Celebrating 60 Years of Barbie: Empowering Women in Communication
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Since her introduction in 1959, Barbie has had over 200 careers, including as a news reporter and a game developer – but she had a long way to go toward respect as a woman in the tech sector.

In 1992, one of the phrases uttered by Teen Talk Barbie was “math is hard!”

Following the launch of Computer Engineer Barbie in 2010, the book Barbie: I Can Be a Computer Engineer included a storyline where Barbie required the help of boys to fix her computer.

In 2014, creative public responses to Barbie’s portrayal as unable to code included the “feminist hacker Barbie” meme generator and my feminist remix of the book, eventually resulting in Mattel apologizing.
(https://caseyfiesler.com/2014/11/18/barbie-remixed-i-really-can-be-a-computer-engineer/)

In 2016, Mattel released Game Developer Barbie, after consulting with real women game developers.

In 2018, Mattel released Robotics Engineer Barbie, along with a book that teaches kids about computational thinking. Because of my previous criticism, they asked me to consult on this book and write the introduction.

Mattel is in an important position when it comes to the portrayal of women in the workforce, because Barbie can be an early dominant media image for girls. The history of Mattel with portrayals of women in tech fields has been fraught, but ends with a story of “failing forward.” This story also showcases the power of creative criticism, and how loud voices can help affect change even for large companies.