

Child's Play

Newsletter of the USA Toy Library Association

Winter 2023



*USATLA: Promoting Development
Through Toys and Play*



CALENDAR

16th International Toy Library Conference Arrow on Swanston, 488 Swanston St., Carlton, VC 3053 Melbourne, Australia

March 3 – 6, 2023
"Community at Play"

Growing your toy library community
Environmentally sustainable toy libraries
Toy libraries supporting child development through play
Toy libraries in the community

Friday 3 March, 7-9pm
WELCOME & OPENING CEREMONY

Aboriginal Elders from the Wurundjeri People will welcome us onto their land.Th

Saturday 4 March, 9am-4:30pm
GUEST SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOPS

Explore the role of toy libraries in building strong and resilient communities and supporting an environmentally sustainable future
Evening social event:
Dinner and Awards presentation at Captain Melville

Sunday 5 March, 9am-4pm
EXCURSIONS

Melbourne has more than 50 toy libraries for us to visit. Some excursions will focus on the broad range of exceptional early years services in Melbourne, while other tours will focus on volunteer-run toy libraries. Evening social event: Barefoot bowls and BBQ dinner (with vege options)

Monday 6 March, 9am-5pm
GUEST SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOPS

Learn more about the world of toy libraries and play through presentations by expert speakers and smaller group workshops led by toy librarians from around the world, as well as playful hands-on activities
Early evening social event: Indigenous landsca

For information on pricing and tickets visit:
<https://www.itla-conference.org/tickets>



International Toy Research Association Conference

The Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY

August 9 – 11, 2023

The overarching theme for the conference will be Toys Matter: The Power of Playthings. We will also be celebrating the 30th anniversary of ITRA's founding.

USA Toy Library Association

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Articles, suggestions and letters are welcome. *Child's Play* newsletter is designed by Anthony Iacuzzi Associates.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Hubbard Ohio Public Library Wins Prestigious American Library Association (ALA) Award

Hubbard Public Library's Toy Lending Library and Children's Room Team Recognized for Innovation and Service to Community and Profession

Hubbard Public Library's toy lending library and the children's room team have earned American Library Association's 2022 *Ernest A. DiMattia Award for Innovation and Service to the Community and Profession*. The award, supported by the DiMattia Family, recognizes a librarian or library for demonstrating leadership in anticipating emerging trends in services, products and technologies that will enhance the library's position in its community. The library is situated in northeastern Ohio.

The toy library officially opened July 20, 2020 as the only toy library in surrounding Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties. This new venture offers exciting opportunities for hands-on learning with challenging, educational toys and other resources, according to the ALA press release.

The wide range of offerings include a doll house, a musical llama, family games such as Zingo, which uses sight words to help children learn to read, SmartGames that facilitate problem-solving skills, and "Sprout Early Learning Backpacks" filled with books, educational toys and games." Grateful families include the "Evans Seven," the family of Jason and Heidi Evans and their five daughters. They said they were happily engaged during the first months of COVID-19 by the games and toys they borrowed.

The toy lending library was made possible by a generous gift from Barb and Loren Kindler in honor of their grandchildren.

Anelis Coscioni Named "Jane Donelson Player of the Year"

USATLA's Jane Donelson Player of the Year Award recognizes the individual or individuals who have made outstanding contributions to toy libraries and early childhood development. Anelis Coscioni, executive director of the Toy Lending Library of Sioux Falls, S.D., won the award in December 2022.

"Anelis works tirelessly to build the fast-growing program there," says USATLA President Sue Kirschner. "The innovative spirit and dedication she displays every day drove the launch of her program eight years ago." Starting at zero, there are now 14 toy libraries in the South Dakota program, mostly partnership libraries that circulate toys belonging to the toy library.

Said Coscioni upon receiving the award, "Anything that I do is only possible because of the incredible support of my husband Jorge Luna, our daughter Anita, my family, friends, our awesome team at the Toy Lending Library of South Dakota, our partnerships and our donors. I share with them this great honor."



