SHARON O’MALLEY INTERVIEW

Narrator: Sharon O’Malley

Interviewer : Chris Krause

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*Chris Krause (CK): So this is Chris Krause interviewing Sharon O’Malley for a San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science student project. Today is October 25 2010 and we are conducting this interview at the Callahan Library of the Saint Joseph’s College campus at Patchogue, New York. This interview is conducted on a Zoom H2 device. Shall we get started?*

Sharon O’Malley (SO): Sure.

*CK: Tell me about when and where you were born.*

SO: Ok I was born in New York, on Long Island, born and raised. I grew up in Huntington Station until I was like 13 and then I moved out to Medford and I’ve been there ever since.

*CK: So describe your childhood home if you would.*

SO: It was a nice house, my parents used to live together and I always had a dog and cat when I was little. Mean, mean cats.

*CK: Did he bite?*

SO: He actually scratched me all the time, he didn’t like me at all.

*CK: [jokingly] Oh my God.*

SO: Yeah, he was pretty mean. Like, we had this cable box, where you had to change the channels and everything and he liked to lay on top of this cable box. So one time I was trying to get under him to change the channel and he was like [mimicking sound of surprised feline] and scratched me and, so mean.

*CK: So how long ago was that, is that like an early childhood memory?*

SO: Yeah, I was like seven or eight.

*CK: Is there anything else that sticks out from that period?*

SO: Let’s see, I used to go to my Grandma’s a lot, she lived in Hicksvile.

*CK: Did she have any influence on your upbringing?*

SO: Yeah, she did. Her and my mother are a lot alike, and my mom and her are really close, and my mom and me are really close. She’s like my best friend pretty much.

*CK: Tell me about your mom.*

SO: She’s a pretty laid back person; she grew up in the 70s, so she is pretty open minded to things. She is not like: “you can’t do this, because it’s new and stuff like that!” She lets me talk about things. For going here for instance, she was like “oh, wouldn’t you go to Stony Brook or something like that” because I was originally going for social work, not criminal justice, like I am now. And she was like: “wouldn’t you want to go to Stony Brook and go for the school of social welfare” and I was like [sound of disapproval] so I decided to go here for criminal justice, at the last minute.

*CK: So… in what way does that show that she is open minded? She was just willing to let you go here is what you are saying?*

SO: Yeah, willing to let me make my own decisions and stuff like that. And she didn’t pressure me to go to school or anything like that either.

*CK: So did she influence sort of your train of thought as you were growing up? Sort of being open minded?*

SO: Yeah, she did. I have a diversity of friends. People from all sorts of backgrounds; people into all sorts of things. Everyone from people who play Risk and all that kind of stuff, to people who go to metal shows. I mean I know you do both but… [laugh]

*CK: Yeah. [chuckle] Interesting, so what about your father, what is your father like?*

SO: He’s kind of, I don’t know – I’m not that close with him. He’s a workaholic. He’s a good guy for the most part, he just can be harsh sometimes. Like, not harsh, that’s not the right word…

*CK: Would you say strict?*

SO: Yeah, there you go, that’s a good word [laugh].

*CK: Did he have any influence in sort of where you are now?*

SO: Yeah, he did. Because I’m definitely my father’s daughter as far as my temper [laugh] and my attitude toward life.

*CK: So do you recall any sort of interesting stories surrounding your birth – as far as like being in the hospital, any funny stories from when you were “little little?” Anything that is sort of floating around the family?*

SO: Yeah when I was little [laughing] around Christmas time we used to put all the ornaments on the tree. I used to take, steal, the ornaments and apparently put [chewed] biscuits in place of it. No one would notice, you know? I used to wrap myself up in the lights, and the dog!

*CK: Interesting [laugh]. So it sounds like you had a, would you consider your childhood to be a happy one then?*

SO: Yeah, it was a good one, it was a good one.

*CK: Did you attend any church or religious services?*

SO: Yeah, when I was little I used to go Saint Peter’s Lutheran Church, and I did bible school and Sunday school there. The pastors were really nice, and, and they weren’t like really strict on you must have one set belief or you are damned to hell. They were pretty open minded, we even had gay and lesbian couples there, and people from all religions, you know that wanted to know what Lutheranism was all about. It was cool.

*CK: Did they have any educational classes there? Or any sort of thing where they had tried to teach you things?*

SO: Well yeah, about the bible. They would have stuff like that. And stuff on like tolerance, and “everybody’s different.”

*CK: Did they ever try to speak to what you should, or should not read? Anything like that? Or what you should avoid, or what you should embrace, besides tolerance, as you have said.*

SO: Yeah, don’t judge people and things like that. I don’t know, I can’t think of how to explain it… [frustratingly trying to clarify]

*CK: Take your time.*

SO: Like everyone’s different, don’t judge someone just because they look do something else or look different.

*CK: Ok, understood. So how were finances growing up? How were the economics?*

SO: It was tough times sometimes. My dad lost his job when I was ten, and he didn’t get one until I was like thirteen. He went back to school and it was hard. I didn’t really feel it that much, my parents taught me not to dwell on material things, and I didn’t mind things from thrift shops and stuff like that, actually I loved them. My mom was like: “Oh cool, what is this thing? What’s it do?” [laugh]

*CK: So how long was that period in your life, of sort of, I don’t want to say deprivation, but of having less?*

SO: It still continues today. I mean, middle class Long Island…

*CK: Yeah, pretty tough… overall, how would you describe your childhood?*

SO: I think it was good, yeah. I mean I wasn’t lacking for food or clothes or things like that, anything really important. I had a roof over my head, I had pets and friends, supportive parents, so yeah, it was nice.

*CK: What were some of the first jobs you had?*

SO: My first job was Vanity Faire in the Bellport Outlet and it was horrific. Alright, one of my first days working there I was giving one of the customers his change, and I can’t do math for anything. So I was counting out the change and I was looking at the cash register, and I was like “alright I think I got it!” [laugh]. And all of a sudden he gives me a quarter and I’m like looking at him, I’m just going to give this back to you because I don’t know what to do. And he’s all like “oh, you don’t know how to make change!” and he started yelling at me, and made me cry, and then I got fired for not doing well with the customers.

*CK: Was that like a traumatic event?*

SO: I guess. But..

*CK: When you are doing math, nowadays, does that come back to you?*

SO: Not really, there’s other things. I was always bad at math so…

*CK: Yeah, same here. That’s why we become librarians and other liberal arts things.*

SO: Yeah that’s true [laughing].

*CK: Probably shouldn’t have said that [laughing]. So what did you like to do in your free time when you were younger, up until adolescence?*

SO: I liked to read, draw, write. I liked to play outside. Anything outdoors I was into. Except sports, I wasn’t really big into sports. I mean I played football with the neighborhood kids but that was different than actual football at school or soccer or something.

*CK: It was more casual and less competitive?*

SO: Yeah, not into competition.

*CK: You did mention that you did like to read in your free time, how did that come about? Or how did you get an interest in reading?*

SO: My dad used to read to me when I was a little kid. And then all of a sudden I started reading on my own, at night. And then it just continued. I always liked to read.

*CK: Where did those books come from?*

SO: I don’t know [laugh].

*CK: They were just in the house?*

SO: Yeah, I think so.

*CK: What sort of books were they?*

SO: Things like the Junglebook, the Little Pony Went Through, things like that, little kid’s books; children’s books.

*CK: Did that interest continue or endure until today?*

SO: Yeah, I still love to read…

*CK: Ok we’re going to get into that a little bit later, but that’s a topic that we are definitely going to return to. As far as, you know, how you find new books, and how you hear about new topics, we’ll get back to in a second. Just going back to your childhood, did you have any admirations of famous people, or did you consider anyone to be sort of a role model?*

SO: Not really famous people so much, but definitely people in my family. Like my mother and my aunt, my grandma. They were definitely inspirational role models.

*CK: You mentioned your grandmother before, and that she was a lot like your mother, and that’s why you sort of looked up to her. Is there anything else about her which is sort of exceptional or that you find to be worthy of taking example of?*

SO: Yeah, she has always been really supportive of me. In anything I choose, like my mom. And she has always been really supportive of my mom. Always been, whenever we had really tough times or anything like that she has always been “you can get through, you can do it.”

