Cinema Exhibition In St. Louis, 1920: A Thriving Business

Sarah E. Boslaugh
*UMSL, eleiko56@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://irl.umsl.edu/urs](https://irl.umsl.edu/urs)

Part of the *Other Film and Media Studies Commons, Social History Commons, United States History Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons*

**Recommended Citation**

Available at: [https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/108](https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/108)
Cinema Exhibition in St. Louis, 1920: A Thriving Business

St. Louis in 1920
- 6th largest city in the U.S.
- 91% white; 14.7% foreign-born
- Twice today’s population density
- Dense trolley network
- 120 cinemas, 29 film exchanges

“Going to the Movies” in 1920: Variety was the Rule
- All films silent, with intertitles, musical accompaniment
- Varied programming to suit different audiences
- Programs often mixed short films, cartoons, features
- Many types of screening facilities, from prestige theatres to airdromes

Where were these businesses located?
- Cinemas: throughout the city, often on trolley lines
  - Car ownership was rare
  - Movies were popular
- Exchanges: central corridor
  - Fire hazard
  - Clustered for business convenience
  - Exception: religious film distributor (South City)

Locations of Cinemas

Locations of Film Exchanges