

# 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

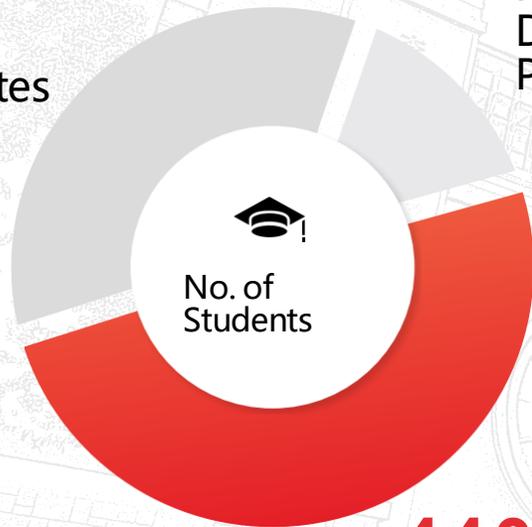
HK International Airport ↔ Lingnan University

🚗 Around 30 mins car ride



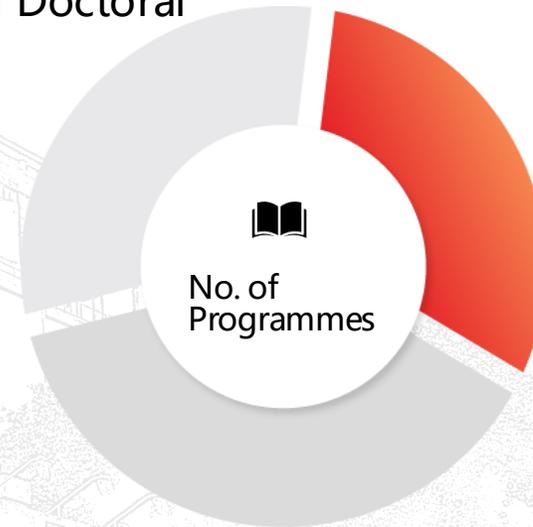
# Numbers at a Glance

**3600+**  
Taught  
Postgraduates



**150+**  
Research and  
Doctoral  
Postgraduates

**36**  
Research MPhil  
and Doctoral



**30+**  
Undergraduates

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

**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

Information for ▾ Quick Links ▾

Lingnan 嶺南大學 | Fong Sum Wood Library  
University 香港 Hong Kong

EDUCATION for SERVICE  
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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)

Search this database

Submit

## 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

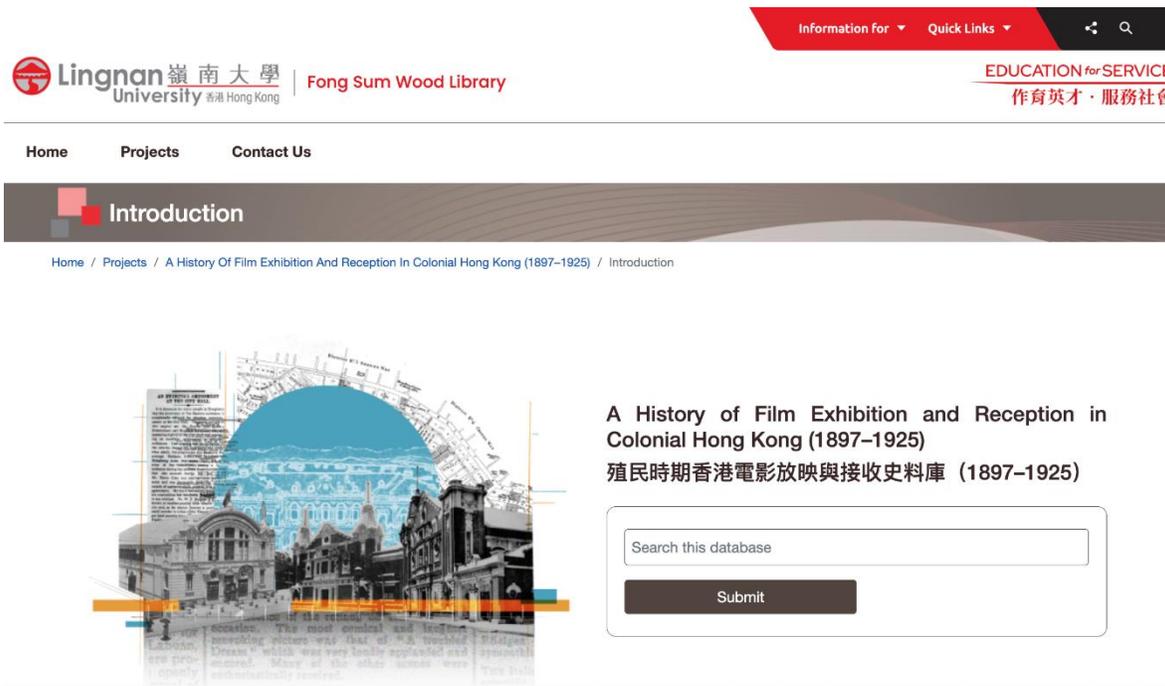
# The Project

## 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:



- 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>  
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 11:46 AM  
To: LIU Wing-hong Jeff <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)



**TUESDAY, JULY 12, 1921.**

**ENTERTAINMENTS.**

**THE PICK OF THE PICTURES TO-NIGHT**

At 2.30, 5.15, 7.15 & 9.15

**WO - - - "THE SON OF TARZAN"**  
**PING - - - Episode 5.**

**THEATRE "DAREDEVIL JACK"**  
 Episodes 3 & 4.

---

at 2.30, 5.15, 7.15 and 9.15

**MABEL NORMAND**  
 - is -  
**"SIS HOPKINS"**

at 9.15 p.m.

**Alice Brady**  
 - is -  
**"IN THE HOLLOW OF HER HAND"**

---

**THE CORONET**      **THE KOWLOON**

**HONGKONG THEATRE.**

TO-NIGHT at 5.15 & 9.15 p.m.

