

Helpsheet

National Helpline

Toy libraries are increasingly taking advantage of computer technology to provide efficient and accessible services to families, carers and children's services. Having a computerised system also enables toy libraries to provide detailed membership and toy reports and information for funders. This Helpsheet discusses some of the things to consider when setting up a computerised system and introduces the software currently on the market. The Association does not endorse any particular company or product.

Planning for a computer system

- In the short term implementing a computer-based system may be more time consuming and demand a higher skill level than a paper-based one. However it will save time and offer a more efficient system in the long run
- With one computer terminal only one person is able to process toy loans at a time
- Consider the use of a 'mini-network' (linking to another computer to share a database)
- Consider the use of a wider network to link the database with a number of locations
- Consider the use of a wireless network to run multiple locations
- Consider choosing laptop (rather than desktop) computers which will offer flexibility about where you can work. Most modern laptops will have the capacity to run toy library software
- It is important to compare companies and check product features very carefully before purchasing a package
- Check if a user manual is available
- Check facility for web-based toy catalogues
- Check availability and cost of after-sales support, training and upgrades
- Computer hardware as well as software will need to be maintained. Maintenance costs can be significant
- Check computer hardware compatibility
- Check memory space required
- Insurance costs will be increased
- View the software in action – ask suppliers for a toy library nearby that is using their system, or contact the Helpline

Going Mobile?

If you are providing mobile or satellite services, consider software with the following features:

- Able to track and record members, toys and loans at different locations
- Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) hand-held

computer which can be attached to a PC

- Bar code or electronic tag technology

Fundraising for IT projects

As a finite project that will add value to your toy library, funding for computer hardware and software makes an ideal package. Consider:

- New projects – add computer equipment and software to initial funding bids and budget
- After-sales support services
- Staff/volunteer training
- Broadband services
- Microsoft software licences
- Consumables: e.g. printer ink, paper, memory sticks
- Insurance
- Computer table/chair
- Storage and security: e.g. a mobile lockable trolley

Toy library specialist software suppliers

These are listed by alphabetical order and not in any order of preference.

eStart

Over 1500 Children's Centres use the eStart web-based Children's Centre database which includes a basic facility to record equipment loan to families.

- Records item loaned
- Dates of loan, agreed and actual return date
- Dialogue box for notes

Capita Children's Services
Franklin Court, Priory Business Park
Cardington, Bedford MK44 3JZ
Tel: 01234 832158
Email: one@capita-cs.co.uk
Website: www.capita-cs.co.uk/LocalAuthority/OneProducts/EarlyYears/Pages/One-eStart.aspx

The Lending Library Manager

This software is an add-on to a main database designed for SureStart Children's Centres. Currently used by around 50 groups within local authorities. It has been available for 7 years.

- Manages members, toys and toy loan
- System links to main database
- Can be used as a stand-alone system
- The system can be networked
- Data can be imported from other databases
- Bar coding and scanning function. Readers available for purchase
- Demonstration available on CD or online
- User manual available
- Price on application
- Annual support available includes 9–5 telephone support and software upgrades

CACI SoftSmart Ltd

2nd Floor, The Centre, High St, Polegate,
East Sussex BN26 6AQ

Tel: 0845 450 7484

Email: enquiries@caci.co.uk

Website: www.caci.co.uk/childcentremgmt.aspx

ToyBase

The first software package developed for toy libraries in the UK.

- Manages members, toys and toy loan
- Multi-site capability for mobile services
- Facility to publish a web-based picture toy catalogue
- Customer queries answered via email
- Upgrades are available to download from time to time
- Can share its database over a local network
- User manual included
- View demonstration on the website
- Product available as download from website
- Free to use if toy library has less than 500 combined toys and members
- Full licence costs £300 with no on-going fees

James Every

Email: james@toybase.net

Tel: mobile: 07876680174

Website: www.toybase.net

Toy-Cupboard

Designed for toy libraries in the voluntary and statutory sectors. There are over 100 toy libraries using this product in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and India.

