

1st International Toy Library Conference – United Kingdom

London, 30 March – 2 April 1978

Main Theme : (Not known)

(Logo)

The first international conference of Toy libraries was organised by the Toy Libraries Association in London in 1978. It was the suggestion of Annetine Forell from Australia in a letter sent to Lesley Moreland, the Director of TLA

"The Council and the staff were excited but daunted at the prospect. TLA had a very small staff, toy libraries in the UK were opening at a rate of over one hundred a year, funding was tight and there were many projects to be achieved in the UK including the extension of toy libraries to all children in addition to children with special needs....."

Contacts with other countries had been building rapidly, mainly through correspondence but also through visits to the toy display room. The pack developed for people wanting to start toy libraries in the UK had been sent all over the world. Letters with exotic stamps arrived regularly with news of developments. It would be such fun to meet the people and find out more about the amazing variety of toy libraries. The TLA Council agreed that the conference should go ahead but there was no budget to cover expenses, no extra staff to do the work and the event would have to be fully self funding....A theme "Toy libraries are Teamwork" was chosen to reflect the co-operation between families, volunteers and professionals working together for the benefit of the children who used toy libraries" (Lesley Moreland, conference organiser)

There were 180 delegates from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, India, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Rhodesia, Sweden, Switzerland, and USA plus the home countries of England, Scotland & Wales.

"We were all housed at Digby Stuart College, which meant it was very matey, with lots of chances to get together informally. One lady came from Japan- non English speaking, but we managed with lots of bows and smiles. The language was English and that was that-no translators!" (Roma Lear)

Programme

Thursday 30th March 1978

Registration, Reception & supper

Welcome & Introduction by Christine Reeves Chair of TLA & David Money-Coutts Patron of the association.

Films

Friday 31st March

Morning

Toy Libraries are Teamwork: Four Points of View-

A Professional's view-----Joan Head, psychologist, Nottingham University TL

A Parent's view-----Christine Dunmore, Darlington TL

A Volunteer's view-----Sheila Osborne, Leicester Red Cross TL

The Community view-----Celia Burn from Home link

Afternoon

Overseas Toy Libraries

"Voluntary help in Dutch Toy Libraries"—Kitty Keyser-Gaymans

"Noah's Ark TL Melbourne" Annetine Forell

"Norwegian Toy Libraries- Quo Vadis?"----Uni Bohmer

"Toys of Love- USA"---- Ellen Snyder

Evening

Forum-a chance to put questions to the speakers, and for group discussion.

Saturday 1st April

Morning

"Making Toys"-----Roma Lear

"Toys"-----Audrey Stephenson

Discussion

Afternoon

“The Importance of Play in a Child’s Development”---- Mia Kellmer Pringle

“Soapbox-Opinions can be aired, points made, questions asked, problems shared in this session”

Evening

Formal Dinner

Sunday 2nd April

“Toys in Public Libraries”—John Allen Whitehawk Library Brighton

“Summing Up” Christine Reeves, Chair and Lesley Moreland, Director of TLA

Excursion.

It was decided unanimously by all present that the bonds of friendship formed between countries should be maintained, that there should be an international newsletter in English (TLA published the first and distributed it at the 1981 conference), and that there should be a link person in each country responsible for that country's inclusion. A collection was made and with the funds left after the conference organization a bank account of £60.00 was set up. Another conference would be held in 3 years, offers to host it came from France, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Canada & USA.

For Memories of the 1st Conference, click here (the short report below)

"REMEMBRANCE OF TIMES PAST

Reflections

Young women on the verge of liberty, Mary Glue, Jan Bailey and I flew to England in 1978 to attend the 1st International Toy Library Conference.

Australian concepts of Toy Libraries for handicapped children (now the terminology seems quaint) grew from a simple premise - if you hear and respect what parents say about their experiences a cycle of interaction is enhanced validating parents experiences of pain , frustration, hope or despair. Actually being heard was and perhaps still is a rare experience.

Joan Head who worked with John and Elizabeth Newson at Nottingham University to establish their research toy library had invited us to stay with

her. Joan showed us 3 volumes of the Nottingham report late in the evening. Mary and I were sitting up in our respective beds reading. Suddenly the house was filled with noise and questions and recognition for us that the path Australian Toy Libraries were taking had been validated by research, heady exciting .days- listening, respect ,acknowledgment,

We headed of to London for the 1st International Toy Library Conference at Roehampton. Organised by Lesley Moreland, at that time Lesley fostered toy Libraries in the UK and was a tremendous strength. I think it is fair to say that we felt we had come home: to share in the understanding of a growing philosophy that in 1978 was foreign to most medical models. The Conference ran over 3 days. The vitality and freshness felt by the Australian group was fantastic" (Annetine Forell)

For more Memories of the 1st Conference, click here (the short report below)

Memories of the 1st International Toy Library Conference

by Roma Lear

I have been thinking back to the very first International Toy Library Conference which was held in the UK in 1978. Compared to the ones that followed I suppose it was a fairly small affair, but my box of paper reminds me that there were 154 people there and that they represented 18 different countries. The venue was a teachers' training college on the outskirts of London. It was perfect for us because we were all able to live under one roof and soon made friends with each other. All the events took place on the same campus.

The Conference lasted from Thursday afternoon, the 30th March to Sunday lunchtime, 2nd April. Looking through the programme it seems amazing that we could cram so much into such a short time .We all attended the same sessions. Friday morning a professional, a parent, a volunteer and a social worker all talked about their experiences as a member of a toy library. In the afternoon we heard about Toy Libraries in Norway, Holland, USA and Australia. After supper a panel of speakers answered questions about their particular toy libraries. At odd moments we could look at the displays by toy manufacturers and a model toy library.

Sunday we learnt about good design for toys for children with disabilities and the value of play. This was followed by a "soap box session" where opinions could be aired, questions asked and problems shared. The day ended with a formal dinner and we were all presented with a little banner that gave details of the conference and boldly proclaimed "Toy Libraries are teamwork".

On Sunday morning we thought about the future and our hopes and plans for all our toy libraries .It was agreed that Sweden would host the next International Conference and we handed over our little British Schoolgirl doll. She had been the mascot of the Conference. After lunch there was a coach trip for our visitors and we waved them off with much regret that the Conference was over.