

· CHILD'S PLAY ·



Winter 2009

USA-TLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play

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CPSC Clarifies Requirements of New Children's Product Safety Laws Taking Effect in February 2010

Guidance Intended for Resellers of Children's Products, Thrift and Consignment Stores

Note: USA-TLA is seeking the advice of an attorney to interpret the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act for toy lending libraries. Please watch our website at <http://usatla.org> for information we can confidently pass along.

In February 2010, new requirements of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) take effect. Manufacturers, importers and retailers are expected to comply with the new Congressionally-mandated laws. Beginning February 10, 2010, children's products cannot be sold if they contain more than 600 parts per million (ppm) total lead. Certain children's products manufactured on or after February 10, 2009 cannot be sold if they contain more than 0.1% of certain specific phthalates or if they fail to meet new mandatory standards for toys.

The new law requires that domestic manufacturers and importers certify that children's products made after February 10 meet all the new safety standards and the lead ban. Sellers of used children's products, such as thrift stores and consignment stores, are not required to certify that those products meet the new lead limits, phthalates standard or new toy standards.

The new safety law does not require resellers to test children's products in inventory for compliance with the lead limit before they are sold. However, resellers cannot sell children's products that exceed the lead limit and therefore should avoid products that are likely to have lead content, unless they have testing or other information to indicate the products being sold have less than the new limit.

While CPSC expects every company to comply fully with the new laws, resellers should pay special attention to certain product categories. ***Among these are recalled children's products, particularly cribs and play yards; children's products that may contain lead, such as chil-***

dren's jewelry and painted wooden or metal toys; flimsily made toys that are easily breakable into small parts; toys that lack the required age warnings; and dolls and stuffed toys that have buttons, eyes, noses or other small parts that are not securely fastened and could present a choking hazard for young children. ●

About the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act

WHEN: The original effective date of Feb. 10, 2009, was changed to Feb. 10, 2010, on 1/30/09.

WHAT IT DOES: Limits lead levels in children's products to 600 parts per million, dropping to 300 parts per million in August. It requires third-party testing to verify compliance.

PRODUCTS AFFECTED: Thousands of children's items including books, clothing, furniture and tableware, and toys.

EXEMPTIONS WANTED: A number of organizations, citing economically catastrophic effects, are pressuring for exemptions for products they say inherently wouldn't contain levels exceeding standards.

HOW TO KEEP TRACK: For information on toys that have been recalled, readers may want to join the CPSC listserve. (listserv@cpsc.gov) You may want to indicate which recalls you want to learn about so as not to receive many irrelevant emails.

If you click on the toy listed on the Listserv update it takes you to the CPSC website and you can print out a description of the toy complete with picture. You may want to keep a notebook with all the pictures and information to be able to reference them as toys are donated. An excellent feature of the listing is information on where the toys were distributed and contact information for the manufacturer.

Readers can also find a full listing of all recalled products by month and year on the CPSC website – www.cpsc.gov.

Play Is Valuable Outlet for Children with Autism

By Martin C. Stone, Teacher of Special Needs Children

Children who are diagnosed with autism are as different as all other children. Their abilities, behaviors and dysfunction vary along a spectrum. Therefore, their interest in play and toys also varies from child to child.

Advice: Begin play at an early age and introduce the child to all childhood games, rhymes and songs, such as "Ring around the Rosy" and "London Bridge Is Falling Down."

Contrary to common belief, most children with autism do not prefer to be alone. Making and maintaining friendships often prove to be difficult for those with autism. These children want to engage with others; they just do not know how. Even when taught what to do and say, they continue to have difficulty learning to be spontaneous. And, like all children, those with autism have very distinct likes and dislikes.

Advice: Look for the child's assets and interests and set up opportunities for the child to participate according to those interests.

Keying in on Interests

Distinguishing what these interests are comes from exposure to various sports and games. Set up group and family time for board games. Children with autism like order and rules. Board games provide specific rules that must be followed and teach helpful skills such as waiting your turn and taking turns. Once the game has been learned, invite other children to join in the game playing.

