

W3C Audiobooks Specification

Audiobooks

"An Audiobook is a collection of audio resources grouped together by a reading order, metadata, and resources..."

— 1. Introduction, W3C Audiobooks

The Audiobooks specification is designed to provide a unified manifest for delivering audiobook content through the supply chain. The manifest provides a method for content creators to send **metadata, content, and resources** in a single format.

Metadata

In the Audiobooks format, metadata is purely for identification and differentiation. Separate from ONIX or other retail metadata needs.

```
"type": "Audiobook",  
  "id": "https://librivox.org/flatland-a-romance-of-many-dimensions-by-edwin-abbott-abbott/",  
  "url": "https://w3c.github.io/wpub/experiments/audiobook/",  
  "name": "Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions",  
  "author": "Edwin Abbott Abbott",  
  "readBy": "Ruth Golding",  
  "publisher": "Librivox",  
  "inLanguage": "en",
```

Reading Order

The most important feature of the new format is the `readingOrder`, a definitive list of the order of files in an audiobook, including key information for user agents. The reading order of an audiobook can only be made up of **audio** resources.

```
"readingOrder": [  
  {"url": "http://www.archive.org/download/flatland_rg_librivox/flatland_1_abbott.mp3",  
   "encodingFormat": "audio/mpeg",  
   "duration": 1371,  
   "name": "Part 1, Sections 1 - 3"},  
  {"url": "http://www.archive.org/download/flatland_rg_librivox/flatland_2_abbott.mp3",  
   "encodingFormat": "audio/mpeg",  
   "duration": 1669,  
   "name": "Part 1, Sections 4 - 5"}]
```

Resources

The resources part of the audiobooks manifest is reserved for all **non-audio** resources related to the audiobook. This is where files like the cover, table of contents, supplements, or transcripts would go.

```
"resources": [  
  {"url": "cover.jpg",  
   "encodingFormat": "image/jpeg",  
   "rel": "cover"},  
  {"url": "toc.html",  
   "encodingFormat": "text/html",  
   "rel": "contents"}  
]
```

Packaging

W3C Audiobooks can be packaged into a single file containing the manifest, audio, and resources using the Lightweight Packaging Format.

This packaging format uses ZIP, similar to EPUB packaging but with fewer requirements. This format was designed to make it easier to package and move files through the supply chain.

Accessibility

The W3C Audiobooks specification was designed with accessibility in mind. Making audiobooks is simple within the manifest format, where there are a few options:

- * Text transcript
- * Synchronized Narration
- * Alternate format

```
"readingOrder": {  
  "url" : "chapter1.mp3",  
  "encodingFormat" : "audio/MPEG",  
  "duration" : 1234,  
  "alternate" : "chapter1_transcript.html"  
}
```

Accessibility in Audiobooks

Accessibility in audiobooks is more than providing a textual alternative to the audio.

It is important for users to have access to navigation, structural information, and metadata to understand **what** they are listening to, and **where** in the audiobook they are.

The Future of Audiobooks

Publishing@W3C has formed the Audiobooks Working Group to maintain the audiobooks standard.

The standard is designed to be a living standard, one where corrections, clarifications, and new features can be implemented as needed.

The Future of Audiobooks needs you

With the standard achieving recommendation status, it is ready for use by anyone.

The next major step is seeing it implemented by content creators, distributors, and vendors.

If you are interested in implementing the specification for your business and have questions, we are here to help.

Thank you!