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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the history of the toy library, a facility or program created to loan toys to children, parents, child care providers, teachers, and play therapists. Types of toy lending libraries are the community toy library, the supplemental toy library, the cooperative neighborhood toy library, and the mobile toy library. The first toy library appeared in Los Angeles in 1935; but it was not until the 1960s and 70s that the concept of the toy library reemerged. This renewed interest was the result of funding of Head Start programs and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, availability of federal funds for day care centers, and the American Library Association establishing the Toys, Games, and Realia Evaluation Committee. In the 1980s, the Lekotek movement arrived from Sweden; it is a program that provides services to children with special needs and their families in resource and play centers. The USA Toy Library Association (USA/TLA) was formed in 1984. In the 1990s, USA/TLA serves as a national network of parents and professionals who promote play as essential to the healthy development of children. Toy libraries in Ohio are profiled: the Columbus Metropolitan Public Library, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Matthew's Lending Library, and Summit County Toy and Resource Center. Toy libraries in countries outside of the United States (Sweden, Norway, United Kingdom, Canada, Netherlands, Australia, Switzerland, France, Russia, Israel, Nigeria, and India) are described. Finally, there are brief biographies of 14 "movers and shakers" in the toy library world. Statistics of U.S. toy lending libraries are appended. (Contains 27 references.) (BEW)

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A HISTORY OF TOY LENDING LIBRARIES IN
THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1935

ED 390 414

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University of Library and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Julia E. Moore

July, 1995

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INTRODUCTION

Toy Lending Libraries offer a valuable service to the community, but have found only limited support in the United States, compared to that found in Canada, the United Kingdom, and European countries. This paper is an attempt to formally record the history of this unique type of library service to children and their parents.

Information for this paper was gathered from a mixture of primary and secondary sources. The project was done using the historical model for research. The clipping files and newsletters provided by the USA Toy Library Association (USA/TLA) and local toy libraries have formed the basis for much of this paper. Secondary sources were also provided by the National Lekotek Center. Both of these organizations suggested names of persons to contact, who they considered to be forerunners in the toy library movement. Neither group was aware of any previous research on this topic. A literature search through sources such as ERIC, Library Literature, Reader's Guide, Dissertation Abstracts, Newspaper Abstracts and Periodical's Abstracts resulted in little information. The few articles that were located dealt with toy libraries in foreign countries, the value of having a toy library, or how to set up a toy library.

A mailing was sent out to individuals active in starting USA/TLA and Lekotek, as well as to various toy libraries throughout northern Ohio. A decision was made not to send out a questionnaire. It was felt that a general request for information would better serve this project. Several of the individuals sent clippings and articles, as well as lengthy and detailed responses to the request. The response to the Ohio letters was less successful.

Many sent brochures, or annual statistics, but little information relating to how their programs started was returned to the researcher. A decision was made to change that portion of the paper, and use several Ohio toy libraries to demonstrate trends in the toy library community as a whole. The researcher also had the opportunity to interview several of the "pioneers" in person or by telephone. These conversations generated a great deal of information, as well as additional persons to contact.

The concept of loaning toys to children dates back to Los Angeles, California where the first Toy Library opened its doors in 1935. That seemed to be the only major effort for many years. Then in the 1960s and 1970s the concept seemed to take off in several directions. Part of this resurgence of interest came from the recognition that children with disabilities needed specially adapted materials to play and learn. Another major impact was the need for day care as more women entered the job force. Both home based caregivers and day care centers needed materials to provide the children they were in charge of with a stimulating and educational environment. The third aspect of this type of library service came from the public library sector. Many libraries both large and small, began lending toys and games as they would books. The USA Toy Library Association was formed in 1985 to try to coordinate efforts among these various groups, and encourage the exchange of information and resources.

The most frequently asked question is, "What is a Toy Library"? The fact that there are several different answers to that question causes confusion to many. A toy library may be as simple as a basket of toys that is passed around a neighborhood on a regular schedule, or as complex as a free standing building that may house several thousand toys, where

families and caregivers go to make selections. A definition that describes most toy libraries would be a facility that allows children and their parents to borrow toys, games, puzzles, etc. as they would books from a public library. Most toy libraries serve children through the preschool years, although some provide materials to age twelve. Many toy libraries also make materials available to day care centers, home care providers, college students and grandparents. A few are specifically set up for use only by teachers, caregivers, or play therapists and are not open to the general public.

Most toy libraries meet all or some of these objectives:

- To enrich the lives of children by promoting the importance of play as it relates to learning and development.
- To provide materials and developmental information to parents, child care providers, teachers and therapists.
- To provide materials for parents whose budgets may limit the variety and number of toys they can afford to buy.
- To provide a means for parents and providers to determine if a desired toy is worth purchasing.
- To provide therapeutic materials and a means of play for children with varying abilities, particularly those who need and may not have access to more elaborate adapted toys. (Adapted toys are playthings that have been altered so they can be manipulated by children who are physically unable to use regular toys.)
- To promote responsibility through the child's sharing, borrowing and recycling of toys.

- To serve as an educational resource in the community for students, parents, therapists and child care providers working with young children.¹

TYPES OF TOY LENDING LIBRARIES

USA/TLA has organized toy lending libraries into four categories. They are:

Community Toy Library - A staff purchases, catalogs, and organizes toys for borrowing. Loan procedures are established, as are routines to clean and maintain the items. The program may also offer other services such as workshops, parent discussion groups, or a stocked playroom. It may be operated by a paid staff, a volunteer group, or a combination of both. Funding may come from grants, donations, or fund-raising projects. It may be housed in an existing agency such as a public library, social service agency, or have its own building.

Supplemental Toy Library - This facility is connected to an existing program such as a hospital, health clinic, child care center, or school. It may provide specially adapted toys for disabled children to use, or have materials available for teachers and parents to borrow. It may have an open borrowing policy, or may be restricted to use by staff, patients, or families associated with the sponsoring agency.

Cooperative Neighborhood Toy Library - Toys are collected in order to catalog and house them in a central location. Interested families may donate toys, funds to purchase additional items, or time for cleaning and maintaining the toy collection. A schedule for

¹ How to Set Up and Operate a Toy Library: The USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual, Third Edition, Evanston, Illinois, 1994, pg. 4.

borrowing toys is set up. This type of library may be housed in a church, home, or preschool setting. It can be as simple as baskets of toys that rotate from house to house.

Mobile Toy Library - This can be part of an existing program, or an independent activity.

A mobile unit may travel to home based childcare sites, health clinics, preschools, or homes. Like a bookmobile a schedule is established for stops on a regular basis. Staff may be paid or volunteers. Programming may be offered as part of the services. Maintenance of the vehicle can be a problem, but it may eliminate the need for a larger site.²

"Toy libraries reflect needs and desires within the communities served. Although financial support and operations may vary, a common element to successful toy libraries is a core group of dedicated workers".³

Other services offered by toy libraries may include educational opportunities such as:

Workshops for parents and caregivers on play and child development.

A stocked playroom for parents and children to use together.

A newsletter that announces new toys, may give ideas on using the toys, information on child development, toy safety, and events of interest to families.

