



## Securing Audiobook Rights: What Writers Need to Bring an Audiobook to Market By Matt Knight

**A**udio rights used to be the ugly step-sister of publishing rights, often thought of as throwaway rights included with many secondary rights in a publishing deal. Not until the mid-1990s, with tremendous advances in mobile technologies like smartphones, tablets, and car entertainment systems, did audiobook sales boom, transforming audio rights into the Cinderella rights of many publishing deals.

At the end of 2020, audiobook revenue grew by 12 percent, marking the ninth year of double-digit growth in a row. And 2021 is looking equally as promising. That's a billion-dollar market just waiting for you to tap.

Whether you're an audiobook producer, a publisher, or a traditionally or self-published author in the market to produce an audiobook, here's a breakdown of the five rights needed to bring an audiobook to market.

**7 pm, October 13  
via Zoom**

### 1. Book rights.

As an author of a book, your creative work is automatically copyright protected. Copyrights come with a bundle of exclusive rights — the right to reproduce, distribute, perform, display, or prepare derivative works from your creative work (like abridgments, translations, dramatizations, film adaptations, sound recordings, and audiobooks). These rights, collectively or individually, are yours to sell, license, or assign, in any manner you see fit.



Derivative rights are the starting point for producing an audiobook from the original content. So, the first question to ask is: Do you control your derivative rights?

*Continued on page 2.*

Join us on October 13 to learn about "Securing Audiobook Rights: What Writers Need to Bring an Audiobook to Market," presented by **Matt Knight**. Matt is a writer and intellectual property lawyer whose publications have appeared in the *New York Times*, *San Diego Union Tribune*, *IBPA Independent Magazine*, *Houston Law Review*, and his publishing law blog, *Sidebar Saturdays*. Matt's GPS coordinates are split between San Francisco and Maui.

Visit him at [mattknightbooks.com](http://mattknightbooks.com).

### ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS:

Sign-up is free. You can join from your smartphone, computer or tablet. If it's your first time, follow the prompts and allow it to access your camera and microphone. Click on this link for the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>. Meeting ID is 867 8214 4399. Password is 668448.

### IBPA Pub U Scholarship

The [Independent Book Publishers Association](http://IndependentBookPublishersAssociation.org) (IBPA) is accepting scholarship applications to the IBPA Publishing University conference in April 2022. The SLPA is a local affiliate. To apply, you must be a current member of both the SLPA and the IBPA. SLPA members may join IBPA at the affiliate member rate. **Deadline is November 30, 2021.** Apply at: [publishinguniversity.org/scholarship](http://publishinguniversity.org/scholarship)

**NOTICE: Nov. 10 is the Annual SLPA Member Meeting.** Members in good standing are encouraged to participate and vote to elect 2022 board members. Further details to come during the Oct. 13 meeting and again by email. To submit a nomination, contact SLPA Pres. Warren Martin, at: [president@stlouispublishers.org](mailto:president@stlouispublishers.org)

## Fine Tune Your Platform and Get Immediate Feedback Facilitated by SLPA Board Member Jo Lena Johnson



**G**ain clarity and immediate feedback on your message and author platform during our November 10 meeting. It's easy to be creative, but your message should be clear. What you think and what people actually hear or read from you may be two different things. Make sure as you're writing your book, selecting the title, and describing your book, that you speak directly to your audience.

Interested in participating? SLPA members will have first consideration, but space is limited, so reserve your slot early by sending an email to [president@stlouispublishers.org](mailto:president@stlouispublishers.org). Facilitated by Jo Lena Johnson, book coach at [Absolute Good Writing Services](http://AbsoluteGoodWritingServices.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

via ZOOM

**October 13, 7–8:30pm**  
**Securing Audiobook Rights: What Writers Need to Bring an Audiobook to Market**

with **Matt Knight**

<https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>

**November 10, 7–8:30pm**  
**Fine Tune Your Platform and Get Immediate Feedback**

with **Jo Lena Johnson**

**November 20, 8am–12pm**  
**How to Publish Your Own Book**

with [Warren Martin](http://WarrenMartin.com), [Andrew Doty](http://AndrewDoty.com), [Peggy Nehmen](http://PeggyNehmen.com), [Jo Lena Johnson](http://JoLenaJohnson.com), and [Bob Baker](http://BobBaker.com)

[Click here to register!](#)

[Details on page 2.](#)

*Securing Audiobook Rights continued.*

If you are self-published, chances are high you still own these rights. However, if you are published traditionally or with a small press, you'll need to read your contract. If you own the derivative rights, then either you or a producer you hire will need to do the following to create the audiobook:

- hire a voice artist to narrate your book
- record the narration
- hire an audio engineer to master those recordings into final audio files, along with any music additions
- hire a cover artist to create your book cover (if the original isn't available from your publisher)

Each of these steps creates certain rights that you must secure to control your audiobook rights.

