



# Preserving Colonial Heritage: A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925)

Jeff LIU (Lingnan University)

October 2025

# Outline



**About Lingnan University Library**



**Project Background**



**Digital Humanities?**



**Usage and Impact**



**Lessons Learnt**



# One of Eight Government-funded Universities in Hong Kong, China



# Location

20min

ShenZhen Port ↔ Lingnan University

🚗 Around 20 mins car ride

30min

HK International Airport ↔ Lingnan University

🚗 Around 30 mins car ride

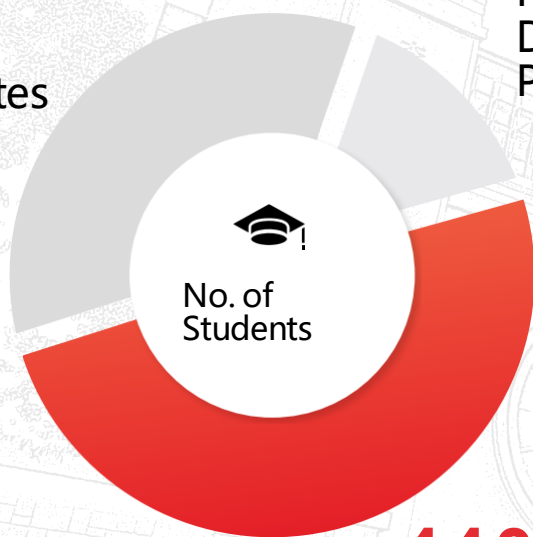
HK International Airport

ShenZhen Port

Lingnan University

# Numbers at a Glance

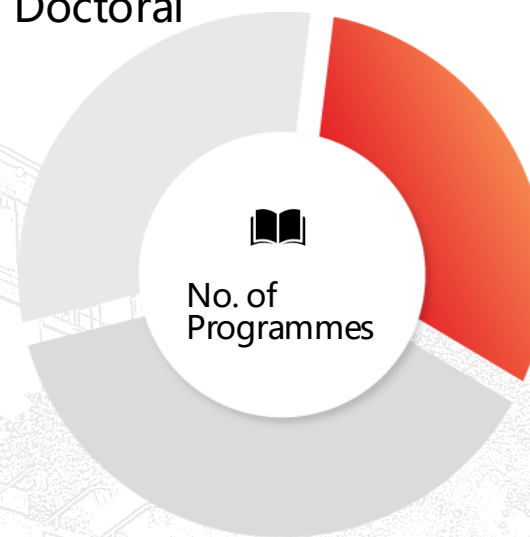
**3600+**  
Taught  
Postgraduates



**4400+**  
Undergraduates  
(1400+ intake for 25/26)

**150+**  
Research and  
Doctoral  
Postgraduates

**36**  
Research MPhil  
and Doctoral



**30+**  
Undergraduates

**48**  
Taught  
Postgraduates

Data as at Aug 2025



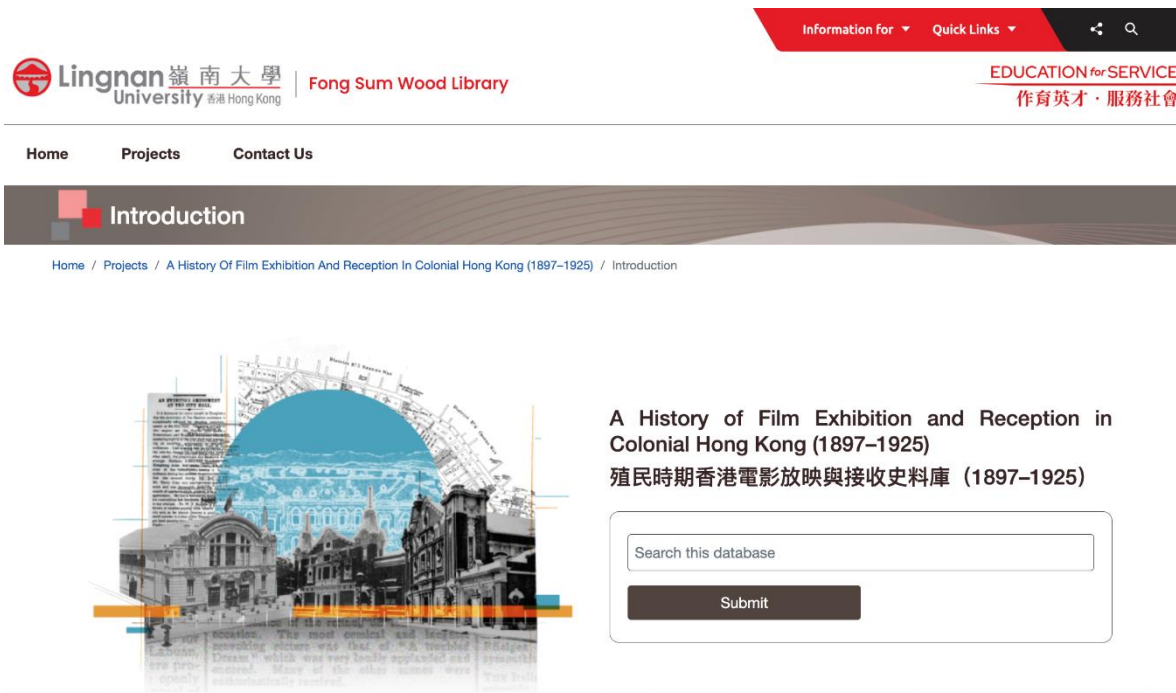
# Library Figures

- 4.5 M+ E-Books
- 0.45M+ Print Books
- 0.18M+ E-Journals
- 1,200+ seats in 4 Floors





# The Project



## A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925) 殖民時期香港電影放映與接收史料庫 (1897-1925)

- Project collaborated with the Research Team from **Centre for Film and Creative Industries** and **Library**.
- Funded by the General Research Fund (GRF) of the Research Grants Council (RGC) of Hong Kong, China
- Research Team led by Prof. Emilie Yeh
  - Dean of the Faculty of Arts
  - Lam Wong Yiu Wah Chair Professor
  - Department Head of Digital Arts and Creative Industries (formerly known as Visual Studies)
  - Director of Centre for Film and Creative Industries

# The Project

## A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925) 殖民時期香港電影放映與接收史料庫 (1897-1925)

- Survey the landscape of early screen practices in Hong Kong, including:

Circulation

Built  
Environment

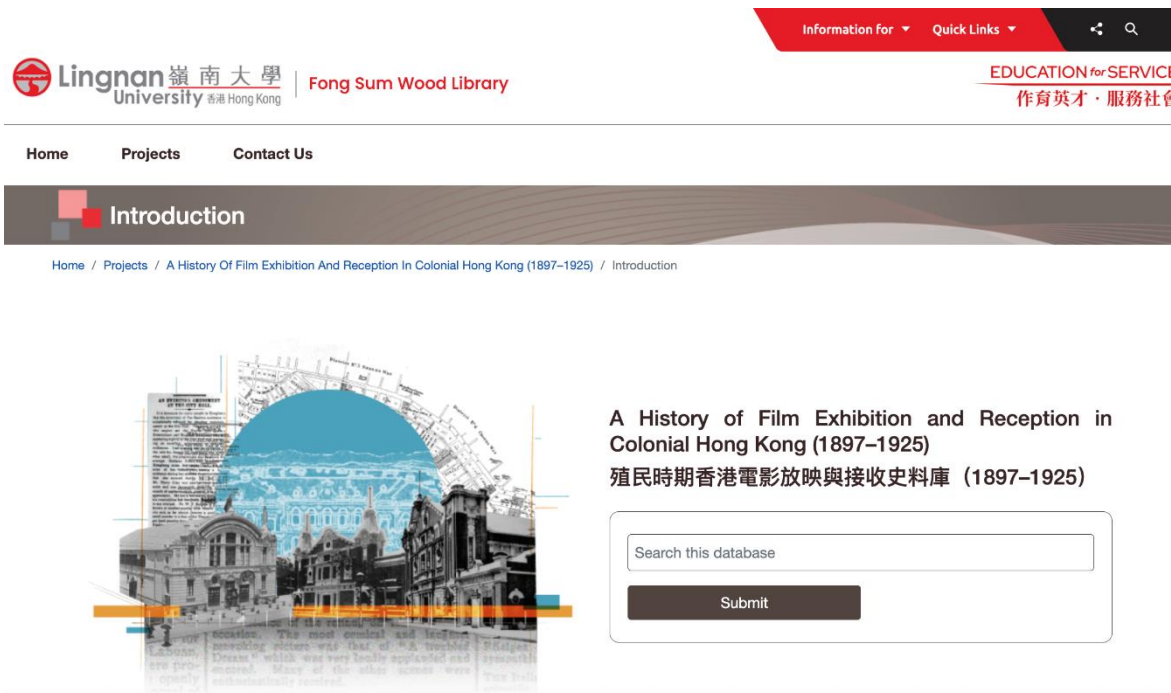
Facilities

Fittings

Materials

Technology  
used to  
project films

- These aspects of film presentation are crucial to understanding how movies were integrated into the social fabric of Hong Kong in the early twentieth century.





