

OFS REPORT 2007: KEY ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This report presents a brief summary of the significant work accomplished by the Olympia Film Society (OFS) under the stewardship of its board and in conjunction with film society staff and volunteers.

Achievements are documented here in the context of the OFS Strategic Plan. Accordingly, the numbered items that follow are consistent with the numbered objectives in the OFS Strategic Plan. That plan exists within the framework of the organization's bylaws and to that end, the OFS mission, organizational goals, and board responsibilities are included at the end of this report for convenient reference.

This report is the first of its kind. The OFS board looks forward to providing the membership with activities reports on a regular basis.

OFS Board: Key Strategic Activities & Accomplishments

1. Shepherd the Organization's Vision and Charter.
 - Strategic Plan. The board created an OFS Strategic Plan in collaboration with staff that was originally approved in 2005. The Strategic Plan was updated in 2006 and newly approved in 2007. The plan is expected to be reviewed at the end of calendar year 2007 and will be revised during the first quarter of 2008.
 - Work Plan. The board has begun drafting a detailed and prioritized work plan further advancing implementation of the strategic plan.
 - Organizational Development. Worked with an organizational consultant who provided in-kind professional services valued at \$10,000, to refine organizational priorities, review management and decision-making styles and systems, and to focus on creating functioning committees.
 - Balance the Need for Income with OFS Core Mission. The OFS board and staff work continually to generate revenue in support of the film society's core mission to foster, promote and present alternative films and other visual media and performing arts.
 - Community Benefits. Continue to provide logistical and financial support to local organizations to hold community-focused benefits.

2. Secure a Long-term Home for OFS.
 - Buying the Capitol Theater. The board has informed the owner of the Capitol Theater of OFS's interest in purchasing the property. The owner has not consented to sell to OFS.
 - Due Diligence. The board formed a task force comprised of board members and a variety of members-at-large to investigate the myriad issues related to purchasing the property. The task force determined OFS must significantly strengthen its financial position to effectively purchase the building if offered. Several measures were taken to improve the financial position of OFS. (See #4)

3. Cultivate an Optimally Effective Board of Directors

- High Priority. This objective was identified as the highest priority when the strategic plan was originated issuing from shared concerns about board conduct, meeting efficiency and effectiveness, operations, and organizational leadership.
- Board Coordinator. Created and filled this new position designed to support the board's performance in executing its duties and to further enhance communications between the staff and board. This position was also created as a way to invest in, build upon, and leverage the OFS board's institutional knowledge.
- Leadership and Organizational Development. Secured and implemented an in-kind gift of \$10,000 of professional consultative services for board and staff to improve leadership through organizational development and process improvement.
- Term Limits. Enforced the bylaws with respect to Directors' terms of service by instituting a board reapplication process. Prior to that time, 2005, board members served without limits or accountability.
- Board Application Process. Revised and clarified the overall Board of Directors application process. The process was formalized through changes in the bylaws during the annual membership meeting.
- Recruitment. The board had operated under the required number of members for many years. In an effort to finally rectify that, many specific recruitment efforts have been made to increase board membership: actively inviting community members to attend board meetings; making announcements at film screenings; posting prominent notices on the lobby bulletin board; increasing board visibility by creating a designate place on the lobby bulletin board for OFS business and board meeting minutes; announcements at special events; moved board meetings to an earlier time; experimented with 'short-term' board commitments in lieu of 1-2 year terms; actively solicited long time members and volunteers to join the board.
- Secured Insurance. A lack of board liability insurance became a glaring issue in the process of trying to recruit potential board members who indicated the provision of such insurance as a standard practice. Thus, a policy was purchased.
- Communications with Staff. Instituted, as needed, operations meetings with Board and Staff to address operations issues in detail, thereby allowing regularly scheduled monthly board meetings to focus on strategic concerns.
- Optimized Board Effectiveness. Implemented results-oriented communications practices including the recording of commitments made during meetings. Implemented a calendar of board activities to ensure that key decisions or initiatives are addressed in a consistent and timely way. Created board coordinator position to assist with tracking commitments and providing central point of contact for board activities and for membership outreach for board activities. Created a dedicated time slot in each agenda for working sessions on strategic plan elements.
- Optimized Board Meetings. Created a consistent agenda format to ensure that key items are consistently addressed at each meeting. Created a 'visitor' time slot for all board meetings to accommodate member input or special needs. Clarified operational

decisions for deferral to staff, such as benefit approvals, and eliminated them from Board decision-making. Eliminated verbal staff reports from board meetings while still keeping in touch with staff through the normally required written reports and operations meetings. Instituted ground rules and meeting practices to keep board meetings shorter.

