

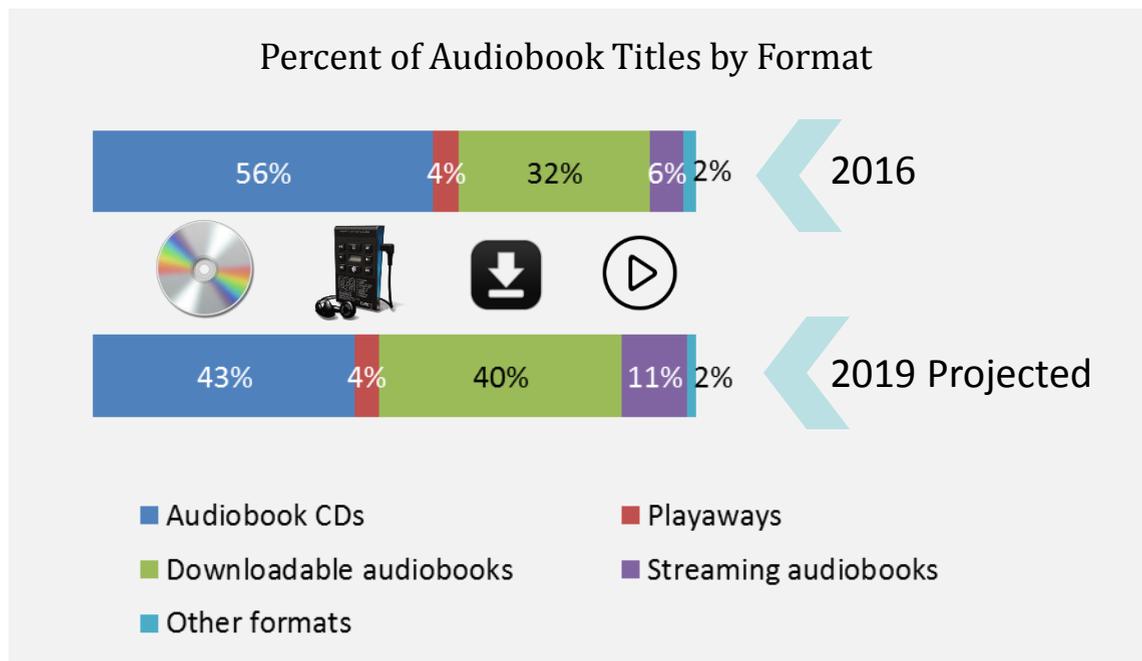
# Audiobooks and Public Libraries

## LIBRARYJOURNAL

Responses from 395 public libraries surveyed in January/February 2016

**AUDIOBOOK FORMATS:** All public libraries responding have physical audiobooks in their collections, primarily on CD but nearly half also collect Playaways. Downloadable audio is available in 96% of libraries and 44% offer streaming audio.

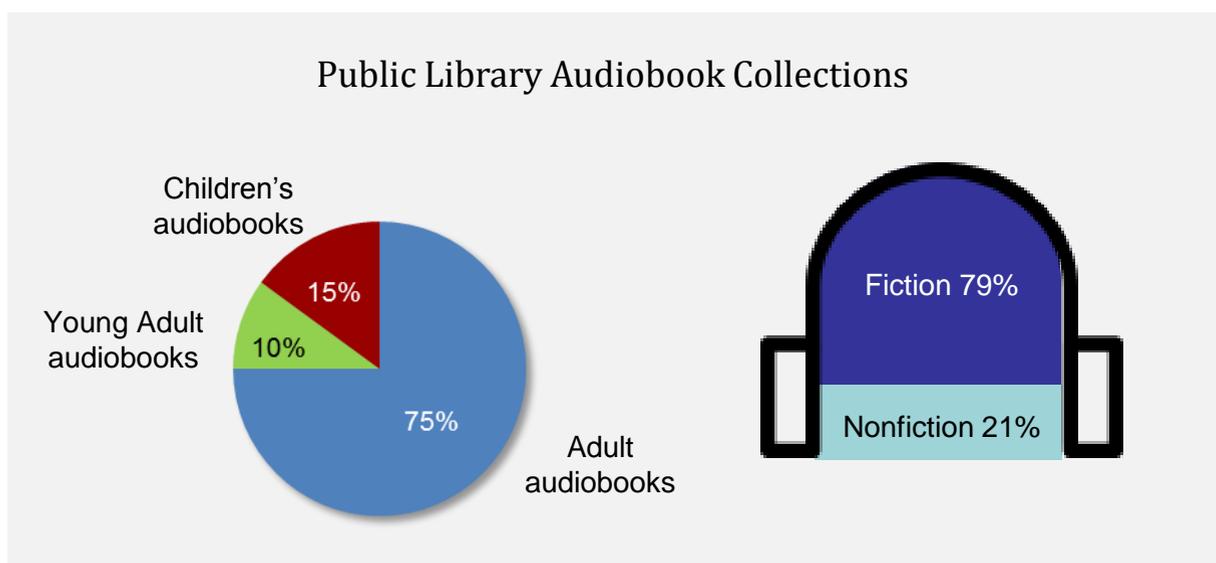
Three years projections for the percentage breakdown of audiobook titles by format predict an increase in downloadable and streaming audio titles at the expense of audiobooks on CD.



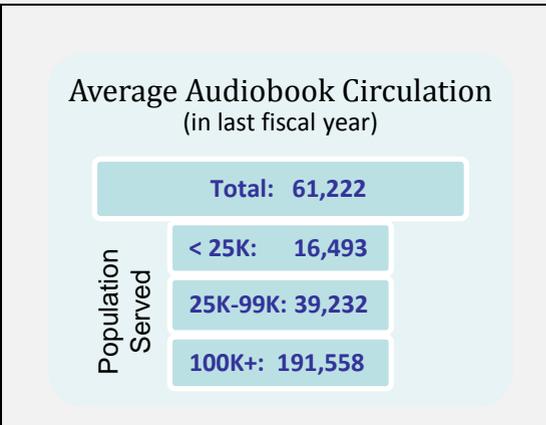
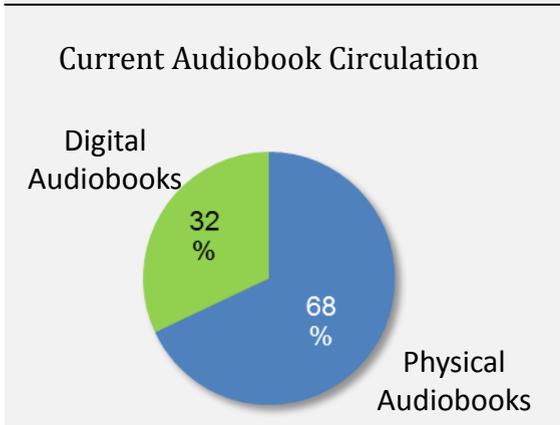
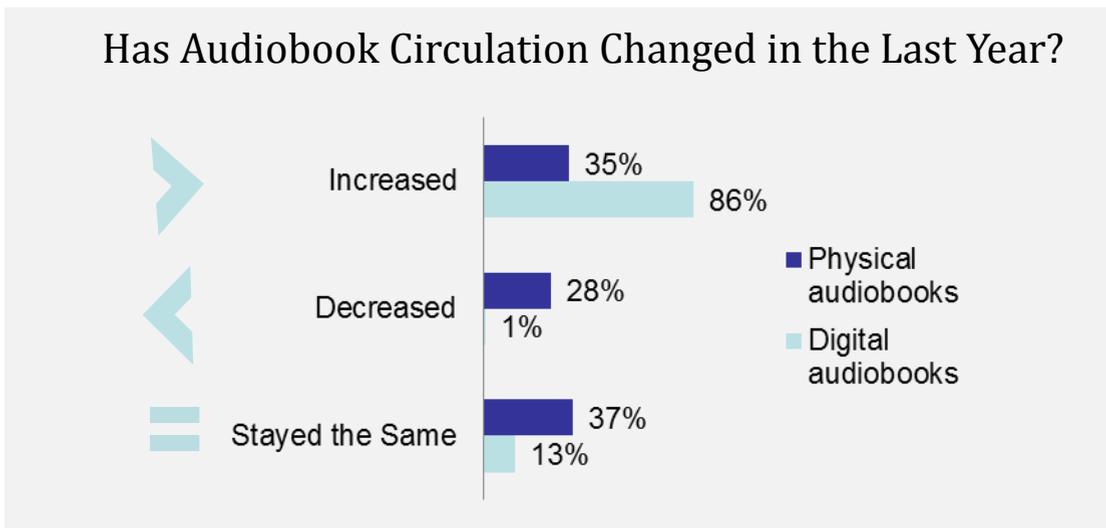
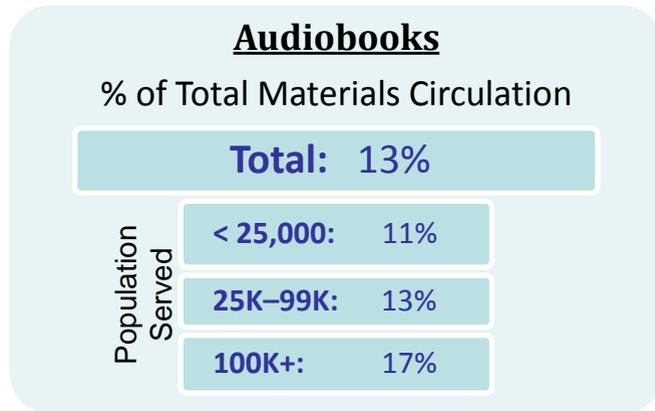
**BREADTH OF AUDIOBOOK COLLECTIONS:** We asked respondents to approximate the size of their audiobook collections and found that audiobooks made available through districts, states or consortia account for a sizeable number of audio titles offered, particularly for small libraries.

Current audiobook collections are comprised of 75% adult titles, 10% young adult, and 15% children’s. Fiction makes up about 79% of audiobook collections overall (ranging from 72% of large library collections to 82% in small libraries). For comparison, print book collections are generally split 58% fiction/42% nonfiction and ebook collections 74% fiction/26% nonfiction (source: *Ebook Usage in U.S. Public Libraries*, *Library Journal*, 2015).

Average Audiobook Collection Size (based on libraries having that format)	Total	Population Served		
		< 25,000	25,000– 99,000	100,000 +
# Physical audiobooks	6,392	1,256	6,132	21,223
# Downloadable/Streaming audiobooks made available through a district, state, or consortium	5,485	3,970	5,351	8,486
# Downloadable/Streaming audiobooks purchased or licensed independently	4,265	1,495	4,099	8,917



**AUDIOBOOK CIRCULATION:** Public libraries estimated that audiobooks account for 13% of total materials circulation (17% in the largest libraries). Two-thirds of audiobook circulation still comes from physical audiobook checkouts. Circulation of both formats increased over the last year; 86% of libraries reported an increase in digital audiobook circulation and 35% experienced an increase in physical audiobook circulation. The overall average audiobook circulation for last year was 61,222 check outs.



**DOWNLOADABLE PLATFORMS:** OverDrive is the most popular downloadable audio platform, used by over 90% of public libraries. OneClick Digital and Hoopla each are used by about a third of libraries. Forty-five percent of libraries use one platform exclusively.

When asked to name traits they like and dislike about their downloadable audiobook platforms, a theme emerged: an easy to use platform plus a broad range of titles equals customer satisfaction.

Which platform(s) do you use to access downloadable audioooks?

	Total	Population Served		
		< 25,000	25,000 – 99,000	100,000 +
<b>OverDrive</b>	92%	93%	89%	93%
 OneClickdigital	32%	31%	36%	47%
 hoopla	31%	13%	32%	40%
 3M	11%	3%	13%	9%
 axis360 (write-in) <small>digital media library by Baker &amp; Taylor</small>	7%	3%	7%	13%
Other	6%	3%	10%	4%
<i>Use only <u>one</u> platform</i>	45%	64%	44%	24%

