

· CHILD'S PLAY ·



Fall 2007

USA-TLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play

Volume XXV, Number 4

Playing to Get Smart Conference Hones In on Play Value "Play is the Brain's Favorite Way of Learning"

The theme was clear and repeated often: children learn best through play. Not directed play necessarily, but through the play conjured by their own imaginations and the tools at hand.

Setting the scene for the exciting event at the Salinas (Calif.) Adult School Parent Center last March was foremost early childhood authority, Betty Jones, professor at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena. Play is "excruciatingly important," said the Oakland native who as a child often found play tools in outdoor settings like campgrounds and woods. "Human beings get smart by choosing something to do, getting pleasure from it and doing it again. Being creative with what's there is the key.

"Play is excruciatingly important."

"To deny children play denies them the opportunity to be smart," Ms. Jones continued. "Obedience is necessary sometimes, but it is not smart. If you want children to be problem solvers, they need to play and create their own experiences. We need to give our children the chance to be smart through reading, thinking, communicating and caring about other people.

"I totally believe that individuals who are creative, courageous, thinking and active played as children with the support of caring adults."

Playtime at this conference, which attracted some 60 teachers, toy librarians and college students, was ample. "By playing in a group – taking turns, cooperating, helping each other, leading, following, laughing, exercising, accepting physical challenges, problem-solving, naming, communicating, strategizing and respecting each other, we all saw the depth and value of the play experience," commented USA Toy

Library Association Executive Director Judith Iacuzzi after attending Paula Stoddard's workshop on interpreting play to parents. The association was co-sponsor of the conference and as such had wide representation as presenters and participants both.

USA-TLA Director Leslie Eslinger, who has authored a book and led many workshops related to the value of "theme kits" in early childhood settings, led a session focusing on toys that lead to optimal play and learning experiences. *What's on your Toy Shelf? Using Play to Meet Early Learning Standards* earned high marks from participants as did *Making Toys from Trash*, a session filled with clever recycling ideas led by L'Shanna Klien of the Parent Center.

"We were pleased at the turnout and thrilled by the quality of the presenters," said Gay Spitz, parent educator, toy librarian, and chairman of conference planning. "We knew we were fortunate to have Betty Jones address the group because she is a master at engaging teachers and parents in thinking about play.

"But we were also blessed to have such an impressive selection of workshop leaders who showed a depth of knowledge and desire to communicate that made this conference very special and particularly high quality."

Members Take Note!

Enclosed in this issue of Child's Play is a ballot of nominees to the USA Toy Library Association Board of Directors for 2007 – 2010. Please mark your choices and mail or fax your ballots to USA-TLA headquarters by October 30, 2007. Fax: 847-920-9032; 1326 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, IL 60091. Thank you!

Toy Recall Affects Us All

By Martin Stone. USA-TLA President

The recent toy recalls from and apologies offered by Mattel, one of USA largest toy manufacturers, once again remind us of the importance of quality control over the products that are sold and we, the professional public, buy and/or lend at our toy libraries.

Certainly Mattel lost control of quality control. These several recalls prompted hours of family time looking through children's toys. The products that were on the recall lists had to be removed from circulation much to the dismay of the children who enjoyed playing with them. One family told me of their children's tears and bewilderment after their favorite toys were taken away. These youngsters could not fully understand the reason.

I am sure that all toy libraries and toy librarians, preschool and day care providers have heeded the call and reviewed their inventory for any recalled toys. The media and especially the Internet have provided excellent lists of those toys with harmful qualities. It is prudent now for all early childhood professionals to review their policies concerning quality control and be sure that the policies are carried out.

Many toy libraries receive donations of toys, and these should be specially screened for lead-based paint and manufacturing sources. As the recalls point out, we the public cannot rely on the manufacturers to necessarily provide us with safe toys, and as families and lenders of toys we need to become more vigilant by providing and recommending toys that are made under the highest standards and receive approval from non-partisan sources.

Director Rancilio Honored

USA-TLA Director James (Jim) Rancilio, director of the Bullard Sanford Memorial Library in Vassar, Mich., was recently distinguished as the 2007 Michigan Librarian of the Year awarded by the Michigan Library Association.