The Famous Comedy Star  
**GEORGE BEBAN**  
 - is -  
**"ONE MORE AMERICAN"**  
 A PARAMOUNT PRODUCTION

---

**THE WORLD THEATRE**

Under European Management.

The Most Modern and Up-to-Date place of  
 amusement in Hongkong.

**THURSDAY, 14th.,**  
**Grand Free Opening Day**  
 2.30, 5.15, 7.15 & 9.15 p.m.

An All Comedy Programme  
 will be introduced.

SEE THE  
**"BONDS OF LOVE."**

---

**THEATRE ROYAL**

Return Visit by General Regent of  
**MATTHEW W. BRADMAN**

Presents  
**THE BANDMAN OPERA CO.**  
 IN THEIR LAST TWO WEEKS

In the following latest London Successes and others.

MONDAY, July 11th	<b>BEAN PIE</b>
TUESDAY, July 12th	<b>AFGAR</b>
WEDNESDAY, July 13th	<b>ISBE</b>
THURSDAY, July 14th	<b>THE BETTER OLD</b>
FRIDAY, July 15th	<b>WHO'S HOOPER</b>

BOOKING at MOUTRIER, TUESDAY, July 12th  
 Prices: 5s. 2s. & 1s.      Quarters at 5.15 p.m.

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	H	L	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	
1	Start Da	End Da		Title	Pa	Column	Summary	Venue	Organizatio	Key Person	Film Projector/Fil...	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., Broadwest 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. July 12 Remarks: On page 10, another ad. on "A Pair of Silk Stockings" and "Birds of a Feather." 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 nim, 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

