

Get in the Hearing Loop

Douglas Beck, AuD, and David Fabry, PhD, offer a terrific vision of improved connectivity with “a universal standard for communication that is low cost, easy to use, acceptable, seamless, and effective” (*Audiology Today*, January/February 2011). As a consumer advocate for hearing aid compatible assistive listening, that’s my vision as well. Moreover, it’s one we’ve already achieved in West Michigan. Looped facilities here, which include my worship place, airport, campus auditoriums, home TV room, and office phone, seamlessly deliver crystal clear sound via telecoil-equipped hearing aids. Because the magnetic signal communicates universally to most new hearing aids and cochlear implants sold here, virtually anyone can benefit.

With my hearing instruments serving an important second function—as customized, wireless loudspeakers—I now love the hearing technology I once barely tolerated. Moreover, with my M+T setting, I can hear room conversation or the doorbell ringing, even while my TV broadcasts via my in-the-ear loudspeakers.

Thanks to initiatives in various states and cities, hearing loops are now spreading to other parts of the country. New hearing loop vendors are manufacturing and marketing product. With new installations ranging from the very big (the

12,200 fixed seats in Michigan State University’s basketball arena) to the very small (New York City’s subway information booths), more and more people are experiencing hearing aid compatible assistive listening. New hearing loop articles are appearing in newspapers and in magazines, from the *AARP Bulletin* to the leading audio contractors’ trade magazine.

It’s true that the United States lags behind the Scandinavian countries and Britain, where hearing loops are becoming omnipresent (they’re now in all London taxis, in most churches and cathedrals, and at tens of thousands of post office windows, pharmacy counters, and the like). But with the support of this year’s joint Academy/HLAA “Get in the Hearing Loop” campaign, to be climaxed by a 2nd International Hearing Loops meeting next June, now is the time to seize Beck and Fabry’s vision.

“The best system is simply ‘the one that is used,’” add Beck and Fabry.

Amen! And that is the number-one argument for hearing loops that communicate via telecoils. No need for conspicuous headsets. No need to locate and check out special receivers. No need to master special equipment. Folks need only activate their telecoils—the same simple, seamless technology that serves them for telephone listening as well.

Will some alternative future technology similarly offer us clear sound via simple, miniaturized, universal, low-cost, no-power receivers that can work in both small and large areas and with most phones? If so, bring it on! In the meantime, today’s Brits, Scandinavians, and more and more Americans have realized the Beck and Fabry vision, and they’re loving it. 🎧

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