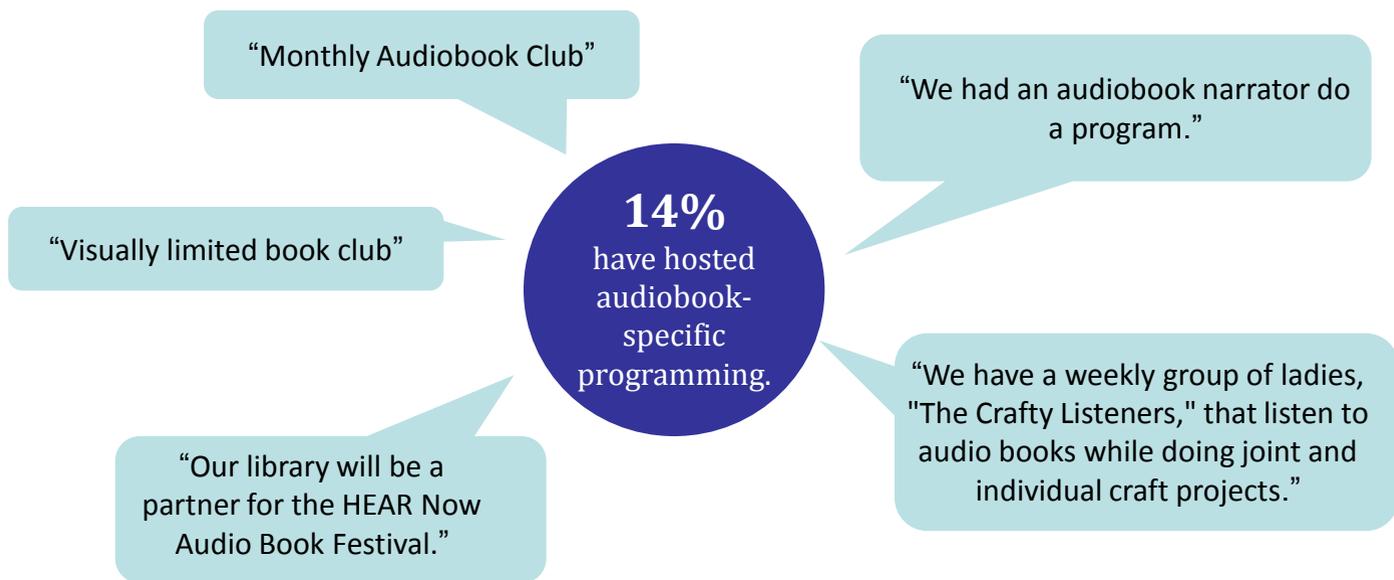
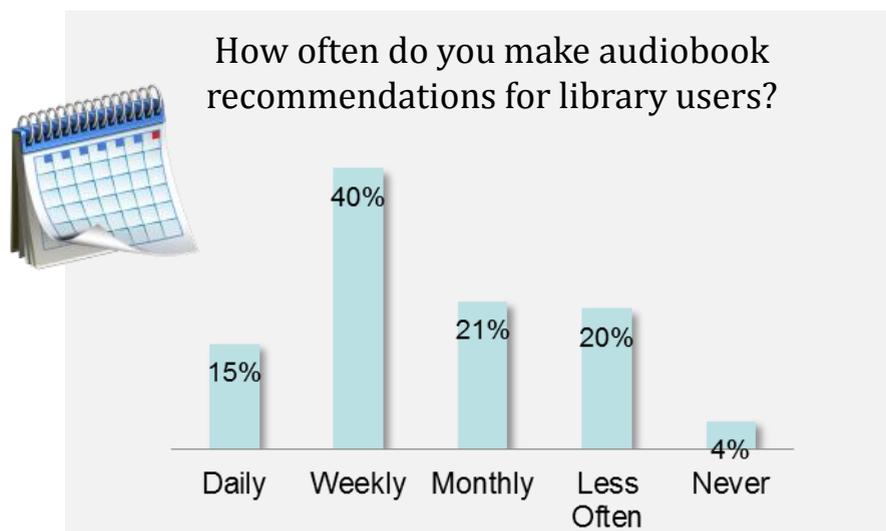
Nearly half uses one platform exclusively. **1**

Easy Platform  Broad Range of Titles  Successful Audiobook Collection

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**LISTENING ADVISORY: Over half of respondents (55%) say they are asked to provide listening advisory at least weekly and 14% of libraries have hosted audio-specific programming.**

