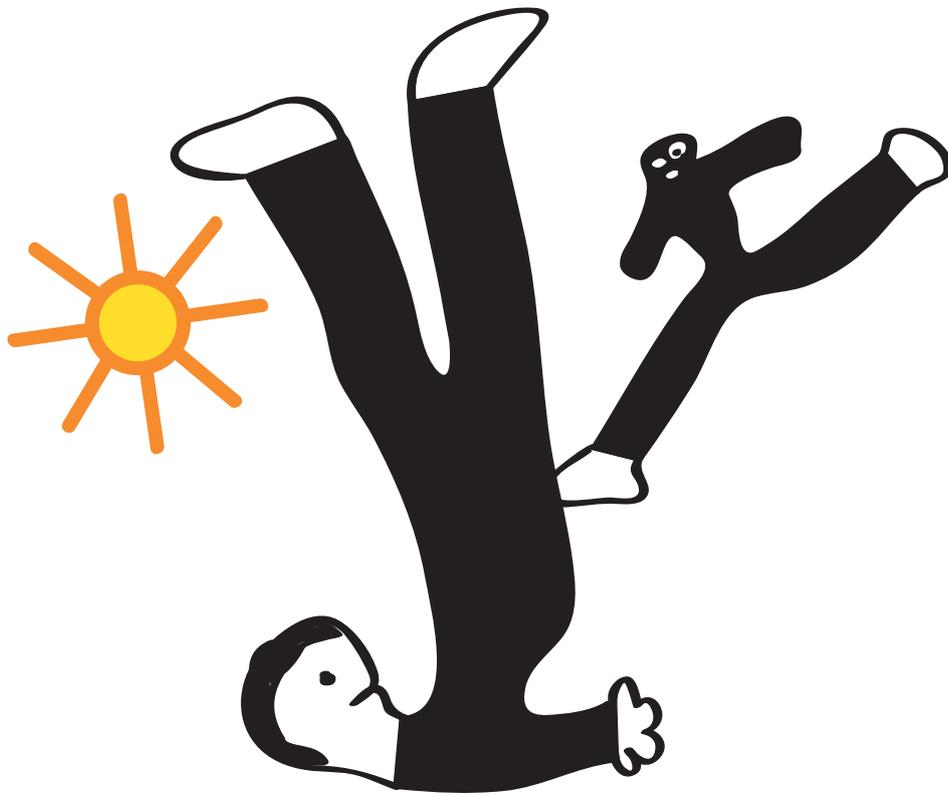


Play and Folklore



The Australian Children's Folklore Collection: a short history

Play and Folklore: partner in cultural diversity

Using North African children's play culture for pedagogical and sociocultural applications

Documenting the Dorothy Howard Collection: a digital approach

A history of their own: the historiography of children and youth in Australia

Documenting play: from the front line

Losing our marbles: what's happening to children's folklore in schools?

A short list of online play resources

An artwork to visit

From the Editors – final issue

Play and Folklore no. 66, December 2016

It's hard to say goodbye to something that's been an important feature in our lives for more than thirty years. *Play and Folklore* has been a unique publication in Australia, and perhaps internationally, with its focus on children's traditional folkloric play – verbal and physical.

Like the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, *Play and Folklore* had humble beginnings. The Collection started in 1979 in a single filing cabinet at the Institute of Early Childhood Development in Melbourne, and the Collection's accompanying publication, *The Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter*, was a rudimentary effort of typed pages, photocopies and staples. Even then, it was greatly enhanced by the art work of Donald Oliver, artist and educationalist *extraordinaire*, who designed the original logos we continued to use.

We three editors have individually written for this final issue of *Play and Folklore*, as have several other key members of the Reference Committee for the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, and one of our most regular contributors, Jean-Pierre Rossie. Happily, the Collection will remain in the care of Museum Victoria and its permanent staff, as well as the advisors on the Reference Committee.

We were all very proud when, in 2004, the Collection was placed on the UNESCO Australia Memory of the World Register as a significant part of Australia's documentary heritage. We were honoured to have been included with the Mabo Papers, Captain Cook's *Endeavour* Journal, The Ballarat Reform League Charter, and the 1906 film of *The Story of the Kelly Gang* – among a total of only fifty nominations.

We are grateful to several institutions for their help over the years in hosting and caring for the ACFC: the Institute of Early Childhood Development in Melbourne, the University of Melbourne Archives, and Museum Victoria. We also thank the National Library of Australia for its commitment to archiving and collecting children's folklore through its Oral History and Folklore Section. We especially thank Margy Burn (Assistant Director-General, Australian Collections & Reader Services at the National Library) and also former and present National Library staff Mark Cranfield, Kevin Bradley and Shelly Grant. Museum Victoria staff Deborah Tout-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caz McClennan and Marita Dyson have been towers of strength. We also thank our many, many contributors to *Play and Folklore* over more than thirty years.

Gwenda Beed Davey, June Factor and Judy McKinty

Play and Folklore

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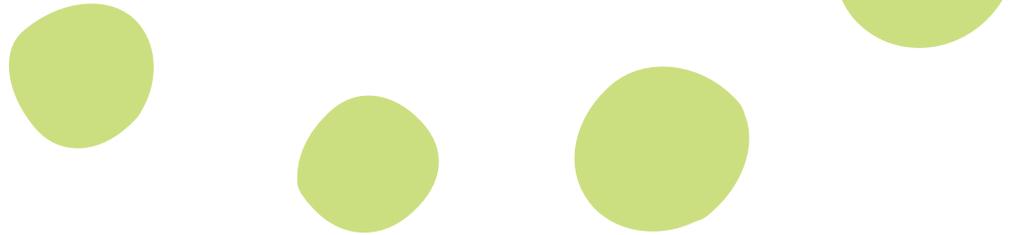
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The Australian Children's Folklore Collection: a short history

June Factor

This is an edited transcript of an oral recording made by June Factor on 8 November, 2016

The beginning

Like many good things, certainly in my life, there was no plan, there was no goal that related to anything that is now called the Australian Children's Folklore Collection. In the early '70s I was an academic at the Institute of Early Childhood Development in Melbourne. Our students, almost all female, were going to be kindergarten teachers or infant grades teachers. I taught in the English Department – a small but wonderful department – and in one of the courses that we ran we set a unit: 'Writing About Children' or 'Writing About Childhood'. I don't remember the details exactly, but it was partly because the students on the whole were very vocationally committed, and we thought it would be interesting for them to read both novels and autobiographies – *The Watcher on the Cast Iron Balcony* by Hal Porter, that sort of thing – that offered very different views about childhood. What we didn't predict was how romantic the students were about childhood.

Even in those far-gone days of the early 1970s families were small, so you could grow up with just one brother or sister and not have much to do with small children at all. Some of the students did babysitting to earn a bit of pocket-money, and that may have given them a slightly more realistic experience. There used to be an ad on television in

those days – I think it was for dog food. The imagery was of a beautiful, blonde-haired, blue-eyed little boy running in slow motion through golden corn with a golden Labrador lapping at his heels, and it was sun and joy and innocence and all those clichés about childhood. The students had something of that kind of image, I think, of childhood, and the more gritty reality that came through in the novels and autobiographies some of them found quite disturbing. I thought they were going to find the real thing very difficult indeed, and decided to remind them of their own childhoods.

Senior academics used to take tutorials in those days, and I'd go into a tute and say something along the lines of, 'What do you remember about when you were a kid at school? What games did you play?' 'We didn't play any games, no, not really.' 'Can you remember any rhymes?' 'No.' And this was almost universal. It took me a while to realise that, as young adults, they were, as the old saying suggested, busily putting away the things of childhood.

Fortunately Ian Turner, an historian teaching at Monash University with a long interest in folklore and folk music, had produced in 1969 the first collection, uncensored, of Australian children's playground rhymes: *Cinderella Dressed in Yella*. It caused quite a furore when it came out – and it was enormously popular. I took a copy into the next series of tutorials. That worked wonderfully.

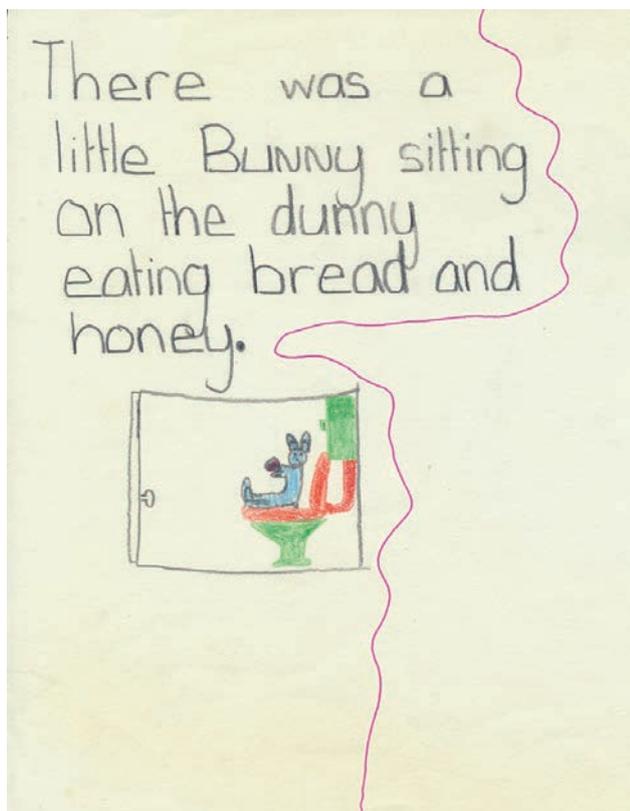
The amnesia about childhood is a very thin layer. The students would read out a rhyme and say things like, 'Oh, but that's wrong!' So I realised I had to explain something about folklore, about the way in which it's constantly changing and adapting. We were getting somewhere because, of course, rhymes such as:

Mary had a little lamb,
Her father shot it dead,
And now it goes to school with her
Between two chunks of bread.

and

Ding dong dell,
Pussy's in the well,
If you don't believe me,
Go and have a smell.

don't sound as if they come from the mouths of 'innocent' children.



A child's rhyme, one of hundreds sent to June Factor.
Source – Collection of June Factor

I knew the students were going on teaching rounds shortly, and so I said to them, 'Right, when you're at the school you can't spend your time at recess and lunch-time having lots of cups of tea in the staff room. You have to be out there in the playground, watching and listening'. And because they were undergraduate students – and by that time I had two or three years of experience teaching undergraduates – I said, 'You have to have pencil or pen and paper, and I want you to write down everything you see and hear – and I'm going to mark what you bring in'. Now of course this is bizarre. What on earth would I have marked it on – quantity? Vitality? But undergraduate students tend to take more seriously material that they think is going to be marked. So off they trot, and they go into the schools usually for about two weeks, and back to me come pieces of paper with the most fascinating material. I was amazed at the range and variety – I was absolutely fascinated by the material. The students had written down rhymes they heard, insults, chants, they described some of the games that were being played, and before me on not very salubrious-looking pieces of paper was a whole culture I recognised immediately.

My first instinct was 'This is important. I can't just give this material back'. So I said to the students, 'Look, you can make copies if you want it, but I'm keeping this because it's really great stuff you've brought in – really important'. We had small offices, and I ended up with a very large pile of paper with all this material, so I got in touch with Ian Turner – he was almost a generation ahead of me but I knew who he was – and Ian came out one day to have a look, and he said to me, 'Well, the publisher of *Cinderella*, Heinemann Educational, has been urging me to do a second edition of the collection. Would you like to co-edit it and we'll put in all the new material?' I said I'd be delighted, and that is what happened. If you look at the second edition of *Cinderella Dressed in Yella*, which came out in 1978, you'll see it uses the figure 2/ in front of all the new material. Almost all of that material came from my students, not just in that one year, because after that I continued this project every year – it became a feature of what we did in the English Department. Apart from its other values it was literary work: oral literature. The oldest kind of literature, the first kind of literature, is not written literature, it's oral, and in this case it's from a particular cohort: the young; primary school children. I knew the material was

important. It spent some time under the bed of my first-born, who actually helped put the book together in the end because she was tired of having these boxes under her bed.



Dorothy Howard noting Marbles rules at an Australian primary school, mid-1950s.
Source – Dorothy Howard Collection, Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria, courtesy June Factor

Another co-editor was Wendy Lowenstein. Wendy was a well-known oral historian, and she had contributed to the first issue of *Cinderella*, particularly the vulgar and obscene material. It was in conversation with Wendy that I asked a question that turned out to have a very significant consequence. In the Introduction to the first edition of *Cinderella Dressed in Yella* that Ian Turner had put together, he acknowledged an American woman called Dorothy Howard, who had come to Australia and whose work he found valuable. And I remember saying to Wendy, 'Who's this Dorothy Howard?' Wendy had met her when she came out. Dorothy Howard was an American post-doctoral Fulbright scholar who came to Australia in 1954-55 and travelled all around the country – the only place she didn't visit was the Northern Territory, which she always regretted – and she collected children's folklore wherever she went, not only in schools, but on the beaches, on the streets, in parks, wherever there were children. But I only discovered this a little later. I was intrigued to hear this story about Dorothy Howard. Wendy was a strong character and was not greatly enamoured of foreign visitors who flounced in to Australia to show off their intellectual wares, so I was interested that she spoke about Dorothy Howard very positively; from Wendy that was indeed a compliment.

She even dug out an address. By this time I realised Dorothy Howard must be quite old and I thought, well, I can only try. She might not live at this address anymore, she may well be dead, but I wrote a letter. Far from being dead, I got a lively, hand-written letter back full of interest, and that began a marvellous friendship and cooperation across the world. I visited Dorothy Howard many times. We would find an old suitcase and I would bring back from what she called her 'mock adobe' house in Roswell, New Mexico, material that she had collected while she was in Australia. Such treasure!



Dorothy Howard in her home at Roswell, New Mexico.
Photographer – June Factor
Source – Collection of June Factor

Meanwhile, closer to hand – in fact a few doors down from my office at the Institute of Early Childhood Development – was a friend and colleague, Gwenda Davey. Gwenda was a psychologist teaching in the Psychology Department. She also had a long-standing interest in folklore, and folk music particularly, and she became very interested in the material I was collecting. This was the time during the Whitlam era when education was valued, and Gwenda gained a one-year grant to go around the country and collect from families of non-Anglo origin, of whom of course Australia is wonderfully enriched, the folklore that parents pass down to their children.

That became the Multicultural Cassette Series, part of what became the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, and at one stage there would hardly have been a kindergarten that didn't have these tapes with the nursery rhymes, the lullabies and the songs in eight languages, of which one was English.

In 1979 – I think that must have been after my first visit to see Dorothy Howard in the US – Gwenda and I held an exhibition at the Institute that included a lot of the material that Dorothy gave me, and we invented the title The Australian Children's Folklore Collection. I think that's the first time it was used.