Some toy libraries offer specialized journals and periodicals that are published by organizations dealing with children and families. Others provide resource materials for classroom use by teachers and college students. Another service found in some toy libraries are computers and software programs specifically for young children. Some agencies require that the computer be used in the center, others allow it to be taken home for a specified time period.

² Ibid, pp. 12 - 13.

³ Ibid, pp. 5.

Too often programs don't consider themselves to be toy libraries because they don't have an open membership policy, have only a small collection housed in a church closet, or are open only part of the year. They are all toy libraries, and part of USA/TLA's mission is to get that message across.

HISTORY

It is generally acknowledged that the first toy lending library in the United States opened in Los Angeles in 1935. It has also been verified by the International Toy Library Association as the oldest in the world. Jane Donelson has been involved with the program for over 35 years. She writes, "Its formation began in the summer of 1934 during the "Great Depression" -- the worst economic times in the history of the USA. The manager of a dime store in Southwest Los Angeles noticed children (boys 8 or 9 years old) wandering around the store. After observing them for several days he became aware they were pocketing small toys and materials that could be used to construct toys -- amazingly spools with the thread removed became wheels for little homemade wooden cars. The manager apprehended the children, for they were taking things that didn't belong to them. The problem was referred to the Probation Department and an investigation revealed that the boys were not hoodlums. The store manager and a probation officer sought the counsel of Mrs. Gertrude Peddie, the principal of the school the boys attended, where their records were good. She explained, "*These are good children from fine homes, but because of the Depression their parents are unable to provide toys which are basic necessities to the development of children*". Mrs. Peddie decided that something had to

be done. *"We cannot let children like these become delinquent just for lack of toys."* The three developed an outstanding plan that did not require funds. They would collect toys from every source. They styled it in much the same manner as books are loaned from a library. The toys would be loaned on a weekly basis, and a record would be kept of every toy borrowed. The children would be graded on the care of each toy. When a toy was returned on time, clean and in good condition, the child would receive a satisfactory mark on their card. After 20 good marks they would have the status of Honor Borrower and have earned a gift of their choice from the Honor Cabinet that would be theirs to keep. The program was planned at a child's level of interest and with the Honor Code and Incentive Component, resulting in an effective way to teach honesty, responsibility, courtesy, and integrity -- all wonderful character traits that would carry over into their adult life."

Donelson continues, "Needing help and support they presented their idea to the Southwest Coordinating Council, a group of businessmen, merchants and activists interested in the well-being of their community. The group was intrigued by the plan and pledged their support. Hundreds of new and used toys were collected and repaired by volunteers in a donated space. The first Toy Library opened in a garage near Manchester Park playground on May 6, 1935, and it was an immediate success. The program was so popular that other communities were soon clamoring for the service. Its rapid growth was more than the Coordinating Council could handle. Without hope of local aid, a letter requesting help was sent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was impressed with the program's concept of recycling toys, then utilizing free space and volunteers to staff the

toy libraries. Budget money was needed to hire a Director to supervise the entire program. Additional space was needed to repair and store donated toys, and a truck and driver were needed to pick up donations and deliver toys. President Roosevelt enthusiastically pledged his support and placed the program under the auspices of the W.P.A. (Works Project Administration) and funded it under the umbrella of the L.A. County Probation Department.”

To continue the story she writes, “The program flourished and was proudly showcased at the L.A. County Fair for several years. Then in 1942 the Federal Works Project was canceled and the Toy Loan with it. The L.A. County Board of Supervisors was cognizant of the program’s value to children and they funded it through the Probation Department. Money wasn’t everything - now Toy Loan was stranded without workers. An Administrator at General Hospital heard of their plight and suggested a few of their welfare patients might be interested in some light work. They thought perhaps 10 people would report for the assignment, and were totally surprised when over 100 showed up to Toy Loan Headquarters eager to help. Within weeks all were assigned to repair areas in the game room, doll house, wood shop, metal shop, wheel toys, and toy paint shop. All were handicapped in some way, yet there found they were productive, helpful and needed. With this measure of success their self confidence soared. Thus began a two-fold program of toy libraries for children and adult rehabilitation through employment training.”

“By 1965 the Toy Loan repair shop was well organized. Welfare recipients were being trained by teachers from L.A. Unified School District for gainful employment while they constructed new items and repaired old toys to look like new. When the Federal Title XX

program was introduced in 1965, the Toy Loan Workshop was already meeting the requirements for the Federal Employment Training Act, and had 150 clients enrolled. The L.A. County Board of Supervisors realized that by transferring the Toy Loan program from the Probation Department to the Department of Social Services, it would be eligible for Title XX funds, so that was done.”⁴

“The Toy Loan program is unique in that it is offered free to participants, thanks to the generosity of the community. All toys are donated by the public, merchants, and philanthropic groups. They are still repaired by welfare volunteers at Headquarters. The Toy Loan sites are rent free locations in schools, parks and recreation facilities, child care centers, libraries, housing projects, and community service agencies. They are staffed by volunteers interested in providing child development through toys and play. There is also an outreach program that is a resource for teachers, child care providers, and school psychologists, that provides toys and materials for use within their facilities to enhance learning and promote social skills. Presently there are 35 Toy Loan sites in Los Angeles County, and 156 outreach sites. There is an inventory of over 35,000 toys and 15,000 children are served annually. It has been a truly remarkable program for 60 continuous years.”⁵

Other than Los Angeles’ remarkable program little else happened across the country until the 1960s. There may have been some small local attempts to offer toys for borrowing, but it never really caught on nationally. In the 1960s and 1970s many things hap-

⁴ Jane Donelson, The History of the L.A. County Toy Loan, letter dated May 4, 1995.

⁵ Ibid

period that demonstrated the need for toy lending libraries in many parts of the United States.

In 1965 Head Start was initiated and it brought a lot of attention to the need for preschool education. The program was developed to give children from deprived areas special help in order to give them a chance to catch up to children who had been read to, knew their colors and shapes, and had been given good nutrition in early childhood. Centers were set up and parents were an important part of the program. It started on a small scale, but became tremendously successful over the next few years. Head Start also helped get some toy libraries started. They were essentially resource centers for teachers to borrow items for use in their classrooms, but some later expanded into open access libraries. One example was the Head Start Resource Center at the Chicago Public Library.⁶ Head Start programs were funded and administered through the Office of Child Development in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Another program, Follow Through, operated under the guidance of the U. S. Office of Education. Both had parent involvement components, and a toy library was easy to propose as part of that ongoing activity. A division of the Head Start program called Home Start was also an ideal medium for a parent/child toy lending library.⁷

In the 1970s, children who had physical and mental handicaps were given federal assistance through two legislative acts. In 1973 the Rehabilitation Act was signed into law. Despite this legislation it would be 13 years before funds would be made available that would assist in the formation of toy lending libraries. Section 504 assured persons

⁶ Child's Play, USA Toy Library Association, November, December 1984, Volume I, Number 6, p. 4.
⁷ The Parent/Child Toy-Lending Library, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972, pp. 34+.

with handicaps access to jobs and services, free of discrimination. *“Sections applicable to preschool, elementary and secondary education required school systems to provide handicapped persons with a “free appropriate education”, educate handicapped students with non-handicapped students to the maximum extent possible, and revise evaluation procedures which resulted in misclassification”*.⁸ Section 504 did not provide any funds with which to carry out the programs it wanted put into place. On November 29, 1975, Public Law 94-142 was signed into law. States could apply for federal funds to supplement the education of handicapped children. The law did not take effect until October 1, 1977, to give states time to form a plan of implementation. This law was only applicable to children ages five and older. It was not until October of 1986 that Public Law 99-457 was passed by Congress to amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It was reauthorized in 1991 as P.L. 102-119. As a result all infants and toddlers with disabilities, from birth through age two and their families are eligible to receive early intervention services. Among other services this law provided for were the accessibility of funds which were used by some programs to provide toy libraries.

