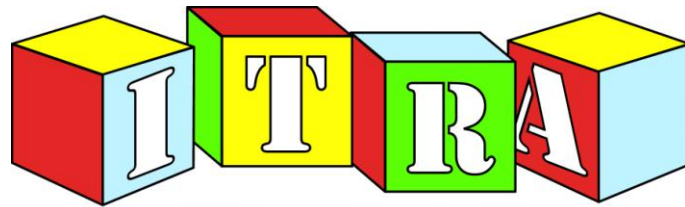


ITRA NEWSLETTER

International Toy Research Association

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<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>



**INTERNATIONAL TOY
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

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PROLOGUE

The International Toy Research Association Newsletter is designed to keep members up to date with research in the fields of toys and play. In this issue, readers will find a note from our President, a couple of Member Profiles, the Members' Forum, various publications, conference and exhibition previews and reviews. Please note that many conference and exhibition organisers have been required to put their plans into abeyance due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The newsletter has been formatted to allow the document to be read in either printed form or as a soft copy, which can be found on the ITRA website.

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

Those of you who promised material that never arrived... send it again. For those who made contributions, without which there would be many more blank spaces, a massive thank you.

Enjoy the Newsletter.

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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ITRA

Dear ITRA colleagues and friends,



First and foremost, I trust this finds all International Toy Research Association members, both past and present, and Friends of ITRA, who read this newsletter, safe and well during the current coronavirus pandemic. Although I concluded my 2019 Winter Newsletter greetings “wishing everyone a memorable festive period and an even better 2020!” this year, thus far, has perhaps unnervingly placed a spotlight on many of our assumptions, expectations and hopes, both globally and individually. On behalf of the ITRA Board and Editorial Team, I would like to pass on our condolences to those who have lost family members, work colleagues and friends. In addition, our thoughts go out to those who have lost, or under threat of losing, livelihoods, jobs, homes and suffering from stress, lockdown fatigue and uncertain futures related to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As of the end of May, various countries are in the process of easing lockdowns and travel restrictions as they navigate through the initial impact from the pandemic, while others are unfortunately still implementing measures to deal with rising rates of infection and overwhelmed medical staff and facilities. Scientific evidence and recent history from viral respiratory diseases – SARS-CoV (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS-CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) – seem to indicate that this latest coronavirus disease is likely to be around for some time and it is only right and proper that the ITRA Board discuss present and future impacts on our Association, especially in the light of the announced ITRA conference.

In the 2019 Winter newsletter, it was my great pleasure to announce, on behalf of the International Toy Research Association Board, that the 9th ITRA World Conference would be held 7th - 9th July 2021 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, at ASCA (Amsterdam School for Cultural Studies). Joyce Goggin, as Conference Chair, had commenced securing meeting rooms, equipment and embarked on planning the social program and various events, when it became clear that the Covid-19 outbreak would play a significant role in whether or not the conference would be able to go ahead with delegates in attendance.

The primary issues facing the ITRA Board may be broken down into the following three areas. The first consideration is whether the Dutch authorities – national and local – in conjunction with ASCA would permit the physical conference to convene. Given that guidelines on travel, quarantining, lockdown, social protocols are changing almost weekly, uncertainty still remains as to the likelihood of ITRA being able to hold a physical conference – hopefully this situation will be clarified by the Dutch government and the host academic institution over the next couple of months. Assuming conferences, in general, are given the go-ahead, the second issue would be whether any applied restrictions would make the physical conference untenable; for example, only fifteen delegates in a room and seated two metres apart would ensure meeting in Amsterdam, next July, would not be sustainable. This leads to the third point, whether potential delegates would be willing and able to attend – we have already had reports of academics having travel/conference funding cut for the foreseeable future by their institutions, individual health concerns about international travel, possible travel restrictions from countries outside the European Union, the impact of a second-wave of infections, are just a few of the concerns raised with the ITRA Board. The intention was to issue the Call-for-Papers sometime in May or June, however, for pragmatic reasons this has been deferred to allow for greater clarity whether a physical conference would be viable or to pursue the Board’s current contingency plan to hold a virtual/digital conference.