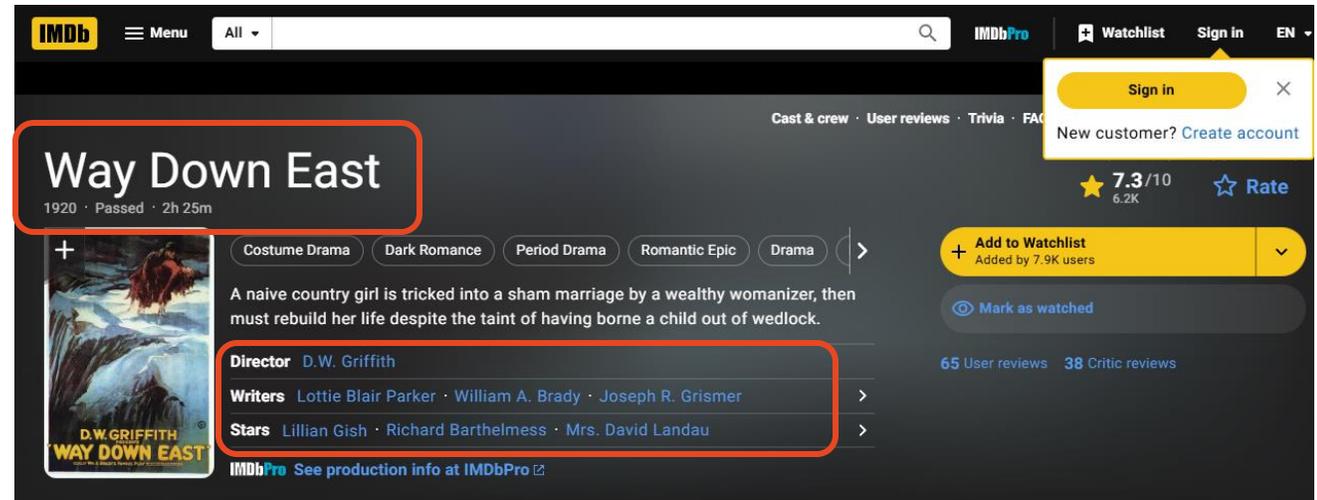
4

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



Photos 135 >

+ Add photo

More to explore

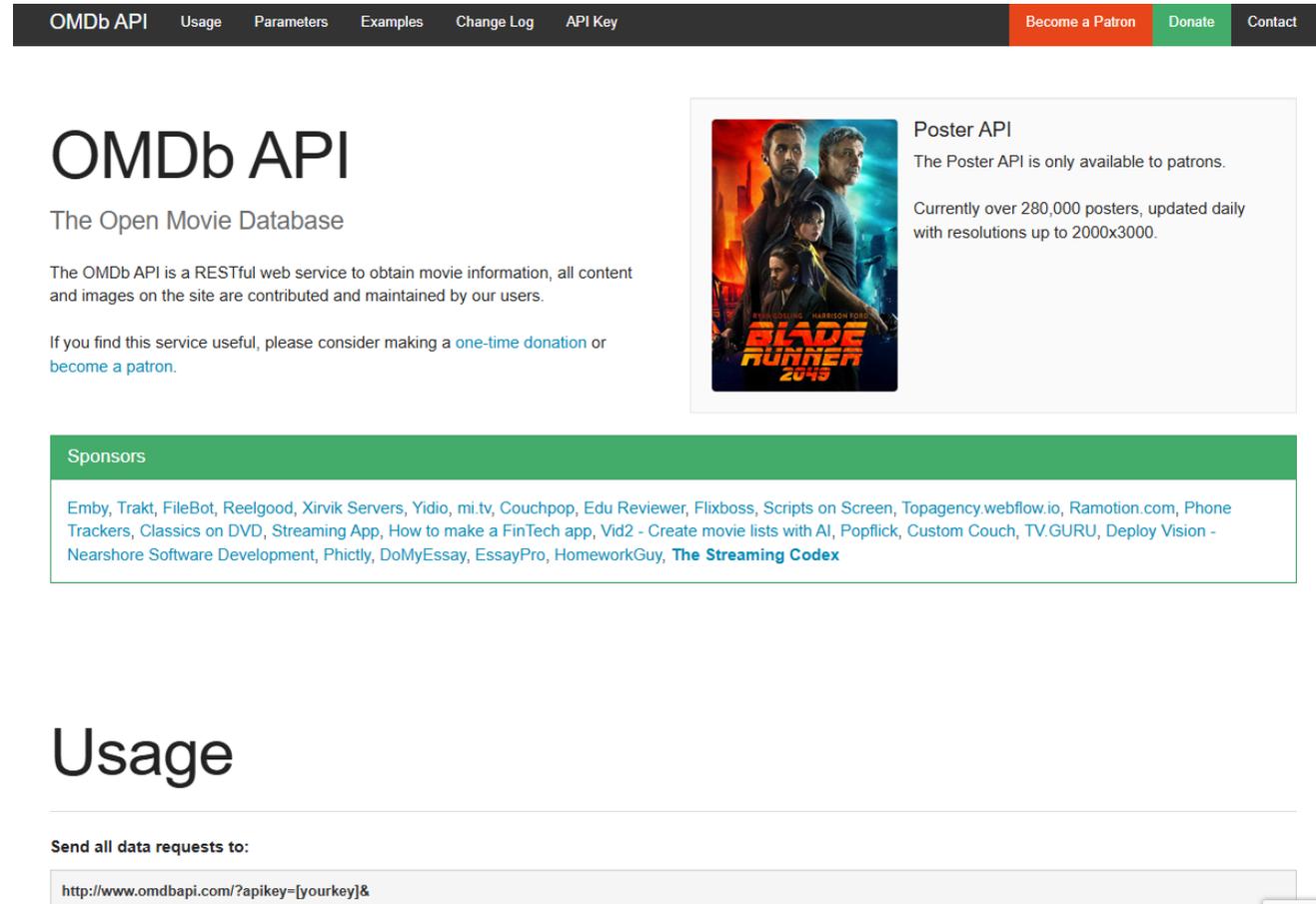


21st Century Scream Queens

See the gallery

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

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



The screenshot shows the OMDb API website. At the top is a navigation bar with links: OMDb API, Usage, Parameters, Examples, Change Log, API Key, Become a Patron, Donate, and Contact. The main content area features the title "OMDb API" and the subtitle "The Open Movie Database". Below this is a paragraph explaining that the API is a RESTful web service for movie information. To the right, there is a "Poster API" section with a movie poster for "Blade Runner 2049" and text stating that the poster API is only available to patrons and that there are currently over 280,000 posters. Below the main content is a "Sponsors" section with a list of sponsors including 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, Phtictly, DoMyEssay, EssayPro, HomeworkGuy, and The Streaming Codex. At the bottom, there is a "Usage" section with the instruction "Send all data requests to:" followed by a text box containing the URL "http://www.omdbapi.com/?apikey=[yourkey]&".

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

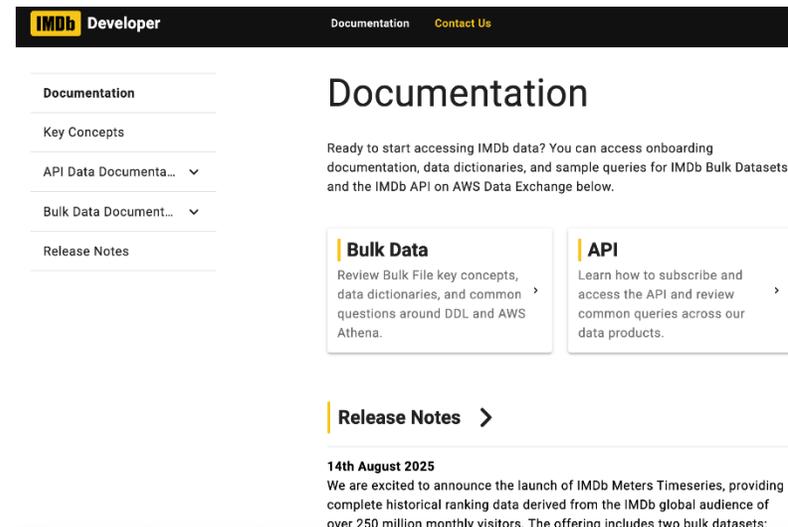
# Enhance the Project with DH elements? (IMDb via OMDb API)

```
{
  "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/MV5BODAS5YjUxYWUzZmQxMy00MTE3LWlZyY2MtNzljOGY3ODUyNDc0XkEYXkFgcGdeQXVyNjc4NTQxNjg@._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"
}
```

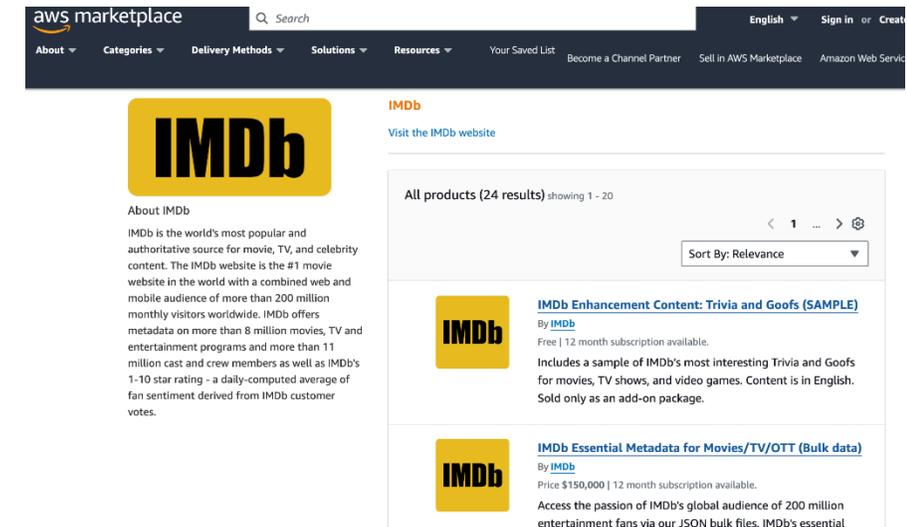
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
1	Year	yearadjust	mergedfilm	title	yearFound	rated	released	runtime	genre	director	writer	actors	plot	language	country	awards	poster	imdbID	boxOfficer	production	
2	1913	1912	"Romeby"	South Sweden	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	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	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	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	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	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*



The screenshot shows the IMDb Developer documentation page. The header includes the IMDb logo and 'Developer' text, with navigation links for 'Documentation' and 'Contact Us'. A left sidebar lists 'Documentation', 'Key Concepts', 'API Data Documenta...', 'Bulk Data Document...', and 'Release Notes'. The main content area is titled 'Documentation' and contains an introductory paragraph: 'Ready to start accessing IMDb data? You can access onboarding documentation, data dictionaries, and sample queries for IMDb Bulk Datasets and the IMDb API on AWS Data Exchange below.' Below this are two cards: 'Bulk Data' (with a sub-header 'Bulk Data') and 'API' (with a sub-header 'API'). A 'Release Notes' section is also visible, dated '14th August 2025', mentioning the launch of IMDb Meters Timeseries.

