

Putting Youth First: The Radical Eliza T. Dresang

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By J. Elizabeth Mills, Annette Y. Goldsmith, Kathleen Campana, Beth J. Patin, Sarah A. Evans

Abstract

This tribute presents a multi-faceted, multi-voiced perspective on the career and work of the late Dr. Eliza T. Dresang through the words of her colleagues. Dresang's groundbreaking work, *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (1999), grew out of conversations with colleagues that were facilitated by her service on book award and other committees. In her research, she pursued the larger connections between children's publishing and the burgeoning digital world, and she had an immeasurable impact on the world of children's and teen library services. She also influenced future youth services librarians by championing groundbreaking changes to the library school curriculum at the University of Washington. Throughout her career, Dresang advocated for services and literature that keep the needs of youth at their core. Her focus on the inclusion of all young people is evident from her work with special needs children as well as her courses on multicultural resources for youth and developing cultural competency among LIS professionals. This article includes interactive links to articles and audio interviews with colleagues that speak to the impact of Dresang's research.

Introduction, by J. Elizabeth Mills

The onus is on us, the adults who care for and work with young people, to guide them to [information], give them the background to sort through it and interpret it, and write, edit, and publish it in books that give them the opportunity to reflect upon and absorb it.

—Dr. Eliza T. Dresang, *Radical Change*, xvi

Information is everywhere and impacts each one of us, regardless of age. Dr. Eliza T. Dresang recognized this and examined various youth-related areas for potential study: information-seeking behavior by digital-age youth, information access for those who need it most but are often denied it, digital vs. printed information, information literacy for those who are too young to know what it is, fictional information in the make-believe worlds of novels and audiobooks along with the realistic information about emotions that is inherent in fiction. Through her work, Dresang added her unique vision to the field of library and information science.

In the 1990s, Dresang developed a theory by which to understand how information delivery was changing for youth in their literature—she called it Radical Change. Its tenets—interactivity, connectivity, and access—depict and unpack the new ways in which digital-age youth were interacting with the world around them. They are also the pillars by which one can examine Dresang’s career: as a librarian in Los Angeles and Atlanta and as a media specialist and administrator in the Madison Metropolitan School District, Dresang provided access and connectivity to information resources; as the Eliza Atkins Gleason Professor at Florida State University, she further refined her work on her Radical Change theory, focusing her courses and research on studying how children interact with technology, as well as

providing strategies to evaluate those interactions; and finally, as the Beverly Cleary Professor in Children and Youth Services at the University of Washington, she began her culminating research study, VIEWS2, which looked at connecting librarians and children to early literacy resources and highlighted interactivity as the vehicle for that connection.

How then to best commemorate such a life well-lived? Perhaps through an examination of Dresang’s extensive and varied body of scholarship; through a close study of her innovative research strategies and collaborations; or through an enumeration of her extensive service to the American Library Association through various award committees, including the Newbery, Caldecott, Batchelder, Pura Belpré, and Odyssey—all of which highlight her dedication to wide-ranging, quality media for youth. The sections that follow will present each of these facets of Dresang’s career, culminating in a selected bibliography. Each section is written by and features an interview with people who knew Dresang in one capacity or another—as a scholar, researcher, mentor, colleague, friend. Dresang fulfilled all these roles, and so it is fitting to have the opportunity to hear from those who knew her.

We encourage you to read radically and synergistically—skip around, listen to the interviews first, read right through—each section sits on its own and builds on the one before. In her book, Dresang defined “radical” as “a departure from the usual or traditional . . . extremely different from commonly existing views” (4). While this work does not include pictures, the interviews serve to supplement and symbiotically complement the written words, presenting a multi-faceted, unique portrait of this radical individual.

[Interview with Dr. Harry Bruce, dean of the iSchool at the University of Washington.](#)

[Conducted by J. Elizabeth Mills on September 12, 2014.](#)

1. Changing Forms and Formats, by Annette Y. Goldsmith

Children who live in a graphic environment do not leave pictures behind as they grow up. Words and pictures continue to intermingle in recent text-based stories for older readers.

