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| **cid:image002.png@01D40E2B.BDFF1320****4 April 2019****Mirrors and windows: Australia’s first cultural diversity database champions multiculturalism in children’s books**Australia’s first-ever Cultural Diversity Database (CDD) of books for children is an invaluable resource for educators, parents and young readers themselves, who are looking to learn more about what binds us in common humanity, and what sets us apart.Created by the [National Centre for Australian Children’s Literature (NCACL)](https://www.ncacl.org.au/), the database is available for free [here](https://www.ncacl.org.au/resources/databases/welcome-to-the-ncacl-cultural-diversity-database/).Australia is just the third country in the world to create such a database, after the US and Canada.“Children need to see themselves in the books they read,” said Dr Belle Alderman AM, Emeritus Professor of Children’s Literature, and the Director of the NCACL. “It helps them to build engagement with and a love for books. And it helps to validate their own identities. These books can be the mirrors in which they see themselves – and the windows, through which other people see them.”Built on a collection of books featuring Australia’s culturally diverse population, the database focuses on knowledge and understanding of both similarities and differences. Created by a team of experts including teachers, teacher librarians, literacy and literature experts, academics and staff at the ACT Education Directorate, the database is itself diverse in its range of storytelling genres and media.“We have books ranging from Morris Gleitzman’s *Once* series, set against the backdrop of the Holocaust, to Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, which tells the story of a migrant’s journey in beautifully-drawn pictures,” Dr Alderman said.Each book is accompanied by an annotation, written by one of the database creators – these allow searchers to quickly grasp the essence, context and synopsis of each book.“We wanted to include only books of high quality – well-written and illustrated, created with a sense of authenticity. Ultimately, the most important thing was that each book chosen would appeal to children,” said Rowan Simpkin, one of the contributors to the database.The books tend to feature interactions between people across cultures, with these interactions often serving as a catalyst for insight. The NCACL hope to expand and update the database every six months, with more books already being collected. A second database is now in discussion, featuring books by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, written for young people. “Both updating the CDD and creating a new database will depend on whether we can source funding,” Dr Alderman said. “It’s very important to keep the CDD current.”“We also strongly believe works featuring and created by the First People of Australia deserve their own database, so we are hopeful that we will receive the support we need. UNESCO has declared 2019 the ‘Year of Indigenous Languages’, so it’s potentially perfect timing.”CDD features at a glance:* 340 books for young people, from early childhood through to late secondary
* Celebrating and illuminating Australia’s culturally diverse population
* Creators living in Australia
* Books published in Australia
* Intuitive, user-friendly design allows searches by authors, illustrators, titles, series, publishers, publication dates, audience levels, key concepts and annotations
* Links to the Australian Curriculum
* Links to the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)
* Gives parents, caregivers, home-schooling groups, teachers, librarians and others working with young people, valuable information about quality resources

**Dr Belle Alderman AM is available for interview.** **Contact the University of Canberra media team:** Suzanne Lazaroo0409 140 415Suzanne.Lazaroo@canberra.edu.au |