The relationship between audio books and reading habits in a digital era

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CHIA CHING CHANG

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Abstract

Content of this research

In a digital era, digital content resellers have been impacting traditional publishing in many ways (Young, 2009). One of the best examples is the recent rise of commercial downloadable audio books. These audio books which have the text of a book read aloud and recorded have been provided mainly for people with a serious reading impairment (Philips, 2007). However, there is a booming market for audio books as people gradually get used to leisure listening to books instead of reading them (Engelen, 2008). This project intends to investigate the relationship between reading habits and audio books under this niche market.

Aims

The main aim of this project is to investigate how commercial audio books change people’s reading habits under this niche market. In spite of the booming market, the reader experience of audio books is still an area under-researched (Philips, 2007). Therefore, this research aims to get a better understanding of people’s general impression of audio books, users’ experiences of audio books, people’s attitudes toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading, and the role of downloadable audio books in this rapidly growing market.

Methods

The main method used in this research is survey. The term ‘survey’ extensively refers to a systematic method for collecting standardised information from a specific group or a sample of one, normally by means of questionnaire or interview (Robson, 1993). A questionnaire was designed for investigating people’s general impression and experiences of using audio books. Then interviews respectively for current audio book users and invited audio book users (users were invited to listen to audio books for this research) were adopted to complement the questionnaire and to get more detailed information about users’ experiences of listening to audio books.

Results

The questionnaire finally obtained 104 responses, and 11 interviewees were interviewed. According to the analysis of the survey, iPod culture and downloadable audio books do have certain impacts on users’ reading habits. Most participants have mp3 players, and over 35% of the mp3 players are iPod. It is also found that most audio book listeners listen to not just one format of audio books (e.g. CDs, cassettes and mp3). downloadable audio books do change the occasions people listen to audio books. For example, participants would listen to audio books while jogging, taking strolls or doing other exercises people could not do in the Walkman era. Most participants agreed that listening to audio books was one kind of reading. Even if
they did not agree the idea, most would think listening to audio books can be equivalent to reading. Interviewees did not want to continue listening to audio books mainly because they already got used to print books and also because they have deep affections toward print books.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

It was concluded that most participants thought listening to audio books could be one kind of reading or equivalent to reading. In addition, audio books did change their reading habits (e.g. ‘read’ while doing housework). Also, it was found that downloadable audio books played an important role in changing the ways people listen to audio books such as finding a place in an audio book easier (using time track on a screen) or listening while jogging.

The recommendations of this research were for suppliers of downloadable audio books and for the future research. It recommended suppliers to adjust their pricing model of downloadable audio books to gain more sales and to adopt DAISY format to provide a better navigation system for audio books users. The future research was suggested to focus more on non-users of audio books and the reading habits of the new generation born in a digital era.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Digital Content Reseller

In a digital era, digital content resellers (DCR) have been impacting traditional publishing in many ways (Young, 2009). A reseller sells goods again (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010c), and a digital content reseller purchases contents from content manufacturers (e.g., a book publisher) and sells it again. The best example of DCR affecting traditional publishing is the ebook resellers. Mobipocket, which launched in 2000 and now is one of the Amazon companies, is an ebook reseller specializing in software that allows customers to publish, read and download ebooks on mobile devices (Bolt, 2005). Ebooks are dominant over paper versions especially for dictionaries and interactive learning (Cavanaugh, 2002). However, ebooks are no more the only form which dominates the digital content reselling market. In recent years, the rise of commercial audio books for leisure listening has drawn more and more attention from the publishing industry (Philips, 2007).

1.2 iPod Culture

iPod culture plays a very important role in changing the nature of the audio book market. The term, iPod, although a specific device name has become a symbol of mp3 players, a small, portable device which can contain several albums and audio files (Philips, 2007). iPod was introduced by Apple in 2001 as a portable device for storing and playing audio files. Close to its 10th anniversary, the iPod has evolved into a portable multimedia device with huge capacity to store data, games and applications (Szeliga, 2009). iPod culture especially refers to the privatisation of soundscape in the public space with the prevalence of portable technology (Szeliga, 2009). From cassette Walkmans to mp3 players, these portable devices have made the private listening possible in public places (Philips, 2007). For example, one can listen to his or her favorite hip-pop music with his headphones loudly on the tube without disturbing others. CDs and tapes have been the major format of audio books for a long time (Block, 2007). Compared to the music industry, downloadable format of audio books became available later (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009; The Recording Industry Association of America, 2009). Although all formats can be portable, the iPod culture has introduced a totally new medium into the market of audio books and attracted new audiences different from people listening to tapes.
and CDs for audio books (Block, 2007)such as teenagers and urban commuters. In addition, iPod is the currently dominant device which digital audio books are downloaded through(Young, 2009). Therefore, iPod culture cannot be ignored when it comes to commercial audio books nowadays.

**1.3 The Merger between Audio Book Market and Print Book Market**

Audio books are definitely not a new invention of technology, but the way people use them can be very innovative. The top 1 bestseller of i-Tunes in October 2005 was not a pop song but a “book”(Keegan, 2006). The book was an audio version of the World is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman. Year 2010 is the 75th anniversary of the first talking novel(Pugh, 2010). The need for audio books was originally conceived when lots of blind soldiers came back from the First World War in the U.K.(British Broadcasting Corporation, 2005). For a long time, these audio books which have the text of a book read aloud and recorded, have been provided mainly for people with a serious reading impairment (Philips, 2007). As the technology for recording books has developed from shellac discs to the instant downloading of books from the Internet, there is a booming market for audio books as people gradually get used to leisure listening to books instead of reading them (Engelen, 2008). Commercial audio books outside the “traditional” user group of persons with visual impairment have become more and more acceptable and popular.

**1.4 The relationship between reading habits and audio book**

Audio books have gradually become the preferred reading format of many commuters and vacationers(Mediatore, 2003). In the U.S., audio books are one of the most popular and frequently used resources(Mediatore, 2003; Memphis Public Library & Information Center, 2007). One thing making commuters and vacationers turn to audio books is definitely that audio books can allow these avid readers to multi-task in the hustle and bustle of city life(Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2010). For example, one can still fold the laundry or washing the dishes while he or
she is listening to an audio book. In addition, audio books can help prevent people from getting bored when they are standing in the crowded coaches during rush hours. Due to this multi-task feature, some claim or imply that listening to audio books can accelerate reading (Mediatore, 2003; Clemens, 2009; Audible.com.uk, 2010). However, most audio book listeners don’t think audio books can substitute printed books. Instead of being substitutions for printed books, audio books are more like supplements to text-based reading (Mediatore, 2003; Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2005).

1.5 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this project is to investigate how commercial audio books change people’s reading habits under this niche market. From a gramophone record to downloadable files from the Internet, audio books, the synergy of the literary texts and audio recording, are one of the best case studies in the transition of cultural forms into new media (Philips, 2007). As mentioned earlier, audio books are a rapid growing trend in the electronic publishing (Engelen, 2008). In spite of the booming market, the reader experience of audio books is still an under-researched area (Philips, 2007). In addition, it is really difficult to get the accurate statistics of commercial audio book market as publishers and resellers are reluctant to publicise their digital content sales (Young, 2009). Therefore, it is intended that this project investigates:

- People’s general impression of audio books.
- User habits of audio books
- People’s attitude toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading.
- Whether listening to audio books changes the time, place and occasion of reading.
- Whether audio books can help accelerate reading?
- Do downloadable(electronic) audio book versions change anything about audio books?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Nature of Reading: when reading meets listening

Reading has long been regarded as an activity mainly involving visual and written components, while listening is pretty much about using ears. The definition
of the verb ‘read’ in Oxford English Dictionary (2010a) is “to scan or to study writing silently”, and its noun ‘reading’ is “the action of perusing written or printed matter (2010b)”. People have long distinguished reading and listening as two very different activities. Just and Carpenter (1980) state that one of the striking differences between reading and listening as the control of the rate of input. They claimed readers can skip portions of the text and reread sections, whereas a listener cannot. So far, no precise relationship between reading and listening comprehension has been agreed generally in research (Irwin, 2009). However, an audio book itself is a hybrid medium (Philips, 2007) combining the text-based and acoustic world. Some argue that listening to an audio book has the same effect as reading to a printed book or even better (Johnson, 2003). Concerning the understanding of the content of the story or the theme, Johnson (2003) asserts that audio books certainly can be as successful as reading printed books. He recites all the processes an audio book listener has to go through just like a book reader: understanding the message, thinking critically about the content and making connections with the text. In a case study of the application of audio books in high school (Locke, 2001), audio books were found to be very helpful for students to comprehend the stories and provide students with weak reading skills their first positive experience with literature. On the other hand, some (Baskin and Harris, cited in Evans, 2009) think format is not so important since the value of a book is to be found in the content, and audio books are just the equivalent of printed works.

There are still critics doubting the substitution of audio books for reading. Those critics argue that audio books already decoded and interpreted by narrators would interfere with the imaginative process of reading. Besides, listening may not generate comprehension comparable to reading (Irwin, 2009). One thing for sure is that most audio book listeners are not substituting the audio format for the printed one (AudioFile, cited in Mediatore, 2003). Audio books for them are more like supplements to printed works.

2.2 History of Audio Books

An audio book, a recording of primary spoken words, was initiated mainly for those with visual impairments. Audio books are also called “spoken books”, “talking books” and “narrated books”. The 1930’s was a very important decade for audio books. In 1931, the American Congress established the talking book program called “Books for the Adult Blind Project” to help those who had difficulties reading print. In the following year, the first talking books were developed by The American Foundation for the Blind (BookAlley.com, 2006).
In the U.K., the need for talking books was conceived in the years after the First World War in response to the thousands of soldiers who were blinded or visually impaired in action (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2005). In addition, talking book service was felt especially needed because those returning from the front found that it was much easier to carry on reading through talking books than through learning Braille. In 1935, the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) launched the dedicated production of recorded books with The Murder of Roger Ackroyd by Agatha Christie amongst the first books issued in the format of shellac discs (Philips, 2007). Fifty years later, the Audio Publishers Association was established in the U.S. By 2005, 75 million audio books have been sent to over two million people with sight problems by RNIB. Now, as the definition of books and publishing is evolving with rapidly-changing technology, audio books change as well. Nowadays, not only do audio books allow readers to multi-task (e.g. reading audio books while driving or commuting), but they also enrich the reading experience by putting narration, sound effects, and music together (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2010). Audio books are no longer materials just for those with sight problems.

2.3 The Booming Market of Commercial Audio Books

As digital audio books can be easily downloaded to portable device such as iPod (Nawotka, 2008), there is a booming market for commercial audio books as people gradually get used to leisure listening to books instead of reading them (Engelen, 2008). Traditional audio books especially for the visually impaired are run on a non-commercial basis, and those books are largely undertaken by volunteer readers (Philips, 2007). Besides, these “transcription” audio books just take a tiny fraction of the total number of books published every year (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2005). The turning point for audio books moving from the realm of service for those with visual impairments to a leisure commodity for all consumers was the prevalence of portable cassette recorders (Sony Walkman) (Philips, 2007). Portable cassette recorders made a personal soundscape portable for the first time. It was such a fresh experience for most consumers to be able, for the first time, to ‘listen privately in public’. What is more, these gadgets were not just for urban walkers but also sold for use in car. Audio book providers and resellers often advertise their products by suggesting consumers listen to books in their cars (Audible.com.uk, 2010). Today, more thanks to the emergence of new “hybrid digital” players such as iPod or Kindle, commercial digital audio books are proliferating and marketed to every kind of consumers. Although the market of traditional “transcription” talking books and the market of “recreation” books are
still segregated, the synergy between these two markets can be expected in the near future (Engelen, 2008).