# Project Background

- All started from an email thread to ITSC in Nov 2020
- CIO & University Librarian passed the case to Library for handling because of librarian's expertise in supporting digital humanities
- Reference to some "traditional" Library databases
- To visualise research data of the Research Team

From: LAM Mei Chun Louisa <[louisalam@ln.edu.hk](mailto:louisalam@ln.edu.hk)>  
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 11:46 AM  
To: LIU Wing-hong Jeff <[jeffliu@ln.edu.hk](mailto:jeffliu@ln.edu.hk)>  
Subject: FW: Meeting between ITSC and Visual Studies Dept

Dear Jeff,

Please take a look. Prof Emilie Yeh would like to create a database like the one done in BU where she came from

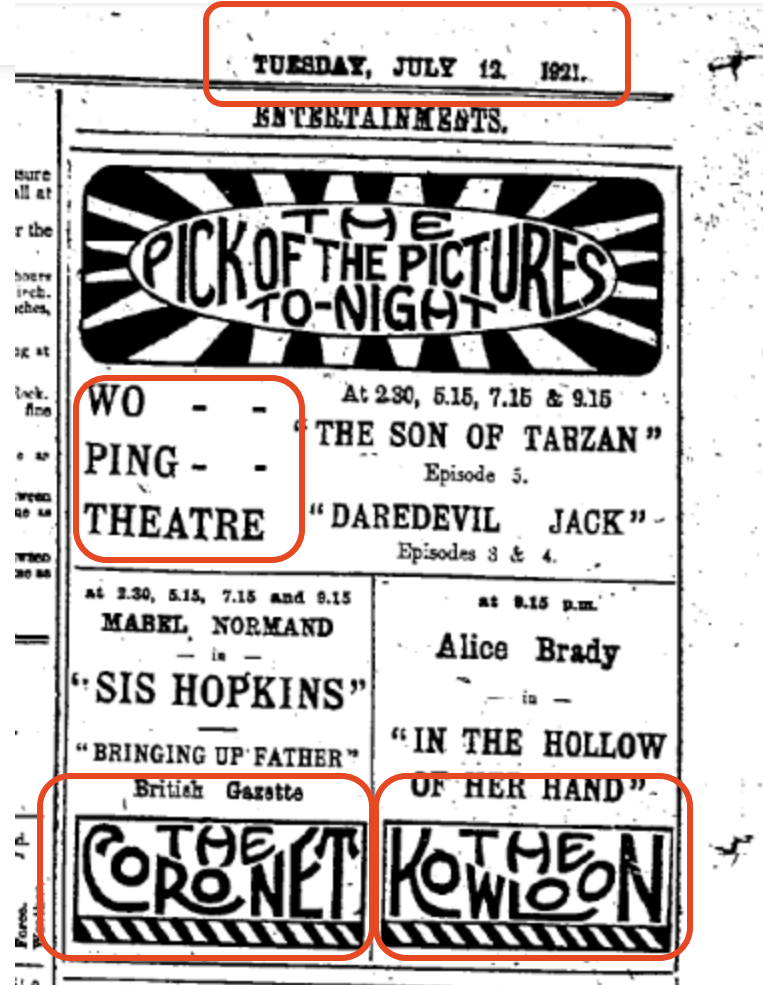
<https://digital.lib.hkbu.edu.hk/chinesefilms/search.php>

and also HKU's Hong Kong Government Reports Online (<https://lib.hku.hk/hkgro/index.jsp>). Prof Yeh approached ITSC for creating the database that contains the data she need in the excel file. But Joyce's team might not be the most desirable team to do this. I wonder if Tony can take this up as a digital humanities project.

Louisa

# Project Background

(News/Advertisements Images from newspaper microfilm)



Source:

Hong Kong Public Libraries Digital Collection The China Mail, 1921-07-12

<https://sls.hkpl.gov.hk/digital-collection/tc/contentcoverpage.html?currentPosition>

=1&catalogueId=188200929cb711ef9c2&mainKeyword=The+China+Mail%2C+1921-07-12&isHKMP=

# Project Background

## (News/Advertisement Images from newspaper microfilm)

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
1	Start Date	End Date		Title	Column	Summary	Venue	Organization	Key Person	Film Projector/Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	Film	
568	1920-06-23	1920-06-25	3	The Coronet: Tel. No. 1743.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Bushman and Bayne in "The Brass Check." At 7.15 p.m., "Elmo, the Mighty" episodes 15 and 16.	Coronet Theatre		Bushman, Beverly Bayne	The Brass Check	Elmo, the Mighty													
569	1920-06-28	1920-06-30	3	The Coronet: Tel. No. 1743.	10	Entertainment Monday to Wednesday at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Broadway presents "Under Suspicion" featuring Horace Hunter and Hilda Bayley.	Coronet Theatre	Broadwest	Horace Hunter, Hilda Bayley	Under Suspicion														
570	1920-06-19	1920-06-21	2	The Coronet: Tel. No. 1743.	10	Entertainment Today at 2.30, 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Clara Kimball Young in "Cheating Cheaters." At 7.15 p.m., H. B. Warner and Dorothy Dalton in "The Raiders." June 21 Remarks: On page 5, ad. on "The Raiders" only.	Coronet Theatre		Clara Kimball Young, H. B. Warner, Dorothy Dalton	Cheating Cheaters	The Raiders													
571	1920-06-02	1920-06-04	3	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Triangle presents William Collier supported by Enid Markey in "The No-Good Guy."	Hongkong Theatre	Triangle Pictures	William Collier Sr., Enid Markey	The No-Good Guy														
572	1920-06-05	1920-06-09	4	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., William Fox presents William Farnum in "Rough and Ready" in 6 parts.	Hongkong Theatre	Fox	William Farnum	Rough and Ready														
573	1920-06-10	1920-06-11	2	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., the London Film Co. presents a 4-part photo drama, "Called Back." Also "The Bridge of Death" in 4 parts.	Hongkong Theatre	London Film Company	Called Back	The Bridge of Death														
574	1920-06-12	1920-06-15	3	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Selznick Pictures presents Clara Kimball Young in Robert Chamber's "The Common Law" in 7 parts.	Hongkong Theatre	Selznick Pictures	Clara Kimball Young, Robert W. Chamber	The Common Law														
575	1920-06-16	1920-06-18	3	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Norma Talmadge in "The Devil's Needle."	Hongkong Theatre		Norma Talmadge	The Devil's Needle														
576	1920-06-19	1920-06-22	3	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Leah Baird in "The Capitol," from the notable stage success by Augustus Thomas.	Hongkong Theatre		Leah Baird, Augustus Thomas	The Capitol														
577	1920-06-23	1920-06-25	3	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Triangle Film Corporation presents William Desmond in "Paddy O'Hara."	Hongkong Theatre	Triangle Pictures	William Desmond	Paddy O'Hara														
578	1920-06-28	1920-06-29	2	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Edward Warren presents Sheldon Lewis in "The Warfare of the Flesh" in 7 parts.	Hongkong Theatre		Edward Warren, Sheldon Lewis	The Warfare of the Flesh														
579	1920-06-30	1920-07-02	3	The Hongkong Theatre: Tel 2511.	10	Entertainment Tonight at 5.15 and 9.15 p.m., Alma Ruebens in "Firefly of Tough Luck."	Hongkong Theatre		Alma Ruebens	The Firefly of Tough Luck														
580	1920-07-01	1920-07-03	3	The Coronet	10	Entertainment Today's the day, 11 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., continuous pictures at the Coronet. Come in when you like, stay as long as you like. Admission: 40 cents. The programme includes Pathe's latest British Gazette; "The Silent Mystery" episode one; Charlie Chaplin in "Sunnyside" and Madame Petrova in "The Law of the Land." Usual performance at 9.15 p.m.	Coronet Theatre	Pathe	Charlie Chaplin, Olga Petrova	Pathe Gazette	The Silent Mystery	Sunnyside	Law of the Land											
581	1920-07-05	1920-07-08	6	The Coronet: Tel. No. 1743.	10	Entertainment Continuous performance, 11 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. and 5.15 and 9.15 p.m. (booked seats). Goldwyn presents Will Rogers in "Jubilo." Also "The Silent Mystery" episode two, Young Mr. Jazz and British Gazette. July 5 Remarks: On page 5, another ad. on "Jubilo" only. July 8 Remarks: On page 5, another ad. on "Jubilo" [sic] featuring Will Rogers, the picture-play since "Mickey" and "The Yankee Way." The String Band of S. S. Colombia will play from 2.15 to 4.30 p.m.	Coronet Theatre	Goldwyn	Will Rogers	Jubilo	The Silent Mystery	Young Mr. Jazz	British Gazette	Mickey	The Yankee Way									
582	1920-07-09	1920-07-12	5	Good Things Always Come In Pairs!	10	Entertainment Come and see Constance Talmadge in "A Pair of Silk Stockings" and Smiling Bill [sic] Parsons in "Birds of a Feather" at the Coronet. July 9 & 10 Remarks: On page 10, another ad. on "A Pair of Silk Stockings" and "Birds of a Feather." Also Pathe's British Gazette and "The Silent Mystery" episode 3. Eastern Theatre, Wanchai, 7.30 and 9.30, "The Red Glove" episodes 15 and 16, "The Silent Mystery" episode 1	Coronet Theatre, Eastern Theatre, Wanchai, Po Hing Theatre, Yaumati	Pathe	Constance Talmadge, William Parsons (Smiling Billy Parsons), Al	A Pair of Silk Stockings	Birds of a Feather	Pathe Gazette	The Silent Mystery	The Red Glove	The Fortunes of Fifi	Comedy								



# Project Background

(News/Advertisement Images from newspaper microfilm)

## A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925) 殖民時期香港電影放映與接收史料庫 (1897-1925)

Year **1897** is the advent of film screenings,

Year **1925** represents the maturity of movie exhibition as an industrial practice.