Talking of digital, during March and April, I took the opportunity to digitally re-master the first decade of ITRA newsletters. Some years ago, Cleo Gougoulis forwarded me photocopies of those early scripts and with advances in OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software it was possible to transcribe the newsletters, with some manual input, into reasonably sized PDF files. It was interesting to note, while proofreading the auto-transcriptions, the changes and similarities from those early days to the current incarnation of the International Toy Research Association – the newsletter appeared to be the primary means to disseminate information. ITRA members were encouraged to introduce other toy and play researchers to the Association – each new researcher was given a short introduction in the newsletter. Established members regularly updated the membership on their latest research activities – conferences, trips, publications – and invited discussion on various toy related topics. The newsletter essentially acted as the ITRA notice board – covering the creation of the ITRA logo, introduction of membership fees, and reviews of early ITRA meetings. If you have a spare moment, I would encourage readers – especially new ITRA members – if you have not already, to have a quick read through those early newsletters to get a flavour of what the International Toy Research Association is all about and learn more of the founding members. The newsletters are something akin to looking through an old family photograph album. The newsletters have been uploaded to the ITRA website.

For some years now, the intention was to move the Association's bank account from Greece to another European country; this became imperative as evidenced during the 2008 global financial crisis and restrictions imposed on the movement of funds in and out of Greek financial institutions – though Cleo Gougoulis, the ITRA Treasurer, reported that many of the restrictions have eased in recent years. Since January, Gilles Brougère, Cleo and I, have been able to make some headway on this matter and currently, as of the end of May, the process appears tantalisingly close to completion – with an account being set up in Paris, France. As agreed in 2018, during the ITRA Board meeting held at the 8th ITRA Conference in Paris, Gilles would take on the treasurer role once the new bank account had been opened. I would like to thank Cleo and especially Gilles, for all their effort and time expended during this endeavour.

Continuing with financial matters, I would like to sincerely thank Roland Earl, Director General of the BTHA (British Toy and Hobby Association), for their continued generous support of the *ITRA Prize for Outstanding Toy Research*, which is due to be awarded during the 9th ITRA Conference in Amsterdam. In addition, the BTHA kindly offered to cover various ancillary costs associated with hosting the Amsterdam conference. The Call-for-Submissions for the *ITRA Prize for Outstanding Toy Research* will be announced once the Board have greater clarity on if, or how, the 2021 meeting will convene in Amsterdam.

To end on a positive note, provided the Covid-19 pandemic can be internationally assuaged, the 9th ITRA Conference, in Amsterdam 2021, promises to be another wonderful opportunity to meet old research friends, make new acquaintances, update and share experiences regarding plaything research with passionate, fellow-minded toy researchers. Do not forget to check our website www.itratoyresearch.org and Facebook page for updated information on the conference.

In the meantime, I trust all ITRA members remain safe and well, as we globally and individually navigate through these uncertain times.

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MEMBER PROFILE – Kati (Katriina) Heljakka



Kati (Katriina) Heljakka gained a Master's degree in economics from Åbo Akademi University, Finland, in 1998, continuing her studies in journalism at a vocational institute in 1998-1999 and comparative literature and audiovisual culture at the Tampere University, Finland. In 2001, she returned to further her educational studies, this time in the field of art history, at the University of Turku and graduated with a Master of Arts degree in 2002. Kati completed another Master of Arts degree in visual culture from the former University of Art and Design Helsinki (now Aalto University) in 2007. Her master's thesis focused on game design as an art form. This led to doctoral research at Aalto University in 2008, with a thesis entitled "*Principles of Adult Play(fullness) in Contemporary Toy Cultures—From Wow to Flow to Glow.*" She was awarded a Doctor of Arts in 2013.

In 2014 Kati took on the position of full-time researcher at the University of Turku, in the Degree Program of Cultural Production and Landscape Studies, with a particular focus on digital culture. Since 2014 she has been involved in several projects as a postdoctoral researcher funded by the Academy of Finland and Business Finland - the most recent being the Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies.

In 2017 Kati was nominated a Research Fellow at The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, USA. During her years as a researcher she has acted as a visiting scholar and a guest lecturer at numerous prestigious schools interested in toys and play, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Fashion Institute of Technology and Parsons School of Design in New York, Otis School of Design in Los Angeles, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Delft University.

Kati (Katriina) Heljakka describes herself as having been born and raised in the toy industry. Her grandfather established a board game company in Finland, in 1967, and her father, in his early twenties, continued as the company CEO. The company, *Tactic Games*, has since grown globally, with a production facility in Finland, and currently having a presence in over 70 countries. Kati recalls having worked in the garage at the family home, producing games. At the tender age of 6 years old, Kati received her first pay cheque for five Finnish Markka. She jokingly confirms that the company no longer uses child labour.

