Doing audiobook research: Local voices, national markets, global contexts

Reporte der Beiträge

Beitrag ID: **1**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Remediating Postcolonialism: the need for aural criticism

Montag, 17. November 2025 11:10 (20 Minuten)

Audiobooks have grown in popularity over the past few decades, but this popularity is limited to recreational listenership with little interest from academic scholarship. This gap is especially noticeable in the study of African audiobooks.This paper recognises the exciting possibilities that audiobooks present as a site of critical interrogation and a medium of representing identity through the spoken word. In this paper I argue that the study of audiobooks demands a radical methodological shift from the traditional mode of written scholarship to an intermedial based approach, which I term aural critical theory (ACT). ACT borrows from media, translation, and post colonial studies to argue for a combination of strategies of writing and sound recording technology in the formulation and presentation of critical arguments. This approach is, in the first instance, a means to address the question of accessibility to literary and English studies, and second, to advance the decolonial project. ACT aspires to enable both literate and non-literate consumers of literature to engage in critical discourse and contribute effectively to the field. This paper hopes to begin a long overdue conversation, nested in advancing the decolonial agenda, through the exploration of the audiobook medium as a site of articulating identity.

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Vortragende(r):   YUSUF, Dikko (University of Leeds)

Sitzung Einordnung: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Audiobooks

Beitrag ID: **2**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Echoing: A Theory of the Audiobook

Montag, 17. November 2025 15:20 (20 Minuten)

Audiobooks exercise enormous influence on both the economy and the phenomenology of contemporary literature. As publishers increasingly work to turn texts into recordings, and listeners increasingly read by listening, the nature of the literary event has changed. The ubiquity of the audiobook has given rise to a new set of structures, roles, and reading experiences in the literary field. In this presentation we focus on one such role, the narrator, and the new kind of intertextuality created as readers re-encounter narrators from one text to another. When a reader listens to Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* (2012), Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018), and Rebecca Makkai's *I Have Some Questions for You* (2023)—all performed by prolific narrator Julia Whelan—the three texts, their authors, and their genres become suddenly porous to one another. On the page, we might call this "intertextuality"; on the stage, Marvin Carlson has labeled a similar effect "ghosting."Overlapping with these concepts, but diverging significantly, the narrator function creates an effect that we refer to as "echoing,"a new form of intertextual affiliation born out of the labor conditions, sociological forces, and reading practices of the contemporary audiobook. This presentation examines echoing at work in the narration of Whelan and Edoardo Ballerini— who has given voice to Franz Kafka, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Dean Koontz, L. Ron Hubbard, and Thích Nhất Hạnh—offering a new theory of the audiobook at a moment in which it is ascendant.

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Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobook Listening: From the Theoretical to the Empirical

Beitrag ID: **3**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

AI Voices and The Audiobook: Listener Evaluation of Human and AI-Narrated Audiobooks in the German Market

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 14:00 (20 Minuten)

ABSTRACT

Since 2024, the advent of high-quality AI-generated voices –driven by advances in speech synthesis technologies –has sparked widespread public discourse in German newspapers and feuilletons. The potential integration of artificial voices into the audiobook market raises fundamental questions concerning listener perception, notions of authenticity, and the broader cultural acceptance of machine-generated narrators as cost-efficient alternatives to professional voice actors and narrators. This study investigates whether AI-generated and human audiobook narrators are evaluated differently by listeners, and whether these evaluations are systematically influenced by contextual and individual variables. Specifically, it examines the effects of the actual source of the voice (human vs. AI), the belief about the voice's origin (informed AI vs. uninformed), textual features such as direct speech dialogues or scenic narration, and individual differences in technological affinity. To investigate these questions, an online experiment (N = 500) was conducted using a 2x2 between-subjects design. The study manipulated both the type of voice (AI vs. human) and the information participants received about the voice's origin (told it is AI vs. not told). Self-identified audiobook listeners were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Each participant listened to four one-minute audiobook excerpts, evaluating the narrator's voice after each stimulus presentation. The stimuli included professionally produced audiobook passages and corresponding AI-generated versions created with the current state-of-the-art voice synthesis software from ElevenLabs. As one of the first empirical investigations of AI voice evaluation in the German audiobook domain, this study provides foundational insights into how AI-voices are evaluated by listeners. The findings will provide valuable insights into how generated voices are perceived and under which conditions they may (or may not) be accepted as narrators of literary texts. The findings offer a critical contribution to emerging research on human-AI interaction in cultural contexts and highlight the need for nuanced understanding as AI-generated voices increasingly permeate everyday media consumption.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Dr. Annika Schwabe, MSc BSc BA is a research associate (post-doc) at the University of Vienna as part of the Listening to Literature: Experiencing Literary Audiobooks project. She wrote her dissertation in Media Psychology on cognitive and emotional aspects of the digitization of fiction reading, which she defended in November 2023. She also studied Psychology (BSc & MSc) at the University of Vienna with a focus on Research Methods and Statistics and holds an additional degree in Development Studies (BA) from the University of Vienna.

