

# Episode 160

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

audiobooks, audio, authors, books, narrators, people, ebooks, hire, megan, money, narrating, series, readers, audio books, produce, big, narration, paperback, alicia, pay

## SPEAKERS

Alicia Rades, Carissa Andrews, Megan Linski

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Carissa Andrews 00:13

The indie author revolution has been around for more than a decade. So we indies continue to push the boundaries of what we're capable of. From getting over initial prejudices to staring down perfectionism and author impostor syndrome. We've become a force to reckon with indie authors now wear more hats than ever as we strive to create a career full of meaning prosperity, that potential, we've juggled the demands and continue to be rebels in the face of adversity. Now, after years of hearing the shouts of hustle and grind, we indies are rebelling again, gone are the days of publishing a book a month until we drop, and in its place, sow the seeds of a better way to rapid release, a way that feels incredible as we build a sustainable, lifelong author career, that not only increases our visibility and royalties, but it's all done with intention and ease. If you're ready to buck the system and become the visionary entrepreneur, I know you're meant to be, you've come to the right place. I'm Carissa Andrews, international best selling indie author, and this is the Author Revolution Podcast. Well, hi there and welcome back to the Author Revolution Podcast. So wow, we have a really fun episode for you today. I have Alicia Rades and Megan Linski back on the podcast. But today we're going to talk about something we really haven't talked about a whole heck of a lot on this podcast, and that's audiobooks. Now, what's really interesting about audiobooks is it's a huge market that so many indie authors really aren't utilizing to the best of their ability. And in fact, as you're going to find out in this podcast episode interview, you're leaving money on the table if you're not actively seeking a way to get into the audiobook market. Just to give you an idea that audiobook market in the US is a \$2.67 billion industry, right now, with an annual growth rate of 24.4% between now and 2027. So what they're saying in terms of size and growth, is that hypothetically, if the annual projected trends continue as they are by 2027, it's going to be a \$15 billion industry, and one that is just going to continue to grow upward as we move forward in this technological digital era. What's really nice about audiobooks, at least in my opinion, is that the hard work really is kind of already done for you, the book is written, the content is there. And all you really need to do then is take this one object because you've already poured your heart and soul into and transform it into something new. We talk a lot on the podcast about the different ways you can go about doing audiobooks, whether you are hiring out actors, whether you are doing yourself whether you're doing AI narration, we go into all of it. But what I want you to know is no matter how you choose to do this, no matter how you choose to enter into the audiobook realm, it can be done at every price point, it can be done as long as you'd make that deliberate

decision to move forward knowing that your books are worth it. And now that's kind of a deeper conversation that Alicia and I will have about mindset because it truly is a mindset issue. If you don't believe your books are worthy of being an audiobook or worthy of investing in are worthy of expanding into a much larger arena, then you're going to have some troubles getting into this particular market space. But here's the thing, your books, once you hit that publish button, they now become a product. They're not just your awesome story. They're not just your imagination come to life on paper. This is a marketable product that you can earn money from and you should earn money from. And as we discuss also, when you do better when you are bringing in more income when you are supporting yourself with your creativity and your writing. You now have the opportunity to support others in this industry who may not even have the chance to do anything without your support. Megan talks a lot about how she has made it her mission to help new audio narrators when she's doing her audiobooks because she felt when she was getting into the industry, not a whole lot of people held their hand out to help support her. And she doesn't want to be that person just she's gonna reach out to as many new audiobook narrators as possible to give them that leverage up right. And we get to do all of these songs things as authors, because we can support audiobook narrators cover designers. People who do lay out, there's so many different people you can hire into your business that can then support themselves doing what they love to do. And it's all about this network of support that I think in the authorship is so good at doing. But it all starts somewhere. And that usually is you believing it's possible. Right? Now, for me, you're gonna hear on the podcast as well, I do my own audiobooks. And the reason I do that is because I love the process of it. One of the things that I don't really overly enjoy, is staying in one particular creative realm. And that's it. So there are plenty of authors out there who can just, you know, write stories every single day nonstop until they die. I am not one of those people, I need to kind of hop around between designing my covers because I see shades, that creative part of me that wants something visual, I like the obviously the writing part of it because now my imaginations engaged and I get to play around with words. But I also love using my voice I found using this podcast actually, how incorporating my voice is something that soothes a different part of me. And so I liked the audio narration aspect, I like being able to describe to you in the way that I hear it in my head, the way that this story comes out, right? Where if I hired someone, and perhaps down the road, that's going to be a thing, maybe I'll have a full cast, who does things at a certain point in time. But right now, I just, I love that aspect. And I don't think that there's another single Narrator out there who could do it the same way I do. And so part of the process for me is that I just love incorporating that into my particular business. Regardless of where you are, in your audio book journey, whether you have created an audio book or two, whether you have plenty of them. Whether you're just starting out and you're wondering how in the world do you get this thing started, we have you covered. I want you to know that this is such a creative and wonderful time to get into this industry. And it's only growing. So don't feel like you've missed the boat and don't feel like it's an overwhelming process either. take things one step at a time, just like Megan and Alicia are talking about in this podcast episode you're gonna hear they're not fully where they want to be yet either. But they are earning a lot of money doing exactly what they're doing right now. All right. So without further ado, let's get into the podcast interview. Well, Alicia, Megan, you're back on the podcast. I'm so excited that you're here. Thanks for joining us. I mentioned in the introduction a little bit about why you guys are back so soon. Because obviously you are masters of audiobook creation and getting your books out there in audiobook format. So because you're such rockstars, can you tell my audience a little bit about how you first got started in audiobook production? Yeah, so this is Alicia talking. I am the one who got into audio first. So I produced my first series around 2016 and 2017. And I did it through ACX as a per finished hour deal. They sold a little bit, but it was only like 60 to \$100 per month. And so I didn't really think that audio was worth it at the time. Because it just it just wasn't making me a lot of money. So when I did my second series, I did it royalty share