—Eliza T. Dresang, *Radical Change*, 95

Radical Change theory describes, explains, and predicts how youth interact with books in the digital age and how children's book publishing has changed, and continues to change, as a result. (The term "children's books" is understood to include young adult books, since it is often the children's division that publishes for both age ranges.) Radical Change can be recognized in many different types of contemporary children's books, and even some unconventional books from the past, through three classifications—Type 1: changing forms and formats, Type 2: changing perspectives, and Type 3: changing boundaries—and by the overarching principles of interactivity, connectivity, and access.¹

Dresang's ideas about Radical Change in children's books were nurtured through conversations with many close friends and colleagues in the children's book publishing community. These relationships were facilitated by her service on book award committees. She was a collaborative thinker and very inclusive in her approach before coming to her own conclusions. Whenever she sat on or chaired a national book award committee—a frequent occurrence—she would invite local academics and practitioners to read books and share their impressions with her. Like an in-depth book club, these groups would help her refine her own thinking about the texts. Notably, she also took into account the responses of child readers. One in particular was Jerusha Burnett, the daughter of Dresang's close friend and

colleague, Kathleen Burnett, herself another important collaborator. Jerusha discussed her reflections on reading with Dresang from the time she was ten years old to when she finished high school. Dresang's respect for youth and their input is a theme that permeates her work.

Dresang's experience on the 1991 Caldecott Award Committee helped the theory take root.² There were many discussions, in particular with Kate McClelland, a librarian friend and fellow Caldecott committee member, trying to make sense of David Macaulay's *Black and White*³—the eventual winner. This nonlinear picture book with four separate or perhaps intertwined story threads was unfamiliar territory at the time, and Dresang saw it as a new type of children's book. As she explains in the introduction to *Radical Change*, “taking root” really is the appropriate metaphor because it is based on Burnett's image of a rhizome—“a horizontal, root-like structure with sprouts here, there and everywhere (first used by French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the 1980s to describe an ideal book).”⁴ Dresang was also influenced by another meaning of the word “radical”—Marc Aronson's description of the avant-garde eventually moving into the mainstream.⁵ His vision of the provocative “radical” settling into the deeply rooted strengthened Dresang's belief that though Radical Change was new, it was “here to stay.”⁶ Perry Nodelman's child-focused works of children's literature criticism, such as *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*,⁷ were another strong influence in the development of Radical Change theory. In addition to these contemporaries, Radical Change theory drew on Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reader Response to produce the concept of synergistic reading: “What Rosenblatt's theory refers to as synthesis between reader and text in aesthetic reading, Radical Change Theory refers to as synergy—in both cases something new is created out of the interactive process between

reader and text.”⁸ Dresang and frequent collaborator Bowie Kotrla illustrate this Radical Change lens on Rosenblatt’s aesthetic reading with a detailed analysis of *Black and White*.⁹

From the list of Caldecott winners and honor books since *Black and White*, it is clear that picture books consistent with the principles and types of Radical Change continue to be popular choices with the award committees. For example, there was the audacious choice of Brian Selznick’s *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* as the 2008 winner.¹⁰ This committee’s decision unexpectedly expanded the definition of the standard 32-page picture book to include what might normally be considered a 533-page novel in words and pictures. *Hugo Cabret* is a prime example of changing forms and formats—“a dramatic departure from the typical picture-book tradition.”¹¹

Diversity in format, perspective, and boundaries is an important value embedded in Radical Change theory. The 2014 Caldecott winner, Brian Floca’s *Locomotive*,¹² is innovative in its reworking of the informational picture book to incorporate a family story, bringing to life the experience of train travel in 1869, and in this way is arguably an example of changing boundaries. *Locomotive* is the first nonfiction book (other than a biography) since 1938 to win the Caldecott¹³ and may also have been riding the Common Core wave of greater emphasis on nonfiction. Floca was criticized by Debbie Reese in her blog, *American Indians in Children’s Literature*, for insufficient mention of Native Americans in the text and illustrations of a book where they might reasonably be expected to appear. He graciously responded point by point, explaining his thought process as he made his decisions.¹⁴ Diversity has been sorely lacking in the Caldecott winners and honor books overall,¹⁵ and with the grassroots “We Need Diverse Books” campaign advocating for a greater number of

books reflecting non-dominant experience, winners of major awards are likely to continue to attract this type of scrutiny.

