AUDIOBOOKS

UPDATE FROM THE PUBLISHING
WORKING GROUP @ THE W3C

AGENDA

OUR GOAL

The Publishing Working Group is focused on bringing the modern web platform and all of its benefits to the publishing industry

USE CASE DRIVEN

We work from use cases pulled from our community to then develop standards that address real problems
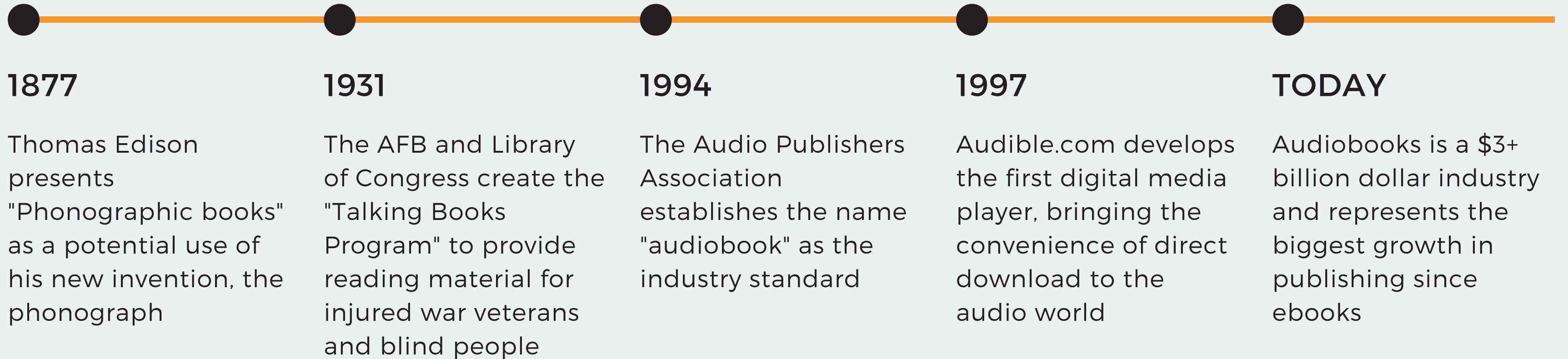
PROFILES

From the use cases, we develop "profiles" that address specific needs for segments of the industry, like audiobooks

PUBLISHING WORKING GROUP

THE AUDIOBOOKS USE CASE

BRINGING STANDARDS TO A MATURE INDUSTRY

AUDIOBOOKS THROUGH HISTORY

1877

Thomas Edison presents "Phonographic books" as a potential use of his new invention, the phonograph

1931

The AFB and Library of Congress create the "Talking Books Program" to provide reading material for injured war veterans and blind people

1994

The Audio Publishers Association establishes the name "audiobook" as the industry standard

1997

Audible.com develops the first digital media player, bringing the convenience of direct download to the audio world

TODAY

Audiobooks is a $3+ billion dollar industry and represents the biggest growth in publishing since ebooks

AUDIOBOOKS MARKET

$3+ billion and growing

According to the APA the market is only growing. $2.5bn of the market is in the US alone, the markets in countries like France, Spain, India, and China are only beginning.

The audiobooks industry is mature and many of the current players are the same companies involved in the . sale and production of ebooks. Some were even involved in the standardization of EPUB.

And yet, there is no common audiobooks specification.

WHAT ARE THE AUDIOBOOK USE CASES?

Listening
A user should be able to listen to an audiobook end to end without input, without interruption.

Portability
A user should be able to download, stream, or offline their audiobook.