The award, announced this summer, will be bestowed in October 2007 in Detroit. Nominated by the Library Cooperative Director of Michigan, Mr. Rancilio received numerous letters of support from other library colleagues and Vassar residents.

"The committee was impressed with the toy library, among other library programs and services cited in the letters," said the recipient, who has been directing the library for ___ years, and has introduced numerous creative programs serving youth and adults.



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Child's Play is a publication of the USA Toy Library Association, 1326 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091; 847-920-9030 (phone); 847-920-9032 (fax); usatla.home.comcast.net (website); usatla@aol.com (email). Articles, suggestions and letters are welcome. Edited, designed and produced by Iacuzzi Associates, Inc., 847-920-9020.

Nielander Lands Chief Post at Lekotek

Former USA-TLA Director Diana Nielander is the executive director of the National Lekotek Center in Chicago, part of the Axiter Company, one of the Chicago area's largest providers of educational, vocational, health care and related services to individuals with disabilities. Lekotek serves children with special needs and their families. According to their website, the 35 Lekoteks in the USA are located in eight states: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Following is a brief listing; for a more complete listing, visit: ww.lekotek.org.

FLORIDA

Lighthouse Learning Center
550 Kingsley Avenue
Orange Park, FL 32073-4830
phone: 904-264-7392
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Atlanta, GA 30329
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Lekotek of Georgia - Duluth
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maria@lekotekga.org

Lekotek of Georgia Inc. -
Fayetteville / The Joseph Sams
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280 Brandywine Blvd
Fayetteville, GA 30214
phone: 404-633-3430
speddie1@juno.com

Lekotek of Georgia - Cobb Site
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Kennesaw, GA 30144
phone: 770-420-9889
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/ Easter Seals of SW Illinois
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lstonecipher@mo.easterseals.com

The Archway Lekotek Center
2751 Main, PO Box 1180
Carbondale, IL 62903
phone: 618-529-5944
archway72@gmail.com

HRDI Lekotek and Compuplay
Center / Human Resources
Development Institute
33 E. 114th Street
Chicago, IL 60628
phone: 773-660-4630
bogbonnaya@hrdi.org

Jackie's Toy Chest / A Lekotek
Program at Children's Memorial
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2515 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60614
phone: 773-327-2340
bkryan@childrensmemorial.org

ToyLend - A Lekotek Program
1950 W. Roosevelt Road, Room
2031
Chicago, IL 60608
phone: 708-863-1186, ext. 226
scici@ucpnet.org

National Lekotek Center / Lekotek
Family Play and Learning Center
2001 N. Clybourn
Chicago, IL 60614
phone: 773-528-5766 ext. 403
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Lekotek of Good Shepherd / SPEED
- Special Education Joint
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432 East Prairie, Suite 100
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WSSRA Lekotek / West Suburban
Special Recreation Association
2915 N. Maple Street
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wssrabob@aol.com

Lekotek of Good Shepherd / Good
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17314 South Kedzie

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dwoods@il-lb.easterseals.com

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Rockford Lekotek Center / Fairview
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Clearbrook Lekotek / Clearbrook
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Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
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bdevito@clearbrook.org

National Lekotek Center / Lekotek
of Evanston c/o Shore Community
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4125 Oakton Street
Skokie, IL 60076
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Northwest Wayne County
26049 Five Mile Road
Redford, MI 48239
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arcnw@aol.com