- Management of members/borrowers – demographic information, waiting lists and history

- Management of toys and equipment – search, record, manage and track
- Resizing (and batch resizing) and placement of pictures within toy record
- Bar code systems and hand-held scanners
- Comprehensive reporting
- Till feature
- Can import database from other toy library systems
- Mobile toy library functions, including hand-held device technology
- Option to host online toy catalogue
- Network version available
- Bespoke tailoring services available
- Annual updates through maintenance package
- Full after-sales support available
- On-line demonstration available
- XP or Windows 7 version available
- Basic price from £450 no VAT to add
- **Exclusive offer to NATLL members – 10% discount. Please quote your membership number when placing your order**
- Negotiable discount available to registered charities

Paula Denton

Toy-Cupboard

Pigeon Cote, Grimsby Road

Laceby, NE Lincolnshire

Tel: 0844 5611162

Email: paula@toy-cupboard.com

Website: www.toy-cupboard.com

Toy Library Information System (TOLIS)

Designed specifically for toy libraries.

- Manages members, toys and toy loan
- Can be networked for multi-user access
- Export facility to other applications
- User manual available
- Demonstration CD can be arranged
- After-sales support available
- Consultancy/bespoke development available
- Discounted basic price from £300
- Further discount for multiple licenses

ITKraft

20 Pine Avenue, Poole, Dorset BH12 4AG

Tel: 01202 739 688; mobile: 07533738324

Email: info@itkraft.com

Website: www.itkraft.com

Toy Library System

A software package originally developed for a large toy library in Portsmouth. Several toy libraries in the UK currently use it.

- Manages members, toys, storage and loans

- Can import toy and member information from other toy library systems
- Can be used with all Windows applications
- Trial version of software available
- 'Getting Started Guide' available
- Barcode System Add-In Module available
- Website System Add-In Module available
- One year support included free (includes all version upgrades, de-bugging, mail and telephone support)
- Bespoke services available
- Basic price from £250 + VAT

Recalldate Ltd
45 Ophir Road, North End
Portsmouth PO2 9EL
Tel: 02392 698789
Email: enquiry@recalldate.co.uk
Website: www.recalldate.co.uk

Toy Tracker

Designed in conjunction with an NCH/SureStart project.

- Tracks subscriptions and loan fees
- Creates membership cards
- Creates reports
- Imports toy and member information from other toy library systems, Excel or Word files
- Can be installed on laptops, desktops or Pocket PC's for mobile services
- Creates online toy catalogue
- Installs onto more than one PC for multiple users
- Optional financial edition
- Optional bar code scanner available – to scan toys in and out of the library
- Demo available via internet or face to face
- User manual included
- £895 + VAT includes installation, full training, unlimited support and help for the first year
- **Exclusive offer to NATLL members – Free Barcode Scanner (usually £125). Please quote your membership number and the code 'Start/Play' when you place your order**

Start Software Ltd
Lasyard House, Underhill Street
Bridgnorth WV16 4BB
Tel: 0845 612 2402
Email: info@toy-tracker.co.uk
Website: www.toy-tracker.co.uk

Toy library software from overseas used in the UK

Libertoy

A Canadian product on the market since 2001. It is a not-for-profit project for the company. Ten toy libraries in the UK currently use it.

- Designed to be used by beginners
- Management of members, toys and toy loan
- Can import from other databases
- Support photos for toys and members
- Bar code reader scanner available
- User manual can be downloaded at www.libertoy.com/libertoy_doc.pdf
- Demonstration CD by post available
- Demonstration available on the website
- One year free user support for one designated person by telephone/email
- Annual support plan available as an extra
- Bespoke services available
- Basic price from £109

Informiciel
1090, De Grand Pre, Laval (QC), H7E 4G6
CANADA
Email: info@libertoy.com
Website: www.libertoy.com

Spelio

Toy library software developed in the Netherlands. The English version has been available since 2005. Three toy libraries in the UK currently use it. The Dutch version is used by over 50 toy libraries in the Netherlands and Belgium.

