

More Than Just Play

University-Based, Multiple Intelligences—Inspired Toy Library

MARY KATHERINE WAIBEL DUNCAN



In an unpublished master's thesis, Julia E. Moore described the history of toy libraries in the United States.¹ According to Moore, the first known toy library appeared in Los Angeles in 1935 during the Great Depression to afford children free access to games and toys. Toy libraries became more widespread in the 1960s and 1970s as women increasingly entered the workforce, the number of preschools and daycare programs grew, and the Children's Services Division (now ALSC) of the American Library Association supported the practice of loaning play materials. In the 1980s, lekoteks, or toy libraries that provide children with a disability access to specialized play materials and offer families professional advice about supporting their children's development through play, were introduced to America. Today, supported by organizations such as the USA Toy Library Association (www.usatla.org), the National Lekotek Center (www.pgpedia.com/n/national-lekotek-center), and the International Toy Library Association (www.itla-toylibraries.org/home), thousands of toy libraries with widely varying missions exist worldwide.

In a 1992 article, researchers Eva M. Bjorck-Akesson and Jane M. Brodin noted four major types of toy libraries.² Community-based toy libraries, for example, tend to be public libraries that offer advice on play as well as access to toys and learning activities primarily for preschool-aged children. Lekoteks operate more like family resource centers providing access to toys as well as guidance and support for young children with special needs and their families. Some toy libraries function more like social or cultural meeting places for people of all ages to play with traditional toys and games. Toy-lending libraries serve as repositories for play materials that can be borrowed and returned, similar to traditional book libraries. Regardless of type, toy libraries are founded on the beliefs that play supports physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development; promotes well-being; and can be facilitated by providing individuals with access to developmentally appropriate toys.

The purpose of this article is to describe a relatively less-known type of toy-lending library—a university-based, special-collections library—whose mission is to provide students access to play materials in support of their academic, professional, and civic development. Specifically, the BU Toy Library at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania launched in fall 2010 to help undergraduate and graduate students appreciate the value of play and unleash its power when working or preparing to work with individuals of all developmental ages and abilities through their coursework, research, student teaching, practicum/internship, service learning, or community-outreach activities. In addition to describing the holdings of the BU Toy Library, this article provides examples of activities supported by the toy library; shares informal feedback about the toy library's use and usefulness; and summarizes data from a year-long, institutional-review-board-approved online program assessment.

Literacy and Play Resources

The BU Toy Library includes approximately seven hundred books (excluding duplicates) and approximately six hundred toys (excluding duplicates). Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory and Thomas Armstrong's practical translation of MI Theory provided useful frameworks for



Mary Katherine Waibel Duncan, PhD, is Professor of Psychology and Joan and Fred Miller Distinguished Professor of Good Work and Founder/Director, BU Toy Library at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania in Central Pennsylvania.

identifying a diverse selection of literacy and play resources that honor the different ways in which individuals learn and create new knowledge.³

According to MI Theory, for example, linguistic intelligence refers to a person's ability to produce and understand spoken and written words.⁴ Individuals who enjoy using their "word smarts" may like to read, write, or tell stories; learn new words in their native or foreign languages; or play word games.⁵ The BU Toy Library's holdings include dozens of resources that support language and literacy play. For example, alphabet books, DVDs, puzzles, games (e.g., Alphabet BINGO), and manipulatives (e.g., magnets, tiles, bean bags, and die cuts) target letter knowledge, or knowledge about the shapes and sounds of letters. The toy library also provides access to English and Spanish dictionaries, rhyming dictionaries, thesauruses, word books, and word games (e.g., 5 Second Rule, Scrabble, Boggle, and Hangman) to support vocabulary, or the comprehension and production of words. Print awareness, or the understanding that printed text has meaning and follows a set of rules, is supported by access to family-literacy books and easy readers whose minimal text, large print, and engaging illustrations introduce new readers to concepts such as authors and illustrators, book orientation, directionality of reading, punctuation, and the difference between letters and words.