**2. Performance rights.** When a creative artist narrates your book, that artist owns the rights to the performance. Therefore, the artist voiceover contract needs to transfer or assign to you all artist's rights in the narration of your book.

**3. Sound recording rights.** The audio engineer also owns rights in the audiobook.

They capture the narrated recordings, add snippets of background music and chapter transitions, and then process all that creative material into a final master audio file. Therefore, the audio engineer contract needs similar copyright-transfer language as used with the voice artist's contract.

**4. Music rights.** If you use pre-existing or original music in your audiobook recording, you'll need a license to two copyrights — the musical composition and the sound recording. You can use public domain music, which is free. Or you can purchase royalty-free music from stock music websites, but make sure your license includes use in audiobooks.

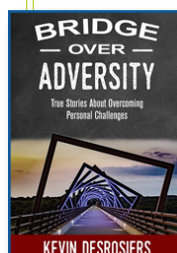
**5. Cover art rights.** Typically, a publisher, an independent artist, a book cover service, or an author creates a book cover. Unless you created the cover design for your book, you need either a license to use and modify the original book cover for the audiobook or a transfer of full rights in the copyright of the cover. If not, then you need to design or hire out an entirely new cover for the audiobook.

For more detail about each of these rights, read the full article on my publishing law blog [Sidebar Saturdays](#).

## KUDOS CORNER

SLPA Member:  
[Kevin Desrosiers](#)

**SLPA Board Member Kevin Desrosiers** is a retired team lead, speaking coach, and two-time Distinguished Toastmaster. He has delivered keynote addresses across the United States and internationally, including in Australia and South Africa.



His first book, *Bridge Over Adversity: True Stories About Overcoming Personal Challenges*, will be available in October of 2021. It shares the incredible stories of 12 individuals who endured severe hardships ranging from addiction to PTSD to abusive trafficking, and what they shared in common to triumph over it all.

For more information, visit:  
[bridgecoveradversity.com](http://bridgecoveradversity.com).

## Membership Renewal

**Special discounted rate for existing SLPA members!**

Beginning October 1 until we return to in-person meetings in 2022, current members can renew their annual dues for the special discounted rate of \$30. This covers your membership for one (1) calendar year from the date of payment. Simply use the special discount code provided in your renewal notice email.

## Online November Workshop How to Publish Your Own Book

**November 20, 8am–12pm**

**Register Now:**

<https://tinyurl.com/8pxabvpx>

**Registration closes  
three business days prior  
to the start date.**



## LAST MONTH'S RECAP Using NetGalley to Promote Your Book

Special thanks to **David Strom, author and leading expert on network and internet technologies**, for sharing how readers, reviewers, and influencers can discover your book and recommend it to their network and audience. Visit David at [strom.com](http://strom.com).

**Author Benefits:** expanded audience and exposure beyond your immediate circle, effortless feedback before publication, and using positive reviews as part of your marketing campaign.

**Author Risks:** negative reviews, limited niche options (review the site to see if your genre is included); all submissions are viewed in electronic format, so illustrated books don't fare as well due to poor image quality, especially on e-readers.

NetGalley is not for beta readers. Submissions are 99% publication-ready. Pricing varies, with discounts and listing options for members of organizations like the Association of American University Presses, Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, and the Independent Book Publishers Association.



**Meetings on the  
second Wednesday  
of every month**

***In-person gatherings are  
suspended due to  
COVID-19 restrictions.  
All meetings will be held online  
until further notice.***

## Admission and Membership

- Monthly meetings on Zoom are FREE
- [Membership is \\$60 per year.](#)

Visit: [stlouispublishers.org/join](http://stlouispublishers.org/join)  
[stlouispublishers.org/benefits](http://stlouispublishers.org/benefits)

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