

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

WIRED FOR SOUND



WiFi Audio – Is It Ready for Prime Time?

Stephen O. Frazier, Hearing Loss Support Specialist

Thanks at least in part to the Loop New Mexico campaign that began as a local HLAA initiative, hearing loops have become the assistive listening system (ALS) of choice for the hard of hearing in Albuquerque. There's now a new technology being used for wireless connectivity—Wi-Fi Audio—and you are probably already equipped to use it. It broadcasts sound via a venue's existing Wi-Fi network (or with a stand-alone Wi-Fi transmitter) to personal smartphones or venue-loaned Wi-Fi receivers with a neckloop or earphones. This technology is being actively used by at least one major Albuquerque A/V firm and can be found in a growing number of venues.

Nationally, the technology is popular in gyms, sports bars, tourist facilities like trains or boats, and in other settings where it may be difficult or impossible to actually hear the person speaking. In the case of sports bars, there can be multiple TVs playing, each with a different event being shown, and no sound from the TV sets. Patrons download

a smartphone app, connect their phone to the Wi-Fi signal and then select which TV they want to hear the sound for. On a sightseeing train they can use their phone to hear the tour guide, who may be in the car ahead of them. Users can listen using the phone's loudspeaker, or plug in earphones or earbuds or a neckloop. If they are equipped with the technology, they can use wireless earphones, earbuds or their Bluetooth-capable hearing aids.

There is a delay (latency) in these systems and, although they have been installed in some places of worship or other such venues, many of the users find the echo effect of the latency to be objectionable. The latency can vary depending of the model and age of the smartphone being used, the Wi-Fi system itself, or several other variables. It can be anywhere from 50 to 80 milliseconds, and people will become conscious of it when it's around 15 to 30 milliseconds. Many musicians will begin to sense it when it's as little as 5 to 10 milliseconds. A millisecond is one thousandth of a second.¹

It has been installed in the both the Santa Fe Convention Center and the Santa Fe County Commission meeting room. When I went to Santa Fe for a demonstration of the system in the convention center, the latency was so bad that the-ee

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¹ *Editor's note:* My church (Hoffmantown) recently installed a Wi-Fi ALS. Our Wi-Fi bandwidth is ample. The transition from FM receivers was seamless, and so far no user complaints. A friend who uses it told me the sound is "perfect". I asked about latency, and was assured the technology has advanced enough that the tiny delay should not be noticeable. I'm a musician, and I could not perceive any delay in the sound.

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Providing support and advocacy for
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Hearing Loss Association of
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15 Oct Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon On **Zoom**

Olivia Fadul will be presenting on
the ABCs of Listening Skills for
Hearing Loss: Navigating after 2020.
This program is aimed to provide re-
search, life experiences and best
practices for those living with hear-
ing loss.



Fadul joined the Hearing Loss
Association of America's (HLAA)-
Albuquerque (ABQ) chapter in Au-
gust 2021. She now serves as HLAA-ABQ program chair. Fadul,
who has lived with hearing loss since age 5, considers herself an
advocate for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH).

In Jan 2022, Fadul founded the University of New Mexico
DHH Support group. Her dream is to expand DHH support
groups for College Age individuals. Currently, Fadul is a Coun-
selor Education and Supervision doctoral student focusing on
DHH mental health and disabilities. She is working towards train-
ing and educating mental health, private, school, and career coun-
selors on best practices on working with DHH and disability
clients. In addition to that, Fadul's passion is universal design for
those living with disabilities. She believes it will improve the
quality of life not only for those living with disabilities, but also
for all individuals

Fadul holds a Counseling degree from Jacksonville State Uni-
versity and is a Licensed Counselor in New Mexico, Nevada, and
Alabama. She also owns a telehealth practice called Olive Tree
Counseling and Wellness.

***Check our Web Page (HearingLossAbq.org) for updates and
the link to join the Zoom meeting.***

***Always check our Home Page for the latest information on
upcoming programs.***

The HLAA ABQ Chapter is always looking for volunteers.
You can man a special project. You can help us out for a few
months, or consider a longer-term commitment. "Try us out"
for a month or two. We will provide orientation for working
on a nonprofit board, share our chapter's mission and goals,
and discuss topics we can use your help with. If interested,
contact any board member (contact info at left), or use the
chapter email hlaabq@gmail.com.

speakerer sounded like this. Center staff apologized and said it was an aberration and that they were still just learning to operate the system. A report from an attendee at an event there was that it was great after you turned the mics off in your hearing aids so you heard only the sound from the Wi-Fi connection.

For those applications where it is practical, this new use of Wi-Fi promises to make certain types of assistive listening accessible to many more members of the public—hard of hearing or not—than FM, IR or Loops are able to serve, because of the smartphone. That being said, as this technology is also being promoted as a suitable substitute for a hearing loop, FM or IR system in a theater, place of worship, council meeting room etc., anyone considering its installation should have a spec-

ified term for its return if it proves to be unsatisfactory to the target audience, as there are sure to be complaints about the echo in the system.