To support print motivation, or interest in reading and writing, the BU Toy Library's holdings include roleplay costumes and props that encourage literacy activities involved in pretend playing doctor/veterinarian, chef/food server, teacher, first responder, and other roles in the community. The toy library's onomatopoeia books, repetition and rhyming books, and games (e.g., Alphabet Soup, Word-for-Word, and Twisterz) support phonological awareness, or the understanding that language is made up of sounds, words, syllables, and rhymes. To support the development of narration skills, or the ability to describe things and tell stories, the BU Toy Library offers access to wordless picture books, felt storyboards, magnetic create-a-scene books, story-starter prompts, as well as conversation cards and cubes.

Logical-mathematical intelligence refers to a person's ability to use logic, numbers, and reasoning to understand how something works or to create something new.⁶ Individuals who enjoy using their "logic smarts" may like to play math or strategy games; solve riddles and mysteries; or cook, perform experiments, and invent things.⁷

To this end, the toy library offers math books, learning mats, and toys to support the teaching and learning of basic operations, sequencing, counting, categorizing, weighing, making change, and telling time. The library's holdings also include strategy games, illusion sets, and resources to support play-based experimentation (e.g., cookbooks, play food, and play kitchen equipment). Additionally, the BU Toy Library's science, technology, and engineering resources include, but are not limited to, color-mixing paddles, solar-system

models, models of human and plant anatomy, magnets, simple machine sets, as well as informational texts.

Spatial intelligence refers to the ability to visualize or mentally represent the spatial world.⁸ Individuals who enjoy using their "picture smarts" may like to draw, design things, look at photos or artwork, or complete puzzles.⁹ Accordingly, the toy library makes available art supplies and a die-cut center including approximately three hundred die-cuts for creating two-dimensional and three-dimensional crafts. In addition, the toy library's assortment of maps, puzzles, and construction toys (e.g., building blocks, wooden train sets, TinkerToys, Lincoln Logs, LEGOs, and K'nex toys) tap into spatial concepts. The library's holdings also include visually stimulating *I SPY* books as well as Caldecott Award-winning picture books. Furthermore, games such as Stare, Find It, Scavenger Hunt, Memory, and Rush Hour encourage children to visualize and problem-solve as they explore and practice using their spatial skills.

Bodily kinesthetic intelligence refers to the ability to use sensory or motor skills to understand or create something.¹⁰ Individuals who enjoy using their "body smarts" may like to act, dance, play sports, fix things, or perform magic tricks.¹¹ To this end, the BU Toy Library includes resources that target fine motor skills such as lacing cards, latches boards, and games (e.g., Feel-and-Find, Suspend, and Perplexis) as well as resources that target gross motor skills such as yoga cards, jump ropes, balls, parachutes, and tunnels. Literacy and play resources also support individuals' exploration of their sensory processing capabilities, sensitivities, and preferences. For example, tactile resources include kinetic sand, sensory bins, and touch-and-feel books. Vestibular resources include rotation and balance boards. Proprioceptive resources include pounding benches, jump rope, and weighted lap pads.

Musical intelligence refers to the ability to read, write, make, or appreciate music.¹² Individuals who enjoy using their "music smarts" may like to sing, hum, or whistle; tap, snap, or clap; play an instrument; compose songs; or listen to music.¹³ To support these play activities, the BU Toy Library provides access to several types of instruments such as chimes, hand bells, pianos, xylophones, tambourines, boom whackers, cymbals, and shakers. Other musical resources include a metronome, games (e.g., Spontaneous), and literacy resources such as songbooks, sound books and puzzles, and picture books based on popular songs.

Interpersonal intelligence refers to a person's ability to understand and interact with other people.¹⁴ Individuals who enjoy using their "people smarts" may make friends easily, like to work in groups, or look for ways to help others.¹⁵ Accordingly, the toy library makes available books that celebrate cultural diversity and games that encourage perspective- and turn-taking. Furthermore, the library offers resources that promote communication and cooperation such as reference books filled with team-building activities and ideas for youth volunteerism.

Intrapersonal intelligence refers to the ability to understand one's own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors.¹⁶ Individuals who enjoy using their "self smarts" may like to work alone, keep a journal, think about their future, or set personal goals.¹⁷ In other words, they tend to have a good sense of who they are, where they are going, and what they aspire to become. To this end, the toy library makes available books (e.g., Dr. Seuss's *My Many Colored Days* and Michael Hall's *My Heart is Like a Zoo*), flashcards, and games (e.g., Guess How I Feel?) about feelings as well as books (e.g., *Listography*), scrapbooking equipment, and art supplies (e.g., Create-a-Face and Create-A-Person drawing pads) to support self-reflection activities. In addition, the library's holdings include a collection of health literacy books published by Magination Press, an imprint of the American Psychological Association, to encourage self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-direction.

