



The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

WIRED FOR SOUND

A New Era of Assistive Listening

Stephen O. Frazier

Auracast™ is not just a technological upgrade for theaters and concert halls; it is a universal solution for inclusive listening.

For decades, theaters and concert halls have relied on a patchwork of assistive listening technologies—hearing loops, FM, and infrared systems—to help patrons with hearing loss fully experience live performance. While each system has met some needs, none has offered a universally user-friendly solution. That landscape is now shifting. With the arrival of Bluetooth LE Audio and Auracast™ broadcast audio, performing arts venues are on the cusp of the most significant upgrade to assistive listening since the introduction of hearing loops.

Auracast promises something long imagined but never fully realized: a standardized, open broadcast that allows audience members to receive high quality audio directly in their own hearing aids, earbuds, or smartphones—without venue-specific hardware, without checkout counters and without the stigma or inconvenience of borrowed devices. For venues, it offers a path toward broader accessibility, simpler maintenance, and a future-proofed infrastructure that aligns with global consumer technology trends.

Yet the transition is not automatic. Theaters and concert halls must navigate questions of compatibility, deployment strategy, acoustic design, and most importantly, audience education. As more hearing aids, smartphones, and public address systems adopt Auracast, the performing arts world faces a rare opportunity: to rethink what inclusive listening can look like in spaces built for shared cultural experiences.



Auracast™ Is Not Traditional Bluetooth

Unlike traditional Bluetooth® pairing—which allows only a single device connection—the Auracast iteration of Bluetooth transmission enables a one-to-many audio stream that audience members can access using their own hearing aids, earbuds, headphones, or smartphones. This shift promises a future in which assistive listening is universally available, wireless, and device agnostic.

A review of recent online articles highlights a remarkable surge in early Auracast installations, particularly within theaters and concert halls. These real-world deployments demonstrate not only the technology's maturity but also the cultural sector's eagerness to embrace it.

Early Adopters

Following the March, 2025 adoption of Auracast in multiple performance spaces in Australia's world-renowned Sydney Opera complex, theaters and performance spaces around the world have been supplementing existing assistive listening systems with the easily installed Auracast version. Notable among them are landmark theaters that include the La Criée National Theatre of Marseille, France, and the Nissay Theatre in Tokyo. Also in Japan, the ROHM Theater in Kyoto, one of the country's premier performing arts venues, successfully tested the technology using a single transmitter to serve its four-balcony auditorium. Installations in the Regent Theatre in Dunedin, New Zea-

Continued on page 3

WIRED FOR SOUND

is published by the
HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER
Providing support and advocacy for
people with hearing loss

P. O. Box 36792,
Albuquerque, NM 87176

HLAAbq@gmail.com

Home page: hearinglossabq.org

[Hearing Loss Association of America](http://hearinglossabq.org)
– [Albuquerque chapter](http://hearinglossabq.org)



Mention of goods or services in articles or advertisements or meetings does not mean endorsement by Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter, nor does exclusion suggest disapproval.

ABQ Chapter Board:

VACANT:
President
Publicity Chair

Treasurer: Bobbi Rodríguez
TreasurerHLAAbq@gmail.com

Editor: A. E. "Rod" Rodríguez
EditorHLAAbq@gmail.com

Acting VP Programs: Mary Clark
Mary@mandgclark.com
Past Pres./Advisor

Membership & Web Master:
Jim Dillow
catchJimmy@comcast.net

Hospitality Chair: Jim Twohig,
JKTwoHig@gmail.com

Professional Advisor:
Dr. Carol Clifford
CCLifford@abqhearing.com

The Albuquerque Chapter
is affiliated with



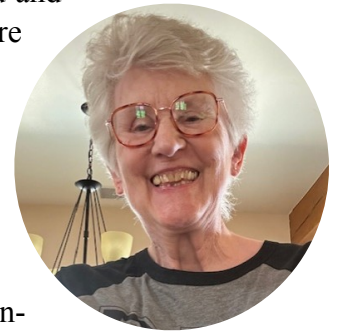
HLAA
Hearing Loss Association of America
www.hearingloss.org
6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320
Rockville, MD 20852
phone: (301)657-2248

18 Apr Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon. **Map on Back Page****Hearing Loss in the Healthcare Setting**

After being unable to find an outside speaker, you will be guests of two of our most experienced presenters from the HLAABQ board! Carol Clifford and



Mary Clark will share what's old and what's new in preparing for a hospital stay. Whether it is planned or unplanned, there are steps we can take to ensure that communication won't



be a barrier to receiving the care we need.

