

**Filename:** NavScreensProfessional14Transcript2018

**Interviewee:** Rural Librarian (Assistant Director & Youth Services Librarian) 'Alecia' is pseudonym)

Alecia: I'd say right now it's very informal. We don't have any structured programming or even guides for parents. Every now and then I'll get questions here and there from people, usually like if they're attending a program or coming in, or just hanging out at the library with their kids and I happen to be on desk. It's not very frequent that anyone asks specifically do you have any advice for me about screens.

Alecia: Usually it'll be I'll hear other parents or other staff talking about screen time and maybe that it's not so good, and we should be watching it. I feel like I'm often correcting myths around it a little bit, or correcting some misinformation that parents are getting, either that it's no big deal and who cares, or we shouldn't have any screens, and trying to point out maybe there's another perspective. It's usually not very targeted. I wouldn't say it's a question I get asked often at all.

Interviewer: Tell me what you say when they're taking one of those, both those extremes. Say, you hear a parent, what do you overhear, or two people are talking and they're saying ...

Alecia: I'm thinking of one time, it was actually a parent and a staff member were talking about screens. I don't remember the full conversation really, but I remember talking with the staff member about some of the ideas that as kids get older they're going to be using screens and there's healthy ways to do that, and it's not a zero-sum game of you can't have any screens, and that they are important, for us to provide that flip side to all the scary information that parents are getting.

Interviewer: You at your role as a supervisor ...

Alecia: Yeah. More so.

Interviewer: ... felt like you needed to inform your staff, your desk staff about how they handle-

Alecia: I don't work on our desks nearly as often, so it's often I'll hear parents after programs or chat with them after story time or whatever it is, but usually it's our desk staff having those interactions. Then there is a lot of, I guess, the other side of where I answer questions is we do some one-on-one technology help that anyone can sign up for. Usually it's like grandparents that I'm talking with, but they're often feel very clueless when it comes to anything regarding any technology. Sometimes they'll ask questions or say, "My grandson knows all about this, and he can do anything." They'll say to me, "Well, you just know how to do absolutely anything." I often try to encourage them that it's all through practice and play in a lot of ways, so that they should just keep trying and keep engaging with it.

Alecia: I think there's bridging that divide of the adults in these kids' lives who maybe have a lot of questions and don't know how to use stuff, and they assume their kids know everything, and helping the adults get comfortable with it, learn the vocabulary to talk about it, and also point out to them that it's not that their grandkids or even their kids are magically able to do all of this. Yes, they're comfortable with it, but they're playing with it a lot more than we are, and that is part of the learning experience. That's probably the more targeted.

Interviewer: That's a great myth bust. Again, you started by saying you do a lot of myth busting. That's a great one. I hadn't really thought about grandparents and this kind of ... It's obvious now, but grandparents.

Alecia: I think that's where I end up having more ...

Interviewer: That's really interesting.

Alecia: ... one-on-one time, just because they are available and have the need to sign up for those classes. They often have that idea that young people just know everything, and that we're all obsessed with computers, so helping them broaden that view.

Interviewer: They can be media mentors.

Alecia: Totally. I would think a lot of them-

Interviewer: Because they're interacting with their grandkids.

Alecia: Yeah. They're also, I think, often going to their grandkids for help. I've had a lot of people and they've been like, "Well, I don't know. My granddaughter put the password in, and I don't know what it is." I think in family life there is this intergenerational conversation around technology and working with grandparents is probably another entry point to that.

Interviewer: That's a whole nother research project. Then on the other side of things, you said sometimes you hear parents are like, "It doesn't matter." How do those conversations come up, and how do you intervene?

Alecia: I guess it's more observational. Families will be hanging out at the library, and you'll often see parents just like a kid is fussy, and they'll shove the phones in their face and say, "Okay. You go play with that." The way when we have just after story time there's usually some social time for families and kids. Some parents will really enter their devices in that, and be either themselves on their phones or with their kids on their phones. Other parents are like nothing. I guess it's more observational. You notice those two groups forming and not necessarily engaging. I guess it's more just judgmental looks of like, "Why is she giving that kid a phone to play with?" Kind of thing.

Interviewer: The parents are judging each other.

Alecia: Yeah. No one has said anything that explicit to me, but you can tell from the looks on their faces and the way that they then socialize that there's a little bit of a divide or discomfort when parents see other parents do that.

Interviewer: Have you thought about addressing that or is that just like ...

Alecia: Not really.