Mag. Dr. Lukas Kosch is a research assistant and lecturer at the Department of German Studies at the University of Vienna, currently working on the project Listening to Literature: Experiencing Literary Audiobooks. After studying German language and literature and history, he focused on post-war philosophy, the consequences of the digitalization of literature and the processes of literary reading from a reception theory perspective. His most recent publications are the anthology "Mythen des Lesens: Über eine Kulturtechnik in Zeiten gesellschaftlichen Wandels"(transcript 2024) and in Mai 2025 the monograph "Literarisches Lesen: Von der literaturwissenschaftlichen Lesetheorie zur transdisziplinären Leseforschung"(Wallstein) will be published.

https://listening-to-literature.univie.ac.at/en/

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Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobooks and AI

Beitrag ID: **4**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Attuning our ear to the voice of the book: The possibilities for audiobooks in literary studies

Montag, 17. November 2025 10:30 (20 Minuten)

Why is it that some audiobook narrators' voices work to pull the listener-reader in, while others repel or leave us cold? Voice vibrates through the teller and these vibrations are powerfully felt by the attentive, attuned listener.

As literary studies teachers based in Melbourne/Naarm, we predict that audiobooks will be routinely used for teaching and learning purposes in future. However, we have encountered multiple barriers to setting them as texts on university reading lists, partly due to the lingering view of audiobooks as a threat to 'real reading'(Magner and Daley 2021).

Once audiobooks are widely accepted in educational contexts, literary studies teachers like ourselves will need to develop nuanced ways of talking about voice with our students. In order to do this, teachers/scholars will require a vocabulary and a repertoire of terms for more precisely analysing how the narrator/performer's voice functions. For meaningful conversations about audiobooks and how they work on us, we need to find language to express the ways in which a narrator uses their voice, what effects it has on us as listeners, and how it contributes to the affects the book may engender.

Amanda Anderson, Rita Felski, Toril Moi have argued that literary studies as a discipline should to refocus on character and characterisation in order to revitalise itself and engage with so-called 'ordinary'people (Anderson, Moi, Felski 2019). To be memorable, the voicing of an audiobook must create an affective bond, or 'attunement'with the reader-listener to breathe life into fictional characters. This elusive bond between narrator and listener - and the possibilities it offers for the teaching of literary studies - is at the centre of our speculative presentation.

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Amanda Anderson, Rita Felski and Toril Moi (2019) Character: three inquiries in literary studies, University of Chicago Press 2019.
Brigid Magner and Linda Daley (2021) 'Yes audiobooks count as real reading'The Conversation 30 Aug: https://theconversation.com/yes-audiobooks-count-as-real-reading-here-are-3-top-titles-to-get-you-started-166097

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Sitzung Einordnung: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Audiobooks

Beitrag ID: **5**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Hearing Northern Voices

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 10:35 (20 Minuten)

Until recently, the northern-most audiobook recording studio in England was based in Sheffield, until New Writing North announced Sounds Good Audiobooks which runs on site at Northumbria University. Responding to New Writing North's important intervention in a South-centric sector, this paper collates data from a questionnaire to audiobook listeners, exploring their responses to northern English and working-class voices. Our data reads listeners'social class against responses, as well as identifying trends across literary genres and the uses of audiobooks. Above all, it is intended as a snapshot of a rapidly evolving sector, and one which will be repeated regularly in the years to come to chart representation of and perceptions towards northern voices in the audiobook industry.

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Sitzung Einordnung: Regional and National Perspectives

Beitrag ID: **6**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Reading Audiobook Platforms: infrastructure, algorithms and corroded cultural environments

Montag, 17. November 2025 09:20 (20 Minuten)

Audiobooks are accessed through interconnected platforms and interfaces, generating infrastructural entanglements between stakeholders in the production, circulation and reception of books in audio formats. The nested and interconnected platforms, whether Amazon's Audible, Overdrive's Libby, Spotify, Librivox or other services, offer different infrastructural characteristics that influence the experience and interpretation of the books. Beyond the digital materiality of the audiobook, the platforms in which the files are housed, with their in-browser and in-app environments augment the reading experiences and stakeholder interactions. The infrastructural and interface environments of audiobook reading are not neutral. James Smithies argues that "infrastructures are dynamic and sociopolitically contested" presenting "an additional layer of interpretative complexity because of their combination of technical as well as sociopolitical (and perhaps aesthetic) complexity" (2017, p. 113). Meanwhile, in looking at music streaming, Hesmondhalgh et al (2023) have argued that where once digital platforms enabled "the democratising and emancipatory possibilities afforded by the (always partial) commons-based open-ness of internet infrastructure", that is no longer the case. This aligns with what Cory Doctorow calls "enshittification" and "the decay of online platforms" (2025). Doctorow describes his own experiences as a writer seeking to balance readers' needs with authors' rights in the context of some publishers' increasing exploitation of both.

