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UNH 3448

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## **“The Magic Lantern: Bringing Art, Science, and Empire to the People”**

If you lived in nineteenth-century Britain, how did you see the world (and the Empire) other than an arduous and costly trip, or through paintings and books? Illustrated lectures at libraries and art museums using photographic slides are a largely unexplored aspect of how many Victorians experienced the wider world. In Liverpool in 1879, for example, you might have seen illustrated lectures on such topics as “England to Rome, with a Rest at the Paris Exhibition,” “Buddha and Buddhism,” or “A study of the Lifetime of one of the Least and Lowliest Organisms in Nature – What we may learn from it.” With their tantalizing titles and wide range of topics, these lecture series give us a sense of the breadth of information available to the inhabitants of industrial cities like Liverpool. This paper explores how library and art museum lectures and educational programs helped bring the world into several industrial cities at the end of the nineteenth century. The detailed records of the governing committees’ lecture programs give us a sense of how such Victorian innovations formed the basis for later educational schemes, like the British Broadcasting Corporation, that would seek to bring the world into every living room. Studying these lost forms of “infotainment” can help us understand our own global, multi-media, and highly visual culture – in particular, innovations like the Internet and PowerPoint – as part of a longer history of representation, education, and global encounter.

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