
THORBURN ASSOCIATES INC.
Acoustic and Technology Consultants
Newsletter

Summer 1992

Welcome to the first edition of this newsletter. Our goal is to inform architects and others in the design community about new and innovative acoustical and audiovisual products and techniques that will help improve the acoustical environment. We hope you find this information useful.

Acoustics and ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has stirred up much controversy over the past year. This article will provide some practical guidelines for the public accommodations portion of these requirements. The new ADA hearing assistance requirements are not really new for Californians since the 1988 UBC, with the California Title 24 Amendment, has required hearing assistance systems.

The following summaries should help unravel the confusion surrounding these requirements.

Title 24 Section 611 (f) requires:

* Assembly areas with permanently installed public address systems provide assistive listening systems for people with hearing impairments.

* Exceptions: 1. This does not apply to systems used exclusively for paging, or background music, or a combination of these two uses. 2. Public and private schools are exempt from the requirements of this section.

The number of personal receivers required is based upon the capacity of the assembly area as follows:

Capacity	# receivers
1 to 99	0
100 to 200	8
201 to 300	12
301 to 400	16
401 to 500	20
over 500	20 + 1 for each additional 100 seats

ADA Section III-7.5180 Assembly Areas requires:

- Fixed seating assembly areas that accommodate 50 or more people OR have audio-amplification systems must have a permanently installed assistive learning system.
- Other assembly areas (not covered in above) must have a permanent system OR an adequate number of electrical outlets or other wiring to support a portable system.
- A special sign indicating the availability of the system is required.
- The minimum number of receivers must be equal to 4% of the total number of seats, but never less than two.



Because facilities will always be required to implement the "strictest" of the two codes we recommend the following as a guideline when designing audio-amplification requirements:

Capacity	# receivers
1 to 49	2
50 to 74	3
75 to 99	4
100 to 200	8
201 to 300	12
301 to 400	16
401 to 500	20
over 500	20 + 1 for each additional 100 seats

The bottom line, as put by the America Speech-Language-Hearings Association's response to the ADA was

"Ask people about their needs, show respect and sensitivity, use what works (not necessarily what is most expensive), and use your resources creatively and effectively."

From a design perspective, any time an audio system that is used for speech reinforcement or audio playback is part of your contract documents, an assistive listening system should be part of the design.

New Acoustical Product at AIA National Convention '92!

While attending the recent AIA '92 National Convention in Boston we took the opportunity to search the trade floor for new building materials with acoustical benefits. The following summarizes our finds:

Among the more promising displays were acoustical wall and finish materials that would provide a durable interior finish while helping solve acoustical concerns. Pyrok Inc. introduced a new acoustical wall and ceiling finish material that can be sprayed onto a ceiling, wall or open plenum. This new product will allow interior designs developed around open ceiling grids, or exposed ducts and beams, to have a cost effective acoustical treatment. The spray on material is relatively smooth when finished, has appearance of a concealed spine acoustical tile material, and can be installed for approximately the same price. One advantage of the Pyrok material is that it is pigmented thus eliminating visible flaking. A second advantage is the ability for freeform coverage of surfaces and constructions without the visible seams common of concealed spline materials. There is also a fire proof version available at a higher price.

Laticrete International, a manufacturer of a thin and thick set tile mortar system, was showing their new product systems. For a long time they have had a thin set mortar system that reduces fort-fall noise and other impact noise when compared to standard mortar systems.

Fabric & Architecture Magazine was giving away free issues. This magazine is a good source for fabric finish ideas. This magazine is a good source for fabric finish ideas. Fabric finishes, drapes, etc. are excellent acoustical finish materials. Fabri finishes allow the interior designer to develop a finish system which they feel meets the aesthetic design requirements for the project. At the same time, the light weight nature of the material allows the acoustical consultant to develop the acoustical room finish requirements in a cost effective manner with out infringing on the design requirements.



Porcelain Enamel Institute was displaying a product that would make a very durable wall finish material for "think tanks" and other rooms where the client wants "white boards" for walls. The disadvantage of the material is that it is a very hard, acoustically reflective surface, and may cause problems if the other room finishes are not carefully selected.

The AIA '93 Convention will be held in Chicago. Hope to see you there! IF you would like to find out more about these products, please contact us.

From the Editors

As you may know, Thorburn Associates is a newly formed acoustical and audiovisual consulting firm. It is our goal for this newsletter to provide a forum of discussion for topics of interest to those in the built environment. If you have recommendations on how to make this more useful to you, or have topics you would like discussed, please let us know. Comments and suggestions can be mailed to PO Box 20399, CA 94546 or FAXED to (510) 886-7828.

Sincerely, Lisa and Steve Thorburn

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