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## Lumières, November 1978

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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# LUMIÈRES

## Addicted to Libraries

**W**hen I was asked to speak to you tonight on some libraries I had visited, my first reaction was to speak of world-renowned libraries which it had been my privilege to visit, such as the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Library of Congress, or even newer ones, such as the library serving the United Nations — a library which I was privileged to see dedicated. But, on second thought, it seemed to me that this would be more in the nature of a travelogue — true a travelogue with bibliothecal overtones, but a travelogue nevertheless. I thought that you would rather hear of those libraries I have known which have actually influenced my thinking. You will notice that I don't say my philosophy — that is much too imposing a term. I am not at all sure I even have one, but in my lifetime I have had many years to think about library matters, and I have visited and/or used many libraries that have influenced my thinking. While the thought first came to me this summer, it was not until just yesterday while reading the *Enterprise* that I realized just what it was that I was attempting to do. In a news item with headline Dr. James Bolner to give "Last Lecture," I learned that in delivering such a lecture one shares his "basic ideas, values, insights, and principles" with his listeners. This, then, is my effort at a "Last Lecture."

Now, of course, I should admit, right here at the start that I was as thrilled as the next one to visit the world's great libraries. I could never forget the anticipation of my visit to the library of Trinity College, Dublin, especially to see the one page of the *Book of Kells* which would be on display on that day, nor the unexpected pleasure of having the librarian turn each page of that magnificent book for my companion and me upon learning that we were American librarians on a busman's holiday.

Nor shall I ever forget the thrill I experienced when I looked down upon the great circular reading room of the British Museum from the balcony above — certainly the most beautiful reading room I had ever seen or would ever see. I had seen circular reading rooms before — notably those at the California State Library and the Library of Congress, and I knew all the arguments, pro and con. In fact this was a typical architectural library feature during the early part of the century. But this was different! Here was the result of a great librarian, Dr. Anthony Panizzi, working with a space problem, and utilizing available unused space, but with all, never sacrificing aesthetics to administrative need.

But these were not the libraries that shaped my thinking or specifically served as sources of continuing education for me. I cannot begin to even list all of the libraries that have served thus, although it seems to me that I have never been to a library from which I did not learn something, however small and insignificant that library may have been. It is about some of these, and their effects upon me I would speak to you tonight. I surely would have to start with the very first library I ever used — that of the West Texas State Teachers' College, as it was then called; I believe now it is West Texas State University — to which I went as a college freshman. West Texas State was a very small four-year college on the high plains of west Texas; its library was correspondingly



small. To fully appreciate the impact that this library had upon me you would need to know that the small east Texas sawmill town from which I came had no municipal library, no county library, no school library. My access to books had been limited to my own home or those of family friends. This small college library was a veritable heaven to me. And it didn't hurt — then at least, though it may have been the source of later trouble — that my great-aunt was a librarian. My two years' experience at Canyon turned me from a textbook learner to one who would thereafter be addicted to libraries.

From West Texas State, I went to a very different kind of institution, and to a very different kind of library — the University of California at Berkeley, and its large, scholarly library. I learned so many things from the use of that library during my four years on campus — too many to mention here, but several stand out above all the rest.

First, I soon learned that no matter at what level one enters, he needs orientation into that particular library. Here I was, a junior, and a pretty knowledgeable one, or so I thought, about libraries, but I was a "babe in the woods" at Berkeley. I almost flunked my Shakespeare course before I learned that there was such a thing as the Variorum edition, and where it was located in that vast, quiet, awe-inspiring reading room on the second floor of the university library. Perhaps it was because I found myself so ill-prepared to use the large, impersonal library in my own university that I saw the real necessity for the "Use of Books and Libraries" course which I was to teach later at the University of Illinois, and that I was always so interested in and supportive of at LSU. Perhaps a required freshman course, such as was offered here at one time, or even the course as it is offered today is not the answer in every college, nor would it necessarily be the answer at LSU always, but every library and every institution needs to consider the orientation of its beginning students — of that I am certain.

