

Here are several program ideas for varied audiences that relate to the *Jacob A. Riis: How the Other Half Lives* exhibition that can be adapted to your local audience and institution's needs. Please contact our constituent services team to be put in touch with other venues hosting this show at 816-421-1388 or MoreArt@maaa.org to find out what other organizations are planning. Please consider sharing your own programming ideas and programming success stories with other venues. Email pictures, ideas, testimonials and more to stephanie@maaa.org and/or beth@maaa.org.

In Riis's Footsteps: Photography and Social Advocacy (lecture, gallery discussion, workshop, or film screening)

In the late nineteenth century, Jacob Riis pioneered the use of flash photography in journalism in order to reveal the squalor of tenement life on the Lower East Side of New York City. Today, many photographers continue his mission of social advocacy, documenting the lives of the marginalized "other half" in an effort to challenge stereotypes, assert the humanity of their subjects, and inspire change. Invite a photographer to give a lecture, lead a discussion, and/or give a workshop about the role that social conscience plays in the work and the art of documentary photography.

Immigration in the Twenty-First Century (lecture, workshop, or film screening)

Help audiences understand what immigrants experience when they arrive in the United States today. Compare this experience to the immigrants photographed by Riis to give a complex look at immigration in the United States. Invite a representative from a local immigrant support group along with recent immigrants who are willing to share their stories with the audience.

Examining Poverty and Homelessness Today, a Century After Riis (lecture or panel discussion)

Organize a public program that explores the legacy of Jacob Riis's journalism and photography circa 1900 for the work of journalists, historians, and community leaders today committed to raising public consciousness about urban poverty and homelessness. What have we learned from Riis about how historians and journalists can illuminate these social issues effectively and accurately? Invite a historian, community leader, or social worker, along with a journalist, to discuss poverty and homelessness in your community or region.

Oral History (workshop)

Almost every American has an immigration story. Whether it's a part of family lore or a first-person experience, immigration is an integral part of the American experience. Host a workshop led by a historian or folklorist who can teach people how to conduct an oral interview, from equipment to questions to setting. Consider collecting these oral histories and donating them to your local historical society.

Tour traditional immigrant neighborhoods in your community (family day, K-12 tours, adult group tours)

Create a family-friendly event to explore traditional immigrant neighborhoods in your community that may compare to the Lower East Side of New York. Present the late-nineteenth-century history of the neighborhood, its geography, place names, dance, art-making, foods, family-owned businesses, etc. Use some of the hands-on activities from the educational outreach kit or lesson ideas found in the programming guide as inspiration. Consider partnering with other museums and/or organizations to assist in planning, hosting, and marketing your program.

Magic Lantern Show (performance)

Travel back to the time of Jacob Riis with an authentic 1890s magic-lantern show. Before the movies, magic lantern shows entertained audiences with projected color images, stories, live music, and audience participation. Riis himself was a famous lecturer who traveled far and wide with his box of lantern slides. The American Magic-Lantern Theater, directed by Terry Borton, is the only professional traveling theater company of its kind in the United States, and uses original antique projection equipment.

Contact Information: American Magic-Lantern Theater
Box 44, Haddam, CT 06423
860-345-7578

<http://www.magiclanternshows.com/magiclanternshows.htm>

History of Urban Planning (lecture or workshop)

Riis's work led to changes in urban planning that created a better living environment for New York City's citizens. His writing and photographs led to housing improvement, new legislation, and communal spaces like public parks. Invite your local city planner or an urban planning faculty member at a local university to lead a talk about the history of urban planning in the United States or lead a workshop giving visitors an opportunity to experience the work of an urban planner.

Social Movements in Our Community (presentation, panel, or display)

Jacob Riis was a key motivator for social change in New York, working with other reformers of the day to bring about changes that dramatically improved the quality of life for the poor. Were there settlement houses in your community? Do they still exist, in some form, today? Which community leaders or organizations worked to improve the lives of the local poor one hundred years ago? Where are the key reformers and service providers today for the poor? Feature these local stories and issues in your programming by planning slide shows, panel discussions, or displays on a bulletin board at your venue.

