The Art of Voice Acting

by James R. Alburger

Exclusive content from the 4th edition
AUDIO BOOK NARRATION

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Hillary Huber is a successful voiceover talent based in Los Angeles. She has voiced thousands of commercials including national accounts for Toyota, Birds Eye, Boeing, Ford, and McDonalds. She is also a critically acclaimed audio book reader for titles including *A Light in the Piazza*, by Elizabeth Spencer, *A Field of Darkness*, by Cornelia Read, *A Map of Glass* by Jane Urquhart, and a six-book series titled *Southern Women*, by Elizabeth Spencer. Hillary is also an accomplished voice-acting coach and will often be found working with Pat Fraley as a co-instructor at his workshops. Here's what she has to say about the field of audio books.

A Bit about Audio Books

Reading audio books is the most rewarding voiceover work I have done. It offers me the opportunity to act, not just announce. I get to be multiple characters, wind a story, do it all on my own time AND I get to line my shelves with my finished work!

This fast-growing market is much easier to break into than other voiceover arenas such as commercial, promo, animation and looping. There are no agents. You forge a relationship with an audio book publisher and they funnel you work. It's that easy.

How does one go about creating that relationship? There are a couple of ways. You might try the gun-for-hire route. In this case you make a demo (generally consisting of three short excerpts from books demonstrating your particular skills; the demo is no more than three minutes total.) Your demo is then sent to small- and medium-sized audio book publishers with the hope that they need your talents and hire you. The larger audio book publishers are a little harder to get to.

I think a better way is to become your own producer. Most audio book publishers farm out their work. Find a book that has not been previously recorded. Record yourself reading a few excerpts from the book. Then approach the appropriate audio book publisher with an offer. "This is how I can make you money," is more attractive than "How can you make me money?"

You can research audio book publishers at **www.audiopub.org**. This is a terrific site loaded with current information about the state of the audio book market.

Reading audio books requires many of the same skills that this book teaches. You must be a good reader. You must be able to interpret themes and wind a story. Acting is critical, unless you want to read nonfiction—medical text, scientific works, self-help, and so on. The ability to change the sound of your voice to differentiate between characters is a big plus. Not all readers do this but I find a little vocal characterization enhances the read and makes the listening easier.

I record for only about four hours at a time. If you work as a gun-for-hire, and record at the audio book publisher's studio, you can expect to read for six to eight hours.

This market is not as lucrative as the commercial world. But it's so much more creative and ultimately, for me, more fulfilling. I produce all of my own work, so I am able to work around my schedule and never have to miss an audition or another job. I record in my home studio (many books are done this way) so I don't have studio and engineer overhead costs. I highly suggest you look into this wonderful, fast-growing world of audio books. It's a blast.