This interdisciplinary paper draws on publishing studies, digital humanities, platform studies and cultural policy studies to consider the layers of interpretive complexity through which readers experience the cultural artefact of the audiobook. The paper provides a reading of the infrastructures and interfaces of cultural platforms, and contributes to the growing platform analyses of digital audiobook environments and the social, political and cultural contexts in which they are framed. In exploring the infrastructure of platforms such as Audible, Libby, and Librivox, this paper seeks to uncover the tensions between reading experience and platform decay.

Bio notes:
Rebekah Badcock is a doctoral candidate in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University in South Australia. Her research considers the effect of recommendation algorithms on publishers, authors, and readers through digital platforms and what this might mean for the future of the book.

Tully Barnett is Associate Professor in Creative Industries at Flinders University. She is an interdisciplinary researcher with a focus on arts and cultural policy and digital humanities approaches to cultural work in digital environments. Her research on digital cultural spheres considers digitization as a cultural practice and the platforms through which digital and digitized cultural labour is made available as socio-technocultural assemblages. For this work, she was recipient of an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award. Tully is serving as Vice President of the Australasian Association for Digital Humanities and in 2024-2025 is serving on the UNESCO reflection group on the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment.

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Vortragende: Frau BADCOCK, Rebekah (Flinders University); BARNETT, Tully (Flinders University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Platformed Production and Reception

Beitrag ID: **7**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

A beautiful tool and a terrible master: A.I. and the aesthetics of Audio-Storytelling

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 15:00 (20 Minuten)

When painstakingly pondering the prevailing problematics, perpetuating polemics, and persistently perplexing potentials pertaining to prototypical phenomenon of AI—which seems to have purportedly permeated the very core of the Artworld at large—it could plainly be postulated that one is presently posed with something of a perfidiously potent and perturbing predicament. In place of either dreading or revering the impending future that AI has in store, this paper wishes to suggest perceiving of AI more along the lines of a 'beautiful, first-rate servant, but a terrible, second-rate master'. Setting aside, momentarily, issues of copyright, ethical concerns, or any so-called dystopian scenarios concerning what AI is able to achieve when it comes to simulating one's distinct vocal signature, I wish to consider the unique aesthetic benefits in utilizing the potential of what AI is (or, by all accounts, will, as time progresses) be able to achieve. By way of illustration, and aiming to underline the immediacy of an imperative debate associated with both present prospective implications of the role of AI in the realm of audiobooks, I, for one, would certainly find merit in potentially amplifying a listener's overall aesthetic experience by exploring such possibilities as, for the sake of argument, prompting an AI algorithm to simulate one's aging-process —effectively generating a younger or older 'version' of the speaker—thus allowing one to literally hear to the apparent changes one's voice undergoes over time.

Hauptautor: SHEINBERG, David

Vortragende(r):   SHEINBERG, David

Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobooks and AI

Beitrag ID: **8**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Machines telling stories: Reader perspectives on synthetic audiobook voices

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 14:20 (20 Minuten)

The audiobook boom has created a new profession: the audiobook performing narrator, with its own forms of popularity and prestige tied to it. There are prizes awarded for best audiobook narration, and publishers are currently standing in line for the narration stars whose voices large groups of readers appreciate.

The rapid technological development is however about to cause the next rupture in contemporary book publishing: AI-narrated audiobooks. Advances in the subdivision of generative AI called TTS (*text-to-speech*) now makes it possible to create realistic synthetic voices that mimic dialects/sociolects, breathing sounds, intonations and emotions, including voice clones of specific human voices. There are already commercial services targeted towards publishers available for transforming ebooks to audiobooks, and book streaming services are experimenting with AI voices in various ways (Berglund 2024: 116–118). Within the next few years, the number of AI-narrated audiobooks will skyrocket. In ten years, it is not unlikely that human-narrated audiobooks will be outnumbered by machine-narrated ones.

This research paper presents tentative results from an ongoing empirical study of the audiobook streaming service Storytel's newly launched function "VoiceSwitcher"(Storytel 2023), which lets the user choose between the original human narration, the AI replica voice of a Swedish star narrator, and a number of generic but still stereotypical AI voices: "mature, calm Carin", "young, energetic Amanda", "middle-aged, honest Martin", "soft, masculine Erik", etc. Methodologically, the study combines data analysis of logged sessions of audiobook streaming using the VoiceSwitcher with large-scale surveys of the same individuals, focusing on their attitudes to and experiences of listening to AI voices.

Karl Berglund is an assistant professor of literature at Uppsala University, Sweden. His research lies in the intersection of the sociology of literature and cultural analytics, and spans popular genre fiction, publishing and reading studies, translation studies, and computational literary analysis.

