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**Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!:**

**16mm and Cinema’s Domestication in the 1920s[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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**Abstract:** This essay investigates the emergence of 16mm projectors and screens during the 1920s. By examining changes to the entertainment industry, the American home, and advertising discourses, it demonstrates that portable film technologies have long been implicated in a complex relationship with a range of automated consumer technologies and idealized private spaces.

In 1923 a new moving image gauge was announced: 16mm. The format was designed to serve as a viable production standard for those not working in the Hollywood film industry and as an affordable distribution and exhibition system alternative to the dominant commercial, theatrical model. The do-it-yourself apparatus was sold as a modern technological marvel. This 1927 ad is typical:

You’ve ridden sixty miles an hour in an automobile. You’ve listened to radio concerts 1000 miles away. You’ve read about wireless photographs and television. Now, here’s a thrill that’s different from any you’ve ever known before. Movies—real movies—of people you know, children you love, places you go—are now easy to make and show right on your own silver screen.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Here, hand-held cameras, push-button projectors, and shimmering personal screens made for a fantastical world wherein all varieties of new inventions transported people, images, and sounds at breakneck speed across great distances. This ad situated movies at home as evidence of a world made magically small and accessible by a cornucopia of consumer technologies and constant innovation. Indeed, while not always sold as expressly domestic as they are here, 16mm technologies were consistently presented in advertising, as well as popular and specialized literature of the period, as modern, efficient entertainment machines that were simple to operate and quick to thrill. At the same time, these little contraptions became instruments of a particular kind of home leisure, one undergirded by what T. Jackson Lears has called antimodernism, embodying ambivalence toward modernity’s rationalized systems.[[3]](#footnote-3) Here, for instance, while the ad promises that “millions” may enjoy the wondrous home screen, it is clear that the millions are not those of cinema’s mass audience but a series of intimate and familial groups with children happily gathered around mother. The projector’s gears are made into conduits of interpersonal warmth and familiarity, working to facilitate fond recollection and personalized—even homemade—entertainment. In short, the film apparatus is not only a magic carpet but also a magic mirror, brokering a distinctly modern form of viewing that also asserted the centrality of an idealized and stable domesticity for managing moving images of a mobile world.

This essay investigates one aspect of cinema’s relationship to the American home by examining the emergence of 16mm film projectors and home screens. The first section surveys some of the technological foundations for the figuration of film projection as a private, domestic ideal by providing information on nontheatrical gauges and on the 16mm film library services available. Attention is also paid to the ways in which Hollywood responded to this emergent field. The second section examines the specific articulations of the idealized home theater and the ways in which cinema as a machine and as a collection of objects (furniture, films, film cans) interfaced with ideals of domesticity, class, and gender, principally during the 1920s.

The broader aim of this essay is a more complex and historically grounded understanding of the ways in which, before contemporary domestic display formats— television, VCRs, DVDs, and computers—home *film* projectors changed the conditions in which we watched, discussed, thought about, and wrote about moving images. Not simply a novelty for the elite or a hobbyist’s obsession, 16mm portable projectors, aided by the broad changes ushered into the entertainment industry by electrification, were also participants in a broadly-based shift in the way that cinema was being thought about specifically. During the 1920s, it was through what Donald Crafton has termed cinema’s “electrical affinity” that the idea of watching movies was linked to the experience of other technologies: radios, telephones, record players.[[4]](#footnote-4) Crafton has shown that commercial or public incarnations of cinema were conjoined with the magic of electricity to exalt the miracle, not just of synchronized image and sound on celluloid, but of simultaneous image and sound everywhere. Crucial for my argument are the specific ways in which the wonders of electricity were foundational for also understanding the growth of home or personal cinema. To be sure, the rise of film-related ephemera (fan magazines, film criticism in newspapers, promotional merchandise, collectibles) provided material support for the kind of domestic omnipresence that Crafton reserves for cinema’s more public transformations. Yet, promulgated for the first time in widely-circulated national advertising campaigns, portable film projectors—and thus home film viewing—became a prominent element in an ascendant domestic ideal. This ideal was held together by the ubiquitous image of the efficient home and the consuming housewife tasked with operating the electrical appliances and machines that were increasingly central to middle-class domesticity. In short, while major studies of 16mm have largely conceptualized the gauge as a distinct mode of production, the making of home and amateur movies was only one of a myriad ways in which a family of consumer film technologies interfaced with the middle-class home.[[5]](#footnote-5) Not only did the 16mm film projector and small screen open the hearth to a deluge of professionally and semiprofessionally produced entertainment, it also asserted that film technology and its accessories were an integral and enduring element of home design, interior décor, and behavioral decorum.

The marketing of automatic home movie machines resonates with the contemporaneous rise of the phonograph and radio—and later with television—each marketed as automatic, efficient, and essential elements of the family circle.[[6]](#footnote-6) While considerable work has been done on the ways in which such technologies were shaped by institutions of advertising, domesticity, and entertainment, little work exists that explicitly situates cinema in this foundational period and within these paradigmatic debates.[[7]](#footnote-7) Prominent film histories of this period tend to focus on the consolidation of Hollywood’s corporate structure, the maturing of film language and style, struggles to increase the respectability of cinema, the rise of the picture palace, and the emergence of synchronized sound technologies.[[8]](#footnote-8) What follows inserts cinema and Hollywood into an earlier history of the entertainment industry’s domestic agenda, implicating the private and familial film screen in a series of class- and gender-based ideals that were both similar to and distinct from companionate domestic technologies, and also public incarnations of cinema.[[9]](#footnote-9)

During the 1920s, the small film screen took a firm and national-wide hold of a new cinema ideal inextricably linked to several developments that are distinct to the period: the centrality of the home in ascendant economic policies, electrification, the rise of home movie making, and a culture of gendered consumption brokered by the proliferation of advertising and mass-circulated middle-class magazines. Historiographically, this increases the variables relevant for thinking about cinema during this period; it also invites a more focused examination of cinema’s relevance to the domestic rather than the public sphere of commercial entertainments. Expanding our definition of cinema demonstrates that film’s technologies and discourses were far-reaching. Supported by a range of other media and leisure practices, the mechanized moving image was increasingly part of an everyday set of ideas about reading, shopping, automation, and domestic modernity. More specifically, we can see the ways in which home cinema was a participant in the automation of domestic leisure, the electrification of the home, and the gendered consumer charged with overseeing the operation of home appliances, entertaining or not. By looking at cinema in this way during this period, we can also see that film already can be productively conceptualized as a family of entertainment technologies in full dialogue with the phonograph, radio, and television that preceded it; each was engaged in a dynamic and dialectical set of relationships with institutions both public and private, communal and commercial, progressive and reactionary.

**The Persistence of Small Visions.** Recent work in film history has shown that the question of precisely what kind of medium film would become was particularly uncertain in its first two decades. Early on, for instance, Thomas Edison imagined that his Kinetoscope was less the forerunner to publicly projected films in movie theaters than a companion to the phonograph, which was marketed to businesses and to the home at precisely the same time. In short, Edison imagined film as a temporary stepping-stone to an invention that would reproduce synchronous sound and image everywhere there was a paying customer. As backdrop, Edison was bolstered by the ways in which the telegraph and the telephone had eliminated the problem of space in the transmission of sound and text. Recent experiments in wireless technologies further cleared the imaginative path for images and sounds that traveled by air without temporal or spatial impediments. Edison believed that cinema was really an imperfect incarnation of what we today call television and that the home was fated to provide the primary theater in which newly individualized consumers engaged with the world reproduced in limitless aural and visual copies.

Edison was not alone in what Peter Kramer has called cinema’s “televisual imagination.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Alongside their Cinematographe, designed primarily for small public audiences, the Lumière brothers also developed a home movie system. Countless other industry pundits, technology gurus, marketing mavens, and social commentators entered the ongoing discussion about what kind of medium film would become. Rather than foreground the question of what films should look like, such discussions frequently explored the problem of where and how cinema would be seen and sold. Neither was it always clear that celluloid would become predominantly understood as a public entertainment nor was it evident that theaters (large or small) would become film’s natural venue. Much speculation existed about the place of film in what we would likely today term “expanded contexts” of exhibition. Homes, schools, store windows, private clubs, urban amusement sites, and churches seemed equally viable venues for this new visual form. And, of course, they *were* viable venues. Animated by itinerant projectionists and showmen, these circuits were fed by permanent and mobile projectors as well as a host of film formats.[[11]](#footnote-11) For instance, Patricia Zimmerman estimates that there were seventy distinct cameras in operation between the years 1897 and 1923, with varied proprietary designs on celluloid width, sprocket size, and placement.[[12]](#footnote-12) Accordingly, Ben Singer has estimated that at least two dozen projectors were designed and marketed between 1896 and the emergence of the 16mm standard in 1923. Many of these were either engineered for or marketed directly to the home.

Nevertheless, industry consolidation and collusion resulted by the early 1910s in agreements and patents establishing 35mm as the professional industry standard. During this decade, the burgeoning film industry gradually settled on its enduring core business model: large paying audiences for a standardized and reproducible product. Yet alternative formats persisted to serve other models of cinema despite industry norms; 16mm was one such example. Announced publicly in June 1923, 16mm was an amalgam of cameras, projectors, and film stock brought together by industry agreements established between Bell and Howell, Victor-Animatograph, and Eastman Kodak. The new gauge was an American rebuff to the dominance of Pathé’s home and nontheatrical business (28mm and 9.5mm).[[13]](#footnote-13) Each partner in the American consortium quickly introduced complete imaging systems comprised of camera and projector; each used Eastman safety (acetate) stock. Screens were frequently packaged with these systems or sold separately as accessories. Similar to Pathé’s recently introduced 9.5mm system, 16mm reduced the costs and increased the portability of previous formats.[[14]](#footnote-14) The new gauge also benefited from an international distribution and rental system as it piggy-backed on Kodak’s extant circuit of photography outlets. In what was previously a relatively decentralized field, 16mm effectively served to consolidate and catalyze one that existed in North America alongside Hollywood and largely beyond movie theatres.

Patricia Zimmerman has discussed the ways in which 16mm cameras, building on the ideals of amateurism, were shaped by industry discourses presenting the new gauge as one that freed middle-class hobbyists to navigate an individual craftsman’s path that was friendly but subordinate to dominant filmmaking practices. Charles Tepperman has further refined this thesis recently by focusing on the whole range of actual films and filmmaking practices. Tepperman argues that amateur filmmaking should be conceptualized as a legitimate mode by which individuals negotiated with the new world of machines by using personal filmmaking to forge creative and sometimes communally-minded paths through it.[[15]](#footnote-15) Both of these can help us understand some aspects of early home theater technologies as well. Both cameras and projectors were situated as instruments useful for resisting the impersonal forces of mass production in general—and the consolidating film industry in particular. Corporate literature, as well as specialist and popular magazines, promulgated the idea that both cameras and projectors allowed image-making and image-watching conducive to an intimate, private environment far removed from the commercialized, professionally programmed movie house. Similar to the ways in which amateur cameras were fashioned as nonprofessional, it is clear that early home theaters could never measure up to the experience of big screens, amplified sound, live performance, or grand ornate picture palaces. Yet, while camera and projector were advertised and sold side-by-side, the former certainly requiring the latter, projectors occupied a slightly different relationship to the unique hobbyist, the expressive craftsman, and the subordinate toiler. Whether marketed to the male tinkerer in specialist magazines or to the female family archivist and entertainer in women’s magazines, projectors were sold as a display system for a seemingly endless supply of professionally and commercially produced films available to the home. In short, the *idea* and the practice of unlimited do-it-yourself projection spread quickly and far beyond what can be termed “amateur” or the question of filmmaking per se.[[16]](#footnote-16) The portable projector and screen imported challenges to domestic space akin to the radio, the phonograph, and later television, as it promised a playback system for cultural content made outside of the home and as a new object to be incorporated into domestic space.

**Sixteen Ascendant.** By 1930 the new projection format incited a feverish enthusiasm for its promise of extending the cinematic frontier everywhere. Film libraries proliferated to deal in the new gauge; a vast library of titles was made available through an international rental and purchase system: Bell and Howell’s Filmo Library, Kodak’s Kodascope Library, Pathé’s Pathéscope Library. (Pathé already had a well-established 9.5mm rental system in place. Yet, 16mm proved successful so quickly that even Pathé began to issue its films in the new gauge.) A series of smaller agencies also entered the fray.[[17]](#footnote-17) These libraries functioned occasionally as stand alone rental agencies but mostly made use of department stores, drug stores, camera shops, and mail order systems, creating sizable networks of moving image circulation and exchange. For instance, in New York, large department stores such as Macy’s and Gimbel’s, and camera stores such as Willoughby’s, attached film rental agencies to their photography counters.

Subjects included slapstick, animation, travel, sports, and nature. Titles ranged from the offerings of defunct production companies to films that had recently expended their theatrical runs. For instance, Kodascope Libraries had contracts with two of the three large studios, Paramount and First National, as well as what were then considered the small studios of Fox and Warner Brothers. But Kodascope Libraries also circulated the films of rival Pathé as well as the semi-regular issues of the U.S. War Department. Additionally, it offered films from long-gone production companies such as Biograph, Triangle, World, Mutual, and Essanay, as well as films featuring Felix the Cat, Mickey Mouse, Charlie Chaplin, Gloria Swanson, Constance Talmadge, Pola Negri, Emil Jannings, and many other silent-era stars.

Films were often chosen explicitly for their ostensible propriety and advertised typically middle-brow values of quality and family appropriateness, implicitly indexing anxieties about lurid or dangerous films, and further promising to keep vulnerable children safe from the moral corruption of the public and commercial spaces of cinema.[[18]](#footnote-18) One can see how home movie services built on fears about vulnerable audiences and also paralleled the efforts of industry improvement groups such as the National Board of Review and the affiliated Better Films movement. Both groups, for instance, advocated for content filters like evaluation and ratings schema, as well as for film programs specifically designed for children such as Saturday matinees.[[19]](#footnote-19) Home movie theaters also resonated with the commensurate and increasingly organized efforts of the industry to publicize the safety of Hollywood movies establishing the “Don’ts and Be Carefuls” guidelines in 1927 and by fortifying these guidelines when they became part of the Production Code in 1930. The Payne Fund Studies investigations of the dangers of movies to children further concretizes the anxiety of the period induced by mass commercial culture and public moviegoing. In this context, the home became friendly to both movie and child, protecting each from the ostensible threats posed by large public spaces, unruly audiences, and dangerous content.

Slightly different from what we might call the “Better Films for Better Homes” phenomena, specialty services were also founded to accent home cinema’s modernity, linking movies in the home less to safety and more to the simultaneity ushered in by other media. These services were designed to bring connectedness and timeliness into the home film market, turning the parlor into a window on the world. In the fall of 1927, for instance, William Ganz announced formation of the *Reel of the Month Club,* a subscription service promising regular and timely motion pictures of the world’s key news events almost as they happened. Once a month a film that had been carefully selected, according to the ads, for quality, relevance, and timeliness would appear on that magically abundant site—the home doorstep—alongside the newspaper, the milk, and the packages and envelopes that constituted the day’s mail. In theory, these films would be eagerly watched by the growing body of home movie fans and then promptly placed on the library shelf, alongside the Encyclopedia Britannica, the leather-bound Shakespeare, and the family photo album.

Similar to the seeming instantaneity of Ganz’s film club, in 1928, a Presidential election year, Pathé advertised “glimpses of the Democratic and Republican candidates . . . See your favorites in public and home life. Know and understand them better through their ‘action’ before the lens.”[[20]](#footnote-20) This film was part of an ongoing series of films called Pathégrams, newsfilms marketed to the home user. These films were often shorter than standard rentals, some only four minutes long, making them more affordable for outright purchase. Kodak had a similar service entitled Cinegraphs designed to provide recordings of “the most important events of the world as they take place.”[[21]](#footnote-21) In addition to the obvious reference to telegraphy and newspapers, Cinegraphs were also likened to other cultural forms. For instance, one press release enjoined potential customers to understand the function of Cinegraphs much as that of phonographs. Just as vinyl records turned music into a domestic object that could be collected and replayed over and over, Cinegraphs promised the same for moving images.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Short news films were also an important element of the next stage in the gradual expansion of moving images into the middle-class home, not just in the form of exhibited moving images but also in the form of the home film library. Because of this, films were frequently likened to books. The Cinegraph catalogue read: “Most Cinegraphs you will want to buy and keep permanently—just as you collect worthwhile books for your library.”[[23]](#footnote-23) The World War Movies, distributed with the Cinegraph service, promised, “a transparent window linked to distant and past events that could now be dramatically ‘lived’ and ‘relived’ in the home. You must see them to appreciate them. . . . They will become priceless ‘heirlooms’ to be passed on in any family . . . increasing in value as years go by.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