Advice: Introduce children with autism to various sports such as ball playing, tennis, gymnastics, swimming, biking and other physical games. By introducing the child to each sport, teachers/counselors/parents can gauge the level of interest.

Some children will enjoy the organized sports and the rules of the game. Others may find the interaction too distracting and overwhelming and thus may prefer more individualized activities.

As for all children, play for children with autism provides learning, skill training and fun. Play is another tool that may also help to engage the child's interest in others and his or her environment. Games and other play situations that have specific rules and order may also provide relief from environmental chaos that some children feel. ●

"Autism is one of the hardest special needs to figure out and help. For children who have sensory processing difficulties, some kids crave more sensory input and other kids need less. They typically have a very difficult time with pretend play. It's too abstract."

— Ellen Metrick of the National Lekotek Center, Chicago, Ill.



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Growing Green Minds in the Great Outdoors

As spring approaches and nature starts to wake up, we watch children thrive out-of-doors. Even if it's exploring in a nearby park or playground, children come alive as they see, hear, touch, taste and feel the rebirth happening around them. Children exposed to nature early and often become aware of their planet, that generates a new kind of confidence. The evidence of needing nature for healthy childhood development is far more than just anecdotal. Here are just a few of many studies pointing to the importance of outdoor play.

"Unstructured outdoor play provides excellent opportunities for cognitive, social and emotional development in children (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005). "In a study of 400 youths, a majority reported that wilderness challenge programs had major positive impacts on their physical, emotional and intellectual development and well-being" (Keller & Derr, 1998). "Participation in green outdoor activities such as fishing was associated with reduced Attention-Deficit Disorder symptoms in a

sample of children from the Midwest (Faber Taylor, Kuo & Sullivan, 2001).

"If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the Earth before we ask them to save it."

– David Sobel, Environmentalist, Educator and Writer.

Henry David Thoreau said, "The more slowly trees grow at first, the sounder they are at the core, and I think the same is true for human beings." The naturalist was right, according to many educators. Let children play – get them outside in unstructured activity so that they can bond with the natural world. Wander with toddlers while their imaginations soar, and pay attention as preschoolers explore the world outside. Advice to families: Turn off computers, phones, ipods and all the rest of the electronic world; tune in the thunderous beat of nature on call! ☪

Green Toys in the Marketplace

By Leslie Eslinger

Here's a riddle:

You buy it in the dairy section of your supermarket.

You drink the contents and then recycle the container.

You fill it with pretend tea and have a tea party.

What is it?

It's the Green Toys Tea Set and it's simply brilliant. Green Toys are made from recycled milk jugs. Here's how it works. When you toss your empty milk jug into the recycling container and put it on the curb, it's collected and reprocessed into something called high-density polyethylene. This completely hygienic and safe plastic is transported to a local production plant. The plastic is reshaped and redesigned into tea-party components. The 17-piece set includes a teapot, creamer, sugar bowl, teacups, saucers, and silverware.

Add some friends, lots of imagination, and a big smile every time you sit down to tea and remember you're helping the environment.

The Green Toys company is committed to making all of the components in California. With domestic production, the miles required to transport this product to market are reduced, in effect lessening the carbon footprint. Green Toys adheres to the strictest California

health, safety, and environmental regulations. The company takes its mission a step further by packaging products in recycled corrugated boxes with no cellophane, twist ties or unnecessary filler.



And here's even better news. This is one of the sturdiest and most child-friendly tea sets I've seen. The muted colors are appealing and the cups are just the right size for the perfect cup of tea.

Make that Green Tea, please! ☪

Leslie Silk Eslinger
Education and Product Development Specialist
Becker's School Supplies
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www.SHOPBECKER.com

Toys and Play Add New Value to the Library

Sari Feldman, executive director of Cuyahoga County Public Library, the 34th Player of the Year, pushed for more play in the library and was wonderfully successful. Last year Sari helped secure a grant so that Cuyahoga County Public Library could purchase enough toys to implement a new service for parents, providers and children. Modeled upon Sandra Feinberg's program in New York that brought a new form of education onto library premises, the Cuyahoga library offers an array of parent/child workshops under the guidance of librarians who facilitate family interaction and learning and provide materials like toys and handouts that encourage optimal play opportunities. Because of the grant and the research that Sari undertook and

“sold” to her fellow librarians, “Play, Learn and Grow” programs take place at all 28 branches of the Cuyahoga County library system.



