

Audio Books are a Popular Choice for Busy Readers

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An ever growing option for the on-go reader is listening to a favorite author in an audio book. Traditionally, audio books were only available at the library or bookstores, but with the explosion of the Internet, many more people have access to them.

“Listening to audio books has replaced radio for me because I became disenchanted when I couldn’t find a good channel that matched my mood,” said LaDonna Benedict, an audio book listener for 15 years. Her frequent 45-minute commutes, from Lawrenceville to Decatur for medical appointments.

Doing a simple search on the Internet pulls up several audio books sites such as audible.com, audiobooksonline.com and blackstoneaudio.com. The major publishing houses, such as Simon & Schuster, Time Warner and Random House have their own audio book departments, which further shows that audio books are steadily increasing in popularity and availability.

Audio books can be easily purchased or rented from a home computer by a few clicks on a web page. The books can either be sent in the mail as a cassette or CD or downloaded as digital audio onto a home computer and then transferred to an audio device such as an MP3 player.

Sue Bernardo, a technology consultant for the blind has been reading audio books since the late 80s.

“I first started listening to audio books from the library while sewing,” Bernardo said. “I love audio books because I can do other things at the same time and the performance of the reader is so wonderful, especially in the Harry Potter books.”

The Doraville resident says that although she gets many of her books from the library and audio bookstores, she prefers downloading them off the Internet.

“Downloading is no comparison to a cassette or CD. I like the fact I can carry around something the size of a cigarette lighter while listening to a book,” Bernardo said.

Book Ears, an audio bookstore at 3944A Peachtree Road in the Brookhaven Plaza in Atlanta, has taken note of the digital downloaded books by providing personalized service.

“Our customers will be able to bring their players in and we can load the book for them, said Tara Wey, a store manager. “Customers complain about the impersonal service from the Internet. I know my regular customers and can help specialize their purchases by asking general questions to make good recommendations.”

Audio books can be purchased for \$20 to \$100. Rentals, however, are cheaper. To remedy this, some avid listeners scan through the numerous selections of audio books at their local library.

Book Ears has been in the audio book business for about 14 years selling only cassettes and CDs, but knows that the usage of audio books will steadily increase as the MP3 and Ipod become more available and less expensive.

“I get my tapes/CDs at the libraries. The prices (\$40 or more) are pretty prohibitive compared to printed books,” said Benedict. “I could never afford all the books I want to listen to; this way they are free.”

The Covington Library Branch located at 3500 Covington Highway in Decatur, boast the largest selection of audio books in the Dekalb County Public Library System with approximately 21,902 audio books currently.

“We carry the most popular best selling fiction,” said Scott Smith, acquisitions Manager who is responsible for placing audio book orders for the library. “We have seen a major increase in the request for books on CD verses cassette and we are steadily providing that format.”