*CK: Excellent, what about your aunt?*

SO: Well my aunt died three youngs ago from cancer but she has always been a really strong person, very head strong, very like “I’ll take you on!” [laughs] No matter what. I get a lot of my attitude from her. Even though I’m small, that doesn’t make a difference, I’ll do anything I want to.

*CK: What were some of the changes in your society you have seen, from when you were really young up until now? What would you say were the big changes that have gone or taken place and also, with that, what were the major events that have occurred or stick out?*

SO: One would be 9/11 and how everybody is focused on protecting homeland and all that stuff. I don’t remember much of societial things from when I was little, you know? It’s hard to remember that. I also grew up in a different area, there were lots of gangs and drugs there, where here, not so much. I mean, there is, but not as much – so it’s hard comparing and contrasting.

*CK: Do you recall why your parents moved; was it because of all that stuff?*

SO: Yes, yeah, it was.

*CK: Ok so they moved away from there and they moved into Medford. Can you recall any sort of technologies that were different then, say twenty years ago, when you were really young, toddler, that are different now? Is there anything that comes to mind?*

SO: Cellphones. People rely really heavily on those, and I don’t think they did when I was younger. I don’t remember anybody walking around with cellphones.

*CK: What do you use your cellphone for?*

SO: I use it, I don’t have internet or anything fancy like that. Thank God, I would be on it all the time [laughs]. I use it for text messaging, phone calls, and when I can’t find somebody I’d be like “heyyy” [laughs].

*CK: So moving onto the topic of education and sort of learning, where did you attend grade school?*

SO: I attended grade school in Huntington, Bridgewood Elementary and after that, Henry J. Stimpson, yeah.

*CK: Is that on Long Island?*

SO: Yeah, middle school.

*CK: And then obviously you went to high school at Pat Med [Patchogue Medford High School]?*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: Can you recall any sort of teachers that were influential?*

SO: Yeah, there was a few of them. There was this lady, Mrs. Foot, she was my first grade teacher. She actually helped me to read and to write well. Because both of my parents are left handed, and them trying to teach me to write, they didn’t know I was right handed. And they tried to teach me how to write, and I couldn’t get it.

*CK: Oh that’s interesting so they tried to teach you as if you were left handed, they just assumed. [laughs]*

SO: Yeah, I guess so. And I couldn’t get it for the life of me. And I would always write letters backwards and everything. I guess because I was seeing it from the other way or something, I don’t know. But then I started writing right handed and I do fine.

*CK: So Ms. Foot did what to sort of improve that?*

SO: She gave me little books to write in, and a little bit more extra homework. She really helped me to improve.

*CK: She did a lot of, you would say, tutoring basically? Or would you consider it to a mentor sort of relationship?*

SO: Both.

*CK: So she took a personal stake in your wellbeing you would say?*

SO: She also helped me with math. I was really, really bad with that. She helped me with simple addition and stuff like that.

*CK: Did you spend time at school after hours to accomplish that or was that done in the actual class time?*

SO: I think it was done in the actual class time, I don’t really remember to be honest. [laughs]

*CK: Ok. How would you describe yourself as a student? Sort of socially and academically.*

SO: Compared to when I first started college, and even when I was in high school, to now: totally different. I stopped going to school for a while and I took some time off, to figure out what I wanted to go and where I wanted to go and all that stuff and now I’m much more serious and I’m more motivated and I’m like “I can’t go out now, I got to do this.” Where at Suffolk [Community College] I was like “naahhh I’ll do it later” and my grades showed for it. And now I’m doing well, so it’s good.

*CK: So would you say that that attitude about school was that present even before Suffolk? Say in like High School, or before that even?*

SO: Yeah. I mean in high school we didn’t have to do much to get good grades. You just kind of showed up and did your work and read whatever you had to read once over, and you’re good. And then in Suffolk you actually had to work, and I was like ugh, yeah.

*CK: “I have to write papers now!” [jokingly]*

SO: [laughs] that I didn’t really mind too much, it was studying, that I was like, “ugh I don’t want to do that.”

*CK: How do you study?*

SO: Now, it’s a lot of repetition. I’ll write things over a million times, I’ll read things over a million times. And then I’ll keep on testing myself. Let’s say its definitions. I’ll write all the words out and then see if I can define them all by myself. Things like that. And other things, like math, I don’t know because I haven’t taken any math courses yet.

*CK: What about topics that are more general in nature, say have you taken any history classes?*

SO: Not yet.

*CK: Ok, have you taken any classes that would require you to have a general understanding of something rather than just memorization?*

SO: Yeah, I think the criminal justice class I’m taking, it’s an intro one. It requires a general understanding. That one I just keep on going over the information. Kind of the same way with the definitions, just not defining every little detail.

*CK: So you physically read it?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: What do you like most about school and least? About the whole learning experience?*

SO: I like least tests. I don’t do well with them. I know the information, but when I have it right there I’m like “what do I do? I don’t know!”. I just get like that. What I like most is actually learning, like new information. It’s pretty cool.

*CK: How do you learn effectively? Or I should say, what is the best way someone can teach you something?*

SO: It depends on what it is – I learn pretty good visually. And I learn pretty good auditory. If I hear something I can pretty much remember it. I also have a photographic memory. So if you show me something most likely I’ll remember it and including things like license plates, stuff like that…

*CK: Oh that’s really useful! [chuckle]*

SO: Yeah, I mean I won’t like always remember. But I can pretty much get it.

*CK: What do you like most about school? Or what really comes, what do you think of when you think good things about school what comes to mind?*

SO: I’m not sure [laughs]

*CK: “I hate this place!” [laughs]*

SO: No, I don’t! I like it, I just like to learn, I like going to class. I don’t mind it. My teachers are pretty good at what they do. I find them pretty involved with the students. Like if you are having trouble, they are willing to help you.

*CK: What sort of extracurricular things have you been involved in? From the earliest days of school up until now?*

SO: I take a free yoga class here, which is cool. And I also do the criminal justice club. They haven’t been doing that much, but it’s ok. [laughs]

*CK: What about when you were younger? Were you into anything extracurricular?*

SO: No. I was just like…

*CK: Because as you said you just wanted to pass through, and ok, understood. What would you say is your favorite subject? Is it criminal justice, or is it something else?*

SO: Actually I really love history – it’s really cool. I love like, Egyptian history, it’s just awesome.

*CK: What is it about history which is so interesting?*

SO: Learning about how things came to be – it’s just like wow. You know? Just like shacks and stuff like that, we went from little shacks and things like that to big huge buildings, and roads, and it’s cool. [laughs]

*CK: Ok so it’s the transformation is really what interests you?*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: So just to do go over this again, how did you learn to read? You said it was your father who really taught you to read?*

SO: Yeah, a combination of him and my mom, teachers.

*CK: Ok, did you have trouble reading initially, or what sort of experience did you have reading initially?*

SO: I don’t think I had that much trouble. I actually was a pretty good reader. I guess because my dad read to me, and I read a lot.

*CK: Would you consider your father to be sort of critical in teaching you to read? It’s just that I’m interested in knowing how much of an influence and how much of an effect school had versus your parents. Where did you learn the fundamentals of reading?*

SO: I think that was school, yeah. But my parents definitely had an influence on keeping up with it. You know, practice makes perfect.

*CK: Understood, so they would urge you to read?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: …ok, and when you were being taught to read in school, how were you taught to read?*

SO: I don’t really remember [laughs].

*CK: Ok, that’s fine.*

SO: I think it was mostly sounding out words and things like that.

*CK: So it was a lot of personal instruction?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: Do you recall any sort of media that was used? Any sort of videos or anything like that?*

SO: I remember books and little flash cards. Now it would probably be computers and things like that [laughs].

*CK: That’s basically what this interview is getting at – how things are changing, and how people are getting information differently. You know?*

SO: I work with kids too, so I kind of get a perspective on that nowadays.

*CK: In that work have you used interactive media?*

SO: [affirmative noise]. We use Smart Boards so the could actually , yeah [gesturing to Smart Board in room and laughing]. So the kids could actually go up and touch it, and see it. They not only get to see it and hear it, but they get a feel for it.

*CK: Would you say that is sort of like a game? What do you think about that as being effective educationally?*

SO: I think it’s really good because I work with special needs kids. So it’s really good especially for the lower functioning guys, because a lot of the time the auditory and the visual isn’t there. So they could repeatedly do it and see it, and interact with it, and remember it more. Because they were actually involved instead of being listening, you know what I mean?