Sari Feldman (left) accepting Player of the Year award from USA-TLA Executive Director, Judy Iacuzzi

“As we know, play is critical to learning. The work with toys and play that librarians do is important in the lives of the children and families we serve. We hope to continue to make the connection between toys and early learning at Cuyahoga County Public Library. Thank you again for this honor.”

– Sari Feldman

“Sari’s initiatives to promote play in our library system have been invaluable to the children service’s staff in Cuyahoga County, and it is for that reason that we nominated her for the prestigious Player of the Year award,” said James Rancilio, president of USA-TLA. ●

Successful Fall Conference Leaves Audience Enthused

Literacy: What Has Play Got to Do With It? was among the most successful conferences co-sponsored by TLA in recent past. It clearly galvanized the audience of librarians, social workers and teachers working throughout northeastern Ohio. Their evaluations of the October 10, 2008, interchange, co-hosted by the Cuyahoga County Public Library, told the story. “All topics and speakers were excellent and well presented ... I got a lot of great information – thank you!...Excellent!

Children were top-of-mind. From making sure they receive toys with maximum play value, making teachable materials from throwaway matter, probing the many dimensions of autism, re-educating the groups about connections between play and literacy, to organizing community for commercial-free childhoods – six gritty presentations drove to the heart of tough issues facing early childhood professionals today.

Play is important, fun, and in jeopardy, said Nina Hillery, infant-toddler specialist with First Steps, Child Care Connection in Akron, in a keynote on play and literacy.

Autism is on the rise, said Martin Stone, teacher and special needs professional, as he described symptoms

of children who find focusing very challenging but not for lack of intelligence.

Through rampant licensing of toys and games corporate marketers rob the imaginations of children, thwart their abilities to think independently and solve problems, said Dr. Susan Linn, director of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and professor in Harvard Medical School’s psychiatry department.

Linn, who is also a ventriloquist of notable talent, described yet a more devious aspect of the toy marketing business: the embedded “nag factor” which gets the child to plead for the toy until satisfied. Research confirms most parents give in and make the purchase regardless of their misgivings.

Held at administrative headquarters of the Cuyahoga County Public Library in Parma, site of a new online toy loan program, the conference hub houses a collection of more than 1,000 toys that circulate to 28 branches covering east and west sides of Cleveland.

“The Cuyahoga library system is one of the premier programs in the USA,” said Rhoda Redleaf, speaker, author and a founding director of USA-TLA. In fact, the library was ranked #2 in the country in 2008. ●

Tales from the 11th International Toy Library Congress

By Giovanni Galanti

About 600 toy librarians from 25 countries participated in conferences, roundtables, symposia and workshops at the Cité des Sciences in Paris during the International Toy Library Congress, Oct. 13 – 17, 2008. Let's begin at the end: it is almost the closing event and the representative of Brazil is proud to show a small movie from a park where there are many giant musical instruments to play on.

First there is nothing to see; then we see but cannot hear anything. After a few minutes of waiting, silence and small commentary, what would a typical audience of delegates do? Whistle? Watch silently and enjoy the forgotten pleasures of the silent film? Indulge in jeers and sarcasm? A real public of toy librarians outsmarts the unfortunate circumstances: it begins to improvise, mimicking the sounds of the instruments (“boom,” “ding, ding,” tataaa”) and singing the soundtrack – “Brazil, nanananan-nanah...,” “The Girl From Ipanema.” Apart from the mortification of the Brazilian representative, the rest of us had a lot of spontaneous fun with the moment.

“Our conferences try to breach the gap between theory and practice; we try to ensure that presentations from as many part of the world as possible are included. This will broaden your understanding of what toy libraries do and achieve and you will feel renewed energy and motivation in your work.”

— Cynthia Morrison, President ITLA, Mmbatho, South Africa

Let's look back. For several months the French Toy Library Association is preparing for the conference, and given the magnitude of the event and despite some technical and organizational problems, the Congress with its basic theme, “Making Alive Games and Toys in Toy Libraries,” is a success. This is a theme at the heart of the profession.