So for me it all began as a means to an end, to reawaken in my students a more complex and realistic understanding of childhood than the romantic television ads and other forms of popular culture might offer, but it became more and more a fascination with this culture of children. It *is* a culture – and it is just as significant for children as adult culture is for adults. It's largely a sociable activity, although you can practise bits of it privately: knucklebones, throwing a ball... It is both kinetic – physical – and verbal, it ranges from the most intimate areas of private languages that only three people know and must keep secret to games and rhymes that are familiar not merely at one school but across the country, although with constant variation. The two pillars of folklore are continuity and change. Children are still playing games that we know were recorded in ancient Rome, but they are also using play, both verbal and kinetic, that is only available to contemporary children, whether it's play with a material object or a rhyme that references a current politician. They hold, as if in a kind of verbal aspic, the past, but they are constantly watching and learning from the adult world, scrutinising it with sharp eyes, subverting it but also copying it.

Gwenda and I recognised the importance – and the fascination – of the folklore both of children and for children. That's how the Collection began.

Moving on

In 1989 I moved from the Institute of Early Childhood Development to the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne, and rather like a snail that carries its shell I brought the Collection with me. Gwenda had left the Institute some years earlier, and I knew there was nobody there who had the interest in this material that the two of us had. I was worried about what might happen to this growing collection: by this time it filled a number of filing cabinets and we also had quite a large library. (The library remained with the Institute and was later incorporated into the University of Melbourne library.) We didn't start with objects – objects happened to us. I remember that the Institute caretaker came to my room one day with a big, old children's drum which he'd found under the stairs somewhere in a cupboard that nobody had opened for a thousand years; and a retired doctor, whose wife had been a kindergarten teacher, gave us a collection of little blocks made of a sandstone material, which really go back to the tactile Montessori blocks that children loved. These things just turned up in my office, and how could we say no? But we didn't initially think about objects. We were very much aware of the verbal and the musical – the singing, the chanting – and of course the games, but the games had to be described or photographed.



A Liberian Bush-child's doll, one of the many playthings donated by Dorothy Howard to the Collection.

Source – Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria
Photographer – Deborah Tout-Smith, Museum Victoria



A paper football, made from a Melbourne newspaper in the late 1980s by an adult who played footy with these as a child. Source – Australian Children’s Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria

When I went to the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne, the Centre was literally next door to the University Archives, in Barry Street, Carlton. Frank Strahan, the director of the Archives, was fortunately a man fascinated by the unusual, the non-conventional, and he was delighted to give house room to the Collection. So that’s where it lived for quite a while. We had a little committee with Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Frank Strahan, myself and a couple of others, and we discussed what needed to be done. There were occasional visitors to the Collection, but there was very little collecting of new material.

The Collection grows

A number of individuals apart from Gwenda and myself, and the wonderful Dorothy Howard, contributed to the Collection. There was Heather Russell, who at one time was working as a Research Assistant to Gwenda. We had a request from a school in a working-class area of Melbourne: the staff were concerned about bullying. Could we help? We didn’t know whether we could or not, but we observed the playground life and thought there was not so much bullying as a lack of much opportunity for play. The school accepted our recommendation and hired Heather, who spent about four months in the school. She became known as ‘the games lady’. She wasn’t there as a teacher and she wasn’t there as a disciplinarian – she was there just to help the children with their play, and her presence made an enormous difference to the playground. It was an immigrant community with children from a number of different countries.

Heather documented much of what she saw – for example the way, in that school, when they played Marbles every child put the marble on their middle finger like a shanghai, and they called it the ‘Chinese flick’, although it actually was a practice that came from the Vietnamese children. We saw fascinating examples of cross-cultural interchange going on in an ordinary Australian school playground, most of which had not previously been documented. Heather’s research material was added to the Collection, and over the years many other people donated material, so the Collection grew.



This decorated envelope arrived full of children’s rhymes. Source – Collection of June Factor

Children’s folklore publication

The Australian Children’s Folklore Newsletter, which we used to publish for subscribers from the early days of the Collection at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, changed its name at some point to *Play and Folklore*, and is now published on the Museum’s website. What had been a largely Australian audience grew to encompass readers – and sometimes writers – from around the world. For most of the time we were publishing *The Australian Children’s Folklore Newsletter* it was Don Oliver who was putting it together physically: cutting and pasting and photocopying, and then sending the printed copies out to our subscribers. We produced two issues a year, and Don would create the illustrations and find images that we could use – he was a very important part of the production. *Play and Folklore* now has a professional designer, and it goes out on the internet so anybody in the world can read it at no cost. We lost much of the personal connection that one has with subscribers, and gained a world-wide audience.



Amy Saunders making string figures with a visitor to the *Tops, Tales and Granny's False Teeth* exhibition, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, April 1990. Photographer – Judy McKinty

Children's play exhibitions

Before the current Melbourne Museum was built, the Museum was housed in the the State Library building in the city, and it included a Children's Museum – a very inventive and exciting Children's Museum with Mary Featherston as the Designer and Rachel Faggetter as the Director. One of the exhibitions was called *You're IT!*, built around children's play. That was a most lively and successful exhibition. That's when Judy McKinty, an Explainer at the exhibition, became part of the group around the Collection. Visitors added to our store of knowledge of contemporary children's play in Australia by filling out questionnaires, which came into the Collection when the exhibition closed.

In 1990, I received a request from a member of the Australian Centre Board, who was also on the Board of the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. Word had got out that Gwenda and I were planning to have an exhibition of children's playthings from many countries. At the High Court in Canberra there had been an exhibition to which the various Embassies had donated what they regarded as a typical toy from their country, and we wrote and said that if they didn't want the playthings back we would take them for the Collection, and include them in an exhibition. I was asked: would we put the exhibition on at the Children's Hospital?

The Children's Hospital was engaged in one of its many refurbishments and rebuildings, and we were given a large room that had once been a lecture theatre. It had lost its ceiling, but the imaginative designer Mary Featherston covered the area with colourful balloons.

We created an interactive exhibition which we called *Tops, Tales and Granny's False Teeth* – a move in the game of Jacks or Knucklebones. While we had covered display shelves in which we put objects from the Collection that couldn't be handled because they were too fragile, the bulk of the room was filled with activities for the children. They could spin tops, they could play Jacks, they could make string figures – there was even a corner where we had books and reading. Judy McKinty and Dorothy Rickards, a wonderful drama teacher and colleague from the Institute of Early Childhood Development, were joint co-ordinators of the project. One of our key 'presenters' was Amy Saunders, a young Indigenous woman whose friendliness and exceptional knowledge of string games delighted the children.

The exhibition at the Children's Hospital lasted a month, and it was an extraordinary experience from which we learnt more than I, or I think any of us, had expected. We believed we would be catering for the children in the hospital who were able to walk around, and probably their brothers and sisters who often had to wait around. We discovered that most of the hospital visited the exhibition. Not only were we catering for children in the hospital who could walk, children would whizz down in wheelchairs. We also had baskets donated from a Chinese store in the city, which we filled with playthings, and they would go up to the wards to the children who really couldn't come down to us. It was amazing, the number of children who did, and so did parents. The play life in the exhibition united young and old. A group of medical students began a long game of Marbles with painters and other workmen. It connected all parts of the hospital. It was a fascinating and interesting learning experience for us.



Family playing string games, *Tops Tales and Granny's False Teeth* exhibition, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, April 1990. Photographer – Judy McKinty

The fact that everybody has been a child means that playlore is a strong (though rarely recognised) connection between adults and children. The playlore also connected the children in the hospital with their normal school lives – the games they would be playing and the rhymes they'd be chanting if they were not in hospital. It wasn't just the rather artificial play life that hospitals sometimes provide, this is the children's own world, these are the things *they* do, and you would see a parent and a child exchanging different ways of playing a game. The father did it one way when he was a child and the child did it another; they could discuss and compare on an equal basis. So that was a marvellous experience, and I was really sorry that the administration didn't recognise the value of this playlore and find a way to integrate it into the hospital's ongoing programs. But they didn't.

A new home

The Collection remained at the University Archives for a number of years. It was safe and secure there, but not growing much, nor having much influence. Then one day I was approached by Maryanne McCubbin, who had worked at the University Archives but now worked at the Melbourne Museum. She was greatly interested in both the historical and cultural value of the Collection, and suggested it should come to the Museum. It took some time before I agreed: I wanted to ensure that the Museum would not only care for the Collection but also develop and enrich it, and make it available to both the Australian and the international community. It took almost five years until I signed a contract with the Museum – signed with great public flourish in 1999.

So it made a bit of a splash, and I have mostly positive things to say about the Collection's shift to the Museum. The Museum has largely committed itself to the Collection, and it certainly has housed it very well, ensuring the preservation of both written material and objects. Gradually, some of this large archive is being made available on the internet. As yet the Museum has not developed an ongoing collection program, the Collection is not on display in the Museum, and it doesn't have its own dedicated curator, but all these achievements must surely be part of the Museum's future plans. After all, in 2004 the Collection was placed on UNESCO's Australian Memory of the World Register, alongside Captain Cook's journals, the Mabo papers, and other materials that are regarded as significant symbols and markers of Australian culture and history. Australian children's folklore now has an honoured place in the country's official memory, something of which the Museum is rightly proud.

Dr June Factor is a writer, historian and folklorist and an Honorary Senior Fellow in the University of Melbourne's School of Historical and Philosophical Studies. She is an Honorary Associate of Museum Victoria and a member of the Museum's Reference Committee for the Australian Children's Folklore Collection. Recognised internationally as a leading scholar in the study of children's lore and language, June is co-founder and former Director of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection and founding co-editor of Play and Folklore, formerly the Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter. June is also one of three co-editors of the International Journal of Play, published by Taylor and Francis (Routledge).



Mabuyag Island – children’s dances.
Photographer – Karl Neuenfeldt

Play and Folklore: partner in cultural diversity

Gwenda Beed Davey

On Sunday 10 July 2016 I watched *Big Ted’s Excellent Adventure* on ABCTV – a tribute to fifty years of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s splendid program for pre-schoolers, *Play School*. Some of Australia’s leading actors recalled, often hilariously, their stint on *Play School* – a true actor’s rite of passage. Among the jokes and the compliments was one focus on *Play School*’s leadership in promoting cultural diversity. Presenters and actors often came from a variety of cultural backgrounds, a situation still poorly represented in Australian commercial television.

I think the whole early childhood field deserves some accolades in this regard. I took up my lectureship in Psychology at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, Kew, in 1973, the year in which Federal Minister for Immigration Al Grassby produced his seminal document, *A Multi-cultural Society for the Future*¹. Grassby wasn’t the first advocate for multiculturalism. Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki had already put forward (in the sixties) the notion that migrant cultures had something to contribute to Australian society (apart from their labour),² and in Melbourne’s inner-suburb of Richmond Priscilla Clarke (now Dr Priscilla Clarke OAM) was already promoting cultural diversity at the heavily migrant Boroondara Kindergarten. In 1978 the Free Kindergarten Association established the Multicultural Resource Centre, providing materials and advice to kindergartens throughout Victoria.

Only one year later, in 1979, June Factor and I established the Australian Children’s Folklore Collection in a filing cabinet in the library at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, where we lectured in English and Psychology respectively. In this final issue of *Play and Folklore* June has written about the beginnings of the Collection, now housed at Museum Victoria and since 2004 listed in the UNESCO Australia Memory of the World Register. *Play and Folklore* began together with the Collection as *The Australian Children’s Folklore Newsletter*, but for simplicity I’ll refer to all issues as *Play and Folklore*.

My contribution to the establishment of the Australian Children’s Folklore Collection was an educational kit known as *The Multicultural Cassette Series*. Eventually produced at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, the kit was based on a year’s fieldwork by myself and folk collector, the late Norman O’Connor. I was lucky enough to receive a grant for a full year’s salary for this project from the Australian Children’s Commission, shortly before it fell along with the Whitlam Government in 1975.

During the 1960s, Norm O’Connor was a prominent researcher and recorder of traditional Australian songs and stories, mainly in outback Victoria and New South Wales. The Norm O’Connor Collection is now one of the National Library of Australia’s prized possessions, housed in the Library’s Oral History and Folklore Section. Norm O’Connor’s recordings

are distinguished by their high technical quality, and he brought the same expertise to the *Multicultural Cassette Series*, which he both recorded and edited. The final kit consisted of twenty-six cassette tapes, in community languages which were important at that time, namely Italian, Greek, Turkish, Spanish, Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, Arabic and English. The tapes included stories, songs and rhymes for young children, presented by native speakers, and interspersed with appropriate music. A printed manual contained translations or summaries of each item in English, for teachers' use. This material was traditional adult folklore FOR children, unlike children's own playground rhymes and games. The Kit, plus original field recordings and notes, became part of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, and a key influence on *Play and Folklore*.

From the beginning, *Play and Folklore* included items reflecting cultural diversity in Australia. A check of the Index shows that in our thirty-five years of existence (1981 to 2016) more than sixty articles referred to languages other than English. Some items were modest (as befits the earliest hand-typed and photocopied issues) and others spectacular, such as reports on fieldwork in the Torres Strait Islands by ethnomusicologist Karl Neuenfeldt (Issues 52 and 55). By this time, the resources of Museum Victoria enabled colour printing for the now online *Play and Folklore*.

From very early days it became obvious that the editors wished to include international material about children's folklore, as well as folklore known in Australia itself. The first item of this type is a review of a thesis concerning jokes by north-German and Australian children (Issue 4), followed by 'Old English Traditions' (Issue 5) and 'Growing up in Moldavia' (Issue 9). Interest from overseas scholars grew, beginning with French scholar Andy Arleo's contribution 'International diffusion of the jump-rope game Elastics' (Issues 19, 20, 21).

Arleo reported that his research in the 1980s, together with other studies, showed Elastics being played in twenty-three countries in four continents. He concluded that Elastics may have been an Asian game which spread to Australia, UK and USA and then 'rapidly or perhaps simultaneously to other countries'. This view concurs with our opinions, enhanced by speculation that the game may have been brought to Australia by participants returning

from the Vietnam War. In 2016, it seems that the game of Elastics is less popular than a generation ago, though it is also possible that it's just part of the normal ebb and flow of many childhood games.



Girls playing Elastics, Bulolo International School, Papua New Guinea.

Photographer – Judy McKinty

Other important international contributions were those of New Zealander Janice Ackerley (Issues 42 and 44) and Jean-Pierre Rossie (Issues 43, 47 and 60). Jean-Pierre Rossie's articles dealt with children's play and toys in Morocco and the Tunisian Sahara, and Ackerley's with playground rhymes 'keeping up with the times' and with gender differences in the folklore play of children in primary school playgrounds.

A significant Australian research project by Heather Russell in 1984 was published as *Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground*,³ and was reported in some detail in *Play and Folklore* (Issues 8, 10 and 13). Russell spent two months in an inner-suburban Melbourne school, where the playground mostly consisted of children from Turkish, Indo-Chinese (Vietnamese, Chinese-Vietnamese and a few Lao) backgrounds. Children from English-speaking backgrounds were in a minority. Results from this project included information about children's friendship patterns, preferences for playmates and attitudes to different cultural groups, as well as documentation about cross-cultural influences in play activities.

