



Beyond a Toy Library - a sustainable approach

The 15th International Toy Library Conference

Johannesburg, South Africa

Scientific panel

The scientific panel for the International Toy Library Conference consists of experts in the field of toy libraries. They are responsible for reviewing and evaluating all the abstracts received to ensure a good quality conference for all attendees. We are proud to introduce our scientific panel to you.



Ana Lourenço, Portugal

Ana Lourenço graduated in Applied Psychology, specialising in Clinical and Health Psychology and is a PhD student in Childhood Studies. She has been working in the Play Activity Department of the Child Support Institute (IAC) since 2008.

She collaborated in several projects in the area of Health Education with adults and children, but ended up discovering the enthusiasm of working in the area of Play. She had the happiness of finding “play enthusiasts”, such as Natália Pais and Renate Fuchs, who showed her the importance of play activity and toy libraries in so many areas of our lives.

She is involved in supervision and technical support to toy libraries and carries out training with professionals from toy libraries. She trains in areas such as "Play Material and its Potential", "New Technologies in Play Activity and Toy Libraries", "Toys and Gender" and “Play(ful) Attitude and Gamification”. She was responsible for the study "Toy Libraries in Portugal" and is part of the team who disseminates and works on World Play Day promotion in Portugal. She has been representing IAC in the European Toy Libraries Group for several years now. Currently she is the European link and World Play Day Coordinator for ITLA.

Maria Celia Rabello Malta Campos, Brazil

Maria holds a PhD in School and Human Development Psychology by University of São Paulo Institute of Psychology. She is an educator and specialist in Psychopedagogy, with specialization on Mediated Learning Experience Theory and Dynamic Evaluation of Learning Potential by ICELP. For about 30 years, she worked in a clinic for children and teenagers with learning disabilities, where play activities were central for evaluation and intervention. Other areas of work were on continuing education of educators and school consulting. She participated in the implementation of psychopedagogy courses in different institutions, also as teacher and supervisor training.



Maria is the former President of the Brazilian Association of Psychopedagogy – ABPp, where she was also the editor of the organisation’s journal. Currently participates in the Council for life of this entity. Maria is the current President of the Brazilian Association of Toy libraries – ABBri and coordinates the America Continental Group in ITLA. She is a researcher in the area of games, learning and development, and has articles and chapters of books published on the following themes: Evaluation and psychopedagogical intervention; Use of play in classroom; Play and learning; Teacher training and mediation. She is the organiser and co-author of the works: "Psychopedagogical Acting in Institutions – to play, create and learn in different ages"; "Games workshops and construction of knowledge"; "Games on Psychology and Education: theory and research", among others.



Mary James, South Africa

Mary is the founder director of LETCEE, an Early Childhood Development (ECD) non-profit organisation in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She has been in the ECD field for 28 years after training as a teacher and librarian. She is passionate about play and believes that Toy Libraries hold the keys to ensuring all children access their right to play and to playing in a safe space. It is for this reason that LETCEE has 11 Toy Libraries serving the under-serviced, impoverished deep rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

Under Mary's leadership, LETCEE spearheaded non-centre based ECD in South Africa. Their community-based ECD model includes playgroups and toy libraries and it was awarded the UNICEF Best Practice status as well as the ABSA Most innovative community project prize in 2009. Mary holds a D.Ed (hc) from the Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford, England.

Michel van Langendonck, Belgium

Michel founded "Alpa-Ludismes" a Toy Library dedicated to adults in Brussels (Ixelles district) in 1989. He obtained a Master of Economics (Université Libre de Bruxelles –ULB) in 1990 and a Master of Politics (ULB) and Postgraduate in Sociology in 1993.

From 1994 to 2006 Michel gave History, Geography, Economics and social sciences lessons in High Schools in Brussels... with toy library activities for students at noon. His first presentation at the ITLA conference was in Zürich in 1996, "jeux demain, jeux pas vilains". Michel has also been the president of LUDO asbl, the association of French speaking Belgian toy libraries and toy librarians, since 1999.

Michel is a member of French game juries (International game design competition in Paris- Boulogne-Billancourt. He has been lecturing in Social Sciences and Sociology of Education at a college for teachers (Haute Ecole de Bruxelles – HEB) since 2006 and in Ludology at a college for social workers and librarians (HE Spaak) since 2008. Since 2009, he has been responsible for the "Ludivine & Lucifer Toy library and documentation centre". Michel is currently on the ITLA Board, and the French-speaking Belgian representative in the European Toy Library (ETL) group of ITLA.