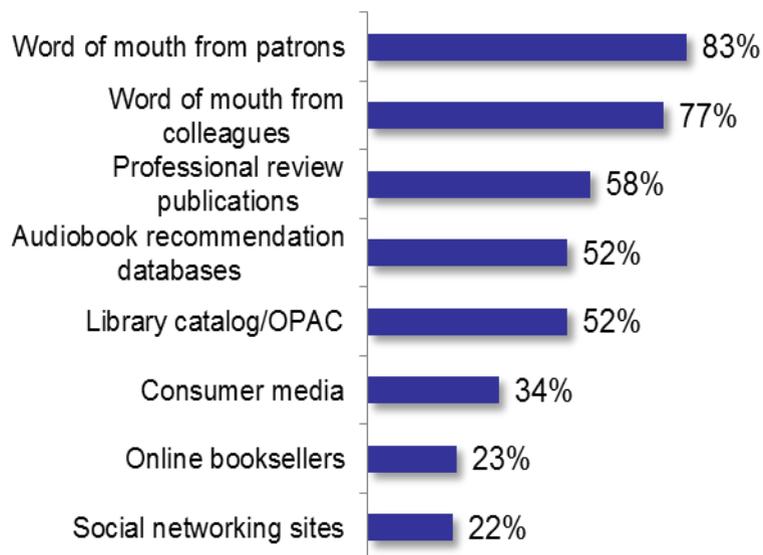
**Word of mouth, professionally sourced reviews and recommendation databases such as NoveList are the top sources librarians use to satisfy listener requests. Fewer than half of libraries (43%) report that they have a go-to audio expert on staff. Being informed about narratives as well as narrators was a frequent challenge noted by audiobook recommenders.**



Does the library have an audiobook “expert” or the go-to person for audiobook information?

NET Yes	43%
Collection development librarian for AV/media	35%
Dedicated audiovisual/ media librarian	6%
Other staff member	7%
No, we have no audiobook expert	57%

What sources are used to provide listening advisory to patrons?



Biggest Challenges When Providing Audiobook Listening Advisory:

“Not enough experience as a audiobook listener.”

“Knowing the narrators. Customers are particular about narrators.”

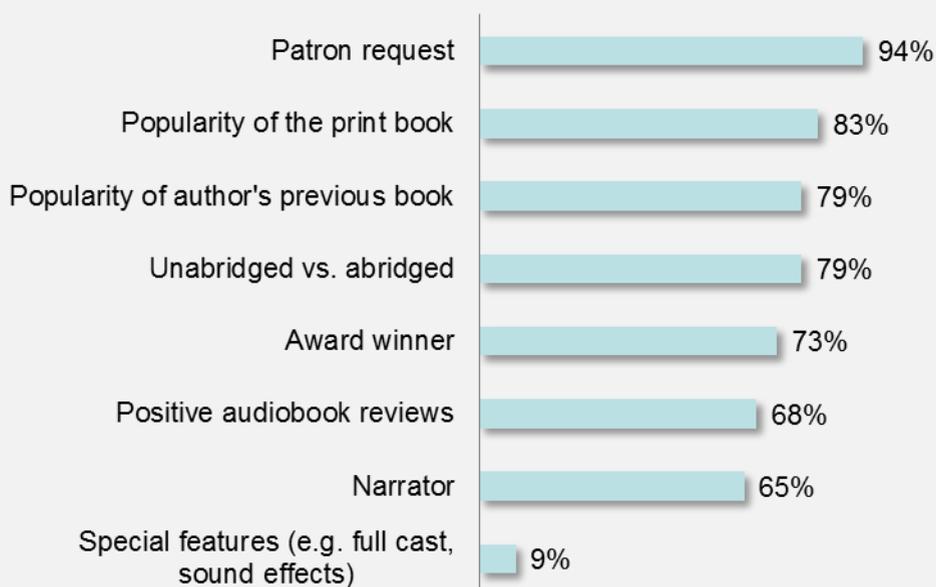
“Finding information specific to an audiobook adaption. We don't have time to read/listen to everything, so having reliable information on the quality/type of narration is key.”

“Telling patrons about all the different formats available and explaining how each works. Advertising all the different formats.”

“Having a good selection in the format they need.”

**AUDIOBOOK SELECTION:** The most important factors that influence audiobook purchase decisions are patron request, popularity of the print book, popularity of the author’s previous book, and whether the book is unabridged or not. The number one resource used to make audiobook purchase decisions is professional review publications in print, followed by word of mouth from both patrons and peers, and vendors’ newsletters/websites.