Finally, naturalistic intelligence refers to a person's ability to recognize, classify, and understand things in nature.¹⁸ Children who enjoy using their "nature smarts" may like caring for animals, hiking and exploring nature, visiting parks and zoos, protecting the environment, collecting things from nature, watching the weather, or looking at the stars.¹⁹ To this end, the library provides access to toys that encourage outdoor play and exploration (e.g., nature reference guides and magnifying lenses) as well as nature-themed books, games, animal figures, and rock collections. In addition, sand, rice, glass bead, and bean sensory bins encourage the creation of real or imagined miniature worlds and promote discussions about the living and nonliving things that might inhabit these environments.

Curricular and Extracurricular Activities and Initiatives

In addition to providing access to an MI-inspired collection of books, toys, supplies, and equipment, the BU Toy Library promotes the value of play through on- and off-campus presentations and strives to advance students' academic, professional, and civic development. Faculty members across colleges (i.e., Liberal Arts, Education, and Science and Technology) have integrated the BU Toy Library into their courses through guest lectures, course projects, classroom demonstrations, and service-learning experiences. For example, education majors enrolled in an introductory course have adapted play materials for use with individuals with a disability in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their experiential course. In addition, psychology majors enrolled in a two-hundred-level early child development course have created toy portfolios describing how children of various developmental ages may demonstrate their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional competencies when playing with specific toys. Furthermore, advanced psychology majors routinely rely on the BU Toy Library when fulfilling the service-learning requirements of their three-hundred-level psychology courses.

For example, the toy library's MI-inspired holdings provided a template for filling hundreds of suitcases with play materials for children and youth enrolled in local foster care programs, creating a kitchen play space at a local battered women's shelter, and hosting an afterschool club in which children in grades K-8 explored their intellectual strengths and practiced using their competencies in service of others. Informal student feedback gathered through written course assignments has suggested that the resources of the BU Toy Library helped students understand and apply major concepts, theories, and research findings, promoted their critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills, and gave them realistic ideas about how to use their knowledge and skills in future academic and professional endeavors.

In addition to benefitting students' coursework, the toy library has supported students' research endeavors. In partial fulfillment of the requirements of an independent study research project, for example, a senior psychology major coauthored and assessed a neuroscience-inspired workbook titled "Do You Sense What I Sense?" to teach school-age children about brain structure and function with an emphasis on sensory processing.²⁰ Additionally, a senior nursing student co-authored and assessed an interactive booklet aimed at helping young children prepare for routine medical checkups. The *My Well-Child Check-Up: A Preschooler's Guide* booklet prompts children to think about answers to commonly asked questions (e.g., How old are you?), review the names and locations of body parts, and learn about instruments that medical professionals use during well-child checkups. It also includes a checklist of events that take place during a typical checkup and an outline of a child's body so that young patients may help medical professionals keep track of what body parts have been examined. The booklet ends with a Bingo game in which children may cross out all of the healthy things they did that day to see if they can get three in a row. One of the thirty preschool teachers and daycare workers who reviewed the booklet wrote, "It's clear, colorful, varied, easy-to-use. I think it's excellent! I've never seen anything like it and I think it would be very helpful before and during a doctor visit esp. [sic] for a nervous child. I work with special needs children who tend to have more doctor visits. I'd love a copy for each of my students!"

The BU Toy Library also has supported undergraduate- and graduate-level fieldwork experiences. For example, two advanced psychology majors enrolled in a senior capstone practicum course developed by the Friends of the BU Toy Library initiative to reinforce preschoolers' emerging literacy skills through shared reading and play. They visited local preschools each week for six weeks, targeting a different early literacy skill during each visit.