Another change that came in the late 1970s was the availability of federal money for day care centers. As more women entered the work force the need for child care became a major focus. To assist low income families, the system of subsidized day care became more widespread. These centers were desperate for toys and equipment. Typical of the response to that need was that of the Greater St. Paul Child Care Council in Minnesota. Rhoda Redleaf tells how their toy library got started, “ A two year demonstration project

⁸ Marilyn Rauth, A Guide to Understanding the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, Washington, DC., no date.

funded by Title IV funds, the University of Minnesota, Ramsey County, and the St. Paul Foundation was the Toys N' Things toy library which opened in 1973. It was open to parents and centers. In 1975 the project ended and the toy library reverted to The Child Care Council and was moved to a larger location. Since the project was fully funded there was initially no membership fee". Another aspect of the service was a Toy Mobile. It was a bus with a caterpillar and butterfly painted on it which was set up like a nursery school with a male teacher as the driver. The Toy Mobile was used as a play site for children in family day care. The children played on the bus while the day care providers received training in child development. The program was a very successful. There were problems with driving in the severe winter weather, and eventually the Toy Mobile went to a three-season program. As Rhoda remembered, "The program lasted until the bus died". By that time the Title IV funds were canceled and they had to start charging fees. Surprisingly the use of the toy library went up! The fees did not cover the cost of operating the toy library and for a while the program seemed to be funded by unemployment insurance. The staff was laid-off, but all volunteered one day each week to keep it open, and lived off their unemployment benefits. In 1978 Toys N' Things received Title XX funds, so fees were lowered. They began a fund raising project that evolved into the Toys N' Things Press, a publishing company of early childhood materials, a profitable business that helped support the toy library. In the 1980s several changes occurred. Families were moving to the suburbs, funding was lost under the Reagan Administration, and fees had to be raised. In an effort to save the toy library, agencies combined and hours were cut, but use continued to decline. The toy library nearly closed, but a donation saved it. Eventually

the toy library became part of the neighboring Roseville area school system which allowed for better access. Every school, or cluster had a nearby childhood and family education program that made toys available already. When the agencies combined The Roseville program was opened up to others. At first there was a librarian to supervise the program, but the position was later cut back to an aide.⁹

The St. Paul program is typical of many toy libraries. They often rise and fall due to funding problems. Initially they may start from a donation or grant, but maintaining financial support over time can be a problem.

The American Library Association (ALA) showed an interest in toys in the 1970's when its Children's Services Division established a committee to *"Identify a selected group of toys, games and other realia, with descriptive annotations and sources for acquisition, that may be considered for use in a library, in a library-related activity, or with a special group of children. This may result in one or more lists for publication. To recommend to the Evaluation of Media Priority Group II and further activities and directions to be taken in this area"*. The Toys, Games, and Realia Evaluation Committee was first listed in the 1974/1975 ALA Handbook of Organization. The chairman was Nancy A. Orr of the Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries in Rockville, Maryland. Other members were Ferne Johnson, Joyce E. Batchelder, Faith Hecktoen, and Barbara D. Widem.¹⁰ The committee was ultimately responsible for the ALA publication of Toys To Go: A Guide to the Use of Realia in Public Libraries(1975), edited by Faith Hecktoen and Jeanne Rinehart. Originally "Toys To Go was created by a group of

⁹ Rhoda Redleaf, Interview given to Julia Moore on May 1, 1995.

¹⁰ ALA Handbook of Organization, American Library Association, Chicago, 1975, pp. 32.

children's librarians in Connecticut, under the direction of their State Library Children's Consultant, 1971-74. They recognized the interest and the opportunities of the public library in supporting the physical, social, mental, and emotional development of children through carefully planned innovative programs that extend the range of media and services available. The first printing of Toys To Go was funded by an LSCA grant made by the Connecticut State Library Board in 1974 to the Realia Committee for distribution of the work in Connecticut. A second revised printing was then made available for sale by the Connecticut Realia Committee itself."¹¹ ALA produced the third printing in July of 1976.

The intent of the committee was to evaluate toys and games for use by libraries, as did the book, film and filmstrip evaluation committees. In a recent conversation with Leslie Edmonds (now Holt) she explained some of the problems they faced. The committee had a hard time getting manufacturers to send them items to evaluate. No one wanted to get a bad review of their products. Information was gathered by the committee on toy lending, some articles were published, and meetings were held at ALA conferences on using toys in libraries. Leslie felt a task force rather than a committee might have been more successful. The final appearance of the committee in the ALA Handbook was in the 1984/1985 edition. They were part of the now renamed Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC). The final section of their charge had been amended to read "To reevaluate and recommend as needed in the ALSC criteria for selection of toys, games, and realia of interest to children". The last chairperson was Leslie Edmonds of the University of Illinois, with Georgia Chiriesion, Florenz Maxwell, Rosemary Nucllo, and Martha

¹¹ Toys To Go, American Library Association, Chicago, 1976.

Shogren as other members of the committee.¹² The end of this committee coincided with the start of USA Toy Library Association in 1984. Leslie Edmonds served on the USA/TLA board for three years.

In the 1980's a program arrived from Sweden that had a major impact on toy libraries in the United States. This was the Lekotek movement. Lekotek loosely translated in Swedish means "play library". Lekotek provides services, support, and information to children with special needs and their families in resource and play centers that can be found worldwide. The National Lekotek Center is based in Evanston, Illinois, and is the administrative and training center for a nationwide network of 51 Lekotek centers housing family play facilities and toy lending libraries, and 21 Compuplay sites housing family computer resource centers. The Lekotek Mission states, "*To facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities and developmental vulnerabilities into the full range of family and community life. Lekotek uses family centered play as the cornerstone upon which to build inclusive environments*". Clinical evidence affirms that early intervention using strategic play techniques profoundly affects a child's learning capacity. "Play is how a child learns, and hidden in play are the keys to positive development"¹³. Lekotek provides each family with the guidance and tools to help their child with special needs develop through play. The focus is on the child's abilities - not disabilities - and Lekotek helps strengthen and support the entire family.

In the late 1970's two special education professionals learned about Lekotek at an educational conference in Scotland. Sally de Vincentis and Sharon Draznin later traveled

¹² ALA Handbook of Organization, American Library Association, Chicago, 1985, p. 45.

