

Lend Your Ears to Audiobooks Kris Wiley for The News-Review

Thanks to a conversation at last month's Roseburg Public Library Commission meeting, I learned the term "ear reading."

Now, I have consumed books in audio format for decades, but I always referred to it as "listening." Sure, that's what I was doing, but "ear reading" is a more precise way to describe my audio experience. And it is an experience in a wholly different, but equally enjoyable, way from eye reading.

Educators have advocated for ear reading for years, particularly as a way to support students with disabilities such as dyslexia and autism. They have science to back their work: A study at the University of California, Berkeley concluded that the same areas of the brain are stimulated regardless of whether the information is received by reading or listening (Journal of Neuroscience, Sept. 25, 2019, pages 7722-7736).

Ear reading in the general population continues to grow. According to the Audio Publishers Association Sales Survey, revenue from audiobooks increased 25 percent in 2021 to \$1.6 billion. Statista shared that 45 percent of adults responding to a survey in early 2022 reported ear reading at least one audiobook since 2020.

Although some folks continue to check out audiobooks on CD, most Roseburg Public Library patrons ear read using the two digital platforms to which we subscribe, cloudLibrary and Libby. Since January 1, 2020, patrons have checked out 5,800 audiobooks on CD compared with 36,000 digital audiobooks.

That tracks because the library has 2,700 audiobooks on site vs. about 35,000 on cloudLibrary and Libby. We purchase fewer audiobooks on CD every year as more patrons adopt the digital platforms.

I have embraced audiobooks on my iPhone, especially since I got wireless earbuds and a car that supports Bluetooth. The miles on the treadmill go that much easier when I am swept up in a story.

I tend to ear read mysteries and thrillers because of their faster paced plots. Recently, I enjoyed much of the Jane Wunderley series by Erica Ruth Neubauer on audio. Narrator Sarah Zimmerman perfectly captures Jane's independent spirit, biting wit and sizzling chemistry with Redvers. These cozier mysteries are set in international locations, and the fourth book in the series, "Intrigue in Istanbul," drops March 28.

Louise Penny's Detective Inspector Gamache mystery series is brilliant in audio format. The first 10 books were narrated by Ralph Cosham. After Cosham's death, Robert Bathurst took over, and I no longer eye read the books because he is that good. I hear Bathurst, and I immediately envision the village of Three Pines, Quebec, which realizes more than its share of tragedy but is held together by the calm and steady Gamache.

The series is up to book 18, and I recommend starting at the beginning, which means hours and hours of ear reading pleasure.

Library staff is available to help patrons set up cloudLibrary and OverDrive. Stop into the library with your device, and we'll have you ear reading in no time.

This Week's Library Events

Tuesday, March 14 – 6:30 p.m., Online Book Group (email library@cityofroseburg.org for the Zoom link)

Wednesday, March 15 – 10:30 a.m., Storytime with Aurora

Thursday, March 16 – 3:30-4:30 p.m., Children's Drop-In Activity

Saturday, March 18 – 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., Read with Astra teens