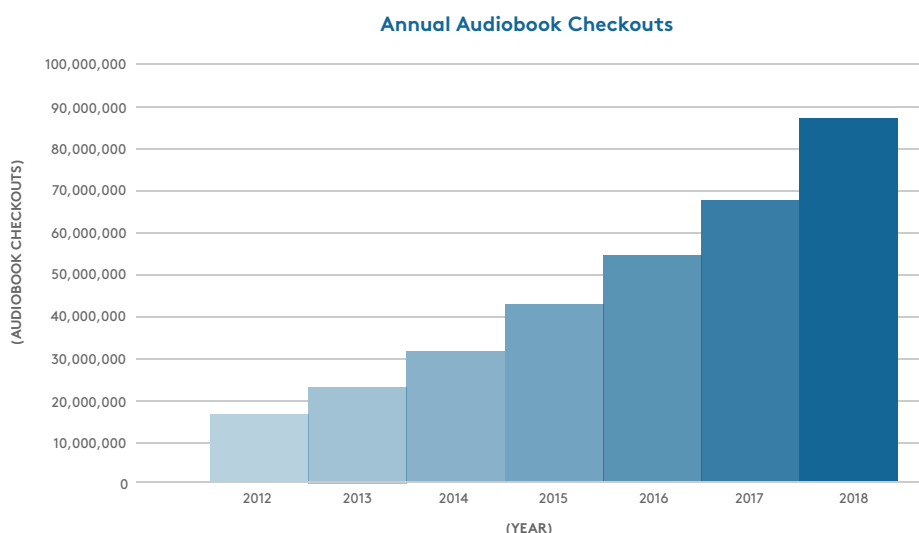


How OverDrive Libraries are Leveraging the Rise in Audiobook Popularity

Proven value provides positive return on investment as circulation increases

As libraries adapt to the widespread adoption of smartphones and other mobile devices in their communities, many are finding it necessary to increase their audiobook offerings in order to meet unprecedented patron demand.

While overall circulation of digital materials has seen steady growth over the past several years, audiobooks in particular showcase an impressive spike. **Checkouts of audiobooks from OverDrive's global library network have risen an average of 32 percent every year since 2012.** This trend is projected to continue through 2019, with a 34 percent year-to-date increase achieved through May. In fact, the 40 OverDrive partners who have seen the greatest audiobook circulation growth this year boast an average 60 percent boost in checkouts year over year.



According to data from the Audio Publishers Association (APA), audiobook listeners have identified their local library as crucial for title discovery:

- 52 percent of people said being able to borrow audiobooks from their library website was important or very important for discovering new audiobooks
- 43 percent of audiobook listeners said they have downloaded at least one audiobook from their library

Proven Return On Investment

For Ariel Farrar, collection development librarian at the New Orleans Public Library, audiobooks just make sense financially, as they are owned in perpetuity. The One Copy/One User lending model combined with growing circulation numbers provides Farrar a consistent positive return.

At the Multnomah County Library in Oregon, Electronic Content Librarian Kady Ferris takes advantage of flexible lending models to fill holds.

“The Simultaneous Use audiobook collections we've added average about 10,000 checkouts a month and the cost per circ is about \$0.14. It's a great return on investment,” she said.



The OverDrive team helped Ferris create an “Always Available Audiobook” room on Multnomah's OverDrive site. The curated collections are organized by genre and provide patrons “a quick shortcut to see what they can check out right now.” She added that it has been incredibly useful to have a page right on the OverDrive site where she can send patrons interested in audiobooks.

Enthusiasm Encourages Growth



The rise in audiobook usage can be directly tied to the flexibility and freedom it provides readers. Findings from the APA indicate that 81 percent of audiobook listeners enjoy the format because audiobooks allow them to multitask, and 75 percent like that audiobooks are portable. For listeners, audiobooks are just another method of reading, and the majority read in multiple formats: Eighty-three percent of frequent listeners read a physical book over the past twelve months and 73 percent read an ebook. Because audiobooks allow readers to read on the go, it increases the amount of books they can consume in a given year, and 57 percent of listeners agreed or strongly agreed that “audiobooks help you finish more books.”

Knowing that patrons are the driving force behind the increase in audiobook circulation, the New Orleans and Multnomah libraries utilize OverDrive's Recommend to Library (RTL) feature. Allowing patrons to make title recommendations guarantees checkouts. In particular, Farrar finds RTL incredibly helpful when it comes to series. If there are enough recommendations on the latest installment in a series, Farrar will add the title to the collection, even if it's not a series the library normally carries.

“There's obviously demand for that,” she said.

Audiobook popularity is only going to continue to increase, making now the perfect time for libraries to invest in building a collection that will increase circulation numbers, produce a positive return on investment and provide patron satisfaction.

Best Practices for Audiobook Collection Development & Curation

- Invest in Simultaneous Use audiobooks.** These select titles are available to patrons without wait lists or holds
- Curate Simultaneous Use titles** into an “Available Now” collection on your homepage
- Feature one Simultaneous Use audiobook title weekly** at the top of your OverDrive site
- Consider Cost Per Circ (CPC)** and only pay for what users borrow
- Set up a **holds manager cart** to manage high-demand audiobook titles
- Turn on **Recommend to Library**
- Promote your audiobook collection using **print-ready and digital marketing materials** available on the Resource Center
- Save staff time** by having your OverDrive team help you with purchasing and curation