*CK: So it’s the repetition of doing it which sort of drills it into their memory where if someone were to just tell them it wouldn’t sink in because they don’t have that sort of higher functioning ability?*

SO: [affirmative noise]. Even with higher functioning kids, it just makes it more interactive. They feel more involved. It’s less like the teacher up there “Duh duh duh, this is A” [gesturing pedantically] things like that. It’s actually maybe “draw A on the board” or something.

*CK: So it sort of involves them in the whole process. So you mentioned before that in your younger years the sort of things you were reading were sort of children’s books that you sort of found in your house, they were just floating around. [both laugh] Did you read anything in school?*

SO: Yeah, we read books like, I can’t remember the name of it is called. It was about an island shaped like a fish. I think it was Dolphin Island maybe. We read that. We read that as a class. But we had to read certain sections of it. Ten pages a night or something.

*CK: So your experience with reading in school is sort of an assignment basis. Where you were given an assignment and had to do it. What was expected of you once, after you read something?*

SO: Usually some questions, like what happened in this chapter, and things like that.

*CK: So when you had questions or curiosities as a child, about anything – how did you find the answers to those curiosities or questions?*

SO: It depends on what it was. Usually I would ask my mom or I would ask somebody. Sometimes I’d go look for it. Like now you’d go look for it.

*CK: How do you look for it?*

SO: On the internet, or through books - usually on the internet.

*CK: What sort of resources do you access on the internet?*

SO: Google is a big one. Wikipedia, even though it’s not always that accurate. What’s the other one? The actual dictionary, encyclopedia, all that kind of stuff.

*CK: Online, or in physical copies of those?*

SO: Usually online, if the physical copy is around, I’ll go to that.

*CK: Walk me through a typical query, online, if you’re searching for something, what do you do exactly?*

SO: I pretty much keep going thorugh websites and I look at the bottom and see when they last updated and all that kind of stuff. And if you can contact them, to see how legitimate the websites actually are. Sometimes people make up things. I saw one website, for a tree squid, I was like, what?! [laughs] It looked like a well done website, but if you go to the bottom there was no contact information, no last update, all that kind of stuff. It was like, “ok.“

*CK: So that is the sort of stuff you look for when you are trying to decide if information is good – so you look for if you can contact the person, when it was last updated, and anything else?*

SO: Yeah, how well it’s put together. I know that’s always a good standpoint but if it’s just like text, and stuff like that, you can tell they are not that into the website, and they are not going to update it that much.

*CK: I’d like to explore the role of public libraries in your upbringing and sort of when you were younger. What is your earliest memory or interaction with a library?*

SO: That’s a good question. I used to go to the library a lot when I was little to get movies and to get books, things like that. I think I was like six or seven, going to the library in Huntington. I don’t remember exactly what we got or anything like that, I just remember going from a young age.

*CK: So you took out books and movies? What was that experience like, or what was the process, to take out a book for instance?*

SO: It was finding the book you want, or asking the librarians to help you find the book you want. Then you go on the line and pretty much check it out for you. I remember getting a little library card, and then stamping it. I don’t think they do that anymore. [laughs]

*CK: Yeah, well I know that seems pretty common sense to you. But nowadays a lot of people will actually search for it online or something. And that’s how they get their books. You know so it’s sort of changing a lot. For me and you, we’re in the same age group, it’s obvious. [contemptuous, playful tone] “Oh you just go on the line, and they stamp the card on the back, and come on, and come on…” But the kids nowadays, it’s changing a little bit. So speaking of interactions with librarians, what was the nature of your earliest memory interacting with librarians?*

SO: Not sure – I just always remember them being pretty friendly, helpful.

*CK: Was it your parents that were interacting with them when you went to the library?*

SO: Sometimes, I was a pretty outgoing kid, so I’d just be like “Heyy, where is this!?” [gasp and laughs]

*CK: Did a librarian ever help you with a reference question?*

SO: I don’t think so, I don’t really remember.

*CK: The building itself, the library building itself, how did it make you feel? What were your thoughts about the building?*

SO: When I was younger I don’t remember. I know my thoughts about Patchogue Medford. I found it small a lot of times. Since I worked there I went into the basement a lot, and it was a lot of times there was mold and things like that. Which I thought was horrible and it would make me choke, and everybody choke. We’d find moldy books and things like that. And a lot of the things they were getting rid of. There was a case of black mold there when I was working there and I couldn’t work for like two weeks because they were getting rid of it. I’m not sure how they did that, but they did.

*CK: Did they have a librarian in charge of collections who was supposed to ensure that the books were well kept? When you found a moldy book what would happen?*

SO: We would usually have to throw it out. Put it in the back in the dumpster. Because, that’s gross. [laughs]

*CK: Did they ever try to preserve them, or restore them?*

SO: Not really because a lot of time they weren’t, they were things like small paperbacks and things like that. Because that was what was kept downstairs. All the big hardcover books were kept upstairs, and they were pretty safe.

*CK: Do you know why that was done?*

SO: No, honestly.

*CK: Do you think they did it to protect the other books upstairs or did that ever come up? Like the ones downstairs were expendable almost?*

SO: Probably, that’s probably it.

*CK: Where there any rare collections, any sort of fancy books like hard covers or anything like that?*

SO: No, not really.

*CK: Ok so how were you introduced to the concept of libraries, how were you introduced to what librarians do, what a library is?*

SO: I actually learned a lot while I was working there. I mean I knew what a library was, I knew it was a place where books were and you get books out, and that movies are there too. I knew what a librarian was, someone who keeps the books in check and all that stuff. But I didn’t really know the full details of what it actually takes. You actually have to know the Dewey Decimal System and how complicated that can get and alphabetical order and all that kind of stuff and that there’s different sections for different types of books. I knew there were different sections but, you know how in the Pat Med library they have the Q section with the oversized books and they have the littler books in paperbacks, and stuff like that.

*CK: So when you were younger, that didn’t enter into the consciousness, you didn’t really know about that stuff?*

SO: No I didn’t know.

*CK: So did you have any introduction to libraries in school?*

SO: Yeah actually we did. We did a lot of going to the library in elementary school, “here, pick out a book” that kind of stuff. I think we did it weekly or monthly, that was pretty cool.

*CK: Were you brought to a public library or a library in the actual school?*

SO: It was a library in the school.

*CK: What sort of interactions did you have with the librarian there?*

SO: They’d help us find what we were looking for – like most of the time we were looking for specific titles and they’d show us where to look for it, and that was cool.

*CK: When you visited those libraries, did they explain what was going on?*

SO: What do you mean?

*CK: Did they ever say how the books were sorted, or how they were going to find the books you needed, anything like that?*

SO: [affirmative noise]. They usually told us it was alphabetical order from the author, and look for the author’s last name, not their first name. Things like that.

*CK: Did the librarian ever talk about what he or she’s duties were or job responsibilities?*

SO: I’m sure they did, but I don’t really remember.

*CK: When you were young and you thought about what a librarian did, what sort of things come to mind? Before you were page, because that changes your understanding of librarians. But when you were younger, before you were a page, what was a librarian?*

SO: Someone who helped you find books pretty much [laughs].

*CK: Ok [laughs], that’s my experience too. So it was basically this weird lady that sort of protected the books and got you books? Just magically the books were there somehow and she’d know somehow [laughing with Sharon] and just get you books. So when was it appropriate when you were younger to visit a library, when would you go to a library?*

SO: Anytime you needed something.

*CK: Did you have class projects that required you to get a book?*

SO: Sometimes.

*CK: What was the nature of those assignments or those projects?*

SO: Sometimes it was research, on weather, things like that. “Hey, is it sunny today?” all that kind of stuff. Sometimes, I don’t know I can’t think of anything. The last time I remember was going for weather, rain and weather, and acid rain, things like that. It was mostly science, and history, history too.

*CK: What sort of book did you take out for the weather project?*

SO: I took out little kid’s science book, “this is why the sun shines” and stuff like that. [laughs]

*CK: So when you had that assignment was getting the book from the library \*the\* way to find that information? When you had that assignment and you needed to find out about the weather, how did the powers that be explain on how to find that information?*

SO: When I was little I found less reliance on the internet and things like that –so I was like, how to get it, you go to the library.