Though they did not collaborate, Dresang and Henry Jenkins were familiar with each other's work, in which they display a shared respect for youth as capable-and-connected with a desire to create and share content through participatory cultures.¹⁶ Three-time Caldecott winner and also three-time honoree David Wiesner's picture books play with conventions in a radical way, making them good candidates for study by both researchers. The 2007 Caldecott winner, *Flotsam*,¹⁷ deserves special mention. With the involvement of Wiesner and his editor, Dinah Stevenson of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, an interdisciplinary group of researchers from the Annenberg Innovation Lab at the University of Southern California led by Henry Jenkins and Erin Reilly drew on *Flotsam* as “the mothership”—the source material—to design transmedia storytelling extensions and a template for future projects. The book's wildly imaginative, wordless, nonlinear approach made it the perfect subject for this type of exploratory investigation.¹⁸ This was exactly the kind of innovative project that Dresang appreciated, right down to the focus group and play testers made up of second-graders.

Dresang wrote about *Flotsam* in a book chapter on the relationship between postmodernism and Radical Change in picture books.¹⁹ She described them as “parallel theoretical approaches” coming from different perspectives and using different terminology to explain the same observed phenomena in picture books: “Postmodernism . . . emphasizes pastiche and parody, bricolage, irony, and playfulness that are related to the ambiguity and fragmentation of postmodernism in society. Radical Change . . . emphasizes handheld hypertext and digital design that are related to the interactivity, connectivity, and access of

the digital environment.”²⁰ According to Dresang, the metafictional devices found in postmodern picture books are more likely to overlap with the changing forms and formats of Radical Change than with changing perspectives or changing boundaries.²¹ Sylvia Pantaleo has adopted Radical Change principles in a number of qualitative literacy studies with elementary school students focusing on reading, including one on Wiesner’s 2002 Caldecott winner, *The Three Pigs*,²² and another on Macaulay’s *Black and White*.²³ Pantaleo’s work demonstrates how well Radical Change can mesh with postmodernism, even though they do not always overlap.

The books that Dresang discovered on her various book award committees always brought up questions for her to explore and sometimes new passions to pursue. For example, as chair of the 2004 Newbery Medal Committee that chose *The Tale of Despereaux*²⁴ for their winner, she became intrigued by the Dickensian but suddenly once again popular “Dear reader . . .” method of direct authorial address, which led her to consider how the use of this device has been adapted over time.²⁵ She served on the Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards Committee for many years. Her passion for social justice fueled her advocacy for marginalized youth and unwavering commitment to intellectual freedom. Naturally changing forms and formats were appealing to her, and she became an avid audiobook reader while chairing the Notables and serving on the Odyssey Committee. In pursuing the larger connections between children’s publishing and the burgeoning digital world, the international Harry Potter phenomenon was of particular interest to her.

[Interview with Dr. Colette Drouillard, assistant professor in the MLIS program at Valdosta State University. Conducted by Annette Y. Goldsmith on September 4, 2014.](#)

Dresang was an early and enthusiastic Harry Potter scholar²⁶ and had a book chapter written with Kathleen Campana about the series forthcoming at the time of her death.²⁷ International books were a passion that we shared. She served as chair of the 1989 Mildred L. Batchelder Award Committee, and it was a great privilege for me to take on the same role for the 2010 committee. The 1989 Batchelder winner, Peter Härtling's *Crutches*—a post-World War II survival story—was characteristic of Dresang's affinity for hard-hitting books that she knew would speak to young readers.²⁸ One of the few committees she did not serve on was the Schneider Family Book Award. Had she had this opportunity, it would have taken her full circle, back to her long-standing interest in children with disabilities.