because I just didn't feel like I had the budget to invest in something that wasn't going to have a decent return. But I was also certain this second series was gonna outsell the first one like it'll be worth it to the narrator. but spoiler alert, that was like a limiting belief I could have afforded it if I wanted to. And I just didn't believe in it. So fast forward to 2019, Megan and I had started co writing at the time, and we unmanifested, a traditional audio book contract. And we talked about that in our last episode. Around this time, we were tuning into our intuition and I kept getting this feeling like I should take my audiobooks wide. So we didn't know pretty much anyone doing wide audio books at the time. And so we didn't know if it was going to work. But we decided that I would take my solo titles and use it as an experiment. So I went wide in the beginning of 2020 with that first series that I had paid for the rights for they didn't do much at first, but we kept getting this feeling like we need to be investing in audio. So in 2020, Megan and I both started putting our backless titles in the audio. I had a series that wasn't selling an ebook hardly at all. On a good month. I was maybe making \$150 a month on that on the ebooks for that series. But I took a chance on it I invested in the audio and it started making me a couple \$100 a month just on audio. So after I took my books wide after we started kind of investing in our backlist, it took about a year before my audio at least I don't know about Megan, she conducted about hers, but took about a year before my audio started gaining traction on by retailers, I broke four figures per month, and that just kept going up. And now it's two thirds of my income. So we saw amazing, we saw the potential that our audiobooks could have. So we bought the rights back from our publisher. Again, we talked about that in the last episode. But just briefly, the publisher wasn't really working with us to market our audiobooks. But from what I had done with my own, I saw that we could market our audiobooks ourselves. So we bought the rights back. And then I also bought the rights back from that royalty share deal so that I could take the audiobook slide because you can't, you have to be exclusive through ACX, if you do royalty share. So I bought the rights back to that now by I think it was 2021. This is last year, now we have the rights to all of our books. And when we bought the rights back from that traditional contract, we started making four figures per month just on that series in audio. I don't remember the data exactly, but I think it was pretty immediate. And so it's been a long process, it took quite a few leaps of faith, we didn't know if any of this would pay off. But I'm really glad that we started when we did, because we're in a much better position now. And it's something we've become very passionate about, especially the kinds of books we write, we talked about in our last episode, how we write about disability and mental illness. And so we want to be available to as many readers as possible and accessible to people who can't read our ebooks or our print books. So that's been really important to us. And to see that payoff allows us to continue doing that. That's amazing. Oh, my gosh, I love that concept too, that for you the nudge to move forward with audiobooks was really that internal nudge at first. I think that's so important for people to hear, too, because sometimes we get those nudges and we're like, that's dumb, no one's doing it this way. Or, you know, we second guess ourselves, and we have those limiting beliefs of I can't afford this, like you had said, or you know, whatever. And it's so important, like when we get those nudges, those internal nudges to try something new or to do something no one else has done yet. To trust that that's internal guidance that's guiding you in the right direction. I think that's so cool that you guys went ahead and did that. Make it? How was it for you like to start the audiobook thing? Were you keen to go straight straight ahead and try to sing? Or were you just really kind of watching to see how Alicia books did first. So I've only been in audiobooks for two years, and they make up 50% of my income and they're climbing every month. Wow, that's great. Yeah, I've had a lot of success and audio that I didn't really expect, because Alicia started doing audio way before me like very many years. And I didn't really understand why she was doing it because audio is expensive to produce. And it does take time, time that I thought was taking away from writing. And I didn't understand why I would produce an audiobook, when I could just write another book and publish something else. Well, I realized through that process that if you expand your

products, even though it's still only one book, you pretty much quadruple the potential for that product. Right? So I didn't end up getting into audiobooks until a publisher reached out to us and asked to produce the fire prophecy for us. And I thought, well, it's free. We're not investing any money in it. So why not? And it wasn't until they produced the first three books in this series that I really saw the potential for audio, we had a lot of fans coming in that were strictly audio book readers. And I realized that this was an opportunity that I was just leaving on the table. So I decided to start producing my own audiobooks. And through that, I ended up making a huge gap. That was I didn't even realize the potential that could be found in audio. I understand that completely. I think a lot of authors really don't understand the potential of the extra versions of the thing that they've already done, whether it be paperbacks or hardcovers or audiobooks. I know so many authors who are publishing only ebooks, and it's like, oh my gosh, what are you doing? Get there? At least get the paperback out there. Like go like there's so much possibility here. I was gonna say there are authors who make the majority of income off of paperback they don't even sell that many eBooks and that's just mind blowing to me. Yeah, because I couldn't fathom that kind of, you know, success off of paperback books, but it is possible and it is no and actually, no do the thing, Right? I sell a lot of paperback books especially in like October, November, December, all of a sudden my paperbacks go off the charts and my eBooks start floundering. Like what's happening here? But it's because people are buying gifts, they're getting ready to do things. And if they loved your books, they want to share them with their friends or their family. So it just makes sense. That that would be the case, too. Yeah, I was just gonna say there are so many opportunities. And I think as indie authors, we get focused on the ebooks, because that's obviously very easy. It's very cheap. I mean, you don't really have to pay anything to go in the eBook. And we see a lot of people doing really well in ebook. But for us ebook always felt like an uphill battle, like spending so much on ads. And it just, it felt like we were trying so hard to make it work and audio for us has been, honestly, like, just so easy. It's one of those things like you're in the flow with us. But that's not going to be the case for everyone, obviously. So it's you got to find what feels good for you. And for us, that's audio. So amazing. So Do either of you narrate your books? Or do you do the the audiobook sharing to get narrators into the process? We hire audio narrators, we never done anything ourselves. And honestly, I would not feel comfortable doing that. I know you do that. You might well, like have the podcast, your you have a wonderful voice. I don't think I would be comfortable doing that. So we do hire. It's a lot of fun. It does take a little bit of work to get the courage up. I know like with my first narrated book Pendomus, if you listen to it, I would cringe because I was so scared reading that stupid book in 2018. I'm like, I don't know what I'm doing. And I'm talking really fast. But I cannot talk fast. It was terrible. But I think I've gotten a little better. What were you going to say Megan? I was gonna say I would love to produce an audio book on my own one day. But I'm not quite there yet. I don't know anything about audio production, I would really love to make an audiobook musical. Those are cool. That's cool. Yeah, that's a project find that I would love to do. Ah, just sounds fun, doesn't it? I think it's so cool that there's so many options with audio as well. I mean, you could do the AI narration through Google or through other programs you can do yourself, you can obviously hire someone to do the narration, or you can have that full cast, it's like, and you can sell each one of those differently, you have the rights to those books. So you could have five different audio books, if you really wanted to, at five different price points to let all of the readers you know, pick and choose what version of that same story they wanted. I mean, there's so so much possibility, and it's just really neat. You know, I had notes to kind of talk about this later. But why don't we talk about it now, since you brought it up? Sure. So there's so many different ways that you can get an audio, and I thought it'd be cool if we talked about them. Absolutely. The first one, what we do is we go, we pay per finished hour. So that means that we're hiring the narrators on a work for hire contract, and we pay them. It's mostly a flat fee, but it depends on how long the audiobook ends up being. So once they're paid, they're paid, they don't get