In addition to hospital stays, we'll touch on other scenarios, like x-rays, MRI's, the dentist, or the eye exam when they turn off all the lights. (ARGH!)

Our speakers will share tools that we can use that you may or may not have considered. For example, make sure your family knows where your "kit" is, so if you have an unplanned visit to the hospital, they can send it along.

Our goal is to share what we DO know about and then ask for your personal experiences that we'll help troubleshoot with you.

We encourage you to check out our live meetings now. We are excited to be able to return to having the opportunity to meet in person again.

In January 2026 we had our first in-person meeting at the Deaf Culture Center (DCC). Their charter includes serving both the deaf and the hard of hearing populations in this area. Their event room is on the ground floor of the PAH! Highland Plaza apartment building at 5000 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108. There is a map on back page. Parking is on Jackson Street or at an abandoned Auto Zone across the street.

We could use help in setup, handling the meeting and tear-down. We also want some new blood. You can ease your way into volunteering and learn how this works. Just email one of the board members (listed on the left). You may also use the chapter email: HLAAbq@gmail.com.

land and a half dozen theaters in the UK further demonstrate the international application of this landmark technology.

Here in the US, the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, IL is among the first U.S. performing arts venues to install Auracast. This installation signals a clear shift toward modern assistive listening, offering both simplicity and high-quality sound to patrons using their own devices. Shortly after the Marriott Theatre deployment, the Metropolitan Performing Arts Centre in Arlington Heights, IL also installed Auracast. Chicago's Goodman Theatre has expressed interest in implementing the technology, further reinforcing the region's role as a U.S. hub for Auracast-based accessibility. These venues provide early proof that regional performing arts organizations are ready to modernize their accessibility technology. The installation in the WYO Performing Arts Center in Sheridan, WY demonstrates a willingness to adopt the technology even in smaller communities.

Beyond Theaters

While this article focuses on theaters and concert halls, the airport in Frankfurt, Germany has just recently installed Auracast transmitters at some departure gates for a two-month test of the technology. The Bristol Temple Meads railway station in the UK now transmits live announcements via Auracast, enabling deaf or hard of hearing passengers to receive high-intelligibility audio directly on their personal devices. These public transport precedents reinforce the technology's suitability for large indoor venues with highly variable needs and acoustic conditions.

With little media publicity, Auracast's adoption is spreading to worship spaces. Churches, mosques, and synagogues worldwide are beginning to install Auracast transmitters, allowing congregants to access sermons and music without venue-specific hardware. This enhances inclusivity and removes barriers for attendees with hearing loss.

A number of universities and schools have installed Auracast for lecture halls and classrooms. Professors can broadcast lectures directly to students' devices, ensuring accessibility for all and supporting diverse learning needs. This is especially valuable in large auditoriums where traditional assistive listening systems may be impractical.

In New Zealand, Stadium Taranaki installed Auracast to upgrade the audio system to allow rugby fans to hear the announcements over the roar of the fans. In the not-too-distant future, venues as diverse as Yankee Stadium and the New Orleans Superdome could join Stadium Taranaki in supplementing their public address system with Auracast™.

Why Turn to Auracast

Across all of the above installations, several themes recur:

- **Device Independence:** Patrons can use their own earbuds, hearing aids, or smartphones—removing the need for venue managed receivers.
- **Improved Reliability:** Compared to WIFI-based streaming or aging FM, InfraRed or induction loop systems, Auracast™ offers a robust low-latency audio alternative.
- **Cost Effective Infrastructure:** As shown in Kyoto, even large venues can achieve broad coverage with minimal hardware.
- **Future-Proofing:** A growing number of new hearing aids already support Auracast, and nearly every major electronics manufacturer has added Auracast enabled consumer audio products to the mix. Most new smartphones are either Auracast enabled or can be with a simple over-the-air update. Most new hearing aids (even some OTC devices) are already either Auracast enabled or have the capability to be with an over-the-air update.

Smith's Community Rewards Shop at Smith's with their Rewards card, and Smith's will make a donation to HLAA Albuquerque chapter. You get your usual rewards points.

1-800-444-8081, opt. 3 to sign up or re-enroll.

The HLAAAbq NPO number for Smith's is **NC419**.

Conclusion

A detailed magazine article on renovation of the Austin, TX airport did not mention the installation of hearing loops that were part of the project. A more recent article detailing the “improvements” being offered in the newest Amtrak trains did not mention that the passenger cars have hearing loops installed. The same sort of omission would not be surprising as Auracast finds its way into more and more venues of every type. This makes researching the installation of Auracast problematic, as so many installations will go unreported.

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

Seamless Travel With Mama Hu

During a recent visit to Eugene, OR, Facebook influencer “Mama Hu” was invited by our county travel bureau to check out a seamless experience across a few of the many different hearing loops large and small, portable and installed, in cultural sites and tourism-related businesses. You can see her journey



That being said, the plethora of Auracast capable or enabled products now available positions the technology as the default assistive listening standard of the next decade. Auracast is not just a technological upgrade for theaters, concert halls and places of worship, it is a universal solution for inclusive listening across transport hubs, sports facilities and educational institutions. Real-world deployments prove that this technology is already reshaping accessibility, making it easier, more dignified and more future-ready for everyone.

here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1488025942928912>

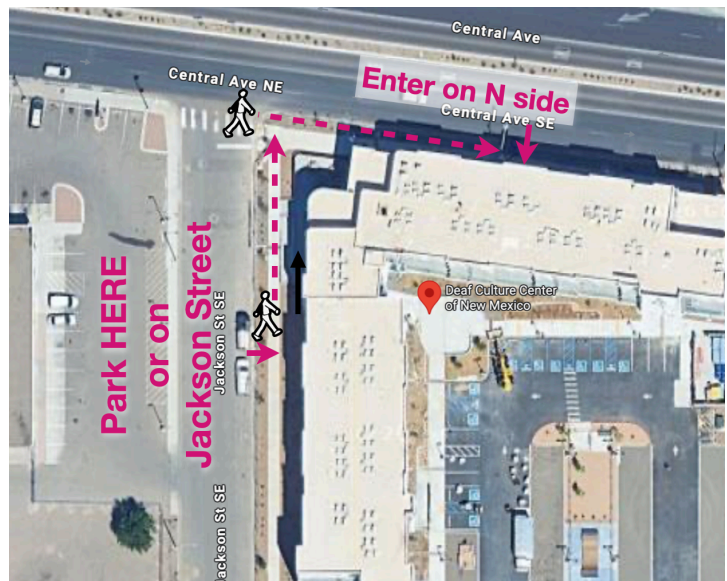
The county and state tourism commissions were instrumental in supporting a hearing access initiative that resulted in more than 30 new local loop sites, plus many more statewide. And she could have added the airport and Amtrak counters as well. There is great attention to accessible tourism these days. Keep asking for it wherever you go, and watch for the sign! Of course, all of this work benefits community members on a daily basis as well.

March Meeting Summary

“Rod” Rodriguez, Editor

In our third hybrid meeting (March 21) Sean Sinderholm from the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing talked about assistive technology options. Sean demonstrated several new devices including Google Live Transcribe, caption glasses from companies like Captify, the Lotus Ring for controlling light switches, and an AuraCast transmitter. The presentation covered the capabilities, costs and potential applications of these devices. He brought a portable AuraCast transmitter which can provide wireless audio transmission up to 200 feet, and demonstrated it for the in-person audience. That included three board members who had Auracast-enabled devices. The one

with a Cochlear Implant could not find how to receive the broadcast, but the two with Auracast enabled hearing aids received the signal very well.



The number of regular members attending in person (not counting the presenter and other active participants) increased from five to seven, continuing the growth trend. We hope the in-person attendance increases even more in April. The topic and speaker are described on page 2. Please help us

Hearing Exam Room Dedicated to Karen Twohig

A hearing testing room in the Presbyterian Ear Institute (PEI) was dedicated to the memory of Karen Twohig on February 28. The beautiful plaque shown below is now installed next to the door to that room.

We include two personal remembrances of Karen.

Remembering Karen Twohig

(repeated from June 2024 WFS) by Stephen O. Frazier

Karen was active in the chapter way back when it was SHHH. Active hardly covers the impact Karen made to the chapter and on Albuquerque's hard of hearing community. In addition to being an upbeat and outgoing individual, she was one of the long-time leaders of the chapter and a mentor, advisor & confidant to so many people with hearing loss.

Karen was a long-time member of the Abq. SHHH board, as well as past president of the chapter. She was the chair of the NM Relay system's board of directors for a time when it was a local entity employing dozens. She was a volunteer to take charge when a leader was needed to organize a yard sale or prepare a lunch for an all-day training session on hearing loops etc. for local audiologists, staffing a chapter booth for a health

spread the word. The address is 5000 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108, and there is a map on the back page of this newsletter. Above, we repeat the close-up map showing where to park and how to walk to the outside doors of the meeting room.

fair at the mall or some other chapter project.

An untold number of people learned about and then got cochlear implants after talking with Karen, who was the chapter's first CI recipient. Later, she would help them adjust to the technology. When the chapter had less than a dozen dues-paying members in the 90's, it was Karen who always made a new visitor feel welcome at a chapter meeting. Celebrating his Birthday and implantation when long-timer "Bagel Harry" got his CI was typical of Karen. Karen (and Jim) hosted many guest speakers in their home. One of them, Dr. Juliette Sterkens, told me they were the most gracious hosts she had ever stayed with in her visits to present to groups throughout the US over the years.

Several years ago, Karen received the Virginia Carr Award—a recognition that used to be given each year by the chapter to a leader in reaching out to and helping people with hearing loss.

Karen will be missed by all of us who knew her at HLAA and, I expect, many with no affiliation with HLAA.

A Personal Note

Jim Twohig

Karen and I were so grateful for the help from PEI, Dr. Horn, Dr. Cris Epstein, HLAA, and everyone for the help Karen received in restoring her hearing! Before Karen went deaf in her right ear and wore hearing aids, she was always looking for things that would help her



hear better, willing to try anything that might improve her hearing. Two things that helped her greatly were the Captel phone and the loop system, and they added to her quality of life. HLAA had programs that helped her deal with difficult situations and showed her ways that would improve her ability to hear in these situations.

When Karen went deaf in her right ear and knowing that her hearing in the other ear was going downhill we quickly started sign language classes but we quickly realized that this would not restore her communication skills. We did use spelling to one another, especially in difficult situations such as airports to communicate with one another. Karen looked into the possibility of a cochlear implant, and Dr. Horn agreed that she would be a good candidate. She had the surgery, and the im-

plant was placed. Dr. Cris Epstein programmed her hearing device and would follow Karen through the years to make sure she was hearing everything. Karen and I were so grateful for the help that they provided in restoring Karen's hearing. Karen became a great advocate of the cochlear implant and would often counsel others that were contemplating the surgery. Kaaren was all about having everyone hearing, and she would often seek out people with hearing aids who were having problems hearing and offer advice on how to hear better. Karen was always asking people who wore hearing aids if they had the T-coil in their hearing aid, so they could take advantage of the loop system. Karen did not want anyone excluded because they had a hearing problem, as she had been when she first had her start of her hearing problems.

Hearing Loss Support Social

HLAA Santa Fe Chapter

Strategies on Coping With Your Hearing Loss

Saturday, April 18th, 10 am to 11:00 am

From National HLAA:

No matter your age, education and support are the keys to your hearing health journey. That's why we are so excited to embark on a partnership with **Hasbro!**

Inspired by the announcement from the world of **Peppa Pig** that George, Peppa's younger brother, has moderate hearing loss, HLAA will be creating new resources designed for children with hearing loss and their families. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore the many ways people talk about and experience hearing loss from the perspective of a child—while celebrating curiosity and acceptance along the way.

Read more about our plans:

<https://ow.ly/B6c950Ykx8o>

Travel Bug Santa Fe: Bring a friend — opportunity to talk about your hearing loss or ask questions

839 Paseo De Peralta

For information, contact John Hooper

johnhooper.ref@gmail.com

505-603-2994



Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.

Platinum \$400+

Adelaide
Zabriskie

Gold \$200-399

Linnea Hendrickson

Bronze \$50-99

Yukie Ebara
Rita García
Kim Granzow
Rod & Bobbi Rodríguez
Mary Tyler
Marge Weitzel

Andrew “Bo” Gamboa
Patricia Gonzáles
Barbara Kerr
Mary L. Raje
Richard Tuschhoff

Donation of Portable Loop:

Ginevra Ralph

Silver \$100-199

Barbara Armstrong
Elisabeth Endean

Friends - up to \$49

Gail Anastasio
Carol Emerson

Special:
Smith’s Community Rewards

In memory of Rosalin Cohen:
Cohen Family

Gloria Inlow
Michael Lieberman

NM HLAA chapters are 501(c)3 nonprofits and all donations are tax deductible.

Support the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Become a member TODAY!

The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. **Membership in the national organization is automatic with any donation (separate from any Chapter dues). A \$45 or more donation to National HLAA provides a subscription to the bimonthly publication Hearing Life.**



Albuquerque Chapter Membership

- New
- Renew

Name: Date:

Address: Please mail Newsletter rather than email.

City: State: Zip:

Email: Phone(s):
voice? text? VP? caption?

Mail to: HLAAAbq Treasurer, P. O. Box36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

Payment: Membership amount: \$..... Donation: \$..... Total: \$.....

Dues: \$15 per household per calendar year (Includes newsletter subscription)

Online: <https://www.hearinglossabq.org/electronic-pay>

Wired For Sound



P.O.Box 36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

