

The transformative power of audiobooks

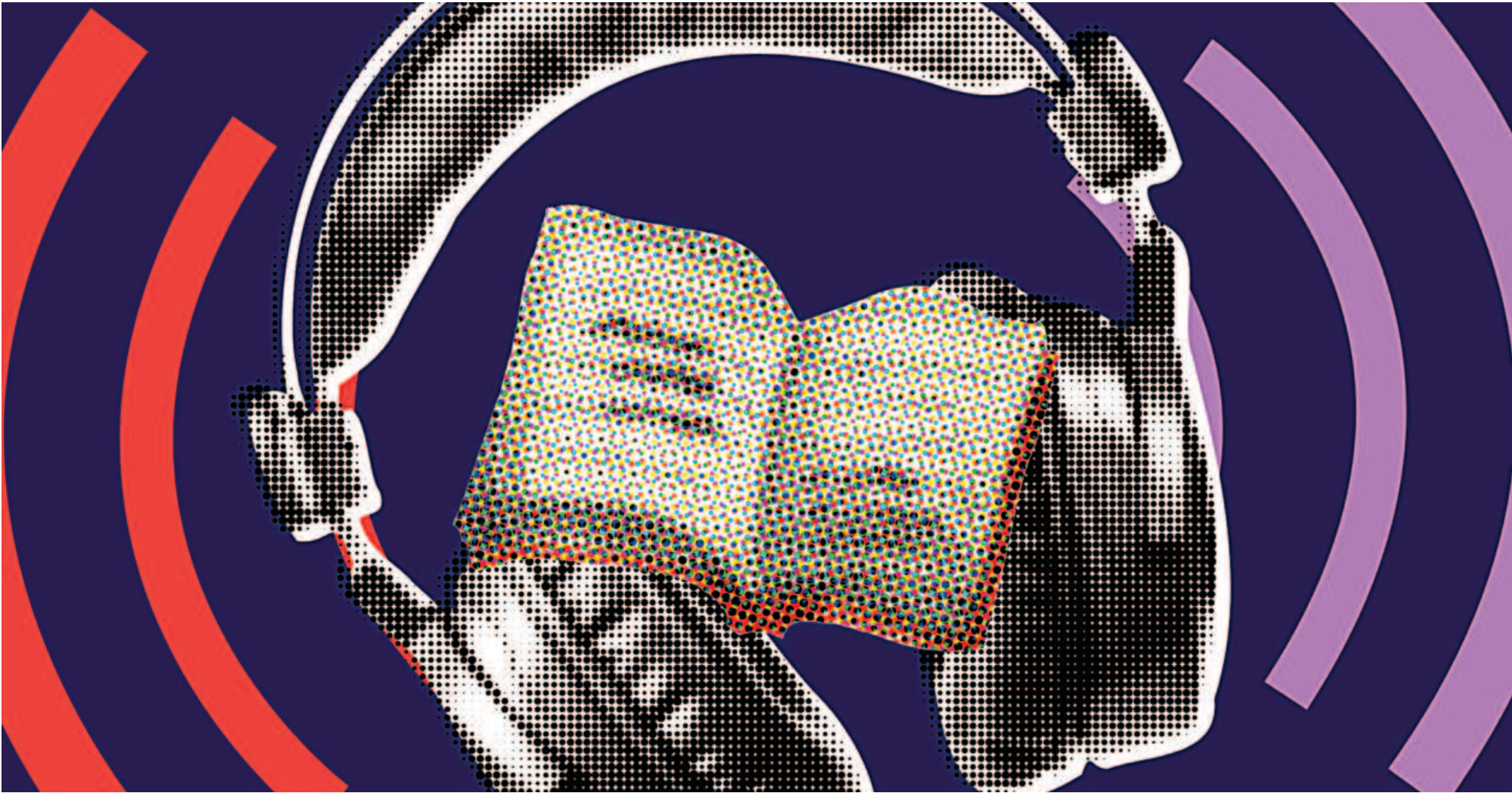


ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

I remember my first audiobook experience. It was a thriller—one of those books you can't put down. But instead of sitting in my armchair flipping pages, I was stuck in traffic, with the narrator's voice pulling me deeper into the story.

TINATH ZAEBA

With the rise of smartphones as well as our endless appetite for content, audiobooks have surged from a niche format to one of the fastest-growing sectors in the publishing industry. Once an option for only a select few, audiobooks are now shaping the way people perceive literature – merging the timeless love of storytelling with modern technology.

Today, they're not just an alternative, they're a whole new way to experience stories, and the numbers back it up. According to reports by Statista, in 2024, global audiobook revenues hit a whopping GBP 7.9 billion, and by 2030, that number is expected to skyrocket to approximately GBP 13.3 billion. Why? Because the way we consume stories has changed. All you

need is a smartphone and a few taps along the way to immerse yourself in a barrage of audiobooks. Whether it's through Audible, Spotify, or Storytel, audiobooks are effortlessly adapting to our on-the-go lives.

After all, in our fast-paced world, finding time to sit down with a book can feel like an impossible luxury. Between work, family, and all our small daily commitments that pile up and eat away our free time, cracking open a novel at the end of the day often takes a back seat. But audiobooks have found a sweet spot here, making stories portable and easily accessible.

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deeper into the story. The idea that I could "read" while commuting was a game-changer.

Amin Al Maksud, 36, a sustainability specialist in an international fashion brand, has had a similar revelation. "Audiobooks are digital, so I can carry them around on my phone," he shared. "I don't need to have my hands free. I can listen to them while doing chores, at the gym, or during commutes."

The shift in how we consume literature is redefining what it means to "read." No longer is reading confined to holding a physical book or scrolling through an e-reader. Now, you can experience literature through your headphones.

