**SILENT CINEMA**

**MOVIE THEATER & FILM PROGRAM ASSIGNMENT**

Your assignment is to design a movie theater and film program during the American nickelodeon boom between 1908 and 1913. You will consult original film industry trade journals and exhibitors’ manuals to glean information about what theater amenities, films, and promotional materials were available to exhibitors at the time. Then you will create a venue and a program designed to appeal to your particular clientele.

**Choose your location:**
- Where is your theater located?
  - small town or large urban center?
  - main street, neighborhood, or busy urban thoroughfare?
  - what other entertainments and/or businesses are nearby?
- Who are your customers?
  - class? ethnicity? race? age? gender?
  - when and how often do they come to the movies?
  - how do they behave in the theater?

**Design your theater:**
- How big is your theater?
- Is it purpose-built or an adapted space?
- What does the exterior look like?
  - plain storefront? heavily-decorated façade? neon signs?
- What does the interior look like?
  - what kind of ticket booth? seats? screen?
  - what kind of projector?
  - other amenities? fans? mirrors? decorations?
- What will you call your theater?

**Create your program:**
- What films will you show?
  - shorts? a feature? some combination?
  - dramas? comedies? educational films?
- What other elements will you include?
  - song slides? advertising slides? contests?
- What music and/or sound will you include?
- How will this program appeal to your customer base?

**Promote the show:**
- How will you advertise to customers?
  - posters? heralds? newspaper ads?
  - tie-ins with local merchants or libraries?
  - souvenir give-aways? spoons? cards? pillow tops?

**WRITE UP YOUR RESULTS:**

*After you have selected all of the elements of your theater, designed your film program and created an advertising campaign, write a 1,000-word essay explaining your choices. Please cite advertisements and/or advice from trade journals and exhibitors manuals of the period; you may also draw on information in our textbook, *From Peep Show to Palace*. **Important:** You must include a minimum of 7-10 illustrations from original journals and manuals to accompany your essay.*

**Due in class**
**Wednesday, April 29**
**RESOURCES:**

David Robinson, *From Peep Show To Palace*
chp. 6, “Finding a Home: The Rise of the Nickelodeon and the Purpose-Built Cinema”

**Media History Digital Library:** [http://mediahistoryproject.org/](http://mediahistoryproject.org/)
film industry trade journals in the Early Cinema Collection:
- The Nickelodeon
- Motion Picture News
- Motography
- Moving Picture World

**Internet Archive:** [http://www.archive.org/](http://www.archive.org/)
keywords: motion pictures; motion picture theaters; motion picture technology; motion pictures in education; motion picture music
- Motion Picture Making and Exhibiting (1914)
- Motion Picture Handbook; a guide for managers and operators of motion picture theatres (1916)
- Exterior and Interior Ornamentation in Plaster, Composition & Cement for the Motion Picture Theatre (1913)
- Handbook for Motion Picture and Stereopticon Operators (1908)
- Opening and Operating a Motion Picture Theatre. How It Is Done Successfully (1912)
- Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures. A Practical Manual for Pianists and Organists (1920)

**IF YOU NEED HELP:**

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