

## 5<sup>th</sup> International Toy Library Conference – Italy

Turin, 1 – 5 November 1990  
**Main Theme : Play is for All**



This conference had three official languages and a complex programme of simultaneous sessions. Many delegates stayed in student accommodation with a magical view across the city to the snow covered Alps. There was disappointment that Glenda Jackson was not able to attend, she sent a message.

Ivanka Stricevic gave a fascinating talk about the toy library & playgroup at the Children's Library in Zagreb Croatia Yugoslavia. Those expecting a simple situation were dazzled by the scope of her work, a bar code checkout system, which was cutting edge technology at the time, linked book & toy loan, stay & play sessions. She foresaw the war that was to come and talked of the need for a safe place for children to play.

Another delegate from behind the disintegrating "Iron curtain" was Elena Bulin Sokolova who with support from contacts made in Turin organized a "Toys Today and Tomorrow" conference in Moscow in 1992.

A workshop where children come to learn about making playthings with natural materials was visited and the cultural importance of traditional games & pastimes was emphasized in several presentations. Another cultural concern was expressed in a Canadian film about the violent imagery of many commercial toys. Sigurd Reimers asked in a keynote speech if "Playing is too important to be left to children?" The ethos of play for children, adults, old people, parents, all kinds of play workers & educators was also the subject of several speakers and training for toy librarians was addressed in a round table discussion.

*"This conference was my second opportunity to participate on an international level with toy libraries and family support services. Many of the participants attending in Turin had also been in Toronto in 1987.*

*Turin had 31 countries participating with excellent technical assistance and translation. There were two objectives-*

- To learn and share together.*
- To establish an international association of toy libraries*

*A variety of talks, debates and presentations were given in the morning followed by half-hour workshops in the afternoon. I attended workshops describing services in Portugal, India, Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Germany. Most of these services were very similar to Canadian Programs and it was exciting to see and hear about the universality of toys and play, children and parents. I also met and spoke to people involved in the movement from Iceland, Israel, Brazil, Zimbabwe and the USSR.*

*We had a day of tours to an Italian toy library, a museum of toys and culture and a teacher's resource centre. These were interesting and a diversion from only hearing about services. The Italians are working toward integrating toy libraries as part of their educational system and are very interested in issues of training.*

*The highlight of the conference was Roy Mc Conkey's game. He involved everyone in a participatory exercise illustrating the universality of some games. The world-wide winners were Hop Scotch, Cat's Cradle (string game), Jacks (or variations) and spinning tops." (Sherryl Smith, President TLRC Canada)*

A Toy Library Documentation Centre was set up after this conference, which later moved to Florence in the care of Giorgio Bartolucci.

WRP International was set up at the Toronto conference in 1987 to research in the field of play and disability. They sent 200 questionnaires to 70 countries for their first international survey.

"Play is for All! Toy libraries in an International Perspective" by Eva Bjork Akesson, Jane Brodin, Greta Hellberg, Marianne Lindberg of Sweden and Mary Sinker of the USA was the resulting report that was distributed at the Turin conference. It gives the first authoritative information about the extent and range of toy libraries in the world. In 1999 a second edition was published by the Swedish Toy Library association based on the 17 replies received after they had sent questionnaires to all ITLA link people.

ITLA was formally constituted in Turin and its **Board** elected.

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**Membership**-3 year for countries with a **national association** to cost **\$100 US**, for **individuals** or an informal group in any country to cost **\$25 US** per year.