

Independent Women: Behind-the-Scenes Representation on Festival Films

by Martha M. Lauzen, Ph.D.

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Women are more likely to work as directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers on documentaries than on narrative features screening at high-profile film festivals in the United States. In 2011-2012, women accounted for 31% of behind-the-scenes individuals working on documentaries compared with 23% on narrative features.

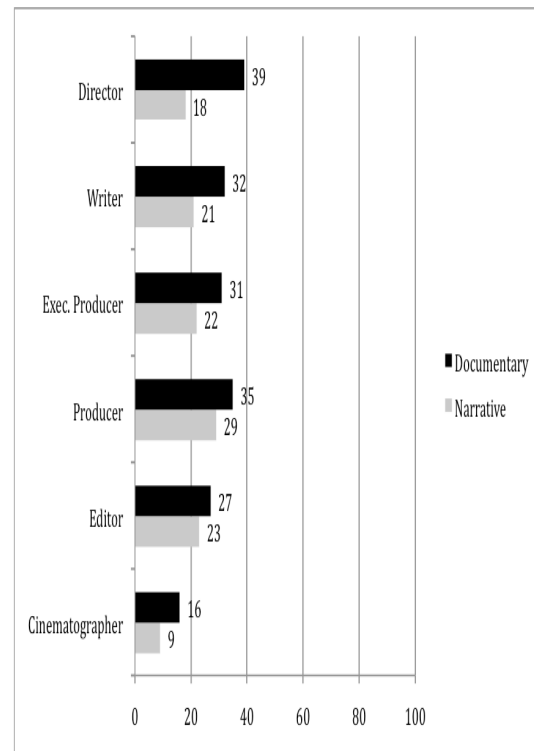
This difference is especially pronounced in the directing role. Women comprised 39% of directors working on documentaries and 18% of directors working on narrative features (see Figure 1). The percentage of women directing independently produced documentaries (39%) is stunning when compared to the percentage of women directing top grossing films in 2011 (5%).

The following summary provides employment figures for domestically and independently produced feature-length documentaries and narrative films screening from August 2011 to August 2012 at the following festivals: AFI Fest; Ann Arbor Film Festival; Atlanta Film Festival; Austin Film Festival; Chicago International Film Festival; Cinequest Film Festival; Cleveland International Film Festival; Florida Film Festival; Hamptons International Film

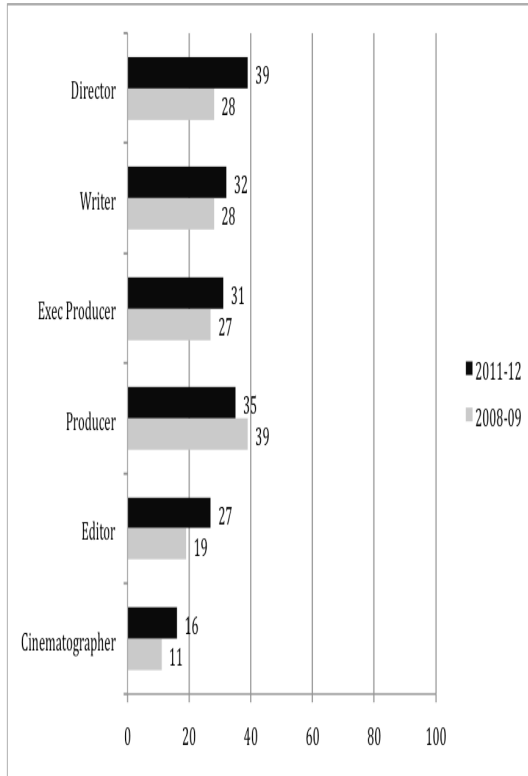
Festival; Los Angeles Film Festival; Nashville Film Festival; New Directors, New Films; Palm Springs International Film Festival; Rhode Island International Film Festival; St. Louis International Film Festival; San Francisco International Film Festival; Santa Barbara International Film Festival; Seattle International Film Festival; Slamdance Film Festival; Sundance Film Festival; SXSW Film Festival; Telluride Film Festival; Tribeca Film Festival.

This report also provides comparisons of the data gathered for the present study (2011-2012) and data collected from a similar study in 2008-2009.

*Figure 1.
Comparison of Percentages of Women
Working on Independent Documentaries
vs. Narrative Films in 2011-2012*



*Figure 2.
Comparison of Percentages of Women
Working by Role on Documentaries
in 2008-09 and 2011-12*



Findings for Documentaries

•Women fare best as directors (39%), followed by producers (35%), writers (32%), executive producers (31%), editors (27%), and cinematographers (16%) (see Figure 2).

•The percentages of women working as directors, writers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers on documentaries has increased from 2008-2009 to 2011-2012, whereas the percentage of women working as producers has decreased.

•Women comprised 39% of directors working on documentaries screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012,

compared with 28% in 2008-2009.

•Women accounted for 32% of writers working on documentaries screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 28% in 2008-2009.

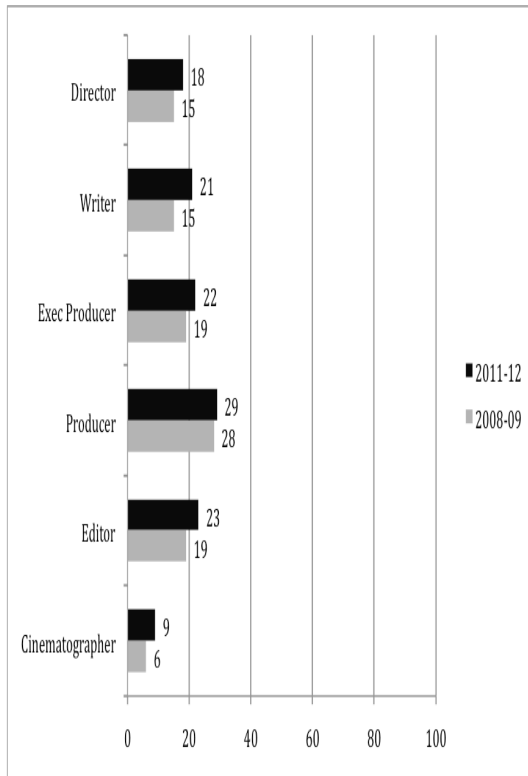
•Women comprised 31% of executive producers working on documentaries screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 27% in 2008-2009.

•Women accounted for 35% of producers working on documentaries screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 39% in 2008-2009.

•Women comprised 27% of editors working on documentaries screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 19% in 2008-2009.

•Women accounted for 16% of cinematographers working on documentaries screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 11% in 2008-2009.

*Figure 3.
Comparison of Percentages of Women
Working by Role on Narrative Features
in 2008-09 and 2011-12*



Findings for Narrative Features

•Overall, women fare best as producers (29%), followed by editors (23%), executive producers (22%), writers (21%), directors (18%), and cinematographers (9%) (see Figure 3).

•The percentages of women working as directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers increased from 2008-2009 to 2011-2012.

•Women accounted for 18% of directors working on narrative features screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 15% in 2008-2009.

•Women comprised 21% of writers

working on narrative features screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 15% in 2008-2009.

•Women accounted for 22% of executive producers working on narrative features screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 19% in 2008-2009.

•Women comprised 29% of producers working on narrative features screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 28% in 2008-2009.

•Women accounted for 23% of editors working on narrative features screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 19% in 2008-2009.

•Women comprised 9% of cinematographers working on narrative features screening at the festivals considered in 2011-2012, compared with 6% in 2008-2009.

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