Sue Kirschner Elected USATLA President

Sue Kirschner, youth literacy and outreach manager at Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL), was recently voted president of the USATLA, now in its 39th years of supporting toy libraries nationwide.



Kirschner has run the robust toy library program at CCLP for 18 years. In 2022 the library's collection of more than 4,000 toys circulated a record 33,000 times to the 27 library branches in greater Cleveland.

"It is a great time to head up the association," says Kirschner, who has been a member for 22 years. "USATLA has many new programs under way. Something we especially look forward to is hosting conferences again." CCPL and USATLA have co-hosted at least three national conferences over the last decade.



These are just some of the 4,000 toys that circulate regularly to 27 branches of the Cuyahoga County Public Library.

New Member “Oh Happy Play” Expands Mission with New Location

The thing that made Jacqueline Hunter, a USATLA member since December 2022, giddiest about the empty storefront on Central Avenue was the display window. It reminded her of the opening scene of “A Christmas Story,” where protagonist Ralphie and his friends crowd to gaze awestruck at gleaming, tinsel-strewn toys or her own childhood in New Jersey doing the same.

“This was the most exciting part for me, that I was going to decorate that window,” said Hunter, an assistant professor of education at Clarke University and former director of Dubuque’s Multicultural Center.

Two years after she founded Oh Happy Play, which recycles used toys and redistributes them to low-income families, the nonprofit has a permanent address. For its first year, Oh Happy Play will occupy the first floor of the building at 1976 Central Ave. without having to pay rent, except for utilities, courtesy of Henick.

Hunter sees the space as an opportunity to expand the nonprofit’s mission, offering year-round access to toys for kids and families. “We would have figured out Christmas, but Matt giving me this space is a game-changer,” Hunter said.

When Hunter started Oh Happy Play in 2020 when had a simple mission: Take toys that were going to landfills and give them new homes. Since then, her understanding of Oh Happy Play’s mission has changed as she has come to better understand through research the importance of play in kids’ social-emotional and cognitive development. “We have a play gap in our society” Hunter said. “Children who come from more affluent families can afford to buy toys that are important for development.” She cites dress-up clothes, dolls, imitation kitchens and workbenches – all examples of pretend play through which children engage in roleplaying to experiment and learn.

Beyond its role as a repository for free toys, Hunter would like Oh Happy Play’s new space to serve as a toy library with kids borrowing and returning toys.

Board member Erica Haugen and the others credit Hunter as a one-woman show, but she is quick to point out how much of Oh Happy Play is a community effort. Among others, Hunter has neighbors who have checked in on her every weekend since she moved into the space and who sometimes drop off more recently purchased toys. “It’s so many people who make this possible,” Hunter said. “I have the building and I make it look pretty, but I could not do it without the community.”



Jacqueline Hunter, founder of Oh Happy Play in Dubuque, Iowa

Volunteers – the Heartbeat of Toy Lending

Most toy libraries, like many other nonprofit organizations, rely on volunteers to achieve their missions. Volunteers play key roles across the scope of nonprofit work, from working in offices to supporting programming in communities.

Volunteering can also take many different forms, from long-term stints onsite to virtual activity, from once a week to every day, and more.

The value that volunteering brings to organizations is well-known and reciprocal. Usually, volunteers themselves walk away with benefits of improved health and well-being, increased longevity, adoption of healthy lifestyles and reduction in depression and stress. The service that volunteers provide also benefits not just the organization but also the communities they serve.

How to attract good volunteers

Educate these people on why volunteering is so vital for the volunteer him/herself. Mention:

- > Making a deeper connection to your community
- > Learning new skills and worthwhile programs
- > Gaining confidence
- > Building a sense of purpose
- > Reducing personal stress
- > Building a network and making new connections

Address some of the challenges of volunteering – and share ways to overcome them

Some of the most common challenges to volunteering are:

- > Finding somewhere to volunteer – answer: your library!
- > Feeling uncomfortable and not knowing anyone
- > Being too tired to do it
- > Not having the time

Being open about these concerns and discussing them shows your “volunteer potentials” that you understand their positions. If you do have a speaker address the value of volunteering, it’s a good idea to mention some of these concerns.

