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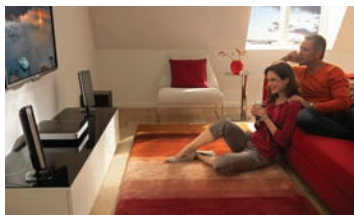


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Look inside for articles about hearing loops that appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and other publications.

The New York Times
The Washington Post



Commercial and Residential Loop Systems

LET'S LOOP **America's** WORSHIP **CENTERS**

By David Myers

By making assistive listening hearing aid compatible, churches are leading the way to doubled hearing aid functionality for people with hearing loss.

Imagine yourself as a person with hearing loss attending your place of worship. As you struggle to hear, which of these two hearing solutions would you prefer?

1. To take the initiative to get up, go locate, check out, wear, and return special equipment (often a conspicuous headset that is incompatible with your hearing aids)? **Or,**
2. To simply push a button that transforms your aids or cochlear implant into a wireless, in-the-ear loudspeaker that broadcasts sound customized to your own hearing loss?

Solution 1-the hearing aid incompatible solution-has been the prevalent assistive listening technology in America's worship places and theatres.

Solution 2-the hearing aid compatible solution-has spread throughout the United Kingdom, across the Nordic countries, and now is being adopted in several states, including by several hundred Michigan churches.

The simple "hearing loop" technology takes a feed from a PA system and transmits it through a wire loop surrounding the worshipers. The loop projects a magnetic signal to an inexpensive "telecoil" receiver, now found in a growing number-60 percent-of new hearing aids (even more among people most needing hearing assistance). The telecoil also serves as a receiver for magnetic signals transmitted by "hearing aid compatible phones," which include all landline phones and designated cell phones. (For any without suitably equipped hearing instruments, portable receivers and headsets are available.)

Thus when one worships at Westminster Abbey in London, or in virtually any church with a PA system in Holland or Grand Rapids, MI, all you need do when the preaching begins is to activate your hearing aid telecoils. Voila! A clear voice is now speaking from the center of your head!

This simple technology, which also enables a home TV to broadcast through one's hearing aids, is now being advocated by a growing number of hearing leaders. In 2010, the Hearing Loss Association of America ("the nation's voice for people with hearing loss") and the American Academy of Audiology (the world's largest association of hearing professionals) announced a joint "collaborative public education campaign 'Get in the Hearing Loop.'" The campaign aims "to enlighten and excite hearing aid users, as well as audiologists and other professionals who dispense hearing aids, about telecoils and hearing loops and their unique benefits." Hearing loops are coming to America.

The move to making future assistive listening installations hearing aid compatible is gaining momentum:

- The California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and New Mexico hearing loss associations are now advocating hearing loops. "In all new and extensively remodeled buildings, wherever there is a public address system, a loop should be permanently installed," declared the California Hearing Loss Association. "When there is a loop, all a hard-of-hearing person has to do to be able to hear is click on the T-switches on their hearing aids."
- Local hearing loop initiatives are underway in Albuquerque, Tucson, Silicon Valley, central Wisconsin and elsewhere.
- Michigan's second largest airport, in Grand Rapids, now offers the technology throughout its concourses and in all gate areas.
- A national service organization, Sertoma ("SERvice TO Mankind") announced in 2010 that it will be promoting the installation of hearing loops through its 540 clubs nationwide.
- Several new companies have begun manufacturing and marketing hearing loop equipment and training audio professionals in its installation (see hearingloop.org/vendors.htm).
- New York City Transit, with a nudge from the Hearing Access Program and using federal stimulus monies, is installing hearing loops at 488 subway information booths.
- Scientific American reported on the move to hearing loops in its January, 2010 issue.
- The first international "Hearing Loops" conference, hosted in late 2009 by the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (www.efhoh.org) for attendees from 15 countries, adopted a resolution recommending that "Venues and service points where sound is broadcast shall offer assistive listening, such as induction loop systems designed to the IEC 60118-4:2006 standard, which broadcast sound directly to hearing aids and cochlear implants, enabling them to serve as customized, wireless loudspeakers (without the need for extra equipment)."