¹³ National Lekotek Center: An Organizational Biography, brochure from the National Lekotek Center, Evanston, IL.

to Norway to be trained in Lekotek methods. Under their guidance the first American Lekotek opened in Evanston in 1980. Since its inception, the primary focus areas have been the play session and the toy lending library for children from birth to eight years of age. Family play sessions are held monthly where Leaders, trained by the National Lekotek Center, focus on facilitating family interaction through play. Specially adapted and regular toys are carefully selected for each child and the members of the family. The play session emphasizes creative use of toys and play materials, while promoting interactive play among all family members. Each month the family borrows several toys to be used at home. Parents are shown how to use the toys and are comfortable using them to expand the child's play. Parents are encouraged to bring brothers and sisters, grandparents, or even neighborhood children to the play sessions.¹⁴

Nationally there are over 50,000 toys in Lekotek programs. Lekotek leaders are knowledgeable about educational and commercial toys, as well as adapted toys that use special switches and motors to accommodate the needs of children with physical limitations.

Compuplay serves children from 18 months to 21 years of age. Using computers and adapted equipment, the Compuplay program allows children and their families to learn through play with computer programs. Some Compuplay centers are run in conjunction with Lekotek Centers, while others are independent. Use of computers empowers children who may not be able to walk, talk, or hold a pencil. It lets them have some control over their environment, builds self-esteem, and paves the way to future independence. Lekotek Leaders and Compuplay Instructors hold degrees in early childhood education,

¹⁴ Ibid

special education, or a therapeutic discipline. They are all certified by the National Lekotek Center once they have completed specialized training there. Lekotek and Com-puplay serve children with a range of disabilities such as Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, sight or hearing loss, mental retardation, or chronic medical conditions including cancer, HIV/AIDS, or epilepsy. Other services offered by Lekotek include playgroups, home visits, toy making workshops, and family literacy programs. Lekotek has also provided assistance to children at risk of developmental delay due to poverty, non-English speaking families, parents with disabilities, and abused children.¹⁵

Many early childhood advocates first learned about toy libraries by hearing about the Lekotek movement. Some started their own toy lending programs or encouraged local agencies to start one. Many toy libraries were developed for children with special needs, but others were open to all. The Head Start programs, child care providers, play therapists, teachers, and parents all benefited from having access to a toy library in their community.

Another major event was the formation of the USA Toy Library Association in 1984. A group consisting of directors of toy library programs, doctors, psychologists, educators, and librarians met on January 20th in Chicago to set up the organization. They all shared a common belief that play and toys are vital in the early development and education of all children. The meeting was the culmination of two years of work to bring the United States into the international toy library movement.¹⁶ Fisher-Price, then a division of the Quaker Oats Company, provided a public service grant of \$76,200 to underwrite the

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Child's Play, March 1984, Volume I, Number 1, p.1.

Association's initial development.¹⁷ The newly elected President Sally deVincentis was also the director of the North Shore Lekotek in Evanston, Illinois. She called on American child-care professionals and parents to use play and play materials to assist in a child's development. *"In Europe and Great Britain, parents and professionals view play as a vital learning experience for the child. Adults encourage and participate in children's play. Toy libraries in community centers, public libraries, schools and day care facilities, even women's prisons loan toys to families and show parents how to encourage developmental play in the home. In the US, play and toys have traditionally been considered unimportant. We have not taken full advantage of play and toys to provide important learning experience for children."*¹⁸

Other officers elected at the organizational meeting were:

Vice President - Ada Dot Hayes, MD

Secretary - Richard Allan Chase, MD

Treasurer - Martin Stone

Directors - Maria Acosta, Leslie Edmonds, Tammy Guensler, Kristen Juul, Sylvia Kottler, Gayle Kranz, Susan Moore Myers, Rhoda Redleaf, and Mary Sinker.

Executive Director - Sylvia Lurie

Three task forces were also established. One for public library toy library programs headed by Leslie Edmonds, one for the Early Education Toy Library group headed by Susan Moore Myers, and one for the Therapeutic Toy Library Task Force headed by Mary Sinker.¹⁹ The bylaws of the Association listed five purposes:

¹⁷ *Child's Play*, March 1985, Volume I, Number 9, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Child's Play*, March 1984, Volume I, Number 1, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

1. To provide a means for all children to be exposed to a variety of appropriate developmental and adaptive play materials through a network of toy libraries throughout the nation.
2. To foster public and professional awareness of the value of play and appropriate use of toys for all children.
3. To maintain a networking liaison with parents, toy libraries, and all organizations and associations pertaining to child development and education.
4. To educate professionals and parents in the fields of child development and care on the significance of play in healthy child development and of well-designed play materials.
5. To educate professionals and parents on the significance of play and toys for all children and encourage the development of toy libraries for all children.²⁰

Those who were already directing toy libraries welcomed the opportunity to communicate with others in the field. Martin Stone, Director of a United Cerebral Palsy toy library in Westchester, New York stated, *"Too many of us have worked in isolation. The Association will put us in touch with other toy library leaders both here and abroad, and also help us reach child care professionals and parents who are interested in using play to promote children's development."*²¹

James Tindell, vice president of Fisher-Price described the donation of funds to help the new Association get started as an extension of *"Our company's long standing interest in the work of toy libraries and toy library associations in other countries. We believe*

²⁰ USA Toy Library Association, Bylaws of the USA Toy Library Association, 1994.

²¹ Child's Play, March 1984, Volume 1, Number 1, p. 1.

*that toys must be safe, fun to play with, and also contribute to children's development. We would like to see play recognized as an important learning experience for children. The Association will help child care professionals and parents understand the development's importance of toys."*²²

The first issue of the USA/TLA newsletter Child's Play appeared in 1984 and included an appeal for membership, a calendar of upcoming meetings, an article on what makes a good toy, and an overview of toy libraries and Lekoteks. There was also an article by Kristen Juul about international toy libraries, particularly those in Sweden.

In December of 1984, Judith Iacuzzi took over as the Executive Director. In May of 1985 the first USA/TLA Annual Meeting was held in Chicago at the Allerton Hotel. The program included speakers, toy exhibits, round table discussions, a parent panel and toy raffle. 150 participants attended the conference, twice what was hoped for. Donations from Fisher-Price/Quaker Oats and Johnson and Johnson Baby Products helped cover expenses of the conference to keep attendance costs low. Sixteen toy makers had materials on display, and many items were donated for the raffle at the end of the conference.

A second conference was planned for Chicago in 1987, but canceled due to a lack of response. In March of 1990 a conference was held at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California. Joanne Oppenheim, author of Buy Me! Buy Me! The Bank Street Guide to Choosing Toys for Children was the keynote speaker. Eighty attended the two day conference. A third conference was held in April 1991, again at San Joaquin Delta College with an attendance of nearly 100. The fourth conference was held there in May of 1994. More than 70 toy librarians, early childhood specialists, and students attended.

²² Ibid. p. 3.

In the 1990's USA/TLA still continues its goals to serve as a national network of parents and professionals who have joined together to promote play as essential to the healthy development of children. The organization offers assistance to members in the form of meetings, newsletters, consulting assistance for toy libraries, research materials, a membership directory, statistics, advocacy for toy libraries, publications and videotapes, as well as access to the International Association of Toy Libraries. There are currently 381 Toy Libraries according to the 1995 Directory of Toy Libraries in the United States. The current president of USA/TLA, Nina Hillery observed, "For each toy library that closes, another seems to open. The number of toy libraries appears to remain nearly the same year after year." The news isn't all bad. There have been some exciting new programs that have opened around the country. Nina hopes to see more regional meetings of toy librarians, and the continuation of the national conferences.