Kathryn Marsh's important book *The Musical Playground: Global Tradition and Change in Children's Songs and Games*⁴ was reviewed in *Play and Folklore* (Issue 53). The book reported her fieldwork in Australia, Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom and Korea, showing how

children transmit, maintain, and transform their musical games. Other international publications were regularly reviewed.

'Merry Christmas from Chile' (Issue 10) was the first of a number of contributors' travel notes, sending their observations of children's play while abroad. *Play and Folklore* editor Judy McKinty was the most prolific, with extensive notes from Thailand, Papua New Guinea and Lord Howe Island. Judy also contributed a long-running mystery about a folk doll she found in a Melbourne 'opportunity shop' (Issues 55 and 62). Eventually, with help from Deakin University academics (and the National Museum in Bangkok), we discovered that this beautifully made doll is carrying a toy gourd mouth organ, a traditional wind instrument, played by musicians in East and Southeast Asia, and which is known in northern Thailand by the Lahu (or Lahoo) people as a *nor* or *naw*.

The mystery folk doll is similar to many material objects of diverse cultural origins which are part of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection at Museum Victoria. When June and I established the Collection, we firmly believed that we would not collect material culture. As it happened, the objects collected us, and many were gifts which could not be refused, such as those given to us by Dorothy Howard, an American Fulbright Scholar whose pioneering research into Australian children's play was an inspiration to others. In 1989 the Australian High Court displayed in its foyer in Canberra an exhibition of children's toys, provided by a number of Embassies and High Commissions. Forty-two countries were represented, many by folk toys such as a wire car from South Africa and banana leaf dolls and animals from Kenya. As a result of representations made by *Play and Folklore's* editors, a number of these toys were given to the Australian Children's Folklore Collection.



Folk doll with traditional wind instrument.
Photographer – Judy McKinty

In summary, I'm immensely proud of our thirty-five years of *Play and Folklore*. Looking back over our Index, I'm often astonished at the richness of the contributions contained in this very informal publication. What about regrets? *I've had a few...* I think the move to online publication lost some of our former contributors' sense of ownership of *Play and Folklore*, despite the high quality production provided by the Museum. I believe this sense of loss, and the fact that no universities in Australia are currently teaching folklore, are the reasons for the current lack of outside contributions, which has influenced the decision by the editors of *Play and Folklore*, and by Museum Victoria, to cease publication with this issue.

I also regret that we were never able to include any material about play and folklore among child refugees and asylum seekers. We do know that children will play even in the most dire circumstances, as shown by publications about children and the Holocaust.⁵ We did publish Bruno Werner Weinmann's article about 'Play in an Internment Camp', and Valerie Yule's 'War, reality and fantasy: the imagination of Belfast children during the Troubles of the 1980s'. I wonder why we didn't publish more such pieces, or more polemics.

I suppose it's not surprising that there's nothing in *Play and Folklore* about refugees in Australia today, given the excessive secrecy thrown around refugee seekers by the Australian government. Perhaps future field workers in folklore, if any, will be able to carry out some *post hoc* research. I was a founder of Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children, and we did contribute to getting virtually all children and families released from the worst of Australian detention in 2016. Not so successful, as yet, as regards the children still marooned on Nauru, Australia's shameful system of imprisoning asylum seekers who travelled by boat in the attempt to find sanctuary here.



Children playing a counting-out game called 'Coconut Crack' at a Melbourne primary school.
Photographer – Judy McKinty

In writing my final contribution to *Play and Folklore*, I want to give sincere thanks to my fellow editors of *Play and Folklore*, June Factor and Judy McKinty, and also to Museum Victoria staff Deborah Tout-Smith, Richard Gillespie and Carolyn 'Caz' McLennan. I'm also delighted that we have a somewhat weightier successor, *The International Journal of Play*. My warmest good wishes go to its three editors, Michael Patte (Pennsylvania), June Factor (Melbourne) and Fraser Brown (Leeds).

Dr Gwenda Beed Davey AM taught Australian folklife studies at the Institute of Early Childhood Development and a number of Australian universities. In the mid-1980s she was appointed to the Australian Government Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia, which produced its final report as Folklife: Our Living Heritage (1987). In 1993 she co-edited, with Graham Seal, The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore. She has been a Harold White Fellow at the National Library of Australia, and a Scholar in Residence at the National Film and Sound Archive. She is currently an Honorary Associate of Museum Victoria, and a member of the Museum's Reference Committee for the Australian Children's Folklore Collection. Gwenda is co-founder of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection and founding co-editor of Play and Folklore, formerly the Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter.

ENDNOTES

- 1 A.J. Grassby, *A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future*. A paper prepared for the Cairnmillar Institute's Symposium 'Strategy 2000: Australia for Tomorrow'. Immigration reference paper, published for the Department of Immigration (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973).
- 2 Jerzy Zubrzycki, *Immigrants in Australia: a demographic survey based upon the 1954 Census*. Assisted by Nancy Kuskie. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press on behalf of the Australian National University, 1960).
- 3 Heather Russell, *Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground*, (Melbourne: Australian Children's Folklore Publications, 1986).
- 4 Kathryn Marsh, *The Musical Playground: Global Tradition and Change in Children's Songs and Games*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 5 George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

Documenting the Dorothy Howard collection: a digital approach

Deborah Tout-Smith

Museum Victoria's Dorothy Howard collection is a remarkable insight into the play and folklore of Australian children in the mid-1950s. It comprises 5,462 documents and 82 photographs, including almost 1300 descriptions and illustrations written by children themselves.

The collection was compiled by Dr Dorothy Howard, an American scholar, educator and ethnographer who visited Australia on a Fulbright scholarship in 1954-55. She corresponded with students and teachers at more than 70 schools, and visited 31 schools in person. She returned to the US with reams of notes, and spent the following decades organising her research, typing thousands of index cards and publishing articles on the games and practices she observed.

In later life, Dr Howard passed her material to Australian children's folklorist Dr June Factor, who donated the collection to Museum Victoria in 1999, part of a larger donation that formed the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, now listed on the register of the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World.¹ Dr Howard's articles were re-published in 2005 by Museum Victoria in *Child's Play*, edited by Professor Kate Darian-Smith and Dr Factor. In recent years, Museum Victoria has increasingly made its collections available through its EMU database and its Museum Victoria Collections online portal. Access to archival collections such as the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, however,

has lagged due to the significant resources required to register, document and image-capture to individual document level. Yet this level contains rich cultural information.

In 2014 a grant was received from the McCoy Seed Fund to document the Dorothy Howard collection, make it accessible to researchers in a navigable web resource, and explore how innovative documentation systems and visualisation tools could enhance and interconnect large institutional collections. The McCoy Seed Fund, named in memory of the first director of Museum Victoria, Frederick McCoy (also one of the first professors at the University of Melbourne), supports joint, inter-disciplinary projects between Museum Victoria and the University of Melbourne to foster innovative and high-impact collaborative research projects, leveraging the strengths of the two partners to build scholarship based on Museum Victoria's collections.

The McCoy grant, awarded jointly to the Humanities Department of Museum Victoria and the eScholarship Resource Centre at the University of Melbourne, enabled full documentation of the Dorothy Howard collection and export of the data into the Online Heritage Resource Manager (OHRM) database, which in turn can be used to produce remarkable visualizations, allowing the collection to be accessed and explored in new and highly innovative ways.

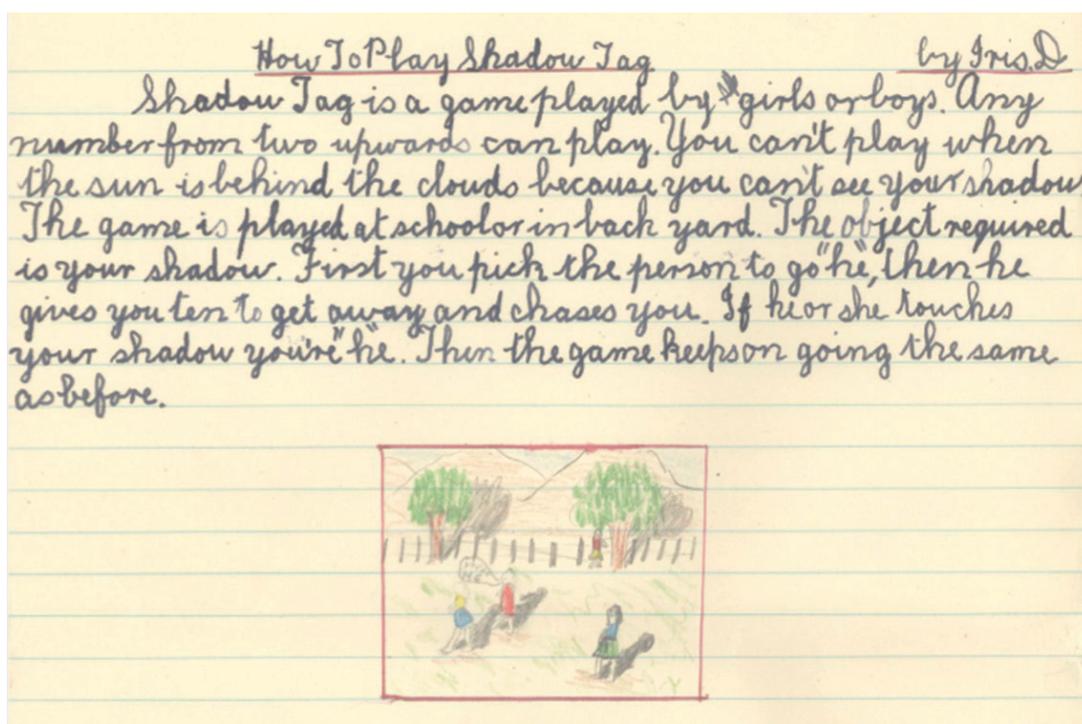
The project was guided by an inter-agency committee under the leadership of coordinating investigator Associate-Professor Gavan McCarthy, director of the eScholarship Research Centre.

Over the course of several months, project curator Georgia Knight worked closely with Collection Information Systems Project Officer Christina Giatsios to register, describe, research and re-house the Dorothy Howard collection to museum best standards, overseen by Senior Curator Deborah Tout-Smith. They identified data standards and maximized the use of bulk-loading to rationalize data inputs. Images of every document were uploaded to the EMu database – a total of 7,088 images that had been taken over several years by dedicated Humanities Department volunteer Chris Friday. At the conclusion of the project, a total of 5,419 new catalogue records had been created in the database; 711 EMu records had been enhanced; and 539 new records had been released to Museum Victoria Collections online.²

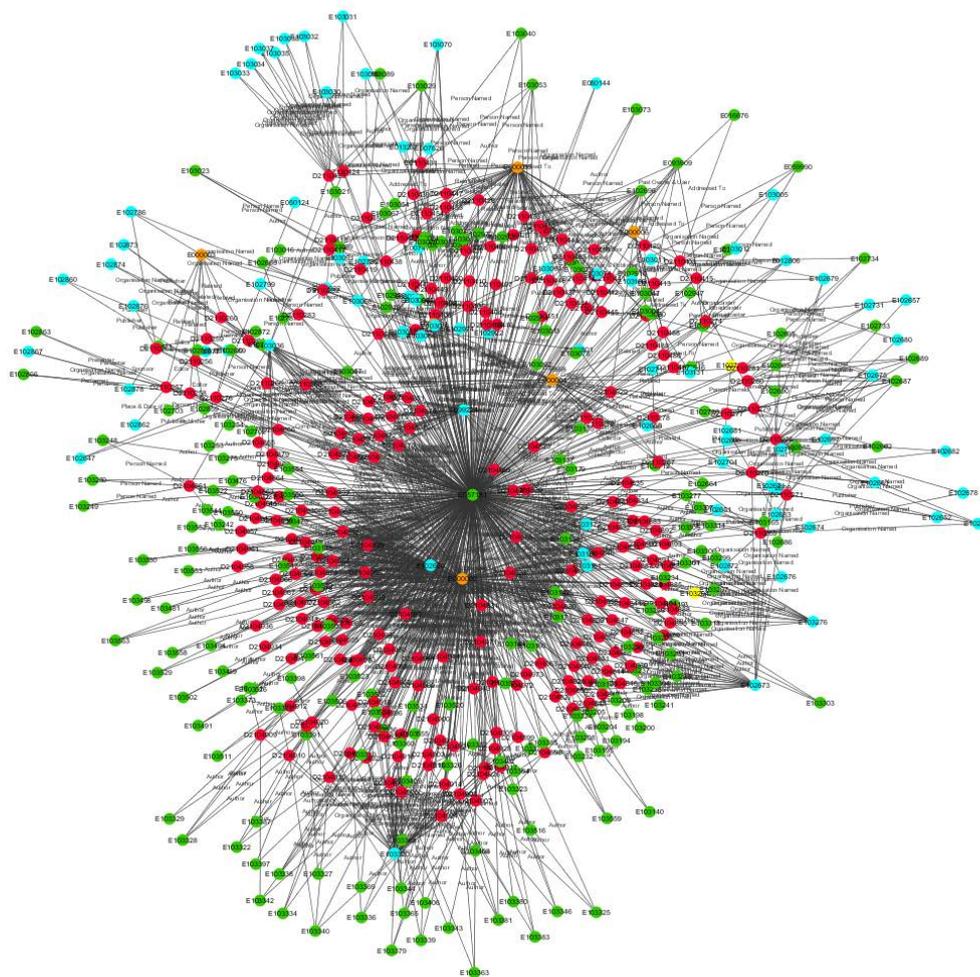
Amongst the remarkable range of documents released is a hand-written description of the chasing game 'Shadow Tag' compiled by Iris D., a student at East Fremantle Government Primary School, Western Australia, for Dorothy Howard between 1954-1955.

Iris explains that the game must be played on a sunny day in a backyard or school ground, and is suitable for boys and girls: For the export of the data to the OHRM database, research archivist and PhD student Michael Jones worked with Museum Victoria's Manager of Collection Information Systems, Nancy Ladas, to facilitate the export of the data. The challenge of mapping similar data (or sets of data) across the two databases was overcome through extensive inter-agency consultation – and many Excel spreadsheets! Static visualizations were created, and a navigable, interactive ConneX visualization of the data at the ESRC was implemented.

Early visualisations of the data in the OHRM demonstrated its potential. In the following visualization of the Dorothy Howard collection, Dorothy Howard herself sits at the centre; the red dots represent documents; the green dots represent people (children and adults); the blue dots represent organisations, mostly schools; and the orange dots represent archival collections or series. Viewed as a dynamic visualization, the user can swing the diagram around to see different content/relationships – for instance, a similar game played at schools located far apart – zoom in to see individual names or documents, or zoom out to see larger connections or relationships.



Document - Iris D., Addressed to Dorothy Howard, Description of Chasing Game 'Shadow Tag', 1954-1955 (cropped), Museum Victoria collection (HT 41438), courtesy June Factor



Visualisation created by Michael Jones (eScholarship Research Centre, University of Melbourne) using Cytoscape (<http://www.cytoscape.org/>)

Although the project is now complete, there is much further work still to be done – in terms of both improving access to the collection and better connecting the collection to other collections and research. Currently individual documents can only be retrieved through searches using key words and game or play types, by location or by school. The application of optical character recognition software will allow all of the words in the documents to become searchable, allowing more nuanced and complex searches.