Let's Loop America's Worship Centers - cont'd

There are many advantages to hearing aid compatible loop systems. For example, many hearing aids now come with a mic + telecoil (M/T) setting that enables one to hear sound from nearby people singing or speaking while simultaneously receiving direct PA system input. Additionally, sound broadcast by one's own hearing instrument is contained in one's ear, without bothering others nearby. Moreover, there is no need to juggle between headsets and hearing aids (during, say, a worship service). There are no hygienic concerns about putting in or on one's ear what has been around others' ears. And most importantly, when not hearing well, people need only activate their telecoils. There's no need to get up, seek out, and wear conspicuous equipment (which, as TFWM readers have likely noticed, few people with hearing loss take the initiative to do).

Wisconsin audiologist Juliette Sterkens and her engineer husband Max Mayfield have recently installed hearing loops in 30 Wisconsin churches, with gratifying responses, sometimes spoken through tears. The following is a list of testimonials they have heard.

"What I experienced last Sunday was nothing short of a miracle. For the very first time in many, many years I was able to hear every single word said in church along with every note of music. I cannot express my thankfulness in words. It was truly one of my most memorable moments in my life and I felt 'normal.'"

"I took my mother to Mass. In her words, 'I could hear every word, and this is the first time that's happened in years.' She went on to say how much more she got out of the service and realized how much she had been missing."

One skeptic from another state undertook due diligence to assess the suitability of a hearing loop for his own church:

"I can certainly attest to the spread of the loop system in Michigan. Before we installed our [church's] system I telephoned a number of facilities listed by a loop vendor as having installed such a system. I was amazed to discover that not a single installed site had anything but vociferous praise for the product! One would expect at least one naysayer in a group that large (22). But there was not a single one!"

As we approach a tipping point where hearing loops become the accepted user-friendly assistive listening technology, we can take satisfaction in knowing that churches are leading the culture. As they enable their people to better hear the word, worship centers are also enabling people to glimpse a future in which hearing instruments have doubled functionality- as not only microphone amplifiers, but also as customized, wireless loudspeakers.

FAQs about hearing loops

- ***Hearing loops harness magnetic energy. So is magnetic interference problematic?***

Generally not. Old fluorescent lighting and some old dimmer switches generate interference. But the experience in hundreds of West Michigan venues and thousands of Scandinavian and British venues is that interference-free installation is nearly always possible.

- ***Isn't this a decades-old technology?***

Like electronic computers, magnetic induction loop technology began more than a half century ago, and now is in newly developed forms (with new amplifier and telecoil technologies, and new computer-modeled designs for complex installations) and with increasing applications.

- ***Will new wireless connective technologies work better?***

New wireless technologies, including Bluetooth, do some helpful things, such as enable binaural phone listening. But Bluetooth is not an assistive listening answer (it requires significant battery power and has limited range). An alternative future assistive listening solution-one that, like hearing loops, is hearing aid compatible-will need similarly to **a)** be inexpensive (essentially no cost to the consumer), **b)** be capable of covering a wide area, **c)** drain little battery power (telecoils require no power), **d)** be universally accessible, and **e)** be sufficiently miniaturized that the receiver can fit in nearly all hearing aids.

- ***Can hearing loops be used in adjacent rooms?***

Yes, with a professional design that controls sound spillover.

- ***Where can one find more information about equipment, installation, applications, and costs?***

Visit the nonprofit information resource www.hearingloop.org
Or visit www.ArkansasLoops.com for local information.

The New York Times

A Hearing Aid That Cuts Out All the Clatter

October 23, 2011

By JOHN TIERNEY

After he lost much of his hearing last year at age 57, the composer Richard Einhorn despaired of ever really enjoying a concert or musical again. Even using special headsets supplied by the Metropolitan Opera and Broadway theaters, he found himself frustrated by the sound quality, static and interference.