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Lekotek-Shirley Eves / Shirley
Eves Developmental and
Therapeutic Center, Inc.
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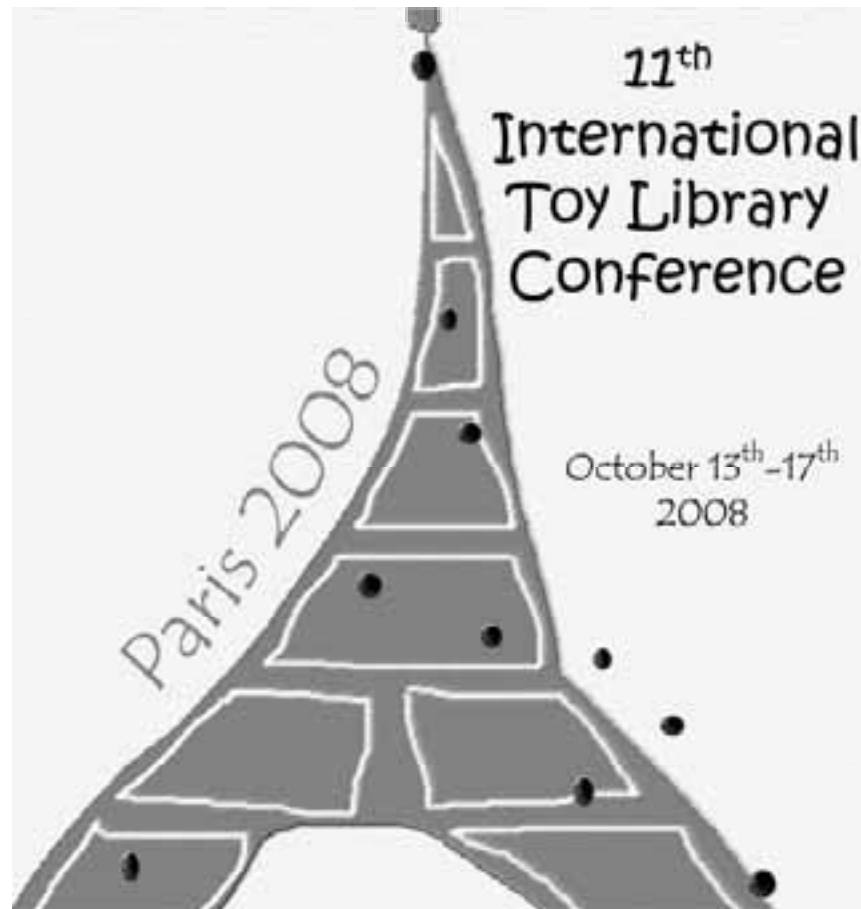
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11th International Toy Library Conference



Call for papers and first announcement

The 11th International Toy Library Conference will be held at the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie de la Villette in Paris from 13th –17th october 2008

Title of the Conference :

Toy libraries bringing toys and games to life



11th International Toy Conference – Call for Papers

Without restricting itself, this conference would like to invite participants to reflect upon and present experiences, research and theories about the objects, the material culture of toys and games that are the basis of toy libraries.

This call for papers, based on variations on three themes, would like to ask contributors to link their paper to the relation between toy libraries and playthings, with toys and games. The aim is to better understand these things in the contemporary world, but also in their history ; to examine the relationship between play and its objects ; to analyse the relationship of toy libraries and toy librarians with playthings. It is about clarifying the place of the object, whether central or marginal according to its use.

Some questions seem particularly important to us : what connection exists between toy libraries and more contemporary toys and games? What is the relationship with playthings made in the community and by children? How are the activities based on the objects? Do children use toys and games in a specific way that is different at the toy library to that in other places? What is at stake for the organisation of the facilities, the toy librarians' training?

It goes without saying that it is appropriate to take into account a wide range of cultural situations, but also the children in their social, cultural, national, and ethnic diversity and gender not forgetting children with special needs.

The question of recognition of the work achieved, and of the toy library itself by other institutions and the government emerges through the different themes proposed.

Theme 1 : Toys and games in toy libraries

This first theme puts the emphasis on the place, uses, and "life" of play materials in toy libraries; it is about them, starting with toys and games.

How does a toy library select, manage, analyse, organise and give life to play things? What are the choices and the taboos linked to values, cost, situation, security, and even hygiene? What tools and training are needed to achieve these things? What problems do we encounter? What is the relation of toys and games to the job of a toy librarian?

We would also be interested in the relationship of the toy library with the toys and games industry and commerce. The way play takes place in a toy library and the use made of toys and games on that occasion has its whole place in this theme. The relation of a toy library with contemporary objects, particularly with video games and more generally with multimedia, is an important aspect of this theme.

Activities based on a distance from or a criticism of industrially manufactured objects by the toy library naturally belong here as well as the practice of making toys and games that happens there.

Theme 2 : The toy library, a cultural institution

The toy library seems to be an institution organised around toys and games, the cultural objects of childhood but also of adults. We can in this way talk about a cultural or socio-cultural institution. It is important to explore what this means, to develop international comparisons of the institution related to things.