Furthermore, graduate students enrolled in the Master of Science Speech and Language Pathology program have noted their appreciation of the toy library's resources and trainings

with respect to their clinic work. One first-year graduate student wrote,

I wanted to thank you for the amazing resource of the toy library and how much it has supported our program. Before this semester, I had no previous experience working with kids with autism. When I was assigned a kindergartener with autism on my case load, I was unsure what kind of lessons to plan. When you brought an Elephant and Piggie book, with the characters, to talk to our class in the beginning of the semester, I knew it was something I needed to try. She absolutely LOVED the book, laughing throughout the whole thing. Since then, I've come to the toy library multiple times and I've done a bunch of different Elephant and Piggie books with her. Answering direct questions about a story is difficult for this student, but with the characters and all the props from the story, she can easily act out each event and recreate dialogue, demonstrating comprehension of the story—which is great! I've also borrowed books and puzzles from the toy library, for this particular student, and others, as well. Occasionally, I would just come over and browse because I needed inspiration!

Bridging the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Student Affairs, the BU Toy Library has supported students' engagement with the university and town. For example, the Residence Life program used the toy library's collection of puppets to produce a musical comedy series about college life and to conduct student-leader training sessions. The assistant director of Residence Life wrote, "It allowed me to diversify the presentation a bit and keep it fresh. It also helped me to educate the staff about the various resources and services . . . that perhaps the average student may not necessarily be aware is available to them." Additionally, the toy library has supported the Students Organized to Learn through Volunteerism and Employment (SOLVE) office's afterschool tutoring program. This program serves local elementary, middle, and high school-aged children with demonstrated social and academic needs. As volunteer tutors, college students bring tote bags of play materials to the schools to catalyze new learning experiences and promote positive social interactions.

In fall 2011, the toy library responded quickly when the town surrounding the university was devastated by a historic flood. When the waters receded, two local preschools were left with little to salvage. The day before the preschools welcomed their students to a temporary space in a local church, representatives of the BU Toy Library emptied the play resource center's shelves and delivered hundreds of books and toys to the church. The children enjoyed playing with the train sets, blocks, puzzles, games, doll houses, and puppets while they awaited the arrival of brand-new toys, books, and furnishings complements of the toy library and its campus partners. The success of this outreach initiative led to the creation of *Y.O.O. Rock Columbia County: Youth Outreach Opportunities for Families, Children, and Youth*,²² which has since been updated and revised into a booklet titled *Doing Good: Bloomsburg*. The

booklet highlights some of the town's greatest needs, inventories nonprofit organizations and agencies that are trying to meet these needs, and shares ideas for how people of all ages can help. The booklet has been distributed broadly through the elementary and middle schools. It is also a popular resource for the local chapter of Big Brothers/Big Sisters as it offers ideas and updated contact information so that mentors may have an easier time finding constructive, empowering activities in which to engage their mentees.

In addition, undergraduate and graduate students have been inspired by the availability of resources at the toy library to create their own outreach programs. For example, using the toy library's laptop computers, a senior psychology major taught basic computer-literacy skills to older adults. Twenty-four adult learners participated in this community outreach initiative to learn how to use the computer to gather information, communicate with friends and family members, for recreational purposes, and for cognitive rehabilitation exercises. Similarly, graduate students enrolled in the university's Master of Science Speech and Language Pathology program hosted an intergenerational therapy day in which they brought together preschool-age children from a local Head Start program and older adults affected by aphasia. Using picture books and musical instruments from the toy library, graduate students facilitated communication in a dynamic group setting through storytelling and singing (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNavxzFeXWE&t=2s).

As a final example, the BU Toy Library has teamed up with the university's honors program on multiple occasions to develop educational and recreational curricula and to supply corresponding play materials for their spring break service trip to Jamaica. One faculty supervisor noted, "Without resources from the BU Toy Library, our teaching and learning sessions would not have had the impact we witnessed. This school is located in a remote area of the island. Resources are scarce. The children delighted in the books, puppets, and art materials that we carried on our journey."