Then, in June, he went to the Kennedy Center in Washington, where his “Voices of Light” oratorio had once been performed with the National Symphony Orchestra, for a performance of the musical “Wicked.” There were no special headphones. This time, the words and music were transmitted to a wireless receiver in Mr. Einhorn’s hearing aid using a technology that is just starting to make its way into public places in America: a hearing loop.

“There I was at ‘Wicked’ weeping uncontrollably — and I don’t even like musicals,” he said. “For the first time since I lost most of my hearing, live music was perfectly clear, perfectly clean and incredibly rich.” His reaction is a common one. The technology, which has been widely adopted in Northern Europe, has the potential to transform the lives of tens of millions of Americans, according to national advocacy groups. As loops are installed in stores, banks, museums, subway stations and other public spaces, people who have felt excluded are suddenly back in the conversation.

A hearing loop, typically installed on the floor around the periphery of a room, is a thin strand of copper wire radiating electromagnetic signals that can be picked up by a tiny receiver already built into most hearing aids and cochlear implants. When the receiver is turned on, the hearing aid receives only the sounds coming directly from a microphone, not the background cacophony. “It’s the equivalent of a wheelchair ramp for people who used to be socially isolated because of their hearing loss,” said David G. Myers, a professor of psychology at Hope College in Holland, Mich., who is hard of hearing. “I used to detest my hearing aids, but now that they serve this second purpose, I love the way they’ve enriched my life.”

After his first encounter with a hearing loop at an abbey in Scotland, where he was shocked to suddenly be able to understand every word of a service, Dr. Myers installed a loop in his own home and successfully campaigned to have loops installed at hundreds of places in Michigan, including the Grand Rapids airport and the basketball arena at Michigan State University. “One of the beauties of this simple technology is that it serves me everywhere from my office to my home TV room to nearly all the worship places and public auditoriums of my community,” Dr. Myers said.

The Midwest has been in the vanguard, but New York is starting to catch up. Loops have been installed at the ticket windows of Yankee Stadium and Citi Field, at the Apple store in SoHo and at exhibits and information kiosks at Ellis Island, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History. Even in that infamous black hole of acoustics — the New York subway system — loops are being placed in about 500 fare booths, in what will be the largest installation in the United States.

“This isn’t just about disability rights — it’s about good customer service,” said Janice Schacter Lintz, the head of the Hearing Access Program, a group in New York promoting the loops. “The baby boomers turn 65 this year,” Ms. Schacter Lintz said, noting that more than 30 percent of people over 65 have hearing loss. “That’s a big group of customers who won’t go to museums or theaters or restaurants where they can’t hear. Put in a loop, and they can hear clearly without any of the bother or embarrassment of wearing a special headset.” The basic technology, called an induction loop, has been around for decades as a means of relaying signals from a telephone to a tiny receiver called a telecoil, or t-coil, that can be attached to a hearing aid. As telecoils became standard parts of hearing aids in Britain and Scandinavia, they were also used to receive signals from loops connected to microphones in halls, stores, taxicabs and a host of other places. People in the United States have been slower to adopt the technology because telecoils were traditionally sold as an optional accessory, at an extra cost of about \$50, instead of being included automatically with a hearing aid. But today telecoils are built into two-thirds of the hearing aids on the market as well as in all cochlear implants, so there is a growing number of people able to benefit from loops. Hearing loop systems are more complicated to install than the assistive-hearing systems commonly used in theaters and churches, which beam infrared or FM signals to special headsets or neck loops that must be borrowed from the hall. Installing a loop in an auditorium typically costs \$10 to \$25 per seat, an initial investment that discourages some facility managers. But advocates for the loops argue that the cost per user is lower over the long run.

The New York Times

A Hearing Aid That Cuts Out All the Clatter - cont'd

"The joke among my friends is that the loop system sounds too good to be true, but it is," said Christine Klessig, a retired lawyer living near Stevens Point in central Wisconsin. "Before they installed a loop at the public library, I had to sit in the front row at lectures and try to lip-read because I missed so many words. Now I sit wherever I want and hear everything."

The Hearing Loss Association of America, the largest group representing people with hearing problems, has joined with the American Academy of Audiology in a campaign to make loops more common in the United States. The technology is a cost-efficient way to provide benefits that even the most expensive hearing aids cannot deliver, said Patricia Kricos, an audiologist at the University of Florida and a past president of the American Academy of Audiology.

"Audiologists have always had a lot of faith in new high-tech hearing aids and cochlear implants, which are wonderful, but we're coming to realize that these work primarily in relatively quiet places without a lot of reverberation and noise," Dr. Kricos said. "In many settings, like a train station, they can't give you the crystal-clear clarity that you can get from a hearing loop." In the pre-loop days at Dr. Myers's church in Michigan, the assistive-hearing headsets were rarely used by more than a single person at any service. Other worshipers were dissuaded by the inconvenience and embarrassment, he said. Shortly after the loop was installed, 10 people told him they were using it, and the number has been growing as more people get hearing aids that work with the system.

"If we build it, they will come," Dr. Myers said. "I see no reason why what's happened here in West Michigan can't happen across America."

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: October 24, 2011

An earlier version of this article misstated the name of the oratorio by Richard Einhorn that was performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington. It is "Voices of Light," not "Voice of Light."

Get in the Loop.

Help us get the word out!

At Arkansas Loops, we're looking for groups to speak to about looping churches, schools, auditoriums, meeting rooms and other facilities.

Call or email us information about groups in which you participate. We want to help!

20 times as many people with hearing aids rate theirs at the top of the scale if they have T-coils and a loop system.



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How Hearing Loops Can Help

New technology has dramatically improved the quality of hearing aids in the past decade, but some say an old technology could have the most profound impact in the decade to come on millions of people with hearing loss. Just as WiFi connects people to the Web in wired places, hearing loops — simple wires that circle a room or part of a room — can connect many hearing aids and cochlear implants directly to sound systems. Bypassing ambient noise, this wireless connection lets users clearly hear actors on stage, the person in the subway information booth, their ministers or rabbis, announcements at an airport, even their own television sets.



But as with all things that seem too good to be true, there's a catch. Actually two catches.

First, for hearing loops to work, users' hearing devices have to be equipped with something called a telecoil — which is common but not universal. Second, public places have to be "looped." In the United States, very few are. Still, you have to start somewhere, and two national organizations — the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and the American Academy of Audiology — have started by encouraging performance venues to install temporary loops, just to let people give them a try.

Last month, I went to Baltimore to attend a special performance at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. The hall was temporarily looped to coincide with an HLAA board meeting taking place in Baltimore. The performance featured the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Choral Arts Society performing the oratorio "Voices of Light" while a giant screen projected the 1928 silent film classic "The Passion of Joan of Arc." Before the show, I asked half a dozen people wearing hearing aids if they had come that night just to try the hearing loop. None knew what I was talking about. When I explained that you need a telecoil in your hearing aids to use the loop, not one knew if they had one.

After the show, I spoke with the oratorio's composer, Richard Einhorn, a relatively new member of HLAA. In 2010, Einhorn got hit with the same freaky, sudden, one-sided deafness that I have. Adding insult to injury, he lost significant hearing in his "good" ear, too. (His hearing aids have a telecoil; mine don't, so I can't report personal experience with loops.) A former record producer and an expert on sound quality, Einhorn listened to his own composition at the Meyerhoff by setting his hearing aid to "T." "It was amazing how good it sounded," he said. The first time Einhorn used a hearing loop — at the Kennedy Center last year — he said, "I literally started to cry. I hadn't heard live sound that good in over a year."