Further exploration of the OHRM as a tool for understanding and visualising the data will identify new local, national and international connections and trends, and support analysis of changes across place and time.

Promisingly, the Dorothy Howard collection data can be linked to data also held in the OHRM that was gathered during the *Childhood, Tradition and Change* Australian Research Council project undertaken in 2007-10. That project saw scholars

from the University of Melbourne, Deakin University and Curtin University, in association with the National Library of Australia and Museum Victoria, collaborate to produce the first national account of continuity and change in Australian children's playlore since Dorothy Howard's work in the 1950s. Eleven of the schools that Dr Howard visited were included in the project. The potential for new understandings of the patterns and meanings of cultural change is significant.

Ultimately, Museum Victoria's commitment to improve the documentation of its collections, and developments in data visualization at the University of Melbourne, have led to a significant improvement in access to the Dorothy Howard collection for a world-wide audience. Key to the success of the project was close teamwork between curatorial and information systems staff, ensuring high data quality and streamlined processes.

We hope that the project will provide a model for future documentation of, and access to, archives of children's folklore.



Girls Playing Hopscotch, Dorothy Howard Tour, 1954-1955. Museum Victoria collection (MM 104107), courtesy June Factor

Reference

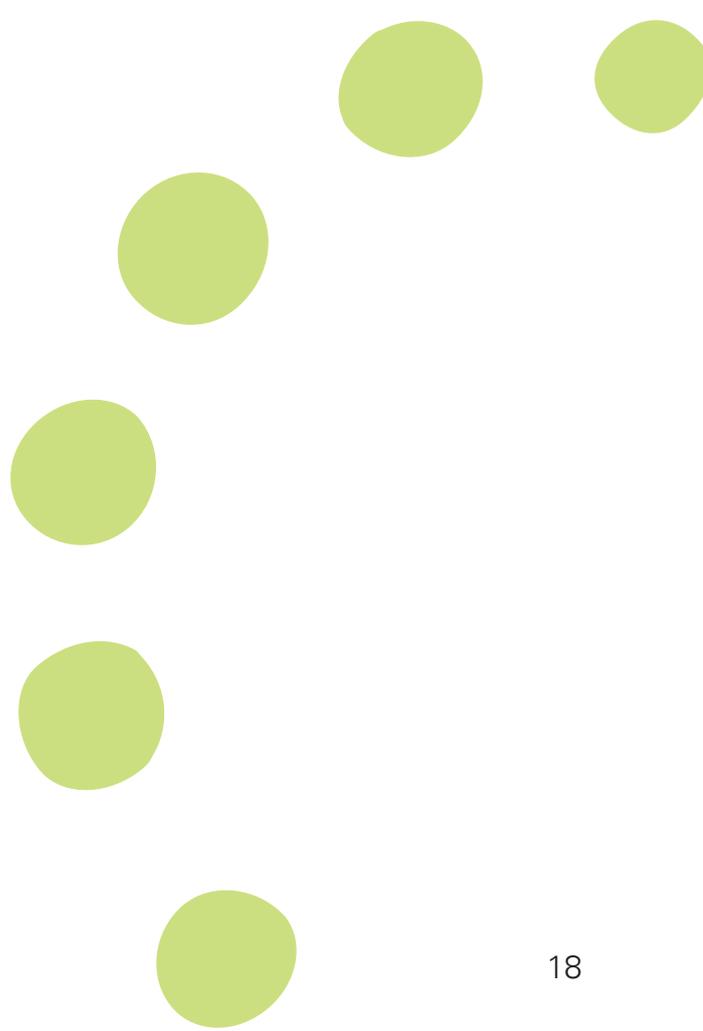
McCoy Seed Funding Scheme Final Report, 26 February 2016, Museum Victoria.

With thanks to Michael Jones, eScholarship Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

Deborah Tout-Smith is Deputy Head of Humanities Department (Exhibitions) and Senior Curator, Home and Community Life at Museum Victoria. She curates several collections within the Humanities Department, including the Australian Children's Folklore Collection.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Australian Children's Folklore Collection, inscription no.9, UNESCO Memory of the World, National Committee of Australia, <http://www.amw.org.au/register/listings/australian-childrens-folklore-collection>
- 2 The collection can now be explored through <http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/>



Using North African children's play culture for pedagogical and sociocultural applications

John-Pierre Rossie

In my book *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures: Children's dolls and doll play*, I described my first experiences in using North African and Saharan play cultures in a chapter called 'Intercultural and peace education in a Western context'.¹ Since then I have organized or co-organized other activities in this context such as seminars, workshops for children and/or adults, conferences and exhibitions. In this article I will offer the reader an overview of some workshops for children and/or adults and a few exhibitions I made in Argentina, Belgium, Greece, Italy and Morocco. This is not a scientific analysis of these activities but a demonstration of the practical possibilities of this children's cultural heritage in and outside the school system.

I begin with an exhibition and a few seminars that I presented in Morocco, in the center of Safi for the *Fondation Orient-Occident*.² I see this opportunity as one of the best I ever had because, after several attempts that failed, I was finally able to use the play and toy-making activities of the Anti-Atlas³ children from southern Morocco as a lever for social and cultural development of Moroccan children and adults. I was able to make contact with this center in Safi through the association *Wellouëj: Jeux Traditionnels et Jeux du Monde* in Lille.⁴ Khalija Jariaa and Boubaker Daoumani assisted me in organizing this week on 'Toys and games of Moroccan children' during the Ashura period, from 22 to 26 December 2009.

This event was organized around an exhibition of one hundred toys created by rural Anti-Atlas children. The exhibition and conference, illustrated by a PowerPoint presentation, dealt with the theme 'Games and toys of Moroccan children: a creative heritage of great value'. Guided tours of the exhibition were made for youth associations and members of the center. Safi children who did not know traditional toys not only had the opportunity to see these toys but also to handle and play with them (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Moroccan youngsters discussing self-made toys.
Photographer – Khalija Jariaa

The visit to the exhibition sometimes gave rise to a lively discussion between children and young people who had no idea about the creativity of Moroccan children in other regions. Halim, the center's

animator, quickly became aware of the content and meaning of the exhibition and subsequently guided the young and older ones with the help of Khalija Jariaa, who was available to answer questions. Association leaders and other adults also showed interest in these toys made by children, and sometimes remembered the toys they themselves made in their childhood.

Manar, the president of the youth association, together with Halim and I organized a round table with members of the association. After a demonstration of how some toys worked, youngsters of the association showed the younger ones how to make toys from recycled material in the way they remembered from their childhood (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Moroccan adolescent showing how to make a kite. Photographer – Khalija Jariaa

The same day, and with language assistance from Halim, I gave a seminar on the possibilities of manipulating traditional toys for parents of motor-disabled children (fig. 3). I proposed this seminar after my visit, a few days before, to the Safi center of the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Disabled. During my visit I was told about the problem of continuing, at home, the therapy of the children who were treated in the center with specific equipment. The staff stressed that the parents did not continue the exercises performed at the center because of lack of means to acquire suitable but expensive equipment. In my seminar I tried to show that several traditional toys, especially toys for games of skill, could replace the equipment used in the center – toys that parents often knew as a child and so could eventually make themselves without cost.



Fig. 3 Traditional games of skill for motor disabled children. Photographer – Khalija Jariaa

As parents had shown their interest in this opportunity to help their children at home, I suggested to the Director the creation of a working group, with some members of the center and myself, to analyze toys for games of skill that could be useful, to develop therapeutic applications with these toys, and to test their functionality. Unfortunately, the proposed collaboration did not go beyond the initial good intentions.

One of the leading officers of the preschool section of the local department of the Ministry of Education in Safi visited the exposition and participated in the seminars. He told me that, inspired by what he saw and heard, he would explore the possibility of creating a module on children's play, among others based on the local play culture, in the training of future teachers of the public preschool sector – a preschool sector that was developing in the primary schools in the area. If these initiatives could materialize, the Moroccan play and toy heritage would not only be safeguarded but also advantage the development of the children and their communities.

A year earlier, in 2008, the educational and sociocultural activities that I use to stimulate the use of children's play and toy heritage, which had stopped around 1992 when I went to do research in Morocco, resumed in Greece. This event was related to the fifth World Congress of the International Toy Research Association (ITRA) held in Nafplion during July 2008.

In this context, the Museum of Childhood 'Stathmos' of the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation 'V. Papantoniou', located in the National Railway Station Park of Nafplion, invited me to set up an educational program and a few workshops related to Anti-Atlas children's play and toy-making activities in southern Morocco. I called my intervention 'Moroccan children's toys seen through the eyes of Greek children'. For the development of this program I received assistance from the head of the Department of Educational Programs, the President of the Association of Friends of the Museum and, of course, from the children who participated.

Inspired by toys made by children of the Anti-Atlas, Nafplion children between six and twelve years created their own toys in the course of six workshops. At a first meeting I showed the Greek children two PowerPoint presentations, one on 'Ashura: a children's feast in Morocco' and another on 'Ashura: the Masquerade in Tiznit'. While showing this second series of photographs I spoke about the masks that adolescents and boys in the region of Tiznit create for this important festivity. The Nafplion children created masks with natural and waste material we searched for in the small park surrounding the Museum. We found many objects, mostly leaves, twigs, feathers, pinecones, caps, pieces of cardboard and plastic. These materials were supplemented by pieces of fabric, pencils and colored markers available at the Museum. At the beginning of the last workshop, the children watched a PowerPoint presentation on the dolls children of the Anti-Atlas make, and then they created their own male and female dolls.

Although the children who participated in the six workshops enjoyed making masks and dolls, I felt sorry that they could not use their masks. I first thought about planning a walk in the Museum quarter, but then I had the idea to invade the reception of ITRA's World Congress with the masked children. Once they were wearing their own masks, just as I did, we all became 'spirits'. The spirit children took control of the reception and wholeheartedly shook their noisemakers, as is done during the Tiznit masquerade. Then I gave my mask to the President of ITRA, Cleo Gougoulis, so that she would wear it while reading a statement declaring that the International Toy Research Association not only supported the rights of children to play, but also their right to create their own toys.



Fig. 4 Italian children creating masks and toys inspired by Moroccan toy-makers.
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

During my visits to my friend Giorgio Bartolucci in Florence, he put me in touch with associations, institutions and people of Florence, Turin and Verona interested in toys and games. These contacts gave me the opportunity to develop activities to disseminate in Italy the play and toy culture of Saharan and North African children. In this context, I organized a workshop for children in June 2008 at the *Biblioteca delle Oblate*, a section of the public library of the city of Florence. As the theme of this workshop I used the Ashura festival and Imachar masquerade.⁵ In the library section for children, some girls and boys had fun making masks, sometimes with the help of a parent (fig. 4). Following this first workshop, I was invited by the cultural association and the library *Libri Liberi* to develop a creative activity during the *Festival della Creatività* held in Florence every year in October. The same theme of creating masks with natural and waste material was used. During the whole day, children and adult passers-by were invited to participate.

Giorgio Bartolucci, as Director of the *Centro Internazionale Ludoteche (CIL)* of Florence, asked me if I was interested in a project on the play culture of Moroccan children for the *Centro per la Cultura Ludica* and the *Instituzione Torinese per una Educazione Responsabile (ITER)*, that is to say for the toy museum of the city of Turin and for the institution in charge of education in this city. An agreement between ITER, CIL and myself was ratified in June 2008. At its basis lay a donation of 268 toys created by children from the Anti-Atlas and

Sahrawi children from the western Sahara desert. The agreement also included a series of seminars, the development of a detailed and illustrated list of my donation, and my participation in the development of an exhibition during 2009-2010. This exhibition, *'Rêves d'Enfants': crescere giocando dal Marocco a qui ('Children's Dreams')*, opened in Turin on November 20, 2010 and ended in December 2012 (fig. 5).



Fig. 5 A view of the exposition 'Children's Dreams' in Turin. Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

During 2013, a travelling version of the exhibition was prepared. I had been asked to provide a richly illustrated brochure for the exposition, but it was not published due to the financial problems of the city of Turin. I decided to publish it anyway in digital form so that it possibly could be used as part of the travelling exhibition. At the same time, this brochure offers an overview of Anti-Atlas and Saharan children's creativity and highlights some sociocultural aspects of these children's play and toy-making activities.

In October 2010 the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* of Buenos Aires, *Programa de Educación Inicial y Primera Infancia* invited me to participate in the international seminar *Infancias, Juegos y Juguetes*. After this event, the *Instituto de Formación Docentes de Bariloche* (Rio Negro province) invited me to participate in the training of students and to organize a workshop. At the start of the workshop I showed a PowerPoint with photos of Moroccan adolescents and boys making masks for the Imashar feast in Tiznit and its region, and photos of dolls and other toys created by Moroccan children. In this workshop, female and male children,

students and a few teachers created masks and dolls with natural and waste material.

Bariloche boys as well as girls made masks, but seemingly more boys than girls – the girls and female students preferred to make dolls. The boys and girls not only showed a lot of creativity in using the available material but also in designing their masks and dolls.

Stela Maris Ferrarese Capettini, a teacher of physical education with a longstanding interest in studying the play and toy cultures of the indigenous populations of South America,⁶ invited me to stay in her home in the city of Neuquén. During the first two weeks of November 2010, she organized several conferences and workshops for me, in different institutions including the *Universidad Católica de Salta, sede Neuquén*. After attending one of my conferences, some student teachers engaged in a creativity workshop.

In Neuquén, at the primary school no. 1 *Ciudad de Buenos Aires*, three workshops took place with pupils of the first and fourth grade. They created masks, dolls and a few other toys like cars and robots. The children of the first grade received help from their mothers and fathers. As in Bariloche, the participants viewed a PowerPoint on Moroccan children's creativity with natural and waste material.⁷ Again, most of the girls and some boys made dolls, but boys preferred to build vehicles such as cars, trucks and airplanes.

On 12 November 2010, a similar workshop was organized by the *Secretaría de la Niñez y Adolescencia de la Secretaría de Derechos Humanos* of Neuquén at the *Centro de Formación Profesional* in the *Barrio Rural 'Nueva Esperanza'*, about 20km from Neuquén. In that workshop 25 boys and girls, mothers and animators participated.

Early 2011, my friend Renzo the Toymaker⁸ proposed that I help develop an important and long-term project in his city of Ravenna. This project would be carried out in collaboration with the *Associazione La Lucertola* and the *Centro La Lucertola, Gioco Natura e Creatività del Comune di Ravenna*.⁹ Renzo Laporta and I agreed to begin the project by making available about a hundred toys made with natural and waste material by Anti-Atlas children from southern Morocco. As I brought the toys in a suitcase



from Morocco, Renzo had the interesting idea to name this project *Jean-Pierre Rossie in Ravenna: i giocattoli in valigia*¹⁰ (toys in a suitcase). The actual implementation of the project began during my stay in Ravenna from 15-27 September 2011. During this time I conducted a training seminar, two lectures and a workshop for children and their parents about creating dolls and cars with natural and waste material.¹¹ Another important event was arranging the exposition of the toys created by Moroccan girls and boys.

