

Getting Started with Audiobooks With Brandy Thomas

UPPAA Spring Conference 2023

Brandy@ThomasEditing.com
www.ThomasEditing.com

Why Audiobooks?

- Fastest-growing book market in the world.
- As of March 2022, 9% of all book sales in the United States are attributed to the audiobook format.
- The U.S. is the world's largest market for audiobooks, estimated to be worth up to \$1.87 billion in 2021.
- Revenue from audiobooks is expected to grow 26.4% every year from 2022 to 2030 and reach \$35.05 billion in 2030.
- Fiction audiobooks are the biggest category in this format, accounting for over 65% of all audiobook sales.

How do I know if my book is ready to be an audiobook?

- Do you have a finished book?
 - This means edited, proofread, and if not published, in the final steps before publishing.
- Do you have the audio rights?
- Is it a picture book?
- Children's books are often a slightly different process
 - Picture books don't make good audiobooks.

The Basic Process

1. Before Recording Starts
2. Choose distribution platform
3. Choose Narrator—Agree on Terms and Contract
4. Record book—15-Minute Sample
5. Edit audio
6. Upload audio files to distribution platform
7. Wait for Quality Control to approve/reject
8. Once approved it should go “live” and for sale

Before Recording Starts

- Who is narrating?
 - Author(s)
 - One narrator or a full cast
- Music?
- Sound Effects?
- Has the print version of your book been published?
- Timeline?
- Budget?

Distribution

- ACX/Audible—Amazon owned
 - ACX-audiobook production and distribution division
- Findaway Voices
 - Works directly with DrafttoDigital
 - Few distribution restrictions
- Lantern Audio
- Author’s Republic
- Kobo Writing Life
- Publish Drive

Production Options

1. Outside Narrator & Audio Engineer
2. Author narrated Outside Engineer
3. Completely Author Produced

Outside Narrator & Audio Engineer

Pros

- Easiest for author
- Voice variety options
- Not much time commitment needed
- Price includes almost everything

Cons

- Can be more expensive than doing it yourself
- Takes time to find the voice and price point that matches your vision and budget

Author Narrated-Outside Engineer

Pros

- You know exactly what your characters are thinking, feeling, and sound like
- Audiences like hearing authors read their own books
- After initial equipment investment cost is lower for future books

Cons

- Need to have some familiarity with recording technology or a willingness to learn
- Need Recording space and equipment
- Takes time to record well
- Must find an audio engineer/editor
- Can be cheaper than having an outside narrator but not always

Completely Author Produced

Pros

- Least expensive(potentially)
- After initial equipment investment cost is lower for future books
- You are in control of the whole sound

Cons

- You are in control of the whole sound
- Need to know, or being willing to learn audio recording and editing
- Access to recording and editing equipment
- Cost of recording equipment/editing software, or rental time
- Takes the most time

What Does a Narrator Need?

- A copy of the book-digital preferred
- Opening and Closing Credits(the metadata)
- Chapter Titles-preferred format
- Which sections of the book are going to be included
 - About the author
 - Acknowledgements
- The plan for parts that are not easily translated into an audio format
 - Maps
 - Photos/Pictures/Illustrations(and their captions)
 - Websites/URLs
 - Formatting that is part of the story (translations, choose your own adventure etc.)
 - Endnotes, Footnotes, and References

What is Helpful For the Narrator?

- A pronunciation guide
 - Names
 - Places – Regional Pronunciations
 - Fantasy and Science Fiction
 - Any terms that may be out of standard American English pronunciation
- Non-English language pronunciation
- Technical terms
- Notes on any characters with distinct speech patterns or accents
- Notes on any characters whose style of speaking changes throughout the story
- Characters who intentionally mispronounce things
- Anything outside of what is specifically written

Editing

- Makes sure audio files meet distributor audio requirements
- Cuts out extra noises, breathes, outtakes, mistakes
- Makes a list of sections/lines that need to be rerecorded
- Adds, EQ, Compression, limiters, and sound gates as needed
- There is only so much an editor can fix in postproduction
- Uploads finished files
- Some provide a errata document with any text errors

Audio Requirements

- Your submitted audiobook must be narrated by a human
- Be consistent in overall sound and formatting
- Each uploaded file must be free of extraneous sounds such as plosives, mic pops, mouse clicks, excessive mouth noise, and outtakes
- Your audiobook must include opening and closing credits that match the title's cover art
- Be comprised of all mono or all stereo files
- Include a retail audio sample that is between one and five minutes long
- Contain only one chapter/section per file, with the section header read aloud
- Have a running time no longer than 120 minutes(per chapter/section)
- Each file must have no more than 5 seconds of room tone at its beginning and end
- Each file must measure between -23dB and -18dB RMS
- Each file must have peak values no higher than -3dB
- Each file must have a noise floor no higher than -60dB RMS
- Each file must be 192kbps or higher 44.1kHz MP3, Constant Bit Rate (CBR)

What Does it Cost?

Outside Narrator & Producer

- Flat Rate vs Royalty Share
- \$100-\$500 per finished hour
 - Most experienced narrators/producers take between 4-6 hours to produce one finished hour of audio
- Approximately 9,300 words per hour

Author Narrated

- Hiring an audio engineer-\$40+ an hour
- Buying/Renting/Borrowing
 - Recording space
 - Microphone
 - Computer/laptop

Author Produced

- What kind of Gear do I Need?
- Microphone(and accessories)
- DAW-digital audio workstation
 - Audacity-free
 - ProTools
 - Reaper
 - Adobe Audition
- Space to Record
 - Build your own
 - Rent space
- Computer
- External Hard drive