I did find two other people at the performance who listened via their telecoils and were happy to have the opportunity; one was very enthusiastic about the sound quality, the other not so much. I had a lot more questions. Here's what I found out.

What exactly is a hearing loop?

A hearing loop is a simple wire that circles a room or part of a room — an auditorium, an information booth, a place of worship, even your den — and connects to the sound system or sound source there. If you have a telecoil — a small metal rod wrapped in wire — in your hearing aids or cochlear implants and switch to the "T" setting, you will hear as if you are connected wirelessly to the sound system. There's no ambient noise, and the sound doesn't have to travel all the way from the stage to your third-level seats or be blasted from your TV to your couch.

How does it work?

I asked Fred Palm — who helped design temporary loops at the Meyerhoff and the Kennedy Center, plus permanent ones in such places as the movie theater at Ellis Island, Yankee Stadium (the ticket booths, food vendors and help desks) and New York subway kiosks — to explain. "If you run an AC current through a piece of wire, it emits a magnetic field," said Palm, who owns a business called Assistive Audio. If you take that wire and run it around a room, then "bring another piece of metal within the looped area, the second piece of metal will be magnetically induced, or picked up. It's called induction." With hearing loops, "the second piece of metal in the equation is the telecoil in the hearing aid [which] picks up the signal [and] feeds it to the processing chip within the hearing aid. The circuitry in the hearing aid then processes the sound and feeds it to the person's ear, and they hear."

How much of a difference do loops make?

Apparently they make grown men cry. Here's loop advocate David Myers's story: "I visited Scotland shortly after getting new hearing aids back in 1999. I was totally lost, and sound was reverberating around 800-year-old walls. My wife saw a sign [saying the site had a hearing loop], so I turned on my telecoil for the first time. It was emotionally powerful. Suddenly I heard a clear human voice, instead of this verbal fog. I was on the verge of tears. I didn't know sound like this was possible." Not all adults have this reaction. Terry Jones, a certified public accountant and financial planner in Fairfax, wears hearing aids. She attended the performance in Baltimore and told me the telecoil setting "makes the music sound more focused and clear," but it came with a "mildly annoying" buzz.

It's important to note that people's reactions to hearing devices are unpredictable: An identical correction can be experienced differently by two people with the same type of hearing loss.

Why not use the traditional headsets that most theaters and auditoriums make available for those with hearing loss?

The headsets can work well, but most loop advocates say that few people with hearing loss bother to check them out. It's a hassle, most say. The question sent composer Einhorn on a tear. Requesting and wearing the clunky and often unreliable headsets "is so embarrassing, undignified and uncomfortable that there's no point. They don't work very well and they're unsanitary. They're just terrible in many, many different ways." Most loop advocates I spoke to feel the same way. "If all you have to do when you're having trouble hearing is push a button, you'll do it," Myers said. "If you have to make a fuss, you'll just sit there and endure." As hearing rights activist Janice Schacter Lintz said, "No one should have to ask permission to hear."

Is this a big breakthrough?

Not at all. Telecoils were first put in hearing aids in the 1940s to help wearers use telephones without screeching feedback. Hearing loops aren't new, either. Nancy Sonnabend, 77 and a board member of HLAA from Boston, remembers when her mother, who was also an HLAA board member, "used to throw a loop around the area where she was talking with a microphone" back in the 1960s and '70s.

Do all hearing aids have telecoils?

No. Trade publications report that the percentage of U.S. hearing-aid fittings that included a telecoil increased from 37 percent in 2001 to 58 percent in 2009. But several audiologists I spoke to in the Washington area said that only about half of the hearing aids they sell have telecoils. Ironically, some of the newest models don't have them because, as aids get smaller, there's not enough room for telecoils. And people seem to like small.

