

## ARGENTINA

Link person and Email	Laura Lagos <a href="mailto:info@lekotek.org.ar">info@lekotek.org.ar</a>
National toy library association	lekotek Centre
Web link	<a href="http://www.lekotek.org.ar">www.lekotek.org.ar</a>
Contact person	Lic. Gabriela Oller, lekotek's General Coordinator and Toy Library Coordinator <a href="mailto:info@lekotek.org.ar">info@lekotek.org.ar</a>
Brief History	lekotek is a non-profit organization based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is the administrative and training centre for a nationwide network of 120 toy libraries located in schools, poor neighbourhoods, health centres and hospitals.
Mission	To promote the inclusion of children with disabilities and at social risk into their families as well as into community life through playing.
Services /Activities	Sponsored by official institutions, companies and private donors, lekotek is able to open Toy Libraries in social, educational or health institutions.  Since 1990, we have open 120 toy libraries and established a network of play centres for the benefit of children living in poor conditions and at social risk all over the country.  lekotek develops different programs to highlight the importance of playing for the children's well being and has an important role defending the children's right to play. One of these is lekotek's toy library ( see later)
<b>Conferences</b>	No information at this time
Meetings	No information at this time
Networking	No information at this time
<b>Toy Library Information</b>	
Number of known toy libraries	120
Administration	No information at this time
Communities served (clients)	Children with disabilities and at social risk
Qualifications of toy librarians	No information at this time
<b>Training</b>	We develop training activities tailored for toy library staff or people willing to work in this field, mostly special educators, child life specialists, therapists, social and family counsellors and rehab professionals.  The lekotek's Training Centre also offers training to the general public--such as volunteers, parents, company staff-- without any requirements of academic qualifications.

## **Additional Information**

Lekotek's toy library is performing successfully since its establishment in 1990. It's a space conceived for families with children with disabilities or at social risk where they can interact and enjoy the benefits of playing. There are toys and other materials to let the children play and focus on their activities instead of distracting them. In addition, there is specially trained staff acting as play coordinators to promote and motivate the participation of the children and their fathers in the ludic activities.

The toy library tries to highlight the benefits of spontaneous play and encourage children to experiment, investigate and express themselves through playing sessions. It supports the inclusion of children with special needs and at social risk into their families and community activities suited for every particular child.

The toy library offers different alternatives that contribute to the well being of the children and their families and also contributes to a better understanding of the importance of spontaneous play in a child's life.

Besides working locally with families of disabled children and or at social risk, the toy library receives also many other groups of children from different institutions.

We conduct:

- play sessions with toy lending for families with disabled children and for families with children at social risk in other locations
- play workshops for fathers, professionals and volunteers,
- training courses connected to playing, child development and child disabilities for people interested in work in these fields
- training for disabled young people in the cleaning, repairing and construction of toys and other playing materials.

In order to include families and institutional groups into the playing sessions the toy library team interview the parents or professionals before playing with the children. The information gathered in these meetings allows us to choose strategies and ludic techniques that make possible a better approach as well to the children as the adults.

At the toy library the focus is on the joy of playing, the development of creativity, communication and the creation of mutual bonds. Family members and friends are welcomed and encouraged to take part of the playing activities or join parent groups so they will have the opportunity to socialize with other families in a supportive environment. Focusing on the children's abilities--and not their disabilities and difficulties--the playing sessions support and strengthen the family.

In a few words, Lekotek's toy library plays an important role in helping children with disabilities and at social risk to reach their full potential.