

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The State of K-12 Digital Reading

Highlights and trends in the use of ebooks, audiobooks, digital comics & magazines



Introduction

The 2023-2024 school year marked a pivotal chapter in the story of K-12 reading. Technology continues to rapidly reshape the education space, impacting instruction, assessment, and learning material delivery. Educators grapple with its impact and question whether technology, particularly social media, has contributed to declines in student reading proficiency.

According to 2024 data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, reading scores for students in grades 4 and 8 have each declined five points since 2019. Anecdotal data also suggests that lagging literacy rates are creeping into collegiate classrooms.

While concerns about the impact of tech aren't unfounded, technology is not a monolith, and all platforms aren't created equal. Technology plays an important role in every student's path to literacy. Whether it's providing kids with home access to books that they might not otherwise have, or creating opportunities for personalization that enable them to read stories in the way that best suits their needs, technology – when used correctly – is a critical tool for closing the reading access gap.

And, as schools pivot back to evidence-based strategies (known collectively as “the science of reading”) to shore up foundational skills like phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, digital reading platforms will be useful supplemental tools that help build these skills, owing in large part to options like:

- **Adaptive features:** Adjustable font sizes, text-to-speech capabilities, and in-app dictionaries help meet diverse student needs.
- **Engagement tracking:** Analytics empower educators to monitor students' reading frequency and duration, informing targeted interventions.
- **Diversity of content:** The seamless availability of diverse formats like ebooks, audiobooks, read-alongs, comics, and magazines make it easier for students to discover what works best for them.

By thoughtfully integrating technology into their classrooms alongside effective, evidence-backed teaching strategies, schools can ultimately empower students to overcome barriers to learning and set them on a path to lifelong readership.

In this deep dive into Sora reading platform data for the 2023-2024 school year, you'll get a bird's eye view of how digital reading continues to impact student literacy in more than 62,000 schools worldwide, tracking year-over-year reading growth and evaluating emerging trends. Plus, we'll examine real-world success stories, including how one state-level Department of Education is using digital as a tool to accelerate reading for every public school student.

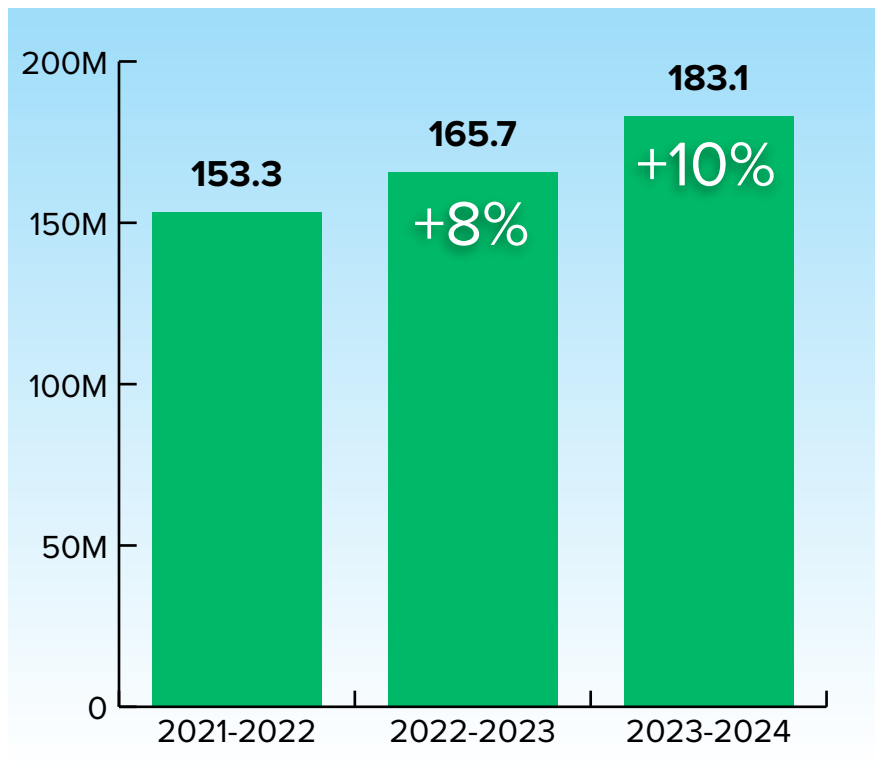
Digital Reading by the Numbers

In our second comprehensive assessment of students' ebook and audiobook reading habits in the Sora platform, we examined how often kids are reading, how many books they read, how much time they spent reading and more during the 2023-2024 school year.



