Chapter One: New Media in Youth Librarianship

Cen Campbell, LittleeLit.com
Amy Koester, Skokie Public Library

Welcome to *Young Children, New Media, and Libraries: A Guide for Incorporating New Media into Library Collections, Services, and Programs for Families and Children Ages 0-5*. This book is a collaborative project by members of the Little eLit community. Together, our community has been exploring the topic, research, and practice of young children and new media in libraries for several years. Over the course of our explorations, one thing has become extremely clear: library professionals want concrete guidance on exploring this topic within their own libraries and communities. As a profession, we need resources, research, suggested practices, and rationale for doing the things we do in our libraries. This topic of new media with young children is no different. And we at Little eLit believe we may have something to contribute to these conversations.

This topic around which we spend so much time—young children, new media, and libraries—is not inconsequential. In a landscape in which 75 percent of households have digital media, and 72 percent of children ages 0-8 have used digital media (Common Sense Media, 2013), this topic is one that the families we serve every day are encountering first hand. They may be sharing technology with their children in an intentional, informed way; or they may not. At Little eLit, we firmly believe that it is the library's place to serve as a resource and mentor on this topic—as we serve as a resource and mentor on all topics that pertain to the literacy of the children we serve. And yes: young children and new media is a literacy issue. Children expected to read at school must first have the pre-literacy building blocks that will allow them to become fluent, comprehending readers. Children expected to wield technology effectively, and increasingly to create with technology, must first have the hands-on experience of using the technology and understanding good content. Literacy allows success in school and in life, and new media is a facet of that future success.

Why do children's librarians have to be knowledgeable about new media?

In her TEDx talk, entitled "How the iPad affects young children, and what we can do about it," Lisa Guernsey asked: "What if we were to commit to ensuring that every family with young children had access to a media mentor?" (Guernsey, 2014).

At Little eLit, we believe that children's librarians already serve as media

mentors, though new formats and platforms require us to do some fast learning to make sure that we're serving the ever-changing information needs of our communities.

Children's librarians are ideally placed to serve as media mentors to families with young children, and we already possess the expertise to evaluate the quality and age appropriateness of different types of media for children. Media mentors help families gain access to high quality resource materials from trusted institutions, then use those resources to make their own informed decisions about media use. The goal is to support families, and to provide access to information and recommendations, so that they decide what type of media use is appropriate for them. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages families to create a Family Media Use Plan, and it also provides guidelines for different age groups (2013), but the reality is that many families don't conform to the "ideal" plan for media use. Each family approaches the topic of media use differently, and as media mentors we can help them as they tailor their own plan. How can librarians meet families where they are; make suggestions for age appropriate media use in a way that supports parents in their role as their child's first and best teacher; and provide guidance that is culturally relevant, appropriate, and respectful?

This generation of children is the first to have been exposed to mobile, touch-screen devices since birth. While we know from decades of research that excessive passive media consumption has detrimental effects on young children, we still don't know what the implications are for interactive technologies; and researchers are still exploring the "prosocial implications"— the positive influences and effects—of interactive media (AAP Council on Communications and Media, 2013).

What is currently known is that children need interaction from loving caregivers more than anything else, and that media consumption for young neurotypical children should be kept to a minimum (AAP Council on Communications and Media, 2013; Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, 2012). What does that knowledge mean in a time when adults are transfixed by mobile devices, screen media is omnipresent in many communities, and schools are beginning to implement one child, one device programs in kindergarten? How can we use emergent technologies to support parents as they talk, sing, read, write, and play with their children, as outlined by Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® 2nd Edition (ALSC & PLA, 2010), and break the all-too-common image of children being left alone with mobile devices, like in Hanna Rosin's "The Touch-Screen Generation" (2013)?

The proliferation of digital content for children, and the mainstream interest in media consumption by young children, is a huge opportunity and challenge for children's librarians. We have the opportunity to break the paradigm of children interacting by themselves with a mobile device; we can provide an alternative in storytimes and other library programs that shows parents how they can support their children's engagement through joint use of media.

