



Audio Has Mixed 2009

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Unit sales of audiobooks rose 4.7% in 2009, but sales fell 12% as audiobook publishers cut prices on selected titles and the number of lower-priced digital downloads increased, the Audio Publishers Association reported this morning. Digital downloads represented 49% of units sold in 2009, but only 29% of revenue. CD sales represented 46% of units sold and 65% of revenue. Digital downloads made up 21% of revenue in 2008, while CDs accounted for 72%.

In a statement, APA president Janet Benson said she was heartened to see the number of units rise in 2009 despite the recession. "The good news is more people are experiencing audio as a result of having value-priced options available, both in the traditional CD format and the growing digital download market," Benson said. Total revenue from the 29 reporting APA members was \$291 million in 2009 and APA estimated that audio revenue at retail was about \$900 million. In 2008, 30 member companies reported sales of \$331 million and the APA put industry revenue at under \$1 billion.

The move to a more digital marketplace has been occurring for several years. In 2007, digital sales were 17% of the total market compared to 29% this year. Pre-loaded devices increased their market share in 2009, accounting for 4% of revenue, while cassettes all but disappeared from the market, accounting for 1% of revenue in 2009.

Audiobooks continued to be mainly an adult format with 87% of dollar volume coming from that age group last year and only 13% from audiobooks aimed at children's and teens. Fiction's share of the market rose to 76% from 73% in 2008; the decline in nonfiction happens in non-presidential election years, the APA said.

