

INFORMATION SHEET



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Australian Children's Folklore Collection

ONE OF THE SIGNIFICANT COLLECTIONS OF MUSEUM VICTORIA

The Australian Children's Folklore Collection (ACFC) was developed from research begun in the 1970s by Dr June Factor and Dr Gwenda Davey. It now consists of more than 10 000 card files and other documents listing children's games, rhymes, riddles, jokes, superstitions and other kinds of children's folklore, together with photographs, audio cassettes, video tapes, play artefacts and a number of specialist collections of children's lore. The archive continues to grow and is accessible to researchers. It is utilised by scholars from a variety of disciplines, as well as writers, journalists and others interested in childhood.

The Australian Children's Folklore Collection is the first Museum Victoria collection to be placed on the prestigious UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register.



Donations of material continue to be received, and financial support from individuals and institutions is welcomed.

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE COLLECTION: DEFINING FOLKLORE

The Australian Children's Folklore Collection classifies children's folklore as either folklore *of* children, or folklore *for and about* children, depending on whether the main persons transmitting the lore are children or adults. Folklore of children consists largely of play lore, such as rhymes, games, taunts, jokes and riddles. Folklore for and about children consists of those traditional songs, games, finger plays, stories,

proverbs and sayings that are passed on informally by adults.



"Wash the dishes" game. Government school playground, Melbourne, 1954.
Source: Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria

FOLKLORE OF CHILDREN

Play Lore

The Collection holds over 10 000 cards and other written material recording children's playlore. Most informants were children, but material has also been collected from adults. The material reaches back to the 1870s, but most was collected after 1970. The material held on cards includes:

- Riddles
- Parodies
- Rhymes for fun
- Jokes
- Clapping games and rhymes
- Ball bouncing games and rhymes
- Skipping games and rhymes
- Counting out rhymes
- Charms and divinations
- Autograph album entries
- Taunts and insults



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- War cries
- Other games



Slingshot, early 1980s and card files of children's rhymes, jokes and games.
Source: Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria

Memories of Aboriginal Childhoods

This collection consists of interviews with Aboriginal adults and children living in Victoria, collected between 1991 and 1997, as well as audiotapes, fieldwork data sheets and photographs. The collection is funded by the Stegley Foundation and some access restrictions apply.

Games of the Past

This is a small collection of adult memories of childhood games and pastimes. Folklore collected from adults can also be found in other sections of the archive, including Play Lore, and the audiotapes made by Norman O'Connor and Wendy Lowenstein.

Debney Meadows – the Multicultural Playground

In 1984 researcher Heather Russell conducted an ethnographic study of the playground at Debney Meadows Primary School – a multicultural, inner-suburban primary school in Melbourne. It chronicles playground life, games, rhymes, and the relationships between children. The material includes playground observations, photographs and videos of playground activities and audio cassettes of interviews with children from different cultural backgrounds. The project is

documented in the publication *Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground*.



"Straight arm" elastics game, Debney Meadows Primary School, 1984.
Source: Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria

Dorothy Howard Collection

This collection was developed by renowned American folklorist Dr Dorothy Howard during her 10 months in Australia (1954-55). It contains original notes and descriptions of some 1 000 games from all over Australia, dating back to the 1870s, as well as playground rhymes, taunts, jokes and a file of play language and terminology. It also includes Dr Howard's published articles on Australian children's folklore, photographs, play artefacts, memorabilia and correspondence from child and adult informants.



American children's folklorist Dorothy Howard watching Australian boys playing marbles, c.1954-55. Source: Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria.





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You're IT!

You're IT! was an exhibition at Museum Victoria's former Children's Museum between December 1988 and July 1993. Written descriptions of games and rhymes were collected from visitors to the exhibition. Other material includes videos, audio cassettes, photographs and playthings related to the exhibition

Cinderella Dressed in Yella

This collection consists of play rhymes collected for the first edition of Professor Ian Turner's compilation, *Cinderella Dressed in Yella* (Heinemann Ed. 1969), and for the second, enlarged edition compiled and edited by Ian Turner, June Factor and Wendy Lowenstein (Heinemann Ed. 1978). Included are two audio cassettes of a 1968 lecture on children's rhymes by Ian Turner.

Lore and Language 1970s – 1990s

This collection contains material collected and written by undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, Melbourne (now part of the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne) in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Fieldwork includes research papers, photographs and audio cassettes.

Regional Collection

The Regional Collection includes material collected from children in Burnie, Tasmania, August 1990, by June Factor; slides of children's games taken during the Moe Folklife Project, 1995, conducted by Gwenda Davey; and recollections of play and verbal lore collected by June Factor and Gwenda Davey from undergraduates at the University of Queensland, August 1998.

Play Artefacts

The ACFC holds over 300 folkloric play objects from Australia and overseas. Material includes traditional playthings such as marbles, knucklebones, home-made dried-apple dolls and wire cars.



Rattle, USA, c.1900. Source: Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria

This collection is complemented by other children's play artefacts in the Museum's collections.



Vietnamese counting game, 1992. Source: Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria

FOLKLORE FOR AND ABOUT CHILDREN

The Multicultural Cassette Series: Field Recordings

This collection consists of about 500 items of folklore told to children by adults in Arabic, Croatian, English, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Serbian, Spanish and Turkish. There is a manual in English and English translations of Italian and Greek material. All items are indexed. It was collected by Gwenda Davey, mainly in 1976 and 1977. The material includes various elements of children's play and lore, such as baby play, ball bouncing, circle games and rhymes, clapping, counting out, lullabies, games, rhymes, poems, songs and stories. There are also two cassettes of Pitjantjatjara songs and stories.





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Folklore for Children Project

This material, including two videotapes, was collected in the 1980s from both English and non-English speaking communities, mainly by students at the Institute of Early Childhood Development and the Footscray Institute of Technology. Informants have listed their repertoire of folklore in current use, with some instructions, including a more detailed catalogue of the collection.

Old Wives' Tales

A collection of beliefs, folk sayings and tales about birth and pregnancy. They are in English, although some cross-cultural items are included. They were collected in the 1970s – 1980s.

PUBLICATIONS

Play & Folklore

Play & Folklore is a forum for discussion about childhood and children's culture. It publishes articles, letters, memoirs and research studies that examine what children do when largely free of adult direction or control – their colloquial speech, songs, games, rhymes, riddles, jokes, insults and secret languages, their friendships and enmities, and their beliefs and hopes.

Play & Folklore welcomes and publishes contributions from all parts of the world. Two issues, edited by June Factor and Gwenda Davey, are published by Museum Victoria every year. These are accessible on the Museum Victoria website:

www.museum.vic.gov.au/playfolklore

Library Holdings

Books, journals, and some audio and videotapes associated with the Collection are housed at the Education Resource Centre, University of Melbourne. Copies of some ACFC audiotapes are held at the National Library in Canberra.

Museum Victoria Resources

- Childhood collections (more information available on the Museum's website)

www.museum.vic.gov.au under 'Collections and Research' and then Australian Society and Technology)

- School Playgrounds exhibition – Australia Gallery at Melbourne Museum (this exhibition features a soundscape which draws upon the Australian Children's Folklore Collection archive)
- *The Importance of Play* Research Sheet, and *Play & Folklore* publication, available on www.museum.vic.gov.au/playfolklore

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Inquiries can be directed to our helpful InfoZone staff. They will enter your details into the inquiry database before forwarding them on to Museum Victoria's curatorial staff.

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School Playgrounds exhibition – Australia Gallery, Melbourne Museum
Source: Museum Victoria

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