Children's librarians have long held an interesting position in the lives of the children and families we serve. We are storytime leaders and recommenders of excellent books. We are (hopefully) familiar faces in our communities, and friends to those we serve. And yet we are so much more: we are also advocates for children and supporters of their caregivers. With the development of Every Child Ready to Read® (ALSC & PLA, 2004), we became experts in early literacy, with a goal to share our knowledge and expertise with caregivers so that they can better promote the literacy development and overall wellbeing of their children. We mentor parents so that they have information and guidance to determine what is best for their children, and then to do those things. Media mentorship is no different. We strive to understand, as best we can, the information surrounding media and young children, and to help the families we serve use this information to make decisions that work for them. We continue to be advocates and supporters, not for media itself, but for the families we serve.

Where did Little eLit come from, and where are we going?

The iPad became available to the commercial market in 2010. In 2011, as I, Cen, was slowly returning to work after staying at home with my son for two years, I started to wonder about the implications of this new format on services to families with young children in public libraries. I downloaded some digital books and apps—not knowing anything about evaluating new forms of media and relying solely on what I knew about selecting children's materials for circulation in public libraries.

After acquainting myself with various tablet devices (I didn't even have an iPad when I started; I did most of my initial exploratory work on a first generation Kindle Fire and a Galaxy Tab), I reached out to two library systems in Silicon Valley where I was working as a substitute librarian. I told them I'd like to try using the iPad in storytime and apply what I knew about storytelling to these emergent formats. I tried a lot of apps, made a lots of mistakes, and spent a lot of time with a confused look on my face in the aisles of electronics stores, trying to figure out what cables and adapters I needed to go with which projectors. I decided to document my projects in libraries on a blog, which I named Little eLit, and I soon began leading and documenting digital storytimes at a children's museum as well.

By 2012, Little eLit was already picking up steam online as a resource for librarians and storytellers who were also experimenting with using apps and ebooks in their storytimes. I began serving on the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Children & Technology Committee and presenting at conferences about my pilot projects. In 2013, the work of Little eLit contributors really began to expand at local, state, and federal levels. Now, in 2014, we are a network of approximately 300 children's librarians, app reviewers, researchers, and professors who work together to figure out how best to serve families with young children in the digital age. That mission is key: it's not about the media; it's about the children and their families.

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Over the course of our experiments, pilot projects, and programs involving young children and new media, some promising practices have begun to emerge. Some examples of these promising practices include:

1. The best media for very young supports the development of a relationship with another human being.
2. Support and model Joint Media Engagement.
3. Encourage creativity and creation in the use of digital media.
4. Use content that supports the early learning practices: Talk, Sing, Read, Write, Play.
5. Always use a mix of physical and digital props.

These practices have been developed collaboratively; through online interaction and face-to-face meetings; through discussions and disagreements (civilized and otherwise); through resource gathering; through experimentation in our libraries, classrooms, and laboratories; and through continual reflection. We present these promising practices, and more throughout subsequent chapters of this book, as we understand them now, to the best of our current knowledge, and with the understanding that all libraries and storytellers are different. We expect these practices to change, and we expect to modify or even retract some of these practices in the future as we continue to learn more.

The Little eLit Ethos

Little eLit has always been a collaborative grassroots effort, and we have worked together to document our findings and spread the vision of children's librarians as media mentors to the field. We have done so by reporting back on pilot projects, implementations, failures, successes, and thoughtful experimentations with new media and families in libraries, soliciting feedback, asking questions, and expanding our collective knowledge base. Our work has grown organically, with contributions from front line staff, to administrators, and everyone in between. We describe the body of work on LittleeLit.com as crowd-sourced and grassroots because so many librarians, storytellers, and educators have given their time to sharing what they know, often on their own time and using their own devices in their libraries or institutions.

But why focus on new media in the storytime setting?

We focus on new media in the storytime setting because we are really focusing on new media and young children—and storytime is the most frequent and traditional way in which young children experience the library. When I, Cen, started Little eLit, I was simply curious about the implications of mobile media on my own young child and the implications for me as a children's librarian. But through explorations and pilot projects, it became more and more clear that the issue is not specifically library practice, or new media in storytime. It's much more broad and family-specific.

Now that we've been working on Little eLit for a few years, we're beginning to see that while curiosity and experimentation were where we started,

pedagogy and pediatrics must inform how we move forward in devising recommendations for the field. The two seminal documents we refer to when incorporating new media into any collection, service, or program for children ages 0-5 are "Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8," a policy statement developed as a collaborative effort between the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media (2012), and the AAP Council on Communications and Media (2013) "Policy Statement: Children, Adolescents, and the Media."

