

## Panel A2

Sala delle Colonne 1

### Women in Animation: The Contemporary International Context



**Linda Simensky**

#### Women as Cartoon Creators

Since the 1990s, many cartoons on cable television have been creator-driven cartoons. Historically, most of these creators have been men. While the industry has not actively discouraged women from creating cartoons, there have been very few cartoons created by women that have been selected to go to series. In turn, this has impacted the lead characters, as many if not most of the main characters throughout cartoon animation are male. For example, while Preschool television has both male and female creators, and the lead characters tend to represent both genders. However, television cartoons for viewers between the ages of six and 11 generally are created by men and most frequently have males as main characters. Until recently, there were very few female creators for this age group. Over the last few years, there have been some improvements in this area. Cartoon Network premiered *Steven Universe*, created by Rebecca Sugar, and Disney Channel premiered *Star vs. the Forces of Evil*, created by Daron Nefcy. Cartoon Network will soon add *Summer Camp Island*, created by Julia Pott.

With this paper, I propose to take a look at the television cartoon development process and share current insights regarding the goals of development executives. I will also look at the cartoon series created by women and capture the experiences of these creators. I will research the experiences of women who are currently pitching cartoons for the 6-11 age group, and will speak with current cable network executives. I will also consider the digital platforms Netflix and Amazon and their similarities to cable.

As a former development executive at both Nickelodeon (1986 – 1995) and Cartoon Network (1995 – 2003) and as the current head of children's programming for PBS, I will be able to add some historical knowledge of the development process as well as current practices.

#### Biography

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Linda Simensky is the Vice President of Children's Programming at PBS, the public broadcaster in the US, where she oversees series production and development on series ranging from *CURIOUS GEORGE* and *DANIEL TIGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD* to *PEG + CAT* and *SPLASH AND BUBBLES*. Before joining PBS, she worked in animation development and production at both Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. She teaches Animation History at the University of Pennsylvania and has written about various topics in television animation for a number of academic books.

