Projectionist Job Description

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1 Introduction

The Projection subcommittee of LSC is responsible for projecting all of LSC films: regular series, Classics, sneaks, Reg Day and special events. We are usually the most popular committee at signup, and the least popular committee when we flub a changeover. Projection also works some of the longest hours of any LSC committee. Projection has always been popular, and a high standard has been set for its members. Since many Projection skills take time to learn and master, long term involvement in the subcommittee is actively encouraged. We hope that all LSC Projectionists find their job challenging, rewarding, and a valuable experience.

As an LSC Projectionist, you will be responsible for the operation of intricate and sometimes finicky machines that can be expensive and difficult to repair. Always keep in mind that the condition of the projectors and sound equipment directly affects the quality of each show! The more you know about how the equipment works, the better you will be at your job, and the more fun projecting will be. Never be afraid to ask “why do we do that?” or “what does that do?”

LSC Projectionists usually work shows in pairs, a Subdirector and a Projection worker. The Subdirector is in charge of the booth, and also in charge of the room in general once film starts rolling. That means that the Subdirector makes the call about when to switch to 10-250 or whether to change to one projector if something goes wrong. The Subdirector oversees projection, handles sound, trailers, and any special work that needs to be done. The Projectionist is generally responsible for the screen, threading, doing changeovers, and rewinding. Never be afraid to ask if it’s not clear what a Subdirector has asked you to do, and be sure to explain if it’s something that you have not yet been taught! With the wide cross-section of techniques and jobs involved in projection, it’s not hard for a Subdirector to miss some particular task or detail when training you. Since you will probably work with and be trained by several different Subdirectors, keep in mind that each has their own style about how to do things in the booth.

2 Screenings

It’s likely that your first experience with LSC Projection will be to work a screening. LSC pre-screens its movies before the regular show dates whenever it is possible. Screenings are used to check for print quality
and to train Projectionists. Whenever you work a screening, if you notice something questionable about
the picture or the sound, or particularly if you think a scene or dialogue is missing, be sure to talk to the
Subdirector and make sure they know about it. The Night committee screeners don’t always catch all the
problems with a film, and it’s just good projection practice to keep an eye out that things look and sound
good on the screen.

Generally, screenings are scheduled for Wednesday nights between 6pm and midnight. Usually the films
will be shown at 7pm and 9pm, and the Projection Director will send an email during the week letting you
know how the screenings are scheduled. Since prints usually arrive late Wednesday afternoon, changes in
the screening schedule can happen with very little notice. Occasionally, screenings must also accommodate a
Wednesday sneak preview, which means that part of a film is shown from 5pm to 7pm, and the rest after
the sneak cleanup (10:30-11pm).

Projectionists should show up about 30 minutes before the first scheduled film. At a Projectionist’s very
first screening, where he or she will be trained, the Projectionist should show up 60 minutes before the
scheduled start.

3 Nights

For a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday “Night,” the Projectionist is expected to arrive at least an hour and a
half (90 minutes) before the scheduled start of the movie, typically 5:30pm. He or she is expected to stay
until the booth is locked or the Subdirector has dismissed him or her for the evening, usually between 12
and 12:30am. A good Projectionist immediately raises the blinds, rolls the screen down (get the key from
the Subdirector), moves the video screen against the wall, and cleans the projectors. Then you should ask
the Subdirector what to do next.

Usually, the next most important task will be to pre-focus the trailer reel and reel one of the movie. This
gives you, as a Projectionist, the chance to see what special things need to be done during the trailer reel:
are there changeovers for scope trailers? 16mm trailers? are there slide trailers? do you need to stop for an
announcement? are there other weird things? In general, Projection should be done with pre-focus at least
forty-five minutes before the show starts so that Night can let people in.

Before the movie, the Night Subdirector is responsible for everything in the room and the Projection
Subdirector is in charge of the booth. Once films starts rolling, the Projection Subdirector is also in charge
of the room, and is responsible, for example, for deciding whether or not to move to 10-250 if a projector
breaks. The Projectionist should ask the Subdirector’s permission before leaving the booth or doing anything
out of the ordinary. The Subdirector will let the Projectionist know what he or she has to do.