In 2020–2024, Berglund was PI for the cross-disciplinary and SRC-funded project "Patterns of Popularity", where he has investigated the ongoing audiobook boom in the Nordic countries from various angles, and in particular by means of large-scale analysis of streamed audiobook data. In 2025–2030, he is a project member of the SRC-funded research environment "VOICE. AI-created voices. Legal and societal perspectives", where he will study the implications of the introduction of synthetic voices for audiobook reading and publishing.

He is the author of Reading Audio Readers: Book Consumption in the Streaming Age (Bloomsbury Academic 2024), the first book to encounter audiobooks from within the world of book streaming and user data. His writing has appeared in PMLA, Translation Studies, Journal of Cultural Analytics, European Journal of Cultural Studies, Public Books, and other publications.

Sarah Hedman-Dybeck is a PhD student in Comparative Literature at Uppsala University. Her research interests lies in sociology of literature, reading studies, and publishing studies. She is especially engaged in questions concerning AI and the impact it has on reading practices, literary production and distribution.

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Vortragende: BERGLUND, Karl (Uppsala University); HEDMAN-DYBECK, Sarah (Uppsala University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobooks and AI

Beitrag ID: **9**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Audio Authors. Writing for Sound –and Streaming – in Denmark and Sweden.

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 10:15 (20 Minuten)

The audiobook's recent popularity has led to debates in Denmark and Sweden about how the development affects authors. The discussion focuses on the audiobook format but also the model of subscription-based streaming, which dominates the Nordic markets (Berglund and Linkis, 2022), fundamentally changing the way authors get paid for their work (Linkis and Mygind, 2025). I will discuss this development as a way to highlight how the rise of audiobooks contributes to transforming the conditions and status of authors in the digital age, hence also affecting their creative practices. The paper will be based on a large interview study with Danish and Swedish authors, conducted in autumn 2024. Drawing on perspectives from studies in the social role of authors (Bourdieu 1986, Bold 2018) and theoretical perspectives on streaming logics (Colbjörnsen 2021) and platform imaginaries (van Es and Poell, 2020), I examine how authors adjust their creative practices to what I call "audiobook imaginaries": established and developing ideas about the audiobook and its associated uses etc. I thus examine what authors do to produce books that "work well"in audio as well as on the streaming services and I discuss how this situation reflects the conditions of authors; that is, what it means to be an author in the age of audio. Thus, I ask: what does "writing for audio"imply for authors writing in different genres and from different market positions? And how does a (partial) transition to the audiobook format impact their roles as authors and relations to other actors, such as publishers and streaming services? Focusing on the Danish and Swedish markets will allow me to shed light on the way in which regional market conditions, including the dominance of streaming services on the Nordic markets, play into a larger discussion about the audiobooks'impact on contemporary book culture.

Bio:

Sara Tanderup Linkis, PhD, is an associate professor in Digital Cultures and Publishing Studies, at Lund University. Her research centers on audiobooks and audio fiction, sociology of literature and media-oriented approaches to literature. She has published widely in acclaimed journals such as Narrative, Image & Narrative, Passage, Orbis Litterarum and she is the author of two research monographs: Memory, Intermediality and Literature (Routledge 2019) and Serialization in Literature across Media and Markets (Routledge 2021). She is PI in the project: "Between Sound and Text: Production, Content and Experiences of Multimodal Audio Literature,"funded by the Swedish Research Council (2024-2026).

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Vortragende(r):   TANDERUP LINKIS, Sara (Lund University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Regional and National Perspectives

Beitrag ID: **10**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Researching Audiobook Experiences through Audiobook Circles

Montag, 17. November 2025 15:00 (20 Minuten)

Digital audiobooks pave the way for new forms of reading. Through a smartphone and a couple of headphones, it is possible for the reader to read "on the go" or take part in other activities such as housework, commuting or exercising while consuming audiobooks (Linkis and Pennlert, 2022; Have and Pedersen 2015).Earlier studies have examined the individual reader's audiobook experiences and reading practices through qualitative or quantitative methods (Have and Stougaard Pedersen, 2015, Wallin 2022, Berglund 2024). It is more uncommon to study collective experiences or discussions about audiobook experiences among readers. Such social dimensions can be approached through methods such as focus-group discussions or book-circles dedicated to audiobooks where readers meet in groups and share their experiences.

The proposed presentation focuses on insights from so-called "audiobook circles" which have been conducted as part of the project "Between Sound and Text: Production, Content and Experiences of Multimodal Audio Literature" (PI: Sara Tanderup Linkis, Lund University), funded by The Swedish Research Council 2024-2026.

The audiobook circles consisted of three groups of audiobook users who met for three times, both in physical and digital format during spring 2025. Based on this material, the presentation will answer the following questions: How can audiobook experiences be investigated through group discussions among readers? What benefits and pitfalls might occur and how can we, as researchers interested in this developing field of research, tackle these aspects?