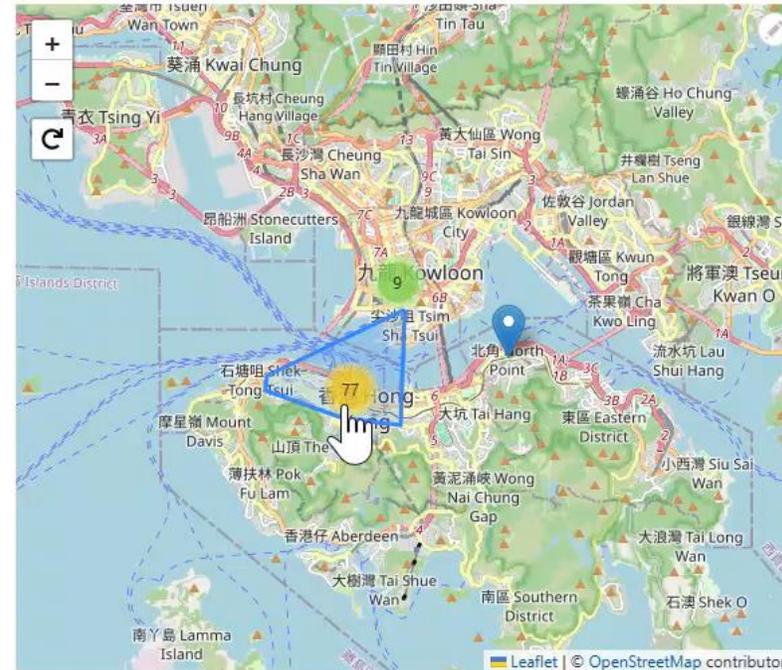


The screenshot shows the IMDb product listing on the AWS Marketplace. The header includes the AWS Marketplace logo and a search bar. The main content area features the IMDb logo and a description: 'IMDb is the world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV, and celebrity content. The IMDb website is the #1 movie website in the world with a combined web and mobile audience of more than 200 million monthly visitors worldwide. IMDb offers metadata on more than 8 million movies, TV and entertainment programs and more than 11 million cast and crew members as well as IMDb's 1-10 star rating - a daily-computed average of fan sentiment derived from IMDb customer votes.' Below the description are two product listings: 'IMDb Enhancement Content: Trivia and Goofs (SAMPLE)' and 'IMDb Essential Metadata for Movies/TV/OTT (Bulk data)'. The first listing is priced at 'Free | 12 month subscription available' and includes a sample of Trivia and Goofs. The second listing is priced at '\$150,000 | 12 month subscription available' and provides access to IMDb's global audience of 200 million entertainment fans via JSON bulk files.

[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	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	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 Chai ■ 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



◀  
SALON CINEMA  
THEATRE/ SALON  
CINEMATOGRAPH  
(沙龍影畫院)

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

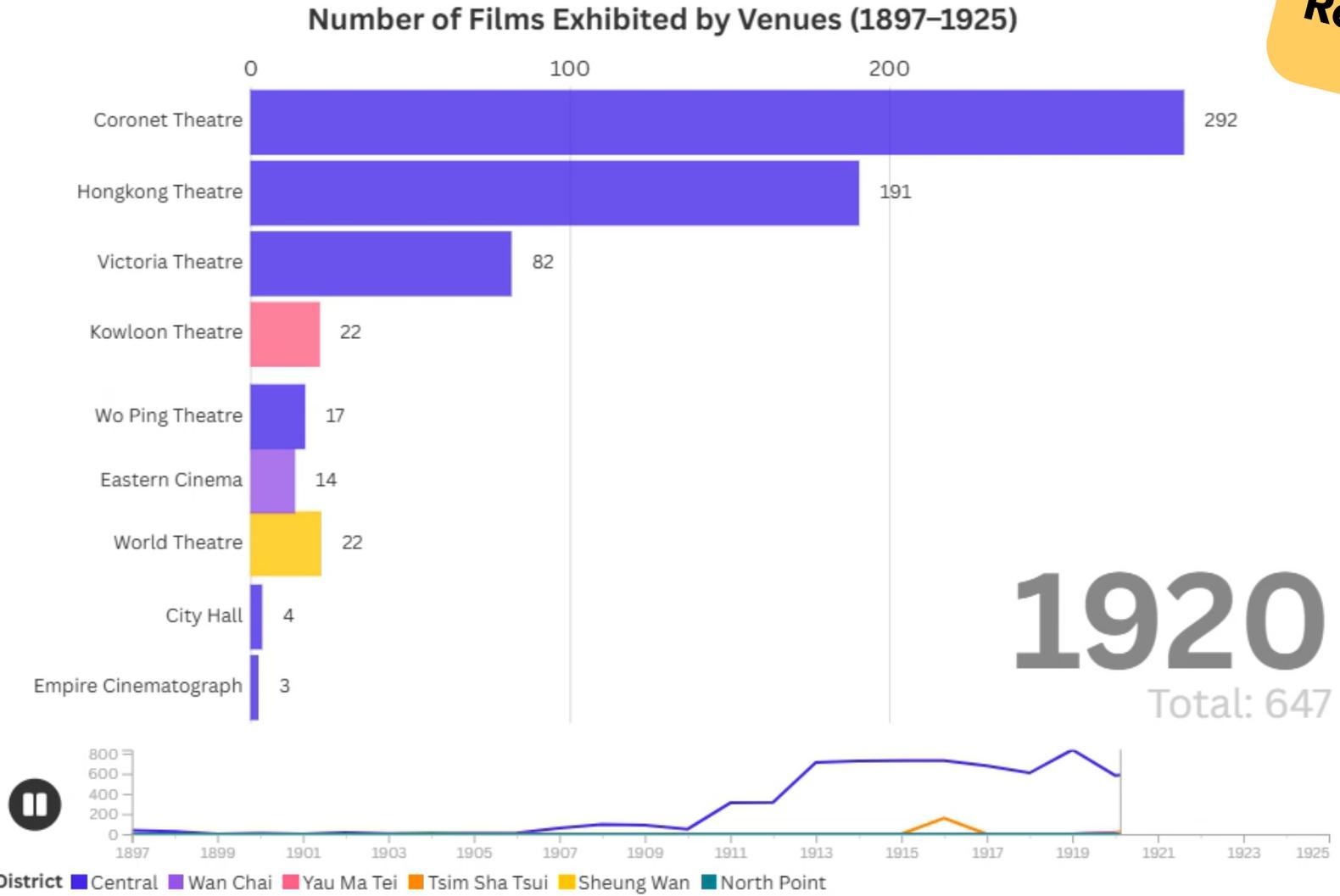
*"The Empire: New Cinematograph Theatre." SCMP, 4 Apr 1910. 11. .*