On his website, Renzo Laporta described the project as follows:

'Jean-Pierre Rossie in Ravenna' is a project about childhood, children and their play cultures in the world of today. During the month of September, the project will start by the arrival of Jean-Pierre Rossie and the presentation of the toys he brings from southern Morocco. During winter the project will continue in the schools of Ravenna. At the end of the project, there will be an exhibition of toys made by children of these schools in the windows of some children's shops in the center of Ravenna. The project will last three years. After the first year the distribution phase will start with an itinerant exhibition of children's toys made in Morocco and in Ravenna and this exhibition will be flanked by creative workshops and training for teachers. The dissemination phase will be planned and carried out in collaboration with national and international organizations.

The second phase of the project started in September 2011 and continued through 2012 in the primary school Morelli of Ravenna.¹² The objectives of the interventions were pursued through workshops promoting creativity and by bringing the pupils into contact with a different play and toy culture from another continent.

After the World Play Day organized on May 28, 2011 by the *Ludothèque HEB-ULB Ludivine* and the *Haute École de Bruxelles - Catégorie pédagogique Defré*,¹³ I was invited by Michel Van Langendonck to write a series of short articles on the play culture of Moroccan children. These articles were printed in the magazine *Les Cahiers de LUDO*, published as a supplement to the magazine *Artichouette*, the organ of the Association of Toy Libraries and Toy Librarians of the French Community of Belgium.¹⁴

At the same time Michel Van Langendonck proposed that I conduct workshops, inspired by toys made in Morocco, in the *Haute École de Bruxelles*. As the theme for these workshops, I used masks made by Moroccan youngsters and boys in the region of Tiznit. A few preschool student teachers participated in the third workshop held in October 2012 (fig. 6). After viewing a PowerPoint presentation on the masquerade of Tiznit and its region, the participants used natural and waste material to create their own masks.

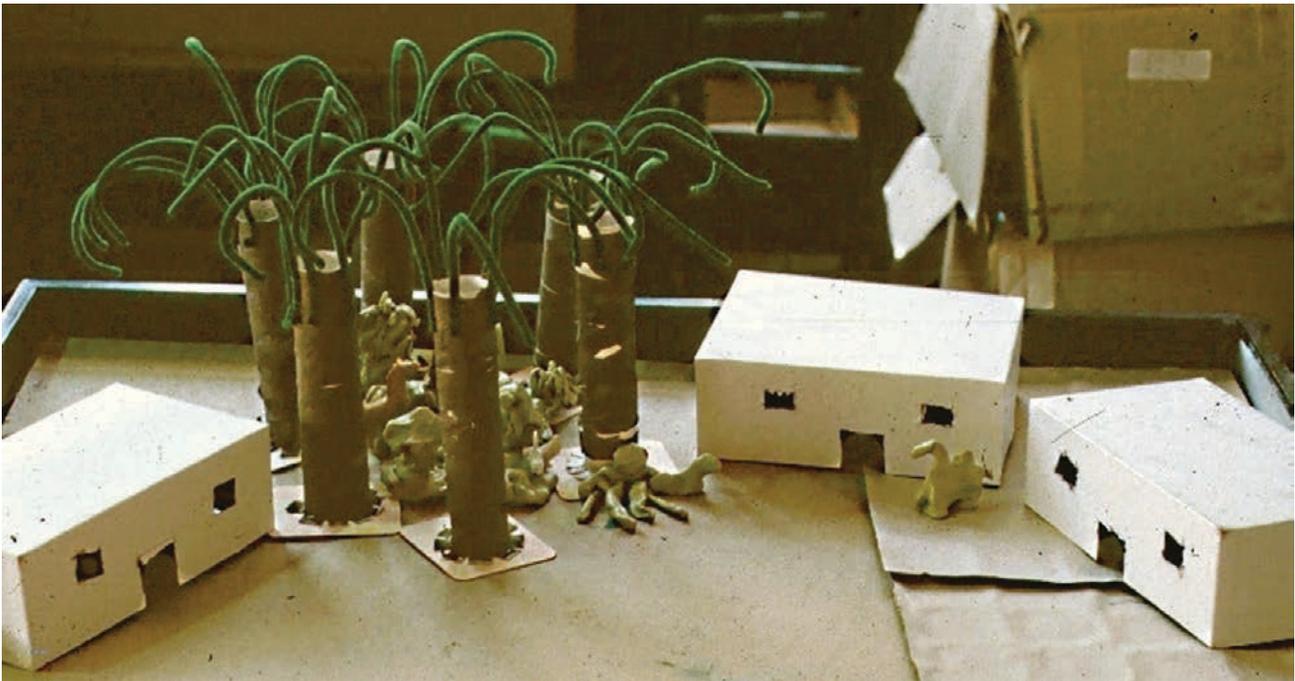


Fig. 6 Flemish preschool children created a Saharan oasis.
Photographer – Jean-Pierre Rossie

In addition to seminars and workshops for children and adults, I try to promote the recognition of North African children's play and toy heritages by donating to museums toys created by Moroccan and Tunisian children. This was the case in 2005 for the Speelgoedmuseum Mechelen,¹⁵ the Toy Museum in Mechelen, Belgium, for its project 'Toys of the World'. In 2011, I donated to The Australian Children's Folklore Collection of Museum Victoria, Melbourne¹⁶ almost forty toys at the invitation of the editors of *Play and Folklore*, which has been a forum for discussion on children's play.¹⁷

Dr Jean-Pierre Rossie is a sociocultural anthropologist researching Saharan and North African children's play, games and toys, and an associated researcher of the Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montagne. His publications are available on www.sanatoplay.org.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jean-Pierre Rossie, *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures: Children's dolls and doll play*, (Stockholm: Stockholm International Toy Research Centre, 2005) 239-244.
- 2 See <http://www.fondation.orient-occident.org>
- 3 The Anti-Atlas is a mountain range in Morocco, in north-west Africa.
- 4 See <http://www.wellouej.com/blog>
- 5 Jean-Pierre Rossie, *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures: Domestic life in play, games and toys*. (Stockholm: Stockholm International Toy Research Centre, 2008) 311-321.
- 6 See www.juegosetnicos.com
- 7 These PowerPoints are available on www.sanatoplay.org (see multimedia: 2010).
- 8 See <http://www.toymakingactivities.com>
- 9 See <http://www.lalucertola.org>
- 10 See: <http://lalucertola.org/italiano/igiocattolidelmarocco.html>
- 11 A four-part document amply illustrated and describing different aspects of this project is available on the website <http://lalucertola.org/italiano/jpraravenna.html>.
- 12 See <http://lalucertola.org/pdf/progettoMorelli2012.pdf>
- 13 See www.defre.be
- 14 See <http://ludobel.be>
- 15 See <http://www.speelgoedmuseum.be>
- 16 See <https://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/infosheets/australian-childrens-folklore-collection/>
- 17 See <http://museumvictoria.com.au/about/books-and-journals/journals/play-and-folklore>





Holidaying at Sorrento, 1909.
Creator Edward Stanfield Wardell. Image courtesy
of State Library of Victoria.

A history of their own: the historiography of children and youth in Australia

Carla Pascoe

Since its inception, *Play and Folklore* has been a forum for taking children's lives seriously. All of its contributions over the years have been underpinned by the implicit assumption that young people are interesting, important and worthy of study. This simple assertion might seem uncontroversial to the readers of this newsletter, but in the broader world children and youth must often fight very hard for their voices to be heard, their rights to be recognised and their stories to be told. This struggle has also dogged a sister discipline of children's playlore – the historiography of children and youth. This final issue of *Play and Folklore* seems a fitting place to consider how far we've come in studying children in the past: their play and also their lives more broadly.

The historiography of children and youth is itself a youthful sub-discipline of historical studies. Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* (published in English in 1962) is generally credited with 'birthing' the field.¹ Aries' work established that definitions of childhood are not solely biological but shift across time periods and cultures. Although histories of children and youth have since been written in many parts of the globe and across many historical eras, Australian studies are still in their infancy. In 2010 I published an overview of the Australian historiography of young people which argued that there were two primary challenges for historians in this field.² The first challenge is the difficulty of avoiding romanticisation, which is easy to slip into

when adults write about children. The second issue I identified is how to write children's history from their own perspective, despite the fact that most historical sources have been authored by adults. This second challenge can be characterised as the difference between histories of childhood (adult ideologies about what children *should* be like) and histories of children (stories of children's actual lives in the past).³ Although historical studies of Australian young people have increased in recent years, these two key challenges are still with us today.

Australian scholarship on the history of children and childhood emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, perhaps inspired by the aim of the social history movement to illuminate the stories of forgotten groups including women, the working class and ethnic minorities. Historians such as Bob Bessant, Ken Inglis, Ken MacNab and Russell Ward wrote early papers focusing largely on the colonial child.⁴ Sue Fabian and Morag Loh published *Children in Australia* in 1980, an overview volume which studied children 'at work, at home, at school, at leisure, their health care, their legal status and their different prospects' throughout Australian history from pre-European settlement.⁵ In 1991 Gwyn Dow and June Factor released an anthology of documentary sources with an emphasis upon personal accounts authored by children in an attempt to uncover 'that most hidden and neglected phenomena of childhood: the inner world of fantasy, dream and thought, and the children's subculture of

play and ritual'.⁶ Penelope Hetherington has studied children's history in a Western Australian context, arguing that as social expectations and gender roles are learnt in childhood, children's history is essential to fully understand the adult world.⁷ Perhaps the most comprehensive history of Australian children attempted has been Jan Kociumbas' *Australian Childhood* (1997), which takes a broad overview of young people from the late eighteenth century.⁸



Unidentified child sitting in cane chair, Mt. Buffalo, Vic., circa 1890-1930.
Creator Alice Mansfield. Image courtesy of State Library of Victoria.

Australian research into histories of young people has been led by historians of child welfare. Partially this is due to the excellent record-keeping of government and not-for-profit organisations charged with the care of juveniles. Perhaps, too, this is indicative of the moral imperative some feel to tell the stories of children whose vulnerability was often exploited by the welfare systems charged with their protection. Here history has sometimes worked hand-in-hand with politics, as a succession of political inquiries have revealed the abuses suffered by child migrants, Aboriginal children,

children in institutional care and victims of child sexual abuse.⁹ Shurlee Swain has specialised in histories of child welfare, viewing the topic from not just an Australian but also a transnational angle.¹⁰ Margaret Barbale, Caroline Evans, Donella Jaggs, Nell Musgrove, John Ramsland and Robert Van Krieken have all written about aspects of the ways in which children's lives have interacted with welfare legislation or institutions.¹¹ Works such as these, as well as Dorothy Scott, Shurlee Swain and Penelope Hetherington's work on child abuse and incest, have challenged sentimental views of childhood.¹²

Histories of Aboriginal children and youth have similarly shaken romanticised notions of childhood as a period of innocence. Denise Cuthbert and Marion Quartly have traced the stories of Aboriginal children forcibly taken from their families after European colonisation.¹³ Shirleene Robinson has uncovered the stories of Aboriginal child workers in Queensland, remaining alert to their agency as well as their oppression.¹⁴

Australian scholars have played a leading international role in researching the intangible culture of children through folklore and play.¹⁵ This research, though often contemporaneous, has become a rich resource for historians wishing to understand children's play customs in previous decades. American folklorist Dorothy Howard visited Australia in the mid-1950s and conducted a detailed study of play practices across the country.¹⁶ In the 1970s Peter Lindsay and Denise Palmer carried out a close study of Brisbane school playgrounds that was followed in the 1980s by Heather Russell's investigation of a Melbourne school playground.¹⁷ Gwenda Davey has enriched our knowledge of regional children's play and the multicultural folklore for children circulating amongst Australian migrant communities.¹⁸ Judy McKinty has researched Australian children's play for many years, including the games of sick children.¹⁹ June Factor's seminal volume *Captain Cook Chased a Chook* (1988) remains the definitive work on Australian children's play customs.²⁰ More recently, Deborah Moore has conducted a multi-generational analysis of childhood play places through qualitative interviews.²¹ In this way, the historiography of children has been enriched by research into playlore.



School children doing exams inside a classroom, 1940.
Courtesy of Picture Queensland, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Neg: 71776.

Another field that has provided cross-fertilisation for historians is the geography of children and youth. Studies of children's geography developed in the 1960s and 1970s and this interest in juvenile environments and mobility was given added impetus in the 1980s by social studies emphasising the agency of children. A growing field of interdisciplinary studies has emerged which are both historical and geographical; temporal and spatial. Some research has focused upon school design as spaces that can discipline children, promote learning or provide opportunities for innovative adaptation of games.²² Other work has focused upon house design, such as Clement Macintyre's exploration of the ways in which Australian domestic spaces have mirrored changing views of family relations, or Julie Collins' study of the ways in which 1950s architecture reflected shifting ideas of child-rearing.²³ In more broad-ranging considerations of youthful spaces, Simon Sleight has tracked the ways in which young Melburnians interacted with their city around the turn of the twentieth century, while I have studied children in that city after the Second World War.²⁴

Personal and literary sources have provided another way of understanding the lives of children in the past. Several Australian authors have provided semi-autobiographical accounts of their upbringing, embroidering bygone eras with rich detail. These include Hal Porter's *Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony*, Tony Birch's *Shadowboxing*, Steven Carroll's *The Gift of Speed* and Arnold Zable's *Scraps of Heaven*.²⁵ Edited collections by Pamela Bone, Helen Townsend, Jacqueline Kent and the National Library of Australia have brought together

memories of childhood that are generally celebratory and sentimental.²⁶ Whilst such collections are often more reflective of adult nostalgia than children's realities, Kate Douglas' analyses of the way memory works in autobiographical accounts include consideration of traumatic childhood memories.²⁷

In addition to oral history and autobiography, scholars have used other written sources to expand our knowledge of Australian children's history. Bronwyn Lowe has explored Australian girls' reading habits in the first part of the twentieth century.²⁸ Kristine Moruzi and Michelle J. Smith have examined the ways in which concepts of colonial girlhood were constructed in literature across the British Empire.²⁹ Kim Torney used a different kind of creative source – paintings – to argue that the image of the child lost in the bush was central to Australian colonial imaginings.³⁰

While children have been studied through their intangible culture, relatively few studies have examined the material culture of Australian children. Brian Shepherd, director of the former Museum of Childhood at Edith Cowan University, is an important exception.³¹ Although some Australian museums have excellent collections of historical objects relating to children, relatively few museum exhibitions have been devoted to their history. In a volume explicitly focused upon the cultural heritage of children and childhood, I have considered museum representations of children's history in Australia and elsewhere.³² Kate Darian-Smith has explored public commemorations of children's history in Australia, as well as other outposts of the British Empire.³³

Our tendency to view children as innocent is perhaps exemplified by the low incidence of research into youthful sexuality in the past. Issues of agency and consent are often difficult to unpack when dealing with historical subjects who leave only faint traces on the historical record. Yorick Smaal attempts this sensitive undertaking in his accounts of boys involved in sexual acts with other males around the turn of the twentieth century, alert to both 'danger and possibility' in his reading of historical records.³⁴ Melissa Bellanta considers the sexuality of larrikin girls in a similar period, attempting to preserve their agency whilst acknowledging the flagrantly misogynistic youth culture they moved within.³⁵



Young girl with a disability playing with her dolls, Brisbane, 1952.
 Courtesy of Picture Queensland, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Neg: 185455

With a focus upon more recent history, Steven Angelides has critiqued the ways in which the discourse of child sexual abuse has served to 'erase' discussion of children's sexuality.³⁶

Instead of taking childhood as a generalised category, historians are increasingly interrogating the way it intersects with different categories of identity, including gender, sexuality, cultural background and more. Martin Crotty, Leslie Johnson and Jon Strattan have studied the development of the category of adolescence, as well as the ways in which youth is experienced differently by males, females and different socio-economic groups.³⁷ As a country shaped by immigration and multiculturalism, cultural variations in experiences of Australian childhood are particularly relevant. Alexandra Dellios has studied the experiences of Greek child migrants in the 1960s and 1970s whilst Jordy Silverstein has examined Jewish identity amongst Holocaust survivors.³⁸ Joy Damousi is leading a project currently underway to understand the history of child refugees in Australia.³⁹

The writing of children's history has long been associated with women's history in Australia and sometimes subsumed beneath a broader category of family history. If the project of writing children's history is understood as related to the recognition of the personhood and rights of the child, then this makes perfect sense. The concept of children's rights in many ways grew out of the women's liberation movement, though feminist discourse has also been critiqued for restricting our understanding of children's rights and potential.⁴⁰ But regardless of the historical roots of a children's rights discourse and the fact that women's and children's lives have often been intertwined, I would argue that children deserve their own histories, like any other social group. Young people have their own ways of making sense of their lives and their own hierarchies of what is valuable. These may be different to the rational and utilitarian perspectives of adults. Children and youth deserve a history of their own that takes seriously what is often a more playful, emotive and irreverent relationship to the world.