How does Radical Change theory stand up fifteen years later? Judging from the award winners, radical change books are in the ascendancy. Research on digital-age youth is still needed and valued. Dresang's theory has been expanded by Kyungwon Koh to operationalize the key concepts of Radical Change—interactivity, connectivity, and access—in a new typology to describe, explain, and predict youth information behavior.²⁹ As noted above, Pantaleo uses Dresang's theory as a point of departure to study how children read postmodern picture books. Revisiting Radical Change theory herself in 2008, Dresang surmised that most handheld (print) children's books would eventually be replaced by some type of vastly improved e-reader, an indication that the predictive power of Radical Change theory is still robust.³⁰

2. Changing Perspectives, by Kathleen Campana

A point of *Radical Change* is to give teachers and librarians a tool to examine what in past literature might be most similar to the radically changed literature of the present, and why.

—Eliza T. Dresang, *Radical Change*, 40

In 2013 Eliza Dresang noted: “The roles of public libraries in the information behavior of youth are more research- and evidence-based than they have been in the past.”¹ This phenomenon is due in part to Dresang’s own radical research. In her early career, she writes, “libraries were not interested in research; everyone knew that libraries were good for youth and that was that.”² Much of her work has focused on providing the research and evidence to support library services to youth. She empowered librarians serving youth by offering evaluation methods that allow them to collect their own evidence to inform their practice. The impact of her work with outcome-based planning and evaluation for youth services has been far-reaching. Her influence extends to future youth services librarians and school library media specialists through her drive to understand and transform core curriculum for youth services and school libraries. To this end, she designed and taught innovative courses, another part of her legacy.

Dresang’s work with outcome-based planning and evaluation began with Project CATE (Children’s Access to and Use of Technology Evaluation). Project CATE was a two-year study to implement and test a change model that integrates outcome-based evaluation into the design, development, and assessment of computer services provided for youth in an urban public library.³ The Project CATE model for outcome-based evaluation emerged from this work as, in true Dresang fashion, an “interactive and iterative” model providing for

“constant modification and feedback” as the model is applied.⁴ Dresang, Melissa Gross, and Leslie Holt’s book, *Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome-Based Planning and Evaluation*, followed Project CATE and introduced the CATE OBPE (outcome-based planning and evaluation) model, which built on the Project CATE model. The CATE OBPE included the additional component of planning, essentially considering “planning and evaluation inseparable, with the planning process incorporating iterative evaluation.”⁵ With this work, Dresang, Gross, and Holt introduced outcome-based planning and evaluation as an innovative method for librarians who serve youth to plan for and evaluate their programs.

Dresang’s significant role in highlighting the importance of outcome-based planning and evaluation for youth services was cemented through her work with VIEWS2 (Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning that Work Successfully). The first goal of VIEWS2 was to have a widespread national impact by providing currently unavailable, valid, reliable methods for assessing and evaluating the outcomes of public library early literacy programs. As part of VIEWS2, Dresang provided children’s librarians with planning tools (developed from the research tools) to help increase the early literacy content in their storytime programs.⁶ Because of her emphasis on outcome-based planning and evaluation, Dresang ensured that the planning tools could be used for self-reflection of their own storytime content as well as the outcomes for children attending the storytimes. Therefore, these tools utilized a similar iterative planning and evaluation process described with the CATE OBPE. As the VIEWS2 resources and training are delivered to four additional states outside of Washington, Dresang’s work will continue to impact library services for youth many years in the future.⁷

Dresang also focused on providing evidence for the role of school libraries, public library storytimes, and youth services programs. In *School Libraries and the Transformation*

of Readers and Reading, Dresang and Bowie Kotrla compiled research examining and providing evidence for the role of the school library in developing and strengthening readers.⁸ In response to one of the goals of VIEWS2, Dresang gave children’s librarians at public libraries research-based evidence that their storytimes are making a difference with the children who attend them.⁹ Through Project CATE, in addition to providing the CATE OBPE model, Dresang equipped youth services librarians with detailed evidence around how youth use computers in public libraries.