What is the toy library's identity compared with other institutions where we can perhaps find toys and games (early

childhood centres, educational, leisure and cultural institutions like libraries or media libraries).

What should be the rules of toy libraries and toy librarians? What training for toy librarians?

What recognition for the facilities? What requirements for toy libraries that develop their practice in special environments (hospital, school, prison, humanitarian aid, etc.)?

How is a toy library perceived by the wide community? What is its cultural and social influence on toy consumption for example, on the improvement of products in the play market, etc?

Theme 3 : Objects and playwork practice in the contemporary world

This third theme aims to broaden reflection on toys and games in the contemporary world beyond toy libraries. It is about presenting research, practice, and analysis of present-day toy and games, work that could interest toy librarians. This includes connections with tradition or history, and subjects related to the production, diffusion, promotion and consumption of playthings. Questions concerning production conditions (globalisation, child labour), quality, security, and the strategies of advertising and marketing find their place here.

The place of contemporary objects, video games in particular, constitutes an important dimension of play culture. Questions related to design, ergonomics, toy adaptations to children's diversity come under this theme as well. We could also ask ourselves about the educational, even therapeutic dimensions of certain toys.

The analysis of play activities, by adults as well as by children in relation to objects, whatever their nature or origin, can also be taken into account.

Guidelines for proposed interventions

- Abstracts should be sent by email as an attachment by 15th april 2008 to the following address: congres@alf-ludotheques.org.

- The abstracts should be no more than 500 words per intervention, in the chosen language for the intervention : english, french or spanish. They should indicate the name of the author(s) (specifying the name of the presenter(s) at the conference), their institutional affiliation, their postal and email addresses.

- The options are a paper or presentation (20 minutes maximum), a symposium composed of 3 or 4 papers (the abstracts in accordance to the common model would be preceded by an introduction of no more than 200 words), a poster (a paper on a board on display for half a day to be presented by its authors for an hour. Poster format to be A 0, height = 1,20 m; width = 0,90 m).

- The abstracts should specify how the presentation is in keeping with the general pattern of the conference. The abstracts should refer to one of the themes and if necessary specify why it concerns the world of toy libraries.

- Each participant will present one intervention only.

Proposed interventions will be considered by the scientific committee which will inform authors of its decisions before the 1st june 2008. Estimate conference fees : 350£.

New DVDs Invite Interactive Learning; Feature Diversity

Tot-a-Doodle-Do! is a new children's educational DVD series, an inclusive show that features the Tot Crew, made up of a diverse group of typical and special needs children, which guide their peers to participate regardless of their disability. Children will learn new vocabulary, sequencing skills, listening skills and manners as Picture Communication (PCS) symbols are used throughout the show to provide visual cues. The show is geared towards children cognitively and developmentally aged 3-7.

A top DVD pick in *Parenting Magazine*, January 2007, the series has also garnered favorable reviews from a variety of national press including the *American Library Association's Booklist* and *School Library Journal*. It is also endorsed by Kids First (Coalition for Quality Children's Media) and the Dove Foundation.

Join us as we make a craft, use our imaginations, meet a neighbor, sing songs, make a healthy snack and learn manners. Each segment is designed to enhance fine and gross motor skills, communication, cognitive and socialization skills.



Tot-a-Doodle-Do! incorporates the following themes: Transportation, School, Animals, Music, The Body, and Family & Friends. Each DVD offers the following segments:

- **Crafty Kids** – Color, paint and glue favorite materials to follow-along art projects
- **Imagination Station** – Use imagination and memory, play games and pretend
- **On our Block** – Meet someone from the neighborhood
- **Hop N Bop** – Sing and dance to original songs
- **Super Snack** – Make nutritious snacks
- **Molly Manners** – Puppet Molly Manners invites interactive role-playing to encourage manners and thoughtfulness

Our panel of expert advisers includes child psychologists, occupational therapists, pediatricians, educators, and speech & language specialists. Heidi Niehart, business owner and mother of three, created the program, which is co-produced by Penny Cohen, child development specialist and speech and language pathologist.

For more information, visit www.totadoodledo.com. DVDs retail for \$14.95 and DVDs with Craft Kits for \$19.95. Toy libraries may contact us for special pricing.