Julia Pennlert has an PhD in comparative literature and works as a senior lecture in reading and reading promotion at SLIS (Swedish Schoool of Library and Information Science) at Universty of Borås, Sweden. Her research interest covers audiobooks, digital reading, sociology of literature and digital humanities. She is a currently a researcher in the project "Between Sound and text"

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Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobook Listening: From the Theoretical to the Empirical

Beitrag ID: **11**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Who Listens to What? A Survey of Contemporary Audiobook Listening in Sweden

Montag, 17. November 2025 15:40 (20 Minuten)

In recent years, high volumes of streamed audiobooks have been a mark of success of audio literature which thus possibly threaten print books in many countries. In Sweden, the 2024 figures indicated a 33 per cent market share of digital audio streaming. And while the sale statistics provide ample evidence of the popularity pf audio books, there is still little knowledge of readers' perceptions of audiobook uses and practices. In early 2025 we conducted a large-scale survey of reading habits in collaboration with the Swedish Publishers'Association. Among the many interesting results from the survey, the audio book practices and patterns in terms of genre, competing formats, and demographic aspects to habits (gender, age, education) provide new knowledge into who listens to what.

In the presentation I will discuss the findings of the survey in terms of who, what, and why. Who listens to audiobooks in terms of age, gender, and education? Furthermore, how is their listening related to print reading (overlapping, excluding, combining)? From the material it is also possible to draw conclusion as to the relation between different genres and modes of reading and/or listening. Among, the many questions asked several was related to attitudes to reading and listening (e.g., I think reading is important, I want to read more, what stops me from reading). In these answers results concerning how audiobook listening is related to attitudes to books, reading, and other media are visible. All in all, the survey as a statistically correct version of the Swedish adult population gives a good indication to present reading and listening patterns.

Bio
Ann Steiner is professor of Sociology of Literature at Uppsala University, Sweden. Her research is within reading studies, publishing studies, and book history. Recent articles include "The Impeccable Taste of a Publisher. Literary Prizes and Cultural Value from a Publishing Perspective" (2025), "On a World Market for Books. The Internationalisation of Publishing"(2025), "Hybrid books. Merged audiovisual literature for children"(2022), with Karl Berglund "Is Backlist the New Frontlist? Large-scale data analysis of bestseller book consumption in streaming services"(2021), as well as several articles on children's audiobooks (in Swedish).

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Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobook Listening: From the Theoretical to the Empirical

Beitrag ID: **12**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

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

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 14:40 (20 Minuten)

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 (nairrativepress.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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Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobooks and AI

Beitrag ID: **13**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Digital Walkthrough Method for Audiobook Research: Audible's ACX

Montag, 17. November 2025 09:00 (20 Minuten)

This paper addresses doing audiobook research using a digital walkthrough method grounded in platform studies (an interdisciplinary field drawing on business and software studies). Scholars such as Sundén & Tanderup Linkis (2024) have used the walkthrough method to analyze digital reading platforms. The walkthrough method presents a systematic way to explore a platform, site, or software application by "engaging directly with an app's interface to examine its technological mechanisms and embedded cultural references to understand how it guides users and shapes their experiences"(Light et al., 2018: 882). In our current research on Audible's 'Audiobook Creation Exchange'or ACX platform, we use the digital walkthrough method to explore independent audiobook production. Given the platformisation of contemporary audiobook publishing, analysing audiobook publishing platforms like ACX through the digital walkthrough method integrates and investigates the making of an audiobook with the contexts and processes that shape it, including experimenting with the interface and affordances of the platform. Through our walkthrough, we highlight the significant role of geopolitics in structuring participation in contemporary audiobook self-publishing as well as the transformation of creative labor as a result of platformisation.

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Vortragende: Dr. PARNELL, Claire (University of Melbourne); NOORDA, Rachel (Portland State University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Platformed Production and Reception

Beitrag ID: **14**   Typ: **workshop format**

Audiobook Bibliotherapy: reading for wellbeing as an aspect of audiobook research

Montag, 17. November 2025 14:15 (20 Minuten)

'Audiobook Bibliotherapy: reading for wellbeing as an aspect of audiobook research'

Bibliotherapy, broadly defined as 'the idea that reading can have a beneficial effect on mental health'(King, Haslam and Campbell, 2018), has become an established wellbeing practice and the basis of formal programmes in institutions including hospitals, schools, libraries, and prisons (King, Haslam and Campbell, 2025; Partington, 2023). The widespread adoption of digital audiobooks has transformed reading for wellbeing, bringing new readers to the practice of bibliotherapy (such as people early in their literacy journeys) and bringing reading into previously off-limits settings (such as lying motionless in an MRI machine.) But as with other aspects of digital bibliotherapy, the study of reading for wellbeing with audiobooks is in its infancy. Examining audiobooks through this lens, and considering the role of wellbeing in aspects such as habit stacking, boundary setting, and customisation (including narrator choice), especially where readers contend with disability and/or over-work, can yield insights into the experiences, values, and motivations of readers. This paper will present original qualitative data from the Co-Creating Digital Bibliotherapy project, an interdisciplinary collaboration between The Reading Agency, the UK's leading national reading charity, and researchers in Education, English Literature, Creative Writing, and Information Studies at the Open University and UCL, funded by UCL Grand Challenges.
We would be happy to be included in the special issue proposal submission.

