

## **OBTAINING FREE AUDIOBOOKS IN BOSTON METRO AREA**

### **THE MINUTEMAN LIBRARY**

If you live in the Boston metro area, you have access to the entire Minuteman Library, which is a consortium of 42 libraries with 64 locations. <http://www.mln.lib.ma.us/about/about.htm>.

To obtain your initial minuteman card, you will have to show up in person with proof that you live in the Boston area. A BU ID and some mail with your local address is adequate if you live in Boston.

The closest library to BU is probably the Brookline Coolidge Corner library at 31 Pleasant St., Brookline, MA 02446, (617) 730-2380.

- THE MINUTEMAN LIBRARY DOES NOT HAVE AUDIOBOOKS THAT CAN BE DOWNLOADED, BUT THEY DO HAVE A LARGE COLLECTION OF BOOKS IN CD FORMAT THAT CAN BE REQUESTED ONLINE AND CHECKED OUT.

You can establish an online account at <https://library.minlib.net/patroninfo> and order the CD version—you have access to all libraries—and when it comes in, they will send you an email. You must make sure that they have your email by logging into your account and giving that to them. You have to show up in person to check out the CDs, but you can request the branch you want them delivered to (in fact, you can make that a part of your account).

Once you upload the CDs to your iTunes folder (which sometimes gets a little tedious, although I have it going on in the background while doing other things), you can keep the audiobook for as long as you want on your computer. You must return the CDs themselves, however, on or before their due date or renew them.

### **FREE DVDS**

You can also check out free DVDs from the Brookline library.

### **THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The BPL has both CDs that can be ordered on line, but must be picked up at the library (as with the Minuteman Library) AND audiobooks that can be downloaded. You can establish an e-account on-line, which is what I did. <http://www.bpl.org/general/circulation/ecards.htm>

Like the Minuteman Library, you will be notified by email when your request is ready, including downloadable audiobooks that are already “checked out” to someone else. The books that are downloadable are only a small percentage of the total audiobooks on CD. If you want to check out CDs and books you have to get a regular card (instructions at the above link).

Here is an example of an email that I received regarding a downloadable book that I requested because it was already “checked out”:

Dear Boston Public Library patron,

The following title is now available for check out and will be held for you for 5 days from the time this email was sent:

The Forever War  
by: Dexter Filkins  
OverDrive WMA Audiobook

Please visit the Boston Public Library website <http://overdrive.bpl.org> and select the 'My Holds' link from the 'My Digital Account' page. From there, you'll be able to add this title to your Cart and proceed to check out. If you do not check this title out within 5 days, the hold on this title will expire.

Thank you for your interest in downloadable media!

## **CONVERSION!!!**

The reference to Overdrive WMA in the above email indicates an important aspect of downloadable media that is not a characteristic of the CDs that can be checked out. The free downloadable media in public libraries are in WMA (Windows Media Audio) format and must be converted to an MP3 format before they can be played on your iPod or other mp3 player. The Boston Public Library has a free conversion program called Overdrive, <http://tinyurl.com/om2eqv> but I suspect that it is inferior to Sound Taxi which I purchased on-line when the Minuteman Library still had downloadable media (briefly before they decided it was too expensive and there was too little demand since it could not be used on iPods without conversion.)

The downloadable media must be downloaded and then opened in either Overdrive or Sound Taxi and converted before the “due date.” YES, the BPL downloadable media have a **due date**.

Sound Taxi, which I already owned and knew how to use, not only converts the WMA to an MP3 format, but also gets rid of the due date so long as you remember to do the conversion before the due date. If you don't, the file is not playable and you will have to check it out again.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

So the bottom line is that you can check out CDs, upload them to your iTunes folder, return the CDs and keep the files forever when checked out from any library. Downloadable media (only available at the BPL) must be converted AND they have a due date unless you have a program that eliminates the due date. I do not know if Overdrive does, but I suspect it does not.

## **PURCHASING AUDIOBOOKS**

If the free audiobook route sounds too tedious, and you really get into this, you can subscribe to Audible.com (or ask someone to give you a subscription as a gift). [www.audible.com](http://www.audible.com) The advantage of audible.com is that the book is just one file. In the case of the CDs and downloadable media, the number of CDs is usually around a dozen (although there are a few old downloadable media that are just one file.)