The second show of a night is always played onto company (shipping) reels. On Friday nights, the
Projectionist should rewind the Saturday night film onto house reels (metal) during the second show. On
Saturday nights, the Projectionist needs to rewind the Friday film during the second show, so it is ready for
the 7pm showing on Sunday. On Sunday night, all films are played onto company reels, which should be
taped down for shipping. If the film has reel bands, remember to put them back on the reels.

Every Projectionist is entitled to one free drink per show, as well as one free drink per screening. If the
Night Subdirector or Projection Subdirector forgets, the Projectionist should gently remind them of this
fact.

4 Overflows

Although less common than in the days of yore, the occasional overflow still happens at LSC. If the number
of people in line for a particular show far exceeds the capacity of the room, the Night Subdirector may
decide to run an overflow showing in another room. Typically, the overflow show would occur at 11pm,
allowing enough time for a reel-runner to run each reel up to 10-250 (or, in an unbelievable crisis, 54-100)
in time to get it on the projectors. Staffing overflows usually involves grabbing Projection members out of
the audience, although the Classic Subdirector and/or Projectionist will be responsible for projecting an
overflow of the late show on Friday. If there is an overflow for the late show, the Projectionist should remain in 10-250 with the Subdirector; Night committee workers will bring over each reel of the movie, one at a time. A Projectionist working a scheduled show which has overflowed should be sure to rewind each reel after projecting it before handing it to a Night committee worker.

5 26-100 and 10-250

Most shows with Projectionists happen in 26-100. 26 features better sound, easier to use projectors, lousy 16mm, and larger audience capacity. 10-250 features passable sound, and much better 16mm capability, and slightly smaller audience capacity. Classics tend to be 16mm prints, which often only barely require the presence of a Subdirector, so Projectionists are no longer scheduled for Classics unless the film is 35mm (likewise, Classics are not usually screened). Nonetheless, Projectionists are encouraged to stop by 10-250 during or before a Classic to get at least a brief introduction to the Bauer projectors, so that they will not be unprepared in the event of an overflow, projector malfunction causing relocation to 10-250, or for a 35mm Classic. Also, screenings occasionally happen in 10-250.

6 Rescheduling

Projectionists who can’t project on nights they are scheduled for have the responsibility of arranging trades with other Projectionists—the easy way is by emailing the lsc-projection list. They should then call or email the Projection Director with details of the trade. Do not change the online schedule! If a Projectionist cannot find anyone to trade with, he or she must call or email the Projection Director and explain the situation. First term Projectionists should never trade away their first screening (it is an important training session) and should when possible trade with other new Projectionists. New Projectionists are encouraged if they want to learn more to ask Subdirectors if they can sit-in on additional screenings or weekend movies.

7 Operation of Equipment

A Projectionist is mainly responsible for running the projectors. A detailed description of how to project is given in an accompanying LSC document. The Projectionist should always be aware of what is going on in the booth and should double check his or her threading, making sure that the proper aperture plate and lens are in place, that the sound track on the 35mm is towards them, and that the picture is focused and in frame. When a reel is loaded, let the Subdirector know so that they can check the threading. The Projectionist should read the cue sheet before the beginning of each movie and know what cue dots to expect. After a reel change, he or she should always check the focus and the frame.

A Projectionist should know the following:

- How to raise the blinds and which ones to raise (varies)
- How to raise and lower the screens in 26-100 and 10-250
- How to thread the 35mm film in 26-100 and 10-250
- How to clean projectors properly (especially the gate)
- The difference between the two types of seconds (academy and real), and their respective countdowns
- The difference between the different aspect ratios (scope, flat, and 1.37:1)
- How to change aperture plates (where 1.85:1 is in 10-250) and lenses (and treat the lenses with care!)
- The difference between house reels and company reels
- What cue dots are and how to read a cue sheet
- How to start up a projector
- How to shut down a projector (including opening the gates)
- How to do an emergency shutdown
- How to do a changeover in 26-100 and 10-250
- How to focus
- How to frame
- How to use the rewind machines
- How to tell which way the head of a film is
- Proper film handling procedures (e.g. no film on the floor)
- How a projector works (e.g. function of douser and Zipper)
- How to pack up a film Sunday night
- When to use house reels and when to use company reels