



## What's New This Season

### ***Eureka Day* About Vaccines and Public Health to Open at Manhattan Theatre Club**

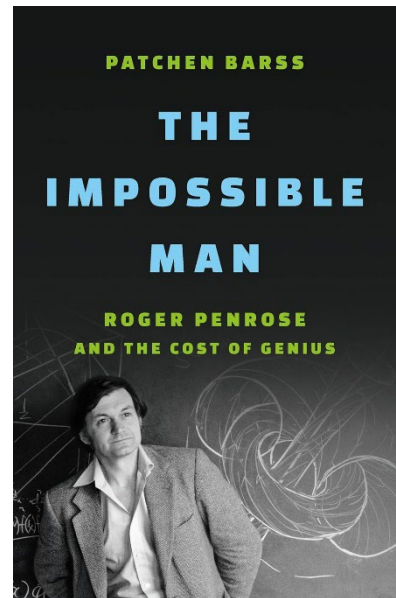


[\*Eureka Day\*](#), a play by Jonathan Spector, will open at Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC) on December 16 at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on Broadway, with previews beginning November 25. The play takes place at a new-age private elementary school in Berkeley, California where an outbreak of the mumps challenges the Board of Directors and its liberal policy of inclusion. The insightful and satiric story is set one year before the COVID-19 pandemic and touches on public attitudes towards vaccines from all sides. MTC will host

a post-show panel featuring epidemiologists, public health experts, and policymakers to discuss the scientific themes of the play. The play premiered in London in 2022, where it received positive reviews. The Broadway production of *Eureka Day* is supported by a 2024 production grant to MTC, one of Sloan's two flagship theater partners.

### **Roger Penrose Biography First in Sloan Scientist Series with Leon Levy Center**

[\*The Impossible Man: Roger Penrose and the Cost of Genius\*](#), the first-ever biography from Sloan's partnership with The Leon Levy Center for Biography, was published on November 12 by 2021 Sloan Fellow Patchen Barss. The book explores Roger Penrose's life and accomplishments as one of the world's most influential mathematicians, philosophers and physicists. It also sheds light on his personal life, where he struggled to connect with loved ones, particularly women. The book has received positive reviews in [Publishers Weekly](#), [The Financial Times](#), and [Kirkus Reviews](#). The Sloan Fellowship for Science Biography is an annual award for biographers working on books that elucidate the lives of scientists or technological innovators. Sloan has been supporting the Leon Levy Center for Biography at CUNY, the only academic institution in the country that awards a master's degree in biography and is devoted to promoting the practice of biography full-time, since 2018. The next biography of biