



Editorial

This Conference was organized jointly by the Korea Toy Library Association and the International Toy Library Association, ITLA.

The first International conference of Toy Libraries was organized by the International Toy Library Association (ITLA) in London in 1978. Now Korea hosted Conference number 13.

We lived 5 days of learning. It gave scope for play through the whole spectrum of life, as the invitation said.

We lived play and shared experiences. We laughed, connected with other cultures, learned about the ways of working in toy libraries and we saw what is happening in toy libraries around the world.

Sometimes toy librarians feel that they are working alone, but at the Conference we saw and felt that we are not alone. We were together, talking the same language and having common experiences.

I am honored to be the first Latin American and Mexican President of ITLA and I am very proud to belong to this group of toy librarians where the only thing that we want is to have a better world through play and toys, in places called toy libraries. We want to have better children, good human beings and we believe very strongly that with all our work we can help to make a better life for every one.

We received training through workshops, presentations and visits. There was also the ITLA General Assembly where the new Board of Directors was elected.

The New Board is committed to work hard, with new feelings and thoughts, to make ITLA stronger than it is. I would like to express a great gratitude to the past Board that made ITLA possible.

Korea!! Seoul!!! Korean Toy Library Association, Thank you!! For sharing your culture, your music, your dances and your kindness. Let's make the Toy Library magic continue in the start towards the 14th Toy Library Conference in the Netherlands in 2017. See you there!!!



Thanks to all, gracias, **kamsahamnida**, 감사합니다

Monica Juarez
ITLA President

NEWS ABOUT THE NEXT CONFERENCE

It is going to be in the Netherlands in 2017. Almost 9 years will have passed since an ITLA conference was held in Europe. We congratulate the Netherlands Toy Library Association for making this possible.

We are sure it is going to be a great experience!!!



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Leading Article

Looking back on the 13th International Conference of Toy Libraries in Seoul, Korea



Preparing the art performances

With the theme of “Play for Life”, the 13th International Conference of Toy Libraries was held in Seoul, Korea from August 18 to 22. From 24 countries, about 200 people who are engaged and interested in Toy Libraries, Early Childhood Education and Care, or Children’s Play participated in the conference. The history of Toy Libraries and the various contexts where Toy Libraries had contributed to children’s development and whole family happiness in some countries were introduced. Also, the policies and the vision for Toy Libraries, and the diverse kinds of play and games of past, present, and future were shared.

We would like to review the conference from the first day, August 18th. Around 2 p.m. people began to flock to the venue to register. In the main hall of the venue, there were prepared tables for delegates from foreign countries to display their own toys. The goods of ITLA were displayed on the very first table. Monica, the President of ITLA and Cynthia, the vice president of ITLA were busy displaying the goods for raising funds for ITLA. Some other delegates from Taiwan, New Zealand, Turkey, India, Japan, and so forth displayed their own tables enthusiastically.

On August 19th, Tuesday, Dr Suh, the president of KTLA declared the conference open and congratulatory speeches were delivered by Sung Lee, the mayor of Guro-District, Monica, ITLA president, and a welcome speech video of Wonsun Park, the mayor of Seoul Metropolitan City was added. The grand opening of the conference was followed by celebration with a variety of art performances. After the opening, Dr. Freda Kim gave a presentation on the history of Korea Toy Libraries. Renate Fuchs from Switzerland, the coordinator of European Toy Libraries mentioned about the European Toy Libraries and some challenges for the future. Christine from New Zealand stated a unique solution for a small island nation through play.



Board members and Keynote speakers having a meeting

Dr. Isik Kamaraj from Turkey reported on the 4th World Play Day in Turkey and there were also various presentations in each department. Especially Japanese delegates led everyone at the hall to enjoy interesting activities with toys made by them.

After every session, on the top of the building all the participants had a good time experiencing some Korean traditional play and games. In the evening, all participants were invited to a good dinner by Guro-District. While having dinner, we could have a really good time to get closer to each other while enjoying a wonderful performance.

On the third day, all the participants went on a field trip to some toy libraries, child care centers and the children’s museum. During the tour, they could experience many children’s programs for themselves. Most of participants told us they were very satisfied with the tour programme though the schedule was a little hectic.



Opening speech of Dr. Suh

Leading Article

Looking back on the 13th International Conference of Toy Libraries in Seoul, Korea



Dr. Freda Kim with Monica Juarez

All the participants started the 4th day with unfading enthusiasm for the conference. Aina from Malaysia, this day's keynote speaker shared about playing for the future. Participants delivered their presentations, listened to other presenters, and shared their experiences and opinions during the sessions. Thursday was the same schedule as Tuesday. On the top of the building, foreign participants could experience Korean traditional cultures and plays such as wearing Hanbok, Korean traditional clothes, playing jegichagi and ddakjichigi, etc. They were very interested in such activities, and did the activities earnestly and zealously though they were clumsy. In the evening, participants were invited to a gala dinner, and shared joy with others.

In the morning of the last day, the new board members of ITLA were introduced, and the next host country was announced. After the closing ceremony, 25 foreign participants visited a Toy Library run by the Guro-District which is quite spacious and well organized. They could see the framework and the role of the toy library for both children and all the people in a community. Guro-District was the district where the very first Toy Library was founded in Korea and has had a deep interest in the toy library movement and child caring, and sponsored KTLA for the Conference. After visiting the toy library, some foreign participants joined the Guro Children Play Festival, and they enjoyed the festival playing various games with children.



Kyunggi Children's Museum run by Kyunggi Province Government

As the host of the 13th International Conference of Toy Libraries, we expected that the conference could be a good chance to promote the value and the importance of play for good life as well as a helpful floor to share information about toy libraries with other countries. During the conference, we could see and hear how Toy Libraries in other countries are run, what kind of vision they have, and also what kind of challenges they are facing. And we could understand one another more deeply and share valuable information and experience with people working for Toy Libraries and children. We could see that we have reaped the fruit expected from the conference since we have had feedback on the conference from many participants saying that they could make their belief in the role of



All the Toy Library Friends

toy libraries and the value of play firm and solid through the Conference. While preparing and running the conference, we sometimes made mistakes, and had some conflicts among staff, but even such happenings could be good experiences and memories for us as we could get to understand each other through such experiences.

Once again, we deeply thank all the participants and volunteers of the conference. With their enthusiasm, we could make an unforgettable experience and memory through the conference.

Youngsook Suh

Korean Toy Library Association (KTLA)

The European Scene and some Challenges for the Future

The European Scene

Europe has a very lively toy library scene and an experience of over 50 years. It started in 1959 with a small toy library in Denmark and after the UNESCO plan to create toy libraries, Sweden, France, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland followed. Now around 5500 toy libraries are in service.

The main quality of European toy libraries is the fact that most of them are open to everybody. In some countries toy libraries are specialized for children and adults with special needs.

Most of the European toy libraries are run by private organizations or local authorities as independent, non-profit organizations, with both professionals and volunteers.

In most countries toy libraries lend out toys and games, provide the opportunity to play and contribute to the quality of life. National associations support the work of local or regional toy libraries.

The group of European Toy libraries was thinking about a definition for a toy library, which would guarantee a great deal of liberty in running toy libraries. The following definition was accepted by the group ETL and now serves as a guideline for the European toy libraries:

“Toy Libraries provide resources for play, including toys, games, trained staff and dedicated space and are run as non-profit organizations”

The Group of European Toy Libraries - ETL

Is the network of the toy libraries in Europe. It is an informal group and serves also as a link to ITLA. It exists since 1996 and by now 22 countries have joined ETL.

The purposes of the European Group are:

- To disseminate the concept of toy libraries as a means for bringing play and play material to people
- To exchange information about the way toy libraries are run in the different countries
- To work for a better recognition of toy libraries
- To cooperate on different themes like standards, charter of quality, working standards, training
- To serve as a link between national toy library organizations, providing opportunity for international exchange of ideas and material.
- To organize common presentations at international events such as Int. Conferences organized by ITLA
- To cooperate with organizations with similar goals.



The Group of European Toy Libraries - ETL

The European Scene and some Challenges for the Future

These topics are discussed at the annual meetings of the ETL members.

During the last meetings a documentation for toy libraries was created. With examples of charts of quality from different countries, information about training in Europe and a paper with working standards for toy libraries.



EuropeanToyLibraries

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Working Standards For Toy Libraries

Government/Management and Toy librarian/Volunteer Roles and Tasks in 10 areas...

1. Create a vision	2. Develop a strategic plan	3. Provide resources	4. Staff and volunteer Development
5. Training for workers	6. Safe environment	7. Public relations and networks	8. Working with users
9. Day to day running of the toy library	10. Evaluation		

Some challenges for the future

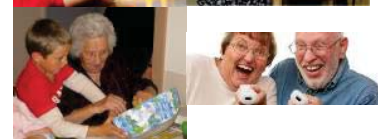
- **Financial crisis:** the actual financial situation is a big challenge for many toy libraries. Governmental subsidies are less or do not exist any more. In some countries the national organisations have to reduce their services with the effect that the communities also reduce the financial aid for the local toy libraries.
- **Electronic games:** another challenge is the fact that the electronic games enjoy a great popularity for kids of every age. Toy libraries will have to attach more importance to the traditional play by organizing play activities: like tournaments for adults in the evening and for kids in the afternoon, information for parents, nurseries, kindergartens, schools etc. and special trainings for toy librarians have to be provided.
- **Demographic changes:** declining birth- rate and an elderly population

In spite of these challenges, the purpose of European toy libraries with more than 50 years of experience will always be to promote play for everybody as an important part in life.



"We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing!"

George Bernard Shaw



Toy libraries provide know how and material for play activities across different generations. School children play with elderly people in a senior home.

Renate Fuchs
European Coordinator

PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

Play in Asia

Play is a common right in a western society whereas in the Asian society, play seems like a privilege. This is probably due to differences in cultures, values and education systems.

Therefore, it is not surprising that toy library services started in the West as part of a child's right to play and recreation. In the East where academic excellence is accentuated, play is often a tool for learning rather than a simple activity of fun and pleasure.

It has taken some time for Asian countries to catch up on the toy library movement. And of late, toy libraries have slowly but surely sprouted in this region.

This keynote presentation took us down memory lane and shed some light on the history of how the toy library movement and network have grown in the Asian region.

Start of the Asian Network

Prior to 1999, ITLA conferences had never been held in Asia. The Japanese National Council of Toy Libraries was successful to bid for Tokyo to host the 8th ITLA Conference. And Japan ensured that, right from the very beginning, it was to be a collaborative Asian effort. Hence 2 years earlier in 1997, the first planning meeting was held in Penang, Malaysia. This was the start of the informal Asian link.

ITLA Conferences

Tokyo did a fine job in hosting the 8th ITLA Conference in 1999. This gave much confidence to the other countries in other continents. And as such, ITLA conferences were able to travel outside the European continent; to South Africa in 2005 and to Brazil in South America in 2011.

As the international conference is held every 3 years, it would take another 15 years for it to return to the Asian Continent as is evident today in Korea at the 13th ITLA Conference.

Asian Conferences

For more than 16 years, our friendships amongst Asian toy librarians have continued to remain strong. With the strength of this informal Asian Network, we have organised our own Asian Toy Library Conferences,

- ⇒ firstly in Seoul in 2004 with the theme "Toy Library and the Family";
- ⇒ 2nd one in Malaysia in 2007 with the theme "Toy Libraries – Reach Out
- ⇒ 3rd conference in Singapore in 2010 with theme "Toy Library and Community Building"
- ⇒ 4th one was in Tokyo last year with the theme "Play. Empowerment. Life"

We are looking forward to the 5th ATLC which will be held in Taiwan in June 2016.



1st Asian Toy Library Conference

PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

Play for Life

Firstly, as people in this field, together we must have a good understanding of what play is all about. What are the functions of toy libraries and how they can help the community? If we can understand the importance of play and believe in what we are doing through the toy library projects, then we can advocate meaningfully and appropriately.

Reasons for Play

We all know that everybody at every stage of their life is involved in play, one way or another.

- ⇒ Play to Progress - For the young children, play functions as one way to progress and develop as the child explores and discovers toys and play. So no one can deny that play has an important role in education and therapy. Everybody, especially early childhood educators, supports the notion of learning through play.
- ⇒ Play to Exercise - As you grow older, play activities come in the form of sports and games. Play that is more structured and has rules are called games. Sports are games conducted in a designated play space. Some people play for fun and exercise for healthy living.
- ⇒ Play to Win - For some who are a bit more serious in their play, it can become competitive when they play against each other in races, games and sports.
- ⇒ Play to Entertain - There are also those who play for the sake of entertainment and enjoyment.
- ⇒ Play to Earn - Everybody plays, as play evokes a thrilling feeling of “excitement”, and has an element of “adventure”. However, some types of play can lead to addiction. This is the type of play that we have got to be careful about. A friendly game of mah-jong can turn to be gambling if one is not careful with the purpose.
- ⇒ Play to Control & Own - On a bigger scale, there are also battle games and war games. Nations play these violent games when they want to own or control other nations. We can see these happening in some parts of the world today.

Pleasure vs Pressure

Play can take place and take shape in all forms depending on the purpose of the play. We just call it by different names – recreation, hobbies, sports, hobby, competition, gambling, battle, etc... However, for many of us who are working with children, we do not dispute that the main purpose of play is for the sake of learning something.

But there is one area that we often miss out or overlook – playing simply for the sake of pleasure, sheer fun and enjoyment.

I must admit that when I started my first toy library project in 1986 in Malaysia, playing for pleasure was not an aim. The idea of playing for fun was just too luxurious to be considered an aim. As toys were expensive and scarce in those days, we would only promote play strictly for educational purposes.

In the East where academic excellence is emphasized, play is often an educational tool for learning rather than a simple activity of pleasure. Due to our competitive educational system, teachers and students focus on educational excellence and scoring A's in our school examinations.



3rd Asian Toy Library Conference

PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

In order for us to keep up with the academic race, everything a child does, must work towards academic achievement. So parents send their children for maths tuition, computer classes, etc... after school. High discipline is required for the child to keep up with these schedules in school and after school. So, you can imagine how stressed the child can become, if they lack the discipline.

You may find it hard to believe that it is rather difficult to find a kindergarten in Malaysia that promotes play, even today. 99% of the kindergartens aim for children to read and write even before they enter formal schooling.



There is really no need to join in the race pushing our children to be academically high achievers. I don't think many high achievers end up leading successful lives anyway. If they do, I am pretty sure their lives are very stressful, just keeping up with the expectations!!

Sheila Flaxman, an American Educationist said – “Today’s children are controlled by the expectations, schedules, whims and rules of adults. Play is the only time they can take control of their own world.”

Enjoying Life and Happiness

People usually measure success based on how rich they are and how high they climb on the social ladder. I would like to suggest that success be measured on happiness. This is why I really like Bhutan. Many countries based their prosperity index on their Gross National Income (GNI) or Gross National Product (GNP).

However, the government of Bhutan measures their prosperity based on Gross National Happiness (GNH) index which covers several domains. In fact Bhutan’s legal code number 1629 states - “if the government cannot create happiness for its people, then there is no purpose for government to exist”.



We have so much to learn from this little country. There are pleasures in life that we must make time for, to enjoy God’s nature and God’s creatures. And these values must be cultivated from a young age.

It is good to work hard and strive to achieve but it should not be at the expense of enjoying life. We have only one life. It is good for us to think what life is all about; and what really matters in life.

I am not asking you to deny the educational, rehabilitative or therapeutic benefits of play, but I would like you to consider the value of pleasure, enjoyment and relaxation.

PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

Enriching Life through Toy Library

I have learnt so much over the years through my toy library experiences. It is important to learn from the past so that we can move on to the future.

Some of you may wonder what is so enriching about toy libraries? Well let me share with you how toy libraries can enrich the lives of those involved. Let's look briefly from 3 aspects i.e. for both the user (the child) and the giver (the family) and the community and society as a whole.



Enriching and Empowering the Child

When it comes to buying a toy, parents are usually the ones who choose the items for the child because they seem to know what is good for the child. However in the toy library, the child is encouraged to choose his or her own items independently. When he chooses his own items, you can be sure that he will take care and be responsible for them. This is empowerment.

Making choices, taking responsibility, being disciplined and caring for the toys enriches character building which will boost the child's self-esteem and self-confidence.

Enriching the Families

In most schools, nurseries, kindergartens or early intervention centres, parents usually rely on the teachers for everything as they are the experts. However, in the toy library, everybody's equal because everybody's the expert. The main requirement to get involved in a toy library is the love for children and the love to play.

And in this aspect, all parents qualify. This non-threatening environment encourages parents to play an active role and sometimes take on leadership roles as well. They are empowered to make decisions on how the toy library is to be run and take responsibilities for its activities etc.. Organisational skills that they learn include management, leadership, accounts, public relations and social skills and much more.

This empowerment contributes and enriches one's personal development.

Enriching the Community



Toy library brings the community together, makes it stronger and empowers local people to have a useful role in their respective communities.

It may be difficult to volunteer at an early childhood education or intervention centre where the personnel may need to have trained skills. However, in the toy library, anyone can participate and have a role to play if they wish. They can get involved in transportation, story-telling or washing toys.

Men usually say that they don't know how to get involved. They give the excuse that child caring and playing with toys requires maternal instinct. Well, toy designing and repairing are ways we can easily involve grandfathers, fathers and even engineers or students.

PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

Enriching Experiences from Global Toy Libraries

Toy library activities have taken me around the globe. This international exposure and of course, the regional network enriched both my work and personal life. And I have learnt so much from these opportunities.