Kodak sold a particular kind of historical experience, one that could be stored on a shelf alongside other “great adventures of modern times.” Moving pictures of the world-in-the-home were likened to the virtues of the library, a comprehensive store of living knowledge whose very possession increased domestic virtue. Cinema was also being constituted here as an aggregate of domestic objects that endured through time, yielding experiences of deep temporality and transparent historicity.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**Enter Hollywood.** Far from insignificant to the rapidly expanding industry known as Hollywood, the promise of consumer display technologies in the home became one small part of the American film industry’s imperial plans. Employing a boosterism typical of the industry rag, as early as October 1927, *Variety* predicted that *all* Hollywood studios would either reduce their theatrical 35mm prints to the 16mm standard or would make titles exclusively for what was variably termed “the home” or “amateur market.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Universal—having no substantial theatre holdings of its own—was particularly gung-ho on 16mm, announcing plans for a studio dedicated to home movie entertainment spurred by the promise of the gauge, as well as establishing deals with other corporations that saw benefits in 16mm’s creation of individuated and microtheaters.[[27]](#footnote-27) For instance, Carl Laemmle (head of Universal) announced a deal with Transcontinental Air to equip fifty planes with 16mm projection machines. The “air theater chain” would play first-run Universal films; press coverage explicitly linked the plan to the growth of the home market and to the increasing “everywhereness” of cinema.[[28]](#footnote-28) Several months later the first motion pictures with full sound accompaniment on a train were announced on a route running from Chicago to Minneapolis-St. Paul. The machine was RCA’s Photophone and was part of a plan to show films regularly on the route. With RCA, Eastman Kodak, and Universal leading the pack, *Variety* reported in 1930 that these collective ventures into the 16mm field constituted the next entertainment revolution.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Within the swell of enthusiasm for this dispersed and mobilized cinema, the home represented the coup de grâce of industry expansion. With *Variety* estimating 200,000 American homes already equipped—a gross overestimation—it was predicted that there was at least two million more homes, which was nearly ten percent of existing homes that could afford and could be efficiently served by 16mm film libraries. With familiar industry modesty, *Variety* exclaimed that through 16mm “the film industry sees itself in a position to dominate the entire peoples of the world,” bypassing theaters and directly targeting people everywhere else.[[30]](#footnote-30) The periodical termed this a “film invasion of the fireside,” predicting that a surge in studios specializing in home entertainment would soon emerge to capitalize on what was seen as “a more assured” site for film prospects.[[31]](#footnote-31)

In the age of the picture palace and unprecedented investment in movie theaters, why was it that *Variety* could or would report that the film industry’s longstanding interest in the home had taken such a noteworthy and enthusiastic turn? And why, in 1930,—some twenty or perhaps fifty years premature—would *Variety* refer to the home as “a more assured site” for film prospects? It’s worth recalling that the 1920s was a period of intense consolidation and aggressive investment in and across American media industries. Film studios bought movie theaters. Theaters bought studios. Radio and film interests acquired song rights and furthered investments in recorded music. Studios (Warner Bros., First National, Universal) used radio as a publicity device, advertising their films, staging star interviews, broadcasting onsite from film premieres, and dramatizing their films in radio form. Paramount even had its own small chain of radio stations, buying 50 percent of CBS’s radio network in 1929.[[32]](#footnote-32) Warner Bros. and Fox invested in the sound research at AT&T. In the backdrop were well-known experiments in television. With the ascendance of radio and the rush to adapt innovations in sound to celluloid in the latter half of the decade, the American film industry was expanding its operations both by necessity and by choice. As Donald Crafton has shown, by 1929, the movie industry was both vertically and horizontally integrating, with holdings in print, music, and electric companies.[[33]](#footnote-33)

In corporate terms, this dispersal across media forms is actually a story of consolidation, but its precise outcome was by no means obvious when the shift began in the mid-1920s. Many possibilities were imagined and tried; among them large screen televisions for “television theaters” to replace film projection, as well as the rise of variety films or canned musical reviews, which emerged in the latter part of the twenties, a kind of “virtual Broadway.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Rising moguls like David Sarnoff predicted in press releases picked up by national newspaper syndicates that the inevitable result of the electrical age was a movie theater in every home.[[35]](#footnote-35) Undergirded by Crafton’s “electrical affinity,” cinema in the most general sense of the term seemed up for grabs, readily linked to the discourses of modern wonder and technological advancement across public and private spheres.

All of this helps explain why home cinema rose so feverishly in industry discourse. It helps to explain further why sound also came to home units quickly, virtually coincident with trends in theatrical exhibition. Bell and Howell’s first home sound unit was announced as early as 1927, several months before the *Jazz Singer’s* release.[[36]](#footnote-36) Film producer William Fox, well-served by his foray into Movietone sound and news, announced a talking machine for the home, “low in price and capable of being operated without instruction.” The home-talker was a major part of what he called a $35,000,000 investment in expanding cinema to include home, church, and schools.[[37]](#footnote-37) And, by Christmas of 1930, *Variety* reported that forty-eight “Home Talker Sets” were available for consumer purchase—some six years before the first 16mm sound cameras, which further highlights the importance of understanding 16mm as an automatic display system as well as an image-making system. The featured unit in this particular article was a “three way home show” that contained a screen, sound and image recording, as well as sound and image playback technologies. The unit also contained a radio.[[38]](#footnote-38)

It must be said that despite the hyperbole, 16mm’s position as the specific tool of Hollywood’s home conquest was never realized. Indeed, the utopian home life of 16mm was relatively short-lived, swept away first by the effects of the Depression, the introduction of 8mm in 1932, World War II, and the rise of television thereafter. The 16mm home theater was more an imagined ideal than a reality, an ideal that prominently migrated to other technologies. While 16mm did find a place in homes (usually in more affluent homes), it eventually became the primary gauge for schools, churches, libraries, and universities from the mid-1930s forward, a function that spread and was thus secured during and after World War II. Yet, throughout the 1920s, 16mm held a brief, if frequently maniacal, promise of a forever-changing home entertainment. Industry hyperbole and restructuring are two key variables. Still another involves the migration of 16mm projectors from the euphoric visions of Hollywood’s boardrooms to the advertising campaigns of Madison Avenue. Hollywood’s vast fireside takeover also became an endless series of efficient, self-operated projectors, overseen by mother. And, it is to the specificities of this that I would now like to turn.

**Electric Domestic.** As a field of cultural practice, home movie making and watching was the domain of a small collection of hobbyists, amateurs, and elite enthusiasts until 1923.[[39]](#footnote-39) If you believe the ads, 16mm functioned to standardize and automate these activities. This was coincident with the influx of other automated and electrified machines into the home. The player piano and gramophone had provided the mechanical automation of music and vocal performance long before. Yet, throughout the 1920s, electricity accelerated the transformation of home entertainment gadgets. Electric turntables were marketed beginning in 1925. Radio and its wondrous capture of the content-filled airwaves was rapidly ascendant. Such products furthered the sense that entertainment was about turning dials and—more and more—about plugging in. In short, automatic electric entertainment and its attendant qualities of instantaneity (flicking switches and so on) were rapidly domesticating. Kodak used these discourses in its advertising campaigns simply importing the “You push the button, we do the rest” slogan—previously used to sell its point-and-shoot-cameras—and substituting projectors. Calm and efficient housewives projected movies to enraptured family members and friends. Images of self-operated projectors and home theaters were frequently associated with the modern home and its essential link to the world through a constant flow of electricity.

Yet, if electricity was changing the home, the home was also changing electricity. The 1920s was witness to a sizable change in the middle-class American household, and to the first significant forays of the federal government into housing policy. The elevation of the single, self-owned family dwelling as the standard unit of economic policy began in the first years of that decade, providing the basic building blocks for the suburbanization we tend to associate with the postwar period. As a result, the 1920s hosted an unprecedented boom in the construction of new stand-alone and multi-unit homes, a rate that almost doubled from the previous decade; suburban construction grew at twice the rate of urban centers.[[40]](#footnote-40) Home growth was fuelled by a national campaign to make home ownership the centerpiece of moral individualism and good citizenship. Most visible of all such campaigns was Herbert Hoover’s promulgation of the Better Homes movement, which took seed nationally and grew steadily in the pages of women’s magazines. The Better Homes movement worked to bolster capitalism through consumption, equating the better home with the better citizen and the better shopper.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Home ownership was refashioned as the site of the robust American nation in presidential speeches and publications, conceptualizing the home owner as the epitome of individual prosperity and moral accomplishment: the American Dream was grafted onto the American Home giving birth to the notion of the “Dream House.”[[42]](#footnote-42) A range of technological systems appeared—electrification, central heating, hot/cold indoor plumbing—to actualize the efficiency and comfort that constituted this idyllic space. Basic now, new houses included electrical sockets placed conveniently throughout rooms to support the lighting, vacuum sweeper, irons, refrigerators, stoves, fans, and floor waxers that proliferated during this period.[[43]](#footnote-43) For instance, the Department of Commerce reported that by 1927, 63 percent of the population lived in dwellings with electric lights, roughly a 400 percent increase from fifteen years earlier.[[44]](#footnote-44) In other words, the new home made electricity into a key instrument of this emergent ideal; the dream home was an enchanted realm of twinkling lights and whirling, whizzing gadgets.

The Better Home was also the efficient home. As such, Taylorist principles undergirded the automation of domestic labor and were aided significantly by the electrical home appliance. Moreover, piggybacking on the explosion of magazine advertising and magazine consumption, a series of widespread discourses appeared linking efficiently-run homes to the moral rectitude of the consuming housewife.[[45]](#footnote-45) These discourses were formed most fully and spread most widely in women’s magazines (*The Delineator, Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping*), on whose pages one could find prescriptive literature about cooking, sewing, beauty, and shopping alongside ads for electric stoves, electric sinks, vacuum cleaners, encyclopedias, and—importantly—home movie equipment.[[46]](#footnote-46) The prosperity of the period helped to turn the dream house into a profit boom for the appliance industry; most of it owned and operated by the very same electrical corporations making their foray into the movies. The value of house-hold appliances produced in the United States nearly tripled in the latter part of the 1910s and more than doubled again from 1920 to 1929.[[47]](#footnote-47) In short, movies in the home were beneficiaries of the ascendant means and methods of the modern, electrified, commodified home. Projectors were likened to other modern, efficient appliances, and linked discursively to toasters, stoves, and iceboxes but also to the gendered, consuming, moral self: the good housewife.[[48]](#footnote-48)

As cultural historians of this period have shown, women were considered central to corporate strategies, working both to naturalize the ascendant consumerism and to promulgate middle-class propriety.[[49]](#footnote-49) Such efforts mirrored those made by the film industry to conscript women in their campaigns to assuage anxieties about Hollywood’s negative influence on public morality. Whether as movie patrons, film characters, or critic-collaborators, women were a crucial element of the industry’s efforts to establish respectability with middle-class audiences and thus to retain industry power and stave off federal regulation.[[50]](#footnote-50) Likewise, for 16mm projectors, linking gender-ideals to class-based cultural ideals was a prominent marketing strategy. Home movie technologies were explicitly articulated to the explosion of middle-brow cultural forms, newly reproducible and widely available. As Janice Radway has argued through her discussion of the Book of the Month Club, formed in 1926, during this period culture was transformed into a “characteristically modern business”—employing speed, quantity, and efficiency all geared toward increasing consumption.[[51]](#footnote-51) The resulting objects of culture were a key part of the growing preoccupation of the middle class to accumulate and display the signs of upward mobility, education, prosperity, and refinement. Books, for instance, became standard elements of the middle-class home, not only as gears for good reading habits but as objects that would imbue the home with the status offered by literature. One critic of the time described the books circulated through the Book of the Month Club as “furniture books,” due in part to the founder’s insistence that all of his books were leather bound so that they looked good on shelves.[[52]](#footnote-52) Their outward appearance was as important as anything that appeared inside their covers.

For films, this phenomenon holds a particular challenge as the titles available for rental and purchase did not necessarily share the respectable status of literature, poetry, or history. Moreover, the gray metal cans that held these films did notably little to improve home décor and did much to accentuate the machine-like qualities of the apparatus. Film advertisements emulated the arrangement of other objects of edification. Films, for instance, were made to look like books. The unsightly film can was made discreet and respectable by placing it in a faux-leather book casing available in equipment catalogues, facilitating its smooth integration with its more visually-appealing brethren on the bookshelf. Indeed, faux-leather cases were marketed by many companies, including Kodak’s catalogues.