It is through open dialogue that volunteer organizations and potential volunteers end up on the same side of a problem, not battling each other for energy and time, and sharing mutual needs!

Did you know?

- > Women volunteer 6% more than men
- > Utah has more volunteers than any other state (51%)
- > The estimated value of an hour of volunteer time is \$28.54.
- > People aged 35 – 54 are more likely to volunteer
- > People who volunteer are 27% more likely to be hired for a new job
- > 71% of volunteers dedicate their volunteer time to a single organization
- > 96% of volunteers believe that doing so increases their sense of purpose

Sioux Falls Toy Lending Library Charms Costco

This story appeared in the January 2023 issue of Costco Connection

MEMBER CONNECTION



GROWING UP

Toy libraries have become a growing trend as parents realize the convenience, sustainability, cost savings and benefits of borrowing toys rather than purchasing them. There are about 400 toy lending libraries in the United States, according to the USA Toy Lending Association. Visit Usatla.org to find a toy library closest to you.—DJ





The joys of toys

The Toy Lending Library of South Dakota is making every day feel like Christmas for local children. The library (toy lendinglibrarysd.org), which was co-founded in 2015 by director Anelis Coscioni, creates opportunities for children up to 5 years of age to enhance their learning development through play. To do that, the nonprofit boxes one or more donated toys and a book, and circulates them free of charge from 14 locations.

"Our vision is to expand to 100 locations in the state," says Coscioni, who explains that they check all donated items for recalls and sanitize each item the library lends out. It currently has more than 900 toy boxes in circulation. Coscioni notes, "Since the start of the organization in 2015, our toy boxes have been borrowed or renewed more than 16,000 times."—Dan Jones

Clockwise from top: Toy Lending Library of South Dakota director Anelis Coscioni; 4-year-old Ella Hinrichs at play; Kayla Hinrichs interacts with her daughter at the library.

JANUARY 2023 Costco Connection 137

Members Speak Up

In December 2022 USATLA surveyed the needs and interests of our members. The results came in loud and clear. Answers were very close until the virtual conference question, which dropped two points lower than Ask an Expert. In descending order of popularity, members want the following:

- A national newsletter (17)
- Quality toy recommendations for all abilities of children (15)
- Best cleaning procedures for toys (15)
- Information on eco-friendly toy manufacturers (15)
- Updates to the Directory of Toy Libraries at usatla.org (14)
- Safety recommendations (14)
- Management guidance (14)
- Publicity assistance (14)
- Toy recommendations for all ages (13)
- Recycling ideas, recommendations (13)
- Discounts on toys (12)
- Information of national grant-making organizations (12)
- Toy library highlights (12)
- Online Quality Conversations (11)
- A national conference (11)
- Information on repair and replacement parts (11)
- Ask an Expert column (11)
- Virtual conference (9)
- Help with navigating website at usatla.org (7)

We are listening and responding. And we thank you for responding honestly! This will not be the last survey we send around to probe your interests and needs.

Adults Clamoring for Toys and Stuffed Animals – For Themselves

‘We All Can Play’

Excerpted from Time, November 2022

Visitors to the Lego store in midtown Manhattan last holiday season found an area labeled “Adults Welcome.” Occupying about a third of the store’s floor space, it invites those who are young at heart, if not in body, to build. In neat stacks sit a Lego typewriter, a Lego grand piano, a Lego Colosseum and a Lego version of the set of Friends...

Lego is far from the only toy company catering to this previously neglected sector. Just a few blocks away, at FAO Schwarz, millennials crowd into the Funko Pop section, where they can buy big-headed figurines of characters like Elaine from Seinfeld and the exercise instructor Richard Simmons. In 2020 Hasbro introduced an adult version of Play-Doh perfumed with smells like “over-priced latte” and “fresh-cut-grass.” In 2021 Fisher-Price brought a Bluetooth-enabled version of the vintage Chatter Phone toy – the one with a face on its dial pad – to the market for grownups.

