as a result will better appreciate the growth in pragmatic applications of technologies together with theoretical perspectives.

The book will be a valuable resource for any academic or practitioner just beginning to understand the complexities and success stories of integrating IoToys for children's playful learning.



Hains, R. C., Jennings, N. C. (eds.) (2021). *The Marketing of Children's Toys: Critical Perspectives on Children's Consumer Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9783030628802.

This book offers rich critical perspectives on the marketing of a variety of toys, brands, and product categories. Topics include marketing undertaken by specific children's toy brands such as American Girl, Barbie, Disney, GoldieBlox, Fisher-Price, and LEGO, and marketing trends characterizing broader toy categories such as on-trend grotesque toys; toy firearms; minimalist toys; toyetics; toys meant to offer diverse representation; STEM toys; and unboxing videos. Toy marketing warrants a sustained scholarly critique because of toys' cultural significance and their roles in children's lives, as well as the industry's economic importance. Discourses surrounding toys – including who certain toys are meant for and what various toys and brands can signify about their owners' identities – have implications for our understandings of adults' expectations of children and of broader societal norms into which children are being socialized.



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- 1) When kids like the box more than the toy: The benefits of playing with everyday objects
<https://phys.org/news/2023-04-kids-toy-benefits-playing-everyday.html>
- 2) Toys help kids discover the power of play
<https://www.seattletimes.com/sponsored/toys-help-kids-discover-the-power-of-play/>
- 3) Researchers find high levels of banned toxic chemicals in toys and headphones
<https://www.utoronto.ca/news/researchers-find-high-levels-banned-toxic-chemicals-toys-and-headphones>
- 4) Opinion: 'Kidfluencer' culture is harming kids in several ways
<https://phys.org/news/2023-05-opinion-kidfluencer-culture-kids-waysand.html>
- 5) Mum splits opinion after admitting she throws toys away if kids don't tidy them
<https://www.heart.co.uk/lifestyle/parenting/mum-splits-opinion-admits-throwing-toys-away-if-kids-dont-tidy/>
- 6) Why don't parents like their kids to play with toy guns?
<https://theconversation.com/why-dont-parents-like-their-kids-to-play-with-toy-guns-201070>
- 7) Too many kids use 'extremely toxic' toy cosmetics: public health experts
<https://nypost.com/2023/01/27/too-many-kids-use-extremely-toxic-toy-cosmetics-public-health-experts/>
- 8) How can toys, games and apps help children strengthen their emotional intelligence?
<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2023/april/helping-boost-childrens-emotional-intelligence/>
- 9) New research shows why kids need play for mental health
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-art-of-talking-with-children/202303/new-research-shows-why-kids-need-play-for-mental>
- 10) Screen time has limited effects on toddlers' development: Japan study
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/03/19/national/science-health/screen-time-children/>
- 11) Letting toddlers play with phones or tablets can lead to long-term brain disruptions
<https://studyfinds.org/screen-time-disrupt-babys-brain/>
- 12) Your child's academic success may start with their screen time as infants, study says
<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/30/health/screen-time-infants-executive-function-wellness/index.html>
- 13) Are video games good for kids' brains or bad for them? New research suggests the answer is 'neither'
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/are-video-games-good-for-kids-brains-or-bad-for-them-new-research-suggests-the-answer-is-neither-1.6266070>
- 14) Do video games cause violence?
<https://www.discovermagazine.com/the-sciences/do-video-games-cause-violence>
- 15) History of Legos: Fun facts to know about the 'Toy of the Century'
<https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/history-legos-fun-facts-know-toy-of-the-century>
- 16) Cereal thrillers: the fans still in search of those little plastic toys
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/mar/26/cereal-thriller-the-fans-in-search-of-cereal-box-toys>
- 17) Children will show compassion unless it costs them, research finds
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/16/children-will-show-compassion-unless-it-costs-them-research-finds>
- 18) UK man uses toys to draw attention to potholes in a funny way
<https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-globally/uk-man-uses-toys-to-draw-attention-to-potholes-8545634/>
- 19) Police Sergeant buys upset boy new toy car after 'bad man' ran over it
<https://www.dorset.live/news/dorset-news/police-sergeant-buys-upset-boy-8356980>



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 Winter edition in December 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 summer and look forward to seeing you at the Rochester ITRA conference.

Regards
Suzy & Mark

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

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