Navigation
A user should always know or be able to find out where they are in an audiobook.
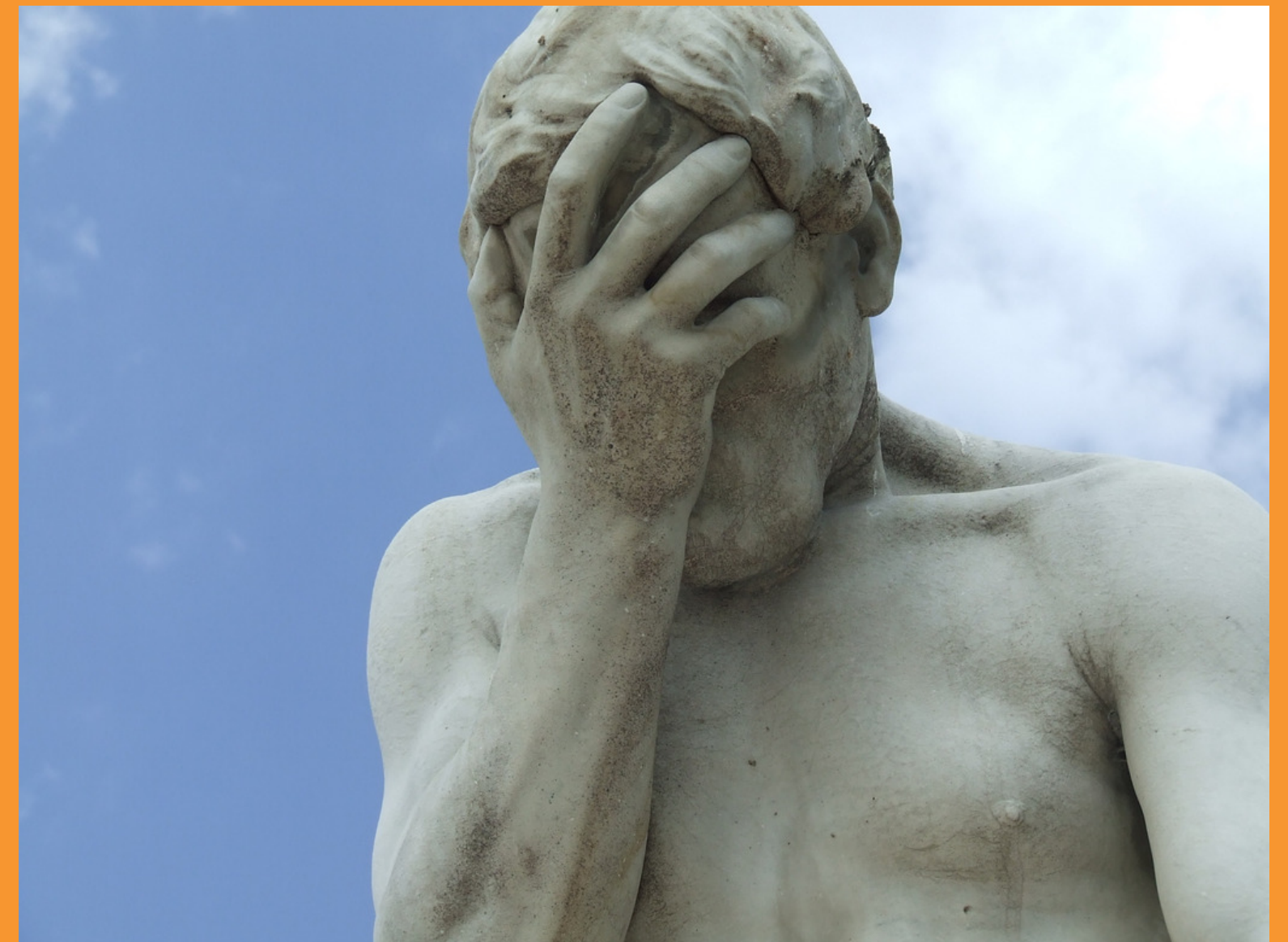
Accessibility
A user, regardless of ability, should be able to enjoy their content.