*CK: Nowadays that would be a little different.*

SO: Yeah, probably.

*CK: What sort of activities did you do at libraries, besides just taking out books. Did you ever go there for any other reason?*

SO: Sometimes there was story time, things like that. There was like children’s game night, something like that, sometimes we would go to that.

*CK: What sort of games did they have at the library?*

SO: They had things like telephone, where you keep saying something, each person says it, and it goes around and eventually it’s something like “I drink water” it comes out like “the elephant is gray” [laughs].

*CK: So the games were purely recreational in nature? Were they educational in any way?*

SO: Sometimes I think, I don’t remember it all, but I think sometimes they were.

*CK: Do you recall anything in your early childhood regarding libraries in which librarians tried to preach the gospel on libraries or they tried to convince visitors to use the library more?*

SO: Probably, they’d give our flyers and little booklets saying “oh this is what is at our library this week” and wanted to give home to the parents so your parents know they can come on down. [laughs]

*CK: So besides the games, did you take advantage of any library facilities or services?*

SO: [unsure] Yeah… I think [laughs]. When I was eleven or twelve I’d go there just to hang out because there was nothing better to do.

*CK: So the library was sort of a social hub in some regard? What sort of social activity was going down at the library?*

SO: Sometimes my friends would be there and we’d just hang out and talk, sometimes we’d get books, sometimes not, sometimes get movies for later on.

*CK: How did the library staff react to that?*

SO: Sometimes they’d get mad, because we’d get loud. But usually they’d just; there was a study room, so they would tell us to go in there so we wouldn’t disturb everyone else that was trying to read.

*CK: Did you ever use the computers that were at the library, in the computer room downstairs?*

SO: At Patchogue Medford?

*CK: Yeah.*

SO: Yeah, yeah I did. I only used it a few times; I always had a computer at home. I used it when I was working there mostly. [laughs]

*CK: Speaking of which, when did you first have a computer in the home?*

SO: When I was thirteen my dad worked for AAA, he worked for; he was in IT back then. He did a lot of computer stuff so he brought home one of those computers he was working on.

*CK: Before you were thirteen, did you ever use a computer?*

SO: I used a typewriter, but not a computer.

*CK: How were computers regarded in sort of everyday life back then before you had one?*

SO: Like the newest thing, like they were pretty cool like internet on phones is now. They were like the newest thing. “You should get one because it’s cool, you can do all these awesome things.”

*CK: Except back then they were like four grand… [laughs]*

SO: Yeah, that’s true. I didn’t know about that then.

*CK: When you were in the library, in a public library for instance, how would you locate books? You said before that sometimes you would ask a librarian – was there any other way in which you located books?*

SO: Sometimes I would look the number if I knew it- the call number.

*CK: How did you know the call number?*

SO: They had it on the, kind of like Pat Med does, they had it on the sides, 800 through this, they had it like that.

*CK: Did you ever use any sort of database or search programs at the library?*

SO: I use them now but I didn’t use them then, I didn’t know how to use them. [laughs]

*CK: Do you recall them existing? Were they in existence?*

SO: If they were, I didn’t know where they were…

*CK: Ok – that’s a really big point. It wasn’t something that you would naturally think about using; you would just go straight to a librarian or use the numbers.*

SO: Yeah, even now I sometimes forget about them. I’m like “oh, I can use them!” [laughs]

*CK: Compared to your peers, do you think that is common? Do you think it’s common to reference a librarian to find something?*

SO: Probably not, they are probably more likely to go to one of the computers or look up the call number online.

*CK: So what sort of relationships did your school have with the public libraries in your area? You said before that for the weather project, did you have to go to your library in thee school or was it a public library? You said that was in your school, right?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: So were there any relationships between your school and an external public library?*

SO: I don’t know actually, probably. I think there were things from Huntington Public Library in the elementary school but I don’t know the relationships.

*CK: This is a sort of a general question – how do you think your personal experiences with libraries compare to that of your peers?*

SO: I’m not sure, I think some people use them more than me. I forget about the library a lot, especially with the internet, even though I did work there I still forget. Even when I was working there I would go on the internet as opposed to going to the library because it’s, the internet is right there, instead of having to drive to the library.

*CK: Yeah that’s statistically the trend that everyone is sort of following nowadays. The library use is going down, but what has been going up recently is distance access to libraries, digital access to libraries. That is sort of the glimmer of hope but services like Wikipedia are just smashing library access. So just on another note now, I’d like to talk about your time as a page at the Patchogue Medford Library. Can you describe how you got the job?*

SO: Pretty much I applied, I went for an interview, and they tested me how well I could do the Dewey Decimal System. Would this number, 108.5 go before 107.3 or whatever? Things like that. And the alphabetical system and how to organize things, that’s how I got it.

*CK: So was understanding the Dewey Decimal System a requirement for getting the job?*

SO: No, because I actually butchered it pretty bad. [laughs] Because like I said I am pretty bad with math, and pretty bad with decimal points and all that kind of stuff but I got to know how everything went and now I’m pretty much a pro at it so…

*CK: Did you know that that was going to be involved on the entrance test?*

SO: No, I didn’t know.

*CK: So it was basically an ambush where they said “put this in Dewey Decimal?”*

SO: Yeah. [laughs]

*CK: Ok that’s interesting, were you ever orally informed that that was going to be required of you?*

SO: No. And I guess I should have known because everything is by Dewey Decimal System, that you should know it. But I didn’t think of it, I guess.

*CK: So you filed out an application, and then what happened then? Did they call you back?*

SO: Not until three or four months later, but they did eventually got back to me.

*CK: And then you came in, and took a test?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: So what were the official requirements of the job?*

SO: Like when I was there? It was organizing books, making sure that they were all in order, alphabetically also. Because a lot of time there would he numbers, and then letters right after the number. So we would have to organize it by that. And making sure all the books were all nice and neat, nice and straight, and none of them were falling off the shelves. Making sure the magazines in the back were all nice and neat and also where they should be and in year order. And for a while we did tax forms and that was pretty complex, it was like you had to get people the right tax form…

*CK: So they actually had tax forms in the library for people to take?*

SO: Yeah, they had 10-40 easys, and regular 10-40as for a while. [inaudible]

*CK: What was your experience with that, did people actually come in and take those?*

SO: [affirmative noise]. They asked for them and we had to get them because we had them in the back because would be all willy nilly and they would be everywhere, and that was difficult. [laughs]

*CK: How big was that? How big was the demand for those?*

SO: See I left there around that time. When I was there there it wasn’t that big of a demand but it was only there for two or three weeks while I was there so maybe everybody didn’t know about it, and it wasn’t quite tax time yet.

*CK: How was the public informed that you had those forms?*

SO: They wrote down those little newsletters that they send home to everyone and they gave out flyers and there were little signs, like “if you need tax forms, ask reference.”

*CK: What was the sort of patron that would come in to take those forms?*

SO: Any sort.

*CK: So it was a wide demographic?*

SO: Yeah, it was busy people or just whoever.

*CK: What about the age of the patrons?*

SO: It would range, usually it was older people, but sometimes it would be younger people.

*CK: Going back to your work as a page, what sort of training would you undertake?*

SO: They would just have me shadow someone and they showed me how to do things and showed me where things go. We had a cart of books, we had a set number of carts we had to do, we had to put back. They showed me how many we are supposed to do and “don’t forget the bottom,” things like that. [laughs]

*CK: Did you have any training that involved more theoretical knowledge of library science?*

SO: Not really.

*CK: So they never for instance said read this, and learn this? It was all sort of on the job training?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: So how many hours did you spend there a week working? Oh, before you answer that, I’d like to go back to, you said there was a certain number of carts you had to do. Was that, every page had to do the same number of carts?*

SO: It would depend on whether you were reference or circulation. I was both, so I usually had to do a cart and then go over to reference. And reference was different than circulation. Circulation was the people that put the books away. Reference was, if you needed newspapers from the archives, or if you needed tax forms, you would go there, or if you needed a newspaper that was yesterdays, we had those in the back. We’d just put the daily one. What else did reference do? [whistles] People got books mailed to them a lot, so reference would also take care of that. We’d actually walk books to the post office and people got them mailed out.

