

## Harpo Studios Chicago, Illinois

Dawn Schuette as Senior Consultant/Principal for Kirkegaard Associates

Harpo Studios began as a odd collection of buildings in Chicago's West Loop that has been transformed over the years into the production facility and headquarters of one of the country's best known talk shows, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

The buildings were purchased and quickly converted into a working studio after Oprah's nearly instant success in entering the Chicago market. As time has progressed, upgrades to the facility were needed to create state-of-the-art facilities for live broadcast, live recording, and pre- and post-production associated with the show.

Acoustic work has been performed over the last eight years to upgrade areas of the complex. Work began with a total renovation of the production suite for the main studio. Controlling the often chaotic environment of the production room and isolating activities from each other during production were primary objectives. Other improvements included the addition of a new voice-over isolation booth and revised HVAC systems to provide quiet background noise levels.

New edit suites for pre- and post-production work were later additions to the complex, with emphasis on isolation between conflicting activities within tight space constraints. This project enhanced interaction among staff members within an environment



that must also provide privacy for focused work.

An evaluation of acoustics within the main studio led to recommendations for improving open mic recording acoustics and ease of communication within the space.

*Client:* Harpo Studios  
*Architect:* Nagle Hartray Danker Kagan  
 McKay Penney Architects  
*Acoustics Consultant:* Kirkegaard Associates