Interviewer: ... [inaudible 00:05:53].

Alecia: There are times where if we're trying to lead an activity, I have to ask parents to put their phones away, like in story time. When it's more social, flexible time, I haven't stepped in ever. I haven't really thought about how I would navigate-

Interviewer: Leading a conversation about it or kind of-

Alecia: Yeah. We just recently got an iPod touch for story time, and I was thinking about how to be more upfront about how I'm using this piece of technology in story time, and some of the best practices I've seen of using it for the purpose you're using it for, and then putting it away when you're not using it, that kind of thing. When we're using music or hopefully when we finish our construction and we have a projector screen and could put lyrics or something saying there's reasons we're using this technology, but we're also still going to do a lot of interpersonal things, so it will be out sometimes and away sometimes, and approaching it that way.

Alecia: I haven't done that yet, because I don't have the space. We just got the iPod a couple of weeks ago.

Interviewer: You don't ban cell phones during story time.

Alecia: No. I usually ...

Interviewer: I know some people do.

Alecia: ... ask parents to put it on silent or on vibrate, and then if they need to take a call to step out. Usually it's a parent pulling out their camera, and wanting to take a picture of their kid, which I don't really want to prevent them from doing. It's often like a nanny or someone taking a picture to send to a parent. It is this cool way to loop a whole family group in. There are these positives to it. I know I have other staff who would prefer to just shut it down and have no cell phones in the room. I also look at it, too, sometimes you might see a parent on the phone during story time, and I think maybe they really need that five minutes to just veg out

and go on Facebook or whatever it is, and they know that their kid is engaged in this activity.

Alecia: It's, I think, a fine line of judging what's right and wrong, and wanting to give parents that agency to choose, because it's really not my place to decide. I guess helping them make more informed decisions or more intentional choices is ...

Interviewer: Yeah. It's the intention.

Alecia: ... is probably important.

Interviewer: Like you say, if you model the decisions that you made around technology and why you made the decisions, these are I'm intentionally using it this way. That's really interesting.

Alecia: I think that's especially with really young kids, and with older kids I have had some questions about like we did some coding programs and stuff over the past year, and I have had a couple of parents ask for specific app recommendations, and things like that to help their kids learn specifically in that area.

Interviewer: In coding.

Alecia: Yeah. With those, there's a lot of resources online, and we did have some stuff ready to go for them, because it was part of the program. That's the only specific question, I think, I've gotten in the last little while ...

Interviewer: Okay. That's interesting too.

Alecia: ... was asked regarding coding.

Interviewer: We've covered that. Number two, disseminating information. Do you have anything on your website or are there fliers around or anything about screen, media use?

Alecia: Not really.

Interviewer: That's fine. Now, number four is what devices are most frequently mentioned, or do you have a sense of ...

Alecia: I would say they usually call everything an iPad, whether it's an iPad or not. Often tablets, and a little bit phones. It seems like with younger kids they're using their parents' phones, and they might have a family tablet. It seems like from what I've gathered from conversations that kids are sometimes allowed to use mom or dad's phone, but they wouldn't have their own at that elementary to play with that. There may be a tablet that is a little more not owned by the kid, but for the family. Yeah.

Interviewer: They bought it for the family. That's interesting that it's not laptops or the desktop computer. It's the mobile devices, so maybe it's more those in between times, like the transition times that they're using them do you think?

Alecia: Yeah. I mean every now and then we have middle schoolers who will use our station, like computer stations, but not that often. Most of what people seem to have questions about or concerns about is more tablet-based and not ... I don't know that anyone's ever mentioned TV to me, or even movies and that kind of media. They're definitely checking out movies, and I'd hear them talking about Netflix and things like that, but I don't get questions about that. It's more about the internet at large and tablets.

Interviewer: They don't specify device.

Alecia: Yeah.

Interviewer: Are there themes around the internet at large that you see coming out in terms of media, screen use?

Alecia: I know there's one parent who I was talking with, she has, I think, a sixth grader, a third grader, and a kindergartner, and she was talking about social media with her older kid, and also feeling very much like she doesn't know what Snapchat is or really what her daughter is doing on it, but she knows she's on it, and the struggle of monitoring that and allowing her daughter freedom, and time to do that, that kind of struggle with older kids.

Interviewer: Time to ...

Alecia: Like to have the device, to use her screen time for social media type stuff.

Interviewer: That's that whole development, like giving your child more agency, like you said, as they get older.