Members of the local community also have used the toy library's resources to complement existing programming in their own schools, organizations, and other workplaces. For example, the toy library has benefitted the local children's museum by lending resources to support theme-based play activities for preschool-age children and their guardians. One museum volunteer wrote, "The children were totally engaged by those [resources] in this environment and the conversations, storytelling, vocabulary building, and nurturing that went on all morning with those puppets made me very grateful for the toy library." She added, "I should also mention that many parents decided to recreate the enrichment activities at home and they very much appreciated the chance to try out the many kinds of toys available through the toy library." This message was echoed by a mobile therapist who provided home intervention to children in need of emotional or behavioral support. She wrote, "I am so thankful for the lending library. It certainly helps me prepare content-laden,

interactive, fun lessons and home visits that offer such creative approaches to learning and coping strategies.”

Program Assessment

The previous section describes some of the many and varied ways that the BU Toy Library’s resources have been used. For several years, informal feedback about the toy library’s use and usefulness played an important role in securing internal and external funding (see acknowledgements). In addition, funding sources have inferred the toy library’s value from the number of people who have accessed it each academic year (approximately 140) and the number of resources they have borrowed (approximately 1,000). After five probationary years, the BU Toy Library was awarded an operating budget through the university’s Office of the Provost to fund the replacement of lost, worn, or broken books and toys. The budget also covers expenses associated with office supplies such as cleaning materials and totes for storing and transporting borrowed resources. Finally, duplicating services for the toy library’s educational booklets and brochures, assessment materials, and promotional items are funded through the operating budget. With growing calls for accountability throughout higher education, the continued ability of the BU Toy Library to secure funding will likely require a more formal program assessment to document its impact, record areas for improvement, and inform future initiatives. Accordingly, as the toy library approaches its ten-year anniversary, a year-long, IRB-approved online program assessment was piloted.

Method

Participants. Sixty-five people completed 71 online program assessments during the data collection period. Six respondents (five students, one faculty) completed the survey at two different data collection times. Of the 65 participants, 48 were students, five were faculty, nine were recent alumni, two were community professionals, and one was a homeschooling parent. With respect to faculty members’ and students’ college affiliations, 37 were from the College of Education, fifteen from the College of Science and Technology, six from the College of Liberal Arts, and four were unreported. Participants reported using the toy library for the following purposes: coursework (46), clinic work (20), practicum/internship (10), volunteer work (9), student teaching (8), university club (7), research (4), and other purposes (4) such as supplementing their own children’s educational or play resources.

Measure. An online Qualtrics survey was developed for the purpose of this study. After reading and signing a letter of informed consent, participants answered up to five demographic questions including whether they participated in the program assessment previously as well as their role (*student, faculty, staff, community professional, or other*), academic status (*freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student*),

college/department affiliation (*Science and Technology, Education, Liberal Arts, College of Business, or other*), and the purpose for which they used the BU Toy Library (*coursework, research, clinic work, student teaching, practicum/internship, volunteer work/community outreach, club/organization, or other*). Then, using a Likert scale (*not at all, a little, somewhat, a lot*), participants rated the extent to which the BU Toy Library supported their selected activities. Next, using a Likert scale (*extremely dissatisfied, dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, and extremely satisfied*), participants rated their satisfaction with the toy library’s selection of toys, books, die cuts, educational materials, and hours of operation. After that, participants used the same Likert scale to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the toy library’s toys, books, die-cuts, educational materials, and consultation services. Participants also noted whether they believed they saved time and money using the toy library (*yes, no, maybe*) and they indicated their likelihood of revisiting the toy library and recommending the toy library to others (*not at all, a little, somewhat, a lot*). Finally, participants responded to three open-ended questions designed to gather information about how the toy library impacted their academic, professional, and civic development. A fourth and final open-ended question solicited suggestions for improving the toy library.

Procedure. After receiving IRB approval for the program assessment, a representative from the university’s Office of Planning and Assessment emailed toy library users an invitation to volunteer their participation in the program assessment. The invitation was emailed at the end of the summer 2018, fall 2018, and spring 2019 semesters. At each data-collection period, prospective participants received two reminder emails spaced approximately one week apart. Participants also had the option of entering their names in a drawing to win one of three play resources. At the end of the year-long program assessment, data were exported to an Excel spreadsheet and descriptive statistics were run as appropriate. After reading through participants’ recommendations for improving the toy library, common themes were identified and participants’ open-ended responses were coded accordingly.