*CK: Did the library pay for the postage?*

SO: Yeah, we had a stamp thing.

*CK: What was involved in that service? The mailing of books. When would that be requested?*

SO: There was a point where I did that everyday, but then it went down to once a week. I guess now it would probably be weekly, they’d probably do that weekly.

*CK: Was that the result of people calling in and saying “I need a book”? And that was a standard service that you offered?*

SO: [affirmative noise] I think so, I think they still offer it. I’m not sure with the online stuff, they might just do that now.

*CK: Do you have any knowledge of what sort of patron was requesting that?*

SO: Probably people that couldn’t get around as well, maybe older people. Maybe wheelchair bound. Not too sure.

*CK: Going back to that, how many hours did you spend working at the library?*

SO: I worked three hour shifts usually, but sometimes I’d work six hours on Sundays. It varied from week to week a lot, but usually I’d work three or four days at three hours a day. Twelve hours, twelve hours I’d say.

*CK: The number of carts you were referring to before – if you finished your number of carts, were you done for the day?*

SO: You really were supposed to do things like fix up the books and make sure everything is fine but usually the library was fine because we’d always be doing it, so we would just relax.

*CK: So you would stay at the library and just sort of chill out basically?*

SO: [affirmative noise]

*CK: Were you ever sent home early or dismissed after you had done the day’s work?*

SO: No. There was once I was sent home early on a Sunday but that’s because they had to pay us double what we usually get because we did the double the hours so they were like “hey, get out of here!” [laughs]

*CK: How many pages were there?*

SO: Let me think. For circulation I think there were five or six of us, and for reference I think there was like four or five.

*CK: And they were all young, high school age or?*

SO: Yeah, pretty much. There were one or two older people and there was in the morning a few older women that worked, like three or four. No, there was more in circulation, there was like eight or nine. Because I forgot about the older people that worked because I didn’t work in the morning because I went to high school.

*CK: What was the compensation?*

SO: What do you mean?

*CK: What was the pay?*

SO: It started off at $6.50, something like that. It went up to almost $8.

*CK: Did your pay go up overtime?*

SO: Yep, yeah.

*CK: And how were the raises given? Was it automatic or was it based on performance?*

SO: Automatic.

*CK: So if you worked there a certain amount of time you were basically guaranteed to get a raise. Did you ever experience or observe disciplinary action by your superiors?*

SO: Yeah [laughs]

*CK: How did that go? [laughs]*

SO: Well we were allowed to listen to music while putting books away and things like that. And I had my music on and I didn’t hear my boss calling me. And he was all like “What are you doing?!?” [laughs] and I just looked at him and went “huh?” and I had no idea what was going on. And he was all like “OH, you don’t hear me” but he was all really mad the rest of the day, even though… [laughs]

*CK: Was that your experience with your boss? Was he a sort of hot head, or?*

SO: No he really wasn’t. He was actually really calm, really good – I guess he was just having an off day. [laughs]

*CK: Did you ever observe more formal disciplinary action?*

SO: Yeah, a few people who were circulation pages that were really slacking off, they were let go. But I didn’t ever see it firsthand.

*CK: Ok. What were your typical social experiences with your co-workers?*

SO: Most of my co-workers and I got along pretty good. There were a few we just didn’t get along due to personalities I guess. Because there were a lot of people from different groups in high school who would go and work there – cheerleader type people, and I didn’t get along with those people in high school.

*CK: What was the work climate? Would you say it was professional or more casual?*

SO: It was professional for the most part.

*CK: So for those cheerleader types that you referred to, what was your work experience with them? Did you just avoid them, or how did that come into play while working?*

SO: We eventually got along…

*CK: Your love of books brought you together! [enthusiastic, laughter]*

SO: Yeah! It must have been. We eventually got along. At first they wouldn’t talk to me. I was like “ok, get over yourself!” They did.

*CK: What was the nature of your relationship with your superiors?*

SO: I felt I pretty much could go for them for things…

*CK: Who was your superior?*

SO: IT was people who had been there longer, and there was a supervisor of circulation and a supervisor of reference, and a supervisor over the whole thing, and it kept going up I guess until it go to the main librarian who actually I really don’t know who is…

*CK: Were all of those people your superior or did you have someone who was your immediate boss?*

SO: My immediate boss would probably be the supervisor of reference and of circulation.

*CK: And those were librarians?*

SO: Yeah [laughs]

*CK: The way the hierarchy was, was it possible for someone higher up than say your immediate supervisor, was it possible for them to micromanage what he was doing and to give you orders?*

SO: Yeah. Yeah.

*CK: Did that happen a lot?*

SO: Not really, pretty much it was trusted that everyone knew what they were doing, and knew their jobs.

*CK: Was there ever an occasion in which the pages were used for non-declared jobs, like “hey go get me this” or anything like that?*

SO: Not really; the only thing we did that wasn’t really part of the job description was bring the books to the post office but that wasn’t really a big… I consider that part of the job because someone has to bring them there.

*CK: So you never did anything like brought them food or anything like that?*

SO: No, I mean we would do it just because, but not because “hey, you have to do this.”

*CK: So speaking of the hierarchy there, do you have any sort of reflections about how effective it was, or anything confusing about it?*

SO: Yeah, sometimes. Like I didn’t know who was who at first; it took me a while to learn who was who and who was my actual boss…

*CK: Did they have identification?*

SO: Maybe if I asked to see it

*CK: But they did have any name cards?*

SO: No, they didn’t have any name cards or anything like that. It even took me awhile to learn names, because there was a lot of… you wouldn’t think it from just looking at a library, but there’s a lot of people.

*CK: You mentioned before that you didn’t even know who the head librarian was [both laugh] was this sort of like Cobra Commander, this dark figure that was a sealed off in a dark room, or? [laughs]*

SO: No. [laughs] It’s funny though. I mean I’m sure I saw them around but I wasn’t sure which person exactly was the head librarian. [laughs]

*CK: I would presume then that they didn’t have much interaction with the pages?*

SO: They did, but it was more like “oh, you’re doing a good job” and things like that, or “did you remember to do this?” not really anything “hi, I’m big library lady or librarian man.” [laughs]

*CK: Did you know if it was a man or a woman? [laughs]*

SO: No, no. [laughs]

*CK: Were digital and computer technologies pivotal to the operations of the library?*

SO: Pivotal?

*CK: Were they important ; for instance did the librarians use computers on a daily basis?*

SO: Yes, yes – because that’s how we checked in a lot of the books. Like when we were kids it was the little cards with dates, now it’s like a little scan thing which would go on the fritz a lot.

*CK: What about the archives, when you were there were they still using the microfilm?*

SO: Yeah, they were [laughs]. It would get stuck all the time.

*CK: Were there any other technologies that were being adapted at that time that were replacing microfilm?*

SO: Yeah, there were little cards of where to find the newspapers, and were putting that on the microfilm. Like that really, really old ones – from the early 1900s, that were just sitting in a file cabinet, we were putting those on microfilm.

*CK: So the cards would have instructions on how to find the original newspaper?*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: Was that preferred to the librarians there, they didn’t want people using the microfilm?*

SO: No, they were fine with people using the microfilm. It’s just, I guess, so much, they didn’t get to it.

*CK: Did the public have access to the original newspapers?*

SO: Yeah, they did. I think they did.

*CK: So could they go and just take it without anyone?*

SO: No, they had to ask. Because it was in a file cabinet, and it was in the back too.

*CK: How were those newspapers stored?*

SO: It was in a big file cabinet, kinda with folders, things like that.

*CK: This is really reaching back, but do you remember the type of folders that they used?*

SO: I think it was like a manila envelope things, no it was different…

*CK: Was it brown, was it like a dark brown?*

SO: Yeah, I think so. [laughs]

*CK: Did they ever talk about the sort of folders they used or anything like that?*

SO: No, not really [unsure].

*CK: It seems like a stupid topic, but the reason why is because folders like this [crinkling], it’s acidic. And it will burn through paper over time. So if I were to leave this in here for like a year, and come back, these pages would be yellow.*

SO: Ohh, really? That does explain a lot, that makes sense.

*CK: So they never talked about that then? They never talked about preservation?*

SO: No, not with us. They might have discussed that amongst each other, but…

*CK: It never came up to the pages?*

SO: No.

*CK: What role did the internet play, other than just computers, what role did the internet specifically play in the operation of the library?*

SO: It would have a lot of books on it; I think then they were starting to put the books on the internet. They were starting to do some e-readers, and they were starting to do where you can check it out on the computer. But it wasn’t as popular as it now. I know it wasn’t that long ago, but it was still newer then. Also, a lot of the kids would come in and they would use the computer, so at night we would get a lot of teenagers there, which was fine.

*CK: Was that in the computer room or the general floor of the library?*

SO: In the general library.

*CK: I should have asked this before, what years were you active there?*

SO: 2004-2007.

*CK: So, that wasn’t too long ago – but they were still in the process then, of moving into, they weren’t fully digital yet then.*

SO: [affirmative noise]. I mean at the end they were ,everything was pretty much on the computer. But in the beginning I guess it was slow moving.

*CK: Did that send any shockwaves through the library? Were the librarians hard to adapt to that, or do you recall any thoughts that they had on the whole change?*

SO: Some people who were like “ohh you’re messing everything up” but some people were like “ohh it makes everything easier” – it depended on who you talked to. [laughs]

*CK: I guess it was sort of like a mixed reaction…*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: Were they any people that were really resistant to change, any hardliners who were like [dramatic voice] “No! We’re not going to digitize!” Did that ever happen? [laughs]*

SO: No, I don’t think they had a choice in the matter.

*CK: Oh, that’s a good question – how there the changes coming down?*

SO: I’m not too sure [laughs]. I just knew that I was at the bottom end, and like “oh, ok, this is what we’re doing, alright.” [laughs]

*CK: Did it seem like your superiors, they were also powerless?*

SO: To certain things like that, yeah. You’re going to do this, and too bad. Certain ways to check out books and things like that, and how we would keep track of all the patrons, you had no choice in that, you just did it, “too bad”.

*CK: Did the library budget changes ever affect your work?*

SO: Not mine personally, but it did affect other people.

*CK: Could you elaborate on that?*

SO: I’m not really sure how it affected, but it didn’t affect me or my pay. It didn’t make it so I had to do more, or less. It was just “you do this still.” [laughs]

*CK: When Steve Levy [county executive] came into power, it was right around then, right? When did he come into power, 2007 or something? I know when he did come into power, he did do some cuts to library funding, it was a thing that was sort of controversy. Was that visible to you? Do you ever recall your collections shrinking, any computers disappearing, things like that?*

SO: In 2007, right after I left, I’m not sure but I’m pretty sure that’s when they started renovating the library, like they changed everything over and now I don’t know where everything is…

*CK: Oh yeah, I know, I went in there a couple of weeks ago and it’s like “woah, this is way different” [laughs]*

SO: Yeah, they made everything purple and strange colored. Its ok, it’s better than the white dreary blah. [laughs]

*CK: So I guess the fluctuations in funding didn’t really have an effect you would say?*

SO: No.

*CK: What experiences do you recall with the towns people? Not the library patrons, but random people who happened to be in the library?*

SO: We’d get a lot of people that, for a lack of a better word, were obviously homeless. And we’d get a lot of, again, for lack of a better word, crazies. You know? Most of the time they were pretty harmless, but sometimes we’d get fights that break out in front of the library. IT would never be in the library but it would be in front of the library, actually there was one fight in the library, but it was in the doorways in the front. We’d get a lot of teenagers who would hang out in the front, and a lot of people were afraid to come in because teenagers scare people for some reason. We’d also get a lot of Hispanics too, and a lot of mothers with little kids. Mostly everyone got along pretty well. There wasn’t anybody really “ehh, that guy’s creepy” there wasn’t anyone really scary most of the time.

*CK: Did you have any experience with any sort of drug use in the library?*

SO: I tried not to pay attention to that, but probably. I didn’t see anything first hand, but probably. Actually, I did see people drinking a lot. Drinking beers.

*CK: In the library itself?*

SO: Yeah. But most of the time the security guards were on top of that. They were like “listen you got to go outside and drink, you can’t be drinking in the library.” There was people that would come in drunk and come in there high probably, but…

*CK: What was the security situation, how many security guards were there?*

SO: There was two, at least two, sometimes more.

*CK: Were they uniformed?*

SO: Yeah, they wore red thingies, red coats, red pants, red khakis sometimes.

*CK: So they were basically British Red Coats or something?*

SO: Yeah. [laughs] They were all from correctional facilities and stuff like that, some were police officers, trained I guess.

*CK: What was your interaction with them?*

SO: They were always good with me, they were always nice. If I got out late and it was dark they would walk me to my car. They would always help me. Upon occasion there were creepy people, if there was creepy people they would be like “alright you got to get out of here.” One time we had someone sleeping, I guess a homeless person, in the back of the library by where we had to go in and out of the back rooms. We had somebody sleeping there. I said something to one of the security guards, because we can’t have people sleeping in the library. I mean it’s cool if you want to sleep on one of the desks, but you can’t break out your sleeping bag…

*CK: [laughs] Is that what the person was doing?!?*

SO: Yeah, there was a blanket, pillow everything. And I wasn’t about to wake them up myself [laughs]. I was like “ok… I can’t put books away over here because somebody has decided to make a bed” [laughs]

*CK: It was inside the library you said? Wow…*

SO: Yeah, we get some silly people. Upon occasion we’d get people, you know? We’d get people who hang out in the back over there. You know where the Q section is? We’d get people hanging out over there and a lot times, you’re alone back there. There’s nobody back there. The patrons are all in the front, the rest of the patrons. And the security guards are by the door. So you’re like “alrigghttt…” [laughs]

*CK: Was the environment sometimes intimidating or sort of scary?*

SO: Yeah, sometimes, depending on what time of day it was, and depending on who was hanging out in the library.

*CK: Did the library staff… they basically allowed them to be there, if they weren’t library patrons?*

SO: As long as they weren’t causing any trouble or anything.

*CK: Did the library staff ever reflect or make comment on that situation?*

SO: Yeah. If there was someone hanging around and bothering any of the staff, we’d tell the security guards and they would be like “you’re bothering the staff, you gotta get out.”

*CK: So you mentioned in the pre-interview that we had, that before you were a page, you didn’t really know the variety of the services and the complexity of libraries? Can you just discuss that for little a bit? After you were a page, and after your experience as a page, what did you really learn about libraries, what changed?*

SO: It changed my perceptions on how libraries are run. I thought “magic lady, brings me magic book, yay!” And I knew that there was much more to it than that, and there wasn’t just one librarian who was magical keeper of all the books, it was a bunch of people who had to know where the books were and know the system, it was actually a pretty complex system, not just a simple “this book goes here.” Things like that I learned. Even keeping newspapers and things like that can get pretty complex sometimes. Even though its just by day and year, sometimes it can get overwhelming I guess.

*CK: Were you aware that libraries even had newspapers or other types of media besides books before you were a page?*

SO: I don’t know. I don’t know. Yeah, I knew they had newspapers, I knew they had magazines.

*CK: What about audiobooks and things like that, and cassettes?*

SO: I didn’t know about that. I knew about movies and stuff like that. I didn’t know about audiobooks and stuff like that though.

*CK: I think you made a comment about this before, the library was definitely a source for getting movies when you were younger? Do you recall why you went there, why would you choose to go there to get movies?*

SO: Because it was free, and it was close.

*CK: Ok, same thing with my family. This is just a sort of opinion question; do you think it’s important to learn about the complexity of a library? Do you think the awareness and the knowledge you gain as a page is sort of relevant to people?*

SO: Yeah because it opens your eyes to a lot of things that are available to you. If you don’t know how things are running and how the library works, you don’t know a lot of things available to you that you can actually get access to. I would have never known about microfilm and things like that. That I can actually get things like newspapers from the 1900s from a library, I would have never known that. I knew that you could get it from bigger libraries, like the New York City Public Library or something like that. But I didn’t know you could get it from your local library.

*CK: Do you think that people would benefit from that wealth of knowledge?*

SO: Yeah I think they would because even people in college that have access to internets [laughs] I think they would benefit a lot from it. Because sometimes it’s just easier to just be like “can you help me find this” instead of Google “help me find something” from Wikipedia, and you get all these illegitimate sites and things like that.

