



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

WIRED FOR SOUND

Assistive Listening—What's Next?

Stephen O. Frazier

Auracast Is Set To Improve Audio Accessibility for Both Those With Hearing Loss and the General Public.

Hearing loop technology is the darling of people with hearing loss. It has enabled them to hear in theaters, meeting halls, places of worship and other venues with the simple touch of a button on their hearing aids. The last decade has seen a huge increase in the availability of the technology, and it continues to find new applications. Amtrak plans to loop ticket windows in 85 stations and have billions of dollars committed to new train cars that will have hearing loops. Nearly 30 airports in this country (and hundreds abroad) now feature hearing loops in some form, and new installations will be forthcoming. New York City taxicabs now feature hearing loops. San Francisco subway cars are "looped" and New York has 1,000 such cars soon to be delivered.

Just as cellular phones have supplanted landlines for most people, there's a new technology that is expected to replace not just hearing loops but also FM, Infrared, and WiFi assistive listening systems. It's a new form of Bluetooth® called Auracast™ and was developed by the Special Interest Group (SIG) that created Bluetooth. Unlike classic Bluetooth, which is essentially a one-to-one technology, Auracast can serve an audience of any size. Hearing aid wearers typically replace their devices every 5 to 7 years. Consequently, it's expected that it will take 10 years before Auracast has become the primary assistive listening technology both



here and abroad, but it's here now, and people with hearing loss should be preparing themselves to use it.

Auracast is included in the features of many new Samsung TVs, and users can connect to it with a growing number of hearing aids, earbuds, or headphones that are now available online and in some stores. This new Bluetooth technology is transforming audio sharing by enabling sound transmission to unlimited audio devices simultaneously. This includes devices for the general public as well as the hard of hearing in consumer products like earbuds, loudspeakers, smartphones, and TVs.

In addition to TVs, Samsung offers Auracast in their Galaxy Buds2 pro and their Galaxy S23 and S24 smartphones. Several other manufacturers have added Auracast earbuds, headphones, loudspeakers and transmitters to their product mix. A new assistive listening system has been developed by loop maker Ampetronic in partnership with Williams Sound, a major audio/visual equipment maker. Called Auri, the system is undergoing fine-tuning and is expected to be available for installations this coming winter.

Resound, Jabra and Beltone have released Auracast-activated hearing aid models. Signia, Oticon, Phillips and Rexton, have models needing only an over-the-air software update to receive Auracast signals. The ReSound/Beltone Multi-Mic+ is Auracast-enabled and can broadcast to multiple users of most Auracast receivers from any maker.

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
– Albuquerque chapter](http://Hearing Loss Association of America – Albuquerque chapter)



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:

President:
VACANT

Treasurer: Bobbi Rodríguez
TreasurerHLAAbq@gmail.com

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

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

Acting VP Programs: Mary Clark
Mary@mandgclark.com

Publicity Chair:
VACANT

Hospitality Chair:
VACANT

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

Past Pres./Advisor: Mary Clark
Mary@mandgclark.com

Past Pres./Advisor: Dr. Norm Dawson
DrNorm@gmail.com

The Albuquerque Chapter
is affiliated with



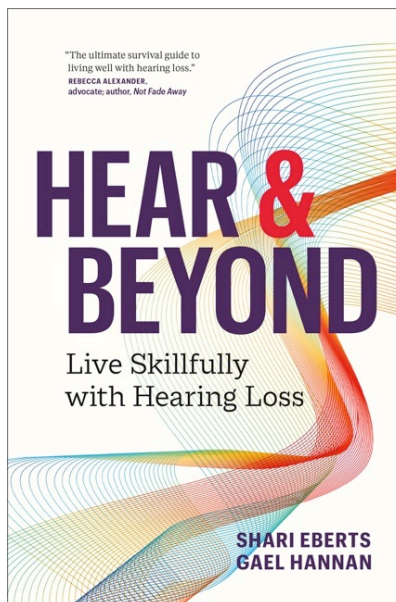
HLAA
Hearing Loss Association of America
www.hearingloss.org
6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320
Rockville, MD 20852
phone: (301)657-2248

16 Nov Meeting 10:00 AM To Noon—on Zoom**Changing our Hearing Loss Goals**

If we aren't satisfied with how we (or others) are handling our hearing loss, it might be time for a close look at our hearing loss journey. By reevaluating our beliefs, practices and even self-view, we may discover fresh goals that can improve our communication with the people in our lives and the world around us. Join Gael Hannan for a compassionate exploration of how we can up our hearing loss game.



Gael Hannan is a renowned advocate, writer and speaker on hearing loss issues. She is the author of two books: *The Way I Hear It* and *Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss*, written with Shari Eberts. Her dynamic presentations and performances that illuminate the life with hearing loss have earned her a passionate international following. Gael lives on Vancouver Island with Doug, the "Hearing Husband".



The HLAA ABQ Chapter could use some help to resume hybrid meetings (for example, with hospitality), as well as some new blood. You already know our dedication to providing the best information, advocacy, education and support for people with hearing loss. 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.

JLab's Hear over-the-counter hearing aids use Bluetooth 5.3, suggesting potential Auracast compatibility. Cochlear's Nucleus 8 processor, introduced in November 2022, is Auracast-capable pending a software update. Windows 11 is Auracast capable.

Because it can be accessed using a personal smartphone or earbuds that cost only a fraction of the cost for hearing aids, it's expected that Auracast will find its way into applications where hearing loops are impractical or impossible, such as sports stadiums, and be the system offered at conventions and other such gatherings. It will make communication access available not just to people with hearing loss, but also to the general public. It will be installed to run along with hearing loops in theaters, places of worship and other currently "looped" venues.

Auracast is set to improve audio accessibility for both those with hearing loss and the general public. While it may take years to fully replace older systems, adoption will be quicker in new or upgraded venues. As affordable options like AURI

emerge, Auracast is expected to rapidly grow in use, meeting ADA requirements and become a key assistive listening technology for all.

This writer has found through experience that, when shopping for Auracast-enabled devices, many salespeople in stores are not familiar with the technology. It's best to research online before purchasing in a store or online. Many can be ordered directly from the manufacturer, and sources such as Amazon or Walmart offer them on their websites. Just go to Amazon and search for "Auracast" to see the growing variety they offer. I now own two sets of Auracast earbuds, several transceivers and a dongle that will both receive and broadcast using Auracast, and I am awaiting the delivery of an Auracast remote loudspeaker.

For anyone considering investing in new hearing aids, it would be prudent to confirm that the new devices are either Auracast-ready or Auracast-capable before making the purchase. This will ensure you're able to access this new technology as more TVs join Samsung and venues install Auri as their only assistive listening system.

Report on HLAA Conference

Dr. Norm Dawson, Albuquerque Chapter

Overview

The HLAA convention showcased a deep dedication to serving people with hearing loss. This time, I felt a greater emphasis on personal stories from individuals and families, compared to 15 years ago. I saw the challenges faced by individuals, family members, friends, and children.

Leadership and Chapter Development

The leadership conference stressed the importance of fostering strong chapters, building personal connections, and instilling confidence in members. HLAA's new organizational structure supports this through various online resources, including e-newsletters, blogs, Facebook groups and an upcoming website with a chapter portal for managing forms and other needs.

Outreach and Community Engagement

Outreach was a major theme. They want to let communities know that chapters are meeting again post-COVID. They suggested using libraries and possibly hiring a professional to spread the word. Sue Miller spoke about chapter coordinators who meet three times a year as advisors via Zoom and have an annual appreciation dinner. There's a call to involve professionals, reach children who might be "falling through the cracks," and send HLAA magazines to libraries and senior residences.

Resources and Accessibility

HLAA aims to be a welcoming space for individuals with hearing loss and their families without requiring payment. The organization offers sample letters for professional advisory committees and encourages chapters to set up demonstration centers with various assistive devices.

Growth and Conferences

Growth through state conferences was discussed, with ideas such as hosting mini-conferences to socialize. Key considerations include finding looped facilities, identifying engaging speakers and promoting these events (noting that marketing is often the most challenging part). A proposed structure included a \$35 fee per attendee, covering coffee, snacks, and lunch from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Fundraising

Marilyn DiGiacobbe and Ronnie Adler highlighted the need for fundraising efforts to support scholarships and outreach programs, and attract new members.