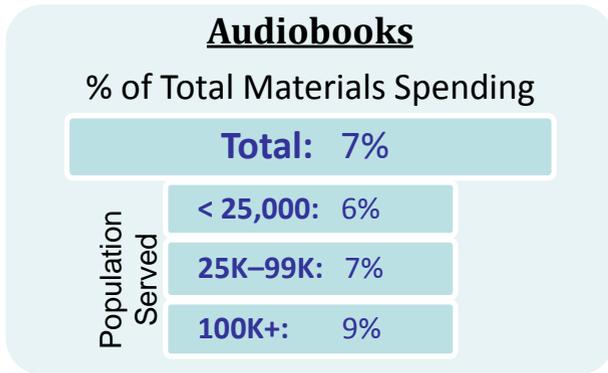
### What are some important factors that influence your audiobook selection decisions?



### Top Resources for Selecting Audiobooks

Professional review publications in print	76%
Word of mouth from patrons	67%
Word of mouth from peers/colleagues	56%
Vendors’ newsletters/websites	40%
Publishers’ newsletters/websites	34%
Audiobook recommendation databases (e.g. NoveList Plus)	33%

**AUDIOBOOK SPENDING:** We asked librarians who are involved in the purchasing process of audiobooks how much the library spent on them in their last fiscal year. The average for all respondents was \$29,900 and the median was \$6,600, about 7% of their total materials budget.



### Audiobook Spending

Average \$ spent in last fiscal year

Population served:	U.S. \$
< 25,000	\$4,500
25,000 – 99,999	\$28,000
100,000 +	\$91,800

**88%**

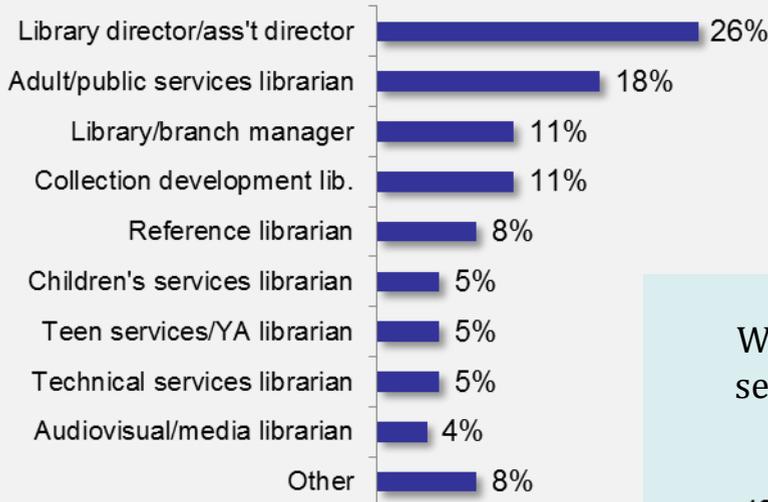
Get downloadable/streaming audiobooks through their district, state or consortium.

**57%**

Purchase/license downloadable/streaming audiobooks independently.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

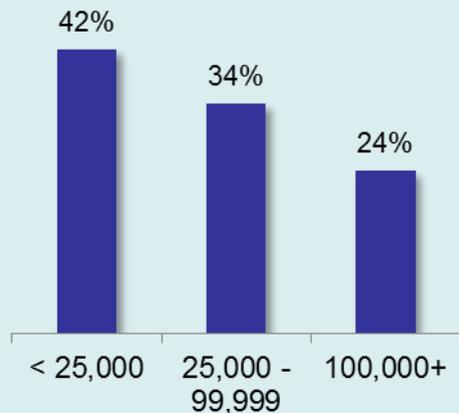
Which of the following best describes your job title?



Where is your library located?

Regions	%
Midwestern U.S.	35%
Southern U.S.	28%
Northeastern U.S.	17%
Western U.S.	12%
Canada	8%

What is the population served by your library?



**METHOD** *LJ* emailed a survey invite on January 15, 2016 to a randomly selected list of public librarians, with a reminder to non-responders on February 5. The survey closed on February 22, with 395 responses, 92% from the United States and 8% from Canada.

The Audiobook survey was developed in conjunction with *NoveList* and was vetted by a representative of the Audio Publishers Association. The survey was conducted and analyzed by *Library Journal* research. All data in this report is unweighted.