A Dandy of a Toy - "Design and Drill" Activity Center

By Leslie Eslinger, Director, USA-TLA

Design and Drill would be a great addition to your toy library collection. I'm not a big fan of battery-operated toys but this one is worthy of exception. The toy includes an activity board with 100 holes, 120 bolts, 20 pattern cards, hand tools, and a power drill (hence the batteries). Take note of all the child outcomes we meet with this one unit. «**Creativity**» Use the colored hardware to make a unique design. «**Fine Motor and Eye Hand Coordination**» Use the correct handgrip to hold the wrench or power tool and secure each piece to the board. «**Spatial Relations**» Use the forward and reverse button on the drill and form directional designs with the pieces. «**Visual Discrimina-**

tion and Memory» Now use the pattern cards and match the pattern. «**Counting, One to One Correspondence**» Place one bolt in each hole. Count all the bolts, color by color.

So, yes, this toy does give you a lot of play for your dollar. But it doesn't fall into the trap of trying to have so many features that none of them works well. The beauty of this toy is that all the elements are designed for fun and learning and deliver the goods! There is no question that children will flock to this toy, and that's where the problem lies. It comes with one drill. My advice is to offer this as a loan for a home environment or bring it out for supervised small group or one on-one-time in the classroom.

Just don't pass it by. It's way too much fun.

Leslie Silk Eslinger is Education and Product Development Specialist, Becker's School Supplies, 1-800-523-1490

Toy Library Resources



RESOURCE ORDER FORM

Quantity		Member	Non-member
	Child's Play Newsletter (One-Year Subscription) An 8-page periodical full of news and information about toy libraries and related topics.	Included w/ Membership	
	USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual Everything you need to know about setting up and operating a toy library.	\$12.50	\$25.00
	Read It! Play It! by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim An illustrated, 112-page book of fun activities that build literacy through reading and playing.	\$12.50	\$25.00
	Learn and Play the Recycle Way by Rhoda Redleaf and Audrey Robertson An illustrated, 200-page book loaded with suggestions for homemade toys that teach.	\$18.00	\$36.00
	Theme Kits Made Easy by Leslie Silk Eslinger 161-page book of clever ideas based on "teaching themes" (fairy tales, animals, city life, etc.) packaged as "kits." A great teaching tool for providers, parents and teachers.	\$20.00	\$40.00
	The Oppenheim Toy Portfolio by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim "The Best Toys, Books, DVDs & Music for Kids"	\$12.50	\$25.00
	The Power of Play A discussion about early childhood education with Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, The Epicenter Inc.	\$5.00	\$10.00



Thanks for your support!

Sub-Total \$ _____

\$7.50 Shipping & Handling (Does not apply to *Child's Play*) \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Check No. _____

To order, complete this form and return it with payment to:

USA Toy Library Association
1326 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091
Phone (847)920-9030
Fax (847)-920-9032
<http://usatla.home.comcast.net>



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Title _____

Institution/Organization _____

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USA-TLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play



USA Toy Library Association
1326 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091

Rating System Sorts Out Toys for Special Needs

AblePlay, developed recently by the National Lekotek Center, is a one-of-a-kind toy rating system and web site (www.ableplay.org for consumers; www.ableplayrating.org for toy manufacturers) that assists consumers in selecting the best toys for children with special needs. The AblePlay seal provides an at-a-glance understanding of a toy's appropriateness for children with physical, sensory, communicative and/or cognitive disabilities. Rated playthings include arts and crafts, educational, electronic, general, interactive books, outdoor and specially-adapted items. Through the AblePlay web site, consumers may purchase toys online directly from manufacturers.

AblePlay evaluators have degrees in special education, early childhood education, or related therapeutic disciplines and have been previously certified by the National Lekotek Center. As part of the toy evaluation process, evaluators assess each toy with 5 - 8 children of varying disabilities during at least 5 - 8 play experiences.

AblePlay is the National Lekotek Center's first social entrepreneurship venture. There are 6.2 million children with disabilities in the United States, and approximately \$3.5 billion is spent annually to purchase toys for these children.

If you've already received a copy of Child's Play, please pass this along to a friend or colleague. Thank you.