

ACOFS - The Australian Council of Film Societies

Film Society Handbook

Chapter 5: THE VENUE

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Film societies operate in school or church halls, community centres, libraries, theatres, cinemas and sometimes in private homes. The venue you choose depends very much on the size of the film society, the cost and availability and accessibility for prospective members. One of the most important things to check when examining prospective venues is blackout, which may even be a problem at night. Nothing creates a worse impression than inadequate blackout. This results in direct light falling on the screen or reaching people in the audience. Stray light falling on the ceiling or walls is less troublesome but should be eliminated where possible.

Other facilities required are power points and light switches which are close to the projector, toilets, fire escapes, comfortable seating and tea/coffee making facilities. If you can find a location which provides raked seating and some form of projection booth, this is even better, although may not be of much use for digital projection which may need to be closer to the screen. Heating in winter may be necessary and air conditioning in the warmer months is desirable. Large venues should be avoided. These have bad acoustics which ruin a film with too much echo, thus causing the sound track to be incomprehensible. If you suspect echo may be a problem stand in the centre of the room and clap your hands. The time taken for the sound to decay gives you a good indication of the echo properties of the room.

When looking for a good venue remember to check:

- Capacity
- Price of venue
- Availability when required
- Echoes
- Comfort
- Appearance
- Black-out against light
- Heating
- Parking
- Security and ease of access
- Accessibility
- Power points
- Catering facilities
- Room to congregate and have refreshments after
- Insurance requirements

Seating Arrangements

Comfortable seating and unobstructed viewing is an important requirement for presenting a pleasing program. If part of the audience is forced to sit too close to the

screen , or too far away, or at too much of an angle, they will quickly lose interest, no matter how good the film. They may not realise why they didn't enjoy the screening but they won't be back for the next screening.

The screen should be raised high enough to allow unobstructed viewing anywhere in the viewing area. If the screen is positioned too low and the seats are not staggered in succeeding rows, the viewer up front will block the view of those sitting in the back. There is nothing more annoying than to have the screen in full view and not be able to read the subtitles. The bottom edge of the screen should not be any lower than head height and preferably no lower than 2 metres from the floor. Speakers should also be above this height so each member gets direct sound without heads being in the way.

The front row should not be closer to the screen than twice the screen width (Of the standard ratio screen). The maximum viewing angle is given by making the back row not wider than six times the standard screen width. Be aware however, that there are some people who may actually prefer to sit closer to the screen.

