Interviewer: Hello, hello. Okay. So, tell me what ways you help parents with decisions about their screen media practices [crosstalk 00:00:10] Let's break it down

Claire: There's so many ways

Interviewer: Yes

Claire: I ... Okay, let me start with ... one of the ways that I do it, really on a regular basis, is I have a pre-school story time. At the end of every pre-school story time I preview one app and I show it to the whole group. We do it interactively, if there's a choice on the screen I'll ask the kids to help me pick what choice we should do. I walk the kids through it so the parents understand how the app works, but then I also try to sprinkle in one or two phrases to talk about why I think this is a quality app and why parents should choose it over other apps. As a way to kind of build their toolkit for their decision-making when they see apps that I haven't recommended. Like, whether or not it's a good app. So, that's one way that I do it.

Claire: I have, in the past, run an app story time, where we do five to seven apps, where it's the same thing but instead of having books first and stories and finger plays and songs and craft and a movie and all that, instead of all that, we just talk about apps. For the whole 45 minutes. And I cover, as I said, between five and seven apps and we talk a lot more about not only how to choose apps but maybe even a little bit about how to use apps at home in the way that's the most healthy for your family. Just with tiny little tips.

Claire: I also helped to create a print piece that libraries can have out in their library, that are about the practices around using screen media. So, I've developed them in conjunction with EBSCO, they have a service of ... where they make posters for people and bookmarks and whatnot. So they work together with me to create this series of, I think, 12 or 15 different flyers.

Claire: On the front of each flyer is a question that a parent might have. Like, is too much screen time unhealthy for my child? Or something like that. And then the flyer will address that in a short answer about why it is or isn't and what you can do with it. And then the backside of the flyer, there's also a short blurb, about a particular app developer. And so it's sort of like introducing them to my favorite authors.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Claire: My favorite app authors. So in the same way that I might recommend high-quality books; if I like this book, them I'm gonna like all the books by this author, the same is also true for apps. And so, in those same veins, I also started a app

podcast in which I interview all of my favorite app developers. Or at least as many as I can get into the six episodes that I had funding for.

Claire: And so, I did that podcast series with the idea that I wanted to, again, kind of 'meet the author' but for app makers. Because I know that, for me, when I listen to an author speak or read something that they have written about themselves or their process, it makes me much more interested in the stuff that they have made. And I better understand their philosophy behind why they do something. So I did that for about 6 or 7 different app makers and the series could be on-going if I ever found more funding, but at this point it's kind of paused. But, the episodes are still available for anybody who would be interested in listening to them.

Claire: And then, once a week, I go on to our local news channel and I do an app review on the news. This was something they actually approached me about. The newscaster, she said that one of her friends, on of her mom friends, mentioned "oh there's a librarian who does app reviews" and she was so intrigued by this idea, that a library would be recommending apps that she came to me and she was like, "This sounds news worthy," she was like, "Would you like to do app reviews on the news?" And I was like, "Sure, that sounds great." And so now, every two weeks, I go on and I have a three minute segment in which I review one app. And I try to do a parent tip along with every app review that I do.

Claire: When they first approached me, when the news first approached me, I don't know if I ever told you this --

Interviewer: No

Claire: -- but they were like "We're thinking you could do maybe, I don't know, three or four apps." And I was like, "You're giving me three minutes and you want me to talk about three or four apps?" I was like, "How about one?" And they were like, "Well, three minutes is the longest single segment we have on the news" and I'm like, "Wow, Americans have such tiny attention spans!"

Interviewer: Wow. That's so interesting

Claire: But I'm like, "Okay, well, can we just try it with just one and me giving a parent tip and we'll see how it goes?" And when they ... after the very first one was recorded, the other anchor was like, "That was a good idea, to just do one". And I was like, "thank you!"

Claire: What I try to do is I open the review by talking about why I picked this app, just briefly. Then I demonstrate the app so the parents have some idea of what the app actually does. And then I give a parent tip about either a way you could extend the play beyond the app or talk about why the app is really good for this certain developmental thing, or I just give a general tip about using screen media together

and how, then, making screen media be a thing that connects two people together rather than being a barrier between two people.

Claire: So, is that all the ways that I do ...?

Interviewer: Well, your blog, obviously

Claire: Oh yes

Interviewer: And also, a lot of these things are linked on your blog

Claire: Yes, exactly, oh and also I write the - this is clearly my favorite one, obviously - I write app reviews for our library's website. And there are people, not even just in Madison, but I know that there are librarians from all over that reference that source for when they are looking for apps and when they're looking for app reviews to recommend to other families.