Typical of what is happening in the toy library community are the closing and opening of toy libraries in Ohio. The decision by the Columbus Metropolitan Public Library to discontinue its toy collections received national attention. The toy collection had been a service offered by the main library and 19 branches since the late 1970's. The collection had grown to over 5,500 items by 1993. Initially, library officials felt that, "These would complement the book collection by helping children develop motor skills and other abilities". In 1993, library officials announced that "The toys tended to distract children from books and caused a variety of other problems that the budget strapped library was ill-equipped to handle." "*What we found was that a lot of kids would come in and play with the toys---period.*" said library spokesman Larry Allen, "*They wouldn't even go near the*

books". Allen also said that maintaining the collection was time-intensive. The toys had to be sanitized after each lending, and multiple-piece toys often came back with pieces missing, rendering them unusable. Children playing with the toys also caused a noise problem in some branches, Allen said. The library donated most of the toys to homeless shelters and child welfare agencies in the Columbus area. Part of the reason for the national media attention was the effort of a seven-year old boy and his mother to get the library to reconsider its decision. Bobby Luciow-Fay was interviewed by Cable News Network's *Headline News* because of his protest against the removal of the toys. The boy sent letters to the mayor of Columbus, the governor of Ohio, The President of the United States, and to library board members, but to no avail.²³ Local TV stations ran footage of Bobby and his friends picketing the library, as did CBS's *This Morning*.²⁴

While Columbus was choosing to eliminate toys from its services, the Cuyahoga County Public Library System was choosing to add them to theirs. Through the efforts of Mayor John Coyne of Brooklyn, Ohio, the Cuyahoga County system has a beautiful new branch with its own toy library. Coyne became interested in starting a toy library when he visited family in Rochester, New York. There he learned about toy libraries and decided that the new library to built in Brooklyn, a suburb of Cleveland, should have one. Mayor Coyne started fund-raising for the toy library by donating \$10,000 that came from a 1990 testimonial dinner to celebrate his 52 years of public service, including 44 as mayor. \$100,000 was donated by a friend, George Zane, and another \$1,000 came from the

²³ "Despite Jr. Lobbyist's Efforts, Columbus Library Removes Toys", School Library Journal, January 1994, Volume 40, p. 18.

²⁴ "Child patron protests end of toy lending program", American Libraries, January 1994, Volume 25, p. 10+.

Brooklyn Kiwanis Club. All the money went into a trust fund to cover the costs of the toy program. The new Brooklyn Branch Library opened in June of 1992.²⁵ It is the first toy library that is part of a public library in Northern Ohio.

At the Brooklyn Branch, toys are available for infants to 3rd graders. More than 1,000 toys are in the collection. There are no fees to borrow the toys, but fines are imposed for overdues, damage, or lost pieces. Donna Giannantonio is the Toy Specialist for the program. Her varied background made her ideal to manage such a unique facility. She has a degree in education and taught Kindergarten for two years. She also owned her own business for four years. Her knowledge of child development, purchasing, bookkeeping, and public relations were all excellent qualities toward managing the toy library. Anyone with a Cuyahoga County Public Library card may borrow toys, and the staff encourages borrowing books and toys together. Donna says they may have a child asking to borrow a toy train, then she or her staff may also find books like the Little Engine That Could to go along with it. The Toy Library does not offer open shelving, so children and parents look through albums that contain sheets with a description and picture of the items for borrowing. There is a play area so children can try out the toy before taking it home.

On April 21, 1995 Mayor John Coyne was named an "Outstanding Player" by the USA Toy Library Association. He was recognized for his vision and enthusiastic support of the toy library which is a unique service of the Brooklyn Branch library. Mayor Coyne was also asked to serve as an honorary director of USA/TLA.²⁶

²⁵ "New library branch program lets children check out fun", The Plain Dealer (Cleveland), May 31, 1992.

²⁶ "Coyne honored for toy library", Brooklyn Sun Journal, April 13, 1995.

In 1991 Vicki and Kevin McCarthy chose to remember their son by creating Matthew's Lending Library in his honor. Matthew died at age 8 of a rare brain disorder. He had also struggled with cerebral palsy and needed special furniture, toys, and therapy aids. His parents had a difficult time locating such items, and found the cost of many of them to be prohibitive. It took the McCarthys four years to get the equipment through a federal Medicaid waiver program. The equipment came only six months before Matthew died. To help other parents who faced similar difficulties, the McCarthys and several family friends incorporated Matthew's Lending Library as a charity a year after his death. More than 80 families were making use of the program in 1994. Some equipment is purchased, and some is donated by families whose children have outgrown it. Families are asked to pay a \$25 annual fee if they can afford it. Located in Westlake, Ohio the program serves children from infancy to 22 years. In addition to adapted toys they loan wheelchairs, walkers, prone boards, therapy balls, and bath chairs.

Another campaign the McCarthys have taken on is the provision of accessible playgrounds. They convinced Rocky River, a nearby Cleveland suburb, to construct a new playground next to city hall. The city spent \$140,000 on the facility, and the toy library donated more than \$10,000 in adapted equipment. The playground opened in 1993, and is dedicated to "Children of All Abilities" in loving memory of Matthew James McCarthy.²⁷

The Summit County Toy and Resource Center (TRC) has been in existence since 1974. It was researched and guided by Community Coordinated Child Care, a coalition comprised of individuals and agencies interested in providing and improving services for preschoolers. TRC has had several locations over the past 20 years. The primary goal set

²⁷ "A child's legacy of hope." The Plain Dealer, April 10, 1994.

in 1974, continues today, "The upgrading and enrichment of programs for young children in the Summit County area by providing resources for teachers, parents, and children on a loan basis."²⁸

Without community involvement the Toy and Resource Center would not exist. The first two locations were provided by the University of Akron. The major funding sources during the first year were the Junior League of Akron and WITAN, who also provided volunteers. An independent Board of Trustees governed the operations of TRC.

1976-78 brought both changes in the community and TRC operations, causing a decline in membership. Federal funds became available to centers serving low income children, to purchase new toys and materials. For those centers fortunate enough to be eligible, the borrowing of toys from TRC was no longer essential. At that time family memberships were extended only to those with children having handicaps, thus limiting the number of families involved. Several Directors came and went, and the Junior League and WITAN could no longer offer support through funds and volunteers. Work-study students had problems arranging their schedules to meet TRC's hours. Membership dropped to 12 by early 1979.

The board realized a need to establish a cohesive plan. The day care centers who had bought toys in the mid 70's found that funds were not available for replacements, so once again they returned to the Toy and Resource Center as a much needed supply of equipment.

In 1979 TRC sought the help of United Services for the Handicapped (now known as United Disability Services). United Disability Services pledged support to aid in planning,

²⁸ Summit County Toy and Resource Center brochure, no date.

and expansion of the center. A part-time coordinator and resource person(Nina Hillery) was made available. Through their combined efforts TRC began to realize continuity and a steady increase in membership. Formal affiliation with UDS occurred in 1986. After much hard work, and financial support from five local foundations, the program got back on its feet. In addition, a special area offering adapted toys was created in 1986.