through their royalties, and we own the rights to do whatever you want, we can go exclusive with Audible or we can go through find a way we can and find a way distributes wide. And we can we've done serial apps, we just started doing that a couple of months ago. And we are now going to be experimenting with putting our audiobooks on YouTube and monetizing them. That's something we can't really talk about yet. Because we don't have data because we have we haven't reached the ability to monetize you need 1000 subscribers. That's one way. You can also do royalty share, which means that you're not paying the narrator upfront, you split the royalties with them, we have not done that through find a way I know find a way it has an option to do that. So you can do that and go wide, but you have to be with find a way. I have done that with ACX. And when you do that ACX distributes to Audible. And so you have to be exclusive there. You can also do royalty share plus, which is where you give the narrators a smaller amount of money upfront. It's also based on per hour, and then they also get the royalty split. The benefit to that is you you'll probably get better talent that way. Because royalty share without any upfront payment is very it's a huge risk to the newer writers. So it's getting a little harder to find new writers that way but it's an option. I would just say. Put your audio book up for an audition and See what you get. You can also distribute why you can be exclusive. You can also sign with a publisher, like we did back in the day. Another thing is running a Kickstarter to raise the funds to pay upfront. That's my point. I've seen several Kickstarters recently that have funded successfully, and now they're going on to, so to produce their audiobook, and they basically pre sold it to their fans. And I've seen people without a big fan base raise over \$3,000. Because the people on Kickstarter, who browse Kickstarter, want to see these projects come to life. Let's see what else you mentioned AI narration we haven't gotten into that yet, because we do hire narrators. So we already have the audiobook option there. I think AI works a little bit better for like the nonfiction side to right now. I don't think it's quite up to speed for fiction, but you never know. I mean, it might be okay. But that's an option if you don't want to pay for it. Absolutely. I can't talk a lot on that, because we haven't done it. But sure, I know you can distribute to Google Play, and then you can also take the files and put them on YouTube. I'm not 100% sure what other platforms allow AI I think Kobo but don't quote me on that. So not, you can't take AI everywhere. Like audible doesn't allow AI yet, but okay, in an income stream on other platforms? For sure. What else do we have narrating the audio books yourself, which you do. So there's a lot of options. And I think people get really scared because they're like, Oh, it's so expensive, because I have to pay upfront. And I don't know if it'll pay off. But you have to start somewhere, right? For sure. I would suggest if you can't start paying upfront, because you don't have the budget. Try one of these other options just to start somewhere. Because that's what we did, we had to build up to where we're at now to be able to pay upfront on every audio book. But that's not where we started. So That's amazing. You know, and you were talking about Kickstarter, as an option. I know that there's lots of grant programs that are out there too, for artists. So if you look around your area for grant opportunities for artists, we have one in our local community, and I've done grants, multiple times, you know, just to get new computers or new equipment if I was not at the point of being able to get them myself. But you can do it for editing, you could do it for conferences, like I'm going to the 20 bucks conference, there's all sorts of ways that grants can help authors. And I think sometimes we forget that we're artists. So when I say it, like an art grant, you know, it includes us guys. So if you need funds, you know, check around and see what kind of grants are available for you. Because narration for your audiobook would be a great opportunity to expand into a new area. So I think that's great. Okay, so you mentioned briefly about how you produce your audiobooks that you've gone through ACX and find a way. You mentioned serialization. So are there serialized audiobook places that you can also produce your books and publish them that? I don't know a lot about that. So I can't talk about that. But what we did is just took the audio books, we already have an uploaded them to the app. So also find a way distributes to radish, which is a cereal app. They don't take everything but they'll pick and

