

SOFTWARE TO SUPPORT YOUR FILM SOCIETY

Introduction

Software can be a blessing or a curse.

How many times have you been asked –

- Do you have a web site?
- Will you send a notice out as an email to all the members?
- Where do you keep the details of all your members?
- Do you accept credit card payments?
- Is your members' personal data safe with you?
- Can you pay your bills by EFT?

It's fine if you have a software or internet whiz in your organization, but you cannot rely on their being around at your beck and call to set everything up when you need it.

So how about you set up the software yourself?

Wow that's a tall order. What do you do first? Do you know the programs you are going to use? When will you have the time to learn that? – It's all too hard.

Well no – it isn't.

There are a significant number of free or low cost software programs that will do most of the work for you and will enable you to produce a quality outcome.

This Information covers possible programs to satisfy your needs:- The society website, the society bulk email needs, the membership database and the on-line payment system. Plus one or two other items!

For each of these products there is a period of learning how they work and what they can do for you. The advantage for the user is that they produce a professional output with minimal effort. Also, the whole process can be handed over to someone else, who has a reasonable level of computer skill.

Website Creation & Hosting using Wix

The **Wix** software is accessible via the internet and thus does not reside on your computer. Your computer may use an Apple, PC or Linux system, but it does require internet access. This also means that multiple members in disparate locations can be responsible for the maintenance of the website in a controlled manner. Once you have an account, **Wix** can look after the process of creating your website, all the way from obtaining your domain, hosting your site and providing you the templates to create your website pages.

There are a number of standard templates for you to select from and, for a few extra dollars, a larger number of alternative templates that are more

detailed are available. Movement of data and information into the system is quite easy and **Wix** will accept word documents, pictures and other images. The setup also leads you through a series of questions that fill the website templates with all the data required.

For any user the most important steps are firstly, to have planned what information the website will contain, secondly to have collected that information and have it in a consistent form to import into the website and thirdly to have a clear idea of the colours, font and layout that are to be used.

Wix then allows you to preview the site and ensure that it looks correct. Then you can publish (that is, upload it to the web as a real live site) so that everyone can access your information.

Provided you stick to the simple format this process is available for free. If however, you need to purchase a domain name or to have hosting service you will have to pay for those services – but you would still have to, no matter how you create your website.

Bulk Emails to your members - Use Excel or MailChimp

Often there is the requirement to send out information or newsletters to your members. With the price of stamps and the time that mail can take to be delivered, a number of societies have adopted the use of bulk email services.

There are many email servers that might be used, and they have differing limits of how many addresses may be used in one email message. For example, Gmail is limited to 550 addresses in each outgoing email which will be adequate for most users. For this number, it is relatively easy to keep all email addresses and membership data in an **Excel** file and simply copy and paste the email addresses into the email “BCC” field. Note that it is not appropriate to use the “To” or “CC” field for bulk addresses.

For larger numbers, to avoid the issue of your domain being treated as a bulk mail site or for the situation where your email address gets blacklisted, it is wise to use a service that does not experience those problems.

MailChimp is a service that enables a user to set up a list of members who are to be sent an email where the email is either a text only or a text and image email. It is free as long as you keep below certain volumes - otherwise you pay for the service.

Once you have your head around their terminology, **MailChimp** is an easy system to use. It allows you to reference other documents within the document being sent. Some societies use it for creating and sending an electronic newsletter to their members. The most onerous job of the process is keeping the member list of names up to date.

The system provides very good statistics of what has happened including how many emails were delivered, how many not delivered, who has unsubscribed, who has opened their email and the summary information showing percentage of recipients opened and percentage of members who have clicked on a link.

This mail system can be used in a variety of ways, as an emergency contact mechanism, a means of sending information to all members and as a vehicle for publishing an electronic newsletter. Some quite large societies (500 members) can use this for free as a principal communication system.

Membership Systems – Excel or MemberTies

Maintaining the members' register is the responsibility of the Secretary of the Film Society. Depending on the number of members of the society, the system that will be used can vary from simple to quite complex.

