

Heard About It? Read About It! Picks for Podcast Fans

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The “Golden Age” of radio in the US occurred between the 1930s and 1940s, before the invention of television stole much of radio’s thunder. However, the last decade has seen a true resurgence in the popularity and cultural clout of audio entertainment with the rise of podcasts in the current zeitgeist. Podcasts, for those unfamiliar, are simply an “on demand” audio media format that cover a wide variety of topics and stories. With an estimated audience of over 100 million listeners in 2023 in the US alone, podcasts are here to stay.

Traditional radio has often been referred to as “theater of the mind” – a medium that invites the listener to fill in the missing visual information with their own imagination. Podcasts are also a “theater of the mind” as are, of course, books. Books are a natural fit for podcast lovers. If you are one of the many Americans hooked on podcasts (as many of us on the library staff are!), then we think you will find these “podcast pairings” to go along with some of your favorite podcasts well worth your time.

True crime has been a big hit with podcast audiences. “Serial”, “Morbid”, “Crime Junkie” and “My Favorite Murder” are some of the highest rated podcasts on the current charts. If true crime is also one of your favorite genres, we have an extensive collection of true crime books that you might enjoy. For example, *Hell’s Half Acre: The Untold Story of the Benders, a Serial Killer Family on the American Frontier*, by Susan Jonusas offers new insights into the famous Bender family serial killings that occurred in 1870s Kansas. Jonusas shares the fruits of her extensive research into the evidence surrounding the Bender family’s crimes, revealing that much of what we have commonly thought about the case is not true.

A few more recommendations for true crime podcast lovers include *Trailed: One Woman’s Quest to Solve the Shenandoah Murders* by Kathryn Miles, which details both the 1996 murder of two campers in Virginia and the broader issue of crime in America’s national parks, *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure* by Menachem Kaiser, which chronicles the author’s difficult journey through the Polish legal system to attempt to recover property that was stolen from his Jewish grandfather by the Nazi regime, and finally *I’ll Be Gone in the Dark : One Woman’s Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer* by Michelle McNamara, about the extraordinary use of DNA to finally solve a decades old unsolved serial killer case.

“This American Life” hosted by Ira Glass on NPR is an example of a traditional radio broadcast that has successfully developed a large podcast audience as well. The show’s format of a new theme each episode, often varying widely from the previous theme, is what has made it such a hit with listeners everywhere. Our non-fiction collection is well suited to pair with that approach, as its breadth is very wide and diverse. Some books in our collection that were featured prominently in past episodes of the show include humorous titles such *Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk* by David Sedaris, and *A Bad Idea I’m About to Do* by Chris Gethard. In the realm of general

non-fiction titles featured on the podcast, our collection includes *The Psychopath Test: A Journey Through the Madness Industry* by Jon Ronson and *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* by Paul Tough.

Fans of popular science podcasts such as “Science Friday” or “StarTalk” will find plenty of books to explore in our science collections, including *The God Equation* by Michio Kaku, *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* by Neil deGrasse Tyson, *In Oceans Deep* by Bill Streever, and *Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law* by Mary Roach.

Finally, history buffs and fans of podcasts such as “Slow Burn”, “Stuff You Missed in History Class” and “ Dan Carlin’s Hardcore History” will enjoy exploring our history collection, where they will discover many books that tie into these shows and more. For example, the current season of “Slow Burn” details the history of Clarence Thomas’ nomination and confirmation to the Supreme Court. Our collection includes *The Enigma of Clarence Thomas* by Corey Robin, as well as Thomas’ personal memoir, *My Grandfather’s Son*.

Be sure to stop by the library and check out these titles and many more featured in our display featuring our “podcast pairings.” Happy reading and listening!