choose which I have excellent. Megan, did you have anything to add about like ways that we produce audio or other ways that other people can get into audio? Well, for me, it's really important to hire narrators. We're AI. I understand that there are reasons why people use AI and use AI narrators. But for me, I really like using actual people because the inflection that you get from their voice. Because I consider audiobooks acting. I consider them a different version of entertainment that is more similar to a film than it is to an actual book. And because of that I hired narrators who are more actors than actual narrators. Now this is like a different type of opinion for different people. Some readers really wanted just a plain straightforward Narrator Some readers really want the actor I want the big show because I feel like my writing is like that. I have a big dramatic writing. I have, you know, the overstatement of words and the ridiculous scenes and because of that I want my narration to match up with the way I write. So that's really important to me. So when you're considering hiring a narrator versus using AI, you really need to decide what's my writing style and who's going to be able to vocalize that writing style and the best way if you write in a very robotic kind of way A in a very straightforward kind of way, which is what nonfiction usually is, you might want to go with an AI narrator. But if you're somebody like me who's really has to have the big passionate, boom, you want to go with a really good actor. So it's not just, you know, cut and dry, who can you afford versus who you can't, it's more of who's going to tell the best story and the way that you envision it. I love that. And it kind of goes back to that manifestation to like, when you know what you want, and you start to go after it, then you can have it, it's just that you need to make that decision for yourself. Like, which, which version feels good. And not necessarily like, I can't afford that. Because that's just a limiting belief, you need to disprove. You need to decide what you want, and then go moving confidently into those directions. I like that. You can always change your mind to like, if you start with AI, you can go hire someone later on, you know, I had to stick with it. Absolutely. So obviously, the two of you are earning really well with your audiobooks. So my question might be a little bit funny, because I'm like, do you think audiobooks can earn authors money? And is it worth it? Which I think you've pretty much described Yes, already. But for authors who haven't to dip their toes into it, what would you say about like whether or not you can earn money and whether or not it's worth it? Obviously, from our experience, I'm gonna say, yes, you can. And I'm also going to add that we weren't making an insane amount of money on ebooks, we were, I mean, we make a decent amount. But we would not be where we are without audio. So you don't have to have this really great selling series. In order to get into audio, you can start at any time. That said, we're all going to have different experiences. So like I was saying before, follow what feels good for you, if that's present, maybe go with that. For us. That was audio. And if that feels good for you, I say go after it. What I want people to take from our experience is you don't have to be in a specific place, or even use a specific method to get into audio. There's so many options available. And it's really all in your mindset. As far as like mindset, one of the things I hear people say is like don't get in audio until your ebooks are making six figures, we would not expect your authors without our audio. So I completely disagree with that. I think that's so true. It's I think people who are earning a lot are gonna obviously say that because if they went a different route for them, the experience was I earned a lot of money here. And then when I did audio, it exploded even more, but they don't think that you can have it be a different way like you can start to explode through your audiobooks. And then it expands into the other, you know, the ebook and the the paperback or the whatever. Like there's always those entry points. And every entry point is going to be just slightly different for the readers. And you don't know which reader is going to take that book and go, Oh my gosh, this was the greatest thing ever. And turn around and give it to a friend who is an influencer? Or who is a you know, someone who is vocal and like spreads the news. So it's like, it's always just eggs and baskets and making sure that you are following those internal nudges. I love that. Well, we've had people who have found us through our audiobooks, and then go on to buy the ebooks and the print books and just buy every format because they

love it so much. Right? Yeah, I've done that. I've done that where I've I started with an ebook, and I've gone oh my gosh, I need this in paperback. It's so great. But then you you're like, Okay, I want to hear the narration for this because this it was such an epic book, and then I'll buy that too. Because why not? You know what I mean? I completely I'm one of those people, but that's me. So it happens. Absolutely. Okay, so since you're doing so well with it, do you have any specific marketing strategies for new authors or even authors who have already produced audiobooks? I know I'm one of them, where it's like I produce it. I obviously let my audience know about it. But then I kind of go on to the next thing, because I'm always in that content creation mode, but what marketing strategies would you suggest to authors who are dabbling into audiobooks or would like to expand further. I would say that for us, it's kind of like a complete cohesive experience between everything that we do. So when we are promoting our ebooks. It also gives exposure to our audio books. For example, every time we have a BoookBub, I can see that spike in our audio sales. We don't do a lot that's different from our audio or sorry, from our ebooks. We are completely wide with ebook and audio. So I do think that helps, again, because promoting the ebooks promotes audio. We also run sales on our audio books when we can and that was really one of the things that made me want to go wide because you cannot control your prices on Audible. And so being wide being to find a way We're able to run sales we can apply for church deals. So if you don't know what Chirp is, that is BookBub's audio distributor. So it's part it's part of the Bookbub company. But it's, you buy the audiobooks directly from the Chirp website. And so they'll run deals specifically on their website for their readers. And those usually make me personally a couple \$100, by the way, also puts out quarter Lane marketing opportunities on their blog. So we apply for those. So for example, right now, a couple of weeks ago, they put out a call for Black Friday deals, and we just filled out a form and they'll handle the pricing with that. They also have a marketing tab, where you can run occasional sales on specific platforms, not everywhere, but I believe they do Google Play apple and chirp, there might be a couple others they've added. Another thing we do is we bundle our series in the audio box set. And that gives readers just a little bit of a discount on the books when they buy them as a as a complete series. And the last thing that is really, really helped us is having a large backlist, so that allows us to rotate through promotions. I'd like Megan to talk about how she markets her audiobooks. All right, Megan, you're up. How do you market? Our most effective strategy is to get our audio books into the hands of as many people as possible. So we're always rotating sales. And we're always trying to reach people on new platforms. So even if we don't necessarily know if a platform was going to work, we always try to at least upload it and attempt promotion there to see what kind of readership we're going to get there. I particularly like to advocate a lot for library borrowers, because there's a lot of people who don't know, you can listen to audiobooks for free through your local library. And we do get a significant chunk of library sales. So I think that just letting readers know that even if you can't afford \$30 audio book, there's a potential for you to listen to it through your local library. And we will get the profits from that large library grow as well. So there's more than just one avenue to do things. And I think that's important when you're considering audio, because there are so many authors who will just strictly upload to Audible so they can get the boost in income that audio gives them that audible gives them specifically and I personally think that that might be a mistake for some people. Because even though you're getting a bigger chunk of money from Audible, you are eliminating a bunch of different platforms as well as libraries. Absolutely. Are you talking about if they use the bounty link? If you go to audible exclusively. Because there's an agreement like it is with KDP? Yep. I was gonna say, I believe it's, you get 40% royalties, if you're exclusive with Audible, and then you get 25. If you're non exclusive, so you do get a bit of a boost on those sales. Gotcha. That's helpful, it's helpful for others to know too, that there is a distinct difference between going wide and going exclusive. But I've also found that so I, when I first started doing audiobooks, I was ACX is exclusive. But I found that it was just not getting out as far as I wanted to. And so when