Roberta Schomburg and Chip Donohue co-authored this joint NAEYC/Fred Rogers Center policy statement after three years of intense academic and field research within early childhood education.[1] Key messages from the position statement include:

- When used intentionally and appropriately, technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development.
- Intentional use requires early childhood teachers and administrators to have information and resources regarding the nature of these tools and the implications of their use with children.
- Limitations on the use of technology and media are important.

- Special considerations must be given to the use of technology with infants and toddlers.
- Attention to digital citizenship and equitable access is essential.
- Ongoing research and professional development are needed. (NAEYC & Fred Rogers Center, 2012)

In 2013, the American Academy of Pediatrics updated its policy statement on children and media. This newest position statement outlines the following suggestions for parents:

- Limit the amount of total entertainment screen time to less than 1-2 hours per day.
- Discourage screen media exposure for children under the age of 2.
- Keep the TV set and internet-connected electronic devices out of the child's bedroom.
- Monitor what media their children are using and accessing including any websites they are visiting and social media sites they are using.
- Coview TV, movies, and videos with children and teenagers, and use this shared media as a way of discussing important family values.
- Model active parenting by establishing a family home use plan for all media. As part of the plan, enforce a mealtime and bedtime "curfew" for media devices, including cell phones. Establish reasonable but firm rules about cell phones, texting, internet, and social media use.

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[1] Donohue, a Senior Fellow at the Fred Rogers Center and Director at the Technology and Early Childhood (TEC) Center, has been an advisor and friend to Little eLit since its creation.

(AAP Council on Communication and Media, 2013)

In 2014, Dr. Dimitri Christakis, one of the original authors of the AAP recommendations, published an op-ed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association: Pediatrics* in which he states "that judicious use of interactive media is acceptable for children younger than the age of two years" (p. 400). The opinion piece also included a chart comparing the reactive, interactive, tailorable, progressive, attentional, portable, and tactile features of traditional toys, touch screen devices, and television. By his analysis, Christakis suggests that touch screens are actually more akin to toys than to television, and guidelines should reflect the interactive potential of touch screen devices and not automatically equate touch screens with static screens (i.e., television).

Throughout this chorus of voices and viewpoints, Little eLit workshops and presentations always include guidelines from the AAP and NAEYC/Fred Rogers documents, even though the families we serve may actually choose not to follow those guidelines within their own families. The choice is theirs. The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages families to devise their own family media use plan, and we as librarians provide resources to support those families' decisions and the realities that inform them. We refer parents to resources produced by health and educational organizations, but we do not give our personal opinions or assumptions about media use with young children. We serve children and their families, not a platform.

While we at Little eLit do still focus a fair amount of time on new media use in storytime contexts, it is not our sole, or even our main, focus. Our focus is young children and their families, and how we can best serve and support them given the practices and research available to us.

Young Children, New Media & Libraries: Children's Librarians as Media Mentors

The media mentor concept was first presented to me, Cen, over brunch in Berkeley by Lisa Guernsey in early 2013. As the author of *Screen Time: How Electronic Media—From Baby Videos to Education Software—Affects Your Young Child* (2012), and the Director of the Early Education Initiative at the New America Foundation, Guernsey has been loudly advocating for librarian involvement in the children's new media marketplace. She's been working with Little eLit ever since that fateful brunch meeting.

Guernsey first published *Into the Minds of Babes: How Screen Time Affects Children From Birth to Age 5* in 2007 because she was concerned about how much television her own children were consuming. The second edition of the book was released in paperback in 2012 with the newer, more eye-catching title and an updated epilogue that includes tablet technology and interactive media as well as resources for parents. *Screen Time* (2012) remains one of our recommended books for librarians and parents alike who are concerned about children's media use.

In 2012, in collaboration with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Guernsey co-wrote *Pioneering Literacy in the Digital Wild West: Empowering Parents and Educators* with Michael Levine of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, Cynthia Chiong of Digital Kids Research, and Maggie Severns of New America. *Pioneering Literacy* was the first document that I, Cen, read on my apps-in-storytime journey that laid out clearly that the incorporation of new media into library collections was not only not optional, but actually a responsibility. With so much competing for the attention of today's children, and so much of their futures riding on the ability to learn to read, schools and community leaders have a responsibility to assess how technology fits into the lives of the children they are trying to serve—and how it might be used to further, not stymie, their language and literacy development.

