

Recorded Fiction
Fiction on Tape • Fiction on Disc • Downloadable Audio
Updated 2/25/08

Description: The Recorded Fiction collection includes both cassette and compact disc formats. In 2005 the Library added a downloadable audio collection. A title popular in the general fiction collection will tend to be popular in spoken word as well, and often items remain popular in spoken word beyond its popularity in print. The recorded books industry aggressively negotiates contracts with popular authors and many books are released simultaneously in print and audio formats. Recorded Fiction does not have a New bookshelf. The percentage checked out is usually high, and collection size smaller; consequently, special attention is not needed for higher-demand titles. Genre sticker labels are placed on the spine to help with browsing.

The Recorded Fiction industry has undergone tremendous change over the years. The industry's preferred format follows the new automobile market when deciding what percentage of titles to offer in cassette or disc format. Some vendors are beginning to limit or eliminate audiocassette format. With the recent proliferation of MP3 players, vendors are eager to join the eAudio download market.

Iowa City Public Library launched the Fiction on CD collection in January 2002. The average cost of a book on disc is \$75.00, making it the most expensive format, other than art print, we purchase. Technology plays a big role in recorded fiction. Titles that are recorded digitally can be transferred to cassette, disc, or MP3 format while titles recorded prior to digital technology can only transferred to cassette. Because of high demand, some vendors are digitizing or re-recording earlier titles. Many classic titles are now available on compact disc.

Scope and Exceptions: The collection is intended to serve the "general" recorded fiction needs of the Iowa City community. Recordings of newly released books and classics are emphasized. Replacement copies are ordered for worn out items when the demand over time has been high and the title is of lasting interest.

ICPL buys only unabridged Recorded Fiction. ICPL's stance against abridgements supports the integrity of the text, insuring that our listening audience experiences an artistic experience analogous to that of the reading audience, with exposition, characterization, and transitions intact. Similarly, ICPL has refrained from buying condensed versions of print fiction, with the exception of Easy Readers in the Easy Reading Collection. Emphasis is placed on purchasing Library Edition items because of the availability of replacement pieces.

Occasionally, fiction will be performed, sometimes by a theatrical ensemble or radio producer, rather than simply read. These performances (Orson Welles's version of *War of the Worlds* for instance) are classified in the Non-Fiction Audio collection, rather than Recorded Fiction. The exception is performances with multiple voices that strictly follow the text, which are classified in Recorded Fiction. Recorded Fiction anthologies are usually classified into the Non-Fiction Audio collection, if the corresponding book would similarly go into the 800's. As with books, distinctions between the children's and adult collections are not always clear-cut. An effort is made to purchase Young Adult titles as well as genre fiction.

Audience: The goal is to provide a broad selection of material for young adults and adults. Both anecdotal evidence and heavy summer circulation point to travelers and commuters as a big audience for Recorded Fiction. Also, as lifestyles become busier, patrons listen to recorded fiction while performing other tasks at home or work. Patrons with low vision, arthritis, or other disabilities may depend on spoken word recordings in order to satisfy their reading interests.

Size and Duplication: As of 6/30/05, Fiction on Tape included 2,023 and Fiction on Disc 790 items. Titles are not duplicated within format unless there is very high demand or a gift copy. Due to consumer trends, limited titles are purchased for the tape collections with the emphasis on purchasing for the disc collection.

Maintenance: Items are withdrawn from the collection when they are in poor condition, cannot be easily repaired, have high circulations, replacement pieces are not available, or are no longer of interest as measured by circulation. Replacements are ordered, when available, for withdrawn, lost, or long overdue material if the circulation history and/or determination of value to the collection suggest replacement is needed and funds are available. An audio-visual task force in FY96, and again in 2002, set 150 circulations as the limit beyond which a title will be re-ordered, rather than single tapes or discs replaced. Often, audiocassettes wear out earlier than 150 circulations. In 2004, the Library purchased a disc cleaning and inspection machine. This has improved the physical quality of the collection; however, we do not have enough data to determine if this will extend a discs' life beyond 150 circulations.

Item purge is run annually for items that have not circulated in the past 12 months. Any title that appears on an item purge list is a strong candidate for withdrawal or evaluation for replacement if the item is missing. Shelving is currently adequate for the collections. Circulation is heavy enough that Item Purge only catches missing titles. Everything else circulates enough to keep.

Selection: The universe of items available is growing rapidly. There are more favorable reviews and items available than money to purchase. Selection tends to focus on the print version's popularity, rather than the technical quality of a title, as most tapes are competently produced. Selected readers have followings (Jim Dale, CJ Critt, George Guidall); however, most do not. Standard feedback tools such as patron holds, lost or long overdue material reports, and purchase alerts are all part of collection maintenance.

The eAudio vendor selected, Recorded Books, gives a database of titles (currently 900) but does not offer the option of selecting specific titles. If vendors change and we have the opportunity to select titles to purchase for download, the same selection criteria would be used.

We participate in various Continuous Order Plans. Standing orders are evaluated and established based on their benefits to the Library. Most benefits include reduced and/or free shipping and availability of replacement parts for no or reduced cost. *Recorded Books*, *Books on Tape*, *Brilliance Audio*, *Chivers Audio Books*, and *Blackstone Audiobooks* are all reputable vendors and all send catalogs. Review sources include Audiofile and Library Journal. Publisher's Weekly lists new releases. *Recorded Books* and *Books on Tape* are useful for locating older titles and replacement copies and their websites are searchable. Some titles can be found on iPage; however, it takes a bit of sleuthing to verify whether a title is abridged or unabridged. Titles ordered through iPage do not receive replacement tapes or discs unless they are Library Edition.

Patron suggestions are welcome and the requested items are considered using standard selection criteria that apply to the rest of the collection. One or two requests come in most weeks. Gifts are welcome but limited.