In addition to the impact that she made on practice for librarians serving youth, Dresang also focused on examining and improving curriculum for librarians focused on serving youth. Beginning with “Education for Youth Services Specialization in Librarianship,” a background paper she wrote for ALA’s Congress for Professional Education in 1999, Dresang then focused on curriculum for school library media specialists through her work with Project LEAD (Leaders Educated to Make a Difference). Project LEAD allowed for the development of a research-based online leadership curriculum for school library media specialists focused on leadership and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standard tenets at FSU’s College of Information.¹⁰ At the University of Washington’s iSchool, Dresang continued to impact curriculum for librarians focused on serving youth when she championed changes to the existing core youth services curriculum. These changes that she supported included the addition of a foundational course that provides information on “major theories of human development from birth through age eighteen and application of these theories to examine youth's information behavior and digital media use at various developmental stages.”¹¹ The subsequent courses were similarly redesigned to

include appropriate developmental theories and research as well as digital resources and research on digital media.

Dresang also brought her radical nature to course design. This can be seen in two innovative courses that she created while at the University of Washington's iSchool. As part of Project VIEWS2, Dresang designed a two-quarter course, taught both years of the study, called "Research in Action" to train MLIS students as researchers so they could help complete observations of public library storytimes. Residential and online students could both participate in the hybrid format, with residential students meeting in a classroom and online students joining the classroom through video-conferencing software. As part of the first quarter, MLIS students were exposed to research methods in addition to training on the observational tools used in Project VIEWS2. During the second quarter, the students performed the storytime observations. The course was well received. According to one student, "I took the basic research methods class, but this opportunity makes research so much more realistic and easy to understand."¹²

Dresang never got the chance to teach the final innovative course she designed--the culminating piece of a new digital-age youth-focused curriculum sequence she and other faculty developed at the iSchool. Libraries as Learning Labs is designed to apply theories and research on youth development and information behavior toward informing practice about programming and resources for youth.¹³ The hands-on course focuses on the wide range of youth programming (maker-spaces, game design, booktalks, and storytelling) offered in libraries today and how this range underscores the library as a site of informal learning, thereby helping MLIS students to understand the *why* as well as the *how* of youth

programming. This course is scheduled to be offered in the spring of 2015, carrying on Dresang's legacy.

Over the course of her career, Dresang has provided a radical change for libraries and librarians serving youth by striving to place a focus on using research and evidence to support the role of libraries and library programs. She created a place for research and evidence-gathering at all levels of library service by empowering and helping librarians to perform their own research and evaluation of their programs. Dresang enabled important transformations for library school curriculum and courses by designing innovative courses as well as championing curriculum changes that emphasized research and theory. Dresang's influence on the field is described perfectly by Judy T. Nelson, Customer Experience Manager for Youth at the Pierce County Library System:

In her own classroom, she prepared new librarians to be excellent, effective youth librarians. In her work with her doctoral students, she infused them with the desire to use research to support libraries. And with those of us out here in the working libraries, she was always asking what support we needed from her and from the university to be the best we could be for our youth and their families. She did this every day with grace, humor, and a positive demeanor. We will miss her and should honor her by continuing her good work.¹⁴

[Interview with Judy Nelson, Customer Experience Manager for Youth, Pierce County Library System. Conducted by Kathleen Campana on September 11, 2014.](#)

3. Changing Boundaries, by Beth J. Patin and Sarah A. Evans

[Children are] real people who have a right to the same community, interaction, and access that other community members have, as well as the right to the support they need to deal with these successfully.

—Eliza T. Dresang, *Radical Change*, 74

In the mid-1970s, Eliza T. Dresang was the director of the Instructional Materials Center at Lapham Elementary School in Madison, Wisconsin. Approximately one-third of the 350 students in the school were designated “handicapped” for various reasons, but the administration, teachers, and students pulled together to create what today would be called an inclusive environment. Dresang led the way by creating a model library curriculum that supported the entire student body. In a 1977 article for *School Library Journal*, fiercely titled “There Are No Other Children,” Dresang argued that librarians must “look at every child, at every need” and develop their programs “from an understanding of the needs of the children.”¹

This focus on the needs of youth guided Dresang throughout her career. Through her professional work and research, she in turn guided all of us to a better understanding of the needs of the youth we want to serve, and she demonstrated how library services could evolve along with the changing needs of youth throughout the decades. Previous sections of this article have discussed her committee work and research projects, such as CATE and VIEWS2, which have had profound impacts on youth literature and library services. At the center of each of her actions, there is a strong concern for the needs of youth and how adults

can better meet these needs. This can be seen especially clearly in her advocacy for quality multicultural resources for youth and cultural competence in the adults who serve them.