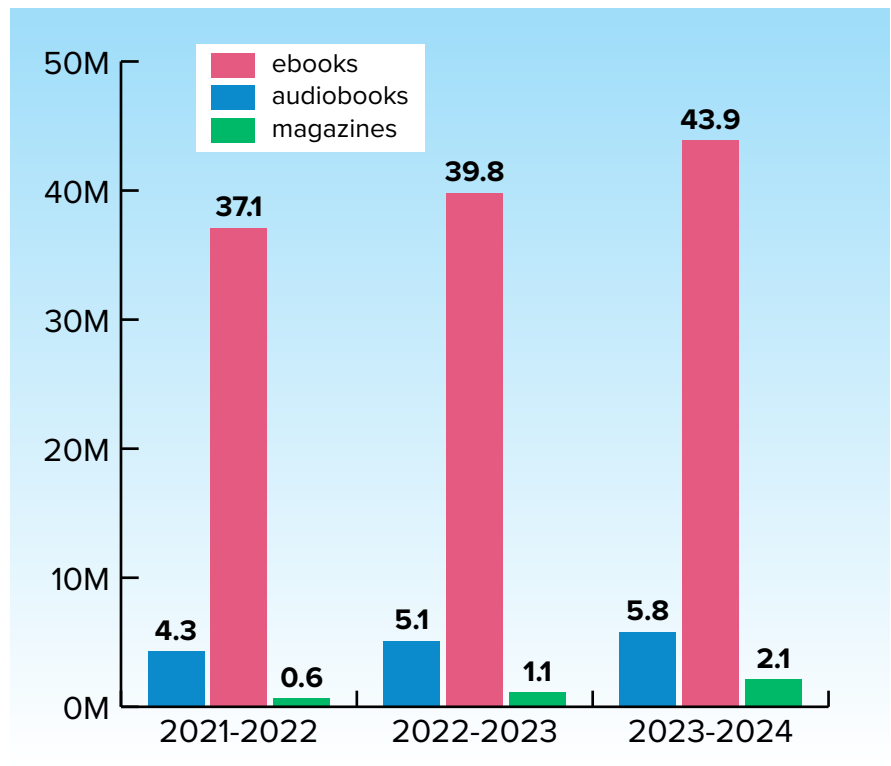
“Sora allows me to expand what I can offer students – especially manga series with many volumes and audiobook options for students who enjoy following along with a hard copy of a book. Sora gives students another place to go for options beyond the walls of our school library.”

Stephanie Mills, Library Media Specialist,
Park View Middle School (RI)



EBOOKS TAKE TOP SPOT; AUDIOBOOKS RISING

Though ebooks are still the most popular digital reading format by a large margin, the rapid ascent of audiobooks shows how popular this accessible format has become among students of all ages and abilities.



**Note: Total digital book circulation includes all schools worldwide with Sora.*

BORROWING TRENDS

Ebooks dominate:

During the 2023-2024 school year, a majority of titles (85%) were opened in ebook format, down slightly from 2022-2023 (87%).

Audio appeal:

Audiobooks made up 11% of total titles opened during the 2023-2024 school year, unchanged from 2022-2023.

Magazines

make a mark:

In 2023-2024, digital magazines comprised 4% of all digital checkouts in Sora, a 91% increase over 2022-2023.

