



Crestron DigitalMedia™ Technology Helps Make Ostrander Auditorium Renovation a Big Success with Students and Administrators

Background

Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale have all spoken here. But thoughts of enticing other dignitaries and world leaders to the campus had nothing to do with the major renovation undertaken by Minnesota State University (MSU) for its famed Ostrander Auditorium. The major motivation for the floor to ceiling overhaul? The students.

In addition to lectures and presentations, film series, theater events and a mix of other activities, the multi-use hall also

hosts large admissions and orientation events for new and prospective students. “This auditorium is the first space our new students experience when they come to our campus,” explains CSU Operations Director, Scott Hagebak.

Built in 1972, the 350-seat auditorium located in the bustling Centennial Student Union (CSU) building, had steadily fallen into disrepair. Its disparate audio/video technology, lighting and HVAC systems were outdated, unreliable and inefficient.

Ostrander was stripped down and almost entirely rebuilt. New walls, seats, a beautiful stage, and state-of-the-art technology – including all lighting, sound system and AV presentation and conferencing systems - were installed.



The Solution

The objectives, as identified by Hagebak and CSU Director, Laurie Woodward during detailed discussions with AV consultants Shen Milsom & Wilke, were simple and straightforward:

- > The university receives guests from across the globe, so the new system had to accommodate a wide variety of presentations and users.
- > Ostrander utilizes both highly experienced and entry level student staff, therefore the system had to be easy to use, with the ability to set up presentations, seminars, shows and other events with consistent quickness.
- > Thirdly, due to the large variety of events, the system needed to simplify complex routing and signal processing requirements.

MSU retained Shen Milsom & Wilke to develop, design and manage the implementation of completely integrated AV technology systems, sound system and lighting control. Video Services, Inc. (VSI) was brought in to handle systems integration, and Advanced Control Systems Design, Inc.

(ACSDI), was recruited to customize presets on the Crestron touchpanels.

“This hall is nearly 40 years old and was overdue for a major facelift,” says Shen Milsom & Wilke project manager, David Peterson. “Several technology systems had been installed over the years, and sorely needed to be updated.”

To create a solid foundation from the start, Crestron DigitalMedia™ was installed as the single-platform solution to distribute, control and manage the array of multimedia technology. DigitalMedia is the only solution that seamlessly handles true high definition signal routing, switching, and long distance distribution of all digital and analog audio/video sources.

“We recommended the DigitalMedia solution,” explained Peterson. “DM helped us establish the digital media distribution throughout the hall. Plus, the Crestron control system helped us create the event recall functionality and an intuitive presentation interface.”

Systems at a Glance

A DM-MD8X8 DigitalMedia Switcher distributes uncompressed digital video and audio signals over a single wire, flawlessly manages all digital and analog signals and devices, providing Ostrander with unlimited multimedia versatility. Allowing virtually any mix of AV sources to be distributed throughout the auditorium from a centralized location, it matches each source's output to each display's capabilities without using scaling or compression, preserving every signal in its native video resolution and audio format.

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Laurie Woodward, CSU Director

The result is pure, lossless distribution of HDMI and all other signals including VGA computer inputs, Blu-ray/DVD players, S-VHS player, streaming Internet media, document camera and more. This flexibility enables Ostrander to deliver the highest

audio and HD video quality for every event, while also keeping its legacy analog devices, including a large VHS media library.

Hagebak and Woodward also wanted added critical functionality to ensure decades of diverse use and scalability – and maximum ROI - such as simple configuration and setup control, presets for recurring venues/events, a simplified infrastructure to allow both simple and sophisticated input/output scenarios, and an advanced control system to mirror campus standards.

“We chose Crestron for Ostrander because it's our campus-wide automation standard. We use Crestron in classrooms, meeting rooms and auditoriums across campus, with great success,” explains Woodward.

“Crestron control technology allows the CSU to reduce the amount of staff necessary to support this auditorium by successfully marrying several disparate systems, and made it transparent to end users and technicians,” says VSI President, Terry Dahl. “The system can now be easily operated by staff, clients and faculty, with very minimal training.”

How the System Works

As a result of in-depth interviews between Shen Milsom & Wilke's Peterson, Hagebak and Woodward at the beginning



of the process, system operation had to embrace flexibility, consistent ease-of-use for all user levels, and the robustness to seamlessly deliver complex AV routing configurations.

TPS-6X and TPS-4000 touchpanels provide intuitive touchscreen control of every AV device, including source selection, projectors and screens, confidence monitors, a DSP, and lighting control presets.

The touchpanel GUI gives users a choice to access either the “auto” or “manual” platform mode. The manual platform is designed for sophisticated users and advanced technical staff, and is password protected to avoid unauthorized system changes. This mode allows finely-tuned configuration of system components to fit specific requirements for larger events.

“Auto” platform gives users a choice to select an input location. For example, pressing the “Stage Left” button automatically routes the inputs for this location to the appropriate outputs. With a button press on the touchscreen, audio can be routed to an auto mixer, which produces preset sound mixes, or to the 32-channel digital mixing console for more complex scenarios.

Source selection, device controls, volume levels and room variables can all be adjusted with a finger tap from the media cart touchpanel. A control room touchpanel is mirrored, so a technician can assist the user if needed.

“It was important that users had the ability to setup and configure the main room quickly and with adaptability, depending on the event,” says Palmer Harbison, lead programmer at ACSDI. Now, users have quick access to easy-to-understand command menus and one-touch presets for several modes, including “Lecture”, “Film”, “Theatrical” and “Audio

Conferencing”. Activating AV and lighting presets for the appropriate event is now a cinch with a few button touches.

Benefits and Results

According to Hagebak, Crestron support also played an important role. “As is sometimes the case with a project of this size, especially one that’s on the front edge of technology, challenges can arise,” he explained. “Crestron was very responsive in providing technical support, including bringing in engineers from Chicago to help our team work through configuration issues.”

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Scott Hagebak, CSU Operations Director

“We are very pleased with the final product we now have in place,” said Hagebak. “We’re not only state-of-the-art, but the system has been well designed to allow it to grow and change as technology continues to change.”

“We renovated a 40-year old facility with all new technology and lighting systems. Crestron ties the whole system together and makes it easy for our student staff and customers to use,” adds Woodward. “Our new facility, with its state-of-the-art technology, also helps us make a good impression on our new students and their parents.”