	Period Covered	News Articles	Advertisements	Total
<b>The China Mail</b>	1897-1925	3,207	4,046	<b>7,253 (23.5%)</b>
<b>Hong Kong Telegraph</b>	1897-1925	2,707	4,516	<b>7,223 (23.3%)</b>
<b>South China Morning Post</b>	1904-1925	7,311	9,118	<b>16,429 (53.2%)</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>13,225 (42.8%)</b>	<b>17,680 (57.2%)</b>	<b>30,905</b>

# Project Background

Dear Louisa,

Thanks for the info.

I have reviewed the databases, it should not be difficult, provided that Prof. Yeh and her research team can provide structured data. There should be copyright concerned if the data are newspaper clippings. Having it typed (not image) should resolve the issue.

Frankly speaking, even Drupal can handle this simple job. However, for a more serious DH project, I think we need to study the potential of the data, but not only setup a simple web search for it.

The metadata is not an issue, as you suggest, we may involve CP team for handling, but in view of the 2 projects you listed, the data structure is very simple after we all gained experience from repository projects that we have been worked on.

A meeting would be needed for the project kick off.

Tony, it is time for us to explore a platform /CMS that can contain this kind of projects.

Thanks,  
Jeff

Dear Louisa,

I have just reviewed the data, I would also think there are some possibilities.

It looks like some venue are in Hong Kong, we can visually look up the GIS data to present it in a map.

With the year and date info, we can visualize it in a timeline.js project

It involves him, so we may look up and link our video Collections, if not, we can check with CDM to acquire the titles.

If not, we can link to wiki or imdb

As it seems to be having some old Movie Theatre in Hong Kong, see if we can locate some old HK pics for kind of visualization.

Thanks,  
Jeff

## Keyword:

Structured Data

Copyright concern

Drupal CMS

GIS Presentation in map

Timeline Presentation

Wiki/IMDB

# Preserve the Heritage: In terms of Research Data

---

1

Correct Typos

2

Normalise special  
/ variant  
characters  
(e.g. Les  
Misérables , café)

3

Delimit Data from  
the researchers'  
source file for a  
more structured  
database

4

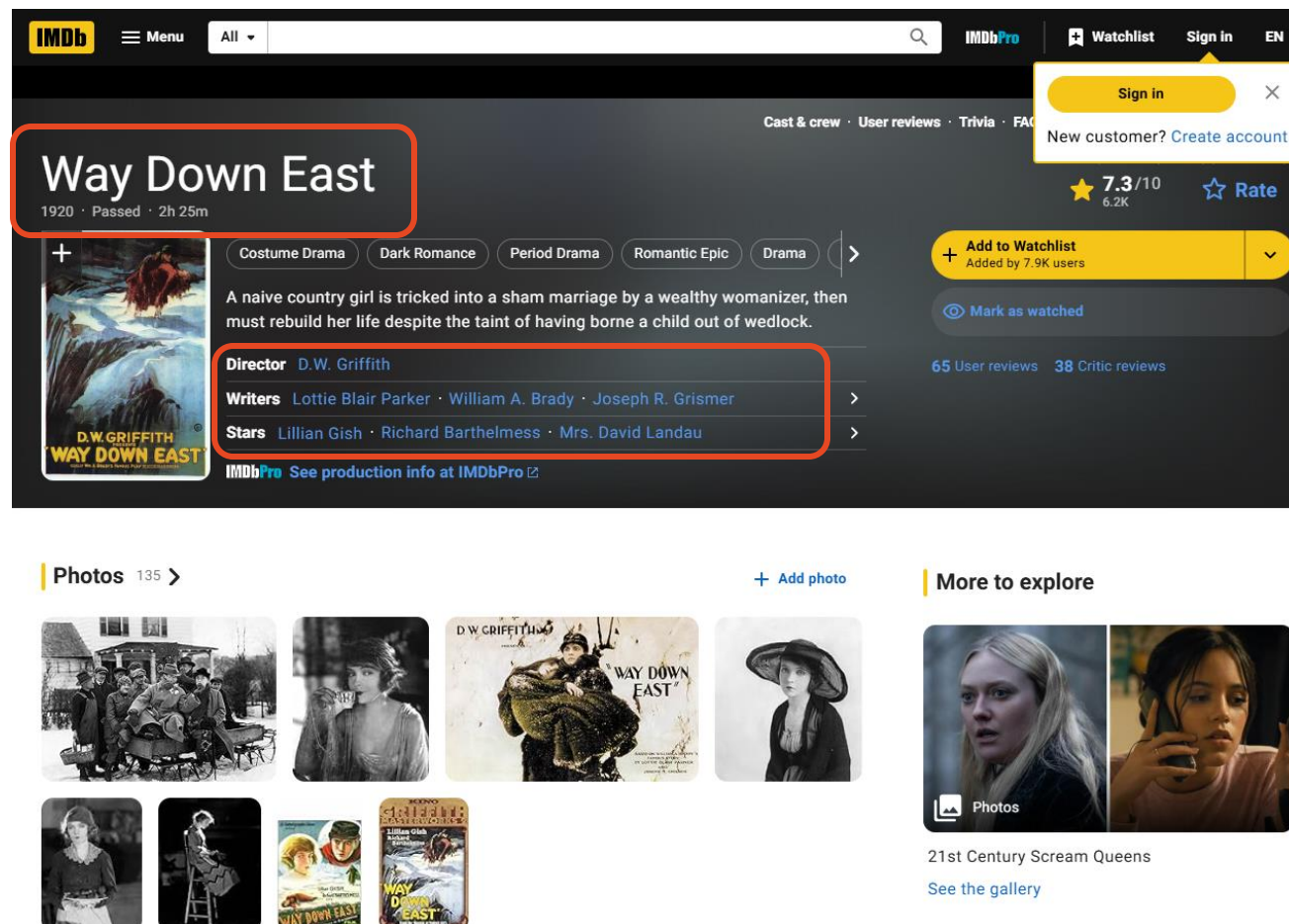
Add Digital  
Humanities (DH)  
Elements into the  
project!



# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (Get more data from IMDb)

- Explore to grab data from International Movie Data Base (IMDB)

- Actors
- Directors/Writers
- Country
- Runtime information
- Release Year
- Genre
- Plot
- Poster image URL
- IMDB detailed page URL
- etc



<https://www.imdb.com/>

# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (IMDb via OMDb API)


[OMDb API](#) [Usage](#) [Parameters](#) [Examples](#) [Change Log](#) [API Key](#) [Become a Patron](#) [Donate](#) [Contact](#)

## OMDb API

The Open Movie Database

The OMDb API is a RESTful web service to obtain movie information, all content and images on the site are contributed and maintained by our users.

If you find this service useful, please consider making a [one-time donation](#) or [become a patron](#).



**Poster API**  
The Poster API is only available to patrons.  
Currently over 280,000 posters, updated daily with resolutions up to 2000x3000.

### Sponsors

Emby, Trakt, FileBot, Reelgood, Xirvik Servers, Yidio, mi.tv, Couchpop, Edu Reviewer, Flixboss, Scripts on Screen, Topagency.webflow.io, Ramotion.com, Phone Trackers, Classics on DVD, Streaming App, How to make a FinTech app, Vid2 - Create movie lists with AI, Popflick, Custom Couch, TV.GURU, Deploy Vision - Nearshore Software Development, Pictly, DoMyEssay, EssayPro, HomeworkGuy, [The Streaming Codex](#)

## Usage

Send all data requests to:

```
http://www.omdbapi.com/?apikey=[yourkey]&
```

<https://www.omdbapi.com/>

# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (IMDb via OMDb API)