Current membership of about 175 consists of: child care centers, students, parents, grandparents, therapists, and home based caregivers. TRC serves 3000 children annually and processes more than 12,000 toys a year. A nominal fee is charged annually depending on the type of membership. All toys and rescue materials are purchased by grants and donations. TRC is now recognized as one of the larger toy lending libraries in the United States.²⁹

TOY LENDING LIBRARIES OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Toy Lending Libraries can be found in many parts of the world. A principal difference between toy libraries in the United States, and those in other countries is that many foreign toy libraries receive government funding, while those in the U.S. do not. Here is a brief look at how some of them were started, and how they are doing today.

- Sweden - The person who gets credit for starting the toy library movement in Europe is Dr. Karin Stensland Junker. She had two children with severe handicaps, and was disappointed in the services available to children with disabilities and their families. She started a preschool in 1963 with the mother of another handicapped child. They

²⁹ Nina Hillery, interview given to Julia Moore, July 10, 1995.

called the school "lekotek" which is Swedish for "play library". The idea spread throughout Scandinavia, and later to Europe and the United States. Loaning toys was only part of the program, which emphasized training in special education or child development.

Other aspects included play therapy, parent counseling, and evaluation of the child's abilities.³⁰

- Norway - In 1969 a preschool teacher, Unni Boehmer, began the first Norwegian toy library using Lekotek as a model. Within four years it had more than 600 clients. As the concept spread, they came under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In 1976 a new law placed them under the Ministry of Education. Boehmer felt that this made their program less important than other concerns in the educational bureaucracy, and stifled the initiative and creativity that were once the hallmark of the program.³¹
- United Kingdom - The first British toy library was set up in 1967 by Jill Norris, a Froebel-trained teacher, who had two children who were handicapped. The idea began with families exchanging toys in their own homes. Members then began fundraising to purchase toys that cost more than most families could afford. Other toy libraries were set up by families with children who had special needs. In 1972 the Toy Libraries Association was formed, with members throughout the country. In 1983 the name PLAY MATTERS was adopted by the Association.³² In Scotland the playbus movement started in the 1970s. The buses remain the largest sector of mobile community resources. Most playbuses have provisions for parents as well as children. They encourage play on the bus, and provide an area for tea and conversation. In many cases the popularity of a playbus has led to the

³⁰ Child's Play, March 1984, Volume 1, Number 1, p. 6.

³¹ Child's Play, November/December 1984, Volume 1, Number 6, p. 9.

³² Play Matters, brochure from the National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries, London, no date.

establishment of a permanent play facility. - - - In London a new service was established in 1988. The Thomas Coram Homeless Children's Project was set up to reach families living in temporary housing. The toy library sessions are held in foyers of rooming hotels. The project visits 6 to 8 hotels a day and sees about five families in each. Each child is allowed to borrow one toy and one book. As families may have to move with little or no notice, many toys are lost each month, resulting in high replacement costs. The Project also tries to make available art supplies such as crayons, paper, and scissors. As families become familiar with the toy workers they may feel able to share concerns about their children and their development. This program brings families together and helps them build closer relationships.³³

- Canada - The Canadian Association of Toy Libraries (CATL) was founded in 1975 under the leadership of Joanna von Levetzow, a social worker from England. By 1985 there were more than 200 toy libraries around Canada, with some especially for children with handicaps. Julie Creighton, who was active in the Association before she moved to the United States wrote in her letter, "Levetzow tirelessly promoted toy libraries when she and her husband made a move to Canada. She envisioned toy libraries as community places, drop in centres for children and their families and a place for new Canadians or new parents to meet and informally improve their lives and their children's through access to and a greater understanding of play. Not a bad idea! I regret that some of the simplicity of this concept has been lost in the rush to secure funding. Toys, it appears, do not sell. I am Canadian and have always been shocked at how underdeveloped the toy library movement and awareness in the USA has been and remains. There are fewer toy libraries

³³ Child's Play, November 1993, Volume X, Number 2, p. 5.

in the US than in Canada **without making any adjustments to a per capita rate**. From what I gather this has **everything** to do with government funding and sensibilities concerning social problems. In Britain, many European countries, and in Canada there is a much stronger support for government funding. In the US it seems to be (and alas is looking even more bleak in the near future!) every man (**who speaks of children and woman**) for himself".³⁴ The CATL was renamed the Canadian Association of Toy Libraries and Family Resource Centers in 1985, then changed again in 1994 to the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs. Creighton continues, "The words Toy Library were taken from the association's name. I have let my membership lapse since this vote was taken."³⁵

- Netherlands - The first toy library in Holland started in 1973 in Haarlem. This toy library was intended for children with handicaps, just like the ones that immediately followed. Once there were ten toy libraries they formed a national organisation called Speel-o-theek Nederland. Speel-o-theek is the Dutch word for toy library. All this happened in 1976. The toy libraries lend to various groups of children including children with physical and mental handicaps, as well as healthy children. In the western part of the country a special goal is to reach the children of foreign workers in Dutch society. They do this by translating the rules of the toy library, and games and toys into Turkish, Arab or Spanish. From 1976 until 1981 the program was financed by two private funds and the government. 1980 was the last year the foundation was

³⁴ Julie Creighton, letter to Julia Moore, dated March 27, 1995.

³⁵ Ibid

subsidized. The toy library association joined with another group, the Ken O /Opvoedingsvoorlichting, which is a state-aided foundation.³⁶

- Australia - Much of the credit for developing toy libraries in Australia goes to Annetine Forell. She visited England and discovered the toy libraries there, so she set up one in Melbourne in 1971. In 1973 she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study toy library development in Sweden, Norway, England and America. Inspired by what she saw, she decided to make the toy library in Melbourne a model for others, and encourage the founding of toy libraries throughout Australia. The Noah's Ark Toy Library for children with handicaps has grown to become one of the most comprehensive in the world. Funding mostly comes from the Health Commission and the Department of Social Security. In 1985 it housed over 10,000 toys and games for children up to 21 years of age. The library was the catalyst in starting the Australian Association of Toy Libraries, and the Australian Association of Toy Libraries for the Handicapped. In 1983 Forell was awarded the Order of Australia for her services to her country.³⁷

- Switzerland - With four official languages, cooperation among toy libraries in Switzerland requires multilingual expertise. In 1986 there were more than 60 toy libraries in operation with 40 toy corners in public libraries. They are funded by a variety of charitable groups, public funds, membership fees, and commercial concerns. Most are intended for families in general while some focus on children with cultural or social difficulties. The Swiss Association of Toy Libraries was formed in 1980. One of the founders, Ann Libbrecht Gourdet was born in Belgium, but moved to Switzerland in 1971. In 1974 she

³⁶ The Dutch Organisation for Toy-Libraries and Parent Education, Spec -theek, no date.

