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## By the Dozen at Toy Fair: Top Library Picks

By [Rocco Staino](#) on February 19, 2013 [Leave a Comment](#)

The familiar faces of beloved book characters Madeline, George, and Eloise greeted visitors at the 110<sup>th</sup> Toy Fair at the Javits Convention Center in New York City this month, an industry-exclusive event showcasing toys and technology from thousands of companies around the world. I attended on behalf of *School Library Journal* to find some of the best new items this year for children's librarians and educators to incorporate into their programs. Below are my top dozen picks.

### Book Characters

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and YOTTOY are prepared. HMH has a special 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the book (\$24.99) that includes an audio version read by Academy Award nominee Viggo Mortensen, while YOTTOY has created a character doll just in time for the celebration later this year.



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After decades of preparation, *Merriam-Webster* is introducing this Spring Mercer Mayer's Little Critter (\$18). From the much-loved series. It will also have a Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site doll (\$25.00).



The 30-year-old *Madame Alexander Company* is not just for collectible dolls. I was delighted to find a wide selection of washable character dolls, including some for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Wizard of Oz*. For those of you who like to plan ahead, there is also a *Fancy Nancy* doll (\$79.00) to coincide with the April publication of *Fancy Nancy: Fanciest Doll in the Universe* (HarperCollins, 2013).



**Apps & Technology**  
By the next school year, *Robo* will help you bring robotics into your school or library for \$150. This Kickstarter-funded company's smart phone app that children can run was the talk of the fair. A curious robot creature, *Robo* comes to life when you plug an iDevice into its rover base. It fits in with STEM initiatives and will encourage the sharing of individually created programs on our website. This will provide an exciting way for kids to interact with kids as their learn about robotics.



Want to bring interactive e-books to storytime? *Eco-Bunk* may be an interesting way to combine the two. *Eco-Bunk* is an inflatable bag toy (\$59.95) that features lovable wildlife characters, each of which is accompanied by an e-story. The toy has interchangeable character covers (\$32.95) and the e-stories, easily downloadable from iTunes (\$3.99), are designed to teach life skills. In addition, the company is eco-friendly and a portion of each sale goes to a wildlife charity.



Crayola isn't just crayons and chalk! In July it will release a digital photo app, *Photo Mix-Ups* (\$19.99). Kids will be able to smash, morph, and mash their photos creating collages that would be applicable to digital design classes. You may want to have this in your collection and share it with your art department. *Photo Mix-Ups* will be available for Apple iOS and on select touch Windows tablets.



**Fun Stuff**  
Looking for a way to attract kids to your books on presidents or literary figures? Check out *Royal Bubbles* for its wide range of figures, including Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, and the founding fathers.



Kids of all ages have always enjoyed *Highlights* magazine's Hidden Picture. Find it joining with *Highlights* to incorporate the search fun in its shape-and-find cylinders. At \$20, these thematic games can be left around a library for individual and group fun.



What better way to start a conversation about body organs and body parts than to have push one on hand? *Heart Guts* creates hearts, brains, eyes, and many other parts that sell for \$20.



**Games**  
*Smart Games* offers an array of mind-challenging games for ages 2 to adult, priced from \$10 to \$25. The newly packaged IQ Link, IQ Fit and IQ Trail games will keep kids' minds and hands busy while they wait for a free computer workstation at the library.



Although the next presidential election is four years off, the games aren't over. *The Presidential Game* (\$35), based on the classic board game *Risk*, helps teach the workings of the electoral college. A roll of the dice takes on new meaning when trying to swing an election.



Exercise and board games don't seem to go together but *Fit 2.0* (\$35) gets children moving and exercising in order to win a game. This is a good addition for days when you have indoor recess.



## Lots for Librarians at New York's Toy Fair 2011

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By Rocco Staino February 22, 2011



John Bemelmans Marciano

Mo Willems's Pigeon, Jon Scieszka's Stinky Cheese Man, and Jeff Kinney's Wimpy Kid were some of the familiar book characters that greeted the more than 20,000 retailers attending the American International Toy Fair at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City from February 13 to 16.

Toy Fair is where the newest and hottest products in the children's entertainment marketplace are exhibited—and where the toy industry often borrows from children's literature to create games, puzzles, and plush toys.

This year, there were plenty of kid lit characters to be found among the 1,100 exhibitors. Ludwig Bemelmans's Madeline was well represented at the **Briarpatch** booth, where she and characters Fancy Nancy and Frog and Toad have been translated into assorted games and puzzles.

At **YOTTOY**, a company that specializes in quality hand sewn dolls of classic characters, Madeline was joined by Paddington the Bear, Harry the Dirty Dog, and Maisy the loveable mouse. John Bemelmans Marciano, the grandson of Madeline's creator was also on hand at the booth to sign copies of his newly release *Madeline at the White House* (Viking, 2011), which hit the *New York Times's* Bestseller Picture Book list shortly after its January 25 release.

"Harry Potter" (Scholastic) and the "Twilight" (Little, Brown) series also made an appearance at **Screenlife Games**, which created the video board game **Scene It**, featuring clips, trivia questions, and on-screen puzzles from films based on the books.

Also on display were plenty of non-book related items that teachers, guidance counselors, and librarians may want to explore using in the classroom. The teen edition of **Boom Boom Cards** promotes various acts of kindness and tracks good deeds online. Players receive a card from the deck and are asked to perform underground acts of guerilla goodness and then post the experience on the Boom Boom website, along with photos and video, before passing the card on to someone else. Each card's unique ID number makes it possible to follow all cards that are played on the website's map. Some of the actions on the cards include: "Ask someone who is alone at lunch or break to join you," "Attend a school event that traditionally has low attendance," and "When You parents ask, 'How was your day?' actually tell them."



Madeline Display

If you're learning about or taking a class trip to New York City, Washington DC, or Chicago, consider **4D Cityscape Time Puzzle**, which challenges kids to collaborate and to think spatially. Upon completing the puzzle, they'll not only have an urban landscape, but they'll also gain knowledge of both the terrain and architectural history of each of those cities.

In this age of digital technology, **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt** has developed a Send a Story Series, which allows people to send small books to a recipient through snail mail. Each of the 5" x 6" books has a place for a message from the sender—and it takes three first-class stamps to mail. Two books in the series include *I Like You* (1965) by Sandol Stoddard Warburg, illustrated by Jacqueline Chwast, and *No Matter What* (1999) by Debi Gliori, and are so popular that they're listed in the latest **American Booksellers Association's Indie Bestsellers List**.

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