A HISTORY OF AUDIOBOOKS


1932: The first test audio recordings include a chapter from Helen Keller’s *Midstream* and Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven*.

1934: The first recordings are made for the Talking Book Program and include parts of *The Bible*, The Declaration of Independence, and Shakespeare’s plays.

1948: The Recording for the Blind program is founded (later renamed Learning Ally).

1952: Caedmon Records is formed in New York and is a pioneer in the audiobook industry.

1955: Listening Library is founded and is the first to distribute audiobooks to libraries and schools.

1963: The cassette tape is invented.


1980s: Bookstores start to display audiobooks on bookshelves instead of in separate displays.

1986: The Audio Publishers Association is created.

1986: The Book of the Month Club and The Literary Guild start offering its members audiobooks.

1987: *Publishers Weekly* starts a regular column to cover the audiobook industry.

1992: *AudioFile* Magazine is launched.
1994: The APA establishes the term “audiobook” as the industry standard.

1995: The first Audio Publishers Association Conference (APAC) takes place at the Chicago Marriott Hotel.

1996: The first Audie Awards ceremony for audiobooks takes place at the Chicago Hyatt Regency.

1997: Audible debuts the first digital audio player.

1998: The APA launches the first **June Is Audiobook Month** month-long celebration of audio.

2003: Audible’s deal with Apple marks an increase in public awareness as audiobooks became available on iTunes.

2004: CDs replace cassettes as the preferred medium for listening to audiobooks.

2005: Preloaded Digital Players, an all-in-one audiobook format, are created.

2009: Digital downloads surpass CDs as the most popular audiobook format.

2011: Audiobook self-publishing becomes possible with the Audiobook Creation Exchange (ACX).

2012: Audiobook annual publication increases 125% from 7,200 to 16,309.


2014: The Deyan Institute of Vocal Artistry and Technology (DIVA) opened, the world's first school for teaching the art and technology of audiobook production.

2015: Author’s Republic launches, widening distribution options for self-publishers.

2017: Findaway Voices opens up the DIY options for audiobook production.


2020: Audiobook annual publication count increases to more than 71,000.

For media inquiries and questions about the industry please contact APA Executive Director Michele Cobb at press@audiopub.org