2.4 Technical Aspects of Audio Books

To make audio books available and popular, there are two technical aspects needed to be stressed, the two aspects are to record and to play. Edison’s invention of a rotating-cylinder phonograph in 1877 created the base for the recording of vocal interpretations of literature (BookAlley.com, 2006). The first audio books were recorded in a format of shellac discs in the 1930’s. After 20 years, the invention of the LP, Long Playing Record with 33 1/3 rpm (revolutions per minute), replaced the original shellac discs with 78 rpm. Soon LP became standard of recording audio books till 1970’s (Philips, 2007). Later on, there was a duplicate time of LP and cassette. However, it did not take too long for cassettes to become a major format of audio books because the popularity of portable cassette recorder made it much more flexible to listen to a book (e.g. while commuting and driving) (BookAlley.com, 2006). Though cassettes have now been largely superseded by CDs and digital technology, the audio book on tape remains a cultural phenomenon, with still 3% of the total sales of audio books in 2008 (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009).

The digital audio books have totally changed people’s attitudes toward audio books. Today, with MP3 players or other multi-functional portable devices, piles of CDs or cassette can be easily replaced with several albums on only one small gadget. Users can easily edit and arrange the order of their books with their portable devices. Where technology can benefit the visually impaired more is that it allows users to “bookmark” their audio books and search the whole content while still being able to listen to the corresponding audio output, and this technology is called DAISY (the Digital Accessible Information System). The DAISY format of audio books was developed by DAISY consortium in 1996 in order to standardise the recording of audio books and to provide a navigation structure for audio books. DAISY books are now available through mp3 files and DAISY CDs with DAISY reading software and this format has become globally accepted (Engelen, 2008).

Another important technical aspect of audio book distribution through digital formats is copyright protection. In music industry, digital rights management (DRM) has gradually been seen as a thing of the past. Although the largest audio book provider, Audible.com, still provides its audio books in a DRM-protected format, a lot of important publishers (e.g. Random House and Penguin Group) in America had decided to phase out piracy protection on audio books in 2008 (Stone, 2008). There were mainly two reasons for this action. For one thing, the DRM-protected formats
or CDs often frustrate customers by hindering them to copy in general and sometimes by hindering playing the legally-acquired files on a normal device (Engelen, 2008). For another thing, this approach allows a variety of online retailers to start to sell audio book downloads and the same time prevents one single store owner (e.g. Apple i-Tunes Store) to have too much influence.

2.5 Features of Audio Books

One of the greatest features distinguishing audio books from the traditional print books is that audio books can turn reading itself from a solitary activity to a shared experience. For example, it is impossible for a family with 3 to 5 members to read a print fiction together at the same time. Today, a family can share a talking book in the living room after dinner or in a car during a journey. In addition, by putting narration, sound effects, and music together, audio books definitely have the potential to change the nature of reading and create a totally new genre on its own (Philips, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, to allow listeners to multi-task is definitely one of the reasons for audio book enthusiasts to choose them (Mediatore, 2003; Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2010). One user claims that the power of audio books can burn calories because they can help her walk an extra mile without realising it (Mediatore, 2003). The fact that audio books allow people to multi-task attracts more and more people to use them for entertainment while engaging in other activities. Nevertheless, not every user shares the same experience. Some users think listening to audio books in car makes driving very unsafe; other find it very difficult to stay focused (Irwin, 2009). In either way, those experiences stated above can never happen when one is reading a print book.

2.6 User Study of Audio Books

2.6.1 Main Audience

According to a consumer survey in 2001, over 75% of audio book listeners were female (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2005). Later on a survey in 2009 indicated that over 83% of the money spent on audio books was for audio books for adults (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). Commuters are definitely one of the target groups of audio book market, and one of the most common reasons for listening to audio books is multi-tasking while commuting (Audio Publishers...

2.6.2 Narrators matter a lot

One of the most significant user inclinations of audio books is that choosing what to read heavily depends on who is doing the reading, and that is, the narrator. Lots of issues may be raised when it comes to the way a narrator perform a book such as the accent of a narrator and the pacing of a story (Mediatore, 2003; Irwin, 2009). The preference of a specific narrator or voice is not particularly idiosyncratic among audio book listeners because most listeners can remember their favourite narrators without hesitation (Mediatore, 2003). There are lots of ways to perform an audio book. Frank McCourt insists on reading his own works because he thinks that is the way the story can be honestly interpreted, whereas Phillip Pullman, the author of the Dark Materials trilogy, reads the narration of his books and leaves the lines of characters done by various actors (Irwin, 2009). Just like the best performer of a song is not necessarily the composer, sometimes a narrator different from the author can be astonishingly good. For example, Jim Dale (American reader) is very famous for bringing an excellent range of voices to the characters of Harry Potter (Rich, 2007). Sometimes audio book listeners don’t care about the way the narrator performs, but they care about gender of the narrator (Mediatore, 2003). In conclusion, one size does not fit all. Each genre and each title has its best way to be interpreted.

2.6.3 Genres Suitable to Have an Audio Version

Not every print book is suited to the spoken format. It is better for some stories not to have an audio version because the structure of the story is more suited to be presented on pages (Mediatore, 2003). Grover and Hannegan (2005) states that both fiction and nonfiction can be presented in an audio format successfully. However, they tell the users to bear in mind that it is sometimes very challenging for a non-fiction to be performed in an audio version due to the lack of illustrative matter. As to the favorite genre of audio book listeners, Mystery/Horror/Suspense was found out to be very popular in the Audio Publishers 2001 Consumer Survey (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2005).
2.6.4 Listener Format Preferences

Book listeners care about the formats of a book more than book readers. There are lots of issues an audio book listener is concerned with regarding the audio book formats such as the abridgement or the length of an audio book. It is universally accepted that most audio book listeners prefer unabridged over abridged (Mediatore, 2003; Greene, 2006). In the 2009 sales survey of audio book market, unabridged audio books represented 85% of the 2008 audio book market in the U.S. (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). Although the turnover of abridged titles was almost twice the unabridged in an industry figure of the U.K. market, it indicated that the sales of unabridged titles increased massively from 2004 to 2006 (Audio Publishers Association U.K., 2006).

As to the technical format, the Audio Publisher Association of America divides it into five formats: CD, MP3 CD, cassette, downloadable, and preloaded (pre-loaded on a specific device). CDs have been the majority in the audio book market since 2005 (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2005; AudioFile, 2005; Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). In the latest survey of Audio Publisher Association of America, it still accounted for 72% of the audio book market in 2008 (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). However, the greatest growth in the audio book market is the downloadable format. Downloadable sales, which represented 21% of the market in 2008, increased by 4% between 2007 and 2008 in the U.S. The sales of cassettes in the U.S. have shrunk to 3% of the total audio book market in 2008, but the number stayed the same since 2007.

3. Methodology

3.1 Proposed Methodology

The main method used in this research is survey. The term ‘survey’ extensively refers to a systematic method for collecting standardised information from a specific group or a sample of one, normally by means of questionnaire or interview (Robson, 1993). Data collected from a sample of a larger population through a survey can help construct quantitative descriptors to answer the question: how many people in a given population have a particular attitude or opinion (Groves et al., 2009)? To manipulate variables or to control conditions is not attempted in survey methodology,
and the data collected through survey methodology is used to explore aspects of a situation (Robson, 1993). Since the main aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between audio books and reading habits under the booming market of commercial audio books, the subjects are definitely focused on audio book listeners, which is a specific group. It intends to discover particular attributes regarding reading habits of audio book listeners.

Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected in this research, but the gathering of the qualitative data is primarily concentrated on. Due to the time and budget limitation for gathering the quantitative data from a big sample, it makes sense for this research to focus on collecting qualitative data from each interview and open questions from the questionnaire. This research aims to understand the user behaviour of audio book listeners in a digital era. The qualitative study is suited to this research because qualitative research emphasises the illumination and the understanding of a phenomena rather than predicting future behaviour (Powell and Connaway, 2004). However, quantitative data is still needed in this research such as the background questions (e.g. average age or reading hrs per day) acceptable price for audio books. Quantitative data and qualitative data are complementary to each other and the two together can make good research because there are always strengths and weaknesses in a single method (Jick, 1979).

3.2 Methods of Investigation

The main methods used in this research were interviews and a questionnaire. As mentioned earlier, surveys usually are implemented by interview and questionnaires. Before the implementation of the survey, examining the relevant literature and statistics was necessary in order to identify the key issues in this field and to help avoid doing the same research done before.

3.2.1 Literature Review

Due to the significant lack of research in the reader experience of audio books (Philips, 2007), pearl growing is very useful for gathering relevant literature and identifying important works. The key idea of pearl growing is to use citations or keywords of a relevant or authoritative article, which is the pearl, to obtain more relevant and authoritative materials (Ramer, 2005; Hawkins and Wagers, cited in Sandieson, 2006). This method can gather dispersed citations and turn them to be a set of related documents. Since there is not much relevant literature from academics, publishers and the audio industry, pearl growing is a very efficient way to identify the
key literature through viewing a few articles. The main source used was ‘Google Scholar’ with library links of preferences set to be University of Sheffield. Key words: ‘audio book’, ‘reading’, ‘digital’ and ‘downloadable’ were used individually and in various combinations to search for relevant literature. This strategy worked well. Lots of highly relevant works were found and the same time more useful keywords (e.g. talking books and recorded books) were gained for further search for literature. In addition, many articles obtained all mentioned the same association: Audio Publisher Association of the U.S. (APA). Since the Audio Publisher Association of the U.K. has already disbanded in 2010 (Audio Publishers Association U.K., 2010), main statistics in this area such as sales or user survey are derived from APA of the U.S. Apart from statistics, much of literature on reader experience of audio books and literature on the market of audio books were also found. This literature provided a basis for this research and helped to find the areas requiring more focus.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see appendix B) in this research was mainly designed for understanding people’s general impressions of audio books, especially people’s attitudes toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading. Therefore, anyone could be the respondents. Both structured and unstructured questions were used in the questionnaire. However, the unstructured questions (also called open questions) were cut down to a certain amount. Considering the time limitations and the number of responses (104), too many open questions are not suggested (Robson, 1993). The tool used for collecting responses was SurveyMonkey.com, an online survey software and questionnaire tool. Before the questionnaire was finally determined, it was tested by two volunteers. The average time taking for filling out the whole questionnaire was 12 minutes. The testing was very important because a too long questionnaire was very likely to result in low response rate (Denscombe, 1998).

After the questionnaire was designed and edited online, SurveyMonkey.com gave the questionnaire a specific URL. The URL was the hyperlink to the questionnaire, and the link could be sent to the participants to fill out the questionnaire without any time and space limitations.

There were four parts (pages) of the questionnaire: ‘background questions of respondents’, ‘audio book listeners or not’, ‘listeners experiences of using audio books’ and ‘attitudes of respondents toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading’.
Background questions of respondents

This part was for understanding the background of the respondents such as their ages, careers, nationalities and reading hours per day. Filter mechanisms of Surveymonkey.com were used to separate the audio listeners and non-audio book listeners. This background survey can help to find if there are any specific characteristics or inclinations of each side. A question was especially added to this part: do you have an mp3 player? Respondents with an mp3 player were also asked to specify the brand of their mp3 players. The extra question was designed for a better understanding of the impact of audio book in digital format on the way people use audio books. For example, listeners with iPod or mp3 players listen to more audio books than non-mp3 player users in a year?

Audio Book Listeners or not

This part was designed to find:
1. How would people define an audio book?
2. Whether a respondent has listened to an audio book or not

Skip logic was added in this part. People who answered that they have listened to an audio book would continue filling out the rest of questionnaire, which was mainly about their experiences of using audio books. People who answered that they never used an audio book before would skip to the final page to tell how willing they would be to try an audio book.

Listeners Experiences of Using Audio Books

Listeners’ experiences of audio books were one of the most important parts in this survey. This part required respondents to answer when, where, how and why they listen to audio books. For example, respondents were asked to state the device they used to listen to an audio book. The occasions audio book listeners listen to an audio book were also in the spotlight of this research.

Attitudes of Respondents toward Listening to Audio Books as one Kind of Reading

Since the aim of this research is to determine whether audio books have changed people’s reading habits, it is very important to know their definitions of reading and their attitude toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading.
Both audio book listeners and non-listeners had to fill out this page, and respondents who did not think listening to audio books is one kind of reading were asked to specify the reason why they did not agree with the idea.

3.2.3 Interviews

Interviews with audio book listeners could help get more detailed information about their experiences of using audio books. Robson (1993) states that the problem of questionnaires is that the data collected from a questionnaire is usually superficial. Therefore, more detailed data derived from interviews can complement questionnaires and provide a better understanding of the subject of the research.

Semi-structured interviews were employed in this project. Questions and pre-defined objectives were set before the interview, but new questions were also allowed to arise during the interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Besides, the order of presentation of questions was not so strictly implemented (Robson, 1993). Sometimes interviewees would mention answers of other questions when they were answering for a question (e.g. interviewee talked about the time she or he listened to audio books when she or he was answering the question of ‘where do you usually listen to audio books’).

Apart from traditional face-to-face interviews, 70% of the interviews were carried out using instant messaging. Considering the fact that most participants were not living in Sheffield, instant messaging was a very feasible option to substitute face-to-face interviews. In addition, one of the greatest benefits anticipated of instant messaging is the time saved from not having to transcribe the interviews (Voida et al., 2004). An interviewer is also allowed to look back at the current interview (Voida et al., 2004) when she or he needs to (e.g. when it is about time to close the interview and to give a conclusion). All the interviews went really well, and the records of the conversations were saved right away after the interviews.

Interviews were divided into two streams. One set of questions (see appendix C) for interviews was designed for current audio book listeners, and it focused on the reasons they turned to audio books and the relationships between their reading habits and audio books. The other set of questions (see appendix C) was designed for new audio book listeners, the new listeners were asked to talk about their experience of listening to audio books. Because Audible (the largest supplier of downloadable audio books in the world) was the designated source of audio books for new listeners, new listeners were especially asked about their opinions of ‘downloadable’ audio books. Both current listeners and new listeners were also
asked to explain whether there are any differences between audio books and print books.

3.3 Sampling

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed to understand people’s general impressions of audio books, so people who were qualified to fill out this questionnaire should be anyone. However, the subjects of this survey were still focused on adults because the market of audio books continued to be targeted at adults according to the latest survey in 2009 (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). In addition, probability sampling was not suggested for this research because of the difficulties in getting a big enough sample to represent the total population in such a short time (Powell and Connaway, 2004). Therefore, non-probability sampling was employed to get responses. The link of the questionnaire was posted on audio book forums: Librivox.org, Audible.com on Facebook and Audible.co.uk on Facebook to gain responses. Besides, a multiple-recipient mail was also used to send out the link to faculty and students of the University of Sheffield. Finally, 104 responses were collected.

3.3.2 Interviews

As mentioned earlier, the part of interviews was divided into two streams: one for current listeners of audio books and one for new listeners.

*Current Audio Book Listeners*

Current listeners of audio books were sought for this part to provide their experiences of using audio books and the description of the relationships between their reading habits and audio books. A multiple-recipient invitation was sent through the University mail system to seek any volunteers. The request was also posted on the Audible.com fans page and the Audible.co.uk fans page on Facebook. 5 participants replied the request and were interviewed.

*New Audio Book Listeners*

6 participants were invited to take trails of audio books. Audio books in this part
were limited to commercial audio books provided by Audible owned by Amazon. Audible is the leading online provider of digital spoken word audio content in English (Engelen, 2008) and has the widest selection of audio books currently. Besides, the sole use of a single provider will limit the influence of other factors (e.g. pricing model on user experience of audio books). Taking into account that the language limitation, all the participants were required to be native speakers or people who have been studying or working in an English-speaking countries for over 5 years.

### 3.4 Limitations and Difficulties

#### 3.4.1 Questionnaire

One of the problems of the questionnaire was that the result might be not objective enough for understanding the ‘general impression’ of audio books people have. It was really good result for a small scale project to obtain more than 100 responses in the end. However, non-probability sampling was used for this research. Over half of the responses were derived from audio book related forums, so it was predictable that most respondents were audio book enthusiasts, not general people.

#### 3.4.2 Interviews

Originally, it was hoped that all the old audio book listeners to be Audible (largest supplier of downloadable audio books) users because one of the objectives of this research is to investigate the impact of downloadable audio books on the audio book market. Questions like ‘what is the difference between downloadable audio books and audio books of CD format’ were intended to be asked. However, only two of the participants were already Audible users and one of the participants never listened to any downloadable audio books before. It was considered not to be a big problem because valuable information always comes from a few ‘key informants’ with a qualitative method (Rieger, 2007).

Another issue of application of interviews was that the audio books were limited to books in English. Therefore, the result of this research should be suited to the English market only.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Subject confidentiality was strictly implemented in this research. As long as a
research involves human beings, a number of ethical concerns exist (Powell and Connaway, 2004). This project was categorised as a low-risk project by the Information School of University of Sheffield according to the initial research proposal sent to the School. Since both a questionnaire and an interview contain some revealing information (e.g. subjects’ age, job and habits) that help people to identify the subjects, ethical issues related to subject confidentiality have to be handled carefully (Powell and Connaway, 2004). Before any method was practiced, an Ethic Application Form was sent to the supervisor of this project to get the ethics approval. Participants of the questionnaire and interview were all guaranteed to have their personal details kept confidential. In addition, participants were all well-informed of the objectives of the research and the potential risk of taking part (see appendix A). Participants were also asked to read and sign the consent form before the interviews started. All the processes and documents were designed with efforts to protect both sides and make sure to reduce the risk of this research as much as it possibly could be.

4. Analysis

All data collected from the questionnaire and interviews was analyzed in this part. Although some open-ended questions of the questionnaire were duplicated with some questions of the interviews, data collected from each side was analyzed separately. The analysis started with the questionnaire which aimed to determine people’s general impressions of audio books and their attitudes towards listening to audio books as one kind of reading. Most answers in the questionnaire were closed questions. The answers of open-ended questions in the questionnaire were coded. Coding the data meant to categorise the content (answers) to the category (numerical codes) they belong to, the categories were set by the researcher. For example, to categorise the occupations of respondents to its career category was coding the data (e.g. assigned piano teacher and high school teacher to the category ‘teacher’). Then the content of interviews with current and new audio book listeners was analyzed. One of the greatest principles of analyzing qualitative data is to find the regularities in the data (Robson, 1993). Analysis of the interviews was focused on audio listeners’ attitudes toward listening to audio books as on kind of reading and the relationship between their reading habits and audio books.
4.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was available on Surveymonkey.com from the 12th of July in 2010, and it was closed on 22nd of August in 2010. The final number of responses was 104, and the completion rate was 92% (96 respondents). If any respondent skipped any question or a filter was used, ‘n’ was used to represent the number of the sample.

4.1.1 Background Questions of Respondents

Gender of the Respondents

Among all respondents (n=104), 35% were male, and 65% were female (see figure 1). However, if all respondents were filtered through their responses of the question ‘have you ever listened to an audio book?’ (6 respondents skipped this question), 68.4% of the respondents who answered positively (n=79) were female (see figure 2). Also, the percentage of female respondents who had never listened to an audio book was relatively lower, 58% of respondents who answered the question negatively were female, and 42% were male (see figure 3). The result was quite consistent with the consumer survey by Audio Publisher Association of the U.S. (Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2005), that female audio book listeners are more than male listeners.

Figure 1. Gender of the Respondents (n=104)
**Age of the Respondents**

The average age of all the respondents was 35 (n=95), from the youngest 14 to the oldest 75, and the average age of the respondents who had listened to an audio book was 37 (n=76), from youngest 18 to the oldest 62. As to the average age of respondents who had never listened to an audio book, the number was 28.17(n=23), from the youngest 14 to the oldest 75.

According to the result of the analysis, the average age of respondents who had listened to an audio book seemed to be much greater than the average age of the respondents who had never listened to an audio book.
Respondents’ Jobs

Over 28% of the respondents (n=94) were students, and over 14% of the respondents (see Figure 4) were academics. The result might result from the multiple-recipient mail through the University of Sheffield school mail system, so most respondents were school students and faculty. IT specialists came after the academics, and they accounted for 11% of the respondents who answered the question. Housewives and librarians respectively represented 6%. One career worth mentioning was Braille transcriber. Audio books have been one of the most important reading materials for people with visual impairment, so it is not surprising that a person who knows Braille (a method that is widely used by blind people to read and write) also interested in audio books.

As to the jobs of respondents who had listened to an audio book (n=73), both the percentages of students and academics decreased. The percentage of IT specialists remained the same. Both the percentages of housewives and librarians increased (see figure 5).
Educational Attainments of Respondents

Among 102 respondents, none of the respondents chose primary school (see figure 6). The majority of respondents had achieved educational attainment of college/university (44.1%). Respondents who had masters degrees or PhD degrees respectively accounted for 37.3% and 10.8%. Therefore, respondents with postgraduate educational attainment (37.3% + 10.8% = 48.1%) were more than those with undergraduate educational attainment.
Among 79 respondents who had listened to an audio book, respondents with a bachelor degree were still the majority. The percentages of high school, masters and PhD all decreased.

As to respondents who had never listened to an audio book (n=19), over 52% of them had a master degree. The percentage of respondents who had a bachelor degree dropped dramatically from 44% to 26%.
It seems then that most people who had listened to audio books had higher educational attainment. However, people who had never listened to an audio book did not have relatively low educational attainment.

Print Books Read by Respondents in a year

Most respondents (n=102) read more than 4 print books in a year (see figure 9). Only 6% of respondents read less than 1 print book in a year.

As to the respondents who had listened to an audio book (n=79), 80% of the respondents still read more than 4 print books in a year (see figure 10). However,
these responses were filtered through their responses to the question ‘have you ever listened to an audio book?’, so it was still possible that some of the respondents were not current audio book listeners.

In order to get a better understanding of the relationship between the number of audio books and print books read by current audio book listeners in a year, another filter was used (see figure 11). In total 47 respondents were filtered by their responses of ‘how many audio books do you read in a year?’ These 47 respondents were people who read more than 4 audio books in a year. Among the 47 respondents, over 85% of them still read more than 4 print books in a year (see figure 11). The result was consistent with the point ‘instead of being substitutions for printed books, audio books are more like supplements to text-based reading(Mediatore, 2003; Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2005)’.

Figure 10. The number of print books read by respondents who had listened to an audio book in a year (n=79)
Do you have an mp3 Player? And the Brand is?

Over 88% of respondents (n=102) had an mp3 player (see figure 12). Only 12% did not have an mp3 player. As to the brands of their mp3 players, iPod and iPhone accounted for over half of the responses (n=90). Over 54% of the respondents who had an mp3 player either had iPod or iPhone (see figure 13).
A filter was used to get the respondents who had listened to an audio book and the format of the audio books they listened to was mp3. Among 59 respondents who passed the filter, 28(74%) people either used iPod or iPhone(see figure 15). This is consistent with the fact that the dominant device of downloadable audio books was iPod(Young, 2009).
4.1.2 Audio book listeners or not

The definition of an audio book

This was an open-ended question by asking respondents to write down ‘how would you define an audio book?’ Among 104 respondents, 16 people skipped this question. It was found that most respondents thought an audio book must contain 3 elements:

From a print book or text-based material

Most respondents would define an audio book as a recording of a text-based material (see appendix D). Such as comments: “a spoken word recording of written words”, “an audio book is a work combining recording and printed material” or “a recording of any text on any topic to be listened to at any time”.

Narrator-the reader

Most respondents mentioned that an audio book was read aloud by a person. Such as comments: “an audio book is a book who is read by someone (and recorded, so that it can be listened to more than once)”, “book read by a narrator” or “a book read aloud by a person, made storable and listenable by technology”.

Acoustic
Lots of respondents all used either ‘listen’ or ‘listening’ to define an audio book. Such as the comment: “A book recorded in a format that enables it to be listened to repeatedly”, “one you listen to instead of reading visually” or “A book recorded for listening purposes”.

In conclusion, most respondents defined an audio book as a written book read aloud for listening.

*Have you ever listened to an audio book or not?*

Total 81% of the respondents (n=98) answered positively, and 19% of the respondents answered negatively (see figure 16). There was a skip logic used in this question. Respondents who answer negatively would directly skip to part 4: ‘attitudes of respondents toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading’. Respondents who answered the question positively would continue to finish the rest of the questionnaire, and which were part 3 and part 4: ‘listeners’ experiences of audio books’ and ‘attitudes of respondents towards listening to audio books as one kind of reading’. This question was also used as a filter to analyze the result of the questionnaire. For example, the number of print books read by respondents who had listened to an audio book might be an interesting topic of this research.