Interviewer: Okay

Claire: So I think it reaches more than just parents, I think it reaches librarians who reach other parents, and so I really like ... honestly that is my favorite of all my resources. It's the most easily sustainable, it, I think, reaches the largest audience. And I'm really glad to be able to keep it going.

Interviewer: And that's a good model, because you're training librarians and then they're training ... it's a more economical ...

Claire: Yeah, but families can also access it directly

Interviewer: Exactly, yeah, yeah

Claire: [crosstalk 00:06:40] So, a lot of people ...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Claire: So I would say those are the ways in which I help parents and caregivers and librarians with decisions about their child's screen media ...

Interviewer: Screen media ... okay so do you feel like those tips ... and those kind of ... guiding principles, then, you've made a really nice parallel between books and apps. Does that ... do those guiding principles also apply to other screen media?

Claire: So I would say that they are different. I say that ... because television is much more passive, when I'm talking about with screen media with families, I'm generally talking about apps. And the reason that I prefer apps to TV is because of that interactive element, and because ... generally speaking it's easier to have two

	people making a personal connection over an app than it is over screen media that they're both just facing forward and watching.
Claire:	Yeah, you can have fun watching a movie together, I suppose, and talking about it, but in general I feel like there's a lot more learning that happens with those interactive apps. And I feel like you can cozy up with a book app on your lap more than you can cozy up with a movie on your lap. Because a book app still has the potential to have a parent be the voice.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
Claire:	Whereas a movie, you're both just passively watching
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
Claire:	Does that answer your question?
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
Claire:	So at the end ... and other screen media ... I mean, I don't really get in to video games much because those are generally for so much older children.
Interviewer:	Right, right, right. Yeah, so tell me what ... who comes to your programs? Who are you talking with face-to-face, and then who do you think also gets it? In terms of age ranges of children?
Claire:	So, I would say that generally I am aiming at elementary school and younger. From elementary school down to two-year-olds.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
Claire:	And I would say the majority of the people who I reach are probably more in the pre-school range. Between age two and five. Because beyond that ... I think that kids start making their own decisions about what media they want, and parents are, at that point, just sort of reacting.
Interviewer:	Yeah
Claire:	Like, yes my kid can play that or, no my kid can't play that. But, when they are in that pre-school range, then it's parents making ... largely making all the decisions about what their child has available to them
Interviewer:	Yeah, yeah, yeah
Claire:	To choose from

Interviewer: Yeah

Claire: Right?

Interviewer: What about media making? 'Cause you're quite a maker.

Claire: I am. I don't do a lot of programs that are about media making

Interviewer: Or advice to parents of ... I'm thinking about how you said up to age five then, you know, it's a lot of tightly controlled ... parent-down kind of control. And then [crosstalk 00:09:41]

Interviewer: So do ... is it at that stage where you're kind of saying, "oh have you tried ... making videos with your child?" Or ...

Claire: Actually now that my son is 8, I have actually started to explore some of ... well actually, what I started doing is exploring some apps that were more made for adults, but that happen to also be totally appropriate and doable for children.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: Those are my favorite apps to find, because those are the ones that I know that ... or have a better chance, that an adult would be just as ... just as much fun playing the app and so they're more likely to sit side-by-side and do it. For a lot of the apps that are out there for making, I don't know ... I guess I have not gotten to them as much, it's probably just my personal preference.

Claire: There are some interesting ones that are about ... there's one called "Foldify" where you can ... you can actually print off ... you can design on the screen a 3D model and then print it on paper and then cut it out and fold it and glue it until you have the actual physical paper 3D model in front of you that you just designed. Which is pretty awesome, right? But that's not really digital media making, it's just making that just happens to have a digital component.

Claire: If we're talking about making videos and that sort of thing, I mean ... there are some apps ... I would say ... Okay, so, there's a group at the [inaudible 00:11:07] Center that I've been working with them on making their own comics.

Interviewer: Okay

Claire: There's a whole suite of apps that I sort of mish-mash together that I like, because they're about making either ... comics that are cell-by-cell-by-cell like an actual comic that you would read, and then there are some that are a little bit more like making a mini movie. Like a mini animated movie. So like, "Tunetastic 3D" is a fantastic one because it's so wide open and yet it still gives the kids so much structure that they don't just feel lost in it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Claire: And so, those are the kinds of ones I would promote for media making, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But parents haven't kinda come to you now, "Oh! Now my child's getting older, I'm not sure how to ..."

Claire: Not really yet, no

Interviewer: I mean, you haven't, in programming, you haven't kind of set up specific programming for the older ...

Claire: I haven't, although if there was a demand for it then I absolutely would. What I have found ... I don't any longer do my Supper club, my app story time, because the audience for that just got smaller and smaller and smaller and I don't know if that is just people got busy or if the people who had been coming are like, "You know, we've got 40 apps already, we don't really need anymore," or if ... exactly what the situation was.

Claire: There's actually been, in the last year or two, there's been a giant shrinking of the app market for kids. Its super complex and I can send you articles and lists about why it's ... why it's happening, but because of that, there's less new stuff that I wanna tell people about that's really exciting to me.

Claire: And so because of that, and because there's been less interest, I've just not been doing as many of the [name of hosting event for parents]. In fact, we tried ... I did three ... this Spring, I had ... I've had two of them so far and we had, I think, a grand total of two families show up to one of them, and the second one it snowed that day and so nobody showed up to that one. And the third one, again, I'm gonna have to find a sub for, because it's during the play conference. But, there's not been as much demand for it.

Interviewer: That's so interesting

Claire: Isn't it? I don't really understand ... I don't know if people just don't want to show up for this event ...

Interviewer: Or ... you've given those guiding principles and so now they can be ... [crosstalk 00:13:29]

Interviewer: Yeah, there could be a lot of reasons. But the shrinking market is also really interesting.

Claire: It makes me really sad. Basically what happens is that the big, big, big, big, big names ... they'll survive fine. But a lot of the really small indies are just rapidly dissolving, which makes me really sad. And a lot of what's coming, what's

swooping in, to fill that gap is stuff that is very commercial, stuff that has media tie-ins. You know, like, "here's a Nickelodeon app" or whatever. "Here's a McDonald's app" I don't know ... and so, or, "Here's a Barbie app". And so ... or stuff that's just made by companies that are copying the really successful big ones, but doing it badly. It's just ... it's all-around tragic.

Claire: I do feel like there's still a core set of some really solid apps that are still available and that can families can still feel really good about letting their children use. And so I wanna make sure that they know about those, so that if they are using screen media with their kids that they're using good screen media and not just ... well this sort of looks like it's kid friendly, because it's Angry Birds and that's a cartoon. But instead thinking, oh here is the Sago Mini apps that were specifically made for a four year old or for a two year old. And so they're gonna be more appropriate for my kid and my kid's gonna enjoy them more and get more out of them.

Claire: And also talking with parents, when I'm talking with parents about not feeling like they always have to use educational apps. Because so many of the apps that are trying to be so overly educational are really horrible. And so I, again, I'm trying to help them find the joy in play in apps.

Interviewer: Okay, so, what devices are ... I'm on to question four. What devices are most frequently mentioned by parents?

Claire: Phones, iPads, Kindles. Those are the main ones.

Interviewer: Okay.

Claire: iPhones, iPads, Kindles and other Android phones.

Interviewer: Okay. So, what are their questions? Sorry, what activities to parents ask about those devices? What are their common questions?

Claire: If they ask me about them, it's usually something like, "Hey we're gonna be going on a trip, and I need to load the iPad with good apps." Or, "Hey, I got my kid a Kindle for this upcoming vacation and what would you recommend?" Honestly, that's the majority of the parents who come to me, it's because they're going to be traveling and they need some entertainment for their children while they travel. Which is one of the reasons why I buy apps for my kids too.

Interviewer: So you can relate to that?

Claire: Right. Oh and I would say I think that there are some parents who use apps at other times at home, but I don't know how comfortable they are coming to me and saying, "Hey, I need some more apps because I just need a quiet moment to be able to fix dinner without somebody yelling at me all the time. Can you give me

some recommendations?" And so, it feels a little bit more ... acceptable, socially acceptable, to say I'm going to be using apps during a trip. Everyone agrees that that's socially acceptable time to be using apps. So, I don't know, maybe there's parents out there who ... would secretly like to have more app recommendations, maybe they use my website, maybe they watch the news, stuff to get that ... and so that's how they get them ... to actually come to me.