Results

Table 1 summarizes participants’ ratings of how well the BU Toy Library supported their curricular and extracurricular activities. Across activities, most participants noted that the toy library supported their efforts *somewhat or a lot*. Across all activities, the majority of respondents awarded the toy library the highest rating of usefulness. With respect to academic development, a faculty participant noted that the toy library “provided a wonderful resource for my students in the area of education and how toys can be used to promote the education of children in math, science, and reading.” Similarly, a student participant enrolled in the College of Education wrote,

Table 1. Participants' Ratings of the BU Toy Library's Support of Curricular and Extracurricular Activities

Activity	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot
Coursework (n = 45)	0	3	11	31
Clinic work (n = 20)	0	0	3	17
Practicum (n = 10)	0	1	2	7
Volunteer work (n = 9)	0	1	0	8
Student teaching (n = 8)	1	1	1	5
Club/organization (n = 7)	0	1	1	5
Research (n = 4)	0	0	2	2

The BU Toy Library has impacted my academic development by opening my eyes to what kinds of resources I will need in my future classroom. By seeing all of the toys and books they have at the library, I was able to come up with ideas for learning that involved play and socialization with heavy influence from the toy library. It has given me inspiration on what kinds of toys and books I would like to keep in my future classroom. The assignments from my classes that required me to utilize the toy library have helped me become a more creative thinker in terms of finding a toy or book and finding a way to make it relevant in my classroom.

In terms of professional development, a student enrolled in the Speech and Language Pathology graduate program noted, "Having a variety of books, toys, and tools available on campus enhanced the quality of my [therapy] sessions and allowed me to experiment with creativity without having the break the bank. I learned to use BU Toy Library materials for a variety of target goals with a variety of clients. My clients loved playing with new materials every week and they made learning fun."

With respect to civic engagement, one student participant wrote, "As a member of Best Buddies, my buddy comes to campus to visit. I have used the BU Toy Library to use toys to help entertain my buddy while visiting." Another student participant wrote, "The BU Toy Library has helped my club Autism Speaks U with the die cut machine because it allows our club to make professional looking bulletin boards and posters."

The majority of respondents reported being *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied* with the toy library's selection of toys (96 percent), books (78 percent), die cuts (88 percent), educational materials (76 percent), as well as the resource center's hours of operations (66 percent). The majority of respondents also reported being *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied* with the quality of the toys (99 percent), books (95 percent), die-cuts (93 percent), educational materials (85 percent), and consultation/training (84 percent) provided by the toy library and its staff. Additionally, most participants reported that they saved time (87 percent) and money (96 percent) by using the resources of the toy library. A student who used the resources for coursework, student teaching, volunteer work, and university-sponsored club activities noted, "The BU Toy Library has

impacted my professional development by providing me with resources I am unable to afford at this time. By having the option to [borrow] toys, games, books, etc. I am still able to provide presentations even though I would not be able to provide them for myself. It helps me [be] prepared and helps me become a better educator." In addition, most participants reported that they would be *a lot* likely to revisit the toy library (80 percent) and *a lot* likely to recommend the toy library to peers or colleagues (96 percent).

In addition to providing a more in-depth perspective on the benefits of the toy library, participants' open-ended responses suggested areas for improvement. For example, respondents' most common recommendation was to continue expanding the toy library's holdings (24 percent) with specific recommendations for more sensory resources, seasonal items, bilingual materials, die cuts, and books. Respondents also suggested relocating the BU Toy Library to a larger space on campus (18 percent), offering additional hours of operation during the evenings and on the weekends (14 percent), improving marketing and promotion efforts to promote awareness of the resource center (10 percent), and creating a searchable list of the BU Toy Library's literacy and play materials (6 percent).

Discussion

The BU Toy Library is a university-based toy-lending library whose mission is to advance students' academic, professional, and civic development by providing access to play materials that support their curricular and extracurricular activities. Guided by MI Theory, the BU Toy Library acquires, develops, and shares literacy and play resources that align with the intellectual strengths of individuals of all developmental ages and abilities.