BOOKWORMS FROM COAST TO COAST

TOP 5 U.S. STATES BY EBOOK CHECKOUT VOLUME

1. Texas
2. New York
3. California
4. Wisconsin
5. Massachusetts

TOP 5 U.S. STATES BY AUDIOBOOK CHECKOUT VOLUME

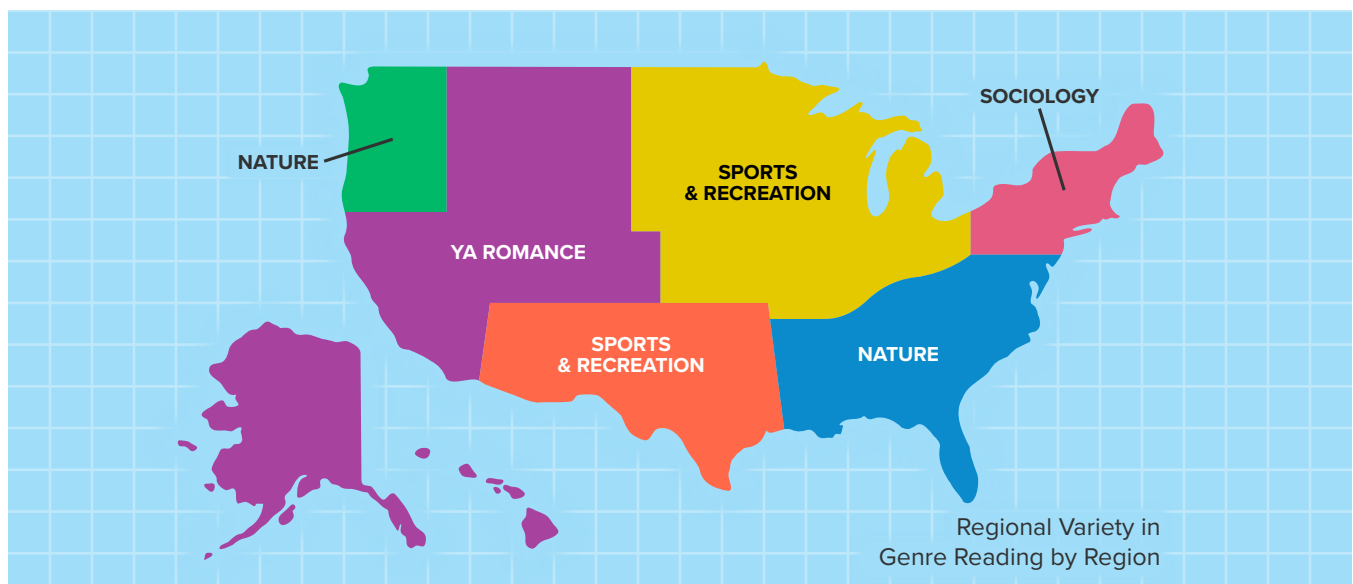
1. Texas
2. New York
3. Utah
4. California
5. Wisconsin

GENRE READING BY U.S. REGION

Four categories consistently dominated the top five most popular ebook genres per U.S. region: Comic & Graphic Books, Humor (fiction), Fantasy and Biography & Autobiography.

However, there was some regional variety in the fifth and final category:

- Northeast: Sociology
- Southeast: Nature
- Midwest: Sports & Recreation
- Pacific Northwest: Nature
- Southwest: Sports & Recreation
- West: YA Romance



LISTENING BY REGION

Audiobook trends stayed consistent from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024. In every U.S. region except the West, the top five genres were:

- Humor
- Fantasy
- Comic & Graphic Books
- Historical Fiction
- Mystery

In the West, the top four remained the same, with YA Romance in lieu of Mystery as the fifth most popular genre.