Her introduction to the toy industry may have had humble beginnings in production, however, she soon moved into the design of toys and board games – covering all aspects from generating game ideas, designing visual and 3D elements, creating back-stories, mechanics, writing rules, translating instructions, making marketing plans and participating in game demonstrations at international toy fairs, including; Hong Kong, London, Paris, Nuremberg, and New York. Later, at around 25 years-of-age, as part of the Product Development Department, Kati focussed on building relationships with game inventors, including all aspects of game creation, writing storyboards for TV commercials, and supervising the production of the games.

In conjunction with her work at *Tactic Games*, Kati embarked on a number of graduate degree programs, culminating in a Doctor-of-Arts, which specialised in the area of adult toy play with related cultures. She continued as a full-time researcher for the University of Turku, in 2014, subsequently recruited to establish and run the Pori Laboratory of Play, at University of Turku. Kati describes Brian Sutton-Smith as her 'go-to' theorist on play, having written extensively on the subject of toys and their relation to culture.

In 2008, having recently completed her Master's degree on game design, Kati knew she wished to continue her play experiences research when she came across information on an upcoming research event taking place in Nafplion, Greece, and made contact with Cleo Gougoulis – the then ITRA President and Conference Chair. Although the abstract submission deadline had long passed, Cleo allowed Kati to present her Master's project at the ITRA conference with the ambitious title, "The Art of Making a Game." Since that conference, however, Kati shifted her research focus from game design to adult toy play, although her expertise in games has been recognised with her affiliation with the Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies, a research consortium between three universities in Finland, University of Turku, Tampere University and University of Jyväskylä.

Kati describes ITRA as having played a significant role in her career as a researcher. She is particularly grateful to Kristoffer Svensson, who sent her toy research books that had been published by ITRA, just when Kati took an interest in academic research. She is also grateful to Cleo Gougoulis for her kind invitation to the Nafplion conference, and Luisa Magalhaes who, in 2013, acted as the opponent at her doctoral defence in Helsinki, Finland. Finally, though not least, Kati is appreciative of two other ITRA members and academics, Minna Ruckenstein and Eva Brooks, whose invaluable insights aided Kati to improve her thesis manuscript. ITRA is especially important, Kati argues, as a professional "home" for toy researchers around the world. Having been involved in both the research and business of games, Kati has observed how games have attracted massive interest from the viewpoint of both academia and media. She notes, however, that associated areas of

research – in particular play – have been almost neglected by the games industry. This trend seems to be changing, however, as Kati has noticed a greater integration between toy and game studies (a branch of the so-called hybridization model) and a merging of their respective industries. Kati referred to this growing integration in her doctoral thesis as *‘the industries of play.’* Even so, she is quick to point out that there is still surprisingly little toy research being conducted, in comparison to games research. However, Kati senses that the interest in physical playthings is slowly improving as the ‘digital turns physical’ (a trend she detected at the Nuremberg Toy Fair 2019) and companies are realizing that their digital properties may garner more interest, if they expand into the realm of traditional toys. Also, toys are important artefacts of study because of reasons other than interaction design and user-studies; they are an integral part of childhood and formative environments. Indeed, the fact is that most children still receive toys before being exposed to games.

Kati describes ITRA’s regular conferences as being invaluable as they attract toy researchers from around the world as well as providing an opportunity to publish with or through ITRA. This was the case with the Paris conference proceedings in which Kati was able to publish her own work alongside her research colleague, Mattia Thibault. In addition, she recognizes the incomparable value of the conferences in terms of conversations and connections. Kati highlighted especially her enjoyment of the social programming accompanying all ITRA conferences, especially in the smaller-scale locations like Nafplion, Greece, and Braga, Portugal.

For a number of years, Kati sat on the ITRA Board and was an active member of the ITRA Editorial Team, regularly submitting informative articles for the member forums, conferences, and exhibition sections for publication in the newsletter. Kati described her role on the Editorial Team as both fun and educational for someone coming from a non-English speaking background.

Kati’s current academic activities revolve around her post-doctoral position at University of Turku (digital culture studies), studying toys and the visual, material, digital and social cultures of play at the Pori Laboratory of Play and Research Group. In her role as research manager, she has been responsible for designing and setting up a creative playspace for adults, as well as planning and executing playful interventions (courses, pop up lectures, playful workshops and installations within the university space). Kati’s current research interests include the toyfication of culture, toy design and the hybrid (digitally-enhanced or mediated) and trans-generational dimensions of ludic practices. Kati visits several conferences annually and since toy-related conferences are few-and-far-between, she has tended to gravitate towards conferences focusing on design, technology, education, popular culture, game studies, even fashion.