*CK: I’d like to change topics here a little bit, I want to talk about information retrieval and I want to talk about the topic of locating and using information in your life. What are the common services or sources that you reference when you’re curious about a topic? You mentioned Google, are there any other sources that you would normally reference other than the internet? Anything, from TV, to people that you know, anything that you could possibly think of.*

SO: I was just going to say, I would ask my friends about it, like “what do you know on this?” or I’d ask my mom, I’d ask around, people that I work with, usually people, I find that sometimes they are a pretty good source. And then sometimes I do research on my own, through TV, to actually asking professionals, through email if I can find it, or through the phone, depending on what it is. If I’m trying to find information on Ireland or something like that, I’d ask people that went there, or I’d ask tour guides, things like that.

*CK: So in your everyday life you actually reference a wide variety of information sources then? Would you say that those things that you listed, would you say that any of them are more prominent?*

SO: I usually go to friends and the internet, yeah. If I’m just trying to find something on music or something like that, I would go to friends and use them.

*CK: So when you do speak to your friends, what qualifies them as being information sources? Like, who do you choose over someone else?*

SO: It depends on the subject. One of my friends he is really into music; he has like every CD known to man. If I ever had a question about that I would go to him. Another one of my friends is into science, and he’s really knowledgeable on that, and if I had a question about that, I’d go to him and I’d be like “what do you know about this?” And even like plants, stuff like that, because he’s good at that kind of stuff, and I’m like I have no idea, “it’s a maple tree I guess” meanwhile it’s a piece of grass. [laughs]

*CK: Understood. In your higher education career, can you walk me through how you would conduct research? This is for something more formal like having to write a paper.*

SO: I’m actually doing a research paper on Into The World, I never read the book, and I just recently watched the movie. [laughs] It was not very enjoyable to me. But, whatever. I mean interesting story but I alright, I get it: you died in the wilderness, sorry. [laughs]

*CK: You drove out into the wilderness and you died, congrats. [laughs]*

SO: You were pretty ill prepared; no offense but I don’t think you’re crazy, I don’t think your weird or whatever, I think you were stupid [laughs]. I’m supposed to do a paper on it: “do you think he’s crazy or do you think he was a hero?” I think neither, I think he’s stupid [laughs]. I talked to my teacher about that, she’s like “you can do that actually” but I’m pretty much on my own, she gave other people “I think he’s a hero” little articles they can look up. Things like that.

*CK: Where?*

SO: On, what are they called, database websites. People who did Cliffnotes, things like that. Not Cliffnotes but…

*CK: You mean online journals: like InfoTrac, EbscoHost and stuff like that?*

SO: Yeah, yeah.

*CK: So what are you going to do?*

SO: I’m doing my own articles, I’m looking them up myself.

*CK: Are you looking for those online?*

SO: Yeah, pretty much, I’m looking at those online. And I’m even looking in books, like “how he could prepared himself” and things like that.

*CK: SO you did reference some physical books then? Where did you get those books from?*

SO: I got them from the library [laughs].

*CK: Was it this library [Callahan at Saint Joseph’s College] ?*

SO: No, I got them from Pat Med. I got some trail guide books and stuff like that.

*CK: So you have your sources, your online journal articles and your books from the library, what do you do then? In conducting research and writing a paper?*

SO: I look through them and see what information is relevant and then what’s good and kind of take out of that, put it into my own words, and “bam I got a paper” [laughs].

*CK: Would you say that is typical for you?*

SO: For me, yeah.

*CK: So just to re-iterate you normally would look online for articles, then you would reference books for contextual information?*

SO: [affirmative noise].

*CK: What has been your experience with using those online databases?*

SO: Sometimes they give you a lot of good stuff, but other times it’s like “I wasn’t asking for any of this” You get things like, you look up plastic usage and you’ll get something totally ridiculous like “this building was made of plastic,” “Whaat?” [laughs] “Ok…”

*CK: So you use the search then, you use the search function?*

SO: [affirmative noise].

*CK: Do you recall any of the databases you use by name?*

SO: No actually.

*CK: That’s fine. How do you access the databases?*

SO: I usually go through this library’s website because they have like free databases…

*CK: The Callahan Library?*

SO: Yeah, they have free database websites and I was going through there and I was going through Pat Med’s also but they didn’t have many articles. They had a lot of e-readers but it was mostly just giving me Into The Wild over and over so…

*CK: Ok. So has that been your experience in your past? Have you done this sort of research in the past? At Suffolk [Community College] for instance?*

SO: No, I wouldn’t do it the same way. I did it mostly using books. The internet. Not database though.

*CK: What has compelled you to start using online databases? It is something that the teachers are requesting or why are you using those now?*

SO: I pretty much just found out about it [laughs]. So I was like “oh, that’s pretty cool.”

*CK: So you didn’t know that they existed up until recently?*

SO: I guess I knew they existed but I didn’t know you could get them without paying.

*CK: So how were you introduced to those?*

SO: They showed us at the library. They had where we had to do a tour thing, and they showed us how to do it, and how to use it.

*CK: Is that when after you applied and everything? Was that part of a class or sort of a general thing?*

SO: That was a general thing. Actually you can’t use the gym for recreational purposes or do any of the free classes without a tour of the building. I guess they don’t want you stealing things. I don’t know.

*CK: I had to go through the same thing, so, yeah. It’s very strange. Do you like using the journals?*

SO: [affirmative noise].

*CK: Do you find that there is better information or worse information?*

SO: It depends on what I was looking for. There’s a lot on psychology. If I wanted to do a paper on psychology there is awesome material for it. But if I wanted to do something on, certain subjects are harder than others. Sometimes you find really weirdly worded ones too, things that you read, it’s like reading philosophy, you have to decipher everything.

*CK: It’s very technical?*

SO: Yeah, there you go – good word.

*CK: What would you consider to be good information when you are conducting research, so when you find something and it’s good, why is it good?*

SO: Things that are factual, things that pertain to what I’m looking for, what I typed into the little search box. Things that I can use.

*CK: When you mean “use” do you mean that you’re going to take what you found and use it support something specific?*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: So if you try to find something for a paper for instance, you use that source to prove your point? Is it something else?*

SO: Yeah, that’s pretty much it.

*CK: Alright, so do you do anything else as far as research is concerned or is that basically it?*

SO: Books, internet, that’s basically it. Sometimes people. I think they have information, sometimes they don’t.

*CK: Nowadays how often do you visit a library or otherwise access library resources?*

SO: A lot now. I mean that I’m doing research paper with the database, I do almost daily. Before that, during the summer, I hardly researched anything or did anything at the library.

*CK: So would you say that it comes in handy when you are doing schoolwork mainly?*

SO: Yeah, or when I want to find information.

*CK: How often do you use this library, or college libraries, versus public libraries?*

SO: I use the public library more often, only because I just started going here I guess.

*CK: So is it matter of just being familiar with the public library? Even though that it’s purple and weird? [laughs]*

SO: Yeah, pretty much. [laughs]

*CK: Have you ever utilized a librarian for reference questions? Have you ever asked a librarian regarding research?*

SO: I don’t think so; I don’t think I have ever done that actually. It’s a good idea though.

*CK: Were you aware that that’s a service that librarians offer?*

SO: No, actually, I think no. [laughs]

*CK: Have you ever contacted a library for any information retrieval needs? Have you ever asked a librarian a question such as why is something the way it is, or what are the movie times, anything like that? A question regarding information?*

SO: No, I don’t think so.

*CK: You said that you used the online journals, have you ever used physical journals, periodicals; peer reviewed periodicals?*

SO: Yeah, but they are harder to find.

*CK: Those that you did find where did you access them?*

SO: Mostly at the library.

*CK: So you’re talking about Pat Med library?*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: So that library has peer reviewed, academic journals?*

SO: Yeah, they have some of them. They don’t have a very big collection, but they have some of them.

*CK: What sort of resources have your professors specifically suggested for finding information?*

SO: Mostly the internet, library books…

*CK: So your professors actually advocated using the internet for research?*

SO: Yeah, they want you to check the legitimacy of websites, but they do.

*CK: What have they said about how to use the internet? Any sort of restrictions or advice? It has to be legitimate, but in what way?*

SO: Yeah, don’t use Wikipedia. Try not to to use Google too much, things like that. Simple things.

