

Against the Grain

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Wandering the Web — Random Podcasts: An Earful for Library Patrons

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Column Editor's Note: Podcasts are to the early 21st century what radio and early TV was to our mid-20th-century grandparents. We can access them anywhere, anytime, and on virtually any subject. We can subscribe to podcasts on iTunes and Google Play through our mobile phones, or we can listen online via our laptops, tablets, or smart speakers. Most podcasts are audio only, although some have video versions or are video only.

Traditional media — radio and TV — has adapted to mobile access by developing podcasts from popular programs. Popular podcast apps include Apple Podcasts/iTunes, Google Play, Podbean, iHeartRadio, Player FM, Stitcher, and more.

Podcasts continue to grow in popularity along with smart speakers, according to a 2018 *Infinite Dial* study from **Edison Research and Triton Digital** — <https://www.edisonresearch.com/infinite-dial-2018/>. Data shows that 44% of Americans aged 12 and over have listened to a podcast, a gain of 4% over 2017.

This *Wandering the Web* column looks at a variety of random podcasts on topics of interest to library patrons and staff. From comedy to pets, education to sports, and more, sit back, relax, adjust your earbuds, and enjoy these popular podcasts! There are lots of top podcast of the year lists on various topics, too, so start making up your own lists with these as a possible starting point. — **JM**

Crafts

Craft-ish with Vickie Howell — <https://vickiehowell.com/craftish/>. Author, designer, and television personality **Vickie Howell** is best known for her knitting television programs on **DIY Network** and **PBS**. On her independent podcast **Craft-ish**, **Howell** speaks to crafters and designers in many fields about their motivations and histories in crafting, as well as how they balance crafting with other parts of life.

Making — <https://makingzine.com/>. Formerly the Woolful Podcast, host **Ashley Yousling** meets with creative professionals and “makers” to discuss their personal journeys with creation. The podcast was formerly limited to fiber arts so the back catalog is full of knitters, spinners, quilters, and even sheep farmers, but the change from “Woolful” to

“Making” in 2018 opened up the podcast to creative professionals of all types.

The Stranded Podcast — <https://www.youtube.com/user/amyflorence14>. **Amy Florence** is a 28-year-old self-employed yarn dyer living on the south coast of England. On her weekly video podcast, she discusses knitting, crocheting, spinning, and running her own business out of her garage.

Education

The Cult of Pedagogy — <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/pod/>. **Jennifer Gonzalez**, educator, blogger, and creator of the web resource **Cult of Pedagogy**, speaks to students, teachers, parents, and administrators “about psychological and social dynamics of school, trade secrets, and other juicy things you’ll never learn in a textbook.” This savvy podcast is well worth listening to for a variety of views and discussions on the ever-evolving world of education.

The Allusionist — <https://www.theallusionist.org/>. **Helen Zaltzman**, an award-winning podcaster located in London, UK, discusses the growth and development of the English language. Selected as iTunes’ best new podcast in the year 2015, **Zaltzman** reveals how England’s colonialist history, combined with “tiny idiosyncratic decisions” from the language’s speakers have shaped English into the messy amalgam of grammar and syntax that it is today.

The House of #EdTech — <https://christnesi.com/> — **Chris Nesi** explores how technology impacts education. Topics include discussion of good teaching, early childhood and technology, pre-service teachers’ need for more exposure to ed tech tools, creativity and critical thinking, and tips for growing ed tech skills over long summer breaks.

Entertainment

You Must Remember This — <http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/> — **You Must Remember This**, as the tagline states at the beginning and end of every episode, is a podcast about “the secret and/or forgotten history of Hollywood’s first century.” Host **Karina Longworth** focuses on accuracy when approaching topics on the behind-the-scenes world that shaped cinema in the 20th Century. The podcast is released in seasons that focus on a single topic or era of Hollywood’s history, making it easy for new listeners to find a starting point.