But why weren't librarians specifically mentioned as key stakeholders for families, if the conversation was about literacy, access, and parent engagement? Is this not the role we've been striving to play in the lives of our families for over a decade? It seemed like such an obvious fit! Yet the library community wasn't really engaged in the media marketplace for young children when the article was written. In 2014, however, Guernsey authored a policy brief for New America, entitled *Envisioning a Digital Age Architecture For Early Education*, which further outlines the role of libraries in the digital age as well as a number of ideas that have since become cornerstones of the children's librarian as media mentor movement. These ideas—as good ideas usually do—also bring up more

questions, including two on which we continue to ponder:

- If technology is not to be used as a babysitter, then how do we use it with young children?
- How can we support children to play actively in the presence of technology?

Further practice and research can help us to understand the range of possible answers to these questions, and in turn allow us to better serve the range of families who look to their librarians for support and guidance.

Pro-Tech or No-Tech? That's the Wrong Question.

While we at Little eLit are still learning on many counts, we are quite firm in one specific ideal: to move children's librarianship as a profession past the false dichotomy of pro-tech vs. no-tech. Many Little eLit contributors, including its founder, started from a philosophy of caution and minimized personal technology use when it comes to children. The overwhelming opportunity to engage caregivers, however, as well as the plethora of high quality digital content and legitimate digital reading choices for families, has begun to encourage even the most technology-cautious librarians to apply their traditional librarian skills to the digital realm. Overwhelmingly, these librarians have asserted that they realized they were already doing these core things: sharing stories, recommending content, modeling positive behaviors between caregiver and child, and evaluating media. These practices are the bread and butter of children's librarianship, and librarians who began to add digital

elements to their practice recognized that the practices themselves have not changed—the range of media and support we provide has simply expanded.

Access is Not Enough

Public libraries have long been advocates for providing access to technology for adults, and in the past few years there has been an increased interest in the provision of access to devices for younger library patrons as well. AWE stations have served as children's technology access for many libraries, but as consumers are becoming more discerning of interactive digital content, and libraries expect to have more control over their digital collections, plug-and-play systems like AWE are finding competition in the form of more customizable and inexpensive commercial (as opposed to proprietary) devices. The Darien Library in Connecticut was one of the first libraries to create early literacy iPads kits, with librarian-curated app collections and information for caregivers on joint media engagement (Parrott, 2011). The librarians, under the leadership of Gretchen Casseroti (now director of the Meridian Library District in Idaho) saw the need both for access to the devices, but also for curated content and guidance for engagement.

In 2012, Susan B. Neuman and Donna Celano published *Giving Our Children a Fighting Chance*, a book encompassing their ten-year study based in two communities in Philadelphia, one impoverished and one wealthy, which showed for the first time that even in the "field leveling" environment of the public library, access to computers (their study

was conducted before the invention of the iPad) alone is not enough to bridge the digital divide:

> Consequently, technology appeared to inadvertently reinforce the gap that already existed between students and their families from neighborhoods of poverty and privilege. Further, given the extraordinary capabilities of the new media environment, one could defensibly argue that these conditions actually exacerbated differences in educational opportunity. In short, a new age of inequality is upon us. (Neuman & Celano, 2012, p. 124)

Neuman and Celano's book greatly influenced the Little eLit thinking around the use of new media with young children. *Giving our Children a Fighting Chance* supplies a new vocabulary for understanding that not only do children need to develop early literacy skills (those outlined in the first edition of Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library®), but they also need to develop information and cultural capital in order to really make use of those early literacy skills and translate them into success later in life.

Joint Media Engagement

Joint media engagement, or "the new coviewing," as coined by the Joan Ganz Cooney Center (Takeuchi & Stevens, 2011), is a concept that we incorporated very early on into our set of promising practices at Little eLit; it refers to the practice of a child and caregiver consuming and interacting with media together. Joint media engagement,

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however jargon-y or academic, is not a new concept for children's librarians. Reading books together is joint media engagement because books are a type of media (and an earlier type of technology, as Lisa Guernsey points out in her TEDxMidAtlantic talk), and when we share them interactively with children, we are engaging jointly. One of the best opportunities we have to model joint media engagement is through storytime, especially in a storytime that incorporates Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library®-style parental asides that support the use of the early learning practices. What better way to empower parents to be actively thinking about their roles in their young children's media consumption habits?