One way that Dresang advocated for the inclusion of multicultural books was through her dedication to service on various committees. In addition to her extensive service to the American Library Association through various award committees, Dresang was one of the founding members of the Advisory Board for the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries, which was founded in 2002 and has awarded more than \$11.5 million to schools in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. In addition to these yearly grants, Dresang worked with the foundation to award more than \$6.3 million to school libraries in the Gulf Coast region to rebuild their library book collections that were lost or destroyed by hurricanes or storms.

[Interview with José Aponte, San Diego County Library director, advisory board member of the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries. Conducted by Sarah Evans on October 3, 2014.](#)

Dresang led workshops for the Gulf Coast librarians who had received grants to help them understand the new trends in books and media for youth, and she encouraged the librarians to diversify their collections. Dresang worked diligently to help support the mission of the Laura Bush Foundation, which supports the education of our nation's children by providing funds to update, extend, and diversify the book and print collections of America's school libraries.

In the United States by the end of the 1980s, the term "multicultural literature" was commonly used to refer to various kinds of diversity in literary representations. In some

instances, the term broadly encompassed race and ethnicity, gender, differing abilities, class, religion, and sexual orientation, while in others it was used more narrowly. For Dresang, it was important that this term be applied to groups that have historically lacked power and authority in society, and therefore lacked representation in children's resources as well. Culture refers to socially transmitted behavior, patterns, arts, and beliefs. Cultural competency is regarded as the ability to know and respect one's own culture and that of others; for many, acting upon this knowledge to effect change is an essential component of competence. In 2009 Dresang worked with Beth Patin, one of her PhD students, to develop a course encouraging the identification of and deliberations about issues relevant to the development of cross-cultural competence in relation to U.S. ethnic minorities through authentic resources for youth. To facilitate this, Dresang provided knowledge and skill development in location, selection, evaluation, and discussion of various genres and formats of multicultural resources as well as in strategies to use them with youth. The course related cross-cultural competence to meeting information needs of children and young adults through library and information collection development and services.

Dresang's continued work in the area of cultural competence differs greatly from much of the work currently available in this field. A number of books have been written about contemporary and historical multicultural literature for youth,² and numerous others have focused on multicultural education and teaching strategies central to it.³ However, none of those books has encompassed a critical multicultural analysis of specific types of youth literature with the stated purpose of promoting cultural competence or proficiency. And none has accepted the value of inauthentic literature in developing cultural competency. While more than one author has used the metaphors of literature as mirror (reflecting one's own

culture), windows (into another culture), and even doors (moving into a different culture), Dresang took these metaphors further with the incorporation of all of these terms into the image of building a bridge that encompasses and links cultures, leading to a transformative experience, cultural competency, and transformative action.

Recently, Dresang was asked to write a book in the Multicultural Education Series published by Teachers College Press about the principles her course focused on with respect to cultural competence and transformative action. This unfinished work, tentatively titled *Building Bridges for Cultural Competence: Transformation through Multicultural Literature for Youth*,⁴ focuses on the following: the growth of authentic multicultural literature in the United States; models for achieving or promoting cultural competency or proficiency; an in-depth critical multicultural analysis of specific genres of this literature; and how multicultural literature can be used by educators as a transformative vehicle for young people of all ages to move toward cultural competency with a strong potential for social action. Though many librarians and scholars would argue that reading changes and empowers us, for Dresang it was not enough to believe this; we have to know it. In order to investigate the transformative nature of reading, Dresang was engaged in yet another important research project at the time of her passing.