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness — <https://www.earwolf.com/show/getting-curious-with-jonathan-van-ness/> — **Jonathan Van Ness**, the flamboyant grooming guru from the **Netflix** reality show **Queer Eye**, has always been curious about how the world works. In this entertaining and diverse series, **Van Ness** brings in experts to discuss a wide variety of topics, with titles such as “Who Was the Beyoncé of Renaissance Art?” and “What’s The Cutest Way to Fight Climate Change?”

Nerdificent — <https://www.nerdificent.com/> — Comedians **Dani Fernandez** and **Iffy Nwadiwe** take deep dives into all things “nerdy” in the podcast **Nerdificent**. With topics ranging from Comic Con to bitcoin to queer representation in geek culture, **Fernandez** and **Nwadiwe** present information in a manner that is entertaining and informative for nerds and non-nerds alike.

Family

One Bad Mother — <https://www.maximumfun.org/shows/one-bad-mother> — **Biz Ellis** and **Theresa Thorn** are mothers who aren’t afraid to dig down to the nitty-gritty. They focus on frankness in discussing parenting trials and tribulations, striving to shift the conversation about motherhood from a place of judgment to one of camaraderie.

Zen Parenting Radio — <https://zenparentingradio.com/> — Separately, **Cathy Adams** is a licensed clinical social worker, therapist, and sociology instructor at **Dominican University** and **Elmhurst College** and **Todd Adams** is a certified life coach focused on supporting work/life balance for men. Together, they are a married couple with three daughters, and co-hosts of the **Zen Parenting Radio** podcast. The two use their personal and professional experience to build a community through this podcast focused on ideals of peaceful parenting.

Mom and Dad Are Fighting — <https://slate.com/human-interest/mom-and-dad-are-fighting> — **Rebecca LaVoie**, **Gabriel Roth**, and **Carvell Wallace** of **Slate** present this podcast where they discuss parenting triumphs and fails, as well as pertinent interviews and news items. Topics hit across the parenting spectrum, including topics such as board games, the teenage boy obsession with the “friend zone,” and daycare.

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Food

The Sporkful — <http://www.sporkful.com/> — or on iTunes or Stitcher — hosted by **Dan Pashman**, author and **Cooking Channel** host, and produced by **Stitcher**, is an exploration of people via food. It “isn’t for foodies; it’s for eaters.” Feast your ears on A Short History of Cereal and Milk, The Food Guilt Remediation Project, Inside the Mind of a Culinary Mad Scientist — and more — to learn more about who we are by what we eat, how we eat, and why.

Gastropod — <https://gastropod.com/> — Viewing “food through the lens of science and history,” co-hosts **Cynthia Graber** and **Nicola Twilley** bring fascinating facts and tales to the table with a new episode every two weeks. Through 100 episodes to date, **Gastropod** explores topics ranging from Native American cuisine to exploring international flavors to fake food and so much more to tease your palate.

Cook the Perfect... from BBC Radio 4’s Woman’s Hour — <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrwmn> — also available on iTunes. **Jenni Murray** and **Jane Garvey** interview leading food writers and top chefs for tips on preparing delicious home-cooked meals including classics like quiche Lorraine or coq au vin, as well as more exotic fare, such as kimchi fried rice or fattoush. American audiences may need to do a little homework to convert measurements and temperatures, but why argue with the quality from Auntie Beeb?

Health

20-Minute Fitness Podcast by Shape — <https://shapescala.com/blog/category/20-minute-fitness-podcast/> — offers tips on nutrition, exercise, weight-loss, and digital resources for a healthier lifestyle. Topics such as improving sleep, smart clothing, helpful apps, and supplements are delivered in 15-25-minute podcast episodes.