Captioning and Advocacy

Captioning is a significant issue for HLAA members. They advocate for better access, including for hearing aids to be covered by Medicare as part of the Build Back Better Act. Hearing aids are not fully covered now due to historical limitations from the 1965 Catastrophic Act, which did not foresee the longevity of people with hearing loss.

Efforts are also being made to push for the inclusion of T-Coils and Bluetooth in hearing devices, emphasizing that hearing loss is a lifestyle issue.

Air Travel and Disability Advocacy

A significant initiative involves advocating for the rights of individuals with hearing loss when traveling. Efforts include:

- *A bill of rights for air travelers*

Encouraging self-identification to TSA and flight crews

A new amendment to the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) is expected by 2025 to improve in-flight accessibility for individuals with hearing loss.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative is being promoted as a tool to indicate a need for extra assistance or understanding in public spaces. We have the Sunflower initiative in Albuquerque.

- *Tools and Feedback*

Google Maps is encouraged as a platform for members to write reviews about the availability of hearing loops and captioning at venues. Chapters are also urged to create surveys to gather feedback from members about accessibility issues, noting that 70% of people with hearing loss avoid events that lack loops or captioning.

- *Assistive Devices and Cybersecurity*

Various assistive devices were displayed by vendors at the convention, showcasing the latest technologies. Additionally, cybersecurity was addressed, with a recommendation to use AARP's fraud hotline for concerns.

Auracast was covered in great detail, and Steve Frasier did a great job in a recent missive.

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

Are Earplugs an Assistive Listening System?

Last month I suggested that you call ahead when you plan to attend a performance or conference at a new place and find out what their assistive listening system is and how you will access it. *Notice* I did not say IF they have a system! To be ADA-compliant they **MUST** have one that communicates directly with your telecoil. Hopefully it's a hearing loop, but you can use a neckloop with either an FM or infrared system. Recently I attended a rodeo in a large indoor arena. I asked for their ALS and was offered a pair of earplugs. No, earplugs are not an ALS, but it was so loud in the arena, they actually helped with comprehension! Nevertheless, that venue is out of ADA compliance. Unfortunately, I can't file a formal complaint because I don't have hearing loss (yet). But all my friends who use hearing devices can complain and should!



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 HLAABq NPO number for Smith's is **NC419**.

Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.

Platinum \$400+

Ginevra Ralph
 Jim Twohig
 Donald Thurn
 Adelaide Zabriskie

**In memory of Karen
 Twohig:
 Bridget & Raymond
 Lewellyn
 Greg & Margaret Larson
 Jim Twohig**

Gold \$200 - \$399

Rosalin Cohen
 John Simmons

Silver \$100 - \$199

Barbara Armstrong
 Gloria Inlow
 Mike Langner
 Michael Lieberman

Bronze \$50 - \$99

Barbara Fix
 Patricia Gonzáles
 Kim Granzow
 Bette Jean Ingui
 Don Johnson
 James & Sharen Koch
 Fran Neil
 Yukie Ebara Pfeuffer
 Rod & Roberta
 Rodríguez

Marge Weitzel

Friends - up to \$49

Gail S. Anastasio
 Geraldine Boden
 Margie Collins
 Norm Dawson
 Don Degasperi
 Elisabeth Endean
 Shirley Furen
 Andrew “Bo”
 Gamboa
 Rita Garcia
 Roy & Helen Johnson
 Richard Johnson
 Ralph & Barbara
 Kaplan
 Richard & Pushpa
 Knottenbelt

Dirk & Arlene
 Knowles
 Victoria L. Magown
 Deanna & Bob
 McMain
 Barbara Pierce
 Mary J. Raje
 Lindasue Romero
 Mara Saubers
 Carol Sliney
 Harriet S. Smith
 Tan Va
 Richard Tuschhoff

Special

Smith’s
 Community
 Rewards

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 by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes 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: HLAABq 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