Some smaller societies create their own system using Office systems such as **Excel** and this allows them to create a system that is exactly what they require. While **Excel** is easy to set up and use, it can be cumbersome to manage, particularly if the list becomes large.

Another alternative is to purchase a membership system such as **MemberTies** and use that to maintain all the membership data. In these systems it is likely that the user will use only a fraction of the functionality of the system. It is most important that whatever system is used, it allows for all of the normal operations of the society and provides an easy way to manage the society.

MemberTies has been around for over 20 years and even though it was developed in USA, it has been made to fit Australian conditions. The standard version of the system works on a Windows PC and has a once-off license fee of US\$99.00 (Approx AUD\$130.00). For more information go to the website of www.myrro.com and download a copy. You may download and use a copy with up to 20 members and use all the features to check that it works for you. The advantage of using such a system is that the data only has to be entered once and you can maintain your membership data in a manner which meets Consumer Affairs requirements.

There are other systems available, and we would encourage you to test drive those to see the most appropriate for your society.

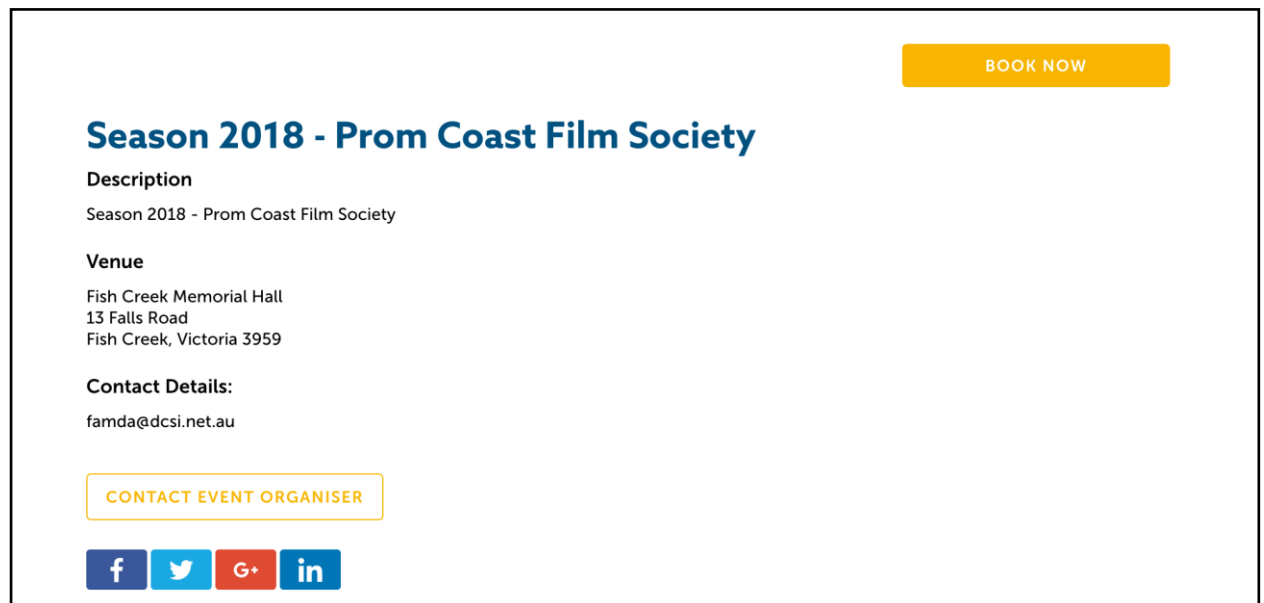
Online Booking service – TryBooking.

TryBooking is a Melbourne-based company offering ticketing services to mainly small groups like local councils, schools, theatre groups, festivals etc. In its most basic form, the **TryBooking** website allows you to open an account, set up an 'event' and offer people an option to book and pay online. It also has many reports you are able to run for each event, covering just about every element you could ever want.