TOP DEFINED WORDS IN SORA, 2023-2024

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 1. trepidation | 6. mollified | 11. ostentatious |
| 2. surreptitiously | 7. AWOL | 12. blase |
| 3. impertinent | 8. contempt | 13. magnanimous |
| 4. incredulous | 9. seldom | 14. mirth |
| 5. chagrin | 10. martyr | 15. bemused |

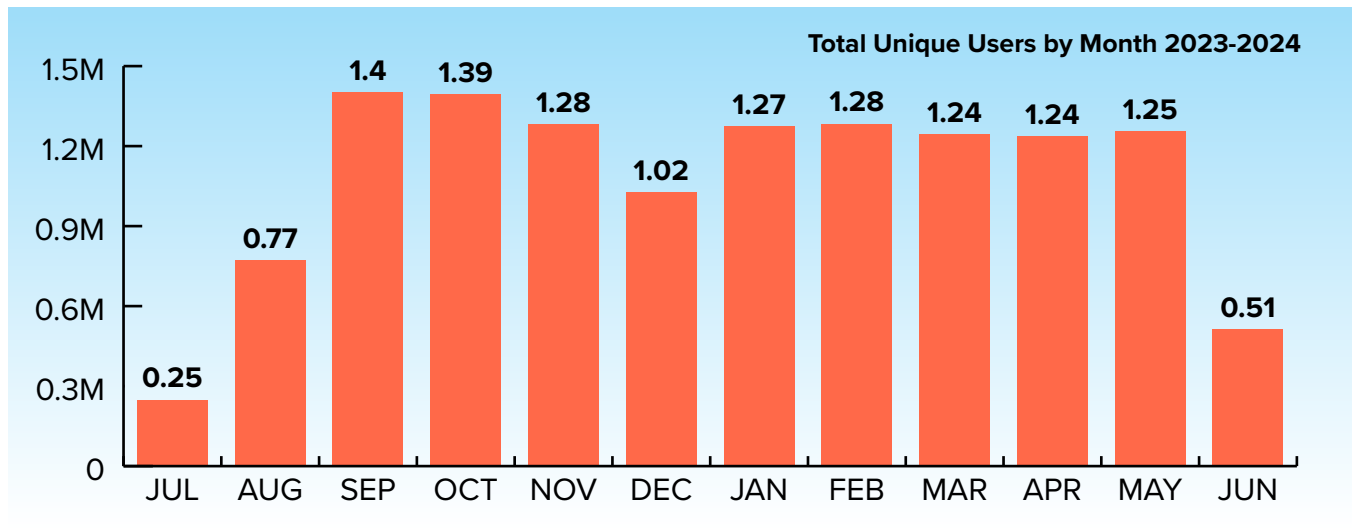


“Sora allows us to deliver a fully digital English curriculum on iPads that prioritizes student choice and diverse authorship. It is important that our students have literary experiences that are both windows into the world and mirrors in which they see themselves.”

Michael Fumagalli, Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning
at Glenbard High School District 87 (IL)

THIS YEAR IN TIME SPENT READING

Over the past two school years, July has been the month with the lowest number of unique users - and yet it's the month with the highest average reading time, at 4.6 hours per student!



Why the discrepancy? It may have something to do with Sora Sweet Reads, OverDrive's free summer reading program (runs May - August) for schools, which has grown by double digits since the 2019-2020 school year, and had a record-breaking year in 2023-2024.



SORA SWEET READS RECAP MAY - AUG. 2024

more than 1 million
checkouts

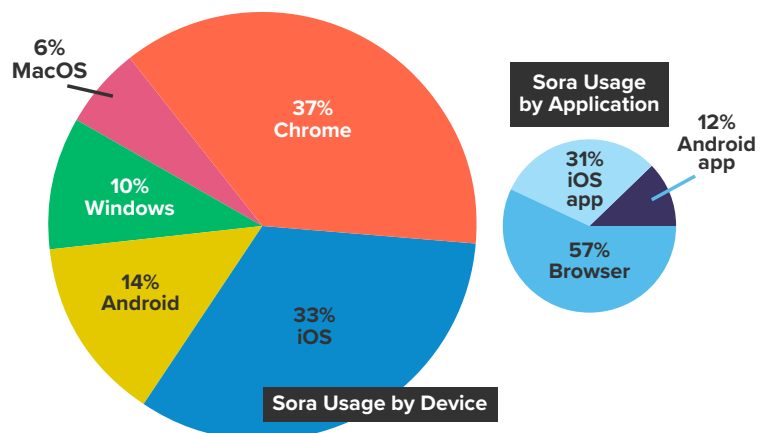
70%
YoY growth

200+
titles

TECH MATTERS: SORA USAGE BY DEVICE & APPLICATION

Technology gives students the power to read anytime, anywhere. Students can read books on Sora using school-supplied devices, then continue seamlessly by installing the app or accessing via browser on home devices.