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Documenting play: from the front line

Ruth Hazleton

In 2007 and 2008 I had the privilege of working for the *Childhood, Tradition and Change* project as a fieldworker. The project was funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Project Scheme and received additional support from the National Library of Australia, Museum Victoria, Deakin University, Curtin University and the University of Melbourne. The research was conducted over four years (2007-10), and material was recorded in nineteen schools across Australia by eight fieldworkers working in pairs.

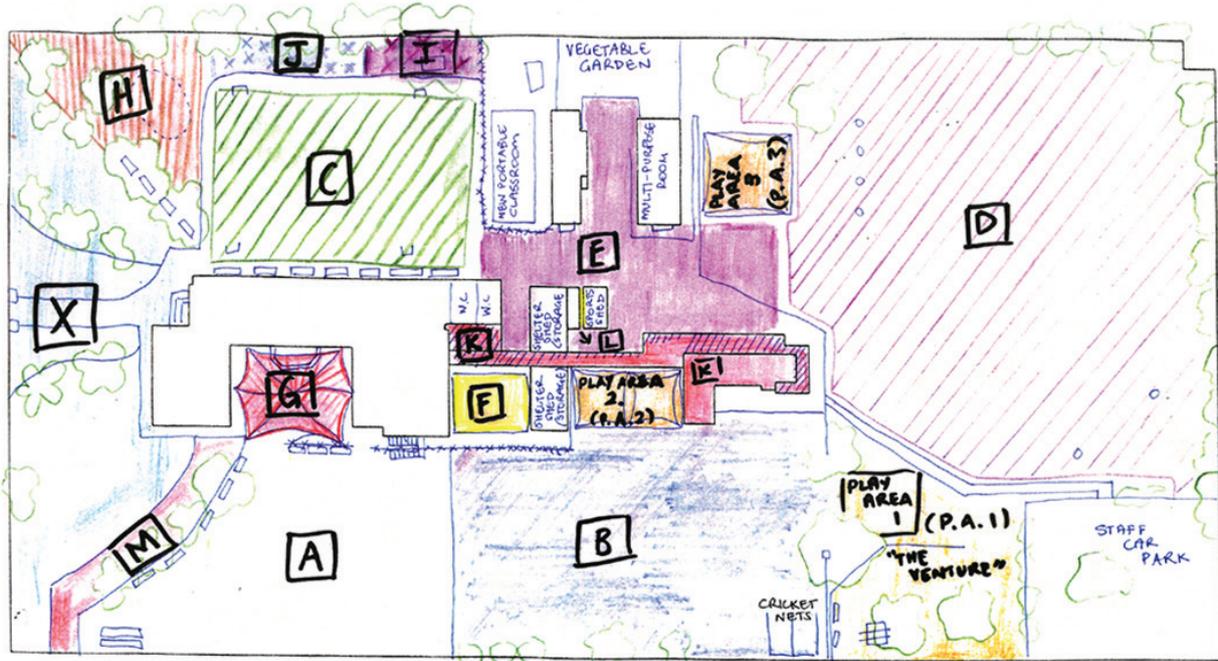
The aim of the project was to gain a 'snapshot' of play occurring in Australian playgrounds and to build on an extant body of work compiled by researchers in the 1950s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.¹

Entering the field

Armed with pencils, notebooks, cameras, folders, microphones, a packed lunch and studio-quality recording gear (from the National Library of Australia), my colleagues and I set out to document what primary school kids were up to during their free play time: at recess, lunch, and as they headed home each day.

My first location was a public school in Melbourne's outer-north (School X). This was part of the pilot project and an initial investigation, and although our work here was not to be included in the final report, we were establishing protocol and methodology for the main, nationwide study. Only 52% of the student body at School X were from English-speaking backgrounds, the remainder representing a further twenty-nine nationalities. We were fortunate that the headmaster at School X was enthusiastic about the project, as were the parents. We were able to address the school assembly on the Monday morning so that students, staff and parents knew exactly why we were there and what we were doing.

The second school I visited was a private 'alternative' school (School Y) in Melbourne's inner-eastern suburbs, as part of the nationwide study. A much smaller school, most students were from English-speaking and higher socio-economic backgrounds. We weren't able to address the whole school at School Y, though the community was equally as cooperative and welcoming. Other fieldworkers experienced very different reactions from schools, principals and parents; more on this later.



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|--|---|---|--|
| A ASPHALT AREA WITH PAINTED BALL COURTS (MEDICINE BALL, SIX-SQUARE AND BASKETBALL). | E ASPHALT - GENERAL PLAY AREA (MAZE) | I SANDPIT | PA 1 ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND KNOWN AS "THE VENTURE" - WOODEN CLIMBING FRAMES |
| B GRAVEL AREA | F ASPHALT | J GRASSY AREA SHADED BY LARGE TREES | PA 2 JUNIOR PLAY AREA (PAINTED METAL & PLASTIC EQUIPMENT (COVERED)). |
| C ASPHALT / BASKETBALL & CRICKET | G COVERED ASPHALT ASSEMBLY AREA. | K COVERED WALKWAY | PA 3 SENIOR PLAY AREA (PAINTED METAL & PLASTIC EQUIPMENT (COVERED)) |
| D GRASSED AREA (USED FOR SPORTS) + TEAM GAMES | H GRASSED AREA WITH BUSHES & TREES | L NARROW SPACE BETWEEN STORAGE SHEDS | |
| M TREES USED FOR CLIMBING & SWINGING | | X GARDEN AREA AT SCHOOL ENTRANCE. OUT OF BOUNDS DUE TO PROXIMITY TO MAJOR ROAD | |

Mapping the playground.
Source – Ruth Hazleton

Mapping

After finding our way around each school and seeking quiet areas where we could conduct interviews and work during class hours, we began to map playgrounds. Initially, this was done during class time without students present, and later added to as we were able to identify which areas of each school were significant in terms of the way the children played during recess and lunch times. It sounds fairly simple, though there are a number of layers of mapping that need to be documented. Apart from the obvious (mapping buildings and open spaces), we had to ascertain which play areas were open to different age groups, where were the 'out-of-bounds' areas, what, if any, play equipment was available to students and where it was kept.

The second layer of mapping required us to document all play areas that had been in any way prescribed for certain activities, including designated sports areas and play equipment (basketball courts, football goals, monkey bars, climbing structures, sandpits, slides, etc.). Public schools also usually have areas where hopscotch games, alphabet snakes, ballgame markings and the like have been painted on the ground and walls – usually by well-meaning adults. If and how children interact with these is also an important observation to make when in the field, and for this reason these were also included on the map.

Lastly were the play areas established by the children themselves, often the most significant areas in terms of observation. Teachers will sometimes be aware of these areas, though often they aren't obvious to adults. Such areas might be centred around a collection of bushes or trees, a single tree, an alleyway in-between buildings, a patch of dirt where a hole is being dug, or a rocky outcrop along the school boundary. Sometimes it's simply a place where children are least likely to be interrupted by teachers.

At School X, for example, we found a tree that was referred to by the children as the ‘abarmantion tree’ (‘abomination’ said with an American accent), and the adventure playground was always referred to as ‘The Venture’. At School Y, there were a number of places named by the children: ‘The Pines’ was an enclosed area separated from the surrounding grounds by a large sliding gate. This is where children would play ‘Gang Up’, as the gate served as a means to ‘trap people’. At the same school, children had tools available to them to build their own cubby houses. One of these rows of cubbies was referred to as ‘Hut Alley’, and a second row was called ‘Peppercorn Court’ and ‘Peppercorn Alley’.

In addition to creating the map itself, we photographed all the areas we identified on the map, labelling each area so we could easily record in which area play was occurring.



Cubbies in ‘Peppercorn Alley’.
Photographer – Ruth Hazleton

Celebrity, ‘tradition bearers’ and ‘adulteration’

With a week to spend at each school, we began by wandering around separately, taking note of weather conditions, what the children were doing, where they were playing, how many of them were engaged in each activity, their gender and age. In those first few days we concentrated on general observations: firstly, to get a feel for the general play environment, and secondly, to document which children were the ‘tradition bearers’ we’d like to interview and/or record later in the week. A ‘tradition bearer’ is a term folklorists use to identify individuals who display the most knowledge of games, rhymes, rules, etc.

At the beginning of each week (particularly at School X), our presence in the playground was far from inconspicuous – we were like school-yard celebrities. The second we pulled out a camera or video camera in the playground, kids would follow as though we were the Pied Piper. This was problematic in that children would also gleefully make things up on the spot, exaggerate what they were doing and compete for attention. After a few days, however, the novelty wore off and they lost interest in us, which was when the best quality material started to emerge. In many ways, it was also very important that this ‘meeting’ process occur, as we needed the children to get to know us before they would open up and share their secrets.

As we worked, we would sometimes intervene and ask questions about the rules if we needed clarification, ask them to repeat a rhyme or describe the game they were playing in their own words.

Ideally, play is best observed without intervention, and this is a primary difficulty confronted by fieldworkers. By intervening, the researcher will interrupt the ‘play flow’ and break the spontaneity of the moment, which results in what professional playworkers aptly refer to as ‘adulteration’. The researcher balances on a fine line between ‘observer’ and ‘participant observer’. By becoming involved we could easily influence the direction in which the play was heading, or even bring play to a halt. This could result in missing an important event or, at worst, being avoided for the rest of the week as a ‘play-destroyer’. Generally, however, most kids will happily pick up where they left off or let their play evolve after an intervention.

Hoarding treasure: categories of play and school rules

Across the entire *Childhood, Tradition and Change* project, over thirty-eight categories of play were recorded, including rhymes, clapping games, chasing games, ball games, quiet play, finger games, forbidden games, language play, counting play, imagination play, jumping games, role playing, building and skipping games.²

My first encounter at School Y is one I'll never forget. Within minutes of entering the playground, I observed a group of five-and-six-year olds crouched underneath a demountable building. They were each equipped with a hammer and a pair of swimming goggles, totally absorbed in the activity of smashing rocks. As mentioned previously, School Y can be described as 'alternative'. Very few school rules dictated how children played, tree climbing was encouraged as was the use of tools, hammers and nails, and play was largely self-directed.

School X had more formal rules in place, though the culture there still valued 'free play' over structured play during recess and lunch hours. Because of the freedoms inherent at both schools, the material we were able to collect overall was rich and varied. The basic rule of a fieldworker is *never presume that the children are not engaged with something!*

At both schools, traditional verbal lore such as the clapping rhymes 'Cinderella Dressed in Yella', 'My Boyfriend Gave Me an Apple' and 'Miss Mary Mack' were still prevalent, as were the endless variations of 'Tiggy' 'Chasey' or 'Tip'. The most commonly documented forms of play were miscellaneous physical play and activities, alongside imaginative play often inspired by characters from popular culture, video games, television and film.

In comparison to Schools X and Y, fieldworkers at a number of different locations throughout the project reported very different experiences. At one school, the Principal was very suspicious of the activities of researchers, and had introduced a great many enforceable rules that ultimately dominated playground culture. At another school, one of the staff noted that it was the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Officer who determined playground culture where an abundance of school rules had been adopted in the name of 'safety'.

Some of the rules noted at these more play-controlled schools included no scratching in the dirt with sticks (as soil would wash away in the rain), no poking sticks in holes in the trees, no cartwheels, no piggy-backing and no 'Chasey', 'Tip' or 'Tiggy' to be played on climbing equipment. Often such rules were not formalised in writing but put in place verbally by senior members of staff or OH&S representatives.

When asked about the effect a heavily-regulated playground has on play culture, fieldworker Judy McKinty observed that children still played, but would engage in more subversive play to get around the rules. Children were observed tailoring their play to suit the attitudes of individual teachers on yard duty, would play a forbidden game when teachers weren't looking, and would even re-name a forbidden game so they could continue playing. In one instance, girls who were not allowed to do cartwheels created a game called 'I Am the Greatest', which involved doing handstands, edging as closely as they could to doing cartwheels.



Girls playing handstands on the school oval.
Photographer – Judy McKinty



Children are incredibly adaptive and innovative in the face of regulation, though overall most schools reported a fairly easy-going attitude to playground rules and regulations. As stated in the official report:

The spread of nineteen schools visited reflects a broad range of playground contexts and experiences; from wealthy non-government schools to government schools in extremely socio-economically disadvantaged areas; from schools in the tropics in summer to those in Tasmania in winter; from those with a playground dominated by natural bushland to those with little more than an asphalt quadrangle; from those where children are allowed to climb trees and use tools to build cubby houses to those where the flying fox on the playground equipment is chained up and no more than five children can play together as a group. In all contexts, children played games of their own choosing, and despite the differences, there were remarkable similarities across contexts as well.³

Also noted in the report were the words of one child who, after being banned from playing 'Chasey' for a week as a punishment declared that 'Being banned from Chasey was like being banned from food, or TV', illustrating how important such play is to a child and also perhaps what drives children to incorporate subversion into their play.⁴

Documentation and ethics

The methodology we used for collecting material differed slightly at Schools X and Y, though overall all games were initially documented by hand. Part of this documentation included noting who primary 'tradition bearers' were so we could then ascertain whether or not we could record them using a camera, video camera and/or sound recordings.