But let's not forget what makes audiobooks truly special: the narrators. If you've ever listened to a good one, you know how they can breathe life

into the text, turning even a mundane passage into something gripping. It's not just about hearing the words, it's about feeling the rhythm, the tension, and the emotions of the story.

Subaita Subah, a student at BRAC University, said she has become pickier about narrators than authors. "A good narrator can make or break a book," she explained. "If they're too monotonous, I lose interest, but if they're overly dramatic, it's just as bad. It's all about finding the right tone and pacing."

Listening to a well-narrated book, in some ways, feels like a return to our roots and also has nostalgia value. Audiobooks, in that aspect, are more than just reading with your ears. They're a revival of the ancient art of storytelling, where the voice of the storyteller adds a layer of performance to the tale.

One of the unsung benefits of audiobooks is how they make literature more accessible. For those with visual impairments or learning difficulties like dyslexia, audiobooks are a game-changer.

Syed Abdul Karim, 62, a banker at Standard Chartered, shared how a retinal issue made traditional reading difficult for him. "I used to love reading, but my vision has deteriorated over the years. Audiobooks have allowed me to keep that connection to literature. And the fact that I can replay a passage if I miss something is a huge benefit for me."

Audiobooks are democratising literature in ways we're only just beginning to appreciate. What once required specialised editions or technology is now just a tap away, available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. People who might have been excluded from traditional reading experiences are now able to enjoy books on their own terms.

While much of the audiobook revolution has been driven by English-speaking markets, the format is now gaining traction globally. In Bangladesh, for instance, where literacy rates are improving but still not universal, audiobooks in local languages are opening new possibilities. Platforms like Storytel are stepping up and offering books in Bangla. For some, this resurgence of oral storytelling feels like a homecoming. In cultures where oral traditions were once the primary way stories were passed down, audiobooks are breathing new life into them.

The benefits don't stop there. Audiobooks are often seen as the greener alternative to printed books. With audiobooks, there's no need for paper, ink, or the energy-intensive processes involved in producing physical books. Additionally, because they're digital, they don't require shipping lorries, packaging materials, or fuel to reach consumers.

Looking ahead, the future of audiobooks seems bright. As technology continues to improve and more people discover the convenience and pleasure of listening, audiobooks are set to become an even bigger part of our literary culture.

Tinath is an optimistic daydreamer, a cat mom of 5 and a student of Economics at North South University.

Beat the burnout: Techniques to stay focused and inspired while learning

Similarly, when you embark on a learning journey without a well-defined destination, it's like setting sail without a map – you drift aimlessly, unsure of where you're heading. Without proper guidance, it becomes difficult to measure progress, and the learning process can quickly become overwhelming and uninspiring.

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

Imagine the thrill you felt at the beginning – when you first cracked open that book, signed up for that course, or decided to learn something new. Your mind was buzzing with excitement, full of possibilities. But as the days turned into weeks, that initial enthusiasm began to fade, replaced by the monotony of routine or the frustration of hitting a difficult patch. It's easy to lose interest when the spark that ignited your journey starts to dim. But what if you could rekindle that passion and see it through to the end?

Our brains are incredible organs, but they can also be stubborn when it comes to learning. We like to relish the idea of mastering a skill and being able to drive a conversation or setting, but the journey to get there is often where our enthusiasm drains. For instance, people tend to seek pleasure towards the conclusion where they picture themselves as effortless experts in the field, without considering the hardship amidst the in-between process. That is where the problem is rooted.

Figure out where your motivations lie
Without aspiration, you might find yourself feeling lost and disoriented, struggling to maintain continuity with your practice. It's easy to lose momentum when you sense confusion in finding a purpose. However, having a conclusive goal can be the ultimate solution. Start by asking yourself: what functioned as your motivation behind the start of the journey?

Identify your preferences according to your interests
If your thoughts circle emulating others' achievements or meeting their expectations, you might be on the wrong path. It's crucial to identify your personal preferences and understand

what draws YOU to what you're learning. Your aim should be powerful enough to serve as your inspiration and keep you on track!

Create a system that allows you to track your progress
Similarly, when you embark on a learning journey without a well-defined destination, it's like setting sail without a map – you drift aimlessly, unsure of where you're heading. Without proper guidance, it becomes difficult to measure progress, and the learning process can quickly become overwhelming and uninspiring.

In case you don't have a tutor, seek feedback from someone experienced in the process; their evaluation and constructive advice can provide invaluable insights for your growth. To stay focused, visualise your goals by creating a big vision board with images and quotes that inspire you. Place it somewhere that can easily be spotted without effort. Instead of a to-do list, try creating a 'done' list and setting realistic deadlines where you checkmark your progress daily. This should help keep you motivated by portraying how far you've come.

Curate a specialised learning environment
It's interesting how some people thrive in group learning environments, while others prefer the solitude of personal space, free from distractions. Understanding your preferred learning

style is key to maximising your potential and achieving the best results throughout your learning journey.

Establish small targets and introduce a reward system for little achievement
Set challenging barriers for you to cross! Once you've advanced them, take the young enthusiast in you out

on a date or buy yourself the little things you've longed for as a postcard of inspiration. Also, avoid trying out too many activities on the run and remember to give yourself occasional breaks.

Learning is a complex and time-intensive process that demands both patience and commitment. While the journey can sometimes feel tedious, it holds the

potential to be both engaging and rewarding. The key lies in cultivating an interest in the process itself, rather than fixating solely on the beginning or the end. Before committing to any new endeavour, prepare to embrace not just the final outcome but the challenges and growth that lead the way. With the right mindset and strategies, you can beat the burnout, maintain focus, and ultimately reach your learning goals.



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANUM