
In 2007 Mary Burkey wrote that ‘young well educated readers who read more books than average are also audio book fans’. The sales of the audio format of the Twilight Series are a good example of this. Today’s ‘born digital’ generation already uses iPods, MP3 players, laptops and mobile phones to access downloaded music and podcasts, making digital audio a fast growing area.

Incorporating audio books into collections in public and school libraries is a natural step to augment youth services in libraries. According to the research literature, having access to audio books in schools and public libraries for young adults creates many benefits, including an understanding of the correct pronunciation of words, helping to improve listening skills, as well as exposure to new vocabulary, which leads to comprehension of books above print-reading ability. And for proficient readers audiobooks present opportunities to develop comprehension skills and strategies in critical and creative thinking.

Burkey’s latest book offers practical tips on how to use audiobooks as both classroom and library tools for learning, as well as advice for maintaining the collection, compiled into a readable guide for public librarians and teachers. She offers examples of how to incorporate audiobooks into reading classes at school and in libraries that could benefit students - ESL students and struggling readers, for example. She emphasises that the rule of a successful audio marketing plan is to ‘treat audio books as you would print, and to include them in staff picks and reading book lists’.

The book is divided into eight chapters, beginning with a history of children’s audiobooks, a physical description, then moving on to production and marketing, developing and maintaining a collection, followed by audiobook awards and finally past issues and future trends. The book also has two appendices: an Audiobook Lexicon and a Recommended Reading list.
Audiobooks for youth: a practical guide to sound literature is a readable, interesting book that would be useful for all librarians who currently are or might be interested in working with youth and audiobooks.

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