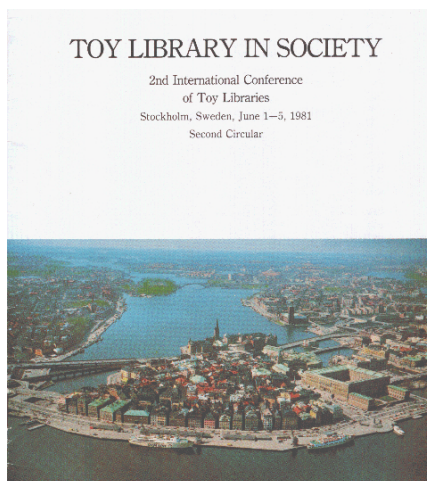


2nd International Toy Library Conference – Sweden

Stockholm, 1–5 June 1981

Main Theme : Toy Library in Society



This Conference was hosted by the Swedish Toy Libraries Association and sponsored by the Swedish government and the National Swedish Board for Health & Welfare as a contribution to the Year of the Disabled. It was a bigger and more scientific event than the first conference, and reflected the nature of Swedish Lekoteks (Toy Libraries) which are for young disabled children. The objective was to share knowledge and to give specialists and lekotek staff possibilities of exchanging experiences and making study visits... 230 people from 30 countries were there. Gretta Hellberg was the conference president. The 5 day programme ran from Sunday May 31 to

Friday June 5th and was divided into

1. Invited speakers and lectures
2. Symposia on
 - i. Children's language & communication
 - ii. Perception
 - iii. The importance of play in a child's development
3. Free papers, posters and table clinics
4. Exhibition
5. Study visits

Delegates were invited to present free papers or posters, 10 minutes were allowed for oral presentations with 5 minutes for questions. An Abstract of all presentations was published in English and presented to delegates.

Wednesday was spent on study visits.

The social programme included receptions at the Folkets Hus and the Town Hall, a folklore evening and a memorable evening cruise in the Stockholm archipelago.

Delegates from countries such as Great Britain where the need to play of disabled children was beginning to be recognized returned home astonished and invigorated by all they had seen.

For Memories of the 2nd Conference, [click here](#) (the short report below)

Memories of the 2nd International Toy Library Conference

Margaret Vogwell (personal communication with Pat Atkinson)

"A real eye opener: I was not used to conferences then and this one was superb. We stayed in various hotels, mostly in language groups... Poster displays made their first appearance. We had a grand reception at the Town Hall which is magnificent, and a dinner at Skansen, the Folk Museum Park. I ate reindeer for the first time! The rain fell in buckets, but nothing could damp our spirits. At the end of the meal was a huge raffle-anything from beautiful dolls to the Swedish flag, or a wooden spoon! We all had a ticket, and it was the luck of the draw. The visits were excellent. I went to a children's residential home, and remember the freedom the children had.... On the way to the dining hall they had to follow an "obstacle course" which included steps, a rope bridge, a wide balancing bar etc. I also saw the children's department at Uppsala Hospital. Special memories- looms in the play room (where beds were pushed to) and a huge water play complex with locks, docks, dry dock etc.!!

Re: The Conference- in the first two days every member of the organizing committee had personally greeted every delegate. A lovely touch not repeated elsewhere.

I remember particularly Betty Willis from New Zealand involved the whole community in her toy library even helping elderly housebound ladies to contribute by asking them to crochet strings to close the toy bags. Moira Mc Lean ran a toy library on visiting days at a Scottish prison. The toys were for playing with "on site". This could be a means of communication between the inmates and their families and of course helped to make the visits much more pleasurable and relaxed.

The opening session was memorable- even after all these years. It was about children's clothing and how it reflected the attitude of grown ups to children at the time, and of course the effect of clothing on play. It was illustrated with slides of portraits of children through the ages- gradually showing their emancipation from long stiff dresses, frills etc where they were expected to be miniature adults. No wonder so many died young (boredom I guess!!!)

Yet another well planned conference, good speakers, good visits and relaxation to meet and learn from other participants. I learned a lot and spent a lot on a special need apron, still going strong today. Such good companionship with old and new friends. The study visit to University Hospital Uppsala inspired me.