- User friendly application, specifically developed for toy libraries
- Only basic experience of keyboard/mouse and Windows application needed to operate
- All functions needed for toy library management are available including: Management of members, membership and toys; toy loans and reservations; financial functions; reports; extended configuration
- Can be networked with up to 4 computers free of charge
- Can import data from other databases or Excel spreadsheets
- Support for bar code scanners available as an extra for £95
- Toy companies extension available for £35 which records comprehensive data on toy manufacturers and suppliers
- Demonstration download available from website
- Support contract (by phone/email) available. Package includes: questions handled with higher priority, software updates, minor modifications of the software, offsite backup storage
- Basic price from £330 (includes installation, start up help, importing data). No VAT is

charged when a valid VAT registration number is provided

Bytewings
Deltalaan 81, 7417 VB Deventer,
The Netherlands
Email: info@bytewings.nl
Website: www.bytewings.nl/spelio-description.html?language=EN

Libratu

Toy library software developed in New Zealand for the Dunedin Parents Centre Toy Library in 2007. It is used by some toy libraries in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States. It is available in two parts:

Libratu – a free downloadable desktop software and database system for Windows, Mac or Linux

- Manages membership and toy loan functions
- Stores toy catalogue (with pictures)
- Automates rosters
- Generates reports and charts
- Supports bar code scanners
- Optional annual support fee
- Data transformation service – for a fee

Libratu Online – an optional fee-paying service which integrates with Libratu to automatically generate an interactive website for toy libraries.

- Allows staff and members to view and interact with the Libratu database
- Enables members to: view and edit their details, browse toys, reserve toys and renew loans
- Automatically email members for roster reminders, overdue toys etc
- Cost for this service depends on the size of toy library. Current fee schedule may be viewed on the website

Rubber Duck Information Systems
39 Cardigan Street
North East Valley
Dunedin 9010
New Zealand
Email: rubberduck@orcon.net.nz
Website: www.libratu.com

Funding Sources

- www.ictHubknowledgebase.org.uk/fundingict for a list of potential funders for ICT projects
- **The Clothworkers' Foundation** funds one-off grants to UK registered charities for capital costs including IT hardware
Tel: 020 7623 7041
Website: www.clothworkers.co.uk

Resources

National Council for Voluntary Service

(NCVO)

ICT Development website for the Voluntary and Community Sector, visit: www.ictHub.org.uk

Help from the Association

Publications all + p&p

- *Nuts and Bolts - a practical guide to setting up and running a toy library* 2nd Edition 2003, £10 members (£15 non-members)
- *Fundraising for Toy & Leisure Libraries* revised 2002, £3 members (£4 non-members)
- *The really useful Guide to involving Volunteers* 2005, £3.50 members (£4.50 non-members)

Association Training

Relevant training includes:

- *Toy library Databases*
- *Smart Ordering*
- *Marketing for Toy and Leisure Libraries*
- *Fundraising for Toy and Leisure Libraries*

For a comprehensive guide to the full range of Association's training please see our current *Training Information* leaflet

Tel: 020 7428 2287

Email: training@playmatters.co.uk

National Helpline

Please contact the Helpline:

- If you are considering purchasing a software package. We may be able to put you in touch with a member using that product
- If you are a member of the Association using specialist toy library software and would be prepared to talk to other toy libraries about your experiences
- If you are aware of a commercially available specialist toy library software available in the UK that is not covered in this Helpsheet

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9.00am – 4.30pm

Tel: 020 7428 2286

Email: helpline@playmatters.co.uk

Website: www.natl.org.uk

Please note that information and prices given are correct at time of publication. Please check with individual suppliers for the latest details.