Interviewer: And it becomes part of the trip planning too, which is kind of interesting

Claire: Yeah, definitely

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Do they ask you about screen time or ... sorry, when you first answer these questions, do you give them those guided principles again? Do you have those tips? Or is it just like, here's a list!

Claire: If it was mostly about road trips, honestly, it's here's a list. Here's my favorite apps for your kid. Like, I'll ask them "how old is your kid? What are they interested in? Are they more interested in exploration or in building things or"... what do they like to do, right? And then I'll give them a list of my favorite five, and then maybe also give them my website and say "You can go on here and you can limit it by ... you can limit it by device, and you can limit it by price ..." and so if you only want free stuff then you can get only the free stuff.

Claire: I do sometimes throw in the parent tip, if that can be called one, of -- please, if you have any money to spend on apps please spend money on apps because you'll be supporting people who are making high quality apps. And they need your support if they're going to keep making those. And if you don't spend $3, which is the same price that you would spend on one cup of coffee maybe, if you don't spend $3 on an app then that company will eventually go out of business and we'll be stuck with only really awful apps.

Interviewer: Yeah, and so that's really educating parents about the industry

Claire: Yes

Interviewer: Giving some basic media literacy -

Claire: Yes

Interviewer: - skills to parents, right?

Claire: Exactly. Right. Exactly.

Interviewer: So they don't ask about screen time or ...

Claire: There are some parents ... like, it hasn't actually happened recently. And I don't know if it's just because my audience has kind of stayed the same or maybe those people already heard me talk about this a million times, they know my spiel. But, I would say that at the beginning, when I first started talking about this, I had more parents who were worried about ... not so much about "My kid has too much screen time", actually had more parents who were like, "I have a two year old and we don't have an iPad yet and I don't know if they're gonna fall behind," and I had to be like, "No, they'll be fine, you don't need to worry about that".

Claire: I would say that, for the most part, the ... I've also had to notice ... okay, so I don't know if this is one of your questions or not, but I wanna skip ahead to say that one of the things I learned pretty early is that if I approach a parent cold, and I say "Do you use screens with your child?" they immediately answer, no matter what their actual answer is, they'll say, "No, no, no we don't use screens with our child." Because they think I'm going to judge them for using it.

Claire: So I had to change my question to, "If you use screens with your child, then you might be interested in looking at my app page." And then, with that opening, then the parent can say, "Oh really? Tell me more," or, "Actually we don't use screens at all with my kid because we have found that they make my kid crazy" or whatever. And I always am like, "That's great, I love that you have made a conscious decision about how much screen time your family can have." Because that's the most important thing.

Claire: Whether that's a lot of screen time or a little screen time, if you have made a conscious decision about it, you are probably on the right track. And that's the message I get most.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. So, what do you think parents are struggling with the most across the screen media? In the home or traveling? Portable devices ...

Claire: Honestly, I would say that question about, "How much screen time is okay?" Is still a really serious question. I think that they ... I think that everyone is scared to ask it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Claire: Because, and if they do ask it, there isn't a really a clear answer. I mean, you can sort of be "Well, one hour a day," but one hour a day is a really random amount. I have answers for that, that I have given people over the years. Like in my family I talked about how ... I didn't really want to ... and this didn't really fluctuate over the years ... but, in philosophy, I didn't want to say, "I'm gonna limit you to one hour a day and I'm gonna put a timer on here, gonna turn the iPad off as soon as it hits the one hour mark"

Claire: Because if you, as an adult, were working on something and you were almost to the end of something you were working on and your machine just shut off because your time was up, it would drive you crazy. And so, instead, I want to empower my children, in theory, to be able to finish the arc of whatever they were doing and then to realize, okay now I need to turn it off. Now that's the tricky part, right? The now I need to turn it off.

Claire: But we have big conversations, with both my children, we've had big conversations about balance. I say, we're going to ... we have these ... these are 7 basic activities that we should try to do every day. We should try to read, we should try to have quiet time, we should try to go outside, we should try to - I don't know what all of them are - we should try to do a chore every day, right? We should try to play every day. These are all things that are on my list, and so if my son came to me and said, "I really want some screen time" but I knew that he hadn't done more than one of those things, we might talk about it.

Claire: Let's talk about balance. And he would rail against it, "I don't wanna talk about balance I just want the screen!" But we would talk about it. He got to the point where he would, because he knew that I would ask him about them, he would intentionally think about ways he could go read and ways he could have quiet time and go outside and get all those other things under his belt ... and if he actually did manage to it in a balanced manner, then he could use screen time without going off the deep end.