I met my first browsing room library at the University of California. Although there are as many variations as there are browsing rooms, perhaps because it was my first, it has come to be my model. I still think that, when possible, a browsing room should have as its central core a true gentleman's library. The Morrison Room housed just such a library, and more. It represented all fields of knowledge; it had the classics, in nice editions, beautifully bound. And then it had more modern titles, and even best sellers. It had easy chairs, and sofas, and table and floor lamps. It was an oasis of peace and quiet, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Browsing rooms today, in the more informal setting of the open stack library, are not the necessary adjunct that these were in the closed stack, formal setting that was the academic library of my day, but I still think that where space and funds permit, they cannot be surpassed as an open invitation to reading, over and beyond the requirements of the classroom in this day and age of specialization.

But the Morrison Library opened to me another aspect of university library financing, quite aside from its own specific purpose, and that is individual and corporate giving to public institutions. Mr. Morrison had been a good friend to the university in his lifetime,

and upon his death, his library — both books and furnishings, and I think, funds for their maintenance — came to the school. Of course, the university was a mosaic of gifts, and no part of it more than the library. The university library was officially the DOE Library. Students used to spell its name, quite irreverently, another way, but even that spelling only served to underscore for me the university's heavy reliance upon gifts in addition to state appropriations. This was, of course, long before the day of federal grants and subsidies, upon which today's academic institutions depend. I am glad to see that LSU in more recent years has become the recipient of so many gifts, both for the library, and for other University uses. But I still find myself harkening my early experiences as I try to defend to critics the *Friends of the Library*, and more especially its Book Bazaar. It was true in my college days, and it is true today: no library can become truly great if it must depend solely upon appropriated funds from the public treasury.

The University of California also gave me my introduction to modern fine printing, an interest that I have continued for more than fifty years. All the great late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century printers were represented in its collection. I would look forward each year to the exhibit that would be made of these beautiful works, and as I came to know more about them, I would wonder which titles of the Ashendene, the Kelmscott, and other presses would be selected for the current year's exhibit. But I think that always the Doves' Bible would be displayed. Surely no more beautiful page of modern printing can be seen than the opening page of the Doves' Bible with its simple but dramatic red initial "I" extending the full length of the page. I can still see it in my mind's eye.

Of course I could spend the entire time talking about the University of California Library and it is no small wonder that one so unacquainted with libraries as was I would have been so impressed. But other libraries did have quite an effect upon me, and about some of these I do want to say a few words.

The Berkeley Public Library had a tremendous effect upon me, and not only because it was the first public library I had ever used. I still remember it as a superior library. True, it was in an ideal setting. Berkeley was predominantly a university community and a bedroom town for San Francisco, with little or no industry and with quite a homogeneous population. Its literacy rate was very high, and its educational system was excellent. All of these facts were reflected in the library's collection and services. In addition, it had a most remarkable man as library director, Dr. Carleton B. Joeckel, later to be on the faculty of the University of California School of Librarianship, and he was even at one time acting director. But actually my first acquaintance with the Berkeley Public Library was as an undergraduate, when I used it as a source of supply for books to which I was assigned in a course on the novel. My own happy experiences with the library were to influence my thinking many years later when student use of libraries became the burning issue among librarians, and in the American Library Association. This was especially true of public librarians and to a lesser extent of academic librarians, and certainly always of



the school librarians. It was even the point of emphasis throughout the term of office of my immediate successor as president of the ALA, Mr. Edward Bryan, then the librarian of the Newark (New Jersey) Public Library. Now I realize that the Berkeley Public Library was not typical, and I can appreciate the need for longer library hours, and more adequate collections in our school libraries. I do know that public libraries can be swamped with students doing their school assignments, but I also know that students must be served, and that they will use the library most convenient to them. They can be served if all libraries within a community cooperate to render that service.

In the years that followed my graduation from college and Library School it seems to me that I have scarcely ever visited or used a library that I have not learned something or had my ideas challenged or sometimes confirmed by something I have seen or experienced. Attendance at conferences were especially fruitful in this respect. My first visit to the Kansas City Public Library, during an ALA conference, incidentally, was such a one in point. Heretofore, due to the prevailing practice in Louisiana, and perhaps my Library School training, I had thought there was only one way to administer a public library, and that was separately, with its own separate board. But here in Kansas City was a thriving library, operating under the Board of Education, and with many of its branches in the public schools. This was a strong challenge to any thought that I might have had that one solution only could exist for any library situation. Since that time I have seen many other instances where more than one way exists, or where one way might serve best in certain situations, or in some localities, whereas another might be the answer elsewhere. I used to try to teach more than one way of doing things in my classes in cataloging and classification, and always there would be those who would say, "If you would only tell us one way, the right way, the best way," as if one could ever do that.

