

Vol. 54 No. 5

May 19, 2008

SOUND

COMMUNICATIONS

SINCE 1955

AV FOR SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS, CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS



Kit Beckmann Photography, Los Angeles, CA

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS

**USC's McKibben Hall's AV
extends education's reach.**

BY DAWN ALLCOT

By now, most AV industry pros are familiar with the capabilities of, and technology behind, distance learning. For many integrators, the primary challenge behind projects in this field is educating the customer and the end user (who are not always the same person, incidentally) about the best ways to take advantage of this cutting-edge technology without losing the personal touch that is so important in a classroom environment. Or, as Michael Pratt of Los Angeles CA-based Hoffman Video put it, "The technology shouldn't get in the way of the material itself."

Pratt is pleased to report that nearly 95% of all instructors in McKibben Hall, part of the University of South-

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**McKibben Hall is part of
the Los Angeles-based
University of Southern
California's Keck School
of Medicine.**



One of the 14 multi-disciplinary laboratories (MDLs).

ern California's (USC) Keck School of Medicine, have been receptive to the new AV and distance learning technology installed in the facility's four lecture halls and 14 multi-disciplinary laboratories (MDLs). With up to 75 different professors using the rooms throughout the semester, a 95% acceptance rate is a huge success, according to Pratt.

Full Renovation

The installation, part of a full renovation of the Keck School of Medicine, located on the Health Sciences campus in Los Angeles, satisfies USC's Distance Learning Mandate, which calls for "the implementation of technology which supports distance learning and collaborative environments serving students beyond the physical campus," according to the installer.

The school is using the new technology for off-campus instruction, which

permits USC to offer the Keck School experience and curriculum to students who don't live near the school or don't want to commute to the campus.

As USC enrollment increased, the school faced an important decision: Should it add buildings to accommodate the larger student body, or use technology to reach out beyond the school's physical walls? Pratt said, "They decided to upgrade their technology and reach out to folks willing to pay for the USC instruction who don't necessarily want to come to California. The distance learning technology attracts people who don't want to live in LA, but want an education from USC."

The Keck School also uses the technology to reach out to hospitals near and far. Top doctors in locales ranging from the UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Medical Center to Asia work as intermediate instructors.

"The technology allows [the staff] to reach out to areas they couldn't before," Pratt said. "They're using the system to their advantage."

Lecture Halls Of The Future

The lecture hall AV systems, which are standardized across all four of the lecture halls, include dual-screen displays, integrated control systems and a "smart instructor's lectern/podium," with a Crestron touchpanel that gives the instructor easy control over the presentation systems during lectures. The podium contains a WolfVision VZ-8plus portable Visualizer and Sony VCR/DVD player/recorder for multimedia presentations.

The systems in the room also incorporate traditional teaching tools, such as a whiteboard and writing tablet, so

the instructor can make notes on top of a PowerPoint presentation. The instructor can connect his laptop to the systems for presentations.

One of the primary needs outlined by the client was that the systems be user-friendly and intuitive. The Crestron control panel on the podium makes it easy for any instructor to come in and set up a simple presentation. Extron equipment handles switching duties.

During distance learning applications, an operator sits in a control booth in the back of the room, per-

mitting the instructor to focus his attention on teaching, rather than using the technology. Pratt cited the control systems, and the control booth, as one of the highlights of the project. "The Crestron PRO2 control system went a long way toward making the system work properly," he said.

A Crestron touchpanel, along with 15-inch ViewSonic LCD monitors, allows the operator to control all distance learning and videoconferencing functions from the control booth.

Extron products were selected for

audio and video switching. Each room uses a CrossPoint 300 128 HVA matrix switcher, an MAV Plus 88 SVA S-Video 8X8 matrix switcher for routing video and stereo audio, and two Extron RGB 109xi computer-video interfaces with Advanced Digital Sync Processing. The ADSP technology conditions sync signals for reliable operation with a variety of signal sources and display types; which makes it suitable for the wide range of sources used in the lecture hall.

The distance learning systems include a Tandberg 6000MXP Codec video system for digital transmission of all the signals, offering near-end to far-end videoconferencing with a videoconferencing feed going out across the network to one or multiple remote sites or classrooms across the USC campus. The MDLs are set up to receive a live or recorded feed from the lecture halls, as well.

A Sonic Foundry Mediasite RL440 rich media recorder permits the school to provide streaming video of lectures at a later date or for digital archiving. Processing is accomplished through a MediaMatrix by Peavey S-Frame 88 digital audio processor. The processors reside in a lower-level control room, and the MDLs can receive a feed from that location.

Image Capture

Image capture for videoconferencing is accomplished through two Vad-dio Sony BRC-300 cameras controlled by Crestron C2N-CAMIDJ digital joystick camera controllers located in the control booth at the back of the room. The cameras are mounted in the left and right back corners.

The presentation systems include two Epson EMP-8300NL PowerLite 8300i multimedia projectors, which project onto Stewart Filmscreen 120-inch tensioned screens on the front wall of the room, flanking the podium.

The lecture halls had no outside windows, so ambient light was not an issue for the installer. However, tiered ceiling in two of the theater-style, 75-seat lecture halls did create line-of-sight challenges. "The ceiling in the



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