

Hope College Hearing Loops

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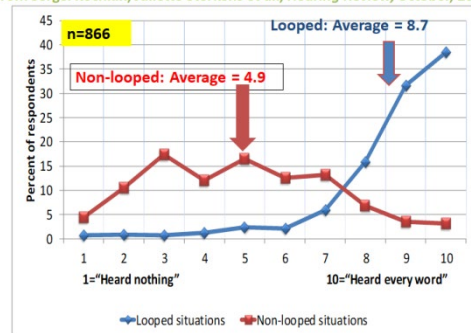
hearingloop.org

By its looping of auditoriums and larger lecture halls, Hope College has become a model for campus hearing accessibility. Its hearing loops enable people with hearing aids or cochlear implants to receive sound delivered magnetically directly to their ears. The sound thus comes not from distant loudspeakers, but—with the mere push of a button—from their own in-the-ear speakers, which customize the sound for their individual hearing loss.

Hearing loops are the ultimate in convenience and clarity. Small wonder that people with hearing loss rave about hearing loop technology and that the Hearing Loss Association of America is encouraging it ([here](#)).

All new cochlear implants and most new hearing aids—including the vast majority of the larger aids that serve those most needing hearing assistance—are available with the needed telecoil (t-coil) sensor, which costs essentially nothing. Those without t-coil-equipped hearing instruments can be served by receiver/headphone units or smartphone-connected [LoopBuds](#).

From Sergei Kochkin, Juliette Sterkens et al., *Hearing Review*, October, 2014



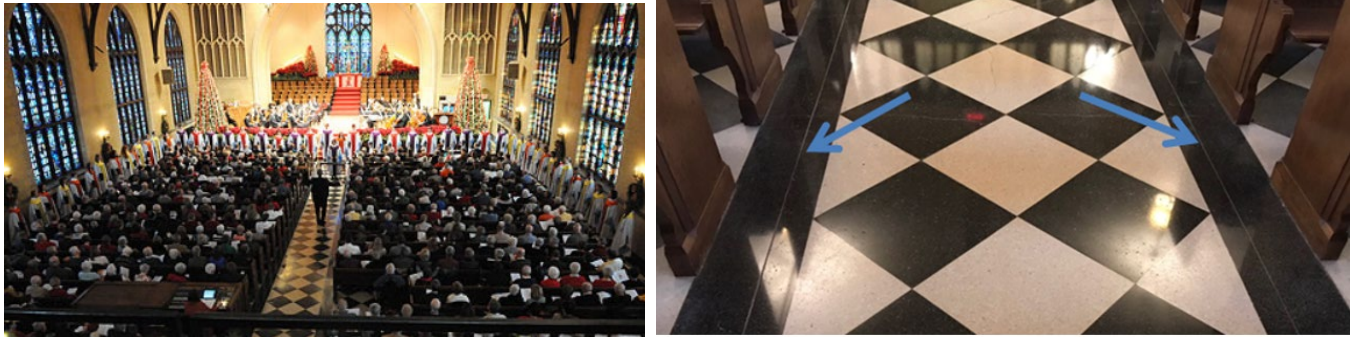
Three lessons from the Hope College experience:

- 1) *Garbage in, garbage out.* The sound output can be no better than the sound input. Three initial installations took the mic input from distant shotgun mics. Alas, when the mic—like the audience—is at some distance from the sound source, then the sound loses clarity. As the distance of either the mic or the loudspeaker increases, the sound degrades. But happily, the person with hearing loss hears well when a mic is within a foot of the person, and when the output speaker is in their ear.
- 2) *Failsafe installations.* Occasionally those setting up for an event turn on the PA system but not the hearing loop system. This problem is averted if both are on the same power strip—meaning that the hearing loop is *always* on when the PA system is active.
- 3) *Do it right.* A state-of-the-art hearing loop by a trained installer will be guaranteed to meet the IEC standard (such as explained [here](#)) for strength and evenness of coverage. Some institutions (not Hope) have naively accepted—and later regretted—low bids from installers for installations that were not up to the standard.

And now the venues . . .

Dimnent Memorial Chapel

The main floor, which seats nearly 1000, is served by one loop encircling the left side seating, and the other the right side seating. In this hard-surface floor, the loop wire is laid into a thin groove cut into the tile. When sealed, it is hardly noticeable to any attending lectures or worship.



Winants Auditorium

A splendid installation, that delivers strong, clear sound no matter where I sit for lectures and faculty meetings.



Science Lecture Hall

This auditorium, which seats 100, is in my building. Despite attending many lectures here, I wouldn't have a clue how the hearing loop works—because never, in my experience, has a speaker been mic'd. (My solution is to sit right at the front for any talk.) So far as the hearing loop is concerned, nothing in/nothing out.