*CK: Did they ever explain why you shouldn’t use Wikipedia?*

SO: One of them did. It’s all just, people can write whatever they want in it, whenever they want.

*CK: Anything else?*

SO: Pretty much that’s what they said.

*CK: What about Google? What did they say was wrong with Google?*

SO: A lot of time they come up with weird things, you can write like Poland Springs coming up with I don’t even know what, porn or whatever [laughs].

*CK: Poland Spring porn, that would definitely be interesting. [laughs] So did they ever specifically list any resources or websites that they wanted you to use?*

SO: Actually, yeah my criminal justice class does that a lot. They want us to use FBI websites and stuff like that. And the NYPD website. What’s the other one? I forgot what it was, but it was the NYPD com on it - there was another police website they wanted us to use but I don’t remember what it was.

*CK: So it seems that even though your professors say that Wikipedia and Google are no nos, it seems that in your everyday life you use those a lot from what you have said so far.*

SO: [affirmative noise].

*CK: So do you think that there is a disconnect between the academic professionals and most people? If you wanted to read up on some topic, and you read Wikipedia, would you consider that information to be false or would you consider it to be reliable?*

SO: I would consider it to be hearsay. If I were to ask one of my friends “I’m not sure if that’s true or not”, ok, I heard this but I don’t know if its true. Usually when I use Wikipedia I just use it to get a background on something. What did I use it for recently? I actually used it for Into The Wild to see what it was about, which, how much can you screw that up, you know? [laughs] Things like that.

*CK: So you use it for basic information but you wouldn’t use it to reinforce specific claims?*

SO: No.

*CK: Do you have any knowledge of the Wikipedia editing guidelines or requirements?*

SO: No, not really.

*CK: Are there any resources that professors have explicitly forbidden, that you cannot use?*

SO: Probably, none that I can think of right now, but probably.

*CK: You mentioned before that you use Google, you mentioned before that you use Wikipedia, I want to return to this again because this is what most people use, it’s sort of the standard way of getting information nowadays. What are your feelings about those services? You did say that it is hearsay. But do you think it’s ethical to turn other people onto those services? Would you tell a niece, if they wanted to learn something, would you show them Wikipedia?*

SO: I’m not sure, it depends on what they wanted to learn about. If they wanted to learn about something specific, something that you need the actual facts for, like how to do a math problem or something like that, something that you need the actual facts and there is only one way to actually do it. If they needed that I would try to refer them to a website that actually has the legitimate things.

*CK: Would you find it through Google?*

SO: Yeah I would. I would look for a teacher’s website that actually has the right way to do it. And hopefully I would know the right way to do it.

*CK: Do you ever pay attention to the end of a URL, the domain name of a website?*

SO: Yeah I do. .gov is the government, org is the government, net who knows what that is? [laughs]

*CK: Would you consider an .org domain to be reliable?*

SO: Not necessarily.

*CK: Why not?*

SO: It depends on what the source – doesn’t the KKK have .org? I think they do, but?

*CK: Yeah, anyone can register a .org.*

SO: Yeah, it just means organization, it doesn’t mean legitimate one. [laughs] Right? I don’t know. I would think .gov would be pretty reliable because not everyone can do that. And maybe .edu, even though a lot of time a even just students, even like little 4th grade students can make that up, gotta be careful with those too I guess.

*CK: Ok. So…*

SO: I don’t know who, am I right or wrong?

*CK: There’s no right or wrong. [both laugh]*

SO: Oh, ok! [laughs]

*CK: All the information is giving me is extremely valuable, there’s no right or wrong. Yeah, sorry, I don’t mean it to seem like a quiz or something. [laughs] How often do you read or absorb information recreationally?*

SO: All the time, I do it all the time. I just heard something about, oh the aliens in Manhattan, I just looked that up in Google, you know what I’m talking about?

*CK: No I don’t know, when?*

SO: October something, 12th I think? There were UFOs over Manhattan, there was like four or five lights over Manhattan. I looked that up, I looked up the news broadcast, News 12 and stuff. So I do that whenever I hear about things, I’m like “oh cool, aliens in Manhattan.”

*CK: So did you find that information on the News 12 website?*

SO: Not immediately, I saw it on people’s Facebooks statuses actually. [laughs]

*CK: Would you say that Facebook is often an indicator of current events, or a news outlet in some regard?*

SO: Yeah! A lot of time it is. I wouldn’t know what is going on half of the time, because I don’t watch the news, I don’t like the news. A lot of times they are trying to portray one thing to you when it is not always accurate. Not that everybody else isn’t trying to portray something else to you, but, yeah…

*CK: So how would you say you learn about the news then? You see things on Facebook, what else?*

SO: People will tell me things, or occasionally I will read the newspapers.

*CK: So word of mouth and exposure to random newspapers that you see?*

SO: [affirmative noise].

*CK: In what ways do you access the information recreationally other than the internet? Do you read books for instance?*

SO: [affirmative noise].

*CK: Have you ever used an e-book?*

SO: yeah, I actually bought one for one of my classes.

*CK: You bought an e-book? How are you reading the e-book?*

SO: Just on the computer, and sometimes I print it out, certain pages I need.

*CK: Is it a PDF?*

SO: Yeah.

*CK: Have you ever had any access with audiobooks, or podcasts?*

SO: When I was younger. No podcasts.

*CK: What are your experiences with those sort of media? E-books and audiobooks, would you consider that to be a good way of digesting information?*

So: Yeah, they’re pretty much as reliable as regular books, so yeah.

*CK: What about the experience of actually accessing that information?*

SO: I think it’s pretty good – you can do it from the comfort of your own home, you don’t have to go anywhere, you can read it whenever you want. You don’t have to carry about a physical book. Especially for people who have laptops, you can just put it on their laptop.

*CK: How do you feel about reading off a screen?*

SO: I do it all the time, so it’s nothing.

*CK: Would you say it’s the same as reading from a physical book?*

SO: No, it’s not the same. Because a physical book you can adjust the lighting so you’re not blinding yourself. You also don’t have that really white bright background. The text sometimes is easier to read in a physical book, but sometimes its harder because it’s a lot smaller.

*CK: What do you prefer?*

SO: It depends on what I’m reading, if I’m reading factual stuff, I prefer it on the computer. But if I’m reading just a regular recreational book I prefer it in a book.

*CK: In a given sitting, how long do you spend with a book?*

SO: Again it depends on what it is, but it can range anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour.

*CK: How often do you reference textbooks?*

SO: All the time for school, I’m always in a textbook. [laughs]

*CK: And what are your experience with those?*

SO: Certain ones I find really easy to read, other ones are all over the place. Depends on the author, depends on the subject. I’m actually having trouble with my criminal justice book right now because it’s all over the place and my teacher is all over the place too. He’s good in what he does but a lot of time he’ll say a little bit on a subject, then the book will say a whole big thing, he’ll get to that later on and he wants you to know it in the way he says it, not in the way the book says it, so it’s all like “ughhh what do I do?”

*CK: So on that note, when do you tend to use a textbook?*

SO: I use it in class, I use it outside of class to elaborate on notes and things that I jotted down. Sometimes I use it for definitions, stuff like that.

*CK: And how does the information in a textbook compare to information in Wikipedia or from a journal?*

SO: It depends. The journals tend to be more opinionated on what the author feels while the textbook is more factual and Wikipedia, that can be weird sometimes, people can write bipolar is caused by a bug in your head and your “Wait a minute, no it’s not!” [laughs]

*CK: What about encyclopedias, ever use encyclopedias?*

SO: Not that often, no.

*CK: When was the last time you used one, do you remember?*

SO: I was young the last time I used one, I don’t remember what up look up in an encyclopedia. [laughs]

*CK: Have you ever used the Encyclopedia Britannica online or anything? Ever used one online?*

SO: I used that, but not for much.

*CK: That’s probably salt in the wounds of those people because they used to be such a big deal and now no one even cares about encyclopedias. [laughs] I don’t feel sad for them, I I think they should just, you know, I don’t care.*

SO: [laughs]

*CK: We’re nearing the end of the interview, this is a lot of great information. DO you feel that there is anything I forgot to ask, anything that you’d like to add at all?*

SO: No, you did a pretty good job.

*CK: Well, I thank you very much for your time. It’s a great boon to our program and the information will be greatly received, thank you very much.*

SO: It’s no problem. Thank you.