Steve Frazier is the former New Mexico HLAA chapter coordinator and was a founding member of the national HLAA Get in the Hearing Loop committee. Trained by HLAA as a hearing loss support specialist, he has in recent years become a freelance writer on hearing loss and noise control issues and has been published in many of the major hearing loss and hearing care periodicals in addition to others such as Sound and Communications and Technologies for Worship. Many of those articles are posted and www.sofnabq.com. Steve can be contacted at: LoopNM@gmail.com

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. **Correction:**

1-800-444-8081, opt. 3 to sign up or re-enroll. The HLAAABQ NPO number for Smith's is NC419.

Amazon Smile You can donate to the Albuquerque Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America every time you make a purchase of most of the products from Amazon.

Go to <http://www.hlaabq.com/amazonmile.html> for more information and detailed instructions on how to designate HLAA-ABQ Chapter as your charity of choice when you make amazon.com purchases.

Once you have set it up, always log into smile.amazon.com to purchase from amazon. 0.5% of the purchase price is automatically donated to HLAA Albuquerque Chapter—at no cost to you.

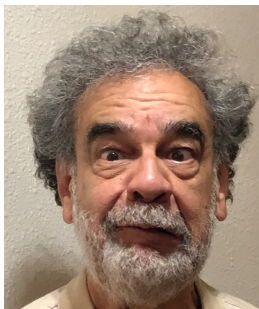
Hybrid Meetings?

"Rod" Rodriguez, Editor, WFS

We did a trial run of a hybrid meeting in September, with a few people there in person as a test audience. If you joined us on Zoom, you know we had some serious technical issues.

Please know that several of us were frantically trying to diagnose the technical problems for the first 10-15 minutes of the meeting. It took a while to find out how to get the audio to go to Zoom.

If you want to catch what you missed, you can find the video Maddie Hickel showed before his talk at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMH3Cts3U.



Some of the problems came because we were using a different Zoom account. The following is my summary of the technical issues.

I meant for the main source for the Zoom audience (audio and video) to be the laptop on the podium. That way, the Zoom audience would see the presenter standing at the podium and hear him (or her) from the closest microphone—the one on that laptop. I say “presenter” (a person), not “speaker” to avoid confusion with “loudspeaker” (a device). It was working as planned until 5 minutes before we started. Then only the microphone on Olivia Fadul’s laptop was working, and when we muted it, the Zoom audience got nothing at all.

It was far from the podium, so the sound it picked up was not as good. The auto captioning application was having trouble “understanding” for the same reason the humans were having trouble.

Open laptops in the room were creating feedback and echos. “Muting” (the microphone) does not turn off the built-in speakers. The problem was that the “open” microphone (the only one we wanted active) was picking up the sound from other laptops. In the future, we will instruct people in the room how to turn off their built-in speakers or turn down the volume to zero. I recommend not using any device in the room unless it has ear-buds which turn off the built-in speakers.

I also anticipated that the presenter’s laptop would provide the video (including its audio). When we found that the video was only available on Olivia’s laptop, we had to improvise, with some undesirable side-effects.

Usually, our presenters will use their own laptops and play any videos or slides from there, whether Zooming remote or there in person. For

the live audience, we just need to project the Zoom video on a large screen and send the audio to the room (loudspeakers and loop). When one of us is speaking in the room, we will mute the Zoom audio and bring up the microphone.

Are you ready to come in person? We got some useful feedback from the Zoom audience, but we want to hear from all members. Please contact any board member who’s listed on page 2.

Let’s not forget the things that went right. The presenter was well received, judging by the number of questions afterward. We managed to get the essentials working for most of the meeting.

We’ll heed the lessons learned, and do better next time. That’s how we will move forward.



Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

Can You Hear the Square Dance Caller?

Hearing the instructions or the count or the music in an exercise setting can be a challenge sometimes, but the answer isn’t to stop attending. You aren’t the only one having trouble, but you may be the only one taking charge of your need to hear better.

One friend puts her “connect-clip” microphone that pairs with the Bluetooth in her hearing aid onto the shirt of her tai chi instructor. It works great for her. The problem arises when others in the class need to add their devices to his shirt so that each can hear better.

Another friend has been experimenting with her portable loop by putting a microphone near her

yoga instructor and plugging it into her loop. It also works well, but only she and perhaps one other student next to her can use it.

A third loves to square dance but can’t hear the caller, and it turns out several other dance club members are pretty much faking it too. A hearing loop in the dance hall would send the calls directly to his hearing aid, and he and his wife can keep dancing.

Each of these spaces, smaller and larger, could benefit from a simple loop installation and serve more than just these three people who want to stay physically active in these group settings. YMCAs and other exercise facilities care about accessibility but may not think about hearing accessibility unless their members speak up.

Yearly dues are \$15 per household.
They are due in January.

Wired For Sound

Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.

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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 by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes a subscription to the bi-monthly publication Hearing Life.



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