Bulletproof Radio with Mike Asprey — <https://blog.bulletproof.com/category/podcasts/> — is a long-running podcast covering the length and breadth of ways business, culture, and health influence one another. In the pursuit of “the art and science of becoming superhuman,” **Asprey** seeks viewpoints from practices as diverse as neuroscience, cardiology, fitness empires, and holistic practitioners. Directory of episodes — <https://blog.bulletproof.com/bulletproof-radio-episodes-directory/>.

Hay House Podcasts — <https://www.hayhouse.com/podcasts> — feature several motivational, inspirational podcasts from such well-known figures as **Louise Hay**, **Caroline Myss**, **Wayne Dyer**, and **Christine Northrup**. Topics for personal growth are gleaned from teachings in psychology, personal development, meditation, and spirituality.

Libraries

Library Land Loves — <https://librarylandloves.libsyn.com/> — is a presentation of the **Ontario Library Association**. Weekly episodes feature library professionals from

across Canada, presenting top five lists about anything they are passionate about related to libraries, from management tips to “Top Five Literary Men I’d Leave My Husband For” and everything in between.

Dewey Decibel — <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/tag/dewey-decibel/> — is a monthly podcast from the **American Library Association**. Host **Phil Morehart**, associate editor of *American Libraries*, interviews authors, librarians, scholars, and other library-adjacent professionals about hot topics in libraries such as disaster response, cybersecurity, and library advocacy.

The Librarian Is In — <https://www.nypl.org/voices/blogs/blog-channels/librarian-is-in> — **The New York Public Library** is the largest public library system in the United States and releases this weekly podcast about books and culture. Hosted by **Gwen Glazer** and **Frank Collierius**, the podcast provides a librarian’s view on literature, pop culture, and library life.

Miscellaneous

How Stuff Works Stuff Media — <https://www.stuffmedia.com/> — presents varied podcasts from topics ranging from the bizarre **Aaron Mahnke’s** Cabinet of Curiosities to Culture Kings to relationships (Committed) to personal and societal health (Commune) to questions about the universe (Daniel & Jorge Explain the Universe). Listeners will also find a comedic take on almost any subject, such as *Alchemy This*, *Creature Feature*. What are you waiting for? Dive in to the constantly changing, sometimes scary, often funny world of **How Stuff Works** podcasts.



A Way with Words — <https://www.waywordradio.org/> — is available on many public radio stations and as a podcast iTunes, player.fm, gpodder, and Android apps. Co-hosts **Martha Barnette** and **Grant Barrett** research and answer listener’s questions about language — unfamiliar, regional, or family expressions’ origins; word histories; misunderstandings, slang, dialects, wordplay — you name it — **Barnette** and **Barrett** will tackle your questions and welcome your contributions.

A History of the World in 100 Objects on BBC Radio 4 — <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nrtd2/episodes/downloads> — and through iTunes. Although this series was recorded in 2010, it is worth listening to for its exploration of human history through ancient artifacts. From coins to vessels to stone tablets, statues, and more, learn about the development of various peoples through the craftsmanship, vision, and impetus of ancient artists and artisans.

Literature

Speedway and Swan — <https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2018/march/lit-lists-5-binge-worthy-literary-podcasts> — a poetry podcast from the **University of Arizona Poetry Center**, is among 5 binge-worthy podcasts showcased in early 2018 on World Literature Today. Among other recommendations are San Francisco legendary bookstore Live! From City Lights, The Moth, Between the Covers, and The New Yorker Literary Fiction podcasts.

Bookstr — <https://www.bookstr.com/11-best-literary-related-podcasts-from-mid-2018> — published a “12 Best Literary-Related Podcasts” list in July 2018, with favorites such as the eerie Welcome to NightVale; “true-life scary stories” from Lore; new writing from The Catapult; cultural conversations with authors on Lit Up; and Book Fight: Tough Love for Literature.

Electric Lit’s post “14 Literary Podcasts that Are Not Hosted by Three White Guys” — <https://electricliterature.com/diverse-literary-podcasts-books-writing-ffdd55bdf2e7> — features literary podcasts with an eye to diversity, from poetry to Black Chick Lit to minorities in publishing to Asian authors and more, these 14 podcasts open up the world of diverse literature for your morning commute or podcast binge.