Participants showed consensus in their high ratings of the BU Toy Library's ability to support their curricular and extracurricular activities. The most common reason participants gave for visiting the BU Toy Library was to support their coursework, and most responses indicate that the toy library supported it *somewhat* or *a lot*. The second most common reason for visiting the BU Toy Library was to support their clinic work, and all responses indicated the toy library supported it

somewhat or *a lot*. Similarly, participants reported consensus in their high ratings of the toy library's selection and quality of resources. The majority of participants reported being *satisfied* or *extremely satisfied* with the selection and quality of toys, books, die-cuts, and educational booklets/training materials. In addition, the majority reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with the hours of operation and the quality of consultation offered through the BU Toy Library. Furthermore, most participants appreciated the opportunity to save time and money by using the BU Toy Library. Finally, most participants reported being *somewhat* or *a lot* likely to revisit the toy library and to recommend the toy library to others.

Respondents' most common suggestion for improvement was to continue adding to the BU Toy Library's holdings, including literacy resources (e.g., wordless picture books, bilingual books, and season-themed books), play resources (e.g., sensory play materials), equipment (e.g., die-cuts), and supplies (e.g., crayons, paints, colored pencils, and drawing pads). Every year, the toy library's staff maintains a wish list informed by users' suggestions. At the end of the fiscal year, remaining funds in the operating budget are directed toward fulfilling the wish list. For example, the recent development of an interdisciplinary minor in Aging Studies has led to increased calls for intergenerational play materials. Accordingly, the BU Toy Library expanded its collection of story-telling resources, large print books, board games, song books, construction toys, die cuts for 2-D and 3-D craft projects, as well as gross and fine motor resources.

Unfortunately, some requests cannot be honored due to financial constraints or space limitations. Other requests are partially fulfilled. For example, one program assessment participant requested theme kits that grouped relevant literacy and play resources into portable totes. At the toy library's founding, theme kits were available; however, they were rarely borrowed and took up a lot of space. Instead, users tended to deconstruct the kits to checkout only the resources that they believed would be most useful for their purposes. Looking ahead, the BU Toy Library will consider posting theme kit ideas as well as lists of corresponding available resources.

Other program assessment participants requested more consumable art supplies. While the BU Toy Library does offer complimentary card stock for use with the die-cut center, we cannot supply the unrestricted distribution of free arts-and-crafts materials. That being said, grant-funded projects that yield leftover or gently used materials are made available upon request to support students' curricular and extracurricular projects.

Finally, a few participants requested that the BU Toy Library make available more electronic resources and popular themed toys (e.g., Pokémon, SpongeBob, My Little Pony). Currently, space limitations create a challenge with respect to storing resources that may be only temporarily popular or appealing

to only a limited number of users based on gender, age, or theme. Should additional space be allocated to the BU Toy Library, future grant writing efforts may be directed toward acquiring popular themed toys with special attention paid to selecting resources that have broad appeal and that have been rated highly for their safety and durability. Currently, the expense of purchasing, maintaining, and replacing lost or broken electronic toys is prohibitive, but we could expand in the future. Special attention would be paid to selecting electronic resources that are adaptable to users' sensory preferences, ability, and pace and that encourage—rather than limit—social interactions between undergraduate and graduate students and the individuals with whom they are working.

Other constructive feedback includes requests for a larger space. From the start, the BU Toy Library has been conceptualized as an academic resource center. As such, this special-collections library has been situated on the academic quadrangle. When it was founded in fall 2010, the toy library shared space in the Student Services Center with an office devoted to community outreach and civic engagement. Three years later, the BU Toy Library received temporary space on the third floor of an academic building that housed several academic departments spanning three colleges (i.e., Liberal Arts, Education, and Science and Technology). Although ample in terms of square footage, the toy library's resources were spread across a suite of four rooms which were separated by a busy hallway. By fall 2015, the BU Toy Library was awarded a dedicated, permanent space on the first floor of this same academic building. It is hoped that data from this and ongoing program assessments will inform discussions about space allocation as the academic building has been slated for renovation.

Some participants requested additional hours of operation. Currently, various funding sources underwrite approximately thirty hours per week of staffing for the toy library. Twenty hours are state- and federal-funded undergraduate work study positions. In addition, a university-sponsored graduate assistantship (GA) has funded ten hours per week (including six credits/semester tuition waiver) for the fall, spring, and summer semesters. Accordingly, the BU Toy Library is typically open Mondays through Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Additional staffing needs have been met by appointment or through the help of undergraduate volunteers and students enrolled in senior capstone psychology courses. Data from this initial program assessment suggest that some toy library users may benefit from additional hours later in the evenings or on Sundays. BU Toy Library staff have begun tracking visitors' use of the toy library. As patterns unfold, students' work study hours may be adjusted as appropriate.