My visit to the Detroit Public Library taught me that cooperation between the library and industry could pay tremendous dividends for both. I recall how impressed I was with the daily contact between the Public Library and the General Motors Library, reducing to the minimum duplication, and the cost of maintenance of research collections in each.

The Detroit Public Library was also one of the first public libraries that I ever visited in which both the general public and the scholar were served, with collections designed for both purposes. Eventually I was to see this combination of general library and research library in a number of the large old libraries in the East, and especially in the New York Public and the Boston Public. No library in the South serves a comparable dual purpose, nor should it. Such libraries require many benefactions, gifts of private collections, endowments. Taxes alone cannot do it. But where this has taken place, the results are truly wonderful. Wasn't it Marcette Chute, in an article in the *Journal of the American Library Association*, or its successor, *American Libraries*, following the publication of her *Shakespeare of London* who said of the New York Public Library that though she had never been to London, she

had walked down every one of its streets in the books of the NYPL. What a wonderful tribute to a remarkable library!

And I cannot leave out the Chicago Public Library which I first visited during the depths of the great depression back in the early thirties. This was the first time I was ever quite aware of a library that was struggling to meet a sociological and economic need. There the newspaper room was filled with men—jobless, hopeless men, seeking job information though the classified ads, and seeking bodily warmth.

In every day and age sociological challenges occur, sometimes and in some places more acutely than in others. But always the challenge is there. Some kinds of libraries may feel these challenges less than others. The academic, the school, the special library may hold to their chartered purposes and be buffeted only indirectly by the winds of change. But the public library has no such refuge. It must meet the challenge.

And now I would talk to you about my Louisiana experiences and the libraries and librarians I have known here. The thought that there is a time for everything really came to mean much to me in the early years in Louisiana, as I observed and played my small part in Louisiana library development. I had originally come from a locality with no library development, had gone to a state which had already reached a high level of development, and now here I was, back home in 1933 in a state poised for growth in every major aspect of library growth, but awaiting the right time. For the first time in many years, the University now had a professional librarian at its head — one both trained and experienced, Mr. James A. McMillen. Mr. McMillen really knew books, and we still have him to thank for the beginnings of a real university library.

We had as Executive Secretary of the Louisiana Library Commission, a professionally trained librarian, Miss Essae M. Culver, who had brought to bear on our state her California and Oregon library experience, both as a county librarian and a staff member of these state libraries. She came with the mandate to prepare a plan for statewide library service, a charge she was never to lose sight of. Later she was asked to implement the plan, and this she was to do from 1925 to 1962.

We had in the State Department of Education, Lois Shortess, as School Library Supervisor, and Superintendent of Education, Mr. T. N. Harris, who gave her generous support, for he really believed in libraries.

And then there was the Library School, which had the backing of all three, and which had as its major objective the supplying of staff for all three.

These three giants of the profession never lost sight of their long-term goals and plans, however delayed their execution had to be, and to which their short term goals must ever contribute. Awaiting the right time, they accomplished the possible, and in the end their achievements were remarkable. To me the most amazing thing about the three and about their dedicated drive for excellence was that despite the necessarily slow pace which lack of funds, appalling ignorance of what a library was and could be, and economic and meteorological problems of more than statewide import, they never compromised their standards or lost faith



in the final outcome of their efforts. When the time was right, they were ready to move swiftly toward the goals toward which they had been making progress — up to then — slowly — the goal of books and libraries for all the citizens of Louisiana.

It was a privilege to work in Louisiana in those pioneering days of library development. Much remains to be done, and you will do it. I am glad that you will never have to repeat our work, but can build upon it. But I am glad for myself that it was my privilege to be a part of those times.

**Florinell F. Morton**  
**Professor Emeritus of Library Science**  
**Director of the LSU Library School, 1944-70**  
(Delivered to the Beta Phi Mu Annual Meeting, October 20, 1978)



## Profile of a Bibliophile

### James Silverman

In significant measure, James Silverman's bibliophilic bent has been molded from happenstance. He certainly didn't originally premeditate a path toward becoming a connoisseur and detective in the field of children's literature. Nor a bibliographer and editor. Nor even a librarian, let alone a prison librarian—and most assuredly not a janitor. Yet, all these things he is or has been.

A native of New Orleans, Jim had become involved in politics while in high school, and by the time he graduated, he knew he didn't want to continue that route; he wanted to get a different vantage point, out of the South, not in the East, and not in a large university setting. Then, somebody mentioned Grinnell College, a small private institution in Iowa. "It was," says Mr. Silverman, "a 'luckout' choice, and as it developed, a very good place for me."

One reason it turned out to be a "very good place" for him is exemplified by the degree he was awarded in 1972, earned partially through an independent-studies major in children's literature—the reflection of an interest he had stumbled into by stumbling onto certain children's books that ignited in him a fascination. His was an uncommon curricular arrangement, even at Grinnell, but rather characteristic of his somewhat maverick personality.

In 1973, armed with a scholarship, Mr. Silverman embarked on graduate study at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, where he also worked in the public library and as an assistant librarian at Vancouver General Hospital. But he and the University Library School severed company by guarded mutual agreement over "philosophical differences," and, in need of funds, he applied for a campus job. The following Monday, he was back in Library School—as a janitor.

Returning to Louisiana, Jim Silverman received his Master of Library Science degree from LSU in 1976, and in January 1977 became a librarian at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola.

The prison employment, according to Mr. Silverman, "was much better for a beginning librarian than just about any place in the state, because everyone gets an extra \$100 a month incentive pay. . . . They have such a hard time getting people."

Mr. Silverman, who was a student worker in the LSU Library's McIlhenny Room, heard about the Angola job through rumor, and joined Mel Louviere, the prison's

lone—and lonesome—librarian, who was glad of the comradery. "Mel had begun work at that library at a point when I probably wouldn't have touched it with a two-mile pole," says Jim. It had been abandoned for nine months, and had become a popular spot for several types of illicit activity.

"The place was in a shambles. They had given Mel the key and shoved all the books in the middle of the floor. . . . Shelves had been stolen right out from underneath the books.

"Mel and I worked well together for about six months; then he decided to go back to library school. . . ."

Jim stayed on for eighteen months, and pronounces Angola "a real challenge. I take some pride in having brought more than 10,000 books into the library. At first, with about half the books missing, there was a Herculean effort just to begin to get the card catalogue to more or less match what we had." Then, an \$11,000 windfall appropriation appeared at the last of the fiscal year and, so as not to lose the funds, the Angola library spent it carefully, but quickly.

Mr. Silverman describes himself as a "hustler and a scrounger. I don't respond to dictatorial situations except by getting very conniving. But I do respond to a wheeling-and-dealing situation, which at Angola can be a giant game. So I hustled some sturdy wooden bookshelves built at one of the warehouses, and I hustled the paint crew to repaint the library (which had been splotches of ten different colors) a goldenrod yellow. An inmate worker got an eight-track tape, and we hustled a speaker. I began charging for lost books, and used the money to buy music; pretty soon we had a really good collection. . . . Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, the Third World Band, James Brown. . . . I've never been in a library quite like it before, and don't expect to ever again. It was funky and quite a lot of fun."

Mr. Silverman quit his prison job in May of this year. He was becoming upset at the unhealthy effects he was feeling, and didn't want them to grow. And he felt it time to move on to something else.

One of the something elses is compilation of a bibliography of children's books published in Louisiana, which he has had in progress for over two years.

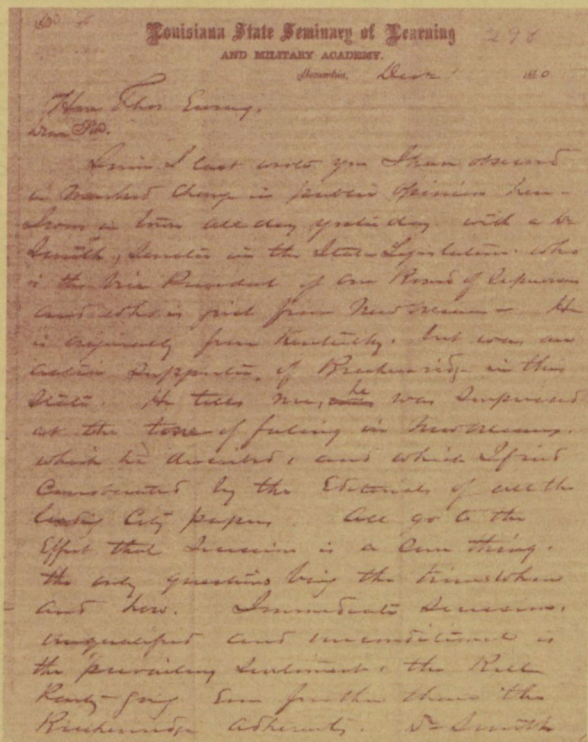
Another project is the preparation for publication of a children's cookbook written in French in the 1840s, of which only two copies are known to exist—one at the University of Alabama and one owned by a private collector. The private collector has kept his identity a secret, and the University of Alabama had listed its copy as lost. But Silverman went to Tuscaloosa and "walked the shelves," until the lost was found. Now he and Don McKeon—linguist and former McIlhenny Room curator who is working on his doctorate at Florida State University—propose to interest a publisher in re-issuing the book in French, with an English translation opposite each page.

Meanwhile Mr. Silverman—who is a member of the Wizard of Oz Fan Club and the Children's Literature Association—spent this past summer as a special lecturer for the Jambalaya Office of the New Orleans Public Library, and has in recent years developed a "lecture-exhibit-magic show" podium technique.

At 28, Jim Silverman has a long career-life before him. Ideally, he would like to work in a special library collection, conducting research from that base and teaching within the field of children's literature. Whatever bibliophilic course he steers, it seems likely he'll retain the underlying tenaciousness demonstrated in his thesis ("The checklist identifies more than 900 children's books issued in the South between 1749 and 1860. . . . There was nobody in the world who thought there were so many. . . . Nobody. . . .") and in the bibliography he has in progress ("I doubt anybody would have thought it a topic worth pursuing, but I will show them wrong. . . . I love it").

**Loyce J. McIlhenny**  
**LSU Office of Publications**





Letters of William Tecumseh Sherman

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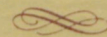
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# LUMIÈRES

Published by the Friends of the LSU Library

131 Pleasant Hall, Louisiana State University, Mary Jane Kahao, editor

Volume 4 Number 1

Literally "lights" in French, *lumières* is frequently used to denote enlightenment or knowledge. As such, it illustrates the purpose of the newsletter: to enlighten members of the Friends of the LSU Library with news of the organization and with needs of the LSU Library. The cover design is based on an exquisite hand-illuminated border from a 15th century French religious manuscript.





## Book Bazaar

Book lovers of Baton Rouge again united to make the third annual Book Bazaar bigger than ever, doubling in inventory and popularity since its 1976 beginning. This year, a literary stock in excess of 40,000 books was colorfully displayed in the sales area at Bon Marche Mall.

The 1978 Bazaar, held on October 5, 6 and 7, netted \$12,000 for the *Friends'* Acquisition Fund. And if the present rate of book collections and increase in sales continues, the *Friends* can look forward to many important purchases for the Library.

The success of the Book Bazaar does not just happen. An assertive and dedicated group of volunteers have logged untold hours during the past year collecting the books and classifying and pricing them for the sale. Media cooperation in area newspapers, radio, and television helped tremendously with collections. WRBT-TV produced a thirty-second spot with Pete Taylor appealing for book donations, while Maxwell the Tiger (courtesy of June Gonce and her talented puppet), was the star of our WBRZ-TV publicity.

More than 350 volunteers were involved in the three-day sale, moving the stock from LSU, manning the sale and dismantling at its conclusion. Individuals, LSU student groups, and Library personnel all helped, saying that they volunteer their time because they love books.

The Book Bazaar means more to our community than just a love of books, however. It serves a three-fold purpose. Our Library benefits by important acquisitions; our city and our state reap rewards — in research, in education, in culture. And hundreds of book lovers in the area benefit, too, by their purchase of excellent used books, magazines, and music at nominal prices.

Joan Goldberger



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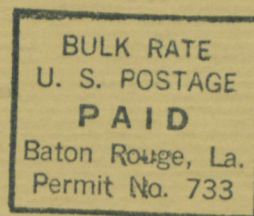
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