Alecia: That's something that's come up with older kids, and even with staff, too, as we've talked about how to design our team space. We had a big conversation about should we have desktop computer stations in that area, or should we just make it so that you can plug in anything and work there. We decided to do the second option, to not have desktop computers, but we'll have iPads and laptops that they could use, and then they could bring their own device, since we often see kids on their own anyways, so that freedom for that older age. I've heard from parents some concerns more about the social interactions.

Alecia: Whereas with younger kids, some of the questions tend to be more about their development and what they're learning, like is this a good resource or a good app for learning, will they understand how to code if they use this, sort of thing, more educational and less social.

Interviewer: That's great, because it sounds like the themes that are coming up are about positive uses of screens, like that they want advice on.

Alecia: And we're right for that age group, and there definitely is a difference from young kids to school aged, to middle school and older, I think.

Interviewer: Finding the appropriate balance, finding the appropriate apps, content, but also negotiating that relationship between adult and child.

Alecia: Yeah. I think then the other thing for people with younger kids, which is probably a little more in social circles I know with young kids is also more like is this content appropriate, is it worth the little bit of screen time I'm supposed to offer them, if they're watching Daniel Tiger is that okay, or should we be watching something else. It seems like at least in the groups that I know, there's a little bit of recognition that there'll be some amount of screen time, and wondering what is the best use of that, and finding that content that's higher quality. There's already been this decided, well, it'll be a certain amount. They're not as worried about amount, I guess, because they've already determined they're going to limit it.

Alecia: If they're limiting it, what's the best use of that limited time, I guess. That seems to be more with younger kids, because the parents are choosing the content. There's some input from a three-year-old, but you can limit the options more.

Interviewer: Then the screen time issue, you say, it sounds like they decide, they know from the [inaudible 00:15:13].

Alecia: Yeah. I would say that's more like my social circle, which is a lot of other librarians and teachers, and people who are probably reading similar things that I am about it. It seems like the consensus of limiting screen time for those kids that are very young.

Interviewer: They have that message.

Alecia: Yeah. They have heard that for sure.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea where that comes from? Do people say I've heard, or I read?

Alecia: I'm trying to think of just the parents I know. They're reading a lot, and a lot of them are teachers and librarians, so they're working in education, so they're probably a little more tapped into some of that child development and how they're integrating technology into their classrooms. They're probably more aware than a parent who might work in a different sector.

Interviewer: Then screen time with older kids, with older elementary kids, do parents raise that or is that just a given, like they're using technology for a range of purposes?

Alecia: I think that's a little more mixed and more unknown for me, because I'm thinking at the library I don't know what the rules are for so many family, you know, what they've decided for their kids. I have heard kids mention, "During my screen time I was doing this." Or that kind of thing. I get the sense that there are some limitations in some households. Other kids it does seem like they can do whatever they want, so I think there's a wider range with older kids. It's hard to know.

Interviewer: Have parents mentioned any resources specifically, like Common Sense Media or NetSmartz, or [crosstalk 00:17:20]?

Alecia: I've heard one parent mention to me the Mighty Girls, Smart Girls, [inaudible 00:17:27] like Amy Poehler's organization getting lists and recommendations from that, I think, on Facebook. That might be the only specific one.

Interviewer: That's really interesting.

Alecia: I was like, "Oh." I have seen their book lists and stuff, too, but she said she checks that sometimes. Not really any other ones that I can think of.

Interviewer: Now, thinking about your skills as a media mentor, so what more information, so we're onto question eight now, what more information do you feel you need to advise parents, or in your case really staff as well? How do those conversations go?

Alecia: I think more reviews for apps and just technology in general would be really helpful. I know there's some out there, but it's not as easy. A lot of our other collection development you can open School Library Journal and see pages and pages and pages of reviews, and maybe there's a little section on apps or something. Sometimes it feels like there's just as many apps out there as there is books to choose from, and more information about what really makes a high-quality app, and what outcomes can be expected from using that app to evaluate it would be helpful. It seems like sometimes that information is hard to find. It's hard to know who to trust with it.

Alecia: You might find a review on a random blog, but you don't know necessarily the authority of where that's coming from.

Interviewer: That ties in with what you said that parents are talking about tablets and phones, and it's the apps on those, I'm presuming, that they're mainly using.

Alecia: Yeah. I don't get questions a lot for websites to use at all.

Interviewer: That's so interesting. Such a shift.