See what students used to browse for books in 2023-2024.



SORA SPOTLIGHT: The Delaware Accelerate Learning Collection

How a state-level collection can foster digital reading success

In 2021, the Delaware Department of Education set a new challenge for itself: Shift the narrative from pandemic-related learning loss to learning acceleration, by giving students and staff across the state access to the resources needed to eliminate barriers to reading.

To achieve this goal, the DDOE turned to the Sora platform, leveraging federal Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to establish the Delaware Accelerate Learning Collection, a shared statewide ebook and audiobook collection available to all public schools across Delaware. The digital collection includes:

- Popular ebooks, audiobooks, comics and magazines
- Authentic and translated texts in languages other than English
- High-quality curriculum books adopted by each of Delaware's local education agencies

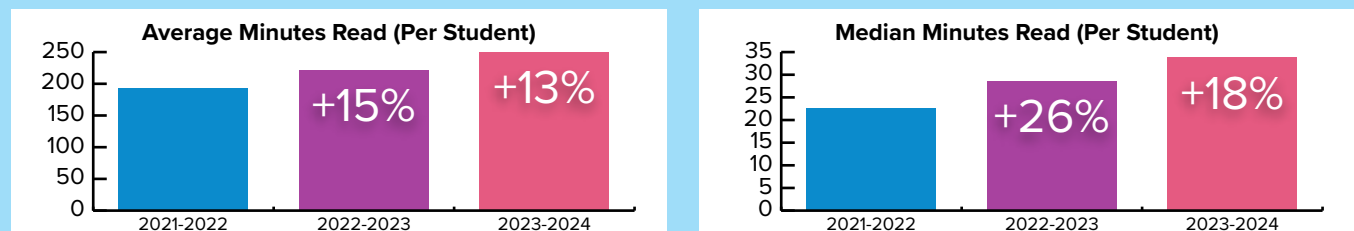
BY THE NUMBERS: THE DELAWARE ACCELERATE LEARNING COLLECTION

144,000
students

221
K-12 schools

17,000+
digital titles

Several years on, the numbers tell the story of the collection's success: Delaware Accelerate Learning surpassed one million checkouts in 2023, and median and average student reading time have all increased not only year-over-year, but semester-over-semester (in 2023-2024).



One third of Sora users read at least an hour more in the second semester of the 2023-2024 school year over the first semester.

“We are committed to making the right choice, the easy choice. We know supporting students in becoming proficient at reading and lifelong seekers of knowledge is critical. Access to ebooks, e-magazines and audiobooks opens gateways to new worlds for our students.”

Former Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Holodick

Which Titles Were Popular in 2023-2024?

What do kids like to read? The simple answer is – it depends!

From classics, to perennially popular student favorites, to the latest trending titles, discover reading trends by age group, including the titles, series and authors that dominated digitally this past school year.

EBOOKS: TOP TITLES & TRENDS BY AGE GROUP

Juvenile *(Elementary and middle school-level)*

DIARY DOESN'T DROP

Similar to last year, titles from Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series dominated juvenile circulations. However, there were a few other perpetually popular series titles that students couldn't get enough of.

1. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid (Diary of a Wimpy Kid series)* by Jeff Kinney
2. *Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea (Dog Man series)* by Dav Pilkey
3. *Smile (Smile series)* by Raina Telgemeier
4. *Makes a Splash (Big Nate series)* by Lincoln Pierce
5. *Camp (Click series)* by Kayla Miller