find a way started coming onto the scene, I think a little bit more, it was probably around 2019 2020 1920 20, when I was first like, you know what this looks like it might be a better situation. And I know BookBub was starting to really push chirp at that time. And so for me, I've transitioned I left my books that were already on ACX there, but I broke my exclusivity agreement, because of that whole like audiobook returns situation that was going on, they gave us an option to opt out. So I did that. And so those audiobooks are still wide, but they're not. So I don't use find a way to distribute to Audible. But I found that to find a way it's just, it's such a cool platform because of how it reaches like you're saying, Megan, that libraries, I have so many people who are listening to my audiobooks through library borrows, and I love being able to put like my first in series down for free for a month just to like get new readership into the series and have an influx and then be able to put it back up where you can't do that through ACX. So do you guys ever do that where you lower the price just for a short period of time and then raise it back up? Not necessarily through the promotion app of things, but just to try putting it down to free for a bit? Yeah, I'll let Megan answer because I think she had more to talk about I'm sure. So we definitely do a lot of sales on our audio books. We've attempted free. We cycle through different books, and we really find that the key is get the first audio book in the series ended the hands of people, whether that'd be a 99 cent deal. I have a 99 cent deal running right now for my boxset it's a I think it's like a \$40 boxset because The book is so long, it's like 60 hours. And you know, people would think I'm crazy for dropping it to 99 cents. But the key is I have three books in that series. If I can get people into that series, they will buy the next three books in the series and potentially go on to read the whole universe. So I'm taking a loss on that product by potentially offering it for 99 cents or free for a limited time. But it doesn't matter because ultimately, I am getting the fan. And if I can gain a lifelong fan, it is worth losing that profit. Absolutely. I've played around with free for like twice now I have my first series for the Windhaven books is free right now just for a short period of time. But the first time I did it, it was a test just to see what would happen. And it was interesting to me to see how it went more from like the library borrows and things like that, to now all of a sudden a lot more people downloading through the the bigger retailers like Apple and Barnes and Noble and Kobo were that it wasn't as prominent, that series wasn't as prominent before I put it up for free for a bit. And so I think that's a, it's still a good strategy. I know, it used to work really well with eBooks. And I don't know how effective it is anymore. I mean, I'm sure it still is a little bit but you really have to, I think hook the readers to the point where they're gonna actually open that free book, because many of us have some new books on our Kindle. And we're like, which one do we want? Now? I don't know. But audiobooks feel a little different to me like you, if you're going to download an audiobook. It's because you're looking for something that you want to start experiencing right now, don't you think? There's different readers on different platforms. And they act and behave differently. If you're somebody on Amazon might hoard free books, but we've really found that people on Apple, they really like free books, they really like sales, and they are more likely to finish the book and go on to buy more of the series and somebody on Amazon because people on Amazon, a lot of them are through KDP. And they're trained to get books for free all the time. So they don't think it's that special. They are trained to buy books that are set at a higher price, or more expensive, or more exclusive. So we really find it important to push avenues that aren't just Amazon. So if you can offer a book on Apple that's free, those readers are more potentially able to pick it up and continue on then somebody on Amazon, For sure. And they'll find it too. So even if you don't push it out that far, like for me, I literally only did a couple of promotions through social media wasn't a boosted post or anything, and then put it in my newsletter. And that was it. And that was enough to let it take off and garnered hundreds of dollars worth of sales that I was not even anticipating like this was just like a, let's just see what happens when I do this thing. And also I was like, that's really cool. I'm gonna try that again. So yeah, yeah, it's it's fun when that happens, where you're just, it's an experiment, and it works out well. It's like, that was sweet. Okay, so, guys,



what kind of audiobooks strategy would you give to authors who are new who have never produced an audio book before, but are really excited to give it a try? Like, what? What would you recommend as their first steps to get started. So I'm going to say what I believe works for us. But if you are a new author, it may not be feasible for you. So always go with your own intuition. But the best option for us has been to hire narrators ourselves and the pay per finished hour so that we own the right, and that we have the flexibility to experiment with covers and Pricing and Distribution. So to do that, what we personally do is, if we don't already have the narrators picked out, we host an audition on ACX. And then we if it's a single narrator, we will hire them through ACX and choose non exclusive distribution and then take those files to find a way or we also can upload director Kobo or any other platforms like YouTube, we can take those files as long as we choose to be non exclusive. For our dual narration projects, we have found and dual narration means there's two narrators personally we do every other chapter for those narrators. So we've found our narrators on ACX, or through recommendations, or even I don't know is specifically for our dual narration. But we have had some narrators where we've hired them for multiple projects so that we don't have to post auditions again. But we will hire them outside of ACX because there's no ability to highly hire two narrators at once, unless they are working together as one single production company. So we will hire them will sign the contract email and then they'll deliver their files through email and we upload as a do it yourself project. So it depends on what your project looks like kind of on where to start. I'll also say that find a way has options for finding narrators. We haven't used that option yet. So I can't really speak to that. But it is available to you and then then you can also just ask around and see what narrators other authors suggest. And then also just like looking at what other authors in your genre who they're hiring can be helpful. We've done that before as well. And then we just approached the narrator or narrators, and ask them, you know, do you want to work on our project? So basically, it's just you start by contacting narrators, and that can be through auditions or reaching out directly. That's great. You mentioned real quick that they, you know, they give you the file, so I'm assuming that when you hire them, they send you the file already edited, mastered. Is that correct? Yes. Okay, great. Now, do you guys use audiobook provers? I know my PA Jenny does a lot of that kind of work for other authors. So I'm just curious to know if you guys use proofers, then since you're not narrating yourselves, or-? We have never done that. Yeah, it's something that would definitely take some work off our plates. But we like to be involved in the process, especially with, we write fantasy. So there's a lot of made up words, and sure, kind of like being involved in the process to make sure those are pronounced correctly or that I think it's, for me, personally, it's hard to hand that over, because I have a specific way that I kind of want my story to hold. Now I'm not really picky. I'm not like sending back edits all the time. But sometimes it's like this was accented wrong, and we lost the meaning to this sentence. So that doesn't happen that often. But I do like to catch that kind of thing. That's I've been able to get a chance to talk. I've been talking so much. Megan, do you like proofing your own audiobooks as well? I love proofing my own audiobooks, I do not think I could give the task to a different person, because it is really important to me to be able to listen to the whole product and see if it's being said the way that I need it to be said, and if things are being spoken in the way that I imagined them as I'm writing them. As for us and myself, I guess we kind of both have the same philosophy on the hiring narrators, we pay our narrators based on a scale of what they request is their per finished hour rate. And as the budget we set for the series, and we're willing to pay more depending on how well they fit the character. We are most interested in hiring new talent and helping new eight new narrators build a name within the industry because I know myself a lot of people didn't give me a chance. When I was first starting out, I had a lot of rejections. And I basically had to pave my own way and pound on the door and refused to go away until they let me in. I know that feeling. Not being able to get any work. Yeah. I think that's so great. Thank you. I really like hiring people who are new to the industry and who haven't really done an audio book before. Because it's so