Some participants recommended more advertising of the BU Toy Library through the university's website, social media, as well as through digital and print signage. Indeed, this is an area of high priority. Currently, the BU Toy Library's website (<http://butoylibrary.bloomu.edu>) informs site visitors of the toy library's mission, location, hours of operation, and

examples of play materials. It also provides a forum for sharing digital copies of educational resources as well as annual newsletters. One step toward increasing awareness about the BU Toy Library is already underway. Specifically, an electronic database of the toy library's holdings is being created and linked to the university's main library so members of the academic community can view the play resource center's inventory and determine the availability of specific resources.

This initial program assessment of the BU Toy Library is not without its limitations, none the least of which is the small sample size. As the program assessment is embedded into the toy library's standard operating procedure, it is expected to yield a larger and more representative sample of toy library users. A larger sample might add the perspectives and recommendations of a broader array of academic community members (i.e., faculty and staff). In addition, a more diverse sample may provide a richer and more detailed understanding about how the toy library supports students' coursework, fieldwork, club/organization, and research activities. For now, however, informal feedback combined with data from this initial program assessment suggest that the BU Toy Library is on the path to doing good work. In the words of one of the participants, "My overall impression of the toy library is it is a great contribution to this campus. It makes our campus unique and allows students endless opportunities for growth."

In summary, the BU Toy Library is a university-based special collections library that serves as an important and effective vehicle for supporting high-impact, on- and off-campus learning experiences. Specifically, a decade of feedback from

toy library members as well as data from a year-long program assessment suggest that the BU Toy Library has advanced the academic, professional, and civic development of undergraduate and graduate students. Members of the academic and broader communities have used the toy library's literacy and play resources to deepen and share their knowledge with others as well as to practice applying their knowledge and skills through meaningful fieldwork experiences. As institutions of higher education strive to recruit, retain, and cultivate good workers and good citizens, they may consider the value of adding a special-collections toy-lending library to their repertoire of campus-based resources. &

The BU Toy Library has been supported by Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania through a Presidential Strategic Issues Grant, the Office of the Provost's Academic Enhancement Project Request, the College of Liberal Arts' Faculty Enhancement Fund, two College of Liberal Arts' Curricular Enhancement Awards, three graduate assistantships from the Office of Graduate Studies, three Teaching and Learning Enhancement Center's Teacher-Scholar Awards, a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Center's Outstanding Teacher Award, and a Margin of Excellence Award. The BU Toy Library also has been supported by the Bloomsburg University Foundation through a lecture award from Husky PIONEERS: Providing Intentional Opportunities to Network, Engage, and Execute Retention Success, two Literacy Awards from the National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, a Jones Center for Special Education Excellence grant, the Berwick Health and Wellness Fund of the Central Susquehanna Community Foundation, and a Cherokee Pharmaceuticals Community Grant.

References

1. Julia E. Moore, "A History of Toy Lending Libraries in the United States since 1935" (unpublished master's thesis, Kent State University of Library and Information Science, 1995).
2. Eva M. Bjorck-Akesson and Jane M. Brodin, "International Diversity of Toy Libraries," *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 12, no. 4 (1992): 528–43.
3. Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); Thomas Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think: A Kids' Guide to Multiple Intelligences, Second Edition* (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2014).
4. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
5. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
6. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
7. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
8. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
9. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
10. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
11. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
12. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
13. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
14. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
15. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
16. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
17. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
18. Gardner, *Frames of Mind*.
19. Armstrong, *You're Smarter Than You Think*.
20. Laurie Ganey and Mary Katherine Waibel Duncan, "Development and Assessment of a Neuroscience-Inspired Psycho-Educational Workbook" (poster, 2014 Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Undergraduate Research Conference, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, 2014).
21. Mary Katherine Duncan, Ellie Benner, and Meghan Weeks, "Y.O.O. Rock Columbia County: Development of a Volunteer Reference Guide for Families, Children, and Youth," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 25, no. 2 (2012): 91–95.