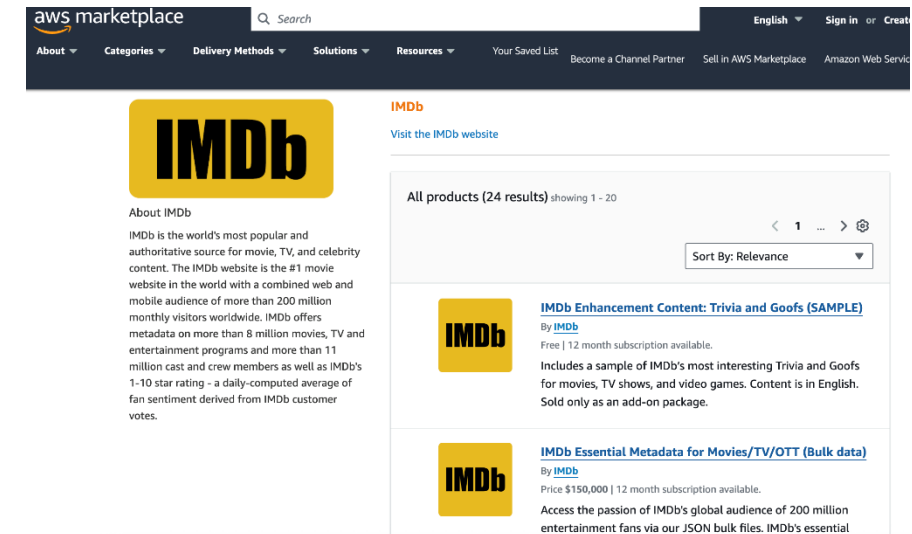
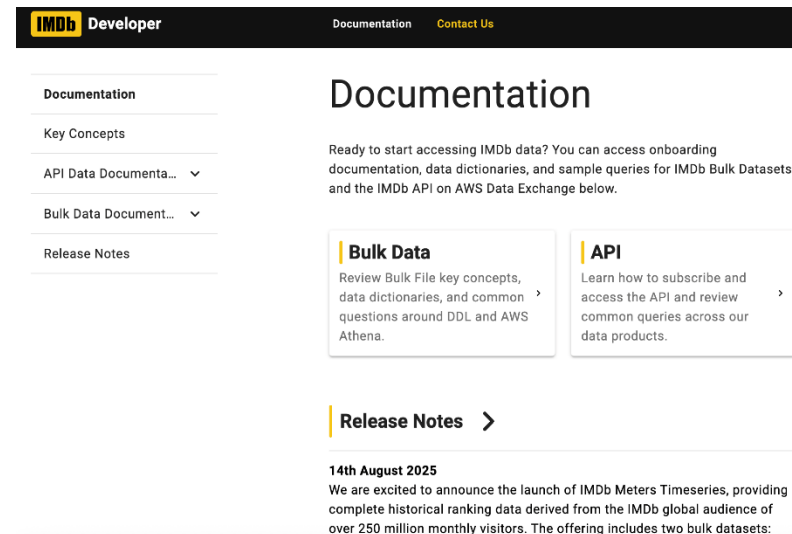
```
{
  "Title": "A Mormon Maid",
  "Year": "1917",
  "Rated": "N/A",
  "Released": "22 Apr 1917",
  "Runtime": "68 min",
  "Genre": "Drama, History, Western",
  "Director": "Robert Z. Leonard",
  "Writer": "Charles Sarver, Paul West (story)",
  "Actors": "Mae Murray, Frank Borzage, Hobart Bosworth, Edythe Chapman",
  "Plot": "This silent melodrama is set against the 1840s westward migration of the Mormons. Dora, a young woman, and her family are saved from an Indian attack by a Mormon community traveling to Utah...",
  "Language": "None, English",
  "Country": "USA",
  "Awards": "N/A",
  "Poster": "https://m.media-amazon.com/images/M/MV5BODAsYjUxYWUzZmQxMy00MTE3LWlzMjY2MjY2OGY3ODUyNDc0XkE5XkFgcGdeQXVyNjc4NTQxNjg@_V1_SX300.jpg",
  "Ratings": {
    "Source": "Internet Movie Database",
    "Value": "6.1/10"
  },
  "Metascore": "N/A",
  "imdbRating": "6.1",
  "imdbVotes": "77",
  "imdbID": "tt0008319",
  "Type": "movie",
  "DVD": "N/A",
  "BoxOffice": "N/A",
  "Production": "N/A",
  "Website": "N/A",
  "Response": "Success"
}
```

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
1	Year	yearadjust mergedfilm		title	yearFound	rated	released	runtime	genre	director	writer	actors	plot	language	country	awards	poster	imdbID	boxOfficer	production	
2	1913	1912	"Romeby" South Sweden	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
3	1913	1912	"Waffles" as Cook Against Her Will	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
4	1920	1919	\$500 or Bust!	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
5	1923	1922	'Snub' Comedy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
6	1922	1921	'Snub' Comedy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
7	1921	1920	'Snub' Comedy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
8	1920	1919	'Snub' Comedy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
9	1915	1914	10th Series of War Pictures	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
10	1915	1914	11th Series of War Pictures	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
11	1922	1921	1922 Derby	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
12	1915	1914	20 Minutes of Love	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
13	1917	1916	20,000 Feet under the Sea	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
14	1914	1913	2nd Series of War Pictures	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
15	1923	1922	365 Days	365 Days	1922	N/A	17 Sep 1922	N/A	Short, Con	Charley Ch	N/A	'Snub' Poll	N/A	None, Eng	USA	N/A	https://m.	tt0467160	N/A	N/A	
16	1922	1921	39 East	39 East	1920	N/A	01 Sep 1920	50 min	Comedy	John S. Ro	Rachel Crc	Constance	The eldest	None, Eng	USA	N/A	https://m.	tt0010945	N/A	N/A	
17	1921	1920	39 East	39 East	1920	N/A	01 Sep 1920	50 min	Comedy	John S. Ro	Rachel Crc	Constance	The eldest	None, Eng	USA	N/A	https://m.	tt0010945	N/A	N/A	
18	1914	1913	3rd Series of War Pictures	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
19	1924	1923	40 Horse Hawkins	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
20	1921	1920	45 Minutes From Broadway	45 Minutes from E	1920	N/A	01 Aug 1920	N/A	Comedy	Joseph De	George M.	Charles Ra	Kid Burns	English	USA	N/A	N/A	tt0011206	N/A	N/A	
21	1915	1914	4th Series of War Picture	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
22	1915	1914	4th Series Rocombol	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	



# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (IMDb via OMDb API)

- **3,978** out of the 9,971 unique film records have been looked up with corresponding IMDb (Internet Movie Data Base) records.
- *A year later in 2021, IMDb launched its official API via AWS Marketplace for data search*

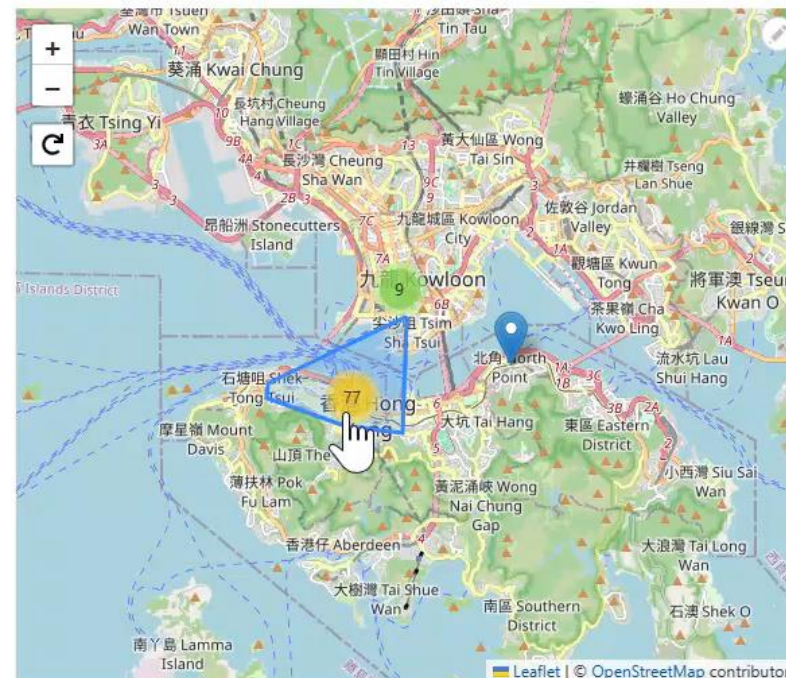


[https://developer.imdb.com/documentation/?ref\\_=side\\_nav](https://developer.imdb.com/documentation/?ref_=side_nav)

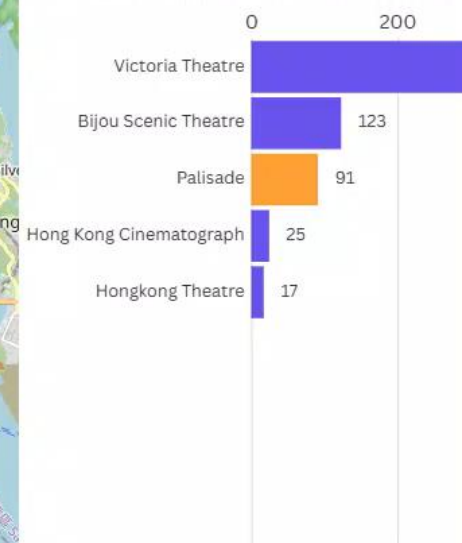
# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (Theatre/Venue Location plot to interactive map)