Pooi Hong Wong, Malaysia

Datin PH Wong, a mother of four young adults is a lawyer by profession but has been involved in the early childhood and education sector since 1989 as an Early Years Centre Director, Trainer and Consultant. She has been and continues to be a passionate advocate for the setting up of community based (for low income families), corporate childcare centres, kindergartens, creative activity centres, community toy libraries, sensory wall murals as well as training related thereto.

She is the first Honorary President of the Association of Toy Libraries Malaysia which was set up as a non-profit to facilitate and spearhead the setting up of toy libraries in Malaysia, especially for low income families and communities. She initiated the I play Toy Libraries in 2008 which has since grown via corporate funding to about 40. These are primarily for the indigenous children and other marginalised children in different urban and rural settings.

She presented the Country Report at the Asia Pacific Toy Library Conferences in Tokyo and Taiwan. She was elected as the Hon Secretary of the international Toy Library Association at the ITLA Conference in Seoul, Korea in 2014 and her term was extended at the ITLA Conference in Leiden Netherlands. She attended the ITLA Conference in Leiden, Netherlands and the ITLA Board Meeting in Mexico City on behalf of Asia. She has also initiated a social enterprise, Play Unlimited, to spearhead advocacy and research on the importance of play and toy libraries.

Mónica Juárez, Mexico

Mónica was born in Morelia Michoacán, Mexico and is married with two children. She works as a consultant and trainer in toy librarianship. Her professional qualifications and achievements include: Economics from National University of México; 3 Diplomas in Play and childhood; Directing and operating a Non-Governmental Organization; The International rights of girls, boys and adolescents; and attended training in Houston, Texas about Montessori Method. Mónica trained as toy librarian in the University of Mexico, and has been a toy librarian since 1996.

She has been the owner of a private toy library for 13 years, and the Founder and President of the Mexican Toy Library Association for 6 years. For the last 8 years, she has been the Mexican link person for ITLA and was the ITLA secretary for 3 years. Mónica has trained more than 300 Mexican and South American toy librarians, established more than 152 Toy libraries through the Management Consultancy “Play is to Growth”, and she is the Founder and President of the Mexico Plays Foundation. She was the President of ITLA during 2011-2014 and was reelected for 2017 – 2019.



Monica Stach, South Africa

Monica Stach holds a doctorate from the University of Pretoria. Her thesis explored the role of toy libraries in providing play-based early learning opportunities for young children. She leads a team of dedicated and passionate early childhood experts, who conceptualised Cotlands play-based e-learning course, toy library and early learning playgroup models and training courses.

Her passion is creating play-based early learning opportunities for young children and promoting toy libraries. She is the chairperson of the Toy Library Association South Africa, and on the global stage holds the position of vice-chairperson and treasurer for the International Toy Library Association.

She is constantly innovating and tinkering the toy library model, collecting and using a variety of play activities, and passionately works towards creating a toy librarian qualification in South Africa. In addition, her firm belief that young children learn best through play makes her an advocate that promotes children’s right to play, as well as a researcher eagerly trying to understand and find ways to improve how adults and children interact in a playful situation. Her favourite pastime is playing alongside her grandchildren, ensuring that every play opportunity is lot of fun and sprinkled with learning.

Robyn Monro-Miller, Australia

Robyn has 25 years experience working with children and families across Education and government in Australia. With qualifications in education and community management, she is a frequent guest speaker at conferences and seminars across Australia and internationally as well as a spokesperson on children’s issues in the media.

A member of the International Play Association since attending her first IPA conference in Melbourne in 1993, Robyn was formally co-opted to the position of Vice President of the International Play Association in 2012 before taking on the role of President in 2017.

In 2012 Robyn was part of the international delegation to the United Nations in Geneva to progress the development of the UN General Comment on Article 31 “The child’s right to play”. In 2013, Robyn facilitated an International World Café on Article 31 at the official launch in Geneva of the General Comment. Most recently in 2016 she was in Geneva for the International Day of Discussion on children and the natural environment and worked on the IPA project “Under the same sky”. Robyn remains passionately committed to social inclusion and the development of communities that nurture and support children and offer opportunities for them to engage with their local community.