Claire: And we would talk about those times when, maybe, I needed some quiet time to myself and he was on his iPad and I was like, "I'm just gonna let him keep being on his iPad for awhile while I finish this thing I wanna finish." And then two hours later I'm like, "oh my goodness I better get him off the iPad", and then he is an emotional mess, right? He's just kind of grouchy and fighting back and not easy to get along and I'll say, "I think that you're unbalanced." And he'll, of course, deny it and yell and shout that he's totally balanced and he's fine. But I think that he realizes later, once he actually calms down and becomes himself again, that he was out of balance, right? If he's acting like that, and then he can come back and we'll have a rational ... more rational conversation about it.

Claire: I mean, I feel like, if I'm professional that's been doing all this reading about this is, and I still struggle in my own home, with figuring out how to balance on a daily basis, it's not even just like I need to figure out my system. I've had multiple systems, it's still a struggle for my family. And so I have to believe that the same is true in other families. There might be families for whom their children, if they say "you get 30 minutes a day and that's it. Or you get two hours a week, you can decide how you wanna use it," or ... there are many people who have these hard and fast rules and for their children it works. Great.

Interviewer: Yeah, and I think you're right, it's for their children. It's so individual

Claire: Absolutely. That's why there isn't a one right way to do it

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah

Claire: And ... and so that's why I think that even though I don't get questions about that, because I still don't know that people see me as the person that they would come ... after all this that I do, I still don't know that people see me as the person that they would come to to say, "I need help figuring out screen time for my kid". I think that they still feel like they need to read articles, or that they need to talk to their friends about it and see what their friends do, or that they need to just try different stuff with their kid to see what works and what doesn't work. Maybe talk to their doctor, I don't know who they're talking to, but it's not me. Even after all of the stuff that I do to try let people know that I've ... I'm sort of an expert. [crosstalk 00:24:42]

Interviewer: And that you're not making value judgements

Claire: Right

Interviewer: And they still don't come to you

Claire: Not very often, but like I said it's usually for the opposite reason

Interviewer: Yeah

Claire: But I think early on there was one family that was really worried about using the screen at all. Like, didn't even want to use FaceTime with their two year old because the doctors had said "No screen time under two or whatever" and I was like, "Look, FaceTime is the exception, it's a great way to connect with other people, talk about it." But other than that, most of these ... have already made their own plans or don't realize that it's a good idea to make a plan and so wouldn't come to me to ask.

Interviewer: Right, right, right, right, right.

Claire: Right

Interviewer: Yeah. So they're not necessarily looking for resources. You say maybe the feel like they need to read information, but then it just ... life happens and it doesn't happen

Claire: Or maybe they do read articles and get conflicting advice because that's what the articles are -- is a bunch of conflicting advice about what to do or what not to do. I ... maybe they're like me and they try a method for awhile and then it falls apart and then they try another method for awhile and it falls apart. And ... like I said, it not only changes per kid, but I think it changes per era of that kid's life.

Interviewer: Yes, definitely.

Claire: But I do try ...

Interviewer: Yeah so that's the other thing, is things are constantly changing. Well, and then media - new media come into the household as well and then [crosstalk 00:26:11]

Claire: So that's one of the reasons why that, for me anyway, it was important to not ... put a blanket "no media in our household" because, for me, I wanted to make sure that my son was building those skills, right? If throughout his entire childhood I'm like "there is no media" well then what happens when he gets old enough to choose his own media? And doesn't have the tools for figuring out the right way to choose? Although, I still think he's trying to sneak YouTube videos past me, 'cause I'll come in and he'll hide the iPad and I'm like, really dude? Like I can look at your history I can see

Interviewer: He actually is an appropriate 8 year old

Claire: Yes, exactly

Interviewer: So do you have any go-to resources that you refer parents to? Besides the flyers that you've developed? And your blog?

Claire: If a parent actually came to me and asked, I would probably refer them to the book by Lisa Guernsey and then there's also a new one, which I haven't even read yet, because --

Interviewer: Oh yeah "The Art of Screen Time"?

Claire: Yes, that one. I read that really, or heard that really great podcast interview with that woman. And it made me wanna read the book, but I haven't had a chance to read the book. But I think that it sounded like she had a really interesting and very, very valid perspective that, I think, would be one for a lot of ... a really great one for parents to listen to

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, I think she has some principles ... some really nice guiding principles

Claire: Yes

Interviewer: So, now what kind of websites or ...