tid	venue	name	Address	Chinese Name	latitude	longitude
12236	1	Coronet Theatre	1 Wyndham St., Central	新比照影畫戲院	22.281198	114.156253
12237	2	Victoria Theatre	71 Des Voeux Street, (junction of Des Voeux Road and Pottinger St.), Central	域多利影畫戲院	22.283953	114.156615
12239	4	World Theatre	Wan	新世界影畫戲院	22.286378	114.153666
12240	5	Star Theatre	Hankow Road and Peking Road, Kowloon	景星戲院	22.296389	114.171244
12241	6	Kowloon Theatre	Nathan Road, Kowloon	九龍戲院	22.310916	114.171016
12242	7	Hongkong Theatre	(1st Generation) Between Des Voeux Road and the Praya, opposite to Central Market; (2nd Generation) Queen's Road East, Central	(1st Generation) 香港影畫戲院, (2nd Generation) 香港影畫院	22.284622	114.156244
12243	8	Queen's Theatre	31 Queen's Road Central, Central	皇后戲院	22.282162	114.156678
12244	9	Bijou Scenic Theatre	1 Wyndham St., Central	比照戲院	22.281198	114.156253
12245	10	Bijou Theatre	1 Wyndham St., Central	比照戲院	22.281198	114.156253
12246	11	Hong Kong Cinematograph Theatre	(1st Generation) 83 Des Voeux Road Central, Central (opposite to Central Market, current Hang Seng Bank Head Office); (2nd Generation) Queen's Road East, Central	(1st Generation) 香港影畫戲院, (2nd Generation) 香港影畫院	22.284622	114.156244
12247	12	Victoria Cinematograph	71 Des Voeux Street, (junction of Des Voeux Road and Pottinger St.), Central	域多利影畫戲院	22.283953	114.156615
12250	15	Empire Cinematograph Theatre	83 Des Voeux Road Central, Central (opposite to Central Market, current Hang Seng Bank Head Office)	奄吧奄派也影畫戲院	22.284591	114.155941
12251	16	Alexandra Cinematograph	2 Zetland St., Central	亞利山打影畫戲院	22.280603	114.15687
12253	18	Empire Theatre	83 Des Voeux Road Central, Central (opposite to Central Market, current Hang Seng Bank Head Office)	奄吧奄派也影畫戲院	22.284591	114.155941
12254	19	Wo Ping Theatre	83 Des Voeux Road Central, Central (opposite to Central Market, current Hang Seng Bank Head Office)	和平戲院	22.284396	114.156109
12257	22	City Hall	1-2A Des Voeux Road Central, Central	大會堂	22.280483	114.159322
12261	26	Salon-Cinema Theatre	1 Wyndham St., Central	沙龍影戲院	22.281198	114.156253
12266	31	Star Cinematograph	1 Wyndham St., Central	明星影畫戲院	22.281198	114.156253

請點選此處了解詳情。



Number of Films Exhibited by



District ■ Central ■ Wan ■ Yau Ma Tei ■ Tsim Si

Source: A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colo

# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (Timeline showing the History of Theatres)

Great work  
done by the  
Research Team



APRIL 4, 1910 – JANUARY 22, 1919

## EMPIRE CINEMATOGRAPH (奄派亞影畫戲院)

On the site of late Hong Kong Cinematograph (1907–1910),  
Des Voeux Rd., Central, opposite to Central Market, opened by  
Ramos

*"The Empire: New Cinematograph Theatre." SCMP, 4 Apr  
1910. 11.*

←  
SALON CINEMA  
THEATRE / SALON  
CINEMATOGRAPH  
(沙龍影畫戲院)

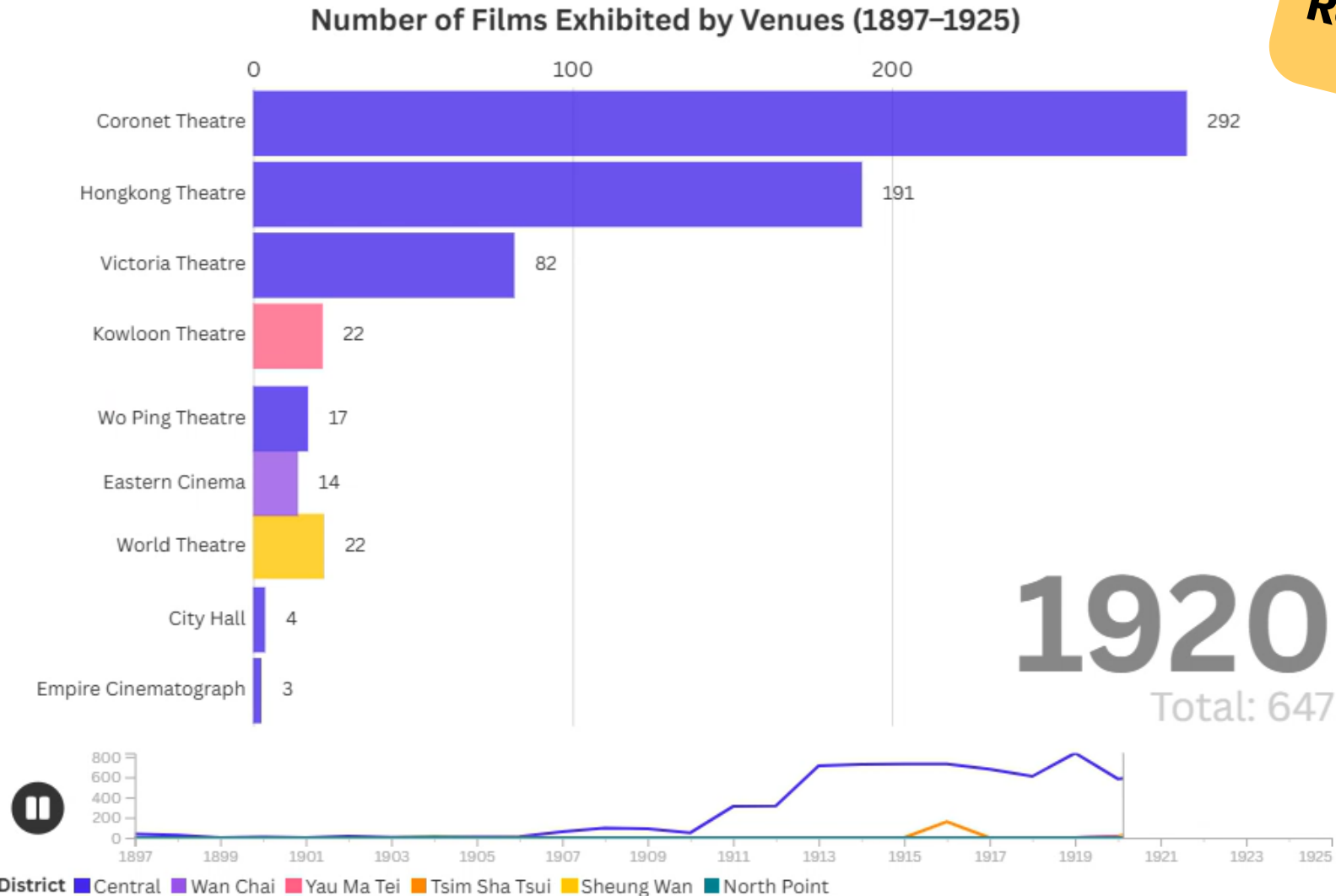
→  
BIJOU SCENIC  
THEATRE  
(比鄰戲院)  
NOVEMBER 16,  
1910 – DECEMBER  
24, 1918





# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (Visualising the No. of Films Exhibited by Years/Venues/Districts)

Great work  
done by the  
Research Team

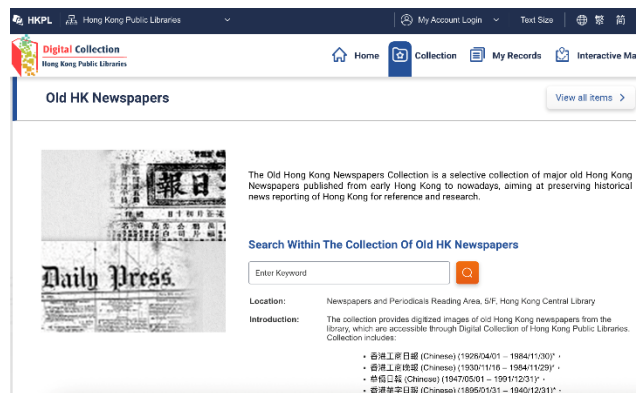


Source: A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897–1925)

## Full Text Images (To have or not to have?)

- 3 most distinct English-language newspapers in colonial Hong Kong
- Copyright Issues
- Availability from other Open Access sources → Construct URLs to link images

	Total	Image Size	Alternative Source
<b>The China Mail</b>	7,253 (23.5%)	5.97 GB	HK Public Library Digital Collection (Open Access)
<b>Hong Kong Telegraph</b>	7,223 (23.3%)	7.18 GB	
<b>South China Morning Post</b>	16,429 (53.2%)	11.5 GB	ProQuest Historical Newspapers (Under Lingnan University Library Subscription)
<b>Total</b>	30,905	24.65 GB	



HKPL Hong Kong Public Libraries


Digital Collection Hong Kong Public Libraries

Home Collection My Records Interactive Map

Old HK Newspapers [View all items >](#)

The Old Hong Kong Newspapers Collection is a selective collection of major old Hong Kong Newspapers published from early Hong Kong to nowadays, aiming at preserving historical news reporting of Hong Kong for reference and research.

**Search Within The Collection Of Old HK Newspapers**

Enter Keyword 

**Location:** Newspapers and Periodicals Reading Area, 5/F, Hong Kong Central Library

**Introduction:** The collection provides digitized images of old Hong Kong newspapers from the library, which are accessible through Digital Collection of Hong Kong Public Libraries. Collection includes:

- 香港工商日報 (Chinese) (1926/04/01 – 1984/11/30)\*
- 香港工商報 (Chinese) (1930/11/16 – 1964/11/29)\*
- 香港工報 (Chinese) (1947/05/01 – 1991/12/31)\*
- 香港華字日報 (Chinese) (1995/01/31 – 1996/12/31)\*



ProQuest Access provided by Lingnan University

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post

Basic Search Advanced Search Publications Change databases

Enter search terms... 