![Figure 16. Have you ever listened to an audio book? (n=98)](image)

However, the design of this question also divided the negative part into two parts:

1. No, but I would like to try.
2. No, I am not interested.
Of the 19 people who have never listened to audio books, 12 would like to try an audio book while 7 had no interest (see figure 17).

4.1.3 Listeners’ experiences of using audio books

This part was the third section of the questionnaire. Questions of this part were investigating audio listeners’ experiences of using audio books, so respondents who answered the question ‘have you ever listened to an audio book?’ in the second part negatively did not have to fill out any question in this part. Among 104 respondents, 79 respondents had listened to an audio book.

Respondents’ first time to listen to an audio book

It was not surprising that over one quarter of respondents (n=77) first listened to an audio book when they were young children (see figure 18). Lots of people have experience of listening to audio books when they were young children(Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). Playing an audio book is just like storytelling for pre-literate children and is very helpful for their language acquisition(Kozloff, 1995). In fact, children’s audio books represent a major portion of the marketplace of audio books(Kozloff, 1995; Audio Publishers Association U.S.A., 2009). Another period worth mentioning was ‘after university’. According the survey result, 24% of the respondents who answered this question read their first audio book after university.
Respondents’ description of their experiences of listening to audio books

Although 10 respondents skipped this question (n=69), rich responses were still collected through this open-ended question. The analysis of this question was split into two parts: the benefits and deficiencies. Here the benefits are first presented:

Beneficial parts

Pleasant and relaxing, but relying on a good narrator significantly

Lots of audio book listeners found their experience of listening to audio books very pleasant, relaxing and soothing. The word ‘pleasant’ appeared 7 times and ‘pleasurable’ once in the 69 responses. Other similar words like ‘relaxing’, ‘soothing’ or ‘enjoyable’ also appeared several times. Such comments were: “Very pleasant - it is nice to relax my eyes but still enjoy the pictures in my head”, “Listening to an audio book is a pleasant way to spend time, especially if one is doing chores that do not require single minded mental concentration.”

Although lots of respondents thought the experience of listening to audio books is soothing and pleasant, although a good experience significantly relies on a good narrator. Some would describe the experience of listening to an audio book as a communal experience with the reader. Such comments were: “A relaxing way of enjoying literature, though rather dependent on the skill of the reader-aloud”, “This depends entirely on the quality of the audio book - both the original work and the
recording. A well-read audio book can make a good book come alive. A poorly-read one (or a boring book) can send me to sleep” or “Well, the communal experience of reading a book with somebody else - the speaker. Pretty much like listening to radio readings of novels”.

Allowing listeners to multi-task

Allowing multi-tasking was one of the most frequently-mentioned features of audio books by respondents. Most respondents would think listening to audio books was very convenient because it allowed them to multi-task. Contrary to saving time, some listeners thought listening to audio books was a very good way to spend time when they feel bored. Such as comments: “Convenient--it allows me to move around the house and do other tasks while keeping my mind busy, as well as allowing me to spend more time on reading than I would be able to otherwise due to my poor vision” or “Pleasant, time saving. Can be done anywhere” and “Listening to an audio book is a pleasant way to spend time, especially if one is doing chores that do not require single minded mental concentration”.

Story telling

Storytelling would definitely be a way for audio book listeners to describe their experiences of listening to an audio book. Some respondents thought listening to an audio book was just like being told a story. Such comments were: “kind of listening to a story” and “It is much like listening to a story, told with the interpretations of a story-teller”.

Slower pace, more engaging and enables to see the pictures

There were 2 respondents describing the experience of listening to an audio book as ‘engaging’ and 1 respondent using the word ‘engrossing’. Another respondent thought she could be involved with an audio book more than a print book. Compared to print books, some respondents found themselves reading (listening to) audio books at a relatively slower pace than print books. Such comments were: “Slower than reading, but it frees up the hands and visual attention so other tasks can be done at the same time. Examples are driving, walking, doing chores around the house, etc” and “I find I get more involved with the book because I am quite a fast reader so tend to miss detail. With audio, I go at a slower speed so get more from the book”. 
Some respondents found themselves so engaged in the audio books that they could see the pictures of the stories through audio books. Such comments were: “Wonderful. I can easily see the pictures in my head that the narrator conjures up” and “It is like reading the book, except that with audio I get clearer pictures in my mind because I’m forced to slow down and have time to actually imagine what it would look like”.

The same with reading

Although lots of respondents mentioned the differences between listening to audio books and reading print books, still quite a few respondents thought listening to an audio book was similar to or the same as reading a print book. Such comments were: “Same as actually reading the text (visually): depending on the book, enjoyable, enlightening, boring, moving....” and “I find it pretty much the same as actually reading the book myself. As I get used to the pace of the reader, I forget about them and just get caught up in the story and the characters”.

Help with language learning

Among the 69 responses, 2 respondents thought listening to audio books was very helpful for language learning. Such comments were: “I remembered as a child, the audio tapes (cassettes at the time) came along with the actual book. So I had the opportunity to read and listen to the book simultaneously. At the time I was still a student in an (English as a Second Language) program; the audio tape gave me the opportunity to increase my vocabulary and pronunciation of words that seemed difficult for me at the time. I remembered that listen to the audio tape was quite novel for me at the time” and “Just for learning English. It is nice to learn for pronunciation”.

Deeper impression

Some respondents thought listening to audio books could help them get deeper impression of the content of a book or help them enhance their memories. Such comments were: “get deeper impression”, “That was a good experience. My parents played a proverb story series for me. But in that time the file type is cassette record so that makes me can’t easily move on the section I want. As I know there are some people around me they have better learning ability from hearing not reading. The voice can enhance their in memory” and “remember the context easily”.

36
Deficient Parts

The second part of this question focused on the deficiencies of listening to audio books according to respondents’ experiences of listening to audio books.

Get distracted easily

One of audio books’ greatest deficiencies mentioned by lots of respondents was that it was difficult to keep concentrating on an audio book. Such comments were: “I enjoyed it, but could only concentrate for around 30 minutes at a time” and “It’s hard for me to concentrate on it”.

Difficult to skip backwards or forwards

A few respondents thought it was really difficult to skip an audio book backwards or forwards. Such comments were: “absorbing; relaxing; occasionally frustrating because of the difficulty of skipping backwards or forwards” and “Very similar to reading, and in fact I am sometimes not sure whether I have read a book or listened to it. It is easier to listen to, rather than read a book, although if your attention wanders, it can be difficult to ‘go back’”.

The format of audio books respondents listened to

Multiple answers were accepted for this question. According to the result (see figure 19), 74% of the respondents (n=77) still used cassettes when they listened to audio books. CDs and mp3 files were also very popular among audio book listeners; they respectively accounted for 73% and 77% of the respondents answering this question. Apart from these 3 popular formats, broadcasts and podcasts also had certain audiences (respectively 21% and 39%). This accounted for a fact that lots of audio book listeners listened to not only one format of audio books. Other formats written down by respondents’ were Digital downloads, M4B, Streamed on internet and LP.
How did you get the audio books?

This question also allowed multiple answers. A total of 55 respondents got their audio books from free downloads from the Internet (see figure 20), 32 respondents received their audio books as gifts, 32 respondents bought them online. Bookstores and libraries were also very popular places for these respondents to get audio books. One of the respondents listened to audio books because of the communal listening with his wife.
How many audio books do you listen to in a year?

Over 62% of the respondents (n=77) who answered this question listened to over 4 audio books in a year (see figure 21). However, still 22% of the 77 respondents listened to less than 1 audio book in a year.

![Figure 21. The number of books read by respondents (n=77)](image)

Where do you normally listen to audio books?

Multiple answers were accepted for this question. According to the result (see figure 22), 86% of the respondents (n=78) listened to audio books at home. Cars have always been a very common place for listening to audio books (Irwin, 2009). In this survey, 39 respondents listened to audio books in cars. Public transportation also proved to be a very popular location for audio book listeners to listen to audio books. In addition, over 16% of respondents answering this question listened to audio books on walks.
Who do you listen to an audio book with?

Although communal listening was one of the greatest features of audio books, over 79% of respondents (n=77) who answered this question preferred to listen to audio books alone (see figure 23). Around 17% of respondents would listen to audio books with others and alone, 2 respondents always listened to audio books with family. None chose the answer ‘with friends’. 
What occasion do you normally listen to an audio book?

Respondents were allowed to make multiple choices for this question. Most respondents (n=78) liked to listen to audio books while relaxing (see figure 24). Due to its multi-tasking feature, many respondents would listen to audio books while doing housework or cooking. In addition, commuting was definitely one of the favorite occasions for audio book listeners to listen to audio books. One respondent wrote in the field of ‘others’: anything that doesn’t require a lot of attention. This answer might be the best description of occasions people listen to audio books.

![Figure 24. What occasion do you normally listen to an audio book for? (n=78)](image-url)

The number of respondents
4.1.4 Listeners’ attitudes toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading

How much are you willing to pay for an audio book?

A total of 92 respondents answered this question. People who were not interested in audio books did not have to think of its price. There were 7 respondents choosing ‘I am not interested in audio books’ in the second part, so this might be one of the reasons why the answer rate of this question was relatively low. The answer chosen by the highest percentage (36%) of the respondents was ‘I do not know’. Over quarter of the respondents answering this question were willing to pay £ 6-10 for an audio book. Only 1 respondent were willing to pay more than £ 15 for an audio book.

As to users who had listened to audio books (n=76), the percentage of respondents belonging to each answer did not change dramatically. Among the 76 respondents who had listened to an audio book, the percentage of respondents who chose ‘I do not know’ (36%) still remained the same with the result of the whole respondents. However, the percentage of respondents who were willing to pay for an audio book increased. The percentage of respondents who were willing to listen to an audio book only if it was free decreased.
Among 19 respondents who had never listened to an audio book, none of the 7 respondents who chose ‘no, I am not interested (in audio books)’ answered this question. Among 12 respondents who answered ‘no, but I would like to try (to listen to audio books), only 7 answered this question. Over half of the respondents were not sure how much they were willing to pay for an audio book (see figure 27). Only 2 respondents would try an audio book only if it was free. Only 1 respondent was willing to pay £1-5 to give an audio book a go.
What channel(s) are you aware of for getting audio books?

Multiple choices were accepted for this question. The no. 1 channel for respondents to get audio books was a library (see figure 28). Total 69 respondents knew libraries were one of the channels for audio books. Amazon’s Audible.com was also very well-known by respondents (over 62% of respondents knew it). Still quite a few respondents knew that they could find audio books in traditional bookstores. Other responses in ‘others’ were: ‘I make audio books myself with Expressivo program’, ‘archive.org’ or ‘Gutenberg.org’.

Which category of books do you think is especially suitable to have an audio version?

Language learning and fiction were the most popular categories of books to
have an audio version for respondents (see figure 29). Both categories had 66 votes. Books for children came after these two categories, and over 66% of the respondents thought books for children were especially suitable to have an audio version.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 29. Which category of books do you think is especially suitable to have an audio version? (n=94)</th>
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<td>Language learning</td>
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<td>Newspaper and Magazine</td>
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How would you define ‘reading’?

This was an open-ended question. Among 104 respondents, 26 respondents skipped this question. To give a definition of reading could be very tricky. According to the collected responses, all opinions could be roughly divided to two groups:

**Group A**

A linguistic analysis showed that for 39 people reading is associated to a visual media: “Absorption of printed material through visual modality”, “Observing and understanding printed words” and “The act of the mind comprehending a written work”.

**Group B**

Others did not stick to the semantic meaning of ‘reading’, and they thought the most important aspect of reading was to take in the meaning of something no matter what format it was: “Taking in an author’s words, either visually or aurally”, “Reading is absorbing a story or article for information or pleasure or both” and “not sure how to answer that. I read regular books and I read audio books. It’s the same thing to me.”
Do you think listening to an audio book is one kind of reading?