As for the original purpose of telecoils, today's "feedback cancellation circuitry is so much better than it used to be," said University of Maryland audiologist Margaret McCabe. "Many people [wearing hearing aids] can hold a phone up to their ear with no problem." No telecoil needed. If you don't know if you have a telecoil in your hearing aid — four out of five of my friends with hearing aids didn't — ask your audiologist. (The fifth one knew she had a telecoil but had no idea why or how to use it.)

What does it cost to loop a room?

That depends on its size and the construction of the facility. Palm said it cost about \$9,000 to temporarily loop Meyerhoff Hall with 3,000 feet of cable. (To permanently loop the space would have required lifting the carpeting to put the wires under it. Many places, I'm told, install loops when they replace carpets.) Joe Duarte, who has cochlear implants and a small business in Fairfax that installs sound systems for people with hearing loss, said, "Most simple loops, like small meeting rooms with perimeter loops, cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000, depending on their size and the labor involved." My audiologist, Jeff Zolt, says he looped his waiting room for a few hundred dollars. "We're laying pieces of wire on the floor," Palm said. "There's nothing glamorous about it."

Where are loops widely used?

In Great Britain, Scandinavia — and in western Michigan, largely because that's where Myers lives. Years ago, he told

me, people working to accommodate those with hearing loss had to make a choice. "Scandinavia and the U.K. went one way," installing hearing loops, while in the United States, "audio contractors saw FM and infrared as meeting the ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] requirements." Today, if you travel to London, Myers said, you'll find hearing loops in Westminster Abbey, the airport and "the back seats of all London taxis," among many other locations. Myers, who teaches at Hope College in Holland, MI, and other loop advocates in the state have been busy. Dozens of churches there are looped, as are auditoriums, libraries and community centers, even the Grand Rapids airport and the Michigan State University basketball arena.

What about the rest of the U.S.?

You can find loops across the country, from Santa Fe, NM, to Seattle to Sarasota, FL, but it's a big country, and loops are hardly commonplace. Some recent big news comes from the Big Apple, where Schacter Lintz and others have been advocating for hearing loops: New York City Transit used federal stimulus money to loop more than 300 subway information booths last year. And just last week, Nissan announced that 13,500 new city taxis, to be phased in as old cabs are retired, will be equipped with hearing loops. The partition between the front and back seat can make it hard for passengers to hear drivers; the loop will fix that. Elsewhere in New York, you'll find loops in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, information booths on Ellis Island, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, the New-York Historical Society, the Shake Shack on the Upper West Side and more.

Are there loops in the D.C. area?

Yes, but not many. Congressional hearing rooms are looped (as they should be; they're hearing rooms!). You'll also find loops in the main chamber of the House of Representatives, the Holocaust Museum, some Gallaudet University classrooms, several meeting rooms at the Library of Congress, some places of worship and more. The Kennedy Center, which installed a loop last year for one performance of "Wicked," has no plans to make it a permanent fixture. Duarte has contracts with Montgomery and Fairfax counties to loop public buildings. Right now, he's working with an architect to install hearing loops in the renovated Gaithersburg library.

How can I check out a hearing loop?

The Web has a cool video demonstration of sound quality with and without hearing loops. (Einhorn made it at a subway booth in New York.) You can listen to and watch it at bit.ly/hearingloop. No hearing aid required.

What has to happen for this technology to take off?

A heck of a lot of education and advocacy. People with hearing loss, audiologists, hearing-aid manufacturers, those who run performance venues and business owners all have a role to play. My conclusion: Hearing loops could help millions of people hear better — if only more people, with and without hearing loss, had heard of them. For more about the efforts of the American Academy of Audiology and the Hearing Loss Association of America, go to www.hearingloop.org.

Is the best-film Oscar that the silent movie "The Artist" won this year a comment on our increasingly loud world or an accommodation for boomers suffering from age-related hearing loss?

In February, the Los Angeles Times reported that of the 5,765 voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 86 percent are older than 50. You gotta wonder.



