

Seating as a Path-Finding Solution

Ecoglo has supported the competitive advantage of a facility that prides itself on its flexibility and customer service, by working closely with a seating manufacturer to provide the perfect path-finding solution.

The Northern Illinois University Convocation Center is a new facility that cuts a dashing image on the campus skyline. This multi-purpose 10,000-seat center features a large sports arena with multiple practice areas also under cover. The main arena floor is below ground and has a basketball court surrounded by retractable seating for 6,800. The room also has an upper concourse that includes a six-lane running track over which further retractable seating can be rolled out for major events. In fact only the back four rows of the bowl are concrete.

This flexible layout enables the facility to be used for everything from sports events to large seated dinners to major performances, sports-themed banquets, and trade shows. The upper level is made up of north and south lobbies and has an area offering further conference facilities.

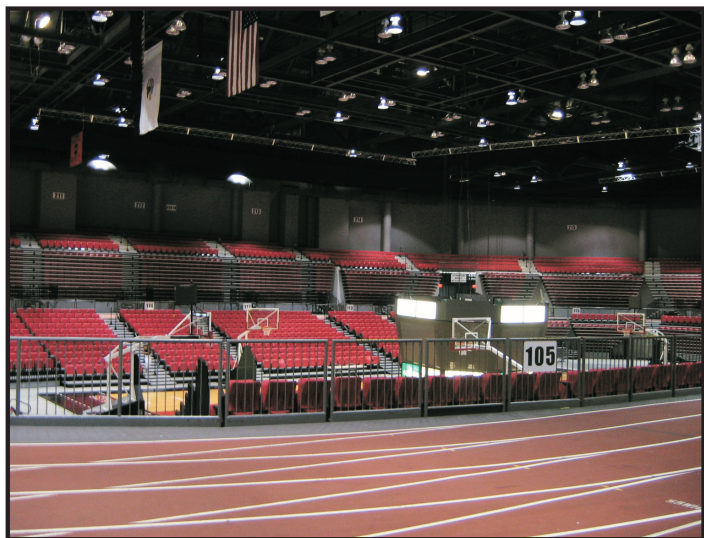
The center was the fourth new facility that Associate Director of Facilities Services, Mick Norwood, had opened, and he had a seasoned eye for a good path-finding solution.

Mick was familiar with the costs and maintenance hassles of electrical lighting, which would not have been suitable for the retractable form of seating being used at the center. He had seen Ecoglo at several IAAM conferences and, when a path-finding solution was needed for the NIU Convocation Center, he decided to give Ecoglo a try.

Before deciding to go with Ecoglo, he visited other facilities nearby who used it and became certain that the pale green photo-luminescent glow given off by eEcoglo would meet his needs perfectly.

This decision was sealed when Ecoglo offered to work closely with seating provider, The Folding Bleacher Company, in the seating manufacture. Folding Bleacher manufactured extruded aluminium risers to fit Ecoglo's patented path-finding system combined with a non-slip strip.

In effect, Ecoglo's approach to manufacturing enabled the seating system to be manufactured as path-finding devices in its own right. Mr Norwood says the competitive advantage added by Ecoglo was its flexibility as a path-finding solution,



This multi-purpose 10,000-seat center features a large sports arena with multiple practice areas also under cover. The main arena floor is below ground and has a basketball court surrounded by retractable seating for 6,800. The room also has an upper concourse that includes a six-lane running track over which further retractable seating can be rolled out for major events.



Ecoglo's approach to manufacturing enabled the seating system to be manufactured as path-finding devices in its own right at the Northern Illinois University Convocation Center.

and its ability to support the design constraints imposed by the center's retractable seating arrangement.

"The number one complaint from performers and their crews is being unable to kill the aisle lights when they are not being used. With Ecoglo, performers look out and can't see the path-finding lights."

Those performers include Bill Cosby, who was the opening night act playing to an elderly and trip-conscious audience. Norwood says the crowd was late and the show opened ten minutes later than scheduled. "Here was an older crowd in a hurry and not one trip or fall occurred despite the arena being dark."

"The aisle numbers installed as part of the path finding solution meant that the ushers ended the night with fresh batteries!"

Other performers have included the Rolling Stones, the Grease musical, Phantom of the Opera, and Andrea Bocelli.

"With Ecoglo, we know that when performers come here, the path finding lighting is going to be a non-issue. That makes them more inclined to book our venue above another up the road that can't offer that flexibility," Mr Norwood says.

As a building manager, Mr Norwood is occupied with the ongoing costs associated with path-finding - traditional electrical lighting includes the cost of bulb replacement, the costs of transformers, and the cost of the electricity itself.

"Ecoglo is maintenance free - it's just part of our seating. We can easily blend the cleaning of the Ecoglo strips into our ongoing cleaning work - all we need to do is wipe the steps in the seating risers," he says.

The other major facility management issue rendered by Ecoglo into a non-issue was slip and fall. No matter what the event or the audience, Ecoglo guides patrons to their seats with confidence, offering an extra dimension in combination with the slip-free surface.

Mr Norwood appreciates that Ecoglo fits the futuristic design of the center. "It looks like it's supposed to be there - it's not just an add-on."

He is experimenting with using Ecoglo for sign writing and extruding Ecoglo into the center's handrail system.

"It's helped us to make our presence felt in leaps and bounds," he says.