The Fallacy of Universally Appropriate Practice

If we want all caregivers, universally, to engage with their children as they use technology, it may seem to follow that there would also be a universal standard for appropriate practice of how to use that technology with children, and how much. Not so; there is no one definitive way to appropriately engage with young children and new media. Rather, there is only the practice that is best for the specific caregiver/child pair and what they hope to do with the media.

When thinking about what the range of appropriate practice may look like, it is integral to consider three key components—what Lisa Guernsey (2012) calls the "three C's," content, context, and the child:

> **Content** - What is the specific media content? Is it user-friendly? Does it include ads and in-app purchases? Is it intuitive for children and their caregivers to use? Is it glitchy? Does it relate to the topic or practice the child and caregiver wish to explore? These questions are examples of considering the content that may be used in any media engagement. The content itself is a huge factor in appropriate practice, as the variety of content available is wide and ever-growing. When considering what is developmentally appropriate, it is necessary to evaluate the content of the media in question. Chapter Six of this book, "Evaluation of New Media" by Carisa Kluver and Claudia Haines, will explore content evaluation in depth.

> **Context** - What do child and caregiver aim to accomplish in using the media together? How one wants to use new media, and the outcomes one hopes to get from the new media, go a long way in determining what type of practice is appropriate. Consider, for example, an alphabet game app in which a child matches pictures of common items to the letter they begin with; e.g., matches an apple to the letter "A." Whether this particular media is appropriate depends upon the context in which it will be used. Is it being used to reinforce letter knowledge? If so, it is probably appropriate. Is it being used to teach letter recognition to children who are just starting to learn the alphabet? In that context, the app is probably too advanced and thus not appropriate. The context

of use is key. Chapter Seven of this book, "New Media in Storytimes" by Claudia Haines, Anne Hicks, and Amy Koester, further explores the range of contexts in which new media may be used in storytime settings.

Child - Every child is different—developmentally, emotionally, perceptively, etc. It should come as no surprise, then, that each individual child may have unique appropriate practices when it comes to new media. It is integral for caregivers and librarians to take the individual child into consideration when creating a family media use plan or guidelines for appropriate practice. For instance, it may be relevant to consider how a particular child responds to and interacts with lots of sensory stimuli; a child who thrives with sensory stimuli will respond differently to an app with sound and motion than a child who becomes overwhelmed by the same elements. No single type of media, or way of using media, is appropriate for every child, and the needs of each child should absolutely be considered in all discussions of appropriate practice. In that same vein, what is appropriate for a child at age three will not necessarily be the same as what is appropriate for the same child at age four. Chapter Three of this book, "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" by Anne Hicks, includes information and discussion about general media use guidelines by age.

When thinking about developmentally appropriate practice, and particularly in providing resources to families as they determine their own family media use plans, thinking about these three C's is vital. It is also important to share these considerations with caregivers who may be anxious about the fact that their child is not necessarily using the same media, or using it in the same ways, as their peers. Recognizing that the idea of developmentally appropriate practice for young children and new media is both relative and dynamic can allow library practitioners to more effectively advocate for the needs of each child and family served.

So how do we move forward?

We move forward respectfully, and with open minds. We must at all times respect the needs and the realities of the families we serve, understanding that although we may provide suggestions regarding appropriate new media use, the decision of how to use new media with their young children remains theirs.

Additionally, we must continue to have open minds. Open minds in terms of our ideas of what it means to serve children and their families--regardless of what our personal philosophies may be on the topic of young children and new media. Also, we must have open minds regarding what we currently consider promising practice. This landscape of new media is still new and is always evolving, and at this point educational and developmental research has not kept pace with technology and its many uses. As new research emerges, it is vital to reflect on existing practice to determine how best to move forward. It

is vital to remember that our goal is serving children and their families, not specific types and methods of technology use. We must be open to all the possibilities of future use as they may emerge.

And finally, we move forward consciously, as informed professionals. We look to the resources we have available to us. We engage in thoughtful conversations with caregivers. When we utilize new media in the library with young children, we do so with specific rationale and goals. It is the goal of this book, Y*oung Children, New Media, and Libraries: A Guide for Incorporating New Media into Library Collections, Services, and Programs for Families and Children Ages 0-5*, to accompany professionals on their first, or next, steps into the realm of young children and technology. We aim to be a go-to resource that reflects what we know now about this topic. This information will almost certainly evolve over time; but now is as good a time as any to start to wade into these waters and better serve young children and families in this digital age.

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