▶  
BIJOU SCENIC  
THEATRE  
(比叻戲院)  
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>	<b>30,905</b>	<b>24.65 GB</b>	

HKPL Hong Kong Public Libraries

Digital Collection Hong Kong Public Libraries

Old HK Newspapers

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 - 1984/11/00)
- 香港工商晚報 (Chinese) (1930/11/16 - 1964/11/29)
- 香港工商 (Chinese) (1947/05/01 - 1991/12/31)
- 香港華字日報 (Chinese) (1995/01/31 - 1940/12/31)

ProQuest Access provided by Lingnan University

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: South China Morning Post

Basic Search Advanced Search Publications Change databases

Enter search terms...

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?

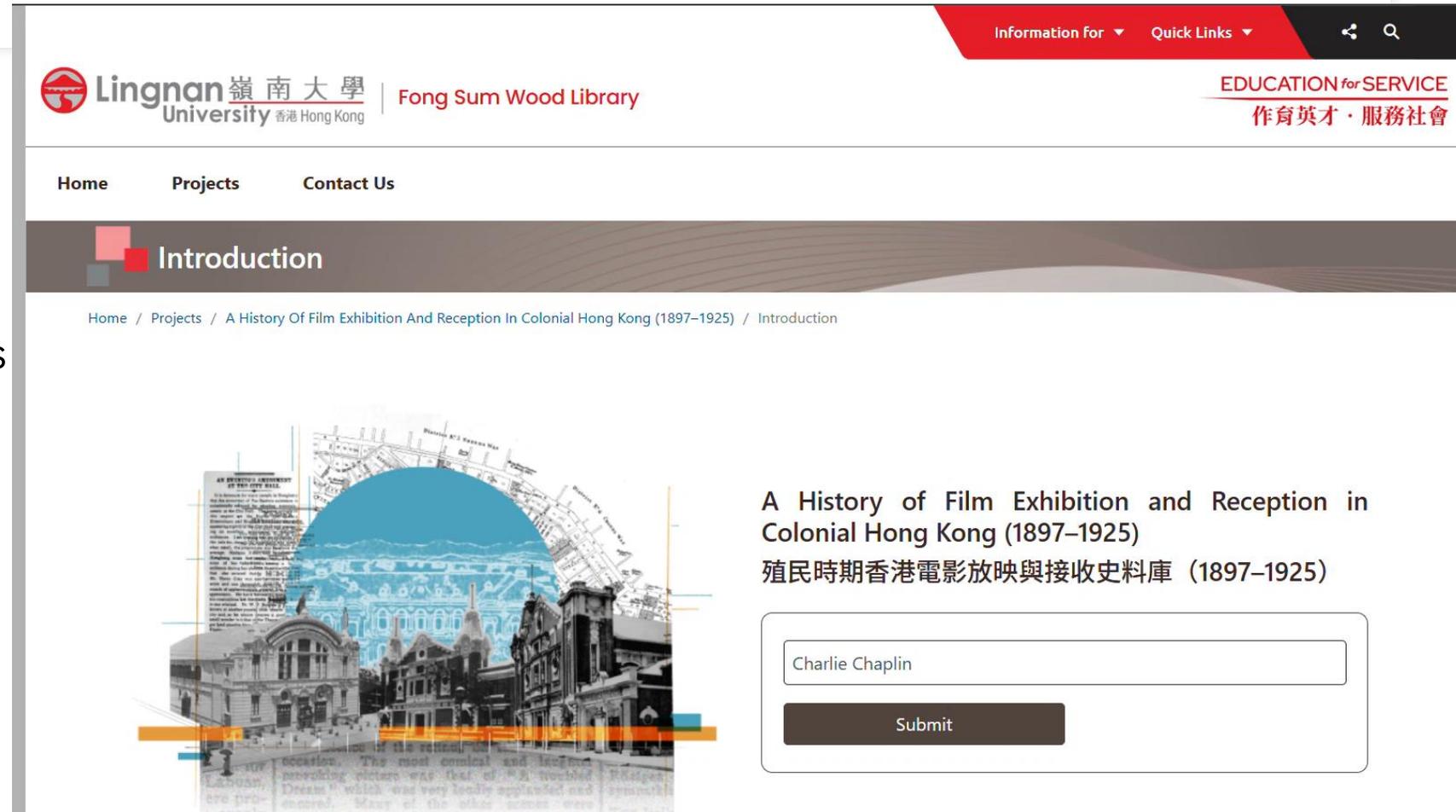
Try one of these options:

- 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)



The screenshot shows the website interface for the Fong Sum Wood Library at Lingnan University. The header includes the university logo and name in Chinese and English, the library name, and navigation links for 'Information for', 'Quick Links', and a search icon. The main navigation bar contains 'Home', 'Projects', and 'Contact Us'. The page title is 'Introduction' under the 'Projects' section. The breadcrumb trail reads: 'Home / Projects / A History Of Film Exhibition And Reception In Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925) / Introduction'. The main content area features a collage of historical images and text, including a newspaper clipping titled 'AN HISTORICAL DOCUMENT OF THE CITY HALL' and a large blue semi-circle graphic. To the right, the title 'A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897-1925)' is displayed in both English and Chinese, followed by a search input field containing 'Charlie Chaplin' and a 'Submit' button.

