

### SO YOU WANT TO START A FILM SOCIETY



Many of the queries we receive are from people wanting to get their own film group going. They have the enthusiasm and the will, but a few hard facts are also needed.

#### YOU WILL NEED TO CONSIDER:

##### *A Venue*

It must be adequate in size for projection, and the comfort of your audience, in terms of seating, heating/cooling, and have facilities for refreshments. Investigate local halls, a movie theatre - most operate only on weekends in the country towns - schools, clubrooms, and a member's home.

##### *Equipment - 16mm film*

Projectors, spare reels, and a screen. If they're not available at the venue they will need to be purchased. Local schools, garage sales, The Trading Post, eBay are good places to start looking; the FVFS is (occasionally) a good source of equipment. Screens can be built, or a white non-shiny wall can be used instead.

NB. Two projectors are needed for smooth reel changes, to allow cooling, and as a back up. Similarly more than one projectionist is desirable (encourage apprentices).

##### *Equipment – DVD projection*

If you are considering using DVDs you will need one or two DVD players, a stereo amplifier, two speakers, a video projector and assorted switches and cabling. One DVD player is sufficient, but two will allow better cueing and a smoother performance when changing between DVDs.

See Information sheet 18 for the description of a suitable projector package and sheet 7 for general specifications.

### *Equipment - 35mm film*

If you are planning on screening 35mm film, and unless you have the knowledge and finance to set up a small cinema yourself, you will need to locate a venue which is already set up to screen 35mm film. It may be an operating cinema in which case you may be able to come to an arrangement with the operator to support your film society. For more options see Information sheet 03.

### *Source of films and DVDs*

They are available from a number of sources, with a variety of prices.

If you screen to members only, membership of the FVFS entitles your society to borrow 16mm films or DVDs from the NTLC (Non-Theatrical Loans Catalogue) at the NFSA (National Film and Sound Archives) in Canberra.

The supply of 16mm film is becoming more difficult as distributors close, so many film societies have moved to DVD projection. This increases their programming options and is cheaper to operate (once a video projector is obtained).

Typical prices of hiring films are as follows (as at April 2010). Return freight is not included.

35mm film (commercial distributor)– \$200-\$300

16mm film (commercial distributor ) - \$80 - \$200

16mm feature film (NTLC) \$38.50 (as at May 2011)

DVD hire (NTLC) \$16.50 (as at May 2011)

DVD purchase \$20-\$35

DVD screening rights \$55 where the rights are paid for by the society under the ACOFS agreements. This applies where a DVD is owned by the society or borrowed privately. It does not include DVDs hired from a retail DVD hire outlet as they are strictly private use only, with no exceptions. Outside of these agreements you could pay up to \$300 for the rights to screen a DVD.

“ReelNews”, the FVFS publication provides regular information on films and programs from other film societies and reports on new film acquisitions and DVD availability. Information is also available on the FVFS website [www.fvfs.org.au](http://www.fvfs.org.au).

### *Publicity*

Small posters prepared on your computer and photocopied, advertising your existence and your programs, need to be spread around - local library, bookshops, cafes, schools etc. Notes describing the film(s) can be put together from the distributors' notes and catalogues. Film and video catalogues e.g. 'Time Out', Halliwell's "Film and Video Guide" are published each year - check your local library (or large bookstores approx \$30). Or you can pick up back copies at sales. See magazines and newspapers for reviews on current and older movies, for example "Film Buffs Choice" in "The Age EG" and "Film Buffs Forecast" on 3RRR

every Saturday at 12.00pm - 2.00pm. Use the internet either through a search engine or by accessing specialised websites such as [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) for film reviews. Many sites specialise on DVD availability (eg [www.happyhunter.com](http://www.happyhunter.com), [www.getonce.com.au](http://www.getonce.com.au) ) and reviews.

A regular newsletter to your members is recommended with copies left in the local library to disperse information and encourage participation.

### *Legal Issues*

You should have a committee operating under an agreed constitution. The minimum you need are rules and aims acceptable to the FVFS.

Copyright laws require that you may not screen a film or DVD in a public venue unless you have permission of the rights owner. This even applies to old films in private collections. In most cases rights may have to be negotiated, especially for DVDs, unless it comes with the film or DVD hire. The FVFS has procedures in place to facilitate this process.

Most film societies screen in a “non-theatrical” manner (ie to members only, with no charges for single admission). The main advantage of being “non-theatrical” is the distributors’ reduced charges for film hire and DVD rights.

At a later stage you should consider incorporation. As an incorporated body (e.g. Filmville Film Society inc), you acquire a legal status which protects members of your organisation in the case of a legal challenge. Information sheet 08 covers this subject – or go to Business and Consumer Affairs for information. Their website is [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au).

### *Insurance*

Membership of the FVFS includes free insurance for film and DVD loss and damage while in use or in transit.

Membership also entitles you to participate in attractively priced public liability insurance cover tailored for the needs of film societies, and commercial (fire & theft) cover.

### *Costs and Finance*

Income will be generated mainly by membership - Your fee needs to be calculated to cover basic costs - venue, films, insurance, publicity etc.

Fund raising and grants from your local council, arts councils, etc are other sources to cover purchases of equipment etc.

### *Tax*

There are advantages in applying to the ATO (Australian Tax Office) for an ABN (Australian Business Number), and then applying for charity status. This has distinct advantages when receiving payments from government or council bodies. This is covered in more detail in Information sheet 05.

### *The budget*

The following calculations may help you work out your annual budget (figures are approximate but should serve as a guide.)

Size of society	Large eg cinema	Medium eg hall	Medium eg hall	Medium eg hall	Small eg home
Source of films or DVD	35mm Distributor	NTLC 16mm	NTLC DVD	Owned DVD	Owned DVD
10 Feature Films	\$2500	\$385	\$165	\$250	\$250
10 x Rights	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$550	\$0
Short Films	\$100	\$0	\$25	\$25	\$25
Freight	\$500	\$200	\$40	\$0	\$0
Venue	\$4000	\$800	\$800	\$800	\$0
FVFS Affiliation	\$180	\$123	\$123	\$123	\$40
Newsletter	\$400	\$120	\$30	\$30	\$0
Postage	\$1060	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$0
Insurance (pub Liability )	\$632	\$380	\$380	\$450	\$0
Equipment fund (Depreciation)	\$400	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$30
Miscellaneous	\$300	\$200	\$60	\$60	\$50
TOTAL	\$10072	\$2808	\$2223	\$2888	\$395
Membership Fees (each)	\$35	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$25
Minimum Members	288	94	74	96	16

Note that the largest cost will probably be your venue (unless you plan to screen in a private home). Seeking the best deal, sponsorship or “community rate” is therefore very important.

The equipment fund is to insure you against unexpected maintenance or unscheduled equipment upgrade.

Ask for volunteers to form an interim committee to take it from here and schedule a formal meeting and election of office bearers.

### *Your First Screening Is Key*

Before the screening gather together 2 or 3 people who will be prepared to take the film society into its first year, and with them, make initial decisions on the style of films, source, venue and approximate budget. Check out the catalogues of the different film or DVD libraries, and their charges, to ensure they hold the titles you wish to program at the prices you can afford.

Attract as large an audience as possible - advertise widely to “come and try” a free screening, show a film typical of the type you intend to screen and have an interesting speaker to open the proceedings.

Make people welcome - officially and informally.

Hold a brief AGM prior to the film.

Explain the aims of the society, types of films and proposed activities.

Explain how the membership fee is calculated i.e. costs involved. Pensioners and seniors often get discounts but as they will probably represent a high proportion of members, you can't afford to offer more than 10-20% discount – and allow for the discounted tickets in your budget.

Propose the first year's program and ask for suggestions or requests - try a survey including a rating of suggested films and a section for suggestions.

Ask for volunteers to join the committee as projectionists (and apprentices), catering, technical, film selection, research, newsletter etc. Committee members don't all need to be film “experts” as many are required for regular club tasks.

Ask the meeting to nominate the inaugural committee. Ask them to approve the initial fees, the program and the constitution.

Keep a record of those attending - names, addresses and perhaps a comments and suggestions section. This will enable the interim committee to follow up with personalised information, as well as advertising before the next screening - Don't leave it too long!

Screen your film and then have an enjoyable supper.

Sell memberships to anyone willing to pay up on the spot. Be in a position to sell membership tickets, or at least provide receipts.

You are now a functioning film society, so keep the reels turning!

Complete your forms to join the FVFS.

### **KEY STEPS TO STARTING A FILM SOCIETY**

- Get together with others who will help.
- Decide on what type of film society you want to be.
- Decide on the type of program you will present.
- Locate a suitable a venue
- Find the equipment.
- Decide on appropriate aims and rules.
- Promote a free screening to come and try it.
- Prepare an approximate budget.
- Prepare a suggested first year's program, with suggested titles and dates.
- Approach council or Arts association for a seeding grant, subsidy or equipment.
- Call a public meeting in the proposed venue.
- At the meeting,

- Present your proposed rules, aims, membership charges.
- Present the first year's program.
- Get discussion going.
- Select interested people who will assist run the society
- Announce that this is the first AGM
- Select and vote on official positions and committee.
- Adopt rules and aims.
- Now you have a treasurer, announce the membership fees and that no-one leaves until they are paid up! (laugh out loud)
- Take the names of those that pay and give them a receipt.
- Show the film.
- Have a great supper.
- Enjoy your first year of being a successful film society.

Remember that the second year is harder, as the first flush of enthusiasm has gone and members have to be persuaded to part with more cash for a second membership year.

If you need further information or assistance you can contact the FVFS on (03) 9873 1369 or at PO Box 125 Mitcham 3132, or [admin@fvfs.org.au](mailto:admin@fvfs.org.au)  
Or check our information sheets on [www.fvfs.org.au](http://www.fvfs.org.au)