- **Consistent and Accessible Meetings.** The board conducts regularly scheduled monthly meetings, open to the public. Moved board meetings to the MIXX 96 conference room, an accessible space, much larger and more public than the former meeting locations.
- **Assessment Tool.** Created an assessment tool by which the board can, on an annual basis and in conjunction with its strategic planning process, reflect on and measure its progress, its weaknesses, and its strengths. With that information the board can then better focus its recruitment and strategic efforts.
- **Board Member Job Descriptions.** Revised and refined board member job descriptions, including defining and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the board President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- **Planning Retreats.** Conduct one to two Board-Staff retreats annually for the purpose of strategic planning.

4. Effectively Develop and Manage the Financial Health of OFS.

- **Cost Increases/Revenue Decreases.** Consistent with worldwide film market trends, OFS film screening revenues have decreased while OFS operating costs such as labor, utilities, film rentals, and shipping, continue to increase. Film programming continues to be the primary service of and revenue source for OFS. To preserve savings and offset rising costs, in 2007 the board, in conjunction with staff, redirected programming to increase its focus on higher-income generating films and to deemphasize high-risk OFS-sponsored live events. Film market analysts point to various factors that contribute to falling revenues including:
 - Competition from Netflix and other direct-to-home distribution methods,
 - Competition from video-on-demand services
 - Erosion of key film audiences to the rapidly increasing video game market
 - Earlier DVD releases of feature films, within weeks of theatrical releases.
- **Investing in Staff.** The board has taken the approach of increasing the organization's investments in OFS staff positions, increasing paid hours, increasing subsidies toward health care, and ensuring cost-of-living raises. Employee costs represent the biggest increase in OFS financial operations. The board has acted with the knowledge that this creates a greater financial burden in the short term. However, the board sees it as an organizational responsibility to endeavor to compensate staff fairly, and further believes that this investment, in concert with other personnel efforts and objectives, will foster a stronger, healthier organization in the long-term.
- **Finance Committee.** The board chairs a committee that is codified in the OFS bylaws and meets regularly. This committee deals in detail with the film society's fiscal matters including budget planning and tracking, managing financial accounts, paying taxes, and preparing financial details and recommendations for the full board.

- Financially Orienting Board Members. It is an on-going and active effort of the board to familiarize its members with financial business practices, and in particular, those of the OFS. This effort is addressed primarily with staff and finance committee support. Instituted a process for budget planning based on projections of actual income and expenses, instead of basing budgets on past years' expenses and income without further analysis.
 - Fund Raising. As anyone who has ever written grants or served in a financial development capacity knows, grant writing and fund-raising is a time-consuming, and often-thought-to-be, professional job. Even without a dedicated development position, the board has asserted specific efforts and stewarded the success of certain fund-raising ventures, including:
 - A cross-promotional, one-time event with Regal Cinemas that garnered more than \$22,966.89.
 - A grant from the Ben Cheney Foundation of \$1,000 designated for the purchase of assistive-listening devices.
 - An annual fund raising letter:
 - sent 2004: \$2,976.92
 - sent 2005: \$2,980.97
 - sent 2006: \$3,312.39
 - City of Olympia, Lodging Tax, for out-of-town promotion of the Olympia Film Festival.
 - 2004: \$5,000.00
 - 2005: \$5,210.00
 - 2006: \$9,702.00
 - Due to the budget deficit of the past couple of years, this year the board acknowledged that OFS may no longer rely solely on grants and film revenues but must fundraise like most other small arts organizations. This is a change from the past operating paradigm. Therefore, the board is shifting focus to community-based fundraising activities for improving income and bolstering/preserving savings. In that vein, OFS held the first ever OFS Silent Auction during Artswalk this fall. The board is looking at other OFS fundraising possibilities and may conduct a major fundraising event this spring.
 - Tracking Accomplishments. For fundraising purposes, the board coordinator is helping track significant organizational achievements and data such as attendance.
5. Increase Attention to and Improve Management of Personnel Matters.
- Health Care. Increased subsidies of staff health care costs.
 - In-House Promoter. Created a structure for the OFS staff who solicit and promote OFS-sponsored live events (typically the live events coordinator) to earn money in proportion to the success of the event.
 - Festival Job Descriptions. Revised and clarified the job description for festival director and created a job description for festival film programmer.