# For Researchers (research on actor/person)



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



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

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 *Zhong huawen buoshi 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; Theibault 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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- **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)



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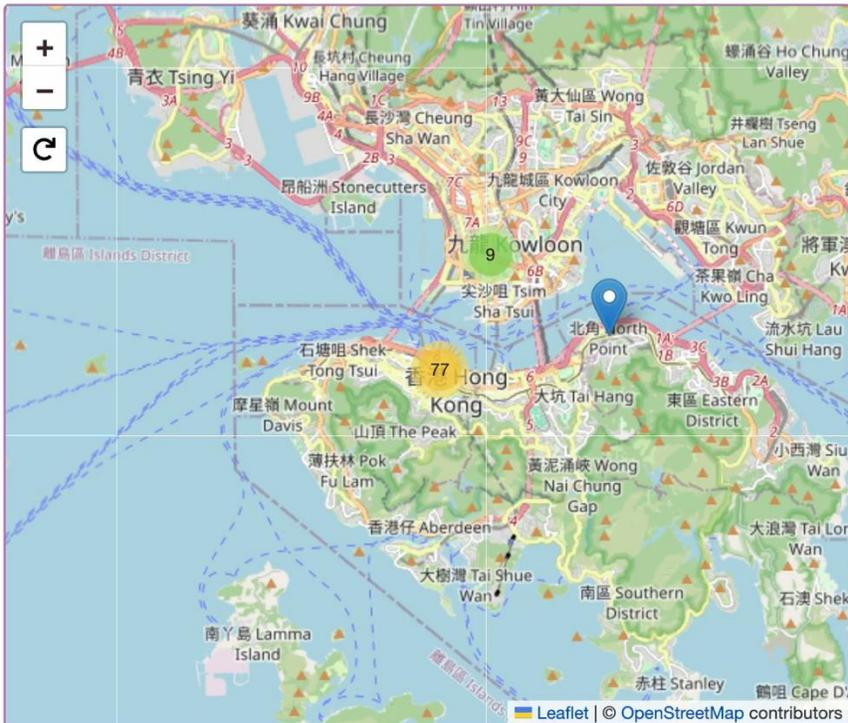
Table 4. Entries of Hollywood stars and directors in the two databases, 1915–1925.

Keywords (Chinese rendition in Hong Kong newspapers)	Entries	Subtotal
Charlie Chaplin	974	1124
查利卓別麟 (卓別麟)	150	
Lillian Gish	169	195
呂倫葛殊 (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 (瑪麗畢克蘭)	49	
Constance Talmadge	353	365
慕斯天 (薛斯天)	12	
Norma Talmadge	462	481
娜瑪譚美芝 (羅瑪譚美芝)	19	

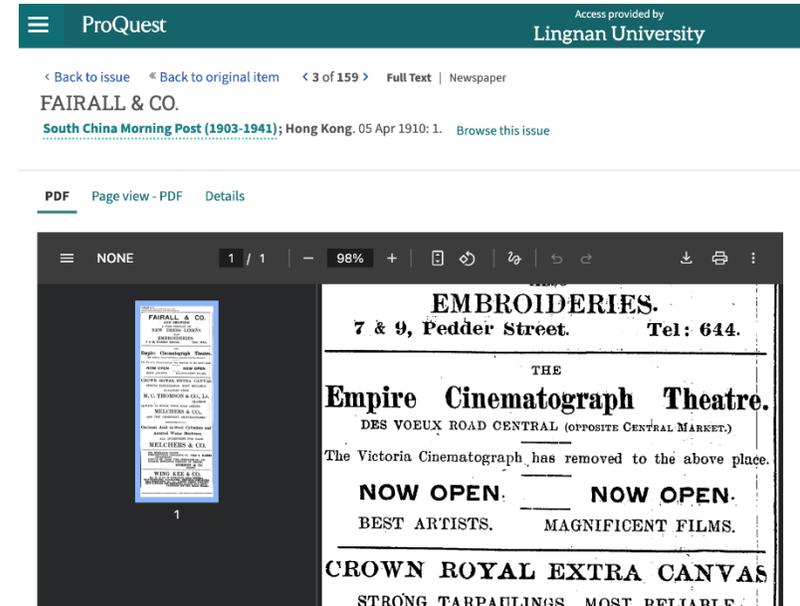
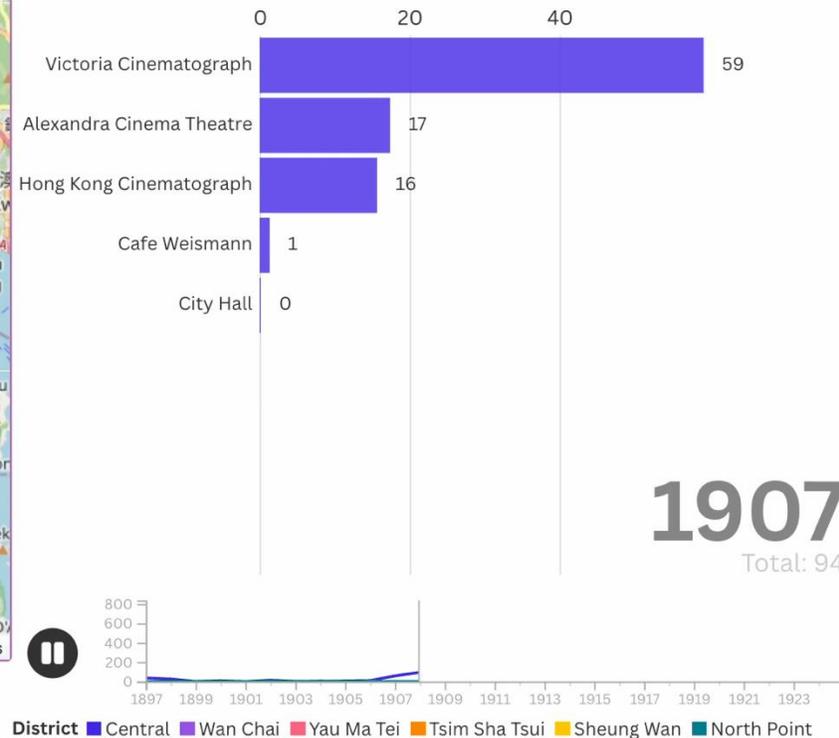
Download CSV