Claire: No I would say, honestly if people come to me looking for specific app recommendations, the first place I send them is to my website. Because at this point it's about over a hundred apps, so it's enough. Back in the days when it was too little, I would be like, "Well you can try Common Sense Media". Common Sense Media has a pretty conservative skew on media in general. And they, I

don't know. I have mixed feelings about the way that they review things. And so, if they were wanting to know about an app that I hadn't ever heard of, I might go on to Common Sense Media with them. But I don't think that's ever actually happened.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: But, yeah.

Interviewer: And then the library website, would you refer them to the library website?

Claire: That's what I mean when I say ...

Interviewer: ... your website

Claire: When I said my website, the app recommendation page on the library's website

Interviewer: Got it, got it. Okay. Have parents ever told you of things that they've consulted?

Claire: I'm trying to think.

Claire: I feel like there are ... there a couple of parents in the past who would tell me about an article that they read about screen media use.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah

Claire: Read this article ...

Interviewer: In the ether somewhere [crosstalk 00:28:52]

Claire: Right, on Facebook or somewhere [crosstalk 00:28:52]. I found this article on this blog post with this idea, what do you think about this?

Interviewer: Yes

Claire: Or, I'm trying it with my kid. And I'll be like, "Great, let me know how it goes".

Interviewer: Yeah

Claire: But then I never hear back, but that's about the majority of it. Nobody has come up to me and said, "Hey I read this whole book ... "

Interviewer: Do you have a feeling of what resources on the library app recommendation page ... what resources are particularly helpful or how parents are using them?

Claire: I don't even know if people are finding them

Interviewer: Okay

Claire: I did have a parent within the last 6 months email me to let me know some of the links were dead. So, somebody had actually looked at the page, so that's exciting. And I went in and I fixed the broken links, so that was good. But I ... I mean we would have to talk to [website manager], to see what the stats were, see if people even access the FAQ page where I talk about those kinds of resources. 'Cause I have no idea.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you're very well informed, is there any other advice you feel like is missing from your repertoire?

Claire: That ... I wish I could give to parents?

Interviewer: Yeah

Claire: I wish there was one right answer. Right? I wish that there was an easy formula for best practices for kids. And there's not really, and I think it is because every kid is different, because the media landscape is changing. Because every family is different in how they want to relate to screens is different.

Interviewer: And kids are constantly growing

Claire: Kids are constantly growing. It's that darn thing. If they could just stay still. Just a minute.

Claire: So I would say, I mean ... that's the one thing I've always wished I had is an easy answer, and there's not. Even if I had like a formula, that I could give the parents ...

Interviewer: But the guiding ... you have guiding principles for evaluating apps

Claire: I do. And I have ... I don't have guiding principles for usage other than "You know your kid and you know what they can and cannot handle. You know what you can and cannot handle in their behavior. And you do what works best for your family."

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. I feel that the new guidelines on developing a family media plan ...

Claire: No, there's new ones?

Interviewer: Yes, from the American Association of Pediatrics Association

Claire: Oh, okay

Interviewer: Yeah 'cause they're the ones that came up with that rule that everyone knows, right? [crosstalk 00:31:22] And then they're like ... Oh it doesn't work ... So then they have you go through this media plan. So, yeah. I can send you the link to that

Claire: Great

Interviewer: So, where did you learn all this stuff? Where did you receive training? Tell me about that

Claire: I probably learned most of my stuff through an email group called (e-group). The (e-group) was started by [name] years ago, probably before [my son] was born, so ... pre 2010? Is that possible it's been that long ago? Anyway, [name] started this ... had a website, basically, had a blog and on her blog she started blogging about using apps in her story times. And at the time, of course, this was very radical.

Claire: And so there were other librarians, including myself, who sort of found what she was doing and started commenting and she was really good at helping to empower all of us who were part of this conversation to be the movers and the shakers ourselves, in our own community. And so, she would ... she and other people ... would post articles that they had read or insights that they had had or talk about programs that they were doing at their libraries.

Claire: And so, between that, I found ... I do a lot of my reading that way. And then she actually asked me to help present to the librarians in Wisconsin. She got invited to come and do a two day workshop to teach them how to use new media within the library.

Interviewer: Okay

Claire: And so she asked me, she's like "Well you're in [Midwestern state], would you like to help me with this" and I was like, "Oh I feel I can't really do that but okay I'll try. I feel very honored that you asked me". Well then she ended up ... she and [another person], who were kind of the two main movers and shakers of this particular group, they were the ones who were gonna be speaking in [Midwestern state].

Claire: Well then it turned out they both had medical issues that came up and they couldn't do it, and so at the sorta last minute they were like, "Can you do it? Also, could you do this presentation for 2 days in Arizona?" And so I felt like I had to very quickly become an expert, and so I did as much reading as I could because this is how I respond when I'm feeling intimidated by a situation. I do as much research as I can. So that's pretty much how I did it, I taught myself because I needed to teach other people.

Interviewer: So what prompted you in the first place to join ...

Claire: The (e-group)?

Interviewer: Yeah

Claire: So I think it started ... I think I discovered them when I was in SLIS and I did a presentation for one of my classes about mobile apps for kids. And mobile apps and how they relate to libraries. And through that search I found a handful, but I was surprised that I didn't really find any that I super loved. And I was like, "Well surely there are some out there".

Claire: And then a couple of years later when I was doing my wonder-works class, which is STEM skills for three and four year olds, the very, very, very first one that I did I was going through the Science, Technology, Engineering, Math when I did the technology I was like, "Well, that's gotta be apps", right?

Claire: So I did all of this research to try and find five apps that were free and that were high quality apps that I could show during this program. And I think it was actually when I was searching for those five apps that I sort of stumbled into the (e-group) and was like, "Wait! This is what I want! I love this!"

Claire: And I also discovered, then, after I'd done those five apps that technology for three and four year olds is much broader than just iPads, right? It's just ... it's tools, it's any tools that you use. So I was able to broaden it in the whole series I was able to do technology in a different way and I didn't have to do apps every time.

Claire: But, it was a really interesting exploration to think about that and to think about, "oh ... what is the role of an app in story time? What could that look like?" And to actually try it out in my own library and to see, "oh I kind of liked the way that worked," and explore that question with other librarians of like mind.

Interviewer: So it's been totally self-driven?

Claire: Yes

Interviewer: So has the library ... how has the library supported you?

Claire: I would say number one, them being open to me using apps in story time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: Eventually, I did get a ... I think at the very beginning I was even using my own iPad in story time. And ... trying to remember if I actually got it to project up on the big screen right away, or if I was trying to just use my small screen. I think ... the very, very first couple that I did were just on my small screen trying to show them to the whole group.

Claire: But eventually the library brought and iPad that I could use. Well, it was supposed to be shared with other staff but nobody else ever used it for anything, so it was mostly my iPad. Then they later bought other iPads to be public-piecing iPads and they asked me to help select the apps that would be put onto it. So I would say those are the main ways, and then like also being open to me doing the news every two weeks ...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah

Claire: (Male name) was actually really supportive in that, because he was like, "It's basically a three minute library program for an extremely large audience." I don't think I ever really realized how big the audience was. Did you know that our local NBC affiliate can be seen all the way up to (Northern Midwestern city)?

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Claire: Yeah [crosstalk 00:36:46]

Claire: Around (Northern Midwestern city), then they start to be able to choose between that NBC affiliate and a different NBC affiliate.

Interviewer: Okay, okay

Claire: But [crosstalk 00:36:54]

Interviewer: That's a big part of the state

Claire: It's a huge number of counties

Interviewer: It's like half the state

Claire: I know. I was like, "Oh ... really? That's great"

Interviewer: How are we doing for time? I only have one more question, but how are we doing? I don't wanna ...

Claire: We're at 3:45, but I'll ...

Interviewer: So the last question is really about media mentors. Do you know that kind of term?

Claire: Yeah, yeah I do

Interviewer: And (media specialist librarian's) work, so how do [crosstalk 00:37:19] see ...

Claire: She and I actually did presentations together

Interviewer: Oh okay

Claire: And I think I was part of the cohort that ... first started using media mentor. So yes, I'm very familiar with that term.

Interviewer: You're very familiar. So ... the last question is just anything else that you think we should know about media? Librarians as media mentors?

Claire: I still feel like the public doesn't know that we do this. And I wish there was a way to more efficiently ... well, number one: to better equip librarians so that they are media mentors. And that they feel confident to do this. Like I know I am, but I don't know that the average librarian is, and so I don't feel like we can tell the world, "Librarians can answer this question," because at this point, they can't, really.

Claire: And so, I would love for there to be some way ... oh I should also say, this wasn't directly to parents, but I also developed an online course for librarians that they can take if they want to learn how to be a media mentor. It's a couple years old now, so I'm sure that some of the stuff is out-dated, but it still has a lot of the same basic core values and same core beliefs and same core processes.

Interviewer: Is that through GPI?

Claire: Through GPI, yup. And so that was my attempt, plus the in-person two-day workshops that I did in three different states, to try to my best to give as many librarians to be up to speed on this as I could. But, that's not nearly enough, right? And I don't know how to reach more of them. By myself.

Interviewer: Yeah

Claire: I feel like we can't send that message to the general public that librarians are your resource if they're not yet. That's not fair to anybody

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

Interviewer: So where do you think the gaps are, then?

Claire: I think that there are still librarians who don't feel confident about their knowledge in apps. And so they don't want to recommend if they don't really know what good apps are. Or how to even choose an app or if they don't have those tools.

Claire: I think that ... I think it's kind of a catch-22, if the public doesn't see librarians as a resource for this, then librarians don't have the motivation to make themselves be a resource for it. But they're never going to become a resource if they're not a resource

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: So I would say ... it's somewhat a marketing gap and somewhat an education gap.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: And I think it's kind of ... it's chicken and egg and I don't know which one came first. I mean, I think the education of librarians has to come first, clearly, because you can't tell a whole wide group of people to come ask librarians and have them not have the answers.

Claire: But, I think that there are still a large number of librarians who ... I think it's kind of like when I first started hearing about STEM, I was ... I felt overwhelmed by it, like, "Oh this is something else I have to learn." Like, I'm supposed to learn all this stuff about literacy and now you want me to learn about science and math too? I got into librarians because I don't really like those fields, right?

Claire: And then, there was this big "ah-ha" moment when I realized, "oh! I probably know enough about STEM to be able to teach a pre-schooler about STEM," right? And then something that demystified it and I feel much more confident in talking and doing programming in that field. I think that same mind block probably exists for a lot of librarians.

Claire: So, if they hear about apps, and they go into the app store, it's totally overwhelming and most of it's junk. And it's really hard to find the good stuff. And I think that if there were a way, like my podcast for instance, that I could introduce them to, like, "If you know nothing else about apps, you need to know about Sago Mini"

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: "If you know nothing else about apps you need know about Toca Boca"

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: And if they have, like, these ... it were "Tiny Buck" or "Originator", all these ones that are the very best apps, the ones that are most effective at teaching, the ones that are most effective at getting kids to get really engaged with the app. If they could know about those, so if families came in and said, "I'm going on a road trip and I need some good apps," that they would have a list of really reliable app makers that they could tell them.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: And that they, maybe, have actually played with those apps, or seen them in action. Or maybe if they're not ready to go to play apps, maybe they need to know

the best book apps, the Sandra Boynton apps that are out there. And the, I don't know, "Go Away Big Green Monster" app or whatever. But the book apps that are really good and aren't just the ones that have doodly-bops that make a busy noise and distract the kid from the book, but ones that are actually ones where they're really thoughtfully, really well made. And those are the apps that I fear are really disappearing as the indie developers dissolve.

Claire: So, what I found when I went to do those trainings was that librarians ... like we did the ... a large portion of the two days was us demo'ing high quality apps. And there were a lot of "ah ha" moments when the librarians would go, "Oh! I could use that app". Like, "That app doesn't scare me because that's just a book" or, "Oh! I didn't think about using that app in that way."

Interviewer: Okay, so maybe it's also a dislike of ... you know ... they think that it's not books and so it's just not interesting or it's like distracting from books, detracting from ... you know, like ...

Claire: Or just, it's not my field and so why would I be interested in it. Right?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah

Claire: And so that's why I try to really strongly get the message across that it is a form of media

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: Books are a form of media, magazines are media, music is media, DVDs are media. We talk about all those. Just because we can't loan an app to someone very easily, doesn't mean that we should ignore them.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: There's still a media that parents are using, probably more than magazines and music CDs at this point.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Claire: Nobody sees music CDs anymore, but even kids music. I don't know how many people get into kindie music, which is great, but nobody does. But, there's ... I think parents are using apps, but they're not using very good apps because they don't know how to find them, because they're hard to find.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, you need to go

Claire: Helpful?

Interviewer: Very helpful, thank you

Claire: Happy to help