Among the 93 respondents, over 60% thought listening to an audio book was one kind of reading, and 29% thought listening to audio books and reading were two different things (see figure 30). The percentage (65%) of respondents who answered this question positively was higher among respondents who had listened to audio books. Respondents who chose ‘no’ were asked to provide their opinions about their choices (see appendix D). The main reasons they thought listening to audio books was different from reading were:

1. Reading implies the sense of sight.
2. Listening can be the equivalent of reading, but not the same.
3. Reading involves making an interpretation of a work on one’s own, but listening to audio books doesn’t.

![Figure 30. Do you think listening to an audio book is one kind of reading? (n=93)](image-url)
4.2 The Interviews

As mentioned previously in the chapter of ‘Methodology’, all interviews were divided into two streams: one for current audio book listeners and one for new listeners. Questions for current audio book listeners were focused on the reasons they turned to audio books and the relationships between their reading habits and audio books. The other set of questions (see appendix C) was designed for new audio book listeners, and the new listeners were asked to talk about their experience of listening to audio books. Their attitudes towards downloadable audio books were also one of the key issues this research aimed to find. A total of 11 participants were interviewed; 5 of them were current listeners and 6 were new listeners.

4.2.1 Interviews with current audio book listeners

*Background of Interviewee*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee A</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>MP3</th>
<th>Audio book channel</th>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Management Information Administrator</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Sansa Clip</td>
<td>Audible and eBay</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The reason the participant first turned to audio books

Some participants started listening to audio books serendipitously, and some did it intentionally. The results were compiled from the interviewees' answers of ‘when was your first time to listen to an audio book?’

Interviewees who started listening to audio books serendipitously

Two of the interviewees started their listening of audio books serendipitously. Interviewee A originally bought one of the novelisations of the Robin Hood TV series because she thought the reader’s voice was “very sexy”. Then she got hooked by audio books and became an audio book enthusiast after her first audio book. She said “I didn’t expect much but really enjoyed having the story read to me - like being a child again - and got hooked. I now have an Audible membership and download 2-3 books every month” Interviewee D found his first audio book in a library where audio books were interfiled with print books. “It was a children’s book collection in a children’s library. I think they were put together” said Interviewee D.

Interviewees who started listening to audio books intentionally

3 participants started their listening of audio books intentionally. Interviewee B started listening to audio books because she could get access to online audio book library for free in her university. In addition, she thought listening to audio books could accelerate reading. Interviewee C started her listening of audio books because of educational reasons. She wanted to get a better understanding of English literature through listening to audio books. “When I was studying Shakespeare, and I found it difficult, I would listen to an audio book again and again” said interviewee C. Trying to find something to entertain himself while driving back and forth between his territories for work was the main motivation for interviewee E to start listening to
audio books.

The experience of listening to audio books

Every interviewee talked about his/her experience of listening to audio books from different perspectives.

Far more intense than reading a print book

Interviewee A thought the experience of listening to audio books was far more intense than reading a print book. “I do tend to read too fast so can overlook detail, whereas with an audio book, I have to go at the pace of the reader so I get much better sense of place and atmosphere” said Interviewee A. She also mentioned that audio books brought her to global travel without the air fare. She described the experience: “Over the last few months, I’ve been walking with my feet in Eastbourne, but my head in India, in the France of Louis XV, or in New York”.

The reader is everything

Interviewee B thought the voice of the presenter was everything when it came to the experience of listening to audio books. Interviewee B was a listener of both Librivox (a platform for people to upload and download audio books in public domain) and Naxos (an online music library, and ‘spoken words’ was one of the genres). “Untrained reader gives tedious and flat voices that irritate you. However, it can be interesting because you can hear various accents” said Interviewee B. She also mentioned 3 important elements of audio books: 1. the voice and the tone 2. the quality of recording 3. background music. Nevertheless, the first element was everything for an audio book for her. “I think the VOICE of the presenter is everything” said interviewee B.

Relaxing and allowing learning subconsciously

Interviewee C thought one of the greatest benefits of audio books was not having to use the eyes. This interviewee had headaches and would get eyestrain when she read a lot. She talked to her sister who was blind and thought listening to audio books might be a good idea to relieve the symptoms while reading. “It is really nice not to have to look at print all the time” said Interviewee C. She also intended to use audio books for learning English literature. She said “With the studying, I used to put on a tape when I was in bed. My intension was to have a kind of subconscious, you know, to learn Shakespeare subconsciously”. Interviewee C was not the only one who mentioned that audio books were very helpful for learning English literature. “Another reason is its Irish accents and usage - Joyce uses lots of Irish terms, some
Latin, this and that” said interviewee B when she explained why she wanted to listen to Ulysses.

Help kids sleep and their language acquisition
Interviewee D thought listening to audio books was like being told stories, and it made children go bed. “Compared to TV, it is less frantic. You can turn the light off, whereas if you turn the TV on, the light will affect the child and keeps them awake” said interviewee D. In addition, both his daughters got higher reading age when they were kids because of listening to audio books. “She learnt to distinguish the words by turning the pages at the right place and by matching them” said interviewee D.

It fills the day dreamy space and generates an interest in books for those who don’t read
“It fills the otherwise empty, day dreamy spaces we experience while walking or driving or ironing, etc, and allows me to discover many more books” was how interviewee E described his experience of listening to audio books. Interviewee E thought audio books have changed what he does while he walks to the store and does housework. In addition, he cited an example of audio books generating an interest in books for his brother who didn’t like to read.

The difference between audio books and print books
Among 5 interviewees, 4 thought listening to audio books was really different from reading print books.

Preference for unabridged version from print books
Only 1 interviewee thought there was nothing different between audio books and print books. However, she stressed that she didn’t like abridged versions from a print book at all. “I like to get immersed in a story and sometimes an abridged version can make the story feel rushed or clunky” said by Interviewee A. Interviewee D had similar comments of the abridged version of audio books. “Abridged version is definitely not going to be accepted” said interviewee D.

More dramatic
Both interviewee B and C mentioned that audio books could bring elements that print books do not have. “Certainly the dramatised version adds something you wouldn’t get in the print. It is extra to the print” said interviewee C. However, interviewee B thought the dramatised version of audio books could be good or bad
because it could affect a reader’s interpretation of a book. “It adds dramatic elements, but it can influence our reading. It feels like a TV show, or a movie, so it entertains, but it doesn’t stay” said interviewee B.

**Portability and flexibility**

Both interviewee D and E talked about portability and flexibility of audio books. As the comments of the questionnaire, they talked about the fact that audio books allow readers to multi-task. “I used always to wish that I could read something while doing the housework. Now I can” said interviewee E. “You cannot read a book while driving, but you can listen to an audio book while driving” said interviewee D.

**Communal listening**

Interviewee D used audio books to distract his children from TV because they can share audio books together. “When my children were really young, I used audio tapes to distract them from TV. You can share the audio books, but not books” said interviewee D.

**Occasions for listening to audio books**

As one of the comments from the questionnaire stated that suitable occasions for listening to audio books can be “anything that doesn’t require a lot of attention”, interviewees listened to audio books while commuting, doing housework, jogging and going for leisure walks.

**Categories suitable to have an audio version**

Plays, classics, crime novels and animal/nature writing were genres especially put forth by interviewees. Interviewee C thought plays and crime novels were especially suitable to have an audio version because “they need that sense of drama”. Interviewee A recommended classics to have audio versions because she was “put off by the very small print in old books”. One genre worth mentioning was ‘animal/nature writing’. Interviewee B said that her favourite audio book was animal/nature writing (http://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=na245412). “It is hard to imagine an animal’s voice when they are written on papers” said interviewee B.
**Private listening**

Apart from interviewee D (audio books for children), most interviewees preferred listening to audio books alone. Interviewees preferring listening to audio books alone all mentioned they used mp3 players (3 were iPods and 1 was Sansa Clip) to listen to audio books. The portable device might be one of the reasons they preferred to listen to audio books alone because they usually listened with headphones. Even with speakers, interviewee C still likes to listen to audio book alone. "Sometimes my husband was there, and then he would start asking too many questions about the audio book. I just have to stop. He gets in the way" said interviewee C.

**Interviewees’ attitudes towards listening to audio books as one kind of reading**

This topic could be very tricky because people might interpret it from different perspectives. Therefore, there were two questions for this topic:

1. Do you think listening to audio book is one kind of reading?
2. For you, can audio books substitute print books under some circumstances?

3 interviewees thought listening to audio books was one kind of reading, and most interviewees agreed that audio books could substitute print books under some circumstances.

**Interpreting text**

Interviewees who thought listening to audio books was one kind of reading because they both thought listening to audio books was just another way to interpret text. Interviewee C thought this question was just a format question. "I know some people think this (listening to audio books) is not reading, and I disagree because you are still engaging in the text which the author has written, so it is just a format question, really, isn’t it” said interviewee C. Interviewee D stressed that “for children before literacy; for the blind and for the old, it may be the only way.”

**Only under some circumstances**

Interviewee E agreed with the idea that audio books could substitute print books under some circumstances. However, he emphasised that “anything I would want/need to think about like Shakespeare or the nuances of history or philosophy I would insist on sitting in front of the text and reading it then looking up, thinking and making marks on the page.”
Encouraging rather than replacing

Interviewee D thinks audio books encourage reading rather than replace reading. “I think basically. You listen to the audio books, and you receive the book by the same people, you want to read it. For my younger daughter, there was one particular book that she used (Rohld Dahl)” said interviewee D.

Deficiency of audio books

The things interviewees thought needed to be improved on for audio books could be categorised to: price, technical problems and presentation of voice.

Too expensive

Interviewees who listened to audio books in CD format all thought CDs were still too expensive. Interviewee C refused to take any risk to buy audio books she might not like. “I usually buy things I know I am going to like, or I have read the print book and I want to listen to it as well” said interviewee C. She also emphasized “most of the books you buy are abridged, don’t they? So sometimes you feel you are missing the details you would get if you read the book. It would be even more expensive than to buy the full book.”

Technical problems

Interviewee B listened to both online, downloadable and CD audio books. She said “I prefer physical CDs” because “it feels better to own the CDs, tangible ones”, and also because she hated to deal with technical problems. “Online audio books - it is convenient in Taiwan because I have wireless internet everywhere, but, if I don’t have internet access, it will be troublesome to hear” said interviewee B.

Technical problems also hindered interviewee E from listening to audio books. Interviewee E started his audio book listening from university, and then stopped until he was 45. He gave up listening to CDs because of “the issue of always having to find your place again.” Recently he went back to audio books because “Audible solved that (the issue of always having to find your place again) - or maybe it's the iPod that solved it - because it simply resumes where you left off.”

Presentation of voice

The issue of the presentation of voice was similar with interviewee B’s “the narrator is everything.” Interviewee A said that she got some titles read by
volunteers but not professionals in a commercial audio book website (There are some editions of audio books of the Royal National Institute of the Blind in Audible)(Audible.co.uk, 2010). “In the ‘old days’ it was volunteers reading for the Blind. Audible has got some of these titles and they are quite amateurish. Not that I could do any better myself though but a poor reader can be very distracting” said interviewee A.

Attitudes toward downloadable audio books

Most interviewees showed very positive attitudes toward downloadable audio books, but one interviewee did not download at all. Among 4 interviewees who like downloadable audio books, 2 are total enthusiasts and 2 still listen to audio books in CD format. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, interviewee E thought downloadable audio books helped him solve “the issue of always having to find your place again.” Interviewee A only listened to downloadable audio books because she thought her mp3 player was much smaller than a CD player and because she did not have to worry an exciting chapter in a CD was scratched. “My Sansa player is so tiny and clips on my clothing so I don’t need to carry a bag for the CD player. And the membership plan means I can get books much, much cheaper than I would with a physical copy, and without paying or waiting for shipping. The sound quality has always been excellent and the downloads can’t get a scratch across an exciting chapter” said interviewee A.

As to the two interviewees listening to audio books in both CD and downloadable formats, one of the main reasons they still listened to CDs was that CDs are tangible. “You know another thing is probably silly, when you buy CDs, you got a cover, so it is like a book. I think the cover is quite important because it gives you a visual idea of the audio book, doesn’t it” said interviewee C. “it feels better to own the CDs, tangible ones” said interviewee B.