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 Public (theatre info, location, etc.)



Number of Films Exhibited by Venues (1897–1925)



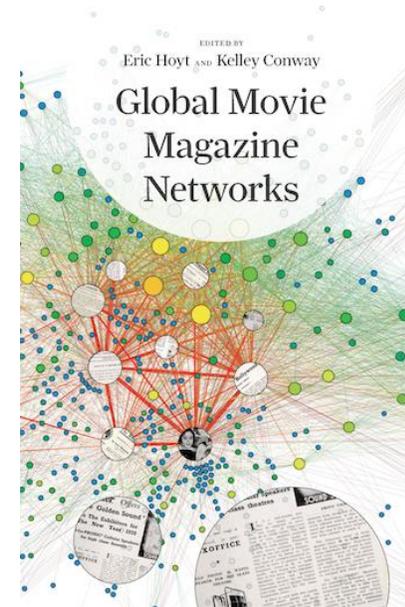
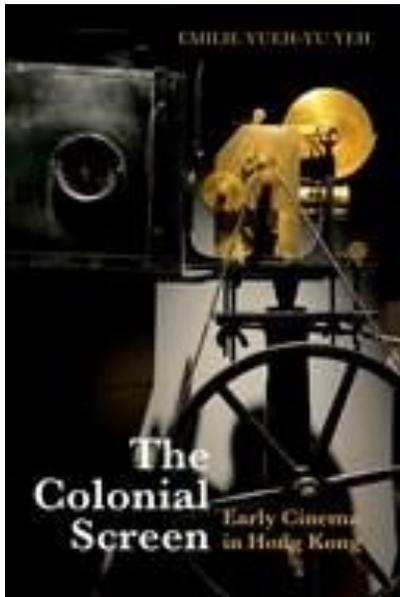
[South China Morning Post \(1903-1941\)](https://www.proquest.com/docview/1498848159/fulltextPDF/742668D639BD419CPQ/3?accountid=12107&sourcetype=Newspapers)

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



# 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



20  
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 pre-1930, the "early" phase of cinema in China and Hong Kong usually refers to the period from the 1900s to early 1930s (rather than the period between the 1900s 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

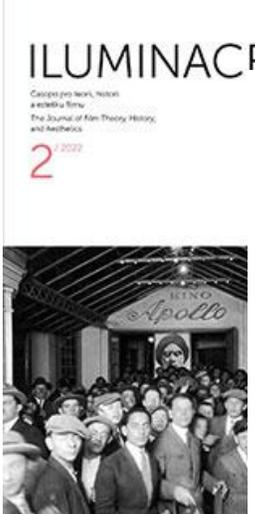
<https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197798331.001.0001>

<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



**ILLUMINACE**  
Volume 34, 2022, No. 2 (126)  
THEMED ARTICLES 73

Michael Aronson – Gabriele Hayden – Elizabeth Peterson  
(University of Oregon)

### Local Cinema History at Scale: Data and Methods for Comparative Exhibition Studies

**Abstract**  
Digital tools and digitized sources have expanded our ability to research and present regional film histories, along with the hope of conducting comparative work across both place and time. Alongside these projects are increasing calls for more deliberate coordination of tools, methods, and sources to create more meaningful comparisons. However, it remains difficult for researchers to know what digital projects exist for comparative work, and the methods, points of comparison, data structure, and sources used all considerably vary. Utilizing research data management principles, we conducted an exploratory survey of local film exhibition digital projects to document the current historiographic landscape, and to assess existing coverage of geography, time, sources, data structures, metadata schema, data accessibility and reproducibility. The dataset from the survey results can be shared by researchers to better discover each other's work, but also to serve as a guide to best practices going forward.

**Key words**  
film exhibition, New Cinema History, digital humanities, data reproducibility, data management

**Introduction**  
Our historiographic intentions were pure. We wanted to build a web-based platform in which our undergraduate students could be taught to collaboratively research, write and map the history of moviegoing and exhibition in cities and towns across the state of Ore-

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



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RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

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

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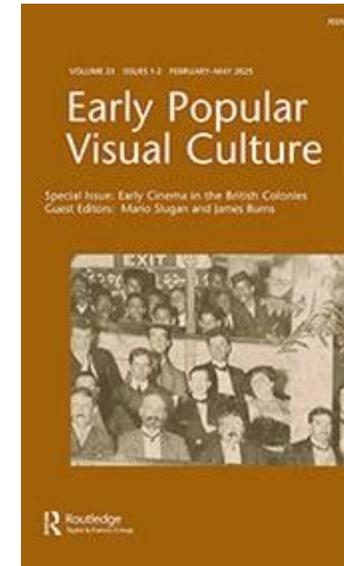
**ABSTRACT**  
A History of Film Exhibition and Reception in Colonial Hong Kong (1897–1925) and Early Chinese Film Database are two digital humanities projects made to share new historical data on early cinema in Hong Kong and China. Information held in these two databases is pivotal to animating local film histories and can be utilized to form a new understanding of the incipient shape of cinema trade. This article seeks to aggregate the reception 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 ethnocentric Chinese cinema. 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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Special Issue: Early Cinema in the British Colonies  
Guest Editors: Mario Sluigan and James Burns

### Introduction to scholarship on early cinema in the British colonies

Mario Sluigan\* and James Burns\*

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**ABSTRACT**  
Early cinema is a burgeoning subfield of film studies and film history. But despite the wealth of research on the subject, work on early cinema in the colonies is limited. This is especially unfortunate, given that around 1900 more people lived in the colonies than in imperial countries. To address this research gap, the article provides an overview of existing scholarship focusing on the colonies in the British Empire. The piece also proposes that neither local film production nor the link to modernity should be the defining parameters for ascertaining until when early cinema lasts in a particular locale. The local endpoint of early cinema should depend instead on how rich the complex of local production, promotion, distribution, exhibition, and reception was in the period during which cinema was yet to be modelled on Classical Hollywood.