Search tips

This historical newspaper provides genealogists, researchers and scholars with online, easily-searchable first-hand accounts and unparalleled coverage of the politics, society and events of the time.

Coverage: 1903 - 2001 [View title list >](#)

Subject coverage

Want to Learn More?

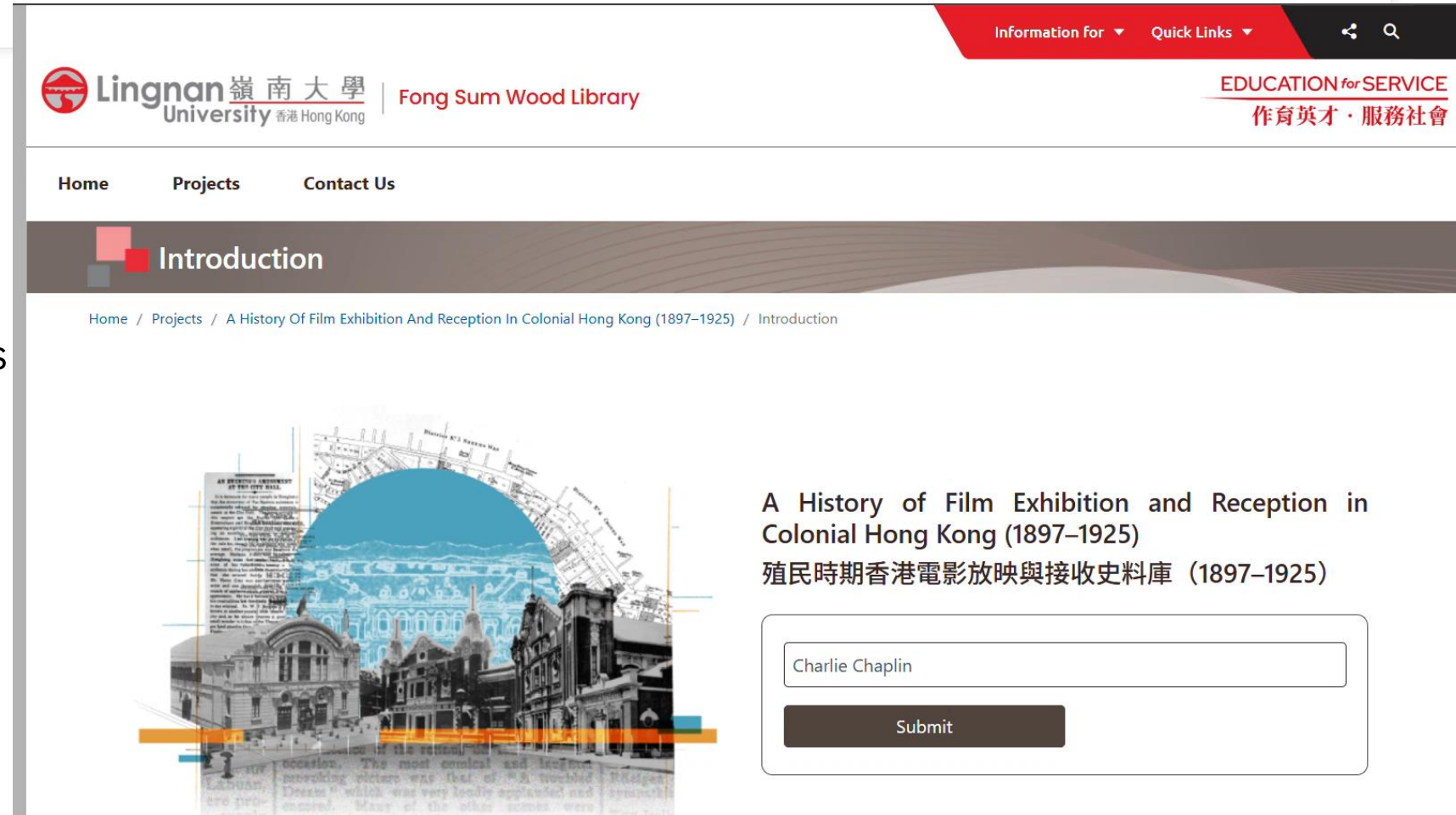
Try one of these options:

- Search the online [Help](#).

# Putting Everything Together!

## Technical Spec.

- Drupal CMS
- Solr
- Leaflet (for showing venues on map)
- Flourish (for visualisation)
- Redis (for caching)
- AWS Cloudwatch (for log monitoring)
- AWS RDS (MariaDB)





# For Researchers (research on actor/person)



JOURNAL OF CHINESE CINEMAS  
2024, VOL. 18, NOS. 2-3, 374-396  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2518014>

Routledge  
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RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

## Testing the canon: Digital scholarship and early cinema in Hong Kong

Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh

Department of Digital Arts and Creative Industries, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong

**ABSTRACT**  
A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897–1925) and Early Chinese Film Database are two digital humanities projects made to share new historical data on early cinema in Hong Kong and China. Information held in these two databases is pivotal to animating local film histories and can be utilized to form a new understanding of the incipient shape of cinema trade. This article seeks to aggregate the receptions of twenty canonical texts in Hong Kong from the late 1890s to mid 1920s by extracting relevant data from these two digital archives. A list of ‘classic’ films from Europe, America, and China was compiled to test the canon by looking at their receptions in Hong Kong. My findings show that early films exhibited in Hong Kong did not match, to a large extent, the canonical history of either global or Chinese cinemas. Instead, other factors might affect the local exhibition and reception of foreign and Chinese films. These factors include stars, the track records of directors and studios, exhibitors, and distributors. In closing, the article considers the likely gaps in digital archives and the limitations of digital historiography.

**KEYWORDS**  
Film database; early film exhibition in Hong Kong; film canon; film history; digital humanities

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- **A much better tool than Excel / traditional Library full text database**
- For instance, *Charlie Chaplin in Colonial Hong Kong* has 974 entries while *Buster Keaton* recorded only 187, showing the wide gap of the exposure between the two iconic stars on Hong Kong's early screens. And there are plenty of things to find in the two databases that will assist in developing hypotheses or agendas in need of empirical backing.

Yeh, E. Y. (2024). Testing the canon: Digital scholarship and early cinema in Hong Kong. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 18(2-3), 375-396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2518014>

# For Researchers (research on importers/distributors)



JOURNAL OF CHINESE CINEMAS  
2024, VOL. 18, NOS. 2-3, 375-396  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2518014>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

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- Before the First World War, most of the films imported to Hong Kong were controlled by *Pathé Freres (Abel 1999)*. It is telling that 2314 entries on Colonial Hong Kong appear under the keyword *Pathé*. This figure is more than those found for American companies Paramount (1000 entries), Fox (722 entries), and Metro and Goldwyn (797 entries).

Yeh, E. Y. (2024). Testing the canon: Digital scholarship and early cinema in Hong Kong. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 18(2-3), 375–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2518014>

# For Researchers (research on movies)



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RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

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Table 4. Entries of Hollywood stars and directors in the two databases, 1915–1925.

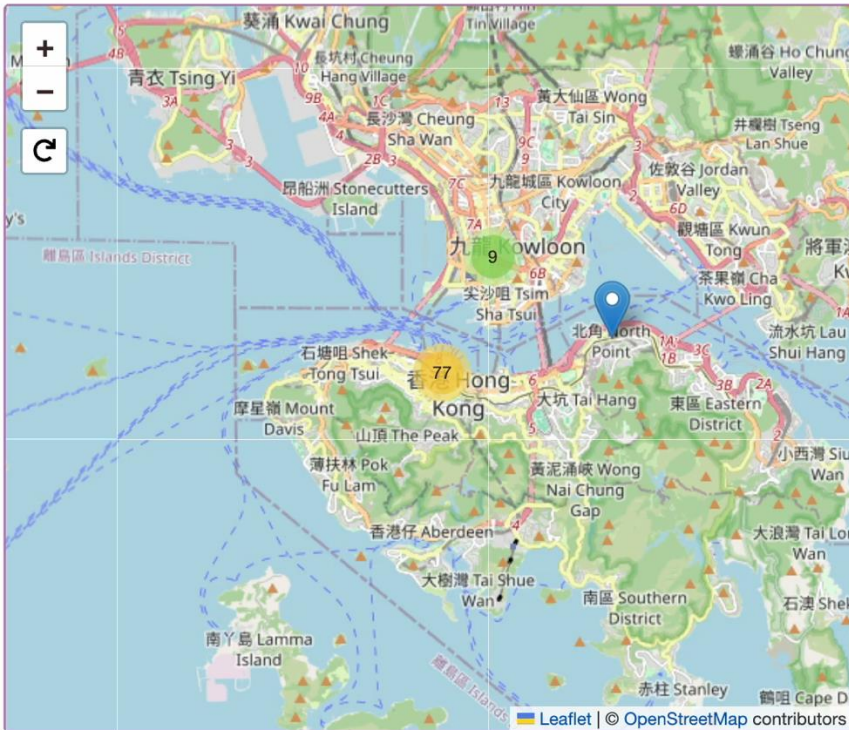
Keywords (Chinese rendition in Hong Kong newspapers)	Entries	Subtotal
Charlie Chaplin	974	1124
差利卓別麟 (卓別麟)	150	
Lillian Gish	169	195
呂倫居殊 (麗琳吉許)	26	
Douglas Fairbanks	537	597
菲賓克范朋克 (菲賓氏範朋克)	60	
D. W. Griffith	490	522
格里菲斯 (葛利佛, 葛萊, 葛萊非士, 葛雷非士)	32	
Harold Lloyd	916	1117
夏勞哀羅克 (神經六)	201	
Mary Pickford	572	621
瑪利辟福 (瑪麗畢克馥)	49	
Constance Talmadge	353	365
畢斯天 (群斯天)	12	
Norma Talmadge	462	481
娜瑪譚美芝 (羅瑪譚美芝)	19	