There were several reasons for the only interviewee not listening to downloadable audio books, but he emphasised one reason: he loves public libraries, so he borrows a lot. Other reasons for not listening to downloadable audio books were “to save file space” and the stereotype of “music is ‘cropped’ and shortened in downloads.”
4.2.2 Interviews with new audio book listeners

**Background of interviewee**

Six participants were invited to have trials of Audible. They were asked to choose one title of an audio book and listen to it, and they were also informed that they were going to be interviewed about their trials after one and half months.

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**The experience of listening to audio books**

Most interviewees would describe their experiences of listening to audio books as “different to what I expected.” Although the experiences were different from what they had expected, most interviewees showed positive attitudes toward their trials.

**Not so different from the experience of reading print books, and even better**

Both interviewee F and J thought the experiences of listening to audio books were not so different from what they had expected. Interviewee F originally thought he might not be able to engage with the content on the same deep level as reading print book, but he found “the content was still absorbed in the same way” even with the different mechanism. Interviewee J was originally a ‘book person’ who liked the
feeling of being able to touch the paper and feel the book. “I wasn’t very sure if I’ll like an audio book. But it turned to be very enjoyable to listen to, especially when my eyes are tired and I just want to relax” said interviewee J.

Requiring more attention than I expected

2 interviewees mentioned that listening to audio books required a lot more attention than they had initially expected. “I found myself drifting quite frequently when I was listening to the audio book” said interviewee K. Interviewee G had difficulties distinguishing different characters in the audio book. “I have to put so much effort to listen to the narrator, especially to distinguish his voice for different characters” said interviewee G. However, she thought this might be because the narrator’s skills were not so good.

Other comments

Interviewee H thought that he preferred reading a print book for entertainment purposes while listening to an audio book that provides educational information. Interviewee I found listening to audio books was very helpful for her to improve her English although she had lived and worked in Canada over ten years. “I find when some Chinese speak English; they are a bit monotone, so listening to an audio book might help” said interviewee I.

The differences between audio books and print books

Accessibility

Most interviewees thought the greatest difference between audio books and print book was the accessibility. Over half of the interviewees thought audio books had better accessibility than print books. “One of the main differences I would state from my experience is the accessibility, I found I was able to engage with the book at times and in places it would have been impossible to engage with a print book (e.g. walking)” said interviewee F.

The experience of reading print books is more personal

Two interviewees mentioned that the experiences of listening to audio books were not as personal as reading print books. “While listing to the narrator, I have to build up a relationship with him/her, which makes it not that personal anymore” said interviewee H. “When I read a book, I would have an image in my mind; when listening to a story, it feels like seeing the image through other's eyes” said interviewee I.
Other comments

Interviewee H thought “major difference (between audio books and print books) is for audio books, the person listening is in a "passive mode". Interviewee stated that G the depth she got isn't comparable to reading a print book while listening to audio books.

Devices used by participants to listen to audio books

Among 6 participants, 2 listened with iPhones, 2 with both laptops and iPods, and 1 listened with only laptop.

Categories especially suitable to have an audio version

Among 6 participants, 2 chose non-fiction and 4 chose fiction. After their trails, they were asked ‘which categories do you think are especially suitable to have an audio version?’ Total 4 participants preferred non-fiction, 1 preferred fiction and 1 preferred both.

Non-fiction

Interviewee F preferred non-fiction to have an audio version because he worried that “the narration might spoil the very personal nature of the way people engage with fiction”. He also recommended ‘language learning’ because he had found “language learning podcasts very useful in my own language studies”. Interviewee G found it difficult to distinguish voices for different characters in the audio book she chose, so she would say ‘diaries’ in which a narrator just has to play one character, such ‘The time traveler’s wife’. Although interviewee K chose fiction for her trial, she preferred non-fiction. “Unless you can have different voices for different characters, and that will make it more interesting. Whereas for a fact book like history or something just needs one voice, pretty much like lectures” said interviewee K.

Fiction

Interviewee I thought fiction would be more suitable to have an audio version because she thought books like interview skills might not be able to present very well with audio version (e.g. lack of pictures and graphics). Interviewee F thought fiction would be a very good option for a family to listen together, but maybe not as much for a single person.
Occasions for listening to audio books

Before bed

Almost every interviewee mentioned that he/she usually listened to the audio book before sleep. “It is like reading a book. I like to do in a peaceful environment” and “it helps me fall asleep” said interviewees.

Commuting

Two interviewees said that they would listen to audio books while commuting by public transportation. Interviewee F didn’t take any transportation to work, but he listened to his audio book while walking to work.

Anything that doesn’t require a lot of attention

Things like waiting, doing chores and lying by a pool were all mentioned by interviewees.

Listening to audio books as one kind of reading

Most interviewees thought listening to audio books was different from reading books, and only 2 interviewees agreed that audio books can substitute print books under some circumstances.

Audio books and print books could be interchanged in most cases

Instead of using ‘substitute’, interviewee F thought audio books and print books could be interchanged in most cases. “Definitely, I think that although they can be used differently, (and I would have different preferences, such as preferring an audio book to fill my time spent walking or doing menial tasks) I would think they could be interchanged in most cases” said interviewee F.

Audio books and print books are two things

The interviewees who did not agree that audio books could substitute print books under some circumstances felt that mainly because they had always been used to the mode of reading print books such as tangibility. However, interviewee K said “maybe future generation listens better than reads, perhaps”.
Participants’ suggestions for downloadable audio books

A better way to present the sample

Over half of the interviewees found it very difficult to decide a title. “The sample is really important” said interviewee H. Interviewee F suggested that it would be better if users could select 3 minutes freely from the whole content (users cannot choose what section they want to listen to in an audio book on Audible).

Keyword searching

Although interviewee K listened with iPod which allowed time tracking on the screen, she still found it very hard to go back and look for something she wants (e.g. what did the person say…..). She would imagine audio books allowing keyword searching, and that would make things easier.

Author as the narrator

Interviewee H and I both mentioned they preferred the author of a book to be the narrator. “I think he (the author) knew the content far better” said interviewee H.

Trained narrator

Interviewee F found the narrator of his book often pronounced words wrong. Because the book chosen by interviewee F was about a specific academic field (quantum mechanics), he hoped “for specialist books, narrators should be coached through specialist terms etc”.

Participants’ inclinations toward continuing listening to audio books

After free trials, participants were asked about their inclinations toward continuing listening to audio books. Half of the participants would like to continue if they could get lower price of audio books; 2 participants did not think they would need audio books; only 1 participant was very positive about continuing listening without any condition. Apart from the pricing model, 2 participants also thought the technical problems could be obstacles of using audio books. “The DRM system (Audible uses DRM to prevent people copying audio files, so users have to download specific software and not every portable device is suited to this format) and the associated software was inconvenient but wouldn’t put me off if I felt that the prices were reasonable” said interviewee F. “I can’t just upload it onto any mp3 player” said
interviewee H.

4.3 Summary

According to the analysis of the survey, iPod culture and downloadable audio books do have certain impacts on users’ reading habits. Most participants have mp3 players, and over 35% of the mp3 players are iPod. It was also found that most audio book listeners listen to not just one format of audio books. Mp3 files, CDs and cassettes are all very popular among respondents of the questionnaire. Downloadable audio books do change the occasions people listen to audio books. For example, participants would listen to audio books while jogging, taking strolls and other exercising. In a Walkman era, people just could not complete these tasks while listening to audio books. As to their attitudes toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading, most participants answered positively. Even if they did not agree with the idea, most would think that listening to audio books is equivalent to reading. Interviewees who did not want to continue listening to audio books thought that mainly because they already got used to print books and also because they have deep affections toward print books.

5. Conclusions

According to the objectives of this research (see chapter 1), conclusions were made.

5.1 People’s general impressions of audio books

According to the results of the questionnaire, the definitions respondents gave of audio books were very consistent. Among all respondents, over 60% were female and almost one fifth respondents first listened to audio books when they were small kids. Basically, there were 3 elements in an audio book: from a print/written book, a narrator/narrators and acoustic in nature. In conclusion, most respondents defined an audio book as a written book, read aloud for listening.

Over 30% of the respondents did not know how much they were willing to pay for an audio book. One quarter of respondents were willing to pay £ 6-10 for an audio book. The main reason of the great uncertainty was probably caused by the significantly varied pricing models among different audio book formats (e.g. online, downloadable, CDs, cassettes and mp3 CD)(Engelen, 2008). As to the most
well-known channel for getting audio books, over 70% of respondents knew they could go to libraries to get it. Language learning, fiction, and books for children were the top 3 categories respondents thought suitable to have an audio version.

5.2 People’s attitudes toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading

Over 60% of respondents to the questionnaire agreed that listening to audio books was one kind of reading. There were mainly 3 reasons why some respondents did not agree that listening to audio books is one kind of reading:
1. Reading implies the sense of sight.
2. Listening can be the equivalent of reading, but not the same.
3. Reading involves making interpretation of a work on one’s own, but listening to audio books doesn’t.

As to data collected from interviews, only 3 (out of 11) interviewees thought listening to audio books was one kind of reading. One thought ‘do you think listening to audio books is one kind of reading’ was just a semantic argument on the term reading, and listening to audio books was definitely equivalent of reading. 6 interviewees thought listening to audio books could substitute reading under some circumstances.

From the results of both the questionnaire and the interviews, the concept ‘listening to audio books as an equivalent of reading’ was widely accepted by most respondents and interviewees no matter listening to audio books was one kind reading or not.

5.3 Whether listening to audio books changes the time, place and occasion of reading

According to the results of this survey, the answer of ‘whether listening to audio books changes time, place and occasion of reading’ was definitely positive. The most frequently-used words to describe the experiences of listening audio books are ‘accessible’, ‘portable’ and ‘flexible’ because people can listen to audio books under more circumstances than reading print books. The places (e.g. home, train or bus) where people listen to audio books could be pretty similar to the places people read
books, but the tasks people are doing while listening to audio books could be very different. For example, it is almost impossible for a person to read and drive at the same time, not mention washing dishes while reading. Places like ‘gym’, ‘on a walk’ or ‘on a bike’ were not words people used in the past to describe their experiences of reading print books. Allowing multi-tasking is definitely the key feature of audio books that facilitates the change in the occasions for reading.

One thing that has not changed is that people listen to lots of audio books still read many print books. As mentioned in the literature review, listening to audio book is more complementary to reading print books rather than substitutive. The result of this survey indicated that 85% of the respondents who read more than 4 audio books in a year still read over 4 print books in a year.

5.4 Whether audio books can help accelerate reading?

Among all interviewees, 3 directly pointed out that listening to audio books helps them read more books than they used to. Two interviewees did not say that listening to audio books helped them get through more books, but they both mentioned that they could listen to audio books in more situations than reading print books. If listening to audio books really accelerates reading for some people, it is because audio books allow people to access to books in more situations, not because people listen faster than reading.

5.5 Do downloadable (electronic) audio books change anything about audio books?

Downloadable/electronic audio books do change the occasions people listen to audio books. Although portable devices for audio files are not new for consumers, being able to contain hundreds of albums in a small device is a big evolution for the history of personal soundscape. Two interviewees said that they love CDs to be tangible, but they could not find enough space for them. In addition, mp3 players (not mp3 CDs) allow audio book listeners to be engaged in activities they could not do in the past. One interviewee mentioned that he likes to listen to audio books while jogging.

Few audio book listeners in the era of cassette Walkman and CD walkman would listen to audio books while taking strolls, not mention jogging. Mp3 players are much
smaller than Walkmans and their appearance solved the problem of CD walkmans’ instability (scratched or skipped).

Downloadable audio books also help to solve one of the greatest deficiencies of audio books: the difficulty in finding a place in a tape or CD. One interviewee complained about the issue of always having to find the previous place again in a tape or CD, and he thought downloadable audio books solved the problem.

Some old problems were solved, but new problems will rise. Though it is much easier to find a place with the time track on the mp3 player screens, content search is still an unsolved issue of audio books. To seek a better navigation system for audio books, some say the available solution might be in the DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System, a standard audio book format originally for people with print disabilities) (Engelen, 2008) (Royal National Institute of Blind People, 2010). DRM (Digital Rights Management) is another problem especially for downloadable audio books. Two new audio book listeners mentioned that it is really inconvenient to deal with the software and the ‘transfer file’ (DRM) problem, but they both thought the DRM settings are understandable.

Another format related to downloadable audio books is online audio books (e.g. Naxos). The subscription fee is much cheaper than the downloadable format, but the interviewee using online audio books complained “no Internet, no books” (online audio books are not downloadable). Although audio books in a digital era have become much convenient, there are still lots of specific problems to be solved.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for the suppliers of downloadable audio books

Pricing model
No matter invited or current listeners of audio books, they all thought prices of audio books (both CDs and downloadable) are really too high. Over 36% of questionnaire respondents did not know how much they are willing to pay for an audio book. Most interviewees thought they would rather to buy physical books if the prices of downloadable audio books are the same or higher than physical book. Considering the fact there are also free digital audio books for downloading (e.g.
Librivox), to adopt a different subscription mode or reduce the price could be options for the supplier.

Adoption of DAISY

To find a suitable navigation system is always an issue for audio books. The ‘finding places’ problem was mentioned more than 4 times among all interviews. The DAISY format which allows the reader to access to the digital material via enhanced navigation (e.g. chapter headings) should be seriously considered by the suppliers of commercial downloadable audio books.

6.2 Recommendations for the future research

This research was focused on the audio book users. The reason why non-users do not use audio books should be also understood. More surveys focusing on the reading habits of non-users of audio books are recommended. Although there is a booming market of commercial downloadable audio books, user studies in this area are currently under-researched. According to this survey, lots of consumers do not listen to audio books because they still have deep affections toward print books. Therefore, it is concluded that more research should be focused on non-users especially the new generation who were born in a digital era (not a paper era).

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http://www.audiopub.org/LinkedFiles/APA_Fact_Sheet.pdf [Accessed 08 August 2010]


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http://www.audiopub.org/LinkedFiles/LancasterPASunAudiesJudging1340_001.pdf [Accessed 03 August 2010]


http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g978140512433117_chunk_g978140512433117_ss1-1 [Accessed 08 August 2010]


http://76.74.24.142/A208B8A7-6BBF-EF15-303B-582014919F78.pdf [Accessed 05 August 2010]


Appendix A-

Information Sheet of the Interview about Using Audio Books

Thank you very much for your participation. The interview is going to start in a few minutes. Before we start the interview, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like to know more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Chia Ching Chang

Research Project Title
The relationship between audio books and reading habits in a digital era

What is the project’s purpose?
This project was designed for my postgraduate dissertation. As people gradually get used to leisure listening to books instead of reading them, the main aim of this project is to investigate whether commercial audio books can change people’s reading habits. For example, this project wants to know whether audio books can help promote the reading rate of modern people. In addition, this project will also investigate whether listening to audio books changes the time, place and scenario of reading.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?
The content of the interview will be used to help understand how audio books can change people’s reading habits. Since you have agreed to take part, the main task of you is to offer an interview with the researcher. As mentioned earlier, this project was designed for my postgraduate dissertation. Therefore, the final presentation of this interview will come out no later than 1st of September 2010. You will receive a copy of the dissertation in the early September.

What do I have to do?
First of all, you have to sign a consent form to agree your participation. Then you are going to fill out a form about your profile. After filling out the forms, you will
have an interview about your experience using audio books. The interview will last about 30 minutes.

**Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

An mp3 player will be used to record the interview. The audio recording of this interview will be used only for the dissertation. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

If you cannot offer a face to face interview, instant message software will be used for the interview, and the entire message will be saved.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

This project has been classed as a ‘low risk’ project by the Department of Information Studies of the University of Sheffield. No foreseeable disadvantages and risks are concerned so far.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help to understand more user needs of audio books.

**What if something goes wrong?**

Before the researcher submits her own work, you will receive a draft of her dissertation. If you find any information derived from the interview is inconsistent with the original interview, you have right to ask for correcting the content.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Full ethical approval has been given to this project by Department of Information Studies of the University of Sheffield. Any information collected from this interview will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Looking for any further information about ethical issue or data protection, please consult the webpage below:

www.shef.ac.uk/researchoffice/gov_ethics_grp/ethics/factsheets.html

**Contact for further information**

For any further information after the interview, please write to:

lip09cc@shef.ac.uk

**Thank you very much for your participation.**

Sign by the interviewee: ________________________

Sign by the researcher: ________________________
Appendix B- Questionnaire about Audio Books

Questionnaire about Audio Books

Dear participants:

Thank you very much for your participation. This questionnaire is purely academic research. As people gradually get used to leisure listening to books instead of reading them, this questionnaire mainly wants to investigate people’s general impression of audio books and how willing they are to adopt audio books. All answers that you give in this questionnaire are entirely confidential and anonymous. The date will help understand how commercial audio books can change people’s reading habit.

I. Background of participants

1. Please tick your gender
   - Male   - Female
2. Please write down your nationality (ex: Taiwanese)
   __________________
3. The country you live in
   __________________
4. The city you live in
   __________________
5. Your age
   ________
6. What’s your job?
   __________________
7. Your education attainment
   - primary school (elementary school)
   - high school
   - college/university
   - graduate school
   - PhD
8. How much time do you spend on reading per day?
   - under 1 hr
   - 1-2 hrs
   - over 2hrs
   - I do not know
9. How many print books do you read in a year?
10. Do you have an mp3 player
   □ Yes, and the brand is _______ □ No

II. Audio book listeners or not
1. How would you define an audio book?
   __________________________________________

2. Have you ever listened to audio books? (skip logic used)
   □ Yes
   □ No, but I would like to try
   □ Not, I am not interested in

III. Listeners experiences of using audio books
1. When was your first time to listen to an audio book?
   □ As a young child
   □ elementary school
   □ high school
   □ college/university
   □ after university
   □ cannot remember

2. How would you describe the experience of listening to audio books?
   __________________________________________

3. What was the format of the audio book?
   □ tape
   □ CD
   □ MP3
   □ broadcast
   □ Podcast
   □ others _______

4. How did you get the audio book?
   □ as a gift
   □ at a library
   □ at a bookstore
   □ online shopping
5. How many audio books do you read in a year?
   - less than 1
   - 1-2
   - 3-4
   - more than 4

6. Where do you normally listen to audio books? (Multiple choices accepted)
   - home
   - train station
   - on the train
   - car
   - airport
   - on the plane
   - on a bike
   - other

7. Who do you listen to an audio book with?
   - I usually listen to audio books alone
   - with my family
   - with my friends
   - sometimes I listen alone, sometimes with friends or family
   - with

8. What occasion do you normally listen to audio books? (Multiple choices accepted)
   - on a car of a trip
   - gardening
   - cooking
   - doing housework
   - relaxing
   - eating
   - on the way of commute (public transportation)
   - on the way of commute (by car)
   - on the way of commute (by bike)
   - on the way of commute (by foot)
   - others

IV. Attitudes of respondents toward listening to audio books as one kind of reading
1. How much are you willing to pay for an audio book?
only if it is free
£ 1-5
£ 6-10
£ 11-15
more than £ 15
I do not know

2. What is the channel(s) you aware of for getting audio books? (Multiple choices accepted)
do not know any
libraries
Amazon's Audible
Audiobooks.net
AudioBooksForFree.com
Leisureaudiobooks.com
Librivox.org
Traditional book stores(e.g. Waterstone or Barnes and Noble)
Official websites of publishers
Others________

3. Which category of books do you think is especially suitable to have an audio version? (Multiple choices accepted)
Business
Classics
Fiction
Non-fiction
History
Language Learning
Books for Kids
Films and TV
Newspaper and Magazine
Others________

4. How would you define ‘reading’?
__________________________________________________________________

5. Do you think listening to audio books is one kind of reading?
I do not know
Yes
No, because_________________

Thank you for your participation, you have finished all the questions.
Appendix C - Questions for interviews

Background questions about the participant

Before we start the interview, I would like you to answer some questions about your background. These questions can help understand user needs of audio books better. Thank you very much.

Background of participants

1. Please tick your gender
   □ Male □ Female
2. Please write down your nationality (ex: Taiwan)
   ____________________
3. The country you live in
   ____________________
4. The city you live in
   ____________________
5. Your age
   ________
6. What’s your job?
   ____________________
7. Your education attainment
   □ primary school (elementary school)
   □ high school
   □ collage/university
   □ graduate school
   □ PhD
8. How much time do you spend on reading per day?
   □ under one hour
   □ between 1 to 2 hours
   □ over two hours
   □ I do not know
9. How many print books do you read in a year?
   □ None
   □ under 1
   □ 1~2
   □ 3~4
   □ more than 4
10. Do you have an mp3 player?
Yes, and the brand is_______(e.g. iPhone, iPod or Sony)
☐ No

Questions for current audio book listeners
1. How would you define an audio book?
2. When was your first time to listen to an audio book?
3. What’s the format of the audio book?
4. How did you get the audio book?
5. How would you describe the experience of listening to an audio book?
6. What occasion do you normally listen to an audio book?
7. Who do you listen to an audio book with?
8. What’s the difference between audio books and printed books?
9. Which category of books do you think is especially suitable to have an audio version?
10. What channels do you normally get an audio book from?
11. Is there anything you want an audio book to be improved on?
12. What suggestion would you like to give to an audio book?
13. How would you define ‘reading’?
14. Do you think listening to an audio book is one kind of reading?
15. For you, can audio books substitute print books under some circumstances?
16. How do you like downloadable audio books?

Questions for new audio book listeners
1. Before this project, do you know Audible.com?
2. Have you listened to an audio book?
3. How would you define an audio book?
4. What device do you use for listening to an audio book?
5. How would you describe the experience of listening to an audio book?
6. What occasion do you normally listen to an audio book for?
7. Where did you listen to the audio book?
8. What time do you usually listen to an audio book?
9. How much time do you spend on the audio book?
10. Who do you usually listen to an audio book with?
11. What’s the difference between audio books and printed books?
13. Which category of books do you think is especially suitable to have an audio version?
14. Is there anything you want an audio book to be improved on?
15. How would you define ‘reading’?
16. Do you think listening to an audio book is one kind of reading?
17. For you, can audio books substitute print books under some circumstances?
18. Do you think the pricing model is reasonable?
19. If you have to pay on your own, are you willing to continue using audio books?
### Appendix D-

**Responses for open-ended questions of questionnaire**

1. How would you define an audio book?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Digital recording of person(s) reading print material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The recording of a book read aloud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A work of literature that is read aloud and consumed by the purchaser via that audio material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A book which is available in audible format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A recording by one or more readers-aloud, of a work also published in book form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It’s just a normal book but with someone else reading it to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A narration of the text, or depending on the genre, a dramatisation of it. It is generally a more active and lively form of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A recording of a book being read aloud or dramatised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A book being read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A fully book or poetry book done completely by recorded voice to enhance books for people that are blind, for people driving back/forth on trips or to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A book that is read and recorded by someone for other people to listen to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A printed book that is read out word for word by a narrator and is stored electronically as a audio file or on physical media such as a cd or dvd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hmmm...hard question...a book unleashed from the page through the collaborative power of the human voice and some kind of electronic technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>A recording of any text on any topic to be listened to at any time, in any place; consists foremost of novels and non-fiction books, but may also be documentaries, poetry, columns etc. An audio book stands on its own, isn't bound to a specific time frame (in contrast to e.g. a news reading, a (live) sports report which can be listened to as well).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>An audio facsimile of a written book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>A book recorded in a format that enables it to be listened to repeatedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>A book that has been put into audio format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Recording of the reading of the full text of a book, by one or more narrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>A book format in which the consumer receives the information through the sense of hearing rather than sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>A book read aloud by a person, made storable and listenable by technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>A book recorded for listening purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>A recording of someone(s) reading a book aloud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>A recording of someone reading a book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>A book read by a narrator that can be enjoyed via listening devices such as mp3 players (or formerly cassette players).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>A book read aloud, usually by a single narrator. Not a dramatization or adaptation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>A book that has been recorded on tape, cd or some digital format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>A printed book made into a spoken word audio file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>A work of literary merit that is read aloud by a person or person(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>an audiobook is a book who is read by someone (and recorded, so that it can be listened to more than once), it should be the complete book (otherwise it is an abridged audiobook). Furthermore it should just be a plain read, no special effects or different speakers for different persons in the book (that would be some subsection of audiobooks, it should be the exception).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>An audio book is the translation of written text into spoken language, captured via recording.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>A material support for a literary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>an unabridged audio reproduction of a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>An audiobook is a published printed book recorded so that a person may listen to it rather than read it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>A complete, unabridged recording of somebody reading a book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>A book that has been read aloud and recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>An unabridged audio book is a sound recording of the full version of a work of fiction or non-fiction, interpreted by a reader or readers who may or may not be the original author/s. An abridged audio book is a sound recording of a condensed version of a work of fiction or non-fiction, interpreted by a reader or readers who may or may not be the original author/s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>One you listen to instead of reading visually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>The verbatim content of a written work presented as speech (including computer-generated speech).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>A spoken book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>A text read aloud and recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Well, it is a read out book. And it takes more time to get through but less effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>an audio data where the story of a book is narrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>I thought that readers can listen audio books wherever they go by mp3. It’s a convenient book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>I started using audio books when due to illness I was unable to read or concentrate for any length of time and decided to give audio books a try I am now hooked. Audio books are as if not more relaxing than reading. It enables me to use my imagination as much as I do with reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>In my thinking the audio book should be a digital file nowadays, the type can be wav, mp3, or other file type. And the speaker will read out the book content with a good skill. The file will separate from the book section for user easy to use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>good. But I cannot concentrate for a long time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>A recording of a person who reads a book, so you can listen to it instead of reading it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>An audio book is a work combining recording and printed material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>An audio book should be a book that you listen instead of reading it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>It's interesting and innovative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>An already printed book that has been professionally read and recorded and produced in conjunction with the book's original publisher and released as an alternative way to experience the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Digital (CD; file) or analogue (tape) of the text of a book, being read out by a human actor or synthesised speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>The book with sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Prose or poetry recorded to be received aurally (except that designed for broadcast by radio or TV), in a form which remains identical each time - this may include alternative routes or add-on activities, so that the listener interacts with what they are hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>is it similar to podcast?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Writings I can listen to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>book read by a narrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Generally a person reading the text of a book, often with added sound effects and music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>A spoken word recording of written words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>novel/poems spoken onto a tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Its simply an audio file like any other song file but has narration instead of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>the book for listening instead of reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>A book that some one is reading out loud that you can listen to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>It is a talking book. It is a book that the reader listen to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>A book that is read to me via cd/download</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>A novel or non-fiction title on mp3, CD or tape that you can listen to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>A book that is played through audio media, to be listened to rather than read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>a book-length piece of usually narrative text in any audio format (cassette, cd, mp3, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>A recorded version of a printed book in which someone reads the words out loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>It can make sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Having the author read the contents of book directly through voice-over. Formats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of audio books could be on CD or digital mp3 and other associated files.

72 A recording of a book read aloud

73 Files that contain a person reading the content of a book, which people can download and listen to during their preferred time using various media, such as computer, CD player, MP3 player.

74 some books with audio helping reader to understand the content

75 a read out loud book

76 Very much. But can I take notes when I listen to it?

77 A book that is read out to me

78 voice book

79 It provides the sound so that you can read books with voice

80 audiobook is a recording that is primarily spoken word. It is often based on a recording of commercial printed material. It is not necessarily an exact audio version of a book.

81 I have no idea, I seldom use/listen to it.

82 a book which has certain device to make sound

83 like a game player?

84 A book that can read for me in lines

85 a printed book with a CD. For learning language.

86 a book which reads the text of a printed book out as telling a story

87 do not need to read it just listen to it!

88 A book has voice

2. How would describe your experience of listening to audio books?

1 When listening to an audio book I relinquish my control of the reading of a story. I rarely listen purely for information, thus my involvement is in understanding the spoken word and the development of the plot, characters and story.

2 Convenient—it allows me to move around the house and do other tasks while keeping my mind busy, as well as allowing me to spend more time on reading than I would be able to otherwise due to my poor vision. It is an experience reminiscent of listening to bedtime stories as a child, something you can drift away into.

3 Rather depends on who is reading it. A good reader can transport you into the fictional world contained in the book. Of course, the characters assume a particular identity because of the way in which the reader brings them to life. This is different from physically reading the book oneself where one's own imagination may ascribe different qualities to the characters.

4 A relaxing way of enjoying literature, though rather dependent on the skill of the
reader-aloud.

5 I find I get more involved with the book because I am quite a fast reader so tend to miss detail. With audio, I go at a slower speed so get more from the book.

6 It is much like listening to a story, told with the interpretations of a story-teller.

7 Very much enjoy it.

8 allows me to do other things while I listen to a book. Also makes me slow down and pay attention to the more boring passages.

9 made time fly by while traveling thru desolate area

10 Very pleasant - it is nice to relax my eyes but still enjoy the pictures in my head

11 It is, in my opinion, quite different from actually reading a book. In a way, the reader of the audio book gives his/her own interpretation of the book (especially when reading dialogue), which may be quite interesting and give a slightly different view of the matter at hand. I find listening to a book, if read well, relaxing; it can be fun, exciting etc, depending on the text that is read.

12 Amazing if the voices are good, very bad if the voices are not so good.

13 Very similar to reading, and in fact I am sometimes not sure whether I have read a book or listened to it. It is easier to listen to, rather than read a book, although if your attention wanders, it can be difficult to 'go back'.

14 I find it pretty much the same as actually reading the book myself. As I get used to the pace of the reader, I forget about them and just get caught up in the story and the characters.

15 The same as reading.

16 Very pleasant - it is nice to relax my eyes but still enjoy the pictures in my head

17 It is, in my opinion, quite different from actually reading a book. In a way, the reader of the audio book gives his/her own interpretation of the book (especially when reading dialogue), which may be quite interesting and give a slightly different view of the matter at hand. I find listening to a book, if read well, relaxing; it can be fun, exciting etc, depending on the text that is read.

18 Amazing if the voices are good, very bad if the voices are not so good.

19 Very similar to reading, and in fact I am sometimes not sure whether I have read a book or listened to it. It is easier to listen to, rather than read a book, although if your attention wanders, it can be difficult to 'go back'.

20 I find it pretty much the same as actually reading the book myself. As I get used to the pace of the reader, I forget about them and just get caught up in the story and the characters.

21 The same as reading.

22 Slower than reading, but it frees up the hands and visual attention so other tasks can be done at the same time. Examples are driving, walking, doing chores around the
house, etc.

24 great for car travel, and when you are doing mundane tasks.

25 Interesting. I discovered that I needed to keep my attention tuned to the reading.

26 Enjoyable. Being able to listen to a book and do other things at the same time.

27 Love it

28 Convenient.

29 Same as actually reading the text (visually): depending on the book, enjoyable, enlightening, boring, moving....

30 engaging

31 I enjoy it. I'm a great reader and this gives me an opportunity to absorb books at times when I normally wouldn't be able to read a print book, e.g. at work, where I spend many hours on the computer.

32 Wonderful. I can easily see the pictures in my head that the narrator conjures up.

33 It is like reading the book, except that with audio I get clearer pictures in my mind because I'm forced to slow down and have time to actually imagine what it would look like. With audio I tend to get more details which I would have missed out on when reading the book but which I get with the audiobook.

34 Listening to an audio book is a pleasant way to spend time, especially if one is doing chores that do not require single minded mental concentration.

35 Pleasant.

36 listening to audio books is the same as reading a printed book, just faster.

37 Always engaging and enjoyable.

38 Pleasant, time saving. Can be done anywhere.

39 I enjoy it, usually better than reading it. I can do more while listening than I can while reading. I get as much enjoyment and information out of the book as I would reading it.

40 This depends entirely on the quality of the audio book - both the original work and the recording. A well-read audio book can make a good book come alive. A poorly-read one (or a boring book) can send me to sleep. By the way, re the previous question, the word is college, not collage.

41 Great

42 I've only ever listened to audiobooks of works I've already read, so the audiobook is effectively an illustration of something I know, coloured through someone else's personality.

43 Very pleasant, if I like the book and the reader.

44 Well, the communal experience of reading a book with somebody else - the speaker. pretty much like listening to radio readings of novels.
pleasant, it brings the book to life

relaxing, entertaining, enjoyable

A very pleasant activity to do while doing another task eg driving, walking, gardening. Not so enjoyable when main activity.

interesting!

That was a good experience. My parent play a proverb story series for me. But in that time the file type is cassette record so that makes me cant easily move on the section I want. As I know there are some people around me they have better learning ability from hearing not reading. The voice can enhance their in memory.

Really novel and interesting.

vividly illustrating the story

Like a guided meditation.

Mixed: enjoyable in some situations (e.g. car) but too easy to get distracted.

Its like a bed time story.

absorbing; relaxing; occasionally frustrating because of the difficulty of skipping backwards or forwards

The best. I didn't know how much I enjoyed reading in this way. Rediscovered after diagnoses of ADHD a couple of years ago.

pleasurable

I enjoyed it, but could only concentrate for around 30 minutes at a time

Pleasant

can be very exciting - if well read

It was quite a different experience. The problem with audio book is the pace cannot be controlled. Generally while reading one tends to vary pace depending upon various factors. But, for audio book we have to accept the pace at which it reads out. So Perhaps, audio books are more suitable for novels and stories and not for academic reading.

It was enjoyable, but it must be read in an good way to make it interesting.

Wonderful, relaxing, engrossing

For me, listening to an audio book does not replicate or replace the experience of reading a book. But it is very useful in situations when I am doing something else e.g. washing up and want to keep myself entertained

I remembered as a child, the audio tapes (cassettes at the time) came along with the actual book. So I had the opportunity to read and listen to the book simultaneously. At the time I was still a student in an (English as a Second Language) program; the audio tape gave me the opportunity to increase my vocabulary and pronunciation of words that seemed difficult for me at the time. I remembered that listen to the
3. I do not think listening to audio books is one kind of reading, because:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No, it's Listening - which is a much maligned skill these days!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>reading implies sight to me, listening is listening. Perhaps someday we'll have a word to distinguish listening to verbal information from listening to other kinds of information (music, for example) in the same way that reading distinguishes looking at words from other kinds of looking (at art, diagrams, technical photographs, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>not written; I do not read a song or a newscast, I do not read an audio book.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Not technically but practically and indirectly as the content began as visual symbols and has been translated into audio by a third party.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>May be equivalent, but not the same.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Because the text has been interpreted for you. No translation is required on your part, other than listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I don't think it is &quot;reading&quot; as that implies the written word, but it is a different (and not better or worse) form of enjoying a literary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reading involves making your own interpretation of a book. When you listen to an audio book, the interpretation is done by the person who has recorded the audio book. <em>Recording</em> audio books, on the other hand, is certainly one kind of very detailed reading, but listening to audio books is not.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>It lacks the translation process between perception and mind</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>reading is more intense</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>it's not the understanding of a written message</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>more like listening in the way you would radio plays etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>because you don't look at the words, but listen to them</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Because reading is an interaction with written language, its spelling, its punctuation, etc. Although, listening IS a vital and traditional form of experiencing story-telling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listening and concentrating in this fashion has been lost since the advent of television, and I'm glad to see audiobooks bringing that back.

More akin to radio listening.

they involve different input messages

no visual component.

You do not have to use your eyes.

Here the book is 'ingested' via the ear, rather than the eye

It is listening, not reading.

for me, reading and listening are very different activities

I've always thought of it as listening, not reading

because it is passive, requires no action from the 'reader' but I think my attitude could change with exposure to audiobooks

Yes and no. There is information receiving, but not through eyes. Listening to audiobooks is more like listening to a TV.

It is a kind of listening, that is, using the ears to take in information

I still think it's a listening thing

it's listening not reading.