Musings from the TV Room



By Denise Portis

Denise Portis talks about using the telecoil in her hearing aid to watch and hear TV. What a surprise she was in for when she switched it on!

Denise Portis has had a hearing loss since age six as a result of a car accident. She is a graduate of Tennessee Temple University and is currently a stay-at-home mom to Kyrsten and Christopher. She says she enjoys this "job" more than any other position she has ever held. Denise is a big supporter of SHHH as she recently started a chapter in Frederick, Maryland, and is married to SHHH Executive Director Terry Portis.

If you would like more information about chapter meetings in Maryland or any state, visit the chapter page at www.hearingloss.org.

I had a personal loop system hooked up in my living room this week. My husband set the loop under "my" chair and attached it to the television. At first I was skeptical, because I have relied on closed captioning for a number of years now.

I was amazed at what I could hear!

I use the T-switch (telecoil or T-coil) on my hearing aid often. Sometimes I use it with my FM system at meetings, and sometimes when the room has an audio loop. (Although that is rare and a completely separate topic!). However, I have never used the T-switch with a personal loop system to watch TV. My preconceived notion was that I would only hear amplification of the voices.

The first thing I just had to watch was *The Fellowship of the Ring* on DVD. As a *Lord of the Rings* fan, I dismally sat through four different trips to the theater when it first came out in attempts to "hear." (My family shares my passion for Tolkien so luckily they enjoyed coming with me four times.). I couldn't wait for it to be released on video/DVD so that I could really "hear" through closed captioning!

After enjoying the captioned version at home, I thought I had experienced this movie to its fullest...NOT! I almost jumped out of my chair when I heard ole Gollum's voice for the first time. (Jumping out of your chair in fright renders the aforementioned personal loop ineffective!) My children at first were tickled at "the things Mom was actually hearing."

I'd pause the movie often to ask, "What was THAT?...That noise right here?...What was THAT?????"

Their prompt reply was: "That's the noise the horses make when their hooves hit the ground, Mom!"

Another ten minutes pass, and again I pause the movie, "Oh my gosh! What is that SOUND? What is that???"

Again, their reply: "Mom, that is the sound of leaves crunching when their boots hit the ground as they walk through the forest!"

At this point they were sitting on the edge of their seats! What sounds will Mom hear next? I noticed out of the corner of my eye that they kept poking each other and smiling as I literally sat there with my mouth hanging open!

In another five minutes, "Oh geesh! What is THAT? What is that SOUND?"

Now, this one took a minute or two for the kids to rewind, review, and figure out what I was hearing. Then, they announced, "That is the wind whipping through the trees!"

New-Found Hearing in the TV Room

I could continue, but suffice it to say that I spent many minutes crying my eyes out for what I was hearing! My family couldn't figure out if I was thrilled or upset! I heard noises in this movie that I had forgotten about. I had forgotten that footsteps would stomp, stomp, stomp up the stairs of an old tavern. Too long it had been since I heard the water from a small stream as it tumbled over the rocks.

So, I sat there — crying and laughing, pausing and questioning. I enjoyed a movie with my family, and enjoyed it using my hearing. (The kids? Well they were getting a little tired of all the pausing! Who could blame them?)

My husband, just as excited, did all the sound checks: "Is it working okay? Can I adjust the volume? What are you hearing that you haven't heard before?" (Grin. Talk about individual attention!)

I fear my housework may suffer, and perhaps we'll be living on take-out pizza for a while. After all, I have a whole shelf of movies to "hear" again!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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. 

David G. Myers
Hope College



HEARING LOOP INSTALLED



ATTENTION:

To enjoy better hearing in the loop, switch your hearing aid or cochlear device to one of the following settings:

- **T**
- **T-Coil**
- **Telephone**

For assistance contact:

Arkansas Loops
5 Medical Park Drive, St. 101
Benton, AR 72015
501.778.3868

www.ArkansasLoops.com



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