Other than Kati’s research activities, she is passionate about travel as she describes herself as “adventurous by nature with a constant wanderlust and an eagerness to explore the world.” Apart from travel, Kati is fascinated by design - interior design in particular. Kati describes herself as a particularly visual person and is active in the field of visual arts as a creator, curator and art critic in Finland, having published some six hundred exhibition critiques, including articles on local gallery exhibitions as well as larger art museum exhibitions.

Kati has managed to carve for herself a professional niche in terms of established research on adult toy play. The term ‘kidult’ and adults as toy players was introduced as a megatrend at the 2019 Nuremberg Toy Fair last year. Her research has diversified with a number of multidisciplinary research collaborations, for example, conducting studies on adult playfulness in working life and within the organizational context. Toys play a part in this and Kati is developing tools and techniques, as invitations to play, for individuals of all ages.

Thus far, Kati feels quite fortunate in being able to define a path for herself, motivated by being ‘ahead of the game,’ as well as the newness of things, ideas, concepts, or novel combinations - the unexpected, the surprise, the ‘wow’ factor. She describes herself as being a lover of word play and appreciates the potential for online media as a whole new playground for wordplay where she can launch new terminologies, playing with hashtags and other toy and play related verbal arts. Similarly, Kati finds toys to be ever inspiring, since, as she notes, “it is possible to craft a toy out of anything, even oneself - as the popularity of selfie-taking shows exemplifies”. Kati argues that many people like to see themselves in a toy, in particular, 3D figurines being made of themselves, similar to any other forms of portraiture.

Kati hopes to be involved with ITRA and continue to support the organization by presenting at conferences and keeping in touch with dear ITRA colleagues, who have presented her with so many opportunities to play together and advance her career. Likewise, the Association trusts that Kati will continue to be an invaluable and active member well into the future.

Leaving the final words of wisdom to Kati, “If something is truly meaningful in life - research or other creative endeavours - success, fun, and gratification will follow. Be patient, share ideas and collaborate and always be the hardest worker in the crowd. Never forget to be playful, because, when you meet challenges, playful resilience helps. Meanwhile, enjoy the ride - and the toys!”

MEMBER PROFILE – Krystallia Markaki



Krystallia Markaki graduated from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece having studied History and Archaeology. She is currently reading for a PhD, at Panteion University, and her thesis is entitled “Playing with playthings during the interwar era - A transnational Greekness.” She hopes to complete her Ph.D by June 2020.

Krystallia presented a paper at a workshop held at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, USA, in May 2018, entitled “The artistic potency of toys or Toys qua works of art in interwar Greece,” and a paper at the 8th ITRA Conference entitled “Toy Design in the Papastrateios School of Interwar Athens Toys.” She has written a journal article,

“Pedagogical ideas and practices of the League for Women’s Rights.” Dokimes (in press).

Krystallia’s specific interest in toys was set in motion once she embarked on her PhD studies as you can see from the title of her dissertation, “Playing with playthings during the interwar era - A transnational Greekness.” The study seeks to capture the rationale underlying the first attempt, within a Greek context, to produce toys with an appeal which transcended national boundaries while maintaining characteristics imbued from ancient Greek civilization. She is currently investigating the history of toys with a primary focus on toys made by children at Papastrateios School of Toys, in particular, toys made by children for children.

Toys are permeated with the potential to liberate, continues Krystallia, and this makes toys the “fantastic things they are.” She argues that toys are fascinating objects, particularly when they are hand-made and not mass produced, since they are unique artefacts and not the products of the culture industry. She continues, “When toys are made by children and for children, they become even more interesting, as they form a conduit for children’s expression and not simply an object of utility. In short, these toys become artistic objects and not cheap, standardized, one-size-fits-all things. Toys, when made by children, condense the playfulness, originality and authenticity of children’s imagination, as producers, and the building process bridges the gap between conception and execution and the gap between producers and consumers, for who knows better than children themselves with what they like to play.” In a similar vein, Krystallia quotes Charles Baudelaire, the 19th century French poet and essayist, whom she approaches as a theorist of toys rather than as a poet, from his essay *A philosophy of toys*, “The toy is the child’s earliest initiation to art or rather it is for him the first concrete example of art.”