This research study, in the preliminary and early results stage, was designed to help fill this evidence gap with systematically gathered concrete evidence about the results of reading high-quality, culturally specific, globally oriented literature for children nine and ten years of age. It focuses on a convenience sample of children from the 2,500 students in forty-five schools who are participating in a Global Reading Challenge. The study also seeks evidence of the impact of a shared reading experience for digital youth, who are part of a

world dominated by interactive social media, by answering the following two research questions: What, if any, effect does the close reading of high-quality, culturally specific, globally oriented youth literature across a diversity of experiences have on children's information about the cultures about which they read? And what, if any, effect does the close reading of high-quality, culturally specific, globally oriented youth literature across a diversity of experiences have on children's gaining active cultural competence in relation to the cultures about which they have read? The initial instrument is a survey that the researchers developed and pretested with the assistance of the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington. The questions focus on the readers' attitudes toward the cultures about which they read and their interest in active involvement with these cultures. For example, "I have read a book that makes me want to experience a culture other than my own."⁵

Though this research was just in its preliminary and testing phases, transformative action and the power of reading were already evidenced by statements of the participants. One student wrote, "Thank you, Ms. Sherman, for showing me that I can change racism. And stand up to the people that are racist." Many others mentioned being empowered to stand up to bullies. One of the classes involved in last year's study read a book about the shortage of water in Sudan and became involved in the Sudan Water Project. The results of this study will provide the first known research-based evidence about the impact on cultural competence of young people's close reading of high-quality, culturally specific, globally oriented youth literature across a diversity of experiences.

Dresang and many others have held firm to the belief that this type of reading can ultimately lead to cultural competency and world peace. This first step was to help determine

what information at least one group of young readers gain about other cultures through reading in a connected learning situation and how their attitudes and actions are affected by such reading. To the very end, Eliza T. Dresang held true to her belief that we should keep the needs of children, no matter what their backgrounds, at the very center of librarianship.

Conclusion, by J. Elizabeth Mills

Interactivity, connectivity, and access—pillars that support the foundation of a groundbreaking theory and descriptors that concisely capture this extraordinary life dedicated to youth and information. We have all been connected to one another and to many in this research community through knowing, working with, and learning from Dr. Eliza T. Dresang. We have been given access and provided access to others by sharing her research and scholarship. And we interact and grow together because that is the model she showed us through her own work. Libraries, librarians, and the practice that is librarianship figure prominently in our lives, our study, and the questions we pursue in our research. This is Dresang's legacy to us. Our distinct voices are yet a chorus in our shared dedication to continue aspects of her work as we rediscover her guidance through our own work and ideas. A remarkable life has ended, but her dedication to youth lives on in her scholarship, research, and colleagues. The selected bibliography that follows expands on the areas covered in this article. Where might these texts take you on your journey to better serve and educate the young people in your life?

[Interview with Dr. Kathleen Burnett, the F. Williams Summers Professor and director of the Florida State University School of Information in Tallahassee, and Jerusha](#)

[Burnett, a law clerk in the Consumer Policy division of Consumer and Governmental Affairs at the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, DC. Conducted by Annette Y. Goldsmith on September 1, 2014.](#)

Notes

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1. Eliza T. Dresang, *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1999).
2. *Ibid.*, xvii.
3. David Macaulay, *Black and White* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1990).
4. Dresang, *Radical Change*, xviii; also discussed in Kathleen Burnett and Eliza T. Dresang, “Rhizomorphic Reading: The Emergence of a New Aesthetic in Literature for Youth,” *Library Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (1999): 421–46; first presented in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
5. Marc Aronson, *Art Attack!: A Short Cultural History of the Avant-Garde* (Boston: Clarion, 1998).
6. Dresang, *Radical Change*, xviii.
7. Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003).
8. Eliza T. Dresang and Bowie Kotrla, “Radical Change Theory and Synergistic Reading for Digital-Age Youth,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 96.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 92–107.

10. Brian Selznick, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (New York: Scholastic Press, 2007).
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