³⁷ Child's Play, March, 1985, Volume 1, Number 9, p. 4.

and several parents formed the first toy library in the French-speaking part of the country. In 1978 she published a book on the creation of toy libraries, and has written many articles on the subject of toys and games.³⁸ By 1991 the number of toy libraries had grown to over 300, according to a letter written by Renate Fuchs of the Swiss Association of Toy Libraries.³⁹

- France - A unique aspect of ludothecaires (toy libraries) in France is that a course of study is now offered by the University of Paris XIII. Students are based in the Department of the Science of Play, which offers courses in theory of play, and sponsors research in various aspects of play. It is hoped that the 12 month course will give status to toy librarians, and be recognized nationally. The program is being run in conjunction with the French Association of Toy Libraries.⁴⁰

- Russia - The first toy library opened in Moscow in the summer of 1992.⁴¹ In the fall of that year, Gayle Kranz, a Director of USA/TLA had the opportunity to visit a toy library in the Nevsky district of St. Petersburg. In an article she wrote for Child's Play, she tells about her visit and the serious shortage of toys they were facing. The St. Petersburg Early Intervention Center and Lekotek began as a joint project with Sweden. The early intervention methods were adapted from those used in the US and Sweden. The directors of the program asked for assistance from their American counterparts in the way of plans for homemade toys, infant toys, puzzles, and toy suggestions for

³⁸ Child's Play, September, 1986, Volume III, Number 3, p. 8.

³⁹ International Toy Libraries Newsletter, July 1992, Volume 7, Number 1, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Child's Play, Winter 1993, Volume IX, Number 3, p. 3.

⁴¹ Child's Play, Fall 1992, Volume IX, Number 2, p. 4.

children who are autistic or have sensory disabilities. They also asked for help with adaptive toys, molded furniture and occupational therapy procedures.⁴²

- Israel - Judith Kirschbaum may qualify as the longest distance member of USA/TLA. She heads the "O-3 Project" run by the municipality of Or-Yeheda's Department of Education. It is a small town near Tel-Aviv many of whose residents came from Iraq, Libya, Georgia, and East Russia. The O-3 Project started in 1984 in order to enrich young parents and give them tools for raising their children to become healthy and happy adults. The program served about 300 hundred families and included two toy libraries in 1994. The libraries are located in two community centers. Funding comes from the municipality, with additional support from the parents, many of whom are in a low socio-economic strata.⁴³

- Nigeria - In 1986, Sally Templer, Director of the Zimbabwe Toy Library addressed USA/TLA members in a Child's Play article. She wrote that the toy library in Zimbabwe is run by volunteers, and no state or civic grants are received by them. At that time they were serving about 40 children each week. Most of their members were from residential institutions and not accompanied by parents. Their goal that year was to educate the public through printing brochures, and having Toy Library boxes with toys in doctor's waiting rooms. It was hoped that through these efforts the public would be better informed, and others might initiate toy libraries in other parts of the country.⁴⁴

- India - In a 1993 letter to Annetine Forell of Australia, Devendra Desai of the Children Toy Foundation in Bombay, writes that after attending an International Toy

⁴² Child's Play, May 1993, Volume IX, Number 4, p. 3.

⁴³ Child's Play, March 1994, Volume X, Number 3, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Child's Play, March 1986, Volume II, Number 7, p. 12.

Library Association conference they were able to set up 16 more toy/game libraries there. Nine were in Children's Aid Societies, and three were set up by individuals under their guidance. They also started two toy/game libraries in jails, for women prisoners and for children under five who are incarcerated with their mothers.⁴⁵

- International Toy Library Association - In May 1987, at the fourth international toy library conference in Toronto, Ontario, it was decided to form the ITLA. The objectives of the organization are:

- To spread the concept of toy libraries throughout the world.
- To cooperate, participate, and work with other international bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and ICCP (International Committee on Children's Play).
- To act as a pressure group, promoting the development of high quality games and toys that will stimulate the social, intellectual, and/or physical development of children.
- To act as an efficient link between national organizations and their toy library networks, giving them opportunities to exchange news, ideas, experiences, materials, bibliographies, etc.
- To organize an international conference every three years.⁴⁶

International Conferences were held in Turin, Italy in 1990, Melbourne, Australia in 1993, and one is planned for Zurich, Switzerland in 1996. In the April 1995 issue of Broadsheet, the ITLA newsletter, there were addresses for contact people in the organization from 41 countries.

⁴⁵ Broadsheet, International Toy Library Association Newsletter, March 1994, Number 1, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Child's Play, June 1987, Volume IV, Number 2, p. 5.

FOR PROFIT TOY LIBRARIES

A final type of toy library that has not been mentioned previously is located in Delray Beach, Florida. The Toys-N-Tech toy and equipment rental agency is a for profit enterprise. It started nine years ago as a toy lending library, but Jane Chacon, the director could not make a living at it. She expanded her line of materials, found a client base, and started charging modest rental fees. In this resort area, many grandparents or traveling families need equipment only for a short time. *"I focused my equipment to meet that need."* She added video cameras, cribs, high chairs, and bikes to the inventory. She recently added a second store in Boca Raton, an upscale community with a large grandparent clientele.

She is able to support three full-time employees and three part-time drivers, who deliver large items to customer's homes. This delivery service is appreciated by the elderly, who could not manage the bulkier items. Jane encounters the same problems as other toy libraries: cleaning, repairs, missing parts, and avoiding faddish items. She has chosen not to carry electronic games, as the systems change so rapidly. She carries a large number of Fisher-Price preschool toys, Little Tikes and Step Two products. She admits the high season is over the winter months, especially around the December holidays, but enjoys having the pace slow down in the summer. That allows her to spend time with her family.⁴⁷ Previously known attempts at operating profit making toy libraries have failed, but Toys-N-Tech has certainly filled a need in this resort area.

⁴⁷ Child's Play, February 1995, Volume XI, Number 3, pp. 1+.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN THE TOY LIBRARY WORLD

- Julie Creighton worked as a product and media specialist, and at one time chaired the Canadian Toy Testing Council. She has an established reputation as a national media commentator on the subject of toys, children and play. She has also served on the USA/TLA Board of Directors since 1990.⁴⁸
- Sally DeVincentis worked as a teacher of special needs children in the Evanston, IL school system in the late 1970s. While in Scotland to deliver a paper on education and children with special needs she met Lena Richter of Norway, who told her about Lekotek. The following summer Sally and fellow teacher, Sharon Draznin went to Norway to study the method. After attempting unsuccessfully to start a similar program in the Evanston school system, she left her job and started her own Lekotek. In the ten years she served as Executive Director, she helped open 55 sites, including several in South America. She left Lekotek in 1990 to work with computers and special needs children.⁴⁹ Sally was the first president of USA/TLA and a founding board member. She served on the board until 1989. She was voted the first Honorary Board Member of USA/TLA in May, 1993.⁵⁰
- Jane Donelson served as the Director of the Los Angeles County Toy Loan Program from 1961 to 1994. It is the oldest toy library known, and now has 35 branches. She is known in California as "Mrs. Toy Loan." Jane was president of USA/TLA from 1990 to 1992.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Child's Play*, Fall 1990, Volume VII, Number 3, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Sally deVincentis, letter to Julia Moore, dated May, 1995.

⁵⁰ *Child's Play*, September 1993, Volume X, Number 1, p. 8.

⁵¹ *Child's Play*, Winter 1991, Volume VIII, Number 3, p. 1.