- ⇒ UK & Portugal - I was astonished to learn that these services are provided by the local council as part of the services for families in the community. I am envious and wish that one day my government too will be able to provide such services in my country. Seeing what is possible in another country will enable us to advocate better in our own.
- ⇒ Paris - I learnt that there are toy librarian courses offered by local universities in France. Toy librarianship is regarded highly as a profession of its own.
- ⇒ South Africa - In some countries toy libraries are set up for children with AIDS and HIV and they can be found in juvenile prisons too. In South Africa, I found toy libraries in shanty towns. In the midlands of Kwa Zulu Natal, there is a project called “Toy Library on Legs” where volunteers carry toys in bags and go on foot into the remote villages.
- ⇒ Brazil - There are toy libraries in children’s hospitals in Brazil.
- ⇒ Australia - some toy libraries also loan out rehabilitative equipment.
- ⇒ Japan – having a long history of toy libraries, many have evolved into Leisure & Recreational Libraries to cater for youths, adults with disabilities and senior citizens in the community.
- ⇒ Philippines - their toy library goes out in a boat to reach out to the many islands.
- ⇒ Cambodia - started their toy library activities recently, and they go out to the community in motorbikes!

So you can see that throughout the world, the concept of toy libraries and its activities can be in so many forms, shapes and sizes. And it is evolving. This is life!

I have indeed been privileged enough to be part of this network. The Toy Library bridges gaps amongst nations and this globalisation will lead to better understanding and appreciation amongst cultures and improve our quality of life for all involved.

Article 31 - UN CRC

Everybody knows that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child advocates on the right to survival (Article 6), the right to healthcare (Article 24), the right to education (Article 28) etc. In the same equal tone, we must not forget Article 31 that states that the Child has the right to relax and play and join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.



It is a challenge, but we must continue to call on all governments globally, especially those in the Asian continent, not to forget their commitment to Article 31 and ensure that every child can enjoy the right to play.

For this reason among others, I believe World Play Day was conceived. A reminder for us to put aside a day dedicated to spending time with our loved ones, to play and relax and enjoy each other’s company.

Dr. Freda Kim first proposed the idea of World Play Day in 1999. It is a day dedicated to fun and enjoyment. Two years later the idea and concept was officially adopted by the International Toy Library Association. Today, World Play Day is being celebrated globally.

PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

It is just unfortunate that we have yet to be successful in getting official recognition from high profile agencies such as United Nations (UNICEF / UNESCO) to have World Play Day endorsed in their calendar.

Ensuring the Future

Almost two-thirds of the world's population live in Asia. Unfortunately, Asia is also home to the majority of the world's poorest people. According to World Bank data, 43% of Asians live in poverty.

And as you know, poverty affects nutrition, healthcare, education and crime and many other issues. There are still children who are forced to work to support the family. Some are being used as beggars and child prostitutes. And in war zone countries, children are being recruited as soldiers.

So it looks like we have a lot of work to do to spread the importance of toys and play and recreation!! Perhaps some of us can do it by starting more toy libraries within our own local communities; all of us can play various supportive roles and some of us may have to play advocacy roles in promoting this need to those in local authorities or to our own government.

We also need to advocate against practices such as child labour, child abuse and child neglect. The child's work at this young age is to play and to receive education.

Play is neither East nor West, it is Human

Malala Yousafzai, the Afghan schoolgirl who was shot in the head by the Taliban for wanting an education and survived, said in her keynote speech to the United Nations last year "Let us wage a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism, let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons!"

We must make sure that no child is left behind in education, no child is deprived of play, fun and toys. In this aspect, children in the developed nations seem more privileged. Most third world countries are either struggling with poverty, natural calamities, civil war or poor governance.

Malala also said "Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human." Likewise, I would like to add that Play too is neither Eastern nor Western, it is just human.

I am sure all of you here are involved with children in one way or another. Many of you here are child care workers or play workers. But what we need for the future is to raise up more play advocates. People who are passionate not just to play, but who can speak up on the importance of play.

So let us speak up if we must, for the many children who still do not have access to play, toys and education. Lobby the relevant authorities and our local governments. Apply pressure from the bottom grass-root level as well as from the top policy makers to make things happen.



PLAY FOR LIFE: THE ASIAN SCENE – PLAYING IN THE FUTURE

A Child's World

Looking into the future with rapid economic development, increasing urbanization, growing connectivity and societal changes, the value and culture of play will naturally be affected in the coming decades.

But in order to keep play alive, let us always remember to view the world as a child.

A child's world is fresh, pure and beautiful; full of wonder and excitement.
Filled with imaginations; never judgemental and without criticism.

Adults see things right or left. Children see things diagonally and sideways.
We see straight or backwards. They see things upside down and inverted.

Adults see black and white. Children see bright lights and colours.
And so, if you want to keep seeing bright and colourful things, always keep a small part of yourself as a child.

Thank you.



Khor Ai-na

ITLA Board Member from 1999 – 2014