News & Politics

SLATE Podcasts — <https://slate.com/tag/slate-podcast/1> — has something for everyone, but not all podcasts are completely free. Slate Plus, their subscription model, includes ad-free, full-length podcasts from such popular shows as What’s Next, The Good Fight, Political Gabfest, and more.

Today, Explained — <https://www.vox.com/today-explained> — from **Vox**, hosted by **Sean Rameswaram**, provides an evening wrap-up of the day’s events, perfect for the commute home. For other timely **Vox** podcasts, see The Weeds, Future Perfect, The Impact, and more at <https://www.vox.com/pages/podcasts>.

Left, Right & Center — <https://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/left-right-center> — from **KCRW**. One of several timely podcasts on modern life, **Left, Right & Center** bills itself as a “weekly civilized yet provocative” discussion of pop culture, politics, and policy. **Josh Barro** hosts as the centrist, with news-worthy guests from the left and right.

Other popular news podcast sources: Popular news podcasts can be found through traditional providers on your favorite podcast source, such as Apple Podcasts/iTunes, Stitcher, Spotify, Google Play, Player FM, iHeartRadio, etc.

- NPR — <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/>,
- BBC — <https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts>, and
- PBS Search — <https://www.pbs.org/search/?q=podcasts>.
- Many TED topics are available as podcasts — <https://www.ted.com/read/ted-podcasts>.

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Pets

Canine Nation Podcasts — <https://caninenation.ca/podcasts> — are based on articles by **Eric Brad**, which appear in *Life as a Human* online magazine — <https://lifeasahuman.com/category/pets/canine-nation/>. **Brad** digs deeper into the history of the evolution of dogs as working animals and companions, dispelling myths and sharing advice for effective training. The podcasts are meant to be an open forum and the producers welcome comments at both sites.

Horse Radio Network — <http://www.horseradionetwork.com/> — for equine lovers everywhere, HRN offers a variety of podcasts on care and tack, horse “eventing,” well-known and unusual personalities, legends, training, nutrition, and good horsemanship.

Radio Public — <https://about.radiopublic.com> — lists a selection of best animal podcasts as of October 30, 2018, “Our Pets, Ourselves: Best Podcasts for Animal Lovers” — <https://about.radiopublic.com/2018/10/30/our-pets-ourselves-best-podcasts-for-animal-lovers/>. Topics include training tips and shared stories about cats and dogs, animal agriculture, aquariums, and caring for unusual pets in the home.

Sports

30 for 30 Podcasts — <https://30for30podcasts.com/> — the award-winning series **30 for 30 Podcasts** follows the same general format as the popular ESPN 30 for 30 film series — they are individual audio documentaries about various sports and sports-adjacent topics. Topics are widely varied across sports fields, including topics such as the birth of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, professional poker cheating, and the John Madden video game legacy.

Outkick the Coverage — <https://www.outkickthecoverage.com/outkick-the-show/> — available on numerous outlets, including iHeartRadio, PodBean, and FoxSports — brings unusual long-format discussions hosted by **Clay Travis** on sports, entertainment, and politics.

Burn It All Down: The Feminist Sports Podcast You Need — <http://burnitalldownpod.com/> — offers a fresh perspective to sports, gender equity, and popular culture through its diverse female hosts. Expect intelligent, engaging, and lively discussions on the intersections — and intersectionality — of women, sports, and social and political questions of today.

STEAM

StarTalk Radio — <https://www.startalkradio.net/> — an award-winning radio show and podcast hosted by **Neil deGrasse Tyson**,

Director of the **Hayden Planetarium** in New York City and host of **Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey**. Along with a rotating cast of comic co-hosts, including comedians **Chuck Nice** and **Eugene Mirman**, **Tyson** discusses physics, astronomy, and life in the universe with celebrities and scientists across various fields.

