

# Navigating AI audiobook narration: Mapping the transformation of the Canadian audiobook market through nAIrrative Press

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Responding to the rise of synthetic narration in audiobooks, I founded the publishing house nAIrrative Press in 2023: a publisher of AI-written and AI-narrated audiobooks ([narrativepress.com](http://narrativepress.com)). In this presentation and article, I trace the changing Canadian landscape of AI-narrated audiobooks and its (im)possibilities through the example nAIrrative Press. As a research-creation project, nAIrrative Press' publications not only interrogate rising questions of AI ethics, authorship, and creativity, but the publishing house itself challenges the Canadian audiobook industry's distribution and publication.

Already in 2023, the audiobook industry in Canada was transforming, with Spotify's acquisition of one of the largest audiobook distributors, Findaway Voices, in 2022 (Spotify, 2022), to their formal offering of audiobook services to Canadians in 2023 (Perez, 2023). This period also saw an expansion of AI narration services, poised as a solution to publishers to meet the demand of Canadian audiobook listeners, despite their high production cost (BookNet Canada, 2024). Google Play Books, Bookwire, and Apple Books began to offer AI narration production and distribution on their platforms (Maughan, 2022; Bookwire, 2022; Anderson, 2023; Cecco, 2023), placing themselves in competition with other text-to-speech software available to publishers and self-publishers alike. Yet in 2023, Findaway Voices and fellow audiobook distributor Amazon's ACX refused to distribute AI-narrated audiobooks. Being the largest distributors, a great portion of the Canadian audiobook market was closed to AI-narrated audiobooks and my nAIrrative Press. Instead, nAIrrative Press' audiobooks snuck into Canadian bookseller Indigo via Kobo Writing Life and onto Spotify, YouTube, and Amazon as "music" via SoundCloud. This landscape has continued to change, with both Findaway Voices and Amazon ACX's limited inclusion of AI-narrated audiobooks (Findaway Voices by Spotify, 2023; Milliot, 2023). How do these shifting narratives around AI narration come to bear on the future of audiobook production and distribution in Canada?

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