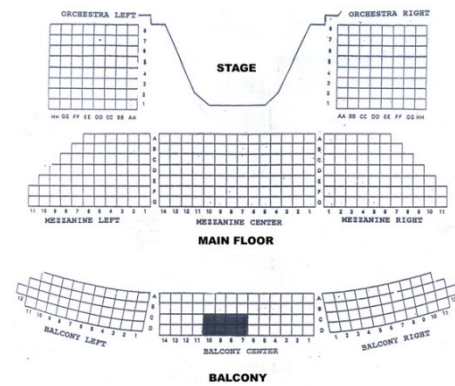
Hope Academy of Senior Professionals Classroom

An excellent and much-appreciated hearing loop.



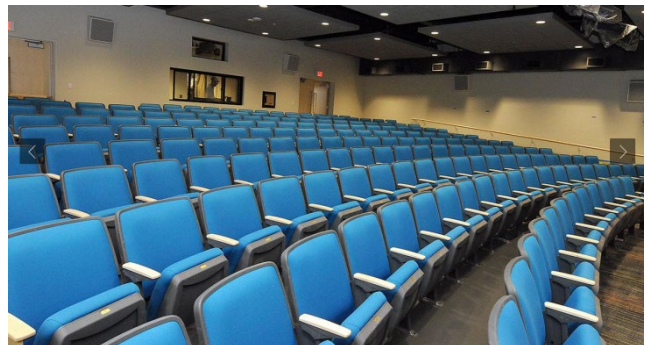
DeWitt Theatre

The entirety of the college's main playhouse theatre is looped. For *some* plays, the actors are individually mic'd—with the results being far preferable to more distant stage mics. (Many Broadway Theatres have more recently installed hearing loops, and are mic'ing their actors. See hearingloop.org for a listing of these and nearly 200 other U.S. looped theatres.)



Bultman Center Theatre

A smaller theatre, which—as one might expect from this being a new installation with the latest design technology—offers excellent results.



Bultman Center MultiPurpose Room

Another new facility with an excellent hearing loop laid during construction.



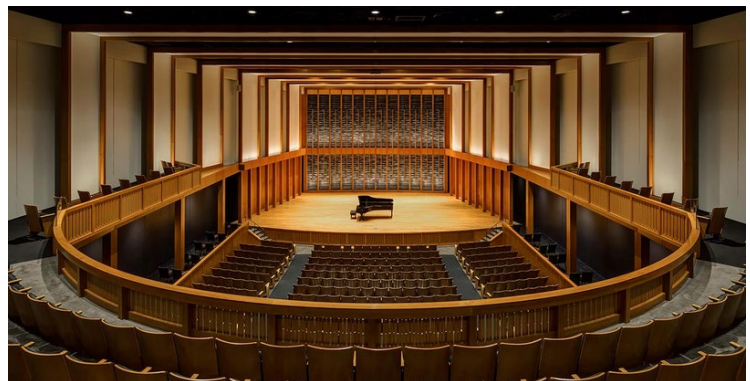
Fried-Hemenway Auditorium

A small theatre which picks up sound from mics at the back of the room—with no purpose served (the audience is closer to the lecturer). Needs reconfiguring to pick up the stage mic—and for lecturers routinely to be mic'd.



Jack Miller Concert Hall

A new 800-seat concert hall and lecture facility that exemplifies the need for a failsafe design. The initial installation did not automatically feed all stage mics into the hearing loop as well as the room speakers—which meant one depended on the technician's activating the system.



Knickerbocker Theatre

A downtown (college-adjacent and owned) movie theatre that is also used for lectures and other performances. Sadly, the movie sound does *not* feed the hearing loop, which is generally fed by distant shotgun mics picking up sound from distant speakers. When doing a series of four lectures there, twice my mic'd talks fed the loop system directly, with excellent results, and twice were picked up by the distant shotgun mics rather than my mic that fed the PA system. For years, I've been hoping this excellent hearing loop could be configured to *always* receive movie sound and sound from PA system mics.



The Haworth Inn Ballrooms

The main ballroom of the campus hotel is served by a hearing loop. The room can also be subdivided into three smaller ballrooms, each served by its own effective hearing loop.



Maas Auditorium

A ballroom adjacent to the college's dining hall that is used for many gatherings and lectures. The hearing loop is helpful. (If carpet is ever redone, it would be a good opportunity to install a state-of-the-art phased array loop.)



My Office

My desk phone connects to an under-carpet hearing loop that enables me to listen to phone conversation with two ears—wonderfully helpful! Even with the phone on the desk, I can listen to voice mail messages . . . because my sound doesn't come from the phone. 😊



July, 2018