Young Adult *(Middle- and high school-level)*

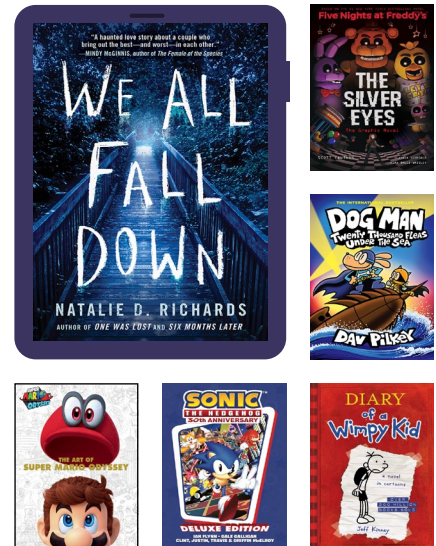
HEART-RACING THRILLS AND FIRST ROMANCE

1. *We All Fall Down* by Natalie Richards
2. *The Silver Eyes* by Claudia Schroder
3. *Heartstopper, Volume 1* by Alice Oseman
4. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
5. *How You Ruined My Life* by Jeff Strand

Adult *(Primarily high school-level)*

COMICS TAKE THE CAKE

1. *Sonic The Hedgehog 30th Anniversary Celebration* by Ian Flynn
2. *The Art of Super Mario Odyssey* by Nintendo
3. *The Search Omnibus* by Gene Luen Yang
4. *Miles Morales: Spider-Man, Volume 5* by Saladin Ahmed
5. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee



ADDITIONAL EBOOK TRENDS BY GENRE

Juvenile Fiction

1. Comic and Graphic Books
2. Humor (Fiction)
3. Fantasy
4. Historical Fiction
5. Mythology

Juvenile Nonfiction

1. Biography & Autobiography
2. Sports & Recreations
3. Nature
4. Sociology
5. Science

Young Adult Fiction

1. Comic and Graphic Books
2. Fantasy
3. Romance
4. Thriller / Suspense
5. Science Fiction & Fantasy

Young Adult Nonfiction

1. Biography & Autobiography
2. Sociology
3. History
4. Games
5. Computer Technology

Adult Fiction

1. Comic and Graphic Books
2. Science Fiction
3. Fantasy
4. Humor (Fiction)
5. Romance

Adult Nonfiction

1. Art
2. Biography & Autobiography
3. History
4. Games
5. Sociology

AUDIOBOOKS: TOP TITLES & TRENDS BY GRADE LEVEL

Juvenile *(Elementary and middle school-level)*

SERIES ARE STILL SUPREME

1. *The Lightning Thief* (Percy Jackson series) by Rick Riordan
2. *Big Shot* (Diary of a Wimpy Kid series) by Jeff Kinney
3. *Dragonet Prophecy* (Wings of Fire series) by Tui T. Sutherland
4. *Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone* (Harry Potter series) by J.K. Rowling
5. *New Kid* by Jerry Craft

Young Adult *(Middle- and high school-level)*

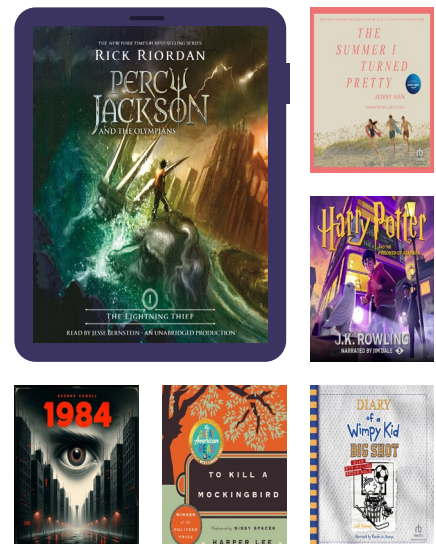
MAGIC, MYSTERY AND COMING-OF-AGE

1. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling
2. *The Summer I Turned Pretty* by Jenny Han
3. *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner
4. *One of Us Is Lying* by Karen M. McManus
5. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

Adult *(Primarily high school-level)*

REQUIRED READS RULE

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
2. *1984* by George Orwell
3. *Night* by Elie Wiesel
4. *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline
5. *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien



ADDITIONAL AUDIOBOOK TRENDS BY GENRE

Juvenile Fiction

1. Humor (Fiction)
2. Fantasy
3. Comic and Graphic Books
4. Historical Fiction
5. Mystery

Juvenile Nonfiction

1. Biography & Autobiography
2. Sports & Recreations
3. History
4. Health & Fitness
5. Science

Young Adult Fiction

1. Romance
2. Fantasy
3. Thriller / Suspense
4. Science Fiction
5. Mystery

Young Adult Nonfiction

1. Sociology
2. History
3. Biography & Autobiography
4. Law
5. Multi-Cultural

Adult Fiction

1. Classic Literature
2. Fantasy
3. Thriller
4. Historical Fiction
5. Science Fiction

Adult Nonfiction

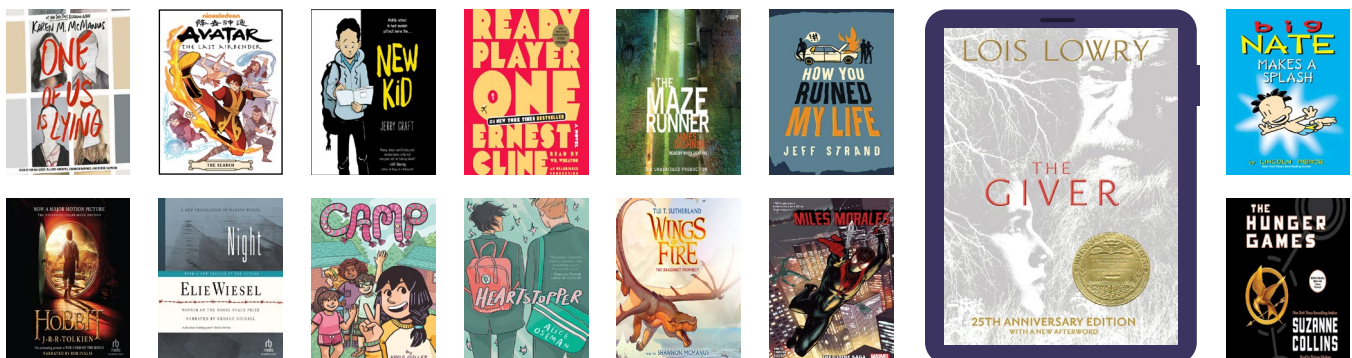
1. Biography & Autobiography
2. History
3. Sociology
4. Self-Improvement
5. Business

Listen In! Fastest Growing Audiobook Genres (Audio Publishers Association, 2024)¹

1. Sci-Fi or Fantasy
2. Romance
3. Mysteries, Thrillers, Suspense
4. History, Biographies
5. Self-Help

In 2024, 77% of parents surveyed by the APA noted that a key benefit of audiobooks is that they give their children a break from screens.

1. Audio Publishers Association. (2024, June 3). Audiobook Revenue and the Number of Listeners Continue to Grow. Audio Publishers Association. <https://www.audiopub.org/surveys>



Methodology

Unless otherwise noted, data for this report comes primarily from the Sora K-12 digital reading platform, which delivers the right books to the right students on any device in 62,000 schools worldwide.

For the purposes of this publication, a school year is defined as the period of time between July 1 and June 30.

About OverDrive and the Sora student reading app

At OverDrive, we believe that reading is the foundation for all learning. Children who love to read become lifelong learners. Reading helps develop logic and problem-solving skills. It opens new worlds and encourages curiosity.

The Sora student reading app, created by OverDrive, is designed to ignite a love of reading by providing access to the right books to every student. Available in more than 62,000 K-12 schools worldwide, Sora offers the industry's largest catalog of ebooks, audiobooks, digital magazines, and other content to support the need for required curriculum titles, class sets and pleasure reading. Sora was named one of TIME's Best Inventions. TeachingBooks.net (acquired in 2021) complements Sora with one of the largest catalogs of supplemental resources that "bring books to life." OverDrive—which also provides digital content to public, academic and corporate libraries—is based in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

To learn more about how the reading app Sora can help your district augment its catalog in the pursuit of lifelong literacy, visit DiscoverSora.com today.

Contact us

If you have questions about this report or about the Sora platform, please contact

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