Resonating with the contemporaneous trend to subsume the technological apparatus of the radio and turn it into furniture, large entertainment centers were crafted to house both films and projectors (and sometimes screens). In 1927, Kodak marketed the “Library Kodascope,” an expensive oak unit with projector and screen housed in a “moderne” style cabinet that allowed for regular projection or self-contained, rear-projection viewing. Happy couples, and sometimes families, were shown gathered around small screens that often were dwarfed by the furniture meant to conceal them. Simpler and less elaborate versions of the Library Kodascope sat on tables and were often pictured beside books. Pathé also developed similar furniture units, as did Bell and Howell. Unit prices give us some indication of the class-bias, or at least income-bias, of this home movie ideal. While furniture units certainly varied in cost to some degree, the Library Kodascope, for instance, would constitute approximately 25 percent of the median family annual income.[[53]](#footnote-53)

The challenges of the home film apparatus to conventional domestic décor extended beyond unsightly film cans and garish projectors. The stark white square only magnified the disjuncture between the well-appointed home and the moving image machine. Where to place the film screen? While budget screens or no-frills units were sold that could easily collapse and be hidden in a closet, other models were also conceived and sold. The Kodacarte, for instance, was actually a card table that converted into a film screen. While the slogan, “From Bridge to Home Movies in Thirty Seconds,” explicitly linked the device with polite leisure, the clandestine nature of the hidden screen suggests that the Kodacarte was intended for more than bridge and baby’s first steps. Upscale screens that were permanently and conveniently mounted were sleeker but obscured by tasteful tapestries or pastoral scenes that pulled-down like a blind to quickly reveal or cover a centrally-located screen. The cinema machine might have announced the home’s modernity but its moving gears, metal cans, and empty screens were to be discretely managed.

**Efficient Togetherness.** Extant scholarship on media technologies and the home has inevitably addressed the question of gender. This literature has shown that producers, advertisers, and programmers have actively tailored their products to what is usually a highly-gendered customer, imagined or real. The history of gadgets, design strategies, advertising campaigns, and popular discourses demonstrates complex cultural and gender dynamics. For instance, Barbara Klinger’s recent book, *Beyond the Multiplex,* on cinema and the home, demonstrates the masculinist ideals associated with the technophilia of the contemporary home theater, with its exultations of visual realism, sonic fidelity, and domestic escape. Keir Keightley’s work has similarly demonstrated the ways in which hi-fi sound equipment in the 1950s entered the home, in part, to reclaim specifically masculine space, waving the banner of “audio realism, sonic immersion and mental transportation.”[[54]](#footnote-54) Complementing these findings, scholars of radio and early television have shown that women, or at least images of women, were key to the ways that these technologies were transformed from odd gadgets into mass-marketed, domestic objects.[[55]](#footnote-55) Rather than emphasizing techno-mastery, this work tends to show that entertainment devices were made to seem harmonious with domestic design, household activity, and women’s work. Ease of use, for instance, was a consistent aspect of both radio and television’s marketing discourses. Integration with household furnishings and family rituals was another recurrent motif.

The phenomenon of film projectors in the home must be understood clearly in relation to the gendered dynamics of the household. Rather than provide an overview of all discourses—specialized science and hobbyist publications, newspapers, and industry literature—I want to focus on Kodak’s campaign as it appeared in mass-circulated family and women’s magazines. Kodak ads were likely the most widely-circulated images of the period. Not only did Kodak maintain the largest retail base for 16mm films as it built its moving image sales on the back of its international photographic empire, it also retained the well-known advertising firm of J. Walter Thompson, placing advertisements in the most widely-circulated magazines of the 1920s, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies Home Journal.[[56]](#footnote-56)*

If the 1920s can be understood as a time of prosperity and utopianism vis-à-vis corporate capitalism, technological progress, and the social transformations embodied by the new woman and suffrage, there was also a reactive thread in American culture seeking to reassert the family and the home as safe from the tumult of modern life. In keeping with the dominant rhetoric in women’s magazines, consistently and with few exceptions, images of home cinema positioned women as the brokers of this refuge. Pictured as operators of the machine and as film programmers, happy homemakers dutifully ensured the moral propriety of family viewing. These women were predictably successful at fostering domestic bliss and family togetherness—and also of mastering the automatic home and home theater at her fingertips.

During this period, it was common in advertisements to picture women alongside the products being sold. The ascendant advertising industry prioritized strategies that rested on ideas about customer identification with the feelings and psychological states of idealized people. Images of happy families and civilized gatherings were similarly common. A concurrent trend toward companionate marriages also helps us to understand changes to middle-class family ideals. More and more husbands and wives were encouraged to spend time together and to share in child rearing. Here, the idea of “masculine domesticity” becomes salient; increasingly men were given a place in the events of house and home. The design of suburban living spaces accommodated these ideals by including large open rooms in which all family members, or guests, could gather to talk, listen to the radio, or to watch movies.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Yet, family leisure-by-machine also resonated with new ideals of domestic efficiency. Women were charged with primary responsibility in overseeing the moral education and proper entertainment of the children. Fathers were frequently included in Kodak’s advertisements as spectators, though never pictured as instrumental to the orchestration of the show. The image machine—like radio, washers, and stoves—was no longer the domain of hobbyists and tinkerers but of the housewife; it was now simple to operate, light to carry, and fun for all. Important to note, mother was not expressly sold another responsibility or additional labor as feminist historians of such items have assured us was actually the case with so-called “labor-saving” machines. Rather, she was presented with an old role enacted by new means: overseeing family togetherness by dutifully operating the automatic movie machine. The elaborate efforts entailed by the modern electrical world were thus further obfuscated by such images which made home cinema as comfortable as furniture and as familiar as any story hour or parlor trick. The modern automatic machine was made appealing largely by reaffirming dominant images of family togetherness and home-as-respite from, rather than promulgator of, change. It did so by obscuring the fact that everyone else’s leisure likely came at the expense of even more work for mother.