The program is packed: too much perhaps? Four or five simultaneous workshops require delegates to make hard choices, and in each workshop panels of three speakers limit the time for discussion. The contribution of knowledge is rich but unidirectional and does not permit a genuine exchange of experiences. Fortunately, beyond the conferences, there are waiting times, corridors, meals, and play space. In these moments magma is created between the participants, who then feel part of a large and united group.

The conferences sometimes give rise to perennial debates: what is the role of video games? How to use games with respect to disabilities? Can we use recycled material in toy libraries? But what matters most is the

recognition of partnerships: We are here because we are toy librarians, and play and toys are the central elements of this profession.

Point of Arrival, Point of Departure?

In recent years the toy librarian profession has grown. It was given a charter, has matured in the field and built stable relationships with local institutions. It seems to have reached the top of a slope on a national and international level. But political recognition still is wanting. At the opening ceremony the representative of the Ministry of Youth, Health and Sports was not there. At the conclusion, the representative of the State Secretariat for Family Affairs was not present. The only remarkable political presence was that of Mr. Santini, mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux and Secretary of State for Public Service. Although local authorities value toy libraries, the national and international authorities continue to ignore them, something that leads to a lack of resources and endemic frustration of professionals on play and toys.

Who Is the Toy Librarian Today?

For of all, and as Prof. Brougère explained in his speech, the toy librarian is usually a female who is one of the lowest paid professionals in the world. The toy librarian is someone interested and believing in play. However, it is also someone who eventually puts forward the pedagogical argument that play is useful for learning, socialization, etc., and can serve the school and community, and this is done, in our opinion, because of a lack of recognition of the fact. Play is no longer a free experience but has a specific role in development and can be used for educational purposes. A transformation defined by Prof. Manson as, “Educational recuperation of fun.” The simple conclusion, strongly denied by those who adopt it, is that the toy librarian risks forgetting the play and the toy as vectors of a specific culture in order to change them into simple alternative tools. It is true that the lack of specific training does not help the case: the toy librarians are retirees, librarians, civil servants, teachers, psychologists.

But we must not forget that play exists for itself before it becomes an instrument of knowledge or development. Otherwise the image of toy librarian will lose its uniqueness and be confused with that of a simple entertainer, and then the right to speak on the play object will remain in the hands of businesses and the media. To avoid this scenario, the solution resides in the front of the article: the toy librarian is a professional able to play with any material, even with a technical problem of sonorization and change. ●

APTE's Color Genie Software Wins Prestigious Tech & Learning Magazine Award

APTE Inc., a software developer and education publisher, today announced that the Crayola Camera with Color Genie software has been honored by Tech & Learning Magazine with a 2008 Award of Excellence. The Crayola Color Genie software developed by APTE uses digital photography as a way to build literacy skills. With Color Genie software kids can edit photos, write books, play puppet shows, create art projects and much more using their own photos. Designed by educators, Color Genie is easy to use and offers great learning value.

"Choosing the finalists was no easy task," said Kevin Hogan, editorial director for the Tech & Learning group. "Those companies that passed muster should feel proud of this accomplishment." A panel of more than 30 educators who tested more than 100 entries at San Francisco Bay area chose the winners.

To develop the Crayola camera and Color Genie software, three committed companies put their experience and expertise to work. Crayola, a world leader in children's creative products, contributed its unique style and images. APTE, a premier education publisher, developed the editing and project software, Color

Genie. Sakar International, a leading distributor of electronic products, supplied the camera and coordinated the efforts of all three companies to bring the product to market. Together, Crayola, APTE, and Sakar have created a camera that entertaining and playful for children of a variety of ages.



About APTE Inc.

For over 18 years, APTE has inspired and nurtured the mind and spirit of children using the power of technology. APTE's learning products – software, web applications, video and books—are found in classrooms around the world. In addition to school products, APTE has created award-winning software for many of the most popular kid toys, cameras and camcorders. For more information about APTE and its products, visit www.apte.com or call 800-494-1112. ●

Reporting TLA Election 2008 Results

Elaine Adler, Jim Rancilio, Rhoda Redleaf and Martin Stone were re-elected to the USA-TLA Board of Directors in October 2008. Their three-year terms started October 1.