For more Memories of the 2nd Conference, [click here](#) (the short report below)

Memories of the 2nd International Toy Library Conference

by Roma Lear

The second International Conference was held in Stockholm from June 1st - 5th, 1981. I think everyone that attended it will have happy memories, but for me it was an extra special experience. It began with my very first flight on a jumbo jet! That in itself was an exciting experience, but once we touched down at Arlanda Airport a whole new world lay before me, and thanks to the Conference so many new ideas and experiences came my way.

On the Sunday afternoon we registered at the Folkets Hus which was to be our Conference home and met each other at the evening Reception. All the six members of the Conference Committee circulated amongst us, introducing themselves and greeting us individually. It was a lovely friendly gesture and made us feel really welcome.

On Monday the conference began in earnest with entertainment by a children's choir and welcoming speeches. At that time toy libraries were still mainly concerned with the play needs of children with disabilities so naturally the Conference reflected this. We began with lectures on "Modern Society and the needs of Children" and followed that with a Symposium on "Children's Language and Communication". The day ended with a truly memorable Reception in the superb Stockholm Town Hall.

Tuesday's programme was headed "Perceptual Motor and Attention Aspects of Development". This sounds intellectual, but interspersed with the theory were many practical hints such as, for children with hand function problems playing "Pick a Stick" with lengths of dowel, or having two children hold the ends of a couple of broom sticks and roll a ball between them. The day ended with a cruise round the archipelago near Stockholm. The weather was perfect, the food wonderful and the view breathtaking. (I was reminded of this happy time when on the recent cruise around Tokyo Bay.)

Wednesday was devoted to study visits. I chose one a distance away so that I could see as much of the countryside as possible! My group headed for the Teaching Hospital and Research Centre at Upsala. On the way we visited the Folke Bernadote Home which was linked to the Hospital. Here about fifty children with various disabilities, multiceps, deaf/blindness, Autism etc. received continuing care and therapy in a homely atmosphere. I have vivid memory of a little girl trotting out of the woods behind the Home, carrying a bunch of wild flowers she had just picked. To reach the dining hall all the children had to manoeuvre their way along an assault course – between parallel bars, over wood slats on bungee rubber, through hoops and tunnels and up steps. Some of the children were helped along the way. None was allowed to fail.

The Paediatric Department of Upsala Hospital seemed to me to have every luxury to delight both children and staff. My eye travelled from the beautiful weaving on the blinds to the attractive pictures on the wall, and took in the double pine handrails – top one for adults, lower one for children – and of course the toys EVERYWHERE. As well as play facilities on all the wards there was also a huge playroom for the ambulant children and there was plenty of room for beds too. Here I was a girl weaving at a large loom, and the biggest waterplay complex ever! It was complete with lock, harbours, wharves with cranes for unloading the vessels, water wheels, and a whole fleet of boats of different kinds. In a corner was a real potter's wheel! It must almost be a pleasure to be a sick child in Sweden!

Thursday was devoted to free papers, mostly from toy library organisers. All were inspiring, but two I remember particularly were from New Zealand and Scotland. Betty Willis from NZ was a member of the Salvation Army and she involved the whole community in her toy library, even helping elderly housebound ladies to contribute by asking them to crochet the strings to close the toy bags. Moria Maclean ran a toy library on visiting days at a Scottish prison. The toys were for playing with "on site". This could be a means of communication between the inmates and their families and of course helped to make visits much more pleasurable and relaxed. At the end of the day we all enjoyed a splendid Folklore Evening.

On Friday, the final day, we had papers on "The Importance of Play in Child Development". I suppose all the speakers were talking to the converted, but again there were many helpful hints. I see I have noted "Play more – teach less" "Don't interrupt" and "Don't forget the button box – real objects often better than toys!"

The Conference ended with a dinner at Skansen, the folk part in Stockholm. I remember arriving in the drenching rain by taxi, buying raffle tickets, and later enjoying my first taste of reindeer. The raffle draw lasted ages and ages for nearly everyone had a prize – a beautiful Swedish doll or maybe a flag or a wooden spoon. We were also entertained with singing and dancing.

After this amazing week I think we all felt "Wow! What an inspiring Conference!" We went away with new ideas and our memories full of happy experiences.