Download CSV

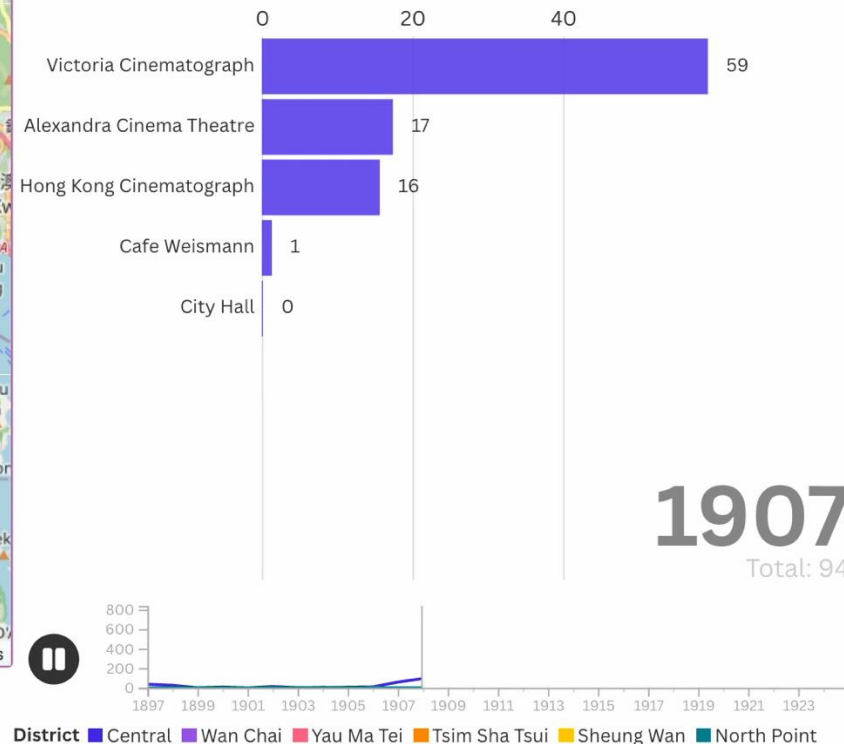
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# For Public (theatre info, location, etc.)



Number of Films Exhibited by Venues (1897–1925)



ProQuest  
Access provided by Lingnan University

Back to issue Back to original item 3 of 159 Full Text Newspaper

FAIRALL & CO.  
South China Morning Post (1903-1941); Hong Kong. 05 Apr 1910: 1. Browse this issue

PDF Page view - PDF Details

NONE 1 / 1 98% +

FAIRALL & CO.  
7 & 9, Pedder Street. Tel: 644.

THE  
Empire Cinematograph Theatre.  
DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL (OPPOSITE CENTRAL MARKET.)  
The Victoria Cinematograph has removed to the above place.  
NOW OPEN. NOW OPEN.  
BEST ARTISTS. MAGNIFICENT FILMS.  
CROWN ROYAL EXTRA CANVAS  
STRONG TARPAILINGS. MOST RELIABLE.

South China Morning Post (1903-1941)

https://www.proquest.com/docview/1498848159/fulltextPDF/742668D639BD419CPQ/3?accountid=12107&sourcetype=Newspapers

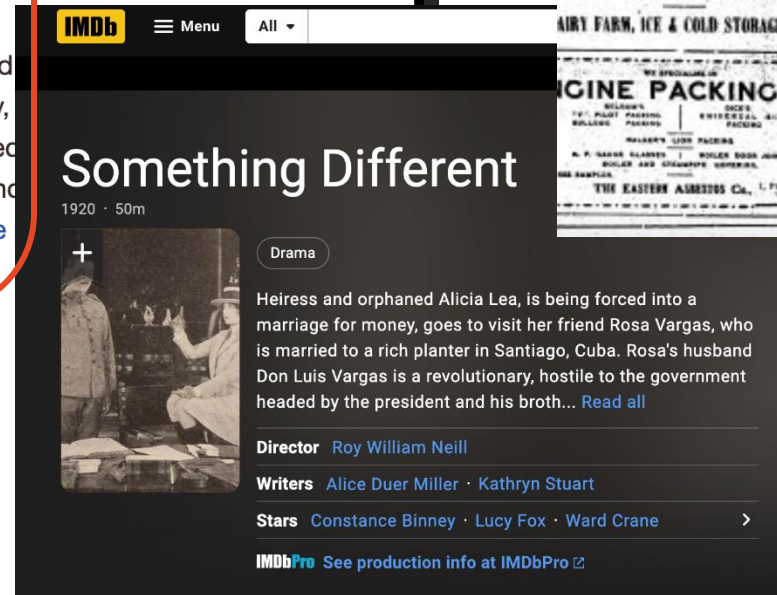
# For Public (movie info, year of exhibit, etc)

## The Coronet; Kowloon Theatre

Home / Projects / A History Of Film Exhibition And Reception In Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925)

Headline	The Coronet; Kowloon Theatre
Newspaper Source	South China Morning Post
Publication Date	1922-06-16 - 1922-06-16
Publication Year	1922
Page	12
Column	Entertainments
Times Appeared (Days)	1
Key Person	Norma Talmadge Constance Binney Henry Lehrman
Film Projector / Film(s)	<a href="#">The Sign on the Door (View more)</a> <a href="#">Something Different (View more)</a> <a href="#">A Game Lady (View more)</a>
Summary	The Coronet: 2.30, 5.15, 7.15 and 9.15, Norma Talmadge in 'Something Different' and 'A Game Lady'.
Type	Advertisement
Venue(s)	<a href="#">Coronet Theatre (View more)</a> <a href="#">Kowloon Theatre (View more)</a>
View the full text image	<a href="#">ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post</a>

Actors	Constance Binney
Director	Roy William Neill
Writer	Alice Duer Miller (novel)
Country	USA
Released	1920-12-01
Runtime	50 min
Genre	Drama
Language	None
Plot	Heiress and orphaned Alicia Lea, is being forced into a marriage for money, goes to visit her friend Rosa Vargas, who is married to a rich planter in Santiago, Cuba. Rosa's husband
Poster	<a href="#">Click here to view the poster</a>
View more in Imdb	<a href="#">View more</a>



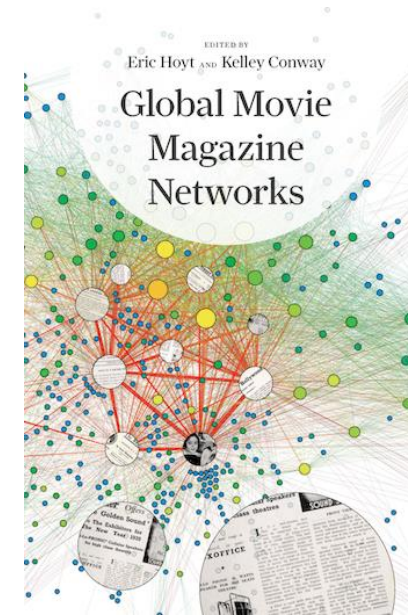
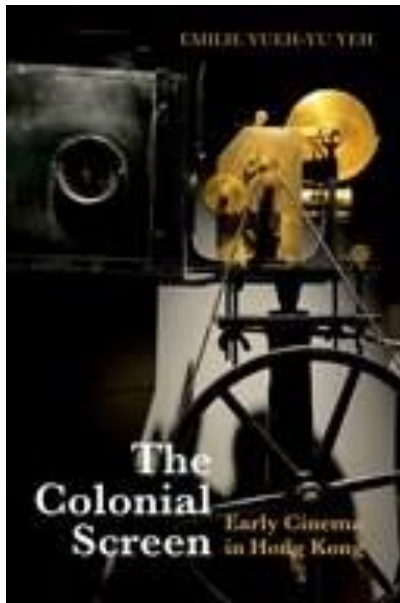
[South China Morning Post \(1903-1941\)](#)

<https://www.proquest.com/pagemap/1499678985/pageview/1D0DA1A3792F4D13PQ/8?accountid=12107&t=lb&t=sourcetype=>



# Usage and Impact

- Over 90,000 web access recorded since its launch in 2021
- Books/Articles/Chapters were published by the Research Team using the findings of this project



Provenance of Early Chinese Movie Publications  
Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis

Researching the past often depends on chance and serendipity. Sometimes an incidental discovery can unexpectedly fill a missing piece in a puzzle; often, a relentless search may result in nothing. A film historian's task is not always rewarding, and frustration abounds when the work needed is to seek materials of the early twentieth century, an era before there was a notion of a film library or archive. In the case of Chinese film, it is especially challenging, as many films before the 1930s did not survive, and many print sources such as handbills, posters, scripts, and company records were destroyed or scattered around the world. In working with the Media History Digital Library (MHDL) and curating books and periodicals for digitization, we find revisiting early Chinese film history an uneven path, though it sometimes seems miraculous or, more often, quotidian.