Re-elected for a second one-year term as President of the Board, Rancilio serves as director of the Bullard Sanford Memorial Library in Vassar, Mich. He has been a member of USA-TLA since 1986. Rancilio is a member of the Michigan Library Association, which named him Librarian of the Year in 2008.

Adler was re-elected vice-president for a second term. She is founder and supporter of a toy lending library in the Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center in Paramus, N.J., where TLA will co-host a conference in Spring 2009. Adler is keenly interested in serving children and her community and has founded numerous toy libraries in the New Jersey area close to her home and family business.

Redleaf, founder of Toys 'n' Things, one of the first toy libraries in the USA and located in St. Paul, Minn., is a prolific writer on children's play and focuses on making recyclable materials into play materials. The respected educator is a founding member of the USA-TLA and often a featured speaker at TLA workshops around the country.

Stone is the director of Special Education Itinerant Services for the Toward Tomorrow Program in Scarsdale, N.Y. He is a founding member of the USA-TLA and has held every office on the board of directors. Stone currently provides educational services to preschool children with disabilities, including autism, who are participating in mainstreamed preschool programs. ●



Jim Rancilio



Toy Library Resources

Resource Order Form

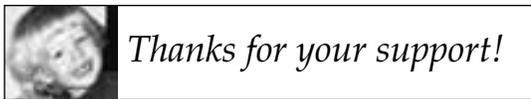
Quantity		Member	Non-member
	Child's Play Newsletter (One-Year Subscription) Included with Membership. An 8-page periodical full of news and information about toy libraries and related topics.		
	USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual Everything you need to know about setting up and operating 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. Now in English and Spanish!	\$12.50	\$25.00
	Learn and Play the Green 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 Power of Play A discussion about early childhood education with Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, The Epicenter Inc.	\$5.00	\$10.00

Sub-Total \$ _____

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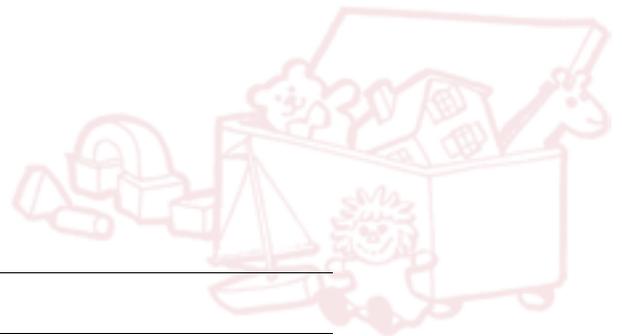
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<http://usatla.org>



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

SAVE THE DATE!

**USA-TLA, & Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center, Paramus, N.J.,
to co-host Saturday conference, April 25 or May 15, 2009, TBD.**

Watch for final date and details at <http://usatla.org>. Theme: *All Work and Lots of Play!*

Four credits will be given and multiple workshops held to cover early childhood development, playing, toys, and special needs, including autism.

Group of American Toy Libraries (GATL) Founded at ITLA in Paris

An increased number of Americans, mainly from Latin America, attended the 11th International Toy Library Conference in Paris, up to 30 from five who participated in 2005 in South Africa. Representatives from six countries – Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia and Mexico – were noted. None from the USA!

Those in attendance organized a group to share experiences and research inside the group. They plan to investigate and promote the social, cultural, educational and psychological value of toy libraries. Each country nominated two representatives to plan a forum, and Alvaro Cordoba from Colombia proposed to host the first meeting in Medellin, Colombia, this year. No legal

structure was established; members will communicate by email.

The official language of the group will be Spanish, but communications will be in English and Spanish. The group expects to attract other American countries as well especially at the next ITLA Congress which will be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2011.

If you are interested in getting involved in this group, please let us know by contacting USA-TLA headquarters at jqi@comcast.net. Also feel free to contact Barros de Oliveira Vera Maria in Brazil at vera.barros.oliveira@terra.com.br for more information on how to participate. ●