



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### AUDIOBOOKS ARE A \$1 BILLION+ INDUSTRY SHOWING STEADY GROWTH

*The Audio Publishers Association releases results from concurrent studies that reveal sales patterns and consumer behavior*

FEBRUARY 12, 2013— The Audio Publishers Association released the results from two concurrent studies of audiobook sales patterns and consumer behavior which revealed that total net sales of audiobooks in 2011 were up from the previous year and that, in general, the audio format is thriving.

According to the independent research firm Lewis&Clark who conducted the 2011 Annual Sales Survey, 3.8 million more audiobooks were sold in 2011 than were sold in 2010, representing a 2.6% increase in total revenues year-over-year.

Some of the growth in the sales can be attributed to a wider selection of titles available to audiobook fans. The total number of titles published in the audio format has doubled over the past seven years and publishers continue to increase their output to ensure that the most popular trade books are available in audio at the time the print book is released.

Adding to the positive outlook is a 3.2% decrease in returns of audiobooks from 14% last year to just 10.8% this year. Returns as a percentage of overall gross sales have never been this low. In fact, the average rate of returns a decade ago was nearly three times higher than it is today.

The rise of the digital download is no doubt the biggest contributing factor in the growth of sales and the declining rate of returns. The study shows that for audiobooks, the digital download format has eclipsed the CD format with slightly more than 60% of all audiobooks sold today being digital.



### **So who is listening and what are their preferences?**

While adult fiction reigns supreme as the top-selling category in audio (with mystery/thriller/suspense at the top of that heap) according to the Lewis & Clark sales survey, non-fiction is seeing nice growth with an 8.4% spike in sales of nonfiction audio titles last year. More children and young adults are listening, too: survey results show a 20% increase in the number of kids' and YA audio titles sold in 2011.

According to the Bowker Market Research consumer survey (titled "Understanding the Audiobook Buyer in the Digital Age"), audiobook listeners love the convenience and ease of the format, especially during car travel. In fact, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents said they listened primarily while in the car and choose audio for its portability. More than two-thirds of recent audiobook buyers described audiobooks as relaxing and a good way to multi-task, also stating that an audio performance makes some books more interesting than they would be in print.

One of the biggest challenges in this current digital age is catching, and keeping, the audiobook listener's attention, when competing with so many other forms of entertainment. Bowker survey respondents reported that they devoted about 3.5 hours a week listening to audiobooks while watching TV and movies, reading print or e-books, listening to music, using social media, and playing video games all commanded more of their leisure time.

### **How is the move to digital affecting the landscape?**

The consumer survey shows that those who prefer download and streaming formats are younger and more affluent than those who listen mostly on CD.

The Bowker survey also shows that the greatest potential for sales growth exists in these digital formats. Of those respondents who purchased an audiobook digital download in the past year, nearly 60% stated that they plan to buy more often in that format in the future.

Creative bundling of audiobooks with physical and e-books could be one avenue to adding new listeners. About one-third of consumer respondents said they might spend more on audiobooks in the future if they were bundled with another product like the hardcover, paperback or e-book of that same title.

### **What challenges and opportunities exist for the audiobook industry?**

Educating consumers is also a potential route to expansion. The overwhelming majority of the consumer survey respondents seemed unaware that MP3-CDs are less expensive than traditional CDs and some did not even know whether their CD player had the ability to play MP3-CDs. A full 10% admitted that they were unaware that downloading audiobooks digitally was an option while slightly fewer claimed they didn't know what file format to buy or were concerned about download time, technical difficulties or losing the file.

The APA looks forward to expanding its growth again in 2012 and has plans in place for continued consumer education and boosted online promotion.



### **ABOUT THE AUDIO PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION**

The Audio Publishers Association (APA) is a not-for-profit trade association that advocates the common, collective business interests of audio publishers. The APA consists of audio publishing companies and allied suppliers, distributors, and retailers of spoken word products and allied fields related to the production, distribution and sale of audiobooks.

### **ABOUT BOWKER**

Bowker is the world's leading provider of bibliographic information and management solutions designed to help publishers, booksellers, and libraries better serve their customers. Creators of products and services that make books easier for people to discover, evaluate, order, and experience, the company also generates research and resources for publishers, helping them understand and meet the interests of readers worldwide. Bowker, a ProQuest affiliate, is the official ISBN Agency for the United States and its territories and is headquartered in New Providence, New Jersey with additional operations in England and Australia.

### **ABOUT LEWIS&CLARK**

Lewis&Clark is an independent research firm founded in 1983. Serving a national clientele consisting chiefly of magazine publishers and associations, Lewis&Clark specializes in providing high quality quantitative and qualitative research, via focus groups, mail, telephone, and online-based methodologies.

**For additional information,  
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