Works cited:

King, E., Haslam, S. and Campbell, S. (2018) 'Bibliotherapy: how reading and writing have been healing trauma since World War I', The Conversation, 15 November. Available at: http://theconversation.com/bibliotherapy-how-reading-and-writing-have-been-healing-traumasince-world-war-i-106626 (Accessed: 28 February 2024).

Partington, G. (2023) Bibliotherapy: a survey of literature. Working Papers 2022/23: 03.
Exeter: Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health. ISSN: 2754-530X

Brief biographical notes:

Dr Siobhan Campbell is a poet at the Open University and specialises in the poetics of Social Literary Practice (Campbell, 2021). Her work in Creative Writing praxis has widened the remit of Scriptotherapy interventions in the UK and elsewhere. Emerging from her practice, she has developed Expressive Creative Writing (ECW) workshops to provide an adaptable, humanities-based resource for survivors of conflict and contested situations. She works with frontline healthworkers and human rights defenders to co-research the impact of creative and life-writing practice with digital and interactive applications. The methodology is now the basis for training programmes in several countries including Iraq and Lebanon and is in use with NHS frontline health workers in end-of-life-care. Publications include 'Negotiated Truths and Iterative Practice: The Women in Conflict Expressive Writing Project'which establishes that certain applications of life-story collection can increase justice outcomes; 'Writing-based interventions: from Communities of Practice to Life Stories'analyses how replicable frameworks operate for NGOs in unstable situations. Most recently, 'Expressive Writing and Telling and Participatory Arts Research: Relational Ethics for Story-based Interventions in Crisis'argues for a Creative-Writing inflected scriptotherapeutic approach, showing how valuing individual experience can enable agency and challenge power structures in
sustainable ways.

Dr Nenna Orie Chuku is a Research Assistant in the Department of Information Studies at UCL.

Her research examines information, knowledge and communication design in migration and journalling culture contexts.

Dr Laura Dietz researches reading, digital publishing, and contemporary authorship, with a particular focus on how reputation and legitimacy (including the book-status of digital books) affect reading experiences. Recent projects have drawn on qualitative and quantitative data to explore how readers use e-books and audiobooks to address health-related barriers. She edits the Digital Literary Culture strand of the Cambridge Elements in Publishing and Book Culture series (Cambridge University Press). She co-convenes, with Prof Rayner, the IAS/ UCL/A&H Reading for Wellbeing Group, publishes on digital bibliotherapy, and organises bibliotherapy events including conference roundtables and festival panels. She serves on the Editorial Boards of The Journal of Electronic Publishing and Short Fiction in Theory and Practice, and on the Board of Directors of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP). Her monograph E-books and 'Real Books': Digital Reading and the Experience of Bookness was published by Cambridge University Press in 2025.

Professor Sam Duncan is an adult literacy specialist, with a specific interest in the roles that literacy plays in different adult lives, and how this relates to the teaching and learning of literacy. Her writing, research and teaching focus on experiences of readers and conceptualisations of reading. Sam has researched reading circles, novel reading and adult reading development (published as Reading Circles, Novels and Adult Reading Development, Continuum/Bloomsbury 2012, and Reading for Pleasure and Reading Circles for Adult Emergent Readers, NIACE, 2014) and was the recipient of an AHRC Early Careers Research Leaders Fellowship for project examining contemporary adult reading aloud practices, published in 2021 as Oral Literacies: When Adults Read Aloud. She is the Director of the Institute of Education's International Literacy Centre and Co-Editor of the journal Literacy. Sam is currently working with Give a Book/Prison Reading Groups on Reading the Way, a project developing reading groups for adult emergent readers in prison.

Professor Sara Haslam is Professor of Twentieth-Century Literature at the Open University, UK. She has published widely on the novelist Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), on modernism and on the literature of the First World War; as textual editor she is Co-General Editor of The Complete Works of Ford Madox Ford (Oxford University Press), has published scholarly editions of Ford's work and her edition of Evelyn Waugh's Helena was published in 2020 (OUP). Since 2017 her war-related research has focused on what she has called 'literary caregiving', therapeutic, largely voluntary, practices associated with the donation and deployment of books to wounded and sick soldiers 1914-1918. Related publications include 'Reading,Trauma and Literary Caregiving 1914-1918: Helen Mary Gaskell and the War Library'(2020), Journal of Medical Humanities, 41, 305–321 and, with Edmund King, '"Medicinable Literature": Bibliotherapy, Literary Caregiving, and the First World War'(2021), Literature and Medicine, 39, 2, 296-318. She is at work on a co-edited collection, A Hundred Years of Bibliotherapy: Healing Through Books and a book, Biography of a Wartime 'Miracle': Women's Literary Caregiving 1914-1918.