Without questioning the obvious importance of ethics around studies involving children, ethics standards do make an enormous difference to the quality of research in this area and the ease in which play can be documented. During the pilot project (School X), and with the cooperation of the school, we were able to photograph and film at will. Unless a parent had specifically objected to their child being recorded, and no parents had done so, we were able to document freely.

When the project began officially (School Y), a different ethical practice had been put in place, meaning that we were significantly limited in regard to what we could photograph or film in the playground, as each child was required to have written parental permission to be recorded. In some cases, we were able to photograph hands, feet and objects that were non-identifiable during play. Inevitably, however, we had to avoid recording group play as it would require collecting all names (thus intervening during play) and checking all children against permissions (time-consuming and not an ideal use of budget). In smaller schools, this might have been an easier task, but at larger schools it was very difficult to navigate.



Due to the above considerations, we relied heavily on written descriptions and sound recordings. The former wasn't so difficult but the latter presented a number of problems. Sound recording is an art form in itself. Heavy rain, noisy birds, traffic, microphone placement, sound quality and using unfamiliar equipment are all potential enemies. Trained by staff at the National Library, we'd been taught how to use the equipment provided to us. Working in pairs meant that one person could operate the equipment and document items that were being collected while the other conducted the interview.



Setting up for audio recording of interviews with children.
Photographer – Graham Dodsworth

While the content we recorded was of good quality, again the artificial process of interviewing children in a room setting took the activity (rhymes, jokes, clapping games, etc.) out of the playground context. In this situation children often became shy, distracted, would forget things and giggled a lot. Necessary perhaps, but not ideal.

Conclusions and musings

At the end of each week, we were required to compile, edit and categorise photographs, films and written descriptions of all the activities recorded at each school; a time-consuming task, but one that gave us the opportunity to reflect on what we had found and observed.

Recordings and photographs from the project are being held at The National Library of Australia and Museum Victoria. Nearly 400 records of play were collected and many are available publicly on the *Childhood, Tradition and Change* website,⁵ which will hopefully be accessed by researchers and public for years to come.

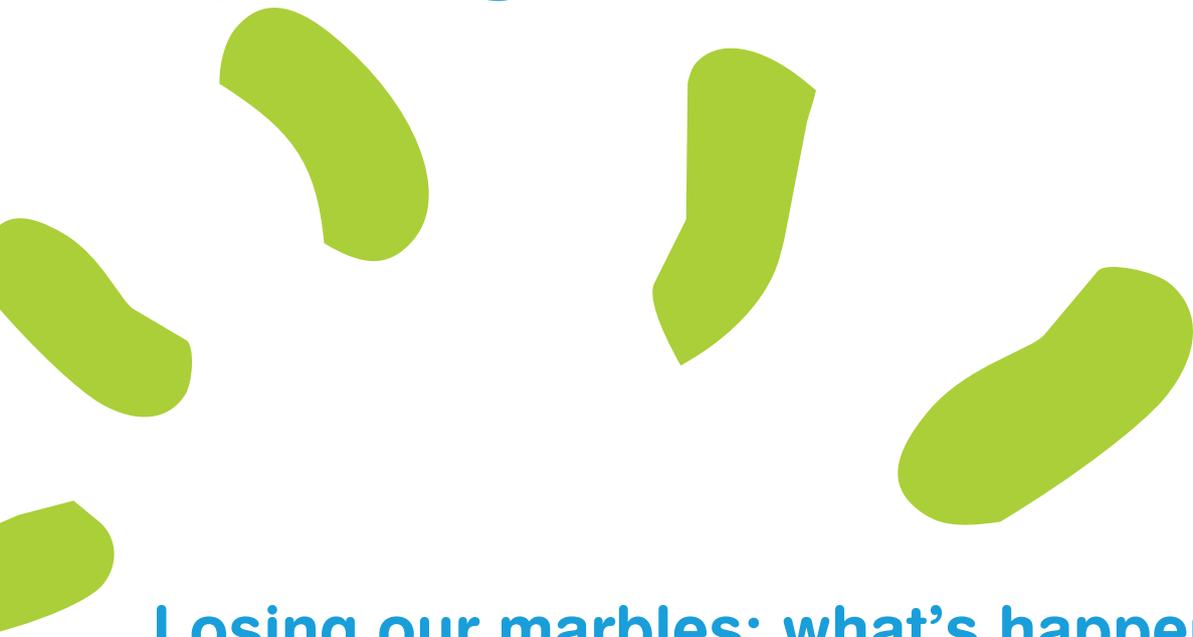
It's been many years since I immersed myself completely in the world of the playground, though I've discovered that once you've engaged in children's culture in such depth, you become a permanent observer. Since the project began I've also become a parent, and my involvement in this project has greatly influenced how I approach play and my understanding of how very important projects like these are in documenting children's culture: a world where adults are rarely privy to the games, methods, ideas and influences that dominate self-directed play.

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<http://www.kateandruth.com/>
<https://thehiddencultureblog.wordpress.com/>
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ENDNOTES

- 1 Kate Darian-Smith & Nikki Henningham, *Final Report of the Childhood, Tradition and Change Project*, 2001, p.4. <http://ctac.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/objects/project-pubs/FinalReport.pdf>
- 2 *ibid.*, p.14.
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Losing our marbles: what's happening to children's folklore in schools?

Judy McKinty

Paper presented to 11th National Folklore Conference, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 24 March, 2016.

Children's folklore encompasses the games, rhymes, riddles, jokes, sayings and other enduring play traditions of childhood, which have been passed down through the generations, mostly through oral transmission and largely without any adult involvement.

In Australia, as in other parts of the world, one of the last remaining places where conditions are just right for this type of play to thrive is the primary school playground. There are groups of children of roughly the same age who spend a great deal of time with each other and, unless something really drastic has happened, there will already be play traditions at the school, a legacy of the past generations of children who have played there.

The children will already have learned from each other the particular rhymes and rituals used at the school for finding who's 'It', and established which part of the schoolyard is the 'jail' or the 'rocket', or the 'stable' for the horses. They will already know which set of drinking taps or tree is the 'barley' – the time-out place in a game of Gang Tiggy – and they'll also be familiar with the invisible overlay that sits over almost every school playground – the things adults have decided they're not allowed to do and the places where they're not allowed to go – the 'forbiddings', as June Factor calls them.

Here is a list of some of the rules children have to keep in mind as they play. It varies from school to school, but it's pretty general. It comes from a 2007-2010 study of play, called *Childhood, Tradition and Change*, which was funded by the Australian Research Council, with assistance from the National Library of Australia, Museum Victoria, the University of Melbourne and Deakin and Curtin Universities:

Rules Impacting on Play

- No hat, no play [in summer]
- No running on concrete or paved surfaces
- No running on the play equipment
- No climbing trees
- No playing with sticks or rocks
- No playing on the gardens
- No scratching or digging in the soil surface
- No picking leaves or flowers
- Each Year level to play in their designated playing area
- No playing in out-of-bounds areas
- No bringing toys from home
- Pokemon cards are banned

In the project's public database there are 26 games listed under the heading 'Forbidden Game'¹ – games like Brandy, doing handstands and cartwheels, standing on top of the monkey bars and playing Chasey.



Some schools consider cartwheels to be unsafe, so they ban children from doing them.

There was some confusion among the children about what was banned and what was not banned. It mostly depended on which teacher was on yard duty, because often class teachers themselves forbid certain activities. A fieldworker on the project explained it this way:

I had been told many times by a number of students and at least one or two teachers that Chasey was banned, and nearly as many students told me *they played* it and I actually saw a number of them playing the game. The Principal explained subsequently that the status of the game was largely dependent on the attitude of the students' class teacher. One of *these* teachers explained that if certain of her students played Chasey there always appeared to be issues that had to be dealt with after they came back into class and she had run out of patience with these issues and therefore, for her class, it was banned.²

At another school, a group of boys commented on *their* games being banned:

Some people are sad about it because most of the games are banned. They feel kind of bored if they don't know what to do, like for a week we didn't know what to do, we just sat around and talked to each other. 'Cause they only ban the really fun games.

On the banning of Chasey:

We're not allowed to play it ever again, only until next year...only at home.

We're not allowed to play it until the teacher says we are.

So it's like you're banned from the TV or you can't have food.³

So children tailor their play to these restrictions – they get to know which areas not to go into and which activities not to do when certain teachers are on yard duty.

Harmony in the playground is a big issue for many primary schools nowadays. Some have special 'Positive Play' programs in place, and there are Yard Duty Reward systems to encourage positive playground behaviour by rewarding those who play well, care for others, help out and so on.

Programs like this which reward positive and cooperative play, as well-meaning as they are, represent another, more subtle, intrusion by adults into what has traditionally been children's own territory. Children have long been the rule-makers, the settlers of disputes, the negotiators, the knowledge-holders and the tradition-bearers in school playgrounds. These 'Positive Play' initiatives are a mild form of social engineering that pervades the whole playground – another layer on top of the 'forbiddings'.

'Loose-parts' play

Into this adversarial territory of the schoolyard comes the idea of 'loose parts' play. This is an adult-led movement, with playworkers, teachers and some parents advocating for more unstructured play involving decision-making, risk-taking, imagination and co-operation (which are also elements of children's traditional play).

'Loose parts' are everyday items that weren't specifically designed for play, but which can be used outdoors for creative physical, imaginative and construction activities. Milk crates, lengths of wood, rubber tyres, cardboard tubes, pieces of fabric and rope are some of the common materials used. Some schools also buy in recycled clean industrial waste, which has been carefully selected for durability and play value.



A typical 1950s schoolyard, one of many visited by Dorothy Howard.
Source – Dorothy Howard Collection, Australian Children’s Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria, courtesy June Factor

Research in Australia and overseas has found that introducing ‘loose parts’ into a school enlivens the children’s play, improves their play skills, provides more choices, encourages co-operation and teamwork, improves resilience and builds connections between students. It is an inclusive, open-ended play activity.⁴

Teachers at schools that have successfully introduced ‘loose parts’ play also say that instead of coming inside feeling upset or angry about something that’s happened out in the playground, the children come back into class happy and ready to learn. The teacher who banned Chasey would be really pleased to hear that!

So has it come to this? Is it now necessary for adults to introduce a whole new way of playing into primary schools? And what does it mean for children’s traditional games and playlore? Perhaps it might be good to take a look at what’s happened in Australian school playgrounds since the 1950s, when the first widespread research into Australian children’s play was conducted.

Dorothy Howard

When American folklorist Dorothy Howard came to Australia in 1954 to study Australian children’s play customs, some of the schoolyards she visited were still divided into ‘girls’ side’ and ‘boys’ side’. Nevertheless, they were alive with children bouncing balls and throwing them at each other, skipping, jumping, hopping, chasing each other, hiding, singing and chanting strange words as they counted out on their toes to decide who would be ‘he’ for the next game.

Her visit prompted adults, as well as children, to write to her, giving descriptions of their games, rhymes, riddles, jokes and other play traditions. Even before she had completed her research – she still had Western Australia and South Australia to visit – Dorothy Howard had collected over 700 names of games, descriptions of about 400 games, 175 autograph album rhymes, 50 skipping rhymes, 40 counting-out rhymes plus a number of singing games, riddles, tongue-twisters, taunts, oaths, ball-bouncing and nonsense rhymes and other types of playlore.

This amount of material was enough for her to be able to do a preliminary analysis, in which she identified some historical changes in play patterns since the 1880s. She noted that while folk tradition and variation still existed in the playways of Australian children:

- (1) [V]erbal ritual appears to be decreasing: some games with lengthy verbal ritual are gone. In some cases the verbal accompaniment is shortened (as in Oranges and Lemons). Counting-out rhymes...are not as numerous, as popular, or as intricate; the counting-out rhymes still in use are short ones.
- (2) Some old games of individual skill are obsolete, obsolescent or being simplified... Knucklebones today is a much simplified version of the game reported by informants who played the game in the 1880s.⁵

Dorothy Howard arrived in Australia on American Independence Day, July 4, 1954. While she was here, she visited 31 schools and corresponded with 11 and 12 year-old students and their teachers at more than 70. She travelled to every state and territory except the Northern Territory, and sailed from Fremantle on April 15th, 1955, after spending a very productive 9 months in Australia. (She spent a month in New Zealand at the end of 1954, and visited Brian Sutton-Smith.) Her large research archive of file cards, correspondence, photos, papers and playthings is one of the most significant elements of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection, held by Museum Victoria.

She wrote several monographs about some of the games she'd collected over here, and we know how they were played because many are described in detail. She wrote about the games that were widespread – Knucklebones, Australian 'Hoppy', ball-bouncing customs and rhymes, autograph album entries, counting-out rituals and rhymes and marbles games. She also wrote about string games and a children's gambling device called a 'Toodlembuck', a spinning toy which appeared in playgrounds around Melbourne Cup time⁶.

Of the games Dorothy Howard wrote about, most of them played right around the country at the time, only counting-out has retained a similar level of popularity among the many games in today's Australian school playgrounds, and although there was no monograph written about chasing games, children still play Tiggy and Chasey everywhere. That's not to say that nobody plays the other games anymore – plastic knucklebones are still being sold in shops so someone's buying them – but they're now more likely to be found in adult-planned activities based around the 'olden days' than in the quiet, tucked-away corners of schoolyards.

Ball Games

Dorothy Howard remarked on the number of ball-bouncing games she encountered wherever she went – games like 'Sevens', 'Tens', 'Oliver Twist' and 'Two Ball' – mostly played by girls, some with increasingly difficult actions, others with a rhyme or a chant. These games were played up against the school's brick wall, where the ball would rebound and bounce off the hard bitumen surface of the playground – a perfect combination for these types of games.



Downball is one of the most popular ball games in schools, particularly among boys.

The most popular ball game played against a wall in today's schools – called Wall Ball, Handball or Downball – has no rhyme and only one action. It has a closer resemblance to the sport of Squash than to the rhythmic, chanting games of the 1950s. A more challenging version of Downball is played on a court with multiple squares, or anywhere there's a flat, even surface with a line across it, like a concrete path. Also called Four Square, this game was recorded at 15 of the 19 schools visited during the *Childhood, Tradition and Change* project, and there was sometimes more than one version at the same school.

Downball is a game of skill, employing different tactics and strategies. There are many rules and even more terms associated with the game, some for different kinds of bounces and 'shots' – it has a very strong verbal lore:

'fireballs'	'out of court' serve
'snakeys'	'doubles'
'skinners'	'full'
'cannonballs'	'enters'
'normals'	'cherries'
'high tower'	'footsies'
'ace'	'practice'
'air ball'	'chance'
'trick' serve	'waiters'
'must accept' serve	'versing' (playing against someone)

This ball game wasn't among the activities described by the children who wrote to Dorothy Howard, so I think it's fairly safe to say that it wasn't around at the time.