99% Invisible — <https://99percentinvisible.org/> — host **Roman Mars**, a founding member of the podcast collective Radiotopia, created the podcast **99% Invisible** to explore the hidden architecture and design that has shaped the modern world. The podcast website includes a list of the staff’s favorite episodes for new listeners wondering where to begin.

Stuff to Blow Your Mind — <https://www.stufftoblowyourmind.com/> — hosts **Robert Lamb** and **Joe McCormick** explore science and technology in their weekly podcast. No field of science is untouched, with topics relating to biology, engineering, chemistry, physics, psychology, and more on regular rotation.

A word of caution as listeners track down the many options available in the burgeoning world of podcasting. Many podcasts are free, but some sources have limited access to recent or full episodes, as upselling listeners to subscriptions is a fact of internet business life. Listeners may have to search various podcast providers for full episodes, newer or archived editions. Happy listening! 🐾

Library Analytics: Shaping the Future — What’s Next

Column Editors: **John McDonald** (EBSCO Information Services) <johnmcdonald@ebSCO.com>

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When we began this column just over a year ago, we were interested in looking at analytics and how they were impacting, or would impact, the future of libraries. We looked at the information we had about user behavior and how people searched, the results of our user research studies and the information we gleaned from our search systems. We endeavored to be mindful of the issues inherent in analytics, including privacy.

In the past year we have showcased colleges and universities doing research related to their own users as they introduce new technology, publishers providing information to help libraries make decisions, how libraries and service providers balance the need for information with the need for privacy, consortial considerations around usage data for shared collections, how libraries use data and analytics to influence institutional decision makers and how libraries can build an analytics culture. In the future, we plan to address the ways additional librarians and providers approach analytics and the issues surrounding them with the goal of continuing to answer the questions, and highlight the issues surrounding the future of libraries and analytics.

We initially interviewed **Rob O’Connell** from **Smith College Libraries**. **Smith College** uses **EBSCO Discovery Service** and did extensive user testing to determine how to best

present the now-un-siloed information the library provides to students and researchers through its discovery service. Common issues surrounding privacy prevailed, but librarians spun up a cross-departmental research team to bring together librarians and programmers to address assumptions and the status quo.

Using a Bento Box approach, the research team experimented with guerilla testing to reach students outside the library space and played with the language and terminology being displayed. Researchers found some surprises that challenged their assumptions about the information that should be presented, but with analytics to back up those findings, decisions were easier to make. Iteration was a common theme as the **Smith College Library** research team determined that whether addressing the language used, the databases being recognized (or not being recognized), or the optimal amount of content to be presented on the homepage, an iterative approach was determined to be better than continuing to force redesigns en masse. Another common theme was understanding the user. By introducing new ideas (e.g., searching by subject area rather than by database name) and by observing what did and didn’t work (e.g., drop down menus that users ignored), the research team was able to challenge its own

assumptions, better understand user behavior and make decisions that were easy to test because they never represented a wholesale change but rather an iteration of the Bento Box presentation.

In April, **Kristen Tepfer**, Senior Marketing Manager from **SAGE Publishing**, wrote about the Customer Value Reports that **SAGE** creates for customers. These CVRs present multiple metrics to customers so they can make decisions based on data including usage, turnaways and faculty reactions. The goal is to help libraries show the value of their investments with the publisher. One of the benefits to libraries is that these reports can be prepared for them and do not draw from library staff resources while providing a useful tool that librarians can use to indicate how users are engaging with their content and by showcasing areas of high usage and areas where usage may need encouragement. The reports also provide librarians with insight into their faculty members by showing faculty contributions to journals in library collections. While the CVRs are an important offering to librarians looking to make collection decisions, **SAGE** also leverages the information for its own product management decision making as it prioritizes the enhancements the company makes to its platform and offerings.

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