This chapter details the process of choosing, searching, and introducing key sources in early Chinese-language film history, including artifacts from China, Hong Kong, and, to some extent, Taiwan, while also balancing among three distinct sources of film history: periodicals, catalogs, and book-length publications. In every case, there were important influences from abroad, via Hollywood, Japanese, and European film industries. We single out the period before 1930 in this study, as it is less familiar to global researchers.<sup>1</sup> This phase is normally called "early cinema" by Chinese historians; that term is defined differently from its use in European and US film scholarship. Due to the scarcity of surviving films predating 1930, the "early" phase of cinema in China and Hong Kong usually refers to the period from the 1910s to early 1930s (rather than the period between the 1910s and 1930s). This periodization follows the time line of films made by the first Chinese producers to the advent of sound and the rise of left-wing cinema, two concurrent

<https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197798331.001.0001>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2518014>

<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.21819454.25>



# Usage and Impact

- Articles cited/quoted this database from other scholars



<https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1733>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2541527>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2025.2509164>

# Lessons Learnt



UNDERSTANDING THE  
PROJECT



LEVERAGING  
EXPERTISE OF  
RESEARCH TEAM AND  
LIBRARY



RESOURCES PLANNING





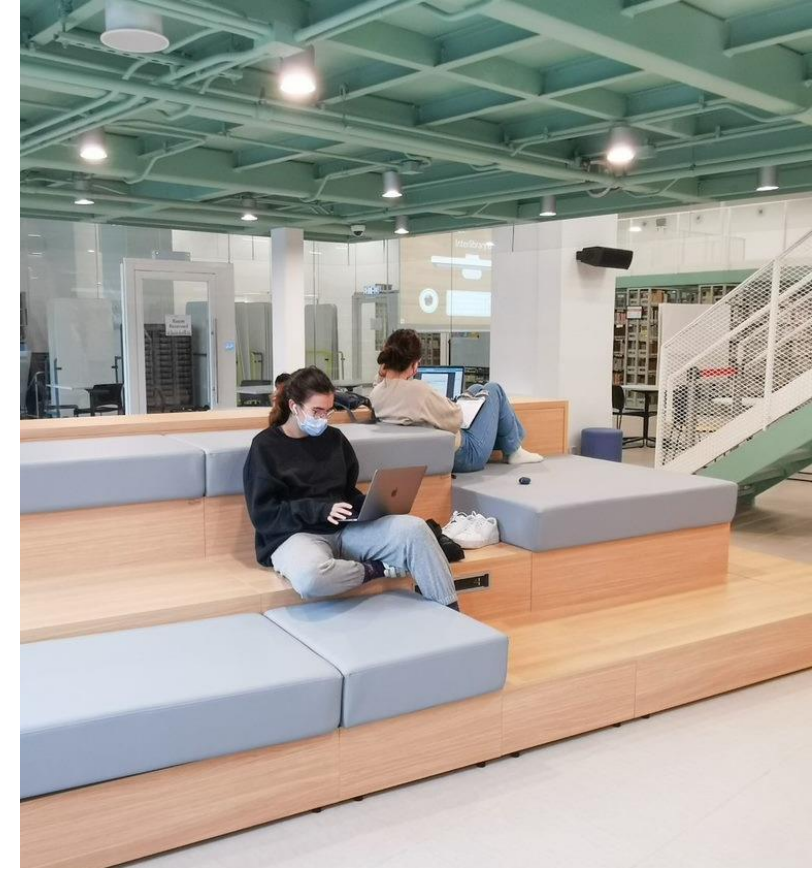
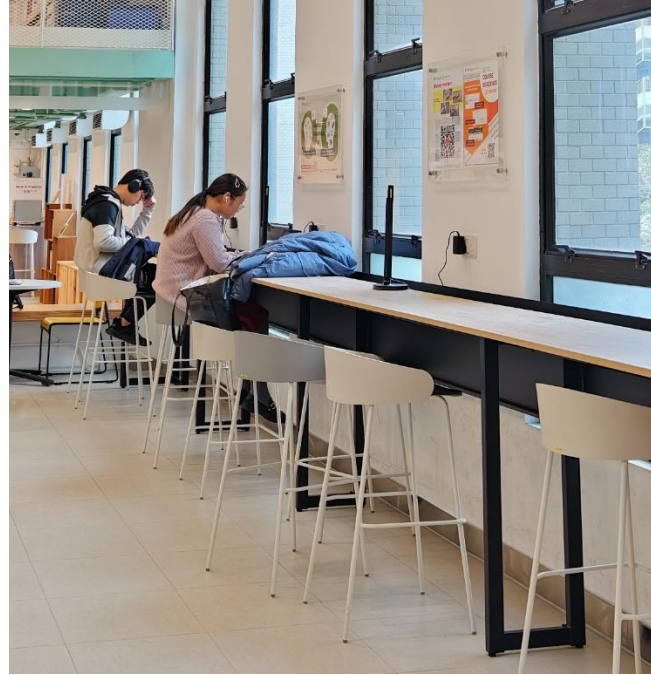
# Thanks to the Team!

## Research Team

- Prof. Emilie YEH
- Ms. Snowie WONG (Senior Research Officer, our main contact)

## Library

- Dr. Louisa LAM (Chief Information Officer and University Librarian)
- Mr. Tony TSANG (Digital Services Librarian)





# References

Yeh, E. Y. (2024). Testing the canon: Digital scholarship and early cinema in Hong Kong. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 18(2-3), 375-396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2025.2518014>

## A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925):

<https://digital.library.ln.edu.hk/en/projects/film/intro>

## Hong Kong Public Libraries Digital Collection:

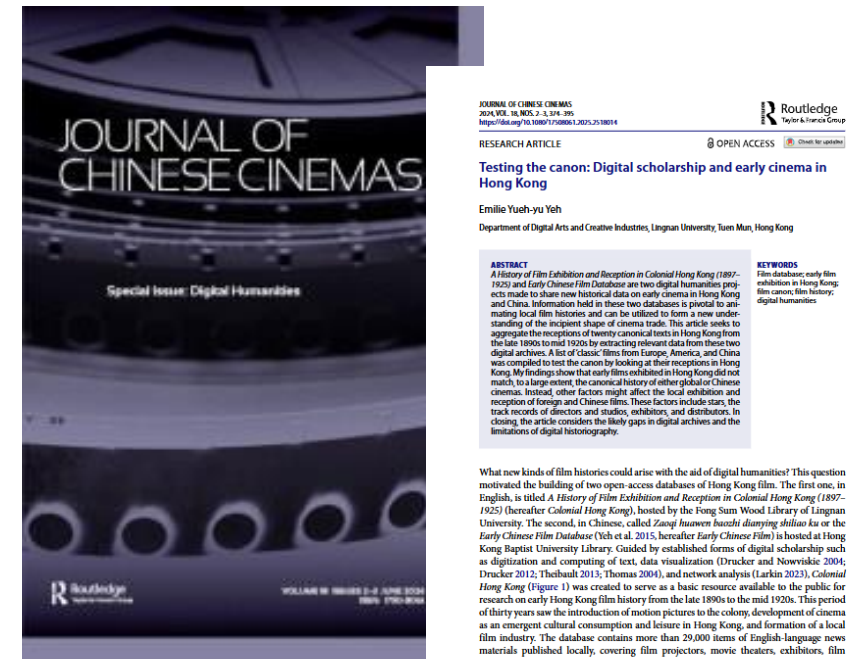
<https://sls.hkpl.gov.hk/digital-collection/en/index.html>

## Proquest South China Morning Post:

<https://www.proquest.com/publication/2030997>

## IMDB:

<https://www.imdb.com/>



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RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

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KEYWORDS  
Film databases; early film exhibition in Hong Kong; film canon; film history; digital humanities

What new kinds of film histories could arise with the aid of digital humanities? This question motivated the building of two open-access databases of Hong Kong film. The first one, in English, is titled *A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925)* (hereafter *Colonial Hong Kong*), hosted by the Fong Sum Wood Library of Lingnan University. The second, in Chinese, called *Zaoqi huawen huashi dianying shiliao ku* or the *Early Chinese Film Database* (Yeh et al. 2015, hereafter *Early Chinese Film*) is hosted at Hong Kong Baptist University Library. Guided by established forms of digital scholarship such as digitization and computing of text, data visualization (Drucker and Nowviskie 2004; Drucker 2012; Thebaud 2013; Thomas 2004), and network analysis (Larkin 2023), *Colonial Hong Kong* (Figure 1) was created to serve as a basic resource available to the public for research on early Hong Kong film history from the late 1890s to the mid 1920s. This period of thirty years saw the introduction of motion pictures to the colony, development of cinema as an emergent cultural consumption and leisure in Hong Kong, and formation of a local film industry. The database contains more than 29,000 items of English-language news materials published locally, covering film projectors, movie theaters, exhibitors, film

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# Thank You!

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