Another popular ball game in the 1950s was 'Branding', which was basically Tiggly with a tennis ball. 'Brandy' was one of the 'forbidden' games collected from several schools during the *Childhood Tradition and Change* project. It's mostly banned unless a soft ball is used or the school grounds are large enough to escape the notice of the teachers on yard duty.

One ball game that has grown until it's now taking over children's playing time and space is Soccer. The worldwide craze for the sport is reflected in school playgrounds, where Soccer is played regularly on any flat, open area, mostly, but not exclusively, by boys. As an indication of the impact of the game on Australian school playgrounds a 2011 study, listing the 20 most prevalent lunchtime activities, placed Soccer in fourth place after eating, talking and walking. Chasey or Tiggly came next on the list.⁷

The amount of outdoor space being used almost exclusively for Soccer in some schools has prevented other types of games, particularly traditional games like skipping, chasing, catching games and different ball games like French Cricket from being played there.

The rise in the use of artificial turf in schools has made it easy to permanently mark out soccer pitches and other ground markings, and I think this has contributed to the problem. Artificial turf puts a layer between children and the ground, and prevents them from interacting with the surface beneath, limiting the kinds of games that can be played there. Games that involve scratching letters, 'mud' maps, lines or shapes on the ground, digging holes or making 'tracks' can't be played on synthetic surfaces.

With so many school playgrounds being covered by artificial turf, it is now theoretically possible for children, especially in urban areas, to spend their whole time, day after day, without ever coming into contact with natural ground.

Hopscotch

Hopscotch was one of the first games Dorothy Howard encountered when she arrived in Australia, and from then on she saw hopscotch patterns chalked on footpaths and playgrounds everywhere she went. She commented on the great variety of patterns and the wide variation in the children's names for them.

The most popular and widespread pattern was for the game of 'Kick Hoppy' or 'Base Hoppy', and it didn't have numbers. Because the children were using chalk, they could vary the game by using different colours and writing their names or drawing shapes inside the squares, according to the rules of the game.

In most Australian primary schools today, a hopscotch pattern – usually the 'Aeroplane' pattern – is either painted onto a hard surface in the playground or embedded into the artificial turf. Instead of a lively game, created and played by children for their own enjoyment, it has largely been reduced to a design element in schoolyards all over Australia. When a hopscotch pattern is embedded into artificial turf, there's nothing lying on the ground nearby for the children to spontaneously pick up and use as a taw, so if they use the pattern at all they simply hop or jump through the squares, as they do with the tiles on the floor of a supermarket.



Hopscotch patterns embedded into artificial turf are largely ignored by the children.

During the *Childhood Tradition and Change* project, in schools where children were allowed to use chalk freely they drew a variety of things, including hopscotch patterns, tracks and paths, circles and other shapes. The hopscotch patterns were often long, meandering paths of squares that were too small to use. But once children know *how* to play the game, their patterns change and become both creative and playable, leading to extended games.

Clapping games

One widespread game in schools now, particularly among girls, is doing hand-clapping rhymes. There are only four descriptions of clapping rhymes in the letters Dorothy Howard received, and all of them came from adults who remembered them from the early 1900s or the 1930s. The earliest comes from the 1890s, and is 99.9% identical to this one, which was collected in Orbost, Victoria in 1996:

My mother said, I never should,
Play with the gypsies in the wood.
If I did, she would say,
'Naughty girl to disobey!'
Disobey one, disobey two,
Disobey over the waters blue. (Waterloo in 1890)

Clapping games are found in practically every school in the country – there are 29 listed in the *Childhood Tradition and Change* database, although several variations are listed more than once. There can be many versions of the same rhyme, with each school claiming that theirs is the 'right' one. Girls are the traditional custodians of the clapping patterns and rhymes.

Here we have a game that has grown in Australian school playgrounds since the 1950s and is thriving, perhaps partly because it needs no props and can be played almost anywhere, without breaking any rules that relate to the use of space or ownership of the playground. In the battle for the playground, verbal lore is the big survivor.



Clapping games are widespread, played mostly, but not exclusively, by girls.

Marbles

When Dorothy Howard visited Australia, one of the richest and most popular games, particularly among boys, was Marbles. The game itself had many names, depending on how it was played – names like 'Big Ring', 'Little Ring', 'Bunny Hole', 'Poison', 'Eye Drops', 'Follow-me-Taw', 'Kiss and Span' and simply 'Alleys'.

The names for different types of marbles and the terms used in describing the rules were part of the lore surrounding the game. It was a very specialised language, with names like 'Cat's Eye', 'Commony', 'Blood Real', 'Agate', 'Bot', 'Tombowler', 'Peewee' and 'Stanker', and terms like 'drizzy', 'knuckle down and screw tight', 'knuckle up, sky high', 'fenudge', 'doogs', 'banks', 'clears', 'dub up', 'slips', 'skin the ring' and 'fen funnicks'.

Dorothy Howard defined the use of children's special play language in this way:

Play language is the lingo of a particular peer group in a specific community. A child, to fit in, be one of the group successfully, must speak the language.⁸

Something interesting happened during the *Childhood Tradition and Change* project – not one marbles game was reported. A few Principals and teachers commented that they hadn't seen Marbles being played at their school for as long as they could remember. It wasn't banned, it just wasn't played.

Now, just because there were no marbles games collected during the project doesn't mean they are not being played anymore. Marbles is a seasonal game – it suddenly appears in the playground and everyone goes crazy and then it disappears again. In my own research, I've found that there can be a very rich marbles culture in some schools, but it's not there all the time. It's a game that's been regularly banned by teachers over the years, but which continues to thrive in schools where there is an acceptance of play in its many manifestations. The rich 1950s marbles culture with its special rules and terminology isn't around in Australian schools any more (in some ways its successor is Downball), but there's a much larger variety of marbles being produced now, with a longer list of names for the different types of marbles children play with.⁹

In 1950s Australia, Marbles was a game of skill and strategy. No-one rolled their marbles – everyone flicked them, and whether you won the game or lost your marbles often depended on how accurate you were at flicking. Most players typically used the 'Aussie' or thumb flick, which is deadly accurate and can split a marble in half if it's going fast enough. The influx of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s and 80s introduced other ways of flicking a marble, like the 'Chinese' flick – using the middle finger as a type of catapult. But a lot of children don't even flick at all now. At some schools, they play a game where they just roll the marbles along – the rules are rudimentary and the rich lore surrounding the game has disappeared, but they still enjoy playing.



The 'Chinese flick' is one of several different ways of shooting a marble.

So the game of Marbles, like most children's folklore, has changed over time. Dorothy Howard says:

Tradition, though stable, is never static. Tradition changes slowly or rapidly but change it must. It is only the printed word and the machine which tend to arrest and hold in static form the words and ways of games...The background environment of children's play customs everywhere on the earth is always changing; sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly. In Australia the pace of change appears to be increasing with the increasing congestion of city play space; and may increase still more rapidly as the impact of immigration begins to show effect. For this reason, a study of Australian children's play customs made in 1955 may have greater significance in 1975 than it has today. Certainly in 1955, we are wise to garner what we can of the playways of the generations before it is too late.¹⁰

Finally, I must return briefly to the subject of 'loose parts' play. I think the movement towards adult-sponsored 'free' play is partly a result of the changes that Dorothy Howard identified back in the mid-1950s – a gradual shift away from skilled traditional games like Knucklebones, with rules and rituals and lore, and ball-bouncing games that take time to learn and play and require practice and passion to keep going, to more unstructured and imaginary play that anyone can do and which doesn't have to be learned. I also think that there are many adults who have forgotten just how much fun traditional play can be, so they look for new alternatives to keep children occupied and entertained.

I'm going to leave the last word to a play specialist who worked at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, in the early 1990s when we installed an interactive exhibition of children's traditional games for the patients.¹¹ After a month watching her patients play these games within the hospital, the play specialist said that it had made her realise that these games mean something special to children:

They come from within the child. They're not just games, but something basic that children understand. They're simple, and it's this simplicity that makes them so important. In the hospital [we] try to keep up with the latest toys so the children won't feel as if they're missing out, but the traditional games seem to connect with the children in a way that the others don't.¹²

It's worth remembering this, in the context of the changes occurring in school playgrounds throughout the country.

Judy McKinty is an independent children's play researcher, based in Melbourne, and a co-editor of Play and Folklore. She is also an Honorary Associate of Museum Victoria and a member of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection Reference Committee.

Unless otherwise attributed, all photographs in this article were taken by Judy McKinty.

ENDNOTES

- 1 *Childhood, Tradition and Change (2007-2010)*: Categories <http://ctac.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/browse_function.htm#r>
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- 5 Dorothy Howard, 'Folklore of Australian children', *The Journal of Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1955, 31-32.
- 6 These monographs have been reprinted in Kate Darian-Smith and June Factor (eds), *Child's Play: Dorothy Howard and the Folklore of Australian Children* (Melbourne: Museum Victoria, 2005).
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- 8 Dorothy Howard quoted by June Factor, 'Collecting Children's Folklore in Australia' in Graham Seal and Jennifer Gall (eds). *Antipodean Traditions: Australian Folklore in the 21st Century* (Perth: Black Swan Press, 2011), 13.
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- 10 Dorothy Howard, 'Folklore of Australian children', *The Journal of Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1955, 34.
- 11 See Judy McKinty, 'From Playground to Patient: reflections on a traditional games project in a paediatric hospital', *International Journal of Play*, vol. 2, no. 3, 187-201, published online December 13, 2013.
- 12 'Tops, Tales & Granny's False Teeth' Diary (1990), [unpublished] ACFC, reg. no. HT8476.1, 12/1/1, Museum Victoria.

A short list of online play resources

American Journal of Play

<http://www.journalofplay.org/>

Published by The Strong National Museum of Play, this site contains the latest journal and past issues to download, back to Summer 2008.

Australian Children's Folklore Collection online

<http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/24>

This Museums Victoria site contains over 8,000 items. Scroll down the page to see images of playthings in the Australian Children's Folklore Collection and scanned documents from the Dorothy Howard Collection, including Howard's monographs on Australian children's games, children's handwritten descriptions of their games and transcripts of interviews.

Childhood, Tradition and Change

<http://ctac.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/>

This is a publicly-accessible database which resulted from a national study of Australian children's playlore, carried out in nineteen schools over four years from 2007-2010. It contains descriptions of games, background information about the schools, de-identified images and other resources.

Fish Trout, You're Out!

<http://www.nla.gov.au/fishtrout/>

This is the Children's Folklore section of the National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklife Collection. The page describes four types of children's folklore and gives examples, and from here you can also follow links to other collections of children's folklore held by the Library.

International Journal of Play

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rijp20>

A Taylor and Francis (Routledge) publication, this Journal began in 2012. It is published in print (black and white) and online (colour) and obtainable by subscription. Complete issues or individual articles can be purchased from the web site, and occasionally selected articles are granted open access and can be freely downloaded. Members of The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) receive the *International Journal of Play* as part of their membership.

Kidsplaybook

<http://www.kidsplaybook.com/>

This is a website and database of outdoor games of children from all over the world, filmed by Jules Oosterwegel, a film maker from the Netherlands. The games are shown in streaming video with commentary, and there is a huge international bibliography of play and games.

Play and Folklore

<https://museumvictoria.com.au/about/books-and-journals/journals/play-and-folklore/>
From this Museum Victoria web page you can find and download every issue of *Play and Folklore* (formerly the *Australian Children's Folklore Newsletter*) from Issue no. 1, September 1981. The publication is listed in decades, and each individual issue is a pdf document, so you can browse through the articles, find what you're looking for and download the whole publication for free. There are also three types of Index available, by Subject and Author, Category or a complete Table of Contents.

Playground Ideas

<http://www.playgroundideas.org/>
This is a non-profit Australian-based organisation that assists communities to build playgrounds anywhere in the world, using recycled materials. The organisation 'supports anyone anywhere to build a stimulating space for play using only local materials, tools and skills'. The website gives access to freely downloadable playground designs, manuals, step-by-step building instructions and guides, and a report, *The Case for Play*, which 'highlights the most significant research findings on the impact of play interventions, particularly for children living in poverty'.

Playground Rhymes

http://folksong.org.nz/playground_rhymes.html
This website of New Zealand Folk Chants has a page of contemporary rhymes of New Zealand school children, collected by Janice Ackerley's students during their studies for the National Diploma of Children's Literature. The content is based on Ackerley's article 'Playground Rhymes Keep Up With the Times', published in *Play and Folklore* no. 42, September 2002. There are also links to two documents by New Zealand researchers Laurie and Winifred Bauer, 'Elastics' and 'Skipping Games and Rhymes', and another link to Maori songs.

Playtimes: a century of children's games and rhymes

<http://www.bl.uk/playtimes>
This is a British Library site containing an online collection of film and audio recordings documenting 100 years of UK children's songs, rhymes and games. It contains digitised audio recordings from the 'Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs', and video from 'Children's Games and Songs in the New Media Age' – a 2009-2011 study of playground culture at two primary schools in London and Sheffield. The final report of the project can be found here:
http://www.dieponderzoek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/end_of_project_report.pdf

Rethinking Childhood

<https://rethinkingchildhood.com/>
Tim Gill is one of the UK's leading thinkers on childhood, and an internationally-recognised advocate for positive change in children's lives. 'For over 20 years his...work has focused on the changing nature of childhood, children's play and free time, and their evolving relationships with the people and places around them'. His best-selling book *No Fear: growing up in a risk-averse society*, which is freely downloadable from his web site, argues that childhood is being undermined by the growth of risk aversion.

Saharan, North African and Amazigh Children's Toys and Play

<http://www.sanatoypay.org>
Dr Jean-Pierre Rossie is a sociocultural anthropologist researching Saharan and North African children's play, games and toys, and an associated researcher of the *Musée du Jouet* in *Moirans-en-Montagne*. He is internationally recognised for his studies, over many decades, of African children's toys, play and culture. The website has a list of his publications, many available to download in English or French.



An art work to visit:

The painting 'Children's Games' by Pieter Breughal, painted in 1560, regularly appears in presentations, publications and other information about children's traditional games and play. In the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, is a modern version of Breughal's work, called 'The Games Children Play'.

Commissioned in 2008, in honour of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch's 100th birthday, this vibrant tapestry depicts children playing games that will be familiar to children and parents alike: they include skipping; Hopscotch; Elastics; Marbles; top, hoop and yo-yo spinning; clapping; 'Cat's Cradles'; ball-bouncing games and French Cricket.

The original vision for the tapestry was 'to create something special for patients, families, staff and visitors to enjoy, which would capture the freedom, joy and innocence of childhood'.

A collaboration between the Melbourne Tapestry Workshop and artist Robert Ingpen, this remarkable art work has to be seen in person to be fully appreciated.

Find out more about the tapestry at:
<https://www.austapestry.com.au/tapestries/pg/featured-tapestries/2/96/the-games-children-play>
<http://www.rch.org.au/education/rchcreate/tapestry/>