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LOUISIANA BOOK FESTIVAL CELEBRATES STATE LIBRARY'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

BATON ROUGE, La. – The [Louisiana Book Festival](https://LouisianaBookFestival.org) kicks off on Saturday, November 1, in downtown Baton Rouge's Capitol Park, with a celebration of the State Library of Louisiana's 100th anniversary.

Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser, State Librarian Meg Placke, and former State Librarian Thomas Jaques will open the state's 21st annual literary festival with a commemoration of the library's role and impact on Louisiana education, literacy, and civic engagement since its founding in 1925.

"It's a great honor to recognize the State Library of Louisiana for its 100th year of service to the citizens of Louisiana," said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. "What started as an experiment a century ago has become an essential resource for all Louisianans. From humble beginnings, the State Library today provides ever-increasing opportunities for citizens to experience the value of libraries and reading."

In 1925, more than half of Louisiana's population – 1.2 million people – had no access to books, with only a few inadequately-funded public libraries in place. Recognizing the education opportunity, state lawmakers created the Louisiana Library Commission with a goal of opening a public library in every parish.

Essae M. Culver, a librarian who had successfully developed rural library systems in Oregon and California, was selected as the first Louisiana State Librarian. She leveraged a \$50,000 Carnegie Corporation grant to launch a network of demonstration libraries throughout the state which served as the frontrunner of Louisiana's 68 public library systems currently in operation today.

"This centennial is not just a celebration of the past – it is a call toward a great future," said State Librarian Meg Placke. "As we reflect on a century of progress, we draw inspiration from pioneers like Essae Culver. Her dedication to establishing public libraries reminds us of the importance of adaptability and resilience as we look toward the next century of library service."

"Supporting literacy is at the core of everything we do, and is a defining principle of the Louisiana Book Festival," said Louisiana Center for the Book and Book Festival Executive Director Robert Wilson.

"Throughout its storied history, the State Library has worked to expand literacy and support academic development across the state, and we want to highlight those accomplishments for festival attendees this year."

Today, the State Library maintains a collection of more than one million items and provides a wide range of services to public library systems, state and local government, and the public. The agency administers the online Louisiana Library Connection and the state's public library interlibrary loan service. The State Library provides training and consulting services for library professionals, support for K-12 literacy development, and specialized services for visually impaired citizens through its Talking Books and Braille Library.

A special exhibition that chronicles the history of the State Library will be on display in the front lobby of its building at 701 North 4th Street on the day of the festival, and special commemorative anniversary booklets will be available for attendees. [Learn more about the history of the State Library of Louisiana and download related materials here.](#)

The [Louisiana Book Festival](#) is the state's signature literary event, drawing more than 20,000 attendees to downtown Baton Rouge annually. Presented by the [Louisiana Center for the Book](#) in the State Library of Louisiana, the festival brings together leading authors, publishing professionals, and book lovers from across the state and nation. Admission is free.

More than two hundred writers, scholars and poets will participate in book signings, book talks, and seminars at the 2025 event. More than one hundred exhibitors will be featured, along with cooking demonstrations and activities for teens and young readers. The Louisiana Book Festival is scheduled for Saturday, November 1, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in Capitol Park, downtown Baton Rouge. More information is available at LouisianaBookFestival.org or the [Louisiana Book Festival Facebook page](#).

The [Louisiana Center for the Book](#) was established in the State Library of Louisiana in 1994. Its mission is to stimulate public interest in reading, books, literacy, and libraries and to celebrate Louisiana's rich literary heritage. It is the official state affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

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