much more important to us to hire the right actor for the character than it is to have a big name. There's a lot of authors who say that you can't make money off of audiobooks unless you have a big name narrator and I don't think that's true, because for us, we haven't noticed a difference in profit. We've used narrators who have gigantic backlist, and we've used narrators who have never done audio book before and the profit for us is the exact same. I love it. What I want to add to that is that you don't know where those narrators how big they're going to be eventually, on that series that I did royalty share. I was one of the first series that Natalie not us did. And if you don't know who Natalie nonIS is, she's very big now. She's done like my fantasy. She's done a lot of stuff, actually. And she's also narrates under the stage name Victoria Ma. But she's done stuff for like Victoria Aveyard. And like, big, traditional authors, and so you just don't know, like how big their careers gonna get. I think authors forget that we're entrepreneurs and like, when you earn more, when you're able to invest more into your own products into your own platform into everything, you're now having the ability to hire people who then could be, you know, risen up because of your efforts. It's like it's such a cool way to look at like how our lives how would we do better, we can help others do better and that can continue onward and expand outward. It's, you know, we kind of get I think a lot of authors get stuck in this scarcity mindset and forget that like you have big things to do you have people to help, like, let's do this thing. You know? You talk so much about a millionaire author destiny. And I think one of the reasons we want to be millionaire authors is to get In fact, two people, right and so surviving, and I, like she talked about, she wants to give new Narrator like she doesn't want to use AI because she wants to give narrators an opportunity to have a job. And I just love this idea of creating jobs for people. And I really want it to get to a point where our audio allows us to pay more and more and more and give the narrator's that we already work with huge raises, I would love to do that. Because there's so such wonderful people and such wonderful actors. And I, like I would just love to like give them a full time job narrating for us or, or something like that. It makes me really happy to think about creating jobs for other people. I do too. For me, it's like it filters to everything. Like, you know, the PA is the cover designers, the promotion experts, if you want to hire like a promotion company, like all the different ways that we as authors, I know we're kind of getting off the audiobook a little bit. But it's so cool that we can impact other's lives. And we think you know, when we're writing these books, and we're solo in our little computer or whatever, we're writing this stuff, we think we're by ourselves, but we have this ability to impact so much further. And I think it's just audiobooks are just one more way that we have the opportunity to touch more lives, whether it be the readers lives, or the people who are narrating and involved in the projects. It's so cool. I think we as authors need to help build other opportunities for people and lift as we climb. To me, it's really important to have a relationship with my narrator's I don't just want to hire somebody who views this as a job and just wants to take a paycheck home at the end of the day, I want to have a close working relationship with the people I hire because I want somebody on my project who cares about my project? Because if they care about it, they're going to do work that is so much more phenomenal than somebody who is just showing up to basically get paid at the end of the day. Yeah, because they're gonna be invested. They're gonna they're gonna want a piece of them in that story. And I think that's really great, too. I think we've gone through a lot of narrators, we've I think we've had over 20 narrators by now because we just have so many different projects in so many different books between the two of us, Alicia and I, and a lot of the people we seem to pick up, we pick them up as newbies, and then they go on to have these big careers like one of my narrators no longer works for me anymore. Because she got a contract with Funimation, which I don't know if anybody on this podcast knows what Funimation is, but it's a huge anime Corporation in Japan, and they produce all. Yeah, it's huge. And it's amazing. And we want to be able to do that for all of our people. That is too cool. I love that so much. Well, is there any other advice or anything else that you guys want to share about audiobooks? With my audience that we haven't covered so far? I would love to talk about