From a user perspective, the initial setup can be a little daunting as you get used to their terminology and process. Like a lot of these things, you are able to make it as simple or as complex as required. For example, in a theatre context you are able to set up multiple sessions, multiple pricing, customer selectable seating, customer discount codes and heaps more. Ticketing can be on a "allocated seating" basis or a "general admission" basis.

The customer interface is much simpler. They generally "click through" to **TryBooking** from another source such as your website, Facebook page or a

simple link on an email. Once they arrive on the **TryBooking** website they are taken straight to your “homepage” such as the example below.



The screenshot shows a webpage for the 'Season 2018 - Prom Coast Film Society'. In the top right corner, there is a yellow button labeled 'BOOK NOW'. Below this, the title 'Season 2018 - Prom Coast Film Society' is displayed in a large blue font. Underneath the title, the word 'Description' is followed by the text 'Season 2018 - Prom Coast Film Society'. The 'Venue' section lists 'Fish Creek Memorial Hall', '13 Falls Road', and 'Fish Creek, Victoria 3959'. The 'Contact Details' section provides the email address 'famda@dcsi.net.au'. Below the contact information is a yellow button labeled 'CONTACT EVENT ORGANISER'. At the bottom of the page, there are four social media icons: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn.

Once a customer clicks on the “Book Now” button, they are given the option to purchase an annual subscription or a 3 month subscription. This can be tailored to meet individual requirements. They can also purchase multiple subscriptions at the same time. Once selected, they input their usual details and credit card numbers and the order is processed. **TryBooking** emails the customer with a confirmation, receipt and a printable copy of their ticket.

On screening night, the printed ticket can be converted to a membership card. The Film Society can also run a report of all tickets sold with names so the subscription can be verified if the member forgets to bring a printed copy.

TryBooking has the ability to limit the number of tickets available for purchase. This is a useful feature for those Film Societies who have strict maximum numbers, although it could be problematic if you are selling both online subscriptions and other methods at the same time.

Trybooking offers quite a range of options, but the simplest – that of booking tickets for a single show – can be handled very easily.

Charges are reasonable and even free if the event itself is free.

Summary

There are many ways to provide mail systems, membership systems, on-line booking and websites for film societies and the solutions offered here are ways that can be done by most committees for very little cost and with a great effect and significant cost savings (especially in postage).

We would suggest that all members investigate these before parting with hard earned funds to a commercial organization.

Other Systems

Although we have not used them, we are aware of other systems for meeting your society's needs. **Survey Monkey** is an on-line system for creating your own surveys, which we understand is very easy to use.

Another system for collecting payments on line is **STRIPE**, which we believe includes credit card payments. It is reported to offer special cheap rates for not-for-profit organisations.

Customer Records and Privacy

If your organisation is incorporated with Consumer Affairs Victoria, your obligations are to retain a register of members, containing name, address, date of joining and, if a former member, date of ceasing to be a member. There is also a requirement that any member may examine the register of members at an agreed time.

It would therefore be wise to hold the register of members in a way that allows you to meet these obligations without fuss. If an organisation is not incorporated it would be wise to meet the above requirements anyway.

Note however, that section 58 of the Incorporation Act states that it is an offence to make improper use of information about a person obtained from the register of members.

Whether incorporated or not, all organisations should be careful about guarding the privacy of members' data, and be cautious about what information is made available, and when, and how it might be used. There can be heavy penalties for inappropriate use of members' personal data.

Payment of invoices by EFT

Most film societies have traditionally paid their invoices by cheque, or occasionally Postal Money Order. In recent years, EFT has become a much more acceptable means of payment. Most film societies have bank accounts which require two signatures on cheques and withdrawal slips and banks have recognised this need and most have a mechanism which will satisfy these requirements on electronic payments and transfers.

The common means of achieving a two-party approval of electronic payments is one where the treasurer (or main payer) sets up a payment on the banks website "lodges" it for approval. The second approved signatory of the society then accesses the account and "approves" the payment. Of course this requires that both are registered signatories of the account and have electronic payments set up by the bank.

There is a need for strong authentication of the user in these situations, and different banks have different ways of achieving this. See your bank for more details and to set this up.