- Festival Job Stipends. Increased stipends for festival director and programmer positions and modestly increased stipends for other staff for festival work.
 - Festival Oversight Committee. Created the festival oversight committee, and formalized its existence in the OFS bylaws, to provide the board with a responsible structure and operational connection to the annually appointed festival staff positions.
 - Evaluation Process. Approved the implementation of a staff-recommended peer-evaluation process.
 - Staff Pay Rates. Approved a staff-recommended labor plan that set systematized rates of pay among staff positions.
 - Personnel Management. Successfully hired at least four employees over the past several years as positions turned over through organizational attrition. Terminated employment of two employees, one employee who was let-go during the six-month probationary period; the second, a long-term employee with a long history of problems.
 - Personnel Committee. The board chairs a committee that is codified in the bylaws and meets regularly, dealing in detail with the film society's personnel matters. During an extended period during which the board dealt with a particularly challenging and confidential personnel matter that resulted in terminating employment of a staff person, the board met regularly as the personnel committee committing all the time necessary to responsibly address the personnel matter.
 - Board Coordinator. Created a new Board Coordinator position.
 - Live Events Coordinator. Created the Live Events Coordinator position.
6. Review and Refine Policies and Procedures of the Society.
- Institutional Knowledge. The recent establishment of the board coordinator position is in part to assist the board with the staff support necessary to effectively review, refine, and document the organization's policies and procedures in a generative way that both leverages and fosters the organization's institutional knowledge.
 - Committee Management. Policies are presently collected in hard-notebooks. It is the task of each committee to review its current policies, and to make recommended revisions to the board.
7. Increase OFS Membership
- Increased Membership. OFS membership has increased steadily from 1,678 members in 2004 to 2,030 members this year. As a strategic priority, the board and staff have pushed membership announcements at live events, promoted OFS membership at community benefits, and developed various incentives such as member discounts at local businesses.

8. Improve Focus on OFS Marketing and Public Relations.

- New Website Planned. The board facilitated a plan for a new website and then authorized funds for its design and development. The new site is envisioned as a major marketing tool for the organization with a plan for incremental enhancements ensuring it as an enduring asset.
- New Website Launched. Live in its first iteration: www.olympiafilmsociety.org
- Increasing Outreach. The promotion of film screenings is expected to extend to outlying communities that OFS has not previously reached directly.
- Street Banners. Started utilizing promotional banners (on Capitol Way and on State Street) to advertise the film festival.

9. Develop OFS Media Studio as an Active and Integral Part of the Society.

- The board has seen the volunteer media production aspect of OFS through several iterations, including its transition from the Film Ranch to the OFS Media Studio. Far from achieving its potential, the Media Studio remains a cherished concept and one that the board has not given up. That said, and given the many and significant organizational priorities, the board at this juncture relies on the initiative of OFS members who are motivated to infuse the Media Studio with energy on a volunteer basis in a way that is in concert with the staff collective.

10. Produce the best Olympia Film Festival to date.

- In order to ensure the strength of the annual film festival, a signature OFS event, the board established a Festival Oversight Committee responsible for overseeing the annual Festival, including overseeing the Festival Director and Festival Film Programmer; facilitating communication between the Board, Festival Director, Festival Film Programmer, and OFS Staff; and developing, and monitoring the festival budget. The board facilitated this committee's codification into the OFS bylaws.

OFS Mission

Our mission is to enhance film appreciation within the community by promoting alternative films and by aiding and encouraging the development of allied arts. Furthermore, it is the purpose of the Society to foster, promote and present visual media and performing arts.

OFS Goals

Our fundamental goals are to:

Enrich the cultural resources of the South Puget Sound area by broadening access to film;

Encourage a deeper understanding of the film medium among ourselves and in the broader community;

Facilitate diverse avenues of engagement with filmmakers and filmmaking, reflecting the diverse interests of the membership;

Maintain high standards of participatory decision-making and fiscal accountability in keeping with the cooperative nature of our association, and our status as a nonprofit cultural and educational corporation;

Promote the spirit of an active volunteer society among the membership; and

Enliven our community by presenting and fostering the development of independent film, music, and other arts.

Board Responsibilities as Delineated in the OFS Bylaws

Establish financial policy, including setting expenditure levels, ticket prices, and volunteer compensation, overseeing fundraising, and monitoring budgets; ensuring the fiscal health of the organization;

Establish program direction, including authorizing new projects and setting the level, kind, and frequency of activities;

Oversee management of personnel, including hiring and firing of staff, setting pay levels, and authorizing cooperative work agreements;

Establish future plans, including setting goals, designing strategies, monitoring progress, and evaluating results;

Solicit input from the membership and report to the membership on the state of the Society;

Represent the Society to the community, including setting publicity standards and communicating with the media about policy and planning; and

Recruit and orient new Board members as needed and assess Board performance.