Gemma Jolly is Head of Health and Wellbeing at The Reading Agency. She oversees the organisation's reading and health work, including Reading Well. Reading Well is a national books on prescription programme that uses recommended reading to help people understand and manage their health and wellbeing, with all books chosen and endorsed by health professionals and people with lived experience. She is currently leading on an Arts Council England funded Reading Well activation programme which aims to embed Reading Well and increase engagement with the Public Library Universal Health and Wellbeing offer, with a particular focus on non-library users and people experiencing health inequalities. Prior to working at The Reading Agency, Gemma has led and delivered a range of health information and support services for national charities including Alzheimer's Society and The Migraine Trust. She is passionate about the importance of health literacy and advocates for the power of reading to help people manage their health and wellbeing.

Professor Samantha Rayner is UCL's first Vice Dean (Wellbeing) for the Faculty of Arts & Humanities. She works closely with the Dean as a member of the Faculty Management Team and is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the Faculty's student and staff wellbeing agenda, to align with UCL's Wellbeing Strategy, Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy

and the UCL 2034 key enablers of giving our students the best support, facilities and opportunities, and valuing our staff. She is also the co-convenor of the IAS/ UCL/A&H Reading for Wellbeing Reading Group, which has been meeting regularly since 2020. Samantha is also Professor of Publishing and Book Cultures in the Dept of Information Studies, and has wellbeing-related research interests, particularly around bibliotherapy. She has a career which has always involved a split role encompassing some sort of staff/ student wellbeing elements, and has a track-record of facilitating collaborative work in HE contexts. She was the PI on the AHRC/ British Library Academic Book of the Future Project (2015-2017).

Dr Katharine Smales is a Research Fellow in the Department of Information Studies at UCL. She recently completed her PhD on a fully funded AHRC London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP) Research Studentship. Her PhD qualitatively explores how children aged four- to eight-years-old and their families experienced information literacy practices relating to shared digital reading in their homes during social distancing. She recently undertook a placement in the UK Government's Open Innovation team, a cross government unit which works between government policy-makers and academics to generate analysis and ideas. During her time there she worked on a project relating to provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Prior to her PhD she taught on the Children's Literature MA at Goldsmiths and worked in the children's publishing industry, including as Communications Director at Macmillan Children's Books and the UK Sales Director at Walker Books. She is also the volunteer librarian at Grange Primary School and runs the UCL Grange Primary school volunteer reading programme.

Dr Carina Spaulding is Head of Research & Evaluation at The Reading Agency, a UK-wide charity working to empower people of all ages to transform their lives through reading. Carina leads The Reading Agency's research portfolio and reading strategy development activity, undertaking original and commissioned research and evaluation projects and speaking to people across the UK to understand the barriers and enablers to reading and the mechanisms for reading as a tool for social and personal change. Together with colleagues, she has published articles on the interrelationship between reading enjoyment, motivation and comprehension; as well as numerous pieces of 'grey literature' for Reading Agency projects and evaluation funders such as the National Lottery; Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS); Welsh Government; Arts Council England; Science and Technology Facilities Council; Paul Hamlyn Foundation; Mercers' Foundation; and the Wellcome Trust. Prior to working at The Reading Agency, Carina held roles at Higher Education institutions including UCL, Royal Holloway University, Canterbury Christ Church University, and The University of Manchester. She was awarded a PhD in English and American Studies from The University of Manchester in 2013.

Dr Shafquat Towheed is Director of Research for the School of Arts and Humanities at The Open University. He is also the director of the History of Books and Reading research collaboration. He has published extensively on 19th and 20th century literature, with a particular focus on the history and practice of reading. His most recent publication (with Corinna Norrick-Rühl) is Bookshelves in the Age of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Palgrave, 2022). He was UK Lead Investigator for the pan-European Reading Europe Advanced Data Investigation Tool (READIT) project (2018-2022). He is Vice President of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP).

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Sitzung Einordnung: Audiobook Bibliotherapy: Reading for Wellbeing as an Aspect of Audiobook Research

Beitrag ID: **15**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Applying Creative Practice to the Literary Audiobook

Montag, 17. November 2025 10:50 (20 Minuten)

Regardless of the increasing prevalence of audiobooks in literary culture, many traditional literary scholars appear reluctant to embrace the form. Even within the discipline of digital literary studies, the digital audiobook is often excluded in favour of screen-based visual texts (Murray, 2018; Grigar and O'Sullivan, 2021) despite theoretical resonances between the disciplines, such as the impact of historical and contemporary media on the production, distribution, and reading of these digital works. There is some existing literary research in which audiobooks are read critically, often alongside their text editions (see Rubery, 2011; Van Maas, 2018; Hsy, 2016), but their methodologies are primarily rooted in comparative literature and close reading/listening. In this paper I will workshop one of the other methodologies from literary studies that I am applying to a broader audiobook research project, through which I intend to contribute to the practice of literary audiobook research and demonstrate the merits of treating audiobooks as literature.