World Day Against Child Labour (activity, lecture)

The international day to increase awareness of current child labor issues is observed on June 12, but this cause has pressing relevancy year round. Use the "Children of the Poor at Work" content discussion and occupation cards to present the child labor issues that Jacob Riis addressed in his work at the turn of the twentieth century. Invite a historian to give a talk about the progress made in child labor since Riis's time and the various actions that precipitated that change. Bring the discussion into the present day by including an individual working to stop child labor abuses and protect working minors today. Consider bringing in a

child welfare or child labor specialist from your state or a representative from one of the organizations in the Child Labor Coalition (<http://stopchildlabor.org>) to present on the current state of child labor in the US, your state, or nations around the world.

Media for Social Change: Then and Now (panel discussion or workshop)

Using the hands-on activity from the exhibition Programming Guide, “Media for Social Change: Then and Now,” plan a panel discussion or workshop with professionals in your community who have used a variety of different communications media to affect social change. Include some of the following: print, digital, and broadcast journalists; documentary filmmakers; public speakers; museum curators; and social media coordinators. Ask them to address the benefits and limitations of the media they employ and discuss how technology impacts their efforts. Select a current social issue or cause and brainstorm ways to use a variety of media to increase awareness of it in your community.

Sing-along for Social Change (participatory performance)

Using the Music component of the “Media for Social Change” activity in the exhibition Programming Guide as a starting point, organize a sharing circle event highlighting songs of social change. Communicate with participants in advance of the event, asking them to nominate selections by submitting recordings, lyrics, and background information about songs that have raised awareness of social issues, past or present. Curate a playlist for a listening event that presents an assortment of songs addressing issues related to labor, peace, justice, the environment, etc. Share the songs through recordings or live performance, planning sing-alongs when practical. Provide examples of songs that have helped make a difference throughout history.

Play Like It’s 1899 Family Day (family festival)

Organize a family festival day inspired by Jacob Riis’s photographs of children participating in recreational activities and the interpretive contents of the “Children of the Poor at Play” portion of the exhibition education kit. Focus on the creative, limited-resource recreation activities of 100–125 years ago. A kindergarten teacher, child care provider, or other early childhood specialist in your community could be a great resource for facilitating a variety of old fashioned, “unplugged” games and activities, such as hand-claps, circle games, dice games, field day games, and jump rope. Invite jump rope teams to demonstrate. Compare the features of playgrounds in your community with those photo-documented by Jacob Riis. Discuss examples of how playground equipment can reflect its time, location, and culture. Conduct a survey of how kids play today using the “How I Play Survey” in the education kit and present your findings in a display, looping slide show, or spoken presentation on this day. Ask an early childhood specialist to discuss the importance of play time to childhood development and to specifically speak to the merits of unplugged play. Consider promoting a Week of Unplugged Play with neighborhood children before your festival day. Ask neighborhood children to help promote and document your festival through social media.

Teddy Bears’ Picnic (children’s/family event)

Play on Jacob Riis’s friendship with fellow reformer President Theodore Roosevelt and the story of the creation of the teddy bear by hosting a Teddy Bears’ Picnic. (A teddy bear is one of the touchable objects in the exhibition education kit.) Offer picnic foods, story time, and

craft activities to make bear clothing or accessories. Invite a children’s librarian to read a variety of books and play recordings related to the theme. Ask seamstresses in the community to operate a “health clinic” to mend bears in need of repair. Present honors to the oldest, smallest, largest, best dressed, and best bear doppelgänger brought to the event by attendees.

Treasures from the Attic—Vintage Toy Fair (family festival)

Share Riis’s photos of children at play as a starting point for discussing the toys that children played with 100–125 years ago. Invite patrons to bring antique and otherwise cherished toys to share in a show-and-tell that features personal stories, memories, and family histories associated with each object. Include toys that represent past generations and the cultural traditions of family members who immigrated to America. Involve a local historical society or children’s museum with a toy collection and expertise. Include related identification, dating, and trivia activities. Conduct vintage board games tournaments. Accept donations of new children’s toys on this day, to benefit a local charity.