In October McDonald’s started serving Adult Happy Meals, toys included!

Companies have long manufactured puzzles, board games, and coloring books marketed specifically to adults who need to reconnect with their inner child. But mostly toys have been the domain of children. Thanks to stress, COVID-19 and social media, however, the demographics of play have changed significantly in the past few years.

As Richard Gottlieb, CEO of the consulting agency Global Toy Experts, says, “Toy companies began to say, ‘We’re not in the kids business. We’re in the play business. And anyone can play.’”

New Zealand, Australia, UK Say No to Consumption of Non-Sustainable Toys

Put World Sustainable Toy Day on the calendar every November 3

Founders of World Sustainable Toy Day, New Zealanders Helen Townsend and Anthea Madill recognize the difficult position that families are in around the holidays with children loving toys. These women identified a day that empowers families to say no to consumption of non-sustainable toys and to develop a community understanding of alternatives to enable play and promote child development without harming the planet.

Helen Townsend said, “Toys shape how kids see and interact with the world. This gives us the opportunity and responsibility to help them become more climate confident”.

Debbie Williams, CEO of Toy Libraries Australia, highlights the role toy libraries play in providing communities with sustainable play options. “Becoming a toy library member is a win for the environment as families share well-made durable toys” explains Ms Williams. “In communities with a strong toy library, over 15% of toys are donated to the toy library after the family has finished playing with them, keeping the toys out of landfill. Further, toy libraries repair toys and repurpose incomplete parts, extending their life.”

As we know, play is an essential part of a child’s life, and toy libraries provide a way to experience a diverse range of toys in a sustainable way with far-reaching benefits. From an environmental perspective borrowing is one of the key solutions to overconsumption and helps reduce fossil fuel emissions.

Recent research by the Australian Toy Association and Sustainability Victoria [https://prwire.com.au/pr/106021/toy-libraries-celebrate-world-sustainable-toy-day#_edn1] shows that 220 million toys are sold in Australia each year. Of these toys, 51% are thrown out as waste within 12 months of purchase. A UK survey found that, on average, a child loses interest in a toy within just 36 days [https://prwire.com.au/pr/106021/toy-libraries-celebrate-world-sustainable-toy-day#_edn2].

America Recycles Day in November

It is the only nationally-recognized day dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States! Held on and around November 15, America Recycles Day educates and encourages individuals on how to be more mindful of what they consume, where and how to properly recycle, and to pledge to recycle more and recycle right in their everyday lives.

<https://kab.org/programs/ard/>

Recycling Tips

What do you do when your Barbie is missing an arm? Throw her away? It's hard to fix something like that, but someone has figured out a way. A French company Dagoma has created a way to save even more toys from the landfill. Dagoma created 3D files of common toy pieces that may go missing or break, then allows people to use them for free.

Use a 3D printer to recreate the piece and "Viola!" the toy is complete once again. A wonderful workable idea! Thanks @dagoma3d for your team effort in reducing toy waste.

<https://youtu.be/zmwUCaRnr74#sustainability>

Revenue sources to consider

(Ideas shared at a recent Quality Conversation online discussion between members)

1. **A Community Thrives** is a grant-making and crowdfunding program from the USA TODAY NETWORK. The initiative is part of the Gannett Foundation and supports nonprofit organizations with projects focused on community building. Since 2017, the program has helped to distribute more than \$15.2 million from donations and grants across the nation. <https://acomunitythrives.mightycause.com/giving-events>
2. **Toy Drives** asking for and dispensing toys in gymnasiums and other community locations
3. **Toy company partnerships** – Lakeshore Learning and Connetix are building relationships with USATLA that will stream to members. Watch your email for details this spring!

Put TerraCycle on your Must-Have List

What do we do with broken toys? Many years ago we didn't have any answer for that, but for the past five years we have been able to recycle our broken toys with TerraCycle US, says Rebecca Nutter, head of the Minneapolis Toy Library.

"We can add puzzle pieces, plush toys, electronic toys, plastic, metal or wooden toys to the box. With many of the plastics TerraCycle receives, they sort, shred, and clean them before they are ready to be used again to make other materials. We have sent in hundreds of pounds of broken toys to be recycled."

Rebecca adds, "This is not only something toy librarians use for the toys in inventory, but a service we offer to our members. Bring in any broken toys and drop off in the box at either (of two) locations."

For detailed information on how TerraCycle US can handle your discarded toys and games, and many other products, visit <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/>





USATLA Publications & Resources

The following publications are available for purchase [HERE](#)

Child's Play Newsletter

A newsletter full of information about toy libraries and related topics.

USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual

Everything you need to know about setting up and operating a toy library.

Read It! Play It! by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim

An illustrated, 112-page book of fun activities that build literacy through reading and playing.

Read It! Play It! With Babies and Toddlers by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim

An illustrated, 103-page book that builds literacy with babies and toddlers.

Now in English and Spanish. Please specify

Hey Kids! Out the Door, Let's Explore by Rhoda Redleaf

This 245-page masterwork includes twenty-seven nature, community and concept walks.

Learn and Play the Green Way by Rhoda Redleaf

This 220-page book is grouped into six age-related sections that range from infants to schoolagers.

When Play Isn't Easy: Helping Children enter and Sustain Play by Sandra Heidemann and Deborah Hewitt

This 87-page book helps children enter and sustain play.

The Power of Play

A discussion about early childhood education with Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, The Epicenter Inc.

Guidance from the CDC on cleaning and disinfecting toys

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, here are recommendations from the Center for Disease Control about cleaning and disinfecting toys. The CDC is a trusted source!

How to Clean and Disinfect Toys

- Clean off visible dirt with soap and water.
- Spray the toys with disinfectant and allow the disinfectant to remain in contact with the toy for one minute and then wipe off.
- Toys that are likely to be mouthed by infants and toddlers should be rinsed with clean tap water after they are disinfected.

In addition, the CDC recommends the following:

- Children and parents should wash their hands with soap and water or clean their hands with antiseptic hand gel before entering and when leaving the common play area.

· Toys used in play areas should be made of smooth solid surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. Avoid toys with small pieces and crevices and those made of fabric or fur.

· Donations of stuffed animals or other toys that cannot be cleaned and disinfected should be accepted only if they are new and then should be distributed to individual children to keep and not kept in common play areas to be shared.

· Toys should be cleaned and disinfected at least three times a day. In addition, they should be cleaned immediately if they are soiled with vomit, stool or other body fluids.

The cleaning of toys (disinfecting) three times a day may put a strain on toy librarians, but may be more important than ever now.

The World Health Organization recommends the following procedures:

Chlorine Bleach considerations and recommendations:

Household bleach is an effective agent against most bacteria and viruses. It is important to follow recommended dilution guidelines for specific surfaces. Certain precautions should always be adhered to when using bleach, including:

- Dilute and perform disinfection procedures and in a well ventilated area. Adverse effects of inappropriate mixtures of household cleaners usually are caused by prolonged exposure to an irritant gas in a poorly ventilated area
- Avoid combining bleach with acids (like vinegar) or ammonia (Windex). Potential irritants released from such mixtures are chlorine gas, chloramines and ammonia gas
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment as chlorine bleach is corrosive and irritating to mucosal tissue, skin, eyes and upper and lower respiratory tract

• It is recommended using a "pump" or "pour" bottle instead of a spray bottle to avoid aerosolizing the bleach solution

• Prepare bleach solutions daily.

• Open bottles of chlorine bleach should be discarded after 30 days

• If a splash occurs to mucosal tissues, immediately flush with water"

A number of toy libraries choose not to use a bleach based agent. If you are a facility that does not use a bleach based agent, be sure that it is an EPA-registered BACTERICIDAL agent, not a BACTERIAL STATIC agent. You will also need to be aware of what specific bacteria and viruses the agent kills. This will be listed on the package or package insert.

We hope this information helps and calms nerves as well. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updated information to you.