THE AUDIOBOOKS CHALLENGE

WHAT WE FACE WHEN NO SPECIFICATION IS
PRESENT

STATE OF THE AUDIOBOOKS UNION:

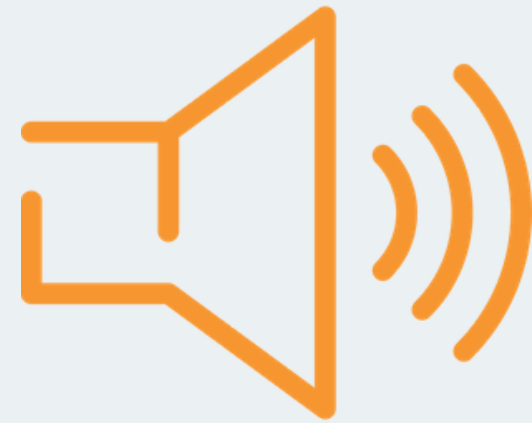No standard distribution, delivery, or production standard.
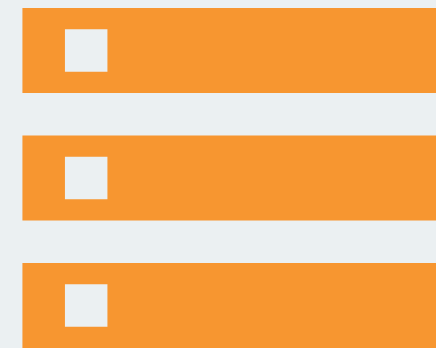
LET'S MAKE AN AUDIOBOOK

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Cover Image

Audio Files

Track List

Supplemental Content

THE DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL

DISTRIBUTOR A

- has content standards
- audio in MP3 format
- track list sent via email
- cover in JPEG
- supplement in PDF

DISTRIBUTOR B

- no content standard
- audio in MP3
- track list in TXT format
- cover image as JPEG
- they do not support supplemental content

RETAILER A

- track list (manifest) in JSON format
- audio files delivered via hosted URL
- all files delivered via FTP to a single folder on the retailer's server

RETAILER B

- audio files formatted in M4B
- metadata and other files delivered separately

EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT

Different Standards = Different Problems

- Retailers can receive bad or incorrect data
- The user experience suffers
- Audiobooks in this system are siloed to their retail/app platform
- This system limits independent content creators or small publishers

TRANSLATING CHALLENGES INTO SPECFICATIONS

USE CASES AND MORE

WHAT MAKES AN AUDIOBOOK UNIQUE?

THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE

We looked at the current market of audiobooks experiences and determined the core use cases.

MISSING FUNCTIONALITY

What are common use cases that are either currently underserved or not represented by audiobooks experiences?

What could we add to the experience that the modern web platform can provide?

FOUR NEW USE CASES

SUPPLEMENTAL CONTENT

Images, graphs, data, any non-audio content a content creator believes is needed to complete the experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A rich HTML formatted table of contents for content parity with an EPUB or print book.. Gives the user the ability to always know where they are in the content.

SYNCHRONIZED MEDIA

Sync audio content with text. Give users the opportunity to move between text and rich audio, or follow along. Make content accessible to users regardless of ability.

PACKAGING

Provides a method for B2B exchange, and simplified user downloads.

FEEDBACK

The Argument Against

Audiobook publishing is an established industry, every audio publisher is comfortable with their current practices, why introduce new work with changes to how they make, distribute, and develop files?

The Argument For

Moving to a single specification eliminates the need for multiple workflows, opens audiobooks to the modern web platform, brings new features to the product, and simplifies file delivery. Retailers who have implemented a similar standard have seen massive reductions in processing time.

WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Specifications are fueled by feedback.

Without feedback, we risk not providing what is needed, so please log issues on Github, contact us via email, or tweet to us! We want to hear your thoughts.

THE ROAD AHEAD

What happens next

TODAY

The First Public Working Draft of the Audiobooks profile has been published.

SUMMER 2019

Reach out to the industry for more feedback, seek out implementors, and prepare the implementation and test plans.

CANDIDATE RECOMMENDATION

We will be looking for implementors to adopt our spec and provide implementations and test results

KEEP IN TOUCH

MAILING ADDRESS

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