**The Endurance of the Small Screen.** Marketing films to the home in the 1920s belies a certain anxiety about importing moving images into the increasingly central site for establishing moral propriety and individual success. Modern technology-as-appliance was omnipresent, but the film projector’s images were more cautiously and ambivalently presented, distinguishing them at least officially from the disruptive taint of the medium’s popular and public incarnations. The small projector was a foundational development in cinema’s home life, linked inextricably to personal movie-making but also to watching professionally made movies. The projector and home movie screen were then both tools of production but also of reproduction. Screens themselves were only welcomed with discretion; films likewise were disguised as books. Commercial film libraries attempted to connect the home and its tasteful screens to an ever-expanding world but they did so clearly within the constraints of a particular cultural stance, crafting films as news, as education, and as objects that maintained value through time, further differentiating them from the ephemeral and populist pleasures of the movie theater. The home became one of the many sites imagined as a generative mechanism for a new kind of film audience, familial or individual, brokered by the efficiently laboring “lady of the house.”

It’s worth remembering that what we film scholars tend to call “cinema” is best understood as a family of technologies and a host of institutions. When considered together, these technologies and institutions indicate the need for a persistent discussion about how best to conceptualize the forms and functions of celluloid: mass entertainment, modernist art, personal expression, home leisure. Because of this, we must not overly generalize about “the cinema” during this or any other historical period. Endorsing the idea that there is a singular knowable entity called “the cinema” that was uniformly operationalized across all social and historical contexts is an error we are reminded of daily in our contemporary and ever-changing technological environment.

In the 1920s, the commercial film library was the imagined and material stage on which the cinematic world came together and was stored, reorganized, and redistributed along specific logics to newly atomized film audiences. The home film library further privatized these activities. Seeing and saving films in the home was likened to the function of reading and collecting books, and listening to music. The film library was designed as a way to rein-in the world, connecting home viewers to audiences, places, events, natural wonders, Hollywood stars, and even historical periods. Long before the auteur theory and the director’s cut, the home film library reflected less the mania of the cinephile and more the attempt to negotiate the position of film within a rapidly transforming domestic arena, one that presages by twenty years debates surrounding television. Crucially, it is also a theater and a library that cannot be understood without considering film’s relationship to books, magazines, television, radio, electricity, and other domestic appliances. With DVD resoundingly exceeding box office take, it remains clear that the importance of the home for thinking about cinema as object, image, and privatized environment will only continue to make the home library and theater a telling and prescient site of analysis.

1. I would like to thank the numerous readers who have provided helpful comments on this essay, in particular Lee Grieveson, Keir Keightley, Dana Polan, and Charles Tepperman, as well as the anonymous *Cinema Journal* readers. This research also benefitted from public presentations at Kings College, Queen’s University, University of Southern California, as well as the annual meetings of the Film Studies Association of Canada and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Funding has also been generously supplied by the McKnight Landgrant Foundation and the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “A New Thrill Millions May Now Enjoy,” [advertisement] *Country Life,* (August 1927): 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema’s Transition to Sound* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On the significance of 16mm as a mode of production, see Charles Tepperman, “Communicating a New Form of Knowledge: Tracing the Amateur Cinema League and Its Films (1926–1954)” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 2007), and Patricia Zimmerman, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). On 16mm’s impact as an exhibition and display device see Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002); Eric Schaefer, “Plain Brown Wrapper: Adult Films for the Home Market, 1930–1969,” in *Looking Past the Screen,* ed. Eric Smoodin and Jon Lewis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007) and “Gauging a Revolution: 16mm Film and the Rise of the Pornographic Feature,” *Cinema Journal* 41.3 (Spring 2002): 3–26; and Jeffrey Ruoff “Show and Tell: The 16mm Travel Lecture Film,” in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel,* ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 217–237. See also my *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Emergence of Film Art* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Michelle Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990) and *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For work that begins this project see Uma Dinsmore, “Films at Home: Putting Domestic Audiences in the Picture” in *Moving Performance: British Stage and Screen, 1890s–1920s,* ed. Linda Fitzsimmons and Sarah Street (London: Flicks Books, 2000), 137–150. On early home systems see also Moya Lucket, “Filming the Family: Home Movie Systems and the Domestication of Spectatorship,” *The Velvet Light Trap* 4 (Fall 1995): 21–32. Though excellent, Ben Singer’s essay “Early Home Cinema and the Edison Home Projecting Kinetoscope,” *Film History* 2.1, (Winter 1988): 37–69, does not deal with domesticity per se. On developments in Europe, see Alexandra Schneider, “Time Travel with Pathé Baby: The Small-Gauge Film Collection as Historical Archive,” *Film History* 19.4 (2007): 353–360 and Ralf Forster and Jeanpaul Goergen, “Ozaphan: Home Cinema on Cellophane,” *Film History* 19.4 (2007): 372–383. On the contemporary period, see Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Crafton, *The Talkies;* Richard Kosarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990); David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994); Sumiko Higashi, *Cecille B. DeMille and American Film Culture: The Silent Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). On expanded cinema during the 1920s, see Anne Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry 1913–1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), as well as Zimmerman, *Reel Families,* especially chapters 1, 2, and 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On the crucial interdependencies amongst cinema and its cognate technologies and industries in a later period, see Tino Balio, *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990) and John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Peter Kramer, “The Lure of the Big Picture: Film, Television and Hollywood,” in *Big Picture/Small Screen: The Relations Between Film and Television,* ed. John Hill and Martin McLoone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 9–46. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Ben Singer, “Early Home Cinema and the Edison Home Projecting Kinetoscope” *Film History,* vol 2, (1988). More recently Anne Morey and Eric Smoodin have discussed the expanded sites for cinema through to the 1930s. See Anne Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders* and the special issues of *Film History* devoted to small-gauge and amateur film 15.2 (2003) and non-theatrical film, 19.4 (2007). See also Greg Waller’s work on itinerant projection: “Robert Southard and the History of Itinerant Film Exhibition.” *Film Quarterly* 57 (2003): 2–14; and Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Zimmerman, *Reel Families,* 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. On the ways 28mm presages the emergence of 16mm, see Anke Mebold and Charles Tepperman, “Resurrecting the Lost History of 28mm Film in North America,” *Film History* 15.2 (2003): 137–151. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. However, prices remained considerable. For example, in 1928 the Kodascope B Projector was $300 ($3713 in 2008 dollars). Generally, projectors ranged in price from $60 to $450 ($743–$5571 in 2008 dollars). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Zimmerman, *Reel Families;* Tepperman, “Communicating a New Form of Knowledge.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The idea of a self-operated projector was crucial to the early film theorists and critics as well as the film society and film study movement. See Bryher, “How Would I Start a Film Club,” 290–293 and “What can I do?” 286–289 reprinted in *Close Up: Cinema and Modernism, 1927–1930,* ed. James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. By 1928 there were at least twenty-two such libraries targeting the home. See David Pierce, “The Legion of the Condemned: Why American Silent Films Perished,” *Film History* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 5–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Pierce notes that Kodak often edited their films in order to fit them on a minimum number of reels. While most films seem to have been edited for length rather than content, there is some evidence that “racy” scenes were eliminated. Pierce, “Silent Movies,” 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Richard deCordova, “Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees,” *Camera Obscura* 23 (May 1990): 91–107, and “Child-Rearing Advice and the Moral Regulation of Children’s Movie-Going,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 15.4 (1995): 99–109. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. “Pathégrams: ‘Political Story’,” [advertisement] *Movie Makers* 3.9 (1928): 565. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. “Cinegraphs,” [advertisement] *Amateur Movie Makers* 2.7 (1927): 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. “Will issue films for Home Movies,” *New York Times,* May 27, 1927, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Eastman Kodak, Inc., *Kodak Cinegraphs,* [catalogue] (Rochester: Eastman Kodak, Inc., n.d.), inside front cover. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “Cinegraphs: ‘World War Movies’,” [advertisement] *Amateur Movie Makers* 2.11 (1927): inside back cover. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Schneider, “Time Travel with Pathé Baby.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. “Predict All Firms Will Print Special Films for Amateurs,” *Variety* 89.1 (October 26, 1927): 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See “Film Concern On National Sales Drive,” *Variety* 88.9 (September 14, 1927): 5, and “Gravy Profits for U’s Old Uns Cut to 16mm,” *Variety* 90.9 (March 14, 1928): 4. Universal mostly issued old prints that remained in its vaults, licensing them for $1.00 per reel to Gimbel’s and Willoughby’s ($12.37 in 2008). “Film Companies Tie Up with Department Stores,” *Variety* 90.4 (February 8, 1928): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. “Ether Circuit For U’s 16mm Talkers,” *Variety* 96.12 (October 2, 1929): 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. “1st Sounders on Train,” *Variety* 99.11 (June 25, 1930): 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “Talkers in 2,000,000 Homes Confidently Looked for in Future by Device Makers,” *Variety* 98.12 (April 2, 1930): 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting,* 34–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Crafton, *The Talkies,* 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Crafton, *The Talkies,* 51; see also William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Quoted in Crafton, *The Talkies,* 51, reprinted in *Looking ahead: the papers of David Sarnoff* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 91–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. RCA announced the first sound-on-film systems with an exorbitant estimated cost of $1100 ($13,616 in 2008). “RCA’s Home Talkers With Sound on Film,” *Variety* 95.1 (April 17, 1929): 5. See also “DeVry’s 16mm Sound Using Victor Song Records,” *Variety* 93.11 (December 26, 1928): 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “Fox Promises Pulpit, School, Home Talkers,” *Variety* 97.1 (October 16, 1929): 6. Fox had struck a deal with Western Electric: “Wm Fox After Home Talkers with Hook-Up in General T.P. Reported,” *Variety* 99.12 (July 2, 1930): 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “Forty-eight Brands of Home Talker Sets by Xmas,” *Variety* 100.2 (July 23, 1930): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Zimmerman, *Reel Families.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), and Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Radford discusses the ways in which this federal policy was meted out at the local and community level. Radford, *Modern Housing for America,* 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690–2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005), especially chapter 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Wright, *Building the Dream,* 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Statistic from Wright, *Building the Dream,* 208, from *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Magazine advertising increased 600 percent in the decade since 1916. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 6–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. 16mm projectors were also given demonstrations in department stores. See “Home Talkers are Demonstrated in Minn. Dept. Store,” *Variety* 99.4 (May 7, 1930): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Wright, *Building the Dream,* 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See Ruth Cowan, *More Work for Mother: Ironies of Household Technology in the Making* (London: Sage, 1993). On the role of women’s magazines see Sally Stein, “The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-class Women’s Magazine, 1919–1939,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography,* ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 146–149. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middleclass: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middleclass: Social Experience in the American City, 1760–1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. On women and reform during early and transitional cinema see Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: the Book of the Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-class Desire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and Joan Scott Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Radway, *A Feeling for Books.* [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Radford, *Modern Housing for America,* 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Keir Keightley, “Turn it Down! She Shrieked: Gender, Domestic Space, and High Fidelity, 1948–1959,” *Popular Music* 15.2 (May 1996): 152. See also, Keightly, “Low Television, High Fidelity: Taste and the Gendering of Home Entertainment Technologies,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 47.2 (2003): 236–259. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Spigel, *Make Room for TV;* Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting;* Boddy “The Amateur, the Housewife and the Salesroom Floor: Promoting Postwar US Television,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 1.1 (1998): 129– 142; Mary Beth Haralovich, “Sit-coms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker” in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer,* ed. Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992), 111–142. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Stein, “The Graphic Ordering of Desire,” 146; Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream,* 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. In *Make Room for TV,* Spigel traces similar discourses surrounding television. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)