mindset of audio, like we touched on it a little bit. But I just think there's so much so many stories that we tell ourselves, especially about audio, that it's too expensive, and that you need to wait until you're at this certain point. And all these things that I think just hold us back. And so I don't know, I kind of covered some of that. I would love to hear more from Meghan, because she I know that like she didn't get into audio as early as I did. And I think that she had some of those beliefs holding her back. So I kind of want to hear from her, what, like how her beliefs have changed. I am very interested in the same Megan, you have the floor. I think before I got into audio, there were a million excuses I made as to why I didn't get into audio. And I looking back I really regret not getting into audio sooner. Because early on in my career, I know I didn't necessarily have a lot of money. I was struggling to pay for covers, let alone audiobooks. But I really think if I had started earlier, my earning potential would have been so much bigger. Because it's a long game with a long process. I have a giant back list of over 50 books, and only 25% Not even 25% I don't even know like less than 20% of my books are in audio. But yeah, audio makes up 50% of my income. Isn't that amazing? imagining what I think everything was in audio is huge. And I realized that the longer I waited to get an audio the longer process it becomes to get that money. So I think that the excuses I made for myself ended up hurting me in the long run. I could have figured out a way to get that money if I had really been committed to the process, but I wasn't committed to the process because I didn't believe in my book I didn't believe that they would sell an audio, I believed I was only good enough to sell an ebook. And because of that, I completely robbed myself of an opportunity I could have had way earlier in life. So now my process going forward is to be committed to the book and to understand, I want to start getting into audio translations every opportunity and Avenue, I have to get this book into the hands of people because I believe in this product and I am good enough to be an audio, want to get an audio you can't sit here and make excuses as to why you can't do it. Because in I'm somebody with a chronic illness had very little income. And I figured out a way to get into audio against all odds. And if I can do it, you can do it too. So amazing. Okay, so now I have to ask you a question. If you've only got 20% of your book so far, what is your strategy then for going forward? Like do you? Do you try to get your new books and audio first and then work on a couple of backless titles? Or are you working through the backlist first and then getting to the end ones? Like what is your strategy right now? I'm finishing up my audio books in a particular series right now that I need to finish before I go on to any other projects. And then after that, I'm going to be slowly working through my back list because obviously, I can't take every single book in my 50 Plus book back list and just plop it into audio immediately. That's a huge investment of \$20,000 worth of money, right? Sure. But if you do it one at a time, and you're like, Okay, well, this 40,000 word book is gonna be \$1,000 to put into audio, I can afford \$1,000 Over the next two months. So that's one more product I can have out. And if you keep doing that over and over and over and over, eventually you're going to run out of books to produce. Your audiobook income increases with every product, right? So the more you put out, the easier it will be to keep producing, but you can't stop, you have to continually be producing. Otherwise, you're shorting yourself of what you could potentially turn into. I completely agree with that. For me, I was I was having limiting beliefs that were very similar. I got like my first my first series out and I did all of those kind of in a rush in 2018. And then I sat, sat and did nothing with audiobooks until like 2020, when like there was really not a whole lot else to go on. I was working on my new series, but I was feeling this push to do audiobooks. And so since then, every month I've been doing another one of my titles in the back catalogue. And so it's just become part of my process. I'm down to, I think three or four books in the back catalogue left, and it's going to be so weird when I have no more audiobooks, I need to narrate a movie like what's happening right now. But it's it's so key to keep going forward and get up to the point where you know that they emerge, because my ideal situation is to get to the point where it's like I write the book, and immediately turn into the the translation or to the narration of it, so that they're coming out almost at the same time.

That's like in my head, my ideal scenario now going forward. I'm not quite there yet, but I'm getting closer. When you don't have audio out, you're not just shorting yourself, you're shorting your readers to because there are so many people who cannot physically read, but they can read audiobooks, or there are people who love to read, they just don't have time. You know, they're single mothers who are taking care of children and doing a million errands at all times of the day. They don't have time to sit down physically read, but they have time to listen to an audiobook on the way to work or whatever. Yes, you have to think about the opportunities. You're not just providing yourself but other people. For sure. I mean, I don't know how many times I've gotten to go pick up my daughter from rehearsal and I listen to audiobooks to and from I mean, nonstop all the time. Alicia, what were you gonna say? I was gonna say that I love that Megan brought up that this is a long game because like I said, initially, the first audiobook I did was in 2016. So what has that been like five years, six years? Almost seven. Seven. Really? It's taken us a while, like, it doesn't have to take you that long. We spent a lot of time being like, oh, we can't do this. But outside looking into like Megan's experience. I just had this memory, like click where I remember her big, like, I want to do audio so that I'm a legit author. And I think that's something that maybe held her back because she's like, I'm, I'm not legit enough for this. Oh, that's really good. So good. Legit, and like you wrote a book. You're an author, like, yeah, you can do audio. But I remember another thing that was holding Meghan back and she's like, I have so many audiobooks to do, like, if I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do my whole back list. And she has a lot of books. Like she said, it's almost 50 now, and I think she got kind of analysis paralysis, where she's like, well, I don't know which one of these first, so I'm not gonna do anything. I want Megan to talk again about those two points and how she overcame them. Like, did you put them all up at a dartboard and just like fling a dart to pick which one to start with? What? How did that happen? Honestly, I still get that kind of paralysis, because I still have a lot of books that I need to put into audio. And it's massive. I think for me going forward, it's more of a case of, I would love to do what's most popular. But what's most popular would be the most expensive to do, should I understand that a bunch of different things that I need to be doing because as an author, I'm not just committed to one single series. But if I was committed to just one single thing, I would be able to throw all the money at it, I wanted, I have 50 different things going on. And, you know, like potentially three things that are making me the most amount of money. So I want to try and allocate most of my resources to the things that are making me the most amount of money while then picking what is most cost effective for me to do right now. So I think going forward, after I'm done with my big series and audio, right now, which I should be within the next couple of months, I will go with what is most cost effective for me to do and not necessarily what is the most popular? So I'll probably start with some trilogies. And then when I get the money back from those trilogies, I will put that into the long series I have, because I will have the funds at that point to do them the way that I want to do them because I don't just want to do like, a half assed job, right, I want to do the most effective job I can do with. That's a really good point to talk about though. Yeah. Well, if I just started this process, like two to three years ago, I'd be done by now. And sometimes if I've been sitting around for two to three years, just, you know, oh, I don't know. Well, when I don't know is the decision. And when you drag I don't know out forever, that becomes your decision to not do anything? Absolutely. Yeah. Well, the confused mind does nothing. And so if you're confused about what you want to start with, you're not going to necessarily do anything. And that's why just making a decision, sometimes it doesn't even matter if it's the right decision, it can still get you going forward. And if you get partway through it, and you go, you know, this wasn't the right decision, but I'm gonna follow through to the end, and then and then now I'd have clarity and move on to the next thing, then it at least it got you in that direction and got you some momentum going forward. That's, that's really key. And changing it later is better than not making any decision at all. 100% agree with you on that? Yes. I love that. Because at least when you make the wrong decision, you're gonna know