Alecia: It is, because adults will ask sometimes for websites, but kids really don't. I think reviews of apps would be really helpful to be able to recommend things. I think I

would love to do some more training for staff, because I think a lot of people are soaking in messages about this all the time, and it's hard to sort through what is credible, what has changed, because we've been learning and researching this more and more, and how to keep that rolling and up to date, that this isn't something like we're going to decide right now what's the best way to do it, and then keep saying that message for the next however many years. Technology will change. What we find out about, how we interact with it will change too, and so how to integrate that, I guess, into our consistent professional development and how we're always learning and growing.

Alecia: I think I have a lot of staff who still use a lot of print media when they're doing story time planning and other programming research. They're going to those big guides of things, but a lot of this information is available online it seems like, so they're not necessarily even considering the technology piece to it, because it's not really in their media diet right now. Finding a way to either help them find it online, or if there are print resources about it, or just getting them more engaged with the topic.

Interviewer: You're really having to be a media mentor for your staff and trying to get them, like you say, about the media diet, like changing their media diet.

Alecia: Yeah, because I definitely have ...

Interviewer: That's really interesting.

Alecia: It's an interesting role too, because a lot of why I know about this stuff or why I think a lot of people do is because just in their personal time they're using it, and you can't really dictate that to a staff person that in your free time you need to use Facebook. It's funny that so many of them do use Facebook. They do use email. They do use a lot of this stuff, but somehow they see that as different.

Alecia: In a lot of ways I think it's just we don't have the same vocabulary to talk about this stuff the way that someone who grew up with technology versus someone who learned it later in life. We're coming from different perspectives, but also the way we speak about these things has changed, so I think there's a lot of confusion over even down to this is a computer. You're using an internet browser. This is an app. That technology lingo, I think, can get really overwhelming for staff that are outside of it.

Interviewer: Is that a generational divide and is that also-

Alecia: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that generation also, your staff, is that a different generation than the parents and caregivers [crosstalk 00:22:28]?



Alecia: Yes. A lot of our staff is nearing retirement or this is a post-retirement part-time job.

Interviewer: There's a generational divide between you and your staff, but also between the staff and the parents and caregivers.

Alecia: Right.

Interviewer: Which seems like it wouldn't be just your library that's having that experience.

Alecia: Yeah. I think that's really common that a lot of libraries have part-time staff that are post-retirees who are engaging with this stuff for the first time, especially in children's areas where it's talking about child development. When they had kids, or were raising their kids this wasn't something they had to think about the same way. It is a stretch or a new area to think about.

Interviewer: It's also interesting, then, to think about the role of your staff to be media mentors for those grandparents who are coming in, and finding common ground there, but maybe that's not the best situation then if ...

Alecia: Yeah. It's a little removed from actually working with the kids. I think part of that's definitely what I've struggled with the most is that I'm only one person at the library, so I only interact with parents for a small percentage. When they come, they're going to run into a new person every time probably, and so how to have that consistent experience across the board is tricky.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. I love that. I think we can build that into what we're thinking of as a workshop, coming up with some way of having a workshop for everyone who's ...

Alecia: Who's going to have face time with a patron who might have these questions. I think it gets challenging when you have staff that span 70 years in their age, and have really wide experiences with technology. I think, too, there's also that me being someone younger, I think there's a bit of, "Well, of course you think that this is a good thing." And that we want to encourage parents to use media appropriately and all that. There's a little bit of that how do they know I'm credible, and I'm not just coming at it because of my age and my experience, like to back that up with more research or whatever it is to make it something that the whole library can buy into and not just the young people, or not just the children and staff even, because people interact with everyone on staff.

Interviewer: That's so interesting. Tell me about your training in this area? What's guiding you, or do you feel like you had any particular training?

Alecia: I think most of the information I get about it is either through School Library Journal or ALA published things, so every now and then I'll do a webinar about

this, or if I'm at a conference and there's a session on it, that kind of stuff. I did take a class on teaching coding with kids, which is kind of related, through UW online. When I was in school, I don't think we were quite getting into this type of thing.

Interviewer: It's very nuanced.

Alecia: I'd say most of it is webinars or stuff that's passed on. I haven't been able to actually physically go to a conference in the couple of years I've been in [small Midwestern town], but my supervisor went to [major library conference] last year, and she went to some sessions on specifically using tablets in your children's room and that sort of stuff. She shared all her materials with me. It's coming from the library professional world right now.

Interviewer: Do you have any blogs that you follow in particular in this area that are helpful?