Krystallia first became aware of the International Toy Research Association through Cleo Gougoulis – her PhD supervisor – who forwarded to her the 2018 Paris Conference’s *Call-For-Papers*. Krystallia described the intrigue of a conference dedicated to toy research as “irresistible”; in addition, she hoped it would be a means of meeting researchers in her field of study. However, while ITRA may not have directly contributed to her dissertation, she was encouraged by meeting and developing relationships with researchers, from different countries and disciplines, who shared a love for and interest in toys. Krystallia described the Paris ITRA conference as opening new horizons for her, both professionally and academically. In addition to a few novel historical approaches, she was also exposed to a number of contemporary perspectives on toys, the toy industry and toy research which were new to her.

Currently, Krystallia is struggling to complete her dissertation as it demands a considerable proportion of her time, consequently she says, “So much so, that there is no time available for anything else, not even for toys or games. Greek society tends not to distinguish between toys and games and saying there is no time for games, really means no time to play. Time is devoted to writing and recently there have been no visits to antique shops in search of old toys - primarily toys in their boxes - and board games.” Krystallia has a particular interest in wooden toys and boxes, the latter, she describes as “mysterious items par excellence, for you never know what may be hidden within them. They can also be artistic objects in themselves, particularly the pre-industrialized/non-standardized examples.”

Regarding her future, Krystallia is unsure where her interest in toy research may take her, however she adds, to quote Charles Baudelaire once more, “Through the Unknown, we’ll find the New.” This attitude exemplifies ITRA and we hope Krystallia will be part of our Association for many years to come.

MEMBERS' FORUM

Please remember when you do submit items for inclusion in the Newsletter to send them in a downloadable form.

FINLAND

Mattia Thibault sent us the following.

This may be of interest to ITRA newsletter readers, as I have just published a book (in Italian) dedicated to the semiotics of play. One of the main chapters is dedicated to toys and playthings. Here is a link to [Colpire nel segno, la semiotica dell'irragionevole](#) and a brief synopsis in English:

We all know, or think we know, what "play" is, but how does this indispensable and varied cultural device really work? What interpretative and communicative operations does it involve? Today, while our culture appears to be the subject of a progressive ludicisation, testified by the flourishing of the video game industry and the fortune of new paradigms such as gamification or game-based learning, these questions appear more pressing than ever. This book tries to answer from a specific point of view, that of semiotics. By investigating the game in its various facets (regulated or free, solitary or in a group) and in its various incarnations (toys, video games, board or role-playing games, etc.), the volume aims to lay the foundations for a ludosemiotics, a play theory based on the latter's ability to create, modify and convey meaning.

All best!

Mattia

Kati Heljakka sent us two articles which she recently published:

Pandemic toy play against social distancing: Teddy bears, window-screens and playing for the common good in times of self-isolation.

This article investigates the recent global phenomenon of the teddy challenge (nallejahti) with a focus on Finland. Beginning in March 2020 and as result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Finnish citizens started to cheer up passersby by displaying teddy bears in their windows. As this activity gained media interest and popularity, it gradually grew into a form of contemporary toy play, inviting both children and adults to participate in the activity as displayers and spectators of toys. Furthermore, a gamified challenge was added on to this originally open-ended and visual-material play pattern made available to a broader audience thanks to sharing on social media. Through an examination of national and international newspaper articles and images posted with the hashtag #nallejahti on social media platforms, the phenomenon is articulated and analyzed through the theoretical lenses of mimetic object play, social screen-based play, and toy play as an act that potentially facilitates mental well-being through imagination, participation, and communal play-here understood as playing for the common good. By theorizing and framing the current phenomenon as pandemic toy play, the article suggests the importance of resourcefulness and playful social resilience as facets of a transgenerational play practice in times of forced self-isolation and physical social distancing.

Link to publication: <http://widerscreen.fi/numerot/ajankohtaista/pandemic-toy-play-against-social-distancing-teddy-bears-window-screens-and-playing-for-the-common-good-in-times-of-self-isolation/>

And:

Robot dogs, interaction and ludic literacy: Exploring smart toy engagements in transgenerational play.

This article highlights a study focusing on playful human-robotics interaction with an interest in robot dogs, technologically enhanced play, and ludic literacy. In order to find out how players of different ages react to, approach and employ a robot dog (called Golden Pup) in play, we designed an experimental study with 6-7-year-old children and 80+-year-old seniors. We conducted the study with preschoolers and seniors, who during a playtest session interacted with a toy robot, namely a smart toy dog resembling a golden retriever puppy. Our aim was to find out how the toy robot invites playful interaction with it, facilitates social engagement between generations of players, and opens up conversations around social robotics and adaptive learning on toy-based technologies between players of different ages. Our findings suggest the role and importance of play in media education and show how robotic toys can be used to enhance ludic literacy when shared as a part of transgenerational play.

Link to publication:

<https://revistas.ulusofona.pt/index.php/reducacao/article/view/7069>

GERMANY

Artemis Yagou sent us an update on her latest publications.

My forthcoming, play-related publications may be of interest to ITRA members:

- *The Other Side of Play: Fear and Frustration in the Design, Consumption, and Use of Construction Sets*. In: Journal of Design History (in press, 2020).

- *Building a Mini-Parthenon: Experiences of Users*. In: Kühberger, C. (ed): Mit Geschichte spielen. Bielefeld: Transcript (in press, 2020).

- *Play, Design, Politics: Technical Toys, Design Policies and British-German Exchanges in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*. In: Wasensteiner, L. (eds), *Sites of Interchange*. London: Peter lang (in press, 2020).
- *More than a Toy Box: Dandanah and the Sea of Stories*. In: Bauer, S.; Schlünder, M.; Rentetzi, M. (eds): *Boxes: A Field Guide*. Manchester: Mattering Press (in press, 2020).
Thank you & Stay safe,
Artemis Yagou

GREECE

Cleo Gougoulis forwarded a petition issued by Anna Beresin of TASP, supporting recess in US schools, as these periods are once again in danger due to Covid-19 related social distancing measures. Cleo thought it may be of interest as recess scholars and lobbyists may welcome international support on the issue:

Anna Beresin wrote – *Several international scholars have banded together to encourage recess when schools reopen. We welcome your signatures and hope you spread the word. Let's make sure the grownups do not forget about the importance of play in these difficult times.*

Visit globalrecessalliance.org

HONG KONG

Rémi Leclerc sent us the following article outlining a competition in which he is involved:

DCDC - D'source Corona Design Challenge 2020 international design competition

<https://dsourcechallenge.org>

How can games be harnessed to help us navigate our lives in times of crisis? In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, India's D'source online design resource platform launched the Corona Design Challenge in April 2020. Framing the issue as a universal design problem, the competition brief emphasized design's ability to appreciate global and local sensibilities and to play a role in mitigating the pandemic's effects. The brief highlighted how the pandemic redefined our everyday experience, and how lockdowns, in limiting the use of resources and movements (of people and things), slowed down modern life, unintentionally allowing the earth to rejuvenate, and ironically helping us realise how ignoring Nature's interconnected system imperils all life and our own existence. Hence proposals needed to respect the broader social and environmental picture and be sustainable. Participants were encouraged to include an account of their design process in their submission to demonstrate appropriateness in approach, knowledge, and rationale. Organisers identified ten problem areas to address through design, including raising awareness on the pandemic's issues, promoting healthy and safe behaviour, managing isolation facilities or crowd moving in public spaces, or visualising pandemic data. Over 2000 participants from 52 countries submitted 1254 entries, of which 19 winning card and board game designs were selected out of 75 entries. Results were announced May 31st. D'source released winning designs online for download at <https://dsourcechallenge.org/results.html>. Winning entries will also be printed as a book and displayed in a traveling exhibition during 2020-2021.

Rémi Leclerc, PolyPlay Lab, Hong Kong

D'source Corona Design Challenge Game Design Category Jury member

THE PHILIPPINES

Jean-Pierre Rossie, in response to a call for Member Forum articles, wrote the following:

I am doing fine but could not return from Manila to Belgium earlier on in May because British Airways cancelled all flights. The same happened to all my planned trips in and around Europe. The international colloquia in Fribourg, on *Play and Toys in Antiquity*, due to be held at the end of June and at which I planned to participate, has understandably been postponed to an unspecified later date.

Here in Dagupan, in the Philippines, I am continuing in good health and well cared for. Not being in a position to travel to Europe for about two months offers me some extra time to continue writing the conclusion of the new book on make-believe games among Amazigh children of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas. I plan to complete the book and for it to be available online in January 2021 – in the meantime, the latest version, as of the 7th May 2020, is available on Academia.edu <https://www.academia.edu/42967387>

Wishing the ITRA membership good health and all the best,

Jean-Pierre

CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

This section covers current, up-coming and past conferences and exhibitions. Previews and reviews of conferences are sought for the next edition of the ITRA Newsletter.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

Due to the current international Covid-19 pandemic many conference organisers have placed their conference plans on hold. More information will be published once it becomes available.

PAST CONFERENCES

January 2020

Kids@Play/Family Tech Summit, was held at the Venetian, Las Vegas, USA, 7th – 10th January 2020.



Digital natives are now raising families of their own. They expect tech to fit seamlessly into their lifestyles. Both legacy brands and new thought leaders in the kids and family tech arena introduced the next generation of devices and services including STEM and tech-toys, IoT devices at home and on-the-go, smart home and voice-enabled devices, plus a look at what AI means to family life.

For more info:

<https://www.ces.tech/conference/28339.aspx>

March 2020

Play For All, 2020 Conference on the Value of Play, was held online hosted by Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, USA, 29th March – 1st April 2020.



Play For All explored play across the lifespan and addressed universal issues of access, equity, inclusion, health and more. The latest research and practices in the field of play were presented at the play conference, which brought together play researchers, park and recreation professionals, educators, health scientists, building architects, landscape architects, business and community leaders, psychologists, physicians, museum professionals, students and parents from across the U.S. and beyond.

For more information visit:

<https://usplaycoalition.org/playconference2020>

PAST EXHIBITIONS

LEGO: Building The Bowes Museum, was held at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, Co Durham, UK, 25th May 2019 – 23rd February 2020.

The exhibition called all LEGO® fans and families to follow an exciting trail of 15 of our most loved objects including the Silver Swan recreated by Brick This' Steve Mayes and have a go at making them too!

For more information visit:

<https://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk/Exhibitions/2019/Lego-Building-The-Bowes-Museum>

Play Well was held at the Wellcome Collection, Euston Road, London, UK, 24th October 2019 – 8th March 2020.

'Play Well' explored how play transforms both childhood and society. The exhibition used displays of historic toys and games, artworks and design, to investigate how play develops social bonds, emotional resilience and physical wellbeing. The exhibition included: images of children at play in the street, in playgrounds and beyond; makeshift and commercially produced toys; digital games and a larp (live-action role play) space by artist Adam James.

For more information visit:

<https://wellcomecollection.org/exhibitions/XSg-7xEAACcAGVXc>

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 iranewsltr@gmail.com.

Bak, M. A. (2020). *Playful Visions: Optical Toys and the Emergence of Children's Media Culture*

The kaleidoscope, the stereoscope, and other nineteenth-century optical toys analyzed as "new media" of their era, were said to provoke anxieties similar to our own about children and screens. In the nineteenth century, the kaleidoscope, the thaumatrope, the zoetrope, the stereoscope, and other optical toys were standard accessories of a middle-class childhood, used both at home and at school. In *Playful Visions*, Meredith Bak argues that the optical toys of the nineteenth century were the "new media" of their era, teaching children to be discerning consumers of media-and also provoking anxieties similar to contemporary worries about children's screen time. Bak shows that optical toys-which produced visual effects ranging from a moving image to the illusion of depth-established and reinforced a new understanding of vision as an interpretive process. At the same time, the expansion of the middle class as well as education and labour reforms contributed to a new notion of childhood as a time of innocence and play. Modern media culture and the emergence of modern Western childhood are thus deeply interconnected. Drawing on extensive archival research, Bak discusses, among other things, the circulation of optical toys, and the wide visibility gained by their appearance as printed templates and textual descriptions in periodicals; expanding conceptions of literacy, which came to include visual acuity; and how optical play allowed children to exercise a sense of visual mastery. She examines optical toys alongside related visual technologies including chromolithography-which inspired both chromatic delight and chromophobia. Finally, considering the contemporary use of optical toys in advertising, education, and art, Bak analyzes the endurance of nineteenth-century visual paradigms.