this was the wrong decision. You're not going to be sitting there with your hands in the air like, oh, I don't know. And the wrong decision is so like, it's so what's the word I'm looking for? Darn it, like... subjective. There we go. That's the word I'm looking for. It's subjective. Yeah, because it's like, it's just like what you're not supposed to do. We've done that so much in our careers, like we could have a whole podcast about the quote, unquote, wrong decisions you made. But we've learned a lesson from all of this. Yes, it is. So key in the in those lessons, sometimes that's the lesson you needed to get the clarity, you have now to be able to know what you want to do next, to be able to get there and move forward. So if you didn't make those decisions to get the clarity, you'd still be stuck in the I don't know. You know, it's like, just go just go. Run toward it. Just do some. Yeah! There are so many creative people I know in my life, like, I get very sad because they failed to make any creative decisions, and they failed to progress. And then they talked to me, and they said, Oh, my god, you're so successful. And I'm like, I'm only successful because I made a lot of mistakes. Yeah, and weren't afraid to make those mistakes. You know, I think that's so key that you have to, I mean, there's there's never a perfect process, you're never gonna make all the right decisions. Sometimes. It's just about the contrast. So you can go yes, no, nope, not that one. That one sucked and turned out horribly. So we're gonna go this way pivot, you know, it's all just about that trial and error and having that fun embracing the experience of it, instead of focusing so much on the perfection of it because there's, it's never gonna be perfect. No, perfect is a lie. Yes, that's something that's possible. Ever. Yeah, I completely agree. And then, especially in a creative endeavor, like creative people, in my mind, it's like, we're creative, because we can see those gray areas, we can see those those lines when they're blurred, and we can understand how like that line can be bent and created into what we actually want anyway. And so when creative people lock themselves in boxes, it's like, well just unlock the box, you know, like, do something else. Like there's, there's ways around it in engage that creative mind and like, really go forward with it because it's just, it's so fun to experience. Even those aspects where you try something and it doesn't work out. The experience of it still teaches you something and you still grow from it. And it feels better than that moment of like, I just don't know, and I feel like I'm a failure. Well, it's just a byproduct of fear failure. In the act, You're just afraid that something is going to happen that you're worried about, but Done is better than perfect. I, you know, audiobook projects where fans have been like, well, I don't think this was the best narrator for this series and my responses. I really enjoyed the narration. And I would rather have an audiobook out there with a less than perfect narrator. Then wait forever to hire Ariana Grande like, Right? Yes. Because I'm not sure when that's gonna happen. I love that. That is so epic. Okay, well, thank you both so much for being here and sharing your experiences with audiobooks. If my listeners wanted to learn more about you. I mean, obviously, we've talked about you guys on the other podcast, but if they want to check out your amazing books again or your audiobooks, now, what is the best place for them to find each of you? So we have a combined website at [HiddenLegendsBooks.com](http://HiddenLegendsBooks.com) That is our series that we co write together. And then for me, I am at [AliciaRadesAuthor.com](http://AliciaRadesAuthor.com). And Megan, is at [MeganLinski.com](http://MeganLinski.com). Excellent. Well, thank you guys, for being here. Thank you for having us. It was really fun. Okay, so hopefully, by this point of the podcast episode, you are now excited and ready to go get your audio books up and running, right? Whether you're starting out right now, whether you are just trying to get some momentum in the ones that you've already created, wherever you are, just know that you are exactly where you are meant to be. Every part of this journey, every little piece of the puzzle that fits into place in our indie author journey in our careers. It's all there for a reason. And so like Alicia talked about, when you feel those internal nudges when you feel that guidance towards something that maybe it doesn't overly feel like everybody else is doing it this way, like why am I being led to do this thing, trust that nudge, because that's your internal compass, your internal guidance, showing you the path of least resistance, because each of us have our own strengths, right? Each of us has this aspect of our writing career that we love the most,

and that it does the best for us where it feels easy. Now, Alicia talked about how like when she was getting into the ebooks side of things, it felt hard, it felt like she was paddling upstream trying to get ebook sales. But as soon as she switched to audiobooks, almost instantly, that eased up, things became easy. And I think each one of us have that path where our books are going to find that easy stream. And we just need to allow ourselves to kind of be guided toward it. And if audiobooks feel like that thing for you, I think you should definitely look into the best situations for you like do you want to narrate your own books? Do you have that kind of vocal acting ability? Do you like the way you sound? Do you want to try to do it so that you can get better at how you sound? I know that was where I started, I wasn't sure if I could do audiobooks. But to be honest, I felt like giving it a try. And that's how it starts take those imperfect action steps. It does not ever equate to a perfection doesn't matter where you are, you're gonna always have little flub ups. But you're gonna have this fun journey along the way where you learn so much, and you grow as an author, as an individual and as a creator. And that my friend, I think, is the biggest win that we as indie authors can get, like when we get to dive into something, and it's a new part of our creative process, and take it on and kind of play in the sand with it. All of a sudden, we have this new tool in our toolbox in order to create really cool things. And audiobooks for me is definitely one of those, and I hope that they will be for you as well. All right. If you want to get the transcript of today's podcast episode, head over to [authorrevolution.org/160](http://authorrevolution.org/160). And you can download it there. I will also include all the links when it comes to the last podcast episode we had with Alicia and Megan, as well as all of their websites to be able to find out more about their books and their amazing audiobooks. In the meantime, I hope that you really do think about how you can incorporate audio into your mix when it comes to 2023 and beyond. Because it truly is another avenue to not only earn more money, but to also give your story to the readers who would not have had the opportunity to read it otherwise. Like Megan said, Think about those women who are single moms and who are running ragged, but they have time in their car to listen to your audiobook. Think about the people with disabilities who have trouble reading, but they can enjoy your books through audio. That my friend that's powerful and I want you to know that every single reader you are able to touch through your words matters. So find ways to be able to deliver your story in the way that they can best consume it, because that is so key. In the meantime, I hope you have a wonderful rest of your week. Get your words written if that's where you're at in your phase of the journey this week, and go forth and start your author revolution.