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**KEYWORDS**  
Early cinema, British Empire, literature review, early cinema endpoint, colonies

**State-of-the-art**  
The global popularization of cinema by the end of the First World War was a world historical event. During the early decades of the cinema age, the medium brought diverse peoples into contact and offered them vivid images of one another and of themselves. This new visual medium quickly established itself as the new century's dominant form of communication and of public leisure. Yet, this constitutive period in cinema history, referred to by scholars as 'early cinema', has been studied largely in European and North American contexts. By focusing on the British Empire, which at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century covered a quarter of the globe, this special issue will focus on a potentially vast, yet heretofore largely ignored, audience – the peoples of the globe's largest empire. Film scholars locate early cinema within the key framework of modernity, which they associate with rapid urbanization, industrialization, and technological development accompanied by socioeconomic change and experiential overload (King and Keil 2024). In respect of whether these scholars have focused on technological, textual, production, distribution, exhibition, or reception aspects of early cinema under the rubric of national cinema (Brewer 1990; Musser 1990; Elanasser 1996; Abel 1998; Carrara 2010; Givón 2010; Conde 2018; Grigg 2022), film genres (Singer 2001; Streible 2008; Gaycken 2015), history of style (Keil 2001; Gaudreault 2009; Keil and

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# Lessons Learnt



UNDERSTANDING THE PROJECT



LEVERAGING EXPERTISE OF RESEARCH TEAM AND LIBRARY



RESOURCES PLANNING



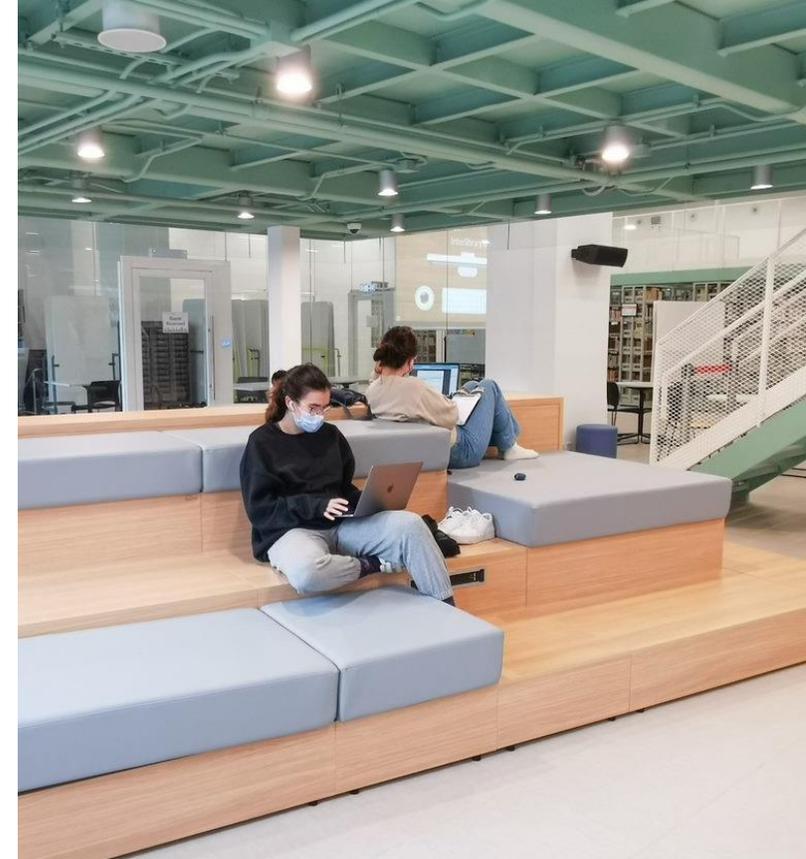
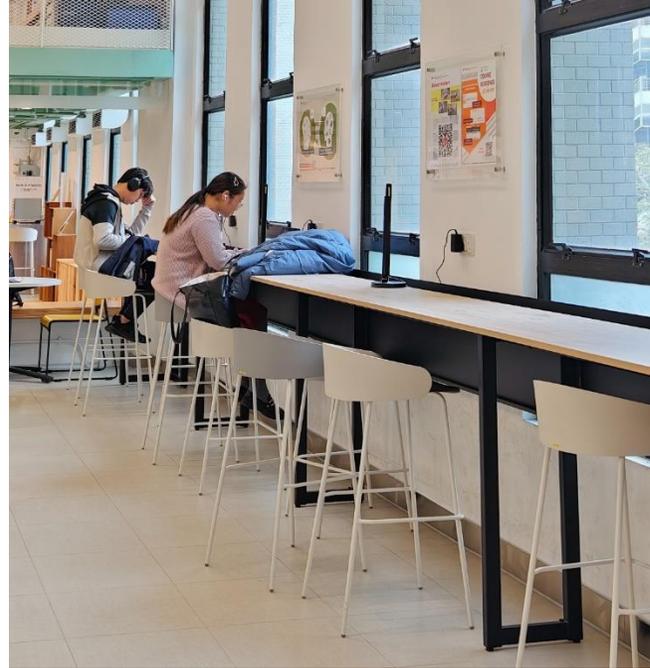
# Thanks to the Team!

## 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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# Thank You!

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