

CHAPTER 10

PUBLICITY

Publicity Officer

The publicity officer is responsible for the co-ordination of all aspects of publicity. Thus, his or her job will not only be to ensure the production of brochures and posters but also the running of the pre-season publicity campaign. Publicity should be thought of as a continuous operation and part of the job is to liaise with the local media (radio, TV and press). Find out who would be interested in your publicity. Give them a complimentary membership and feed them information in the form of news items: "Banned Film to be shown at ...", "Festival Winner for Film Society Program", "New President for Film Society", "Film maker to speak at", "Membership rush Begins", "Film Society Closes Membership". Keeping the society in the public eye as much as possible throughout the year is an important part of your publicity campaign.

You should always bear in mind that most films that are available for film society use are shown on condition that there is no admission charge to see the film. A film Society must be, and be seen to be a "non-commercial" organisation and the easiest way to demonstrate this is to have free entry to the particular film screenings.

All publicity for such screenings should make it clear that members will need to join the society to see the films. Membership is preferably for 12 months however 6 or 3 monthly memberships are allowable. In your flyers, brochures and the website (if you have one), the society should set out the subscription rates including any concessions for students, unemployed, social security, beneficiaries etc. A membership of less than six months should be the exception, if

absolutely necessary, it should be at least 50% more than the price of the ticket to the local (or nearest) cinema

In newspaper, radio & TV ads (ie ads for the public) you should stress that you are promoting a Society screening with membership available.

At no time can you give the impression that there is a mandatory charge for a society screening. The phrase “admission by donation” or “charge for afternoon tea (or supper)” should not be used.

Distributors have been known to confuse membership rates with admission rates so it is best not to quote specific subscription rates in your public advertising.

Brochures and Leaflets

These are the main means of attracting new members and telling the public about the film society, and should therefore contain essential information about where and when the society meets, how to join, who to contact, subscription rates, tear off membership application form, and sufficient information about the film to whet the appetite. For major impact the brochure should be eye-catching and therefore visual. Film is a visual medium and new members are more likely to be attracted to a few well chosen stills than lengthy verbiage. The brochure must look sufficiently interesting for people to want to pick it up in the first place. If you're worried about the cost of printing a brochure, think of it in terms of members. If 8 or 10 new members join as a result of distributing 1000 leaflets, this more than justifies the cost of printing them. If you do the design and layout yourself, it is even cheaper.

An attractive looking leaflet is of no use unless it reaches people, so distribution should be carefully handled.. Copies can be placed in the

public library, and most librarians will agree to this. Local schools, adult education centres and colleges should be circulated (you may not get too many pupils, but should pick up a few teachers). Leaflets and brochures should also be distributed individually by members of the committee. It should be pointed out, that, particularly in the first year, the vast majority of members are obtained through direct contact with a committee member — so your committee has to get out there and sell by distributing the brochure to friends and acquaintances, or to anybody who shows the slightest interest.

Care should be taken if you are advertising a recent release film, especially if there is a commercial cinema in your area. There have been cases in the past where commercial cinema owners have been very upset when a film society has advertised a 16mm version of the film they are about to screen in their cinema. It is good policy to always be on good terms with the local cinema manager.

Mailing List

Build up a mailing list of anybody who is likely to be interested. On this list include your committee's friends and acquaintances, local schools, libraries and clubs. Also borrow the mailing lists of other cultural organisations (Arts Council branches, drama groups, music societies, etc.). If anyone contacts the society as a result of some publicity initiative then get their names and addresses. If a non-member comes to a screening, make sure you get their name and address. A mailing list is basic to a film society. Use it to send details of free screenings, to send your program brochure and to send reminders of your activities.

Posters

An attractive eye-catching poster is essential. Whilst not highlighting the actual program, it is possible to present to the public a good deal of information — names of directors, actors, countries of origin, cost of subscription, meeting time, venue name and address and phone number of the membership secretary. As posters don't contain specific details of your program they may be displayed publicly without breaking the rules regarding advertising your films. Get your committee to plaster the town with posters — particularly the local shopping centres, as well as the humble corner store. The more posters you put up, the more chance people have of seeing them. Apart from shops, don't forget libraries, schools, information centres, railway stations and even the local cinema if the manager is agreeable.

Radio and television

Access to the electronic media may be difficult in the large cities, but it's worth a try anyway. In provincial centres, radio and television stations are always looking for local news items and personalities to interview. So give them a try. You can probably secure a 5-10 minute interview on radio or perhaps less on TV to promote your society. All it will cost you is butterflies in the stomach if you haven't done this sort of thing before!

Please stress that your society is for members only and that annual membership is available. Give a contact number for more details — ensure that someone (or answering machine) is standing by to take any calls.

Web page on the Internet

Many Film Societies have members who have access to a computer and that have Web access (ie have an account with an Internet provider). Your committee may think it worthwhile to have your own