Alecia: Not on a regular basis. I'll sometimes look up, like if I see a review or something about apps, will look up that person and bookmark their blog, but I rarely go back. Don't know what they are.

Interviewer: I know. My bookmarks are just ...

Alecia: I do check Common Sense Media sometimes.

Interviewer: For what and under what circumstance?

Alecia: Hopefully looking for some type of review on something to know what age they recommend it for, or what the content is of an app or piece of media. Not that often though.

Interviewer: Do you have iPads that you're putting apps on for public use? Is that why you're checking apps?

Alecia: We don't have that currently, but next year when our new children's room opens, part of the plan is to have a little iPad area, so in the next eight months I'll be building that collection. I've started bookmarking, especially I think I have a few from Storytime Underground. They're a Facebook group of other librarians talking about apps. I haven't actually dove into any of it yet, and where they get reviews. That was a question I saw just this morning, was like, "Where do you find reviews on these things?" I bookmarked it to find what people say.

Interviewer: You did coding, why did you decide to do coding?

Alecia: We had a systemwide training with [state agency for curriculum and instruction], with [Tina] out coding and also just maker space technology in general. With the [state-level agency], we have a mobile maker space with different items you can

check out, so they wanted to showcase some of those items for system staff, so that we would know what it is we might be using. Then I think Tina presented with a couple of other people about coding in libraries, and that was maybe last year around this time or so, and Bob [Slis 00:29:01] had an online course about it. Where I am now, my supervisor has encouraged me to take one of those classes at least once a year or so. That kind of fit under my goals for the year to learn more about it.

Alecia: It's one of those buzz words I hear a lot, and it seems that parents are interested in it, and some kids are too. We did a week of our summer reading program was about coding, and then I did a family coding day just a few months ago ...

Interviewer: Fun.

Alecia: ... to try to share some of that with parents as well, so they could get an idea of these beginning things, and try out some apps.

Interviewer: That's interesting just how learning, like in terms of different ages. Parents are looking for learning in a very school definition of learning, as their kids are developing literacy skills, it sounds like, and maybe coding then fits with the slightly older kids that they don't feel the need for the early literacy apps. This has filled that gap for parents. Do you think?

Alecia: I think a little bit, because it's often parents with kids who are probably in third, fourth, fifth grade who are showing interest in technology, and I think their parents want to harness that in, in some ways. They're getting a lot of messages that coding is so important, and you could have any job you want, and we need it in every field. I think they see that as a really valuable thing. There's also this magic to it almost, I think, for parents or grandparents who don't understand how your computer is doing what it's doing. For a kid to be able to dive into that and actually make something on the computer, I think, is really, really cool to parents, because it's something that they didn't necessarily learn how to do.

Alecia: Some of them, of course, are programmers and developers, but there's also that sense that this is something really new, and really cool for the kids to do.

Interviewer: The wow factor.

Alecia: Yeah, and a really good use of that interest in technology, that it's not just playing a game. There's a learning outcome associated with it.

Interviewer: It's interesting, because it could have gone to video editing. It could have gone to media production, different kinds of media production, but coding seems to have taken off for whatever reason.

Alecia: It different has.

Interviewer: Maybe it's because, like you say, there's all that rhetoric around jobs, and this is useful.

Alecia: It's very tied to that. We always do stop motion animation workshops. We've done them for the last, like before I was there even, because they're super-popular. Kids just love doing them. There's still, I think, coming from kids that big interest in creating media, creating videos, music, whatever it is, but I don't see parents engaging with that the same way as with coding.

Interviewer: That's so interesting.

Alecia: They have more questions about it. They're signing kids up who maybe aren't that interested in it, because they want them to come, whereas whenever we do stop motion or something else that's more tech-based but just making something for the fun of doing it and learning along the way, it's a lot more kid-driven, I'd say.

Interviewer: That's so interesting.

Alecia: The kids are wanting to do it. The parents, they seem excited to watch their kid's video, but it's not the same "let's dive into this" energy.

Interviewer: Great. Okay. That's kind of it, unless there's anything else. Number 10 is: is there anything else you'd like to tell us about being a media mentor?

Alecia: I don't think so. I think it's something that, I think, is really important, and I'm excited to learn more about, and I hope we can do better at, because I think there is, like especially in the community I am in now, a big void of this. I think there's a ton of media, and we're using it all the time, but we haven't really thought directly about how to mentor parents through that. I think it's an important thing, and I hope that we're able to do it better as we move into the future.