

# Genetic Engineering

## The Hunter College Videoconferencing Center Spearheads Research, Collaboration

by Alicia Zappier

NEW YORK, NY—It's been nearly three years since Dr. Robert Dottin, Ph.D., submitted a proposal to the National Institutes of Health requesting the installation of videoconferencing equipment at his workplace. Dottin is a biology professor at New York City's Hunter College and also the director of the Center for the Study of Gene Structure & Function.

A few months ago, his request was completed when the school's Distance Research & Learning Facility was reborn with a new videoconferencing system that promotes real-time collaboration experimentation and teaching projects within the global gene research community. Now, scientists can exchange and study detailed information with high visual and audio quality and real-time connectivity.

The new facility was designed by the Walters-Storyk Design Group, which worked closely with Dottin as well as the center's facility manager, Carlos Lijeron, and project manager, Ed Pearlmutter. The school had a number of specific requirements, including the draining of peripheral noise that can often disrupt a videoconferencing session. Because of



The Center for the Study of Gene Structure & Function at Hunter College was redesigned with a new videoconferencing system to enable realtime collaboration

signed by WSDG. Each desk seats two students and includes computer, phone, and AV connectivity. The desks can be configured into various shapes, including the horseshoe-shaped table popular with many of today's conference rooms.

Dottin said the center's Internet2 connection is an integral part of the upgrade. Because of its high bandwidth capabilities, it enables students to gather information and analyze data much more expeditiously than before.

"Hunter College paid a fee required to join the consortium."

Dottin has been teaching at Hunter College for close to 20 years. The Gene Center conducts research in the areas of biology, chemistry, physics, and more. "We study how genes work, but because Hunter is a teaching institution as well, we offer a nice balance between scientific research and teaching," Dottin explained.

Before the center was renovated, its two rooms had limited technology for special applications. To fund the project, Hunter College was

mation is transmitted and shared.

"The system is really flexible. We can collaborate with students and teachers from different parts of the world—and even from home, students can access presentations via the internet," Dottin said.

In addition to the Gene Center's two main rooms, WSDG also designed a mobile videoconferencing unit, which provides full AV and internet connectivity to individual labs within the facility. The studio can monitor real-time experiments ranging from behavioral studies of live lab mice to collaborative microscopy, and transmit live coverage to research institutions and universities participating in the Internet2 network.

"It's a cart with all the elements of the studio, but miniaturized. We can even connect microscopes to it and collaborate with a colleague in real time in another country," Dottin said. "Students are learning more actively and becoming more involved in collaboration. That means they're more likely to understand and retain information and project new ideas."

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[www.extron.com](http://www.extron.com)

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the school's urban location, street noise needed to be highly regarded.

"A major factor with videoconferencing is background noise. Because we're close to the street, we don't want to hear sirens and traffic," said Dottin. "So the room had to be designed in such a way to block that out." WSDG assembled a sound curtain in the center's two rooms to combat these outside audio interruptions.

The center totals 1,100 square feet of space on the third floor of the school's 69th Street campus. It includes advanced AV gear such as TANDBERG 990 MXP videoconferencing units and Internet2 connection, as well as Sony HD plasma displays. A Crestron lsys touchpanel controls the facility's overall AV functionality and can shut blinds, dim lights, and turn microphones on and off. Additional equipment includes Extron switchers, Shure microphones, and Mitsubishi projectors.

One of the rooms is used primarily for observation, while the other serves as the main research room. The research room houses eight "smart desks" that were also de-

Internet2 is not available to the general public; it's a consortium of universities that work with the government to enable and deploy advanced network applications and technologies for research. "You need a special fiber optic connection in your building," Dottin noted.

the project, Hunter College was awarded a grant by the National Institutes of Health. But the school also had to raise money from the taxpayers. The work paid off, as the upgrade has radically improved teaching and research methods at Hunter, particularly in the way infor-

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## Raising The Volume

HARROGATE, ENGLAND—Ministry of Sound has chosen the town of Harrogate for its first new bar concept, setting the stage for its planned inauguration of a major bar chain across Britain by moving into Harrogate's original bathhouse. The 700-capacity venue, under the stewardship of general manager Andy Dempster, will include a Jacuzzi, hanging chairs, VIP areas, touch-screen computers replacing waiters, and a sound system courtesy of Martin Audio.

The Ministry of Sound's relationship with Martin Audio has been growing since it first put a 5.1 DJ monitor system into the original Ministry at the Elephant & Castle five years ago. Since then, MoS's Dave Bradshaw and his technical team have rarely missed an opportunity to upgrade to the range of Blackline, Contractor, and Wavefront line array

products. DJs love Martin Audio's Blackline series for reference monitoring, so it was natural that Bradshaw would choose this high-powered series when specifying the system for Harrogate.

In the corners of the main dance floor, the Ministry has flown four Blackline F15s, reinforced by four S218 subs with a pair of F12 monitors. The main bar contains a total of eight F12s and two S218s, and a pair of F8s provide the DJ reference sound at the booth.

There are 11 F8s performing infill duties throughout the high-profile areas, while downstairs in the Kandi Bar, replete with giant leather beds, six F8s and two S15 subwoofers provide sound reinforcement. The VIP rooms (which offer local control) include 20 of Martin Audio's C115 Contractor series, sup-



*Ministry of Sound has chosen the town of Harrogate for its first new bar concept, which includes luxurious accommodations and a sound system courtesy of Martin Audio.*

ported by five CS256 subs.  
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