My research methods include a dual approach of practice-led research and close listening, the former of which I will consider in this paper. Practice-led research is an increasingly established method of research in the arts (Schön, 1983; Nelson, 2022; Smith and Dean, 2009) including within literature and creative writing specifically (Flower and Hayes, 1981; Barrett and Bolt, 2010). Though practice-led research methods have yet to be applied to the audiobook, they have been applied to other digital literatures (see Skains, 2016; Wright, 2022), and as such I expect to encounter further resonances between research in digital literature and audiobook studies as I pursue this methodology. The final research products will include an original audiobook that I will write, record, and produce, accompanied by a dissertation that will exegetically reflect on the creative process and synthesize these findings with close listenings of existing audiobooks. This reflexive creative praxis will allow me to examine the processes and decisions involved audiobook creation (including writing, performance, and audio production) and their impacts on the audiobook as a literary object.

Author Bio: Patricia Frazis is a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, Canberra. Her research examines the use of voice, music, and ekphrasis in audiobooks to portray cultural encounters through close reading and creative practice.

Hauptautor: FRAZIS, Patricia (Australian National University)

Vortragende(r): FRAZIS, Patricia (Australian National University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Audiobooks

Beitrag ID: **16**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Curating reading of literature in a digital age

Montag, 17. November 2025 09:40 (20 Minuten)

The rhythms of reading literature via streaming platforms, like music streaming, are systemically structured by the technological configurations of the platforms we use for the activity; however, individually designed by each reader for her specific plans and/or moods.

"Curating reading of literature in a digital age" discusses how reading practices, reading habits, and reading situations are reshaped in a digitized everyday life, reflecting how social and cultural competencies are developed when curating literary titles for specific moods or reading situations. The paper will specifically investigate how streaming platforms for reading e- or audiobooks create possibilities for curating choices for reading in the direction of situationally considering which specific activities during an everyday call for specific kinds of literary experiences or moods.

This activity can be framed as an individualized type of curating, and the paper will use curating as methodology (Pehrson, 2021) to discuss how everyday curatorial habits are developed and take place in the individualized media economy that streaming services provide.

The paper will, through specific examples, discuss how this curatorial aspect possibly changes the role of literature reading in everyday practices. This curating happens in a dialogue between reading literature as an affective mood- or atmosphere related activity and the situatedness of reading in an everyday planning of schedules. Thus, the paper compares literature consumption to music consumption, where playlists are designed in continuation of their ability to create certain moods (Krogh, 2022, Nowak, 2016).

The affective role of music in research is often presented critically regarding how music has been used to create specific emotional responses, e.g. in strategic communication and consumer contexts, e.g. via the concept of muzak. This paper both compares the activity of music listening to literature reading, pointing to the potentials of both well-being in audiobook reading (Wallin, 2021) and to new types of everyday uses of literature (Felski, 2008).

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Sitzung Einordnung: Platformed Production and Reception

Beitrag ID: **17**   Typ: **nicht angegeben**

Industry perspectives: RB Media in conversation with Silvia Krysciak & Chiara Priorelli (05)

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 09:00 (45 Minuten)

Vortragende: PRIORELLI, Chiara (Wavesound Pty Ltd); NORRICK-RÜHL, Corinna (English Department, Chair of Book Studies); WEBER, Millicent (Australian National University); KRYSCIAK, Silvia (RB Media Germany)

Beitrag ID: **18**   Typ: **15-minute research paper**

Audiobook reading between Australia and Germany

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 10:55 (20 Minuten)

Hauptautoren: NORRICK-RÜHL, Corinna (English Department, Chair of Book Studies); WEBER, Millicent (Australian National University)

Vortragende: NORRICK-RÜHL, Corinna (English Department, Chair of Book Studies); WEBER, Millicent (Australian National University)

Sitzung Einordnung: Regional and National Perspectives

Beitrag ID: **19**   Typ: **nicht angegeben**

Introductory Remarks, Welcome, Warm-Up

Montag, 17. November 2025 08:45 (15 Minuten)

Vortragende: NORRICK-RÜHL, Corinna (English Department, Chair of Book Studies);   WEBER, Millicent (Australian National University)

Beitrag ID: **21**   Typ: **nicht angegeben**

Concluding Remarks (08)

Dienstag, 18. November 2025 15:30 (15 Minuten)