

Reflection: Librarianship in an Underserved Population

An article in today's LA Times caught my eye, so I thought I should share it with all of you. [*A visit to a haven for kids in France's 'Jungle' refugee camp one day before it's set to be destroyed*](#) is a heartbreaking story about children in a refugee camp in Calais, France. Around 10,000 people from war-torn African and Middle Eastern countries are living there, including an estimated 1,000 children without parents. Today French authorities will begin to dismantle the refugee camp and relocate its inhabitants. However, the safety of young people during this process is uncertain, as they are especially vulnerable to traffickers.

Many of these children have experienced the terrors of war and poverty, and have traveled thousands of miles alone in the hopes of a better life. Mary Jones, a former British schoolteacher, co-founded a cafe and a library to provide refugee children with a place to borrow books, "play, contact relatives, watch television, eat warm food, and ultimately remember they are still children."

The courage and humanity demonstrated by Jones is a model of inspiration for librarians. Her establishment of a children's library amidst horrific conditions reminds us of a basic library function: a safe space for the local community to gather and exchange information. My thoughts and prayers are with these children today, as they lose this one welcoming and secure place in their troubled young lives.

Reflection: First African American and First Woman as Librarian of Congress

I read an article in *Library Journal* (Schwartz, 2016) today about [Dr. Carla Hayden](#), the new Librarian of Congress, who was sworn in on 14 September 2016. The

appointment of Dr. Hayden is a significant landmark, since she is the first African American and the first woman to hold the position. With a background in librarianship, her plans include outreach initiatives to improve service to the public, especially in rural communities and children.

This appointment is an important message to libraries, as well as society in general, about diversity in leadership roles. Regardless of political stance, I am inspired by the fact that ethnic minorities and women are seen increasingly in important US offices. I am hopeful that these leaders will help to dissolve counter-productive race tensions and gender inequalities in our country.