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Currently many libraries offer downloadable versions of audio books. For example, my library offers them here:

<http://www.lib.ci.tucson.az.us/digitalbooks/default.htm>

The problem is that special software is required to use the legally-checked out downloaded books. While this software is free to download, it is only offered on a single computer operating system, and then requires a special media player to already be installed on that operating system.

There are many problems with this arrangement. Many patrons, myself included, do not use the required operating system, and many with the operating system do not use the proper media player. Indeed, I cannot use the computers at my library to listen to the audio downloads I check out! This situation is terrible for education and comment on the audio books.

Secondly, this has a bad effect on libraries. They are at the mercy of the software providers, who may at any time go out of business or decide to stop supporting or distributing the player software. Thus, for archival purposes, they must be allowed some leniency.

Thus, libraries should be allowed to make archival copies of audio books for their own use. They should also be allowed to distribute copies of software that can play the audio books on multiple operating systems and media players. Third, they should be allowed to check out unencumbered audio books to patrons.

There is virtually no copyright infringement problems with this solution. The unauthorized exchanging of audio books on the internet is so small as to be immeasurable - fundamentally different from the online distribution of music and movies. Thus, the copyright holders have virtually no valid complaints as to the institution of said remedies. However, it would allow library patrons the rights which their tax money has entitled them.