
WRITERS' CORNER

Audiobooks continue to gain strength



Troy Juliar, chief content officer for Recorded Books, pointed to a convergence of consumer, technological, and demographic trends as a likely reason sales of digital audio will continue to grow this year. He stressed that listening to audio is becoming easier thanks to an increasing number of digital outlets for audiobooks in the U.S. and globally, as well as a proliferation of “smart speakers” and other integrated home systems from Google, Amazon, and others.

The audiobook story of the year was—again—the continue dstrong sales growth of the digital audio market.

But, though listening at home is on the rise, the car remains the dominant, preferred place where people consume audiobooks. Michele Cobb, executive director of the Audio Publishers Association, is among those who say that is a

big reason the CD format is still important, even as sales of digital increase rapidly. “Cars last a long time,” she noted. “I rent cars all the time, and they all have CD players.” In addition, Cobb said that technological advances have made producing small runs of CDs cost-effective, keeping the physical product viable.

As sales of audiobooks continue to rise, the industry is also maturing and gaining more attention from consumers. Juliar sees this as a gateway to new opportunities for audiobook companies, including finding ways to differentiate themselves from each other, experimenting with pricing, and pursuing international growth. “In some ways, the audiobook business is becoming less and less rooted in and connected to the overall book business; it is almost a separate thing affected and driven by different trends, and engaging people outside of traditional book channels,” he said.

At HarperAudio, v-p and audiobook publisher Ana Maria Alessi noted a similar trend. “I’m now seeing examples of ‘outlier’ titles where digital audio sales are strong compared to the e-book and print sales,” she said. “That used to be here and there, but it is happening consistently now. This gets us right in the middle of the conversation with authors and their titles. It’s a subtle but important distinction that has emerged over the last 12–18 months.”

This shift has also prompted Alessi to consider the timing of publication and to wonder if simultaneous audio and print publication matters as much as it once did. “We have always been beggars with the print side,” she said. “Now they come to us to ask what’s new and what we can do.”

“Although CDs remain popular, the audio format is shifting to downloadable formats.”

According to Juliar, there will never be a complete separation of audio from the traditional print book world, “but if you look at the audiobook business purely through the lens of the traditional book business, you miss a lot of what is going on in this dynamic world.”

Authors have noticed this new exposure for audio and want to be a part of it. “They articulate their support for audio now,” Alessi said; she sees authors who are more agreeable to going the extra mile to get the word about audiobooks out. “The main job for all of us in publishing is to attract additional readers and listeners for our authors. The success of audio makes everyone very happy.”



“I have decided to increase my target audience by turning all of my publications into e-books. Many of them I will translate into several languages as well.”

Daisy Papp

Innovation is also in the forefront for audio publishers as they work to build awareness and expand the format. Many publishers are trying multivoiced recordings, short-form content, bonus audio-only material added to audiobooks, adaptations of such print formats as graphic novels, and more original content created for audio. HarperAudio has experimented with releases in the vinyl format, and Alessi mentioned “being creative with our marketing” on social media and elsewhere as a way to keep things fresh.

And it appears to be working. “Gwyneth Paltrow’s site Goop recently did an audio roundup, and we are getting more press coverage,” Alessi said. “We have broken through into the everyday.”

To meet the growing demand, title output will rise again in 2017. “We are still doing more titles because there are more people who are listening,” Cobb said. “All the publishers I’ve spoken with recently say they are doubling output again this year.” But the production volume is not without strategy, especially for smaller companies. “If you can’t do 800 titles, the 20 you do must be very much in [y]our audience’s sphere,” Cobb said.

At Penguin Random House Audio, senior v-p and publisher Amanda D’Acierno noted, “We’re on track to record more than 1,100 titles in 2017, up from nearly 900 in 2016.” In the year ahead, she said she’d like to see the format continue to expand, “particularly in children’s and young adult audiobooks,” citing the benefits of the format for building young listeners’ vocabularies and providing entertainment.

“Family listening is a memorable shared experience—there’s no comparison to a long road trip with Jim Dale narrating Harry Potter,” D’Acierno said. She is among the many publishers who believe that, despite several boom years in a row, there’s still plenty of room for industry growth. “While more listeners than ever are buying and using audiobooks, overall they are still a small piece of the overall book marketplace,” she added. “We still have millions of readers to reach with the message that audiobooks help you read anytime, anywhere.”

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Globalization of Publications



Today, more than ever before, American authors are looking to have their manuscripts translated into multiple languages...and vice versa. The world of literature is rapidly shrinking, and that is all good.

R. Tomassi, Editor

Our Senior Editor for E-Publications recently conducted an in-depth research of most available reviews and advise on “how to” reach a global audience for your publication. Essentially, how to get your book translated into a foreign language. Although most blogs and self-appointed e-book gurus provide valuable—albeit repetitive—information about finding the right translator and market, they give little more than a glimpse of which countries offer less competition for your publication. Case in point India or Italy. And that is perfectly acceptable if you are interested in mass-publishing your material in either of those countries, both of which where Jeff Bezos is investing heavily.

However, there a several key factors that clearly escape these gurus. Translation of your material—and subsequent introduction into a foreign market—requires a little more than just finding “the right translator for the right money.” Although these two factors appear to be intertwined for the self-appointed advisors of foreign culture, there are far more significant factors that go into play. First and foremost, cross-culturalization of your material is vital to the success of the marketing campaign. It’s not so much about the literal translation that you will get from the “quick and dirty” shops (because they will hire bilingual folks to translate literary work) And if you heed their advise and consider (or I should write, even consider) Google, then your book will take three times as long to edit the cultural message...at a much higher cost, naturally. Popular sites that allow you to share your work with foreign nationals, even if you have the rights to your manuscript, are extremely risky. Especially once the material is turned into a “foreign book.”

So, before you throw caution to the wind, think about the actual cost of your globalization effort. Your translation plan should include a reputable company with an extensive record of performance. At a minimum, one that has been in business for a decade and continuously providing translation work in multiple languages. What are the things to look for when dealing with these companies?

Here you go:

1. How long as the company been in business?
2. Is the company bonded?
3. Do they have errors and omissions insurance?
4. Do they back-translate their work?
5. Do they share every step of the translation process with the author?
6. Do they sign non-disclosure, binding documents with the author?
7. Do they match the subject matter with the translator?
8. Do they share the name and credentials of the translator with the author?
9. Do the translator have experience with literary work?
10. Do they use a tiered translation process which includes editors and proofreaders?
11. Do they guarantee that they will not use “machine translation”?
12. Do they work with sales projections in order to establish a budget?
13. Do they use “local” bonded and insured translators?
14. Do they have sample translations to share with the author?

Before you embark on the eternal search for the cheapest, make sure you give consideration to the best. Your book is a very personal part of yourself. Not just a piece of paper that must be turned into a profit. It's a story that, should you decide to make it available in foreign languages, must be told as you felt it.

When you are ready to make the move into a foreign audience, make sure your translation company understands the target audience and its culture. The message of your book is far more important than the cost of the translation.