The International Journal of Play

2021 Special Issue Call for Papers entitled *Play: Resilience and Vulnerability in Difficult Circumstances*

This special issue focuses on play and providing for play during times of crisis and stress including homelessness, abject poverty, natural disasters, border crossing/trafficking, imprisonment, refugee/mass migration, pandemic, terrorism, and war. Drawing on Sutton-Smith's (2017) conceptual framework on play as emotional survival, this issue is broadly organized around play as a coping mechanism in the face of external adversities and as a way to foster resilience and hope. As such, an organizing principle is how play serves a protective function against risks to children but also how it might be compromised in difficult circumstances. To this end, the special issue calls upon multidisciplinary scholars who are exploring the interrelationship between play, resilience, and vulnerability to contribute reviews or empirical papers that capture the dimensions of this process.

The guest co-editors of the special issue are James E. Johnson (The Pennsylvania State University), Jaipaul L. Roopnarine (Syracuse University), and Michael M. Patte (Bloomsburg University). Potential contributors are invited to submit a 250 word abstract to the editors by July 15, 2020.

Full papers of up to 7,000 words, which will go through a blind peer-review process prior to publication, are to be submitted by November 1, 2020.

Review the *International Journal of Play* website for details regarding the presentation of material:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rijp20/current#.VZINvmqBc>

For further information, inquiries, and to submit abstracts for the special issue, email the co-editors.

James E. Johnson: jej4@psu.edu

Jaipaul L. Roopnarine: jroopnar@syr.edu

Michael M. Patte: mpatte@bloomu.edu



MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- 1) From Tremor to Buzz Lightyear - meet the toys that have been to space
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52874060>
- 2) Less is more when it comes to children's toys and quality play time, expert says
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-17/toy-overload-stops-kids-from-playing/11965898>
- 3) Would Greta Thunberg's generation play with these toys?
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51221865>
- 4) How a toy retailer is adding quality play time to quarantine
<https://www.pymnts.com/news/retail/2020/toy-retailer-quality-play-time-quarantine/>
- 5) How COVID is changing play patterns
<https://kidscreen.com/2020/05/12/how-covid-is-changing-kids-play-patterns/>
- 6) "We don't give children the freedom to play" says designer Cas Holman
<https://www.dezeen.com/2020/02/14/cas-holman-toy-designer-interview/>
- 7) Not Child's Play: Toys that inspired NASA innovations
<http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.html?pid=55691>
- 8) Why toy retailers are betting big on experiential
<https://kidscreen.com/2020/03/06/why-toy-retailers-are-betting-big-on-experiential/>
- 9) Local toy stores get creative to help kids play during COVID-19
<https://www.wcpo.com/open/local-toy-stores-get-creative-to-help-kids-play-during-covid-19>
- 10) Whisky, the Collie, knows her toys
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/science/dog-learning-toys.html>
- 11) Practical joke or toy? Leather 'mouse' shows Romans' playful side
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/16/practical-joke-or-toy-leather-mouse-shows-romans-playful-side>
- 12) US outdoor toy sales surge
<https://kidscreen.com/2020/05/20/outdoor-toys-sales-surge/>
- 13) Coronavirus heroes: Matchbox cars, action figures and UNO cards honor front-line workers
<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/05/19/coronavirus-mattel-matchbox-frontline-heroes-set-essential-workers-medical-professionals/5212122002/>
- 14) Next generation of soft robots inspired by a children's toy
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/05/200520151245.htm>
- 15) Sales of board games and jigsaws soar during coronavirus lockdown
<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/01/sales-of-board-games-and-jigsaws-soar-during-coronavirus-lockdown>
- 16) Is Augmented Reality the Next Big Thing in the Toy Industry?
<https://arpost.co/2020/04/27/augmented-reality-next-big-thing-toy-industry/>
- 17) Reusable Toy Packaging Boosts the Fun Factor
<https://www.packagingdigest.com/sustainable-packaging/reusable-toy-packaging-boosts-the-fun-factor-2020-03-06>
- 18) The Source sees year on year growth in robotics toys as it eyes expansion into the wider toy sector
<https://www.toynews-online.biz/2020/03/02/the-source-sees-year-on-year-growth-in-robotics-toys-as-it-eyes-expansion-into-the-toy-sector/>



ITRA 2020 Fees Notice

Please note that, according to the ITRA Board's decision in Alicante, 8th August 2005, conference fees cover ITRA membership fees until the following conference. This means that conference participants who paid full registration fees for the 8th ITRA conference in Paris, France, 2018 have been exempted from paying ITRA dues for the years 2019 through 2022.

If you were not able to attend the conference in Paris, you must submit your annual membership fee for 2019 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 2020. 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.

Regards
Suzy & Mark

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