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AT THE LIBRARY: A NEW WAY TO HEAR

The Southeast Steuben County Library is now In the Loop. With the installation of a Hearing Loop system at its Circulation Desk, the library has become the first in our area to offer people with hearing aids or cochlear implants the ability to make library transactions and have their questions answered without interference from background noises, and without having to request a special receiver.

Hearing loop systems use induction technology to excite tiny telecoils inside most hearing aids and virtually all cochlear implants. Sound that is picked up by a microphone at the Circulation Desk is transmitted directly into the listener's ears.

To use a hearing loop, one flips the telecoil switch on the hearing aid or cochlear implant. No additional receiver or equipment is needed. Hearing quality is enhanced automatically by the hearing aid or implant, which has been adjusted to suit individual needs.

"Inductive hearing loops have become the preferred type of assistive listening system, and we are delighted that we can now provide better access to library services for those with hearing loss" said Library Director Pauline Emery.

Hearing loops for two-way conversations – like the one at the Circulation Desk - will be installed in the Reference Department and Children's Department within the next couple of weeks," Emery said. In April, a larger Hearing Loop system will be installed in the Laura Beer Community Room, the library's main public meeting room.

Loop systems are just one class of Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). Other classes of ALDs include FM systems and infrared systems. With inductive hearing loops, those with T-coil

(telecoil) equipped hearing aids do not have to wear anything extra in order to connect to, and use, a loop.

“For many years we have had an FM Assistive Listening Device for use in our meeting rooms, but like most of these systems installed elsewhere, it rarely gets used,” said Assistant Library Director Brad Turner. “The trouble with most FM or infrared systems is that people have to request a receiver to make them work, and few are willing to do so. You’ll see a special sign at the Circulation Desk letting you know that you are in the loop.”

Hearing Loops at the Southeast Steuben County Library are made possible through donations by library users, a generous donation from the Quota Club of Bath and through the encouragement and financial support of library volunteer and hearing loop advocate Suzanne Jeffrey, who also serves on the Southern Tier Library System’s Outreach Board. Installation of the Hearing Loop in the Community Room will be made possible, in part, with New York State Construction Aid for Libraries.



Photo caption: Circulation Department supervisor Marcia Stewart looks on as Ryan Enoch of Southern Tier Sight and Sound installs a Hearing Loop at the Southeast Steuben County Library.