

ACOFS - The Australian Council of Film Societies

Film Society Handbook

Chapter 12: BOOKING YOUR FILMS or DVDs

[Jan 2010]

WHERE TO GET FILMS

Most of the commercial 16mm films are now distributed by two companies:

Roadshow

This company, now distributes on behalf of all the major American film producers (except Columbia) as well as Roadshow. Prints are held primarily in Sydney, but are available Australia-wide. A comprehensive catalogue is available which is available on their website. Most of the films can be rented at \$100+ with the most recent releases being the most expensive. Note that film societies that are members of a State Federation do NOT have to pay the insurance charge since they are automatically covered by the ACOFS insurance policy

Contact your state federation for the latest information on distributors and their contact details.

AMALGAMATED MOVIES

This company handles Columbia Tri-Star and Hoyts Distribution films. Like Roadshow, their films could be subject to negotiation on price. Special deals can be obtained for the older films

'Free' Film Libraries

These libraries represent by far the most important range of film society material, including classics from the silent and sound eras, documentary films, animation and experimental film.

ACMI:

This library is a goldmine for film societies, and is worth a lot of attention for the devoted film society programmer, although their catalogue is a long way out of date.

The films handled by ACMI are in several categories

The old State Film Centre (Victorian) films are only available for use in Victoria and are available to members who have paid an annual membership fee.

French Embassy collection.
German Embassy collection.

Non-Theatrical Lending Collection at the National Film & Sound Archives

Whatever your interests in 16mm film, you're sure to find something in the NTLC at the NFSA in Canberra. Some of the areas well catered for are:

Documentaries
Animation (all periods, all styles),
Silent films (dramas and comedies),

Narrative feature films (strong on English language films of the 40's to the 80's),
Avant-garde films (an extremely good collection of the major experimental films), plus associated
features and shorts.

DVDs

These categories can be found in the Index volume of the NTLC Catalogue.

Many of these are restricted for use by registered film societies and tertiary educational institutions,
so don't forget to register. It's easier if you join your state Federation.

You will pay a handling charge and return freight back to the Library. An information booklet is
available from the NFSA which explains all. You will need to register and then you may book films
by mail, telephone, fax and the Internet. Their website is <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/>

There is no rental charge but there is a handling charge of \$A9.90 for each DVD, and \$27.50 for
each 16 mm. film borrowed which includes outward freight. The borrower is responsible for return
freight.

There is a catalogue for the NTLC available online at their website.

How to Book Films

Once you've selected the programme you have to book it. That's easy, or so you think. You may
encounter a few problems.

Mail, Phone or Fax

Most suppliers will accept bookings by fax, phone, email or mail. Check the respective websites for
details. Email and fax bookings can be confirmed by email overnight. If you phone through your
booking please take note of the confirmation number. The big drawback to booking by mail that it
takes time. If you can't afford the long distance phone calls, plan your program well in advance.
This will give you plenty of time to alter your program if something is not available on the date
required. You should also list alternate dates (or alternative titles) if you want to cut down on
correspondence and save a lot of time.

Overall it's more convenient to book by phone or email and include the expense on your budget.
You'll save yourself a lot of mucking around in the long run.

Block Bookings by State Federations

These are arranged from time to time by your Federation or ACOFS. A number of films are block
booked from the source for a longish period of time something like three months, and distributed
by the Federation concerned to individual film societies. This may result in lower transport costs
for the films particularly in States like Western Australia or other States which are a considerable
distance from the distributors. The WA Federation often distribute packages of films in this
manner. Contact the Federation for further details.

Conditions of Hire.

It is important that you abide by the conditions of hire relating to films that you screen. Your bookings are usually accepted on a "non-theatrical" basis, i.e. you are not a commercial enterprise and do not charge for admission. You must obey the conditions of hire of the libraries, which are often printed on the booking or confirmation sheets. If you ever want to do something different to from your normal regular screenings e.g. screen a film or DVD more than once or to a wider audience than just your members, you will need to contact the distributor or library.

Film Society Rules for Screenings of Films or DVDs from the NTLC.

The Film Society should be properly constituted and a member of a State Federation.

Membership fees are to be set by the Society in such a way as to cover all screening and administrative fees for 12 months.

Membership of any society is by annual fee. Alternately, 6 months or 3 months membership may be offered. The criteria is 'period' not 'number of sessions'.

Guests and casual visitors may be admitted free but under no conditions may an entry fee be charged "at the door". They should be encouraged to join rather than continue to come as "free guests".

Societies may mention individual film titles in newspapers, TV and other promotional media, but it should be made quite clear that the screening is open to members only, but that new members are always welcome"

All publicly distributed publicity material of the Film Society (i.e. Brochures, flyers, calendars, programme notes, newspaper publicity, radio and TV plugs and Internet pages must contain words similar to "This is a Film Society screening open to Members only. Contact For details and for membership enquiries."

All loans are for 1 screening only unless arranged otherwise.

A film society may hire a function room in a hotel or cafe for their screenings providing the area is clearly separated from other public areas and the members-only policy is clearly applied.

Film Societies organising "Special Events" that use films from the Collection, should first consult with the NTLC at NFSA regarding the possible need to obtain copyright clearance from rights holders. When a Society negotiates a fee for a screening with the rights holder to any individual titles in the Collection the written copyright clearance must be provided to NTLC before the print will be dispatched. The Collection is also bound by Australian copyright and contracts law.

Thus a Film Society that uses venues such as pubs, cafes or even picture theatres to attract customers could run into problems on this basis. The commercial activities of the venue could easily become confused with the Society's activities, hence raising issues about the relationship between the two organisations.

If you have any doubts about your relationship with a current or potential venue for your film society screenings, do not hesitate to talk to NFSA and seek clarification.

Note that if you belong to a Federation you will be covered for film loss or damage in transit or damage when projecting. This insurance policy is maintained behalf of member film societies by the Australian Council of Film Societies.

This should not be confused with the optional Public Liability and equipment insurance policy offered by some state federations.

The mechanism for selecting and booking DVDs is covered in another Chapter.

Which source to use.

The main factor affecting your choice of library/distributor to supply your films and DVDs will be availability and cost. There is more on this in Chapter 10 "Picking a program".

Condition of the film or DVD

When your film or DVD arrives ensure it is what you booked and is in good condition.

Ensure films have their reels start-out, and all reels are of the same film title. It has been known for an occasional film to be supplied with one reel missing, of the wrong title or supplied end-out or even back-to-front.

Ensure DVDs are the right title also and that the case is not empty, and the DVD is not scratched or marked.

If you have time it is a good idea to run the film or DVD to ensure it is in good condition and runs well in the projector or player.