PEREGRINATIONS

SCIENTIFIC TOY BOX

The theme section of the September issue of *Photonics Spectra* concentrated on the well-stocked scientific toolbox. Well, some playful eggheads at the National Institute for Optics in Florence, Italy, have found their favorite optomechanical tools in a toy box.

F. Quercioli and colleagues at the institute join the dozens of other researchers around the world who have discovered the joys of using LEGO construction toys to hold their optics. They veritably bubble over with glee in the June 1 issue of *Applied Optics*, with a nine-page photo layout showing the fun they had with standard LEGOs and a few custom kludges.

The article shows the group's basic optical mounts and stages, then continues with some larger instruments, including a microscope and Twyman-Green interferometer. It suggests that the interchangeable LEGO blocks are stable and precise enough for most educational and some scientific or applied research applications.

The photos are OK, and the concept is very creative, but we think the best part of this article is its final sentence, which acknowledges the institute's president, F.T. Arecchi, "who saw us playing with LEGO and trusted us when we told him that we were actually working." □