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**The Definitive Biography of Louisiana’s First State Librarian**  
*LSU Press to publish Spreading the Gospel of Books in November*

“No one other than Florence Jumonville could have captured the funny, practical, wise, and resilient nature of Essae M. Culver, a hero to so many Louisiana librarians, including me. We have waited a long time for this book, and Jumonville has made it worth the wait.”

—Rebecca Hamilton, state librarian of Louisiana

**Baton Rouge**— In 1925, Essae Martha Culver, a California librarian, arrived in Louisiana to direct a three-year project funded by the Carnegie Corporation that aimed to introduce public libraries to rural populations. Culver purchased a round-trip ticket, but she never used the second half. Instead, she stayed in Louisiana the rest of her life, working tirelessly to see libraries established in every parish by 1969.

In *Spreading the Gospel of Books*, Florence M. Jumonville chronicles the impressive, colorful history of Louisiana parish libraries and the State Library of Louisiana. She draws upon Culver’s journals and library reports, correspondence, scrapbooks, and State Library internal documents, and includes photos from five decades, many never before published. The campaign to persuade individual parishes to financially support a library of their own was a long, uphill pull through poverty and politics, flood and famine, discouragement and depression, war and bureaucracy, ignorance and prejudice. Culver credited success to the citizens, whose thirst for books and embrace of the idea of a library inspired perseverance.

In time, Culver’s Louisiana plan served as an exemplar of library development elsewhere in the United States as well as abroad. Culver touched the lives of generations of Louisianians who have never heard her name. *Spreading the Gospel of Books* is her story, along with that of colleagues and supporters, of making the dream of library service come true for all.

**Florence M. Jumonville**, a native New Orleanian, is the archivist at Touro Infirmary. There and in previous positions at The Historic New Orleans Collection and the University of New Orleans Library, she has worked with Louisiana materials and special collections for over forty-five years and has written extensively on Louisiana history.

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History / Library Science

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