- Judy Ellis was associate chairperson for the Toy Design Department of the Fashion Institute of Technology. She was also a member of the American Society of Testing Materials, which evaluates the safety of new toy products and consults with many toy manufacturers. Judy was elected to the USA/TLA Board of Directors in 1991.⁵²
- Nina Hillery worked as a play therapist for several years, then went on to run a chocolate shop. In 1979 she revived the Summit County Toy and Resource Center in Akron, Ohio. After several years of neglect, Nina was able to develop the program into one of the nation's larger toy libraries. The Toy and Resource Center serves all children including those with special needs.
- Lilburn H. Horton, Jr. (Burnie) is the Superintendent/President of San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California. The college has an outstanding child development program. He was elected to the USA/TLA Board of Directors in 1989, and elected to president of the board in 1993. In 1994 Delta College opened a \$3 million child care facility that included a toy library. The center is designed for 110 children ages 10 months to 12 years.⁵³
- Judith Iacuzzi became the Executive Director of USA/TLA in 1984. She had a Master's Degree in Journalism and had six years experience in higher education. She also had several years of fundraising experience with non-profit organizations before taking over the post from Sylvia Lurie who remained as a consulting director.⁵⁴ Judy serves as the national spokesperson for USA/TLA.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Child's Play, September 1993, Volume X, Number 1, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Child's Play, November/December 1984, Volume I, Number 6, p. 10.

- Gayle Kranz is Clinical Director of the Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation. She was elected to the USA/TLA Board of Directors in 1984 and has served several terms, then was elected as president for 1988 to 1989.⁵⁵ She was a founding member of USA/TLA.
- Susan Moore-Myers is a Montessori teacher who served for six years as executive director of the Rainbow Fleet in Oklahoma City. The Fleet provided extensive mobile services to day care centers. She has also been an early childhood and fundraising consultant. She was a founding member of USA/TLA, served as president from 1986 to 1988, and has served on the Board of Directors since 1984.⁵⁶
- Diana Nielander was elected to the USA/TLA Board of Directors in 1994. She is planning and information officer for the National Lekotek Center in Evanston, Illinois.⁵⁷
- Joanne Oppenheim is the president and author of the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio, a quarterly publication, as well as over 40 books for children and parents. She has spoken at several of the USA/TLA Annual Meetings. She is a senior editor with the Bank Street College of Education. She was elected to the USA/TLA Board in 1992.⁵⁸
- Rhoda Redleaf started the Toys 'N Things toy library in the St. Paul area. She also established Redleaf Press, publisher of early childhood materials. She is a child development specialist, teacher trainer, and founding USA/TLA board member.⁵⁹
- Mary Sinker was a Montessori-trained professional who aided in the formulation of Lekotek-USA, and was a founder of USA/TLA. She became the first "toy guru," first

⁵⁵ Child's Play, December 1994, Volume XI, Number 2, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Child's Play, Winter 1991, Volume VII, Number 4, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Child's Play, December 1994, Volume XI, Number 2, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Child's Play, Winter 1993, Volume IX, Number 3, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Child's Play, Fall 1990, Volume VII, Number 3, p. 1.

suggesting adaptations, then making them. She was among the first to give input to toy makers about their products, and designs her own items for production. She helped write the bylaws for the International Toy Library Association.⁶⁰ She was named Honorary Director of USA/TLA in 1994.⁶¹

- Martin Stone became active in USA/TLA through his activities as Director at the United Cerebral Palsy Westchester County in New York. He had a Master's Degree in Special Education and a certificate in administration. Westchester UCP's toy library began in April of 1982 by Stone and Dr. Steve Kanor, a pioneer in the development of adapted toys. Martin was a founding member and the first treasurer for USA/TLA.⁶² He later became director of children's services at the Rockland County Association for Retarded Citizens in Pomona, New York.

CONCLUSIONS

Toy Lending Libraries may be one of "the best kept secrets" a community has. Too often they are underfunded, with no budget for publicity. While their existence may be well known to child care professionals and therapists, the general public may be unfamiliar with the concept. In December 1993, *CBS This Morning* visited The Brooklyn Branch of the Cuyahoga County Library system and the Summit County Toy and Resource Center in Akron, Ohio. Money editor John Stehr used the toy libraries to demonstrate, "how you

⁶⁰ *Child's Play*, Winter 1993, Volume IX, Number 3, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Child's Play*, December 1994, Volume XI, Number 2, p. 3.

⁶² *Child's Play*, Summer 1984, Volume I, Number 4, p. 6.

can give your kids a steady supply of toys without buying any.⁶³” He interviewed parents and a grandparent, all of whom felt that the toy libraries were an ideal solution for families with young children. Stehr also interviewed Mayor Coyne who stated, “This is probably one of the most outstanding things that was done in my 46 years in office.”⁶⁴ Stehr gave the address for the headquarters of USA/TLA, which made available a list of all the toy libraries in the country, if a self-addressed, stamped envelope was sent with the request.⁶⁵ USA/TLA and the Summit County TRC both reported a positive response to the broadcast. This brief segment was a much needed step in promoting the concept of toy libraries to the general public.

Both USA/TLA and Lekotek are trying to make the public more aware of their resources and services. They both want to get the point across that “toys are for sharing.” The American mentality concerning possessions seems to stem from the adage, “S/he who dies with the most toys - wins.” This quip may have been aimed at adults, but our children seem to be learning the lesson all too well. It makes so much more sense in this era of smaller families, and environmental awareness to share toys, rather than assume that every child needs to have them all. In the past when families were larger, it made sense to pass toys along from child to child, or neighbor to neighbor. These days, many families outgrow toys before they are barely used. How much more sensible to borrow a toy that a child may outgrow quickly, or try it out before making a decision to purchase.

Toy libraries often carry items too costly for a single family to purchase, such as playhouses, or climbing apparatus. In addition, toy libraries are a perfect solution for

⁶³ CBS This Morning, transcript for segment on toy libraries, December 21, 1993.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

grandparents who have grandchildren visiting only once or twice a year. Toys purchased for visiting children one year, will surely be outgrown by the next. Instead, a toy library allows the children to select toys they may have back home, or have always wanted to try.

Toy libraries that serve children with special needs are especially valuable. Few toys are available on the open market that are suitable for many children with physical limitations. When they can be located, the costs may be prohibitive. Having a central facility, with a trained staff to make recommendations, can be a real blessing for parents. Rather than having to purchase a single toy, they can borrow a variety of materials as the child as the child develops new skills.

“Filling a need” is a good phrase to describe what toy libraries do best. With the hard work of the people mentioned in this paper, the many different types of toy libraries should continue, and hopefully flourish as time goes on.

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APPENDIX

STATISTICS OF UNITED STATES TOY LENDING LIBRARIES ⁶⁶

 Populations Served

General	57%
Developmental/Special Needs	32%
Family Day Care Providers	5%
Other	6%

 Geographic Location of Toy Lending Libraries

Midwest States	50%
Eastern States	22%
Western States	29%

 Where Toy Lending Libraries Are Housed

Public Libraries	28%
Child Care Resource and Referral	17%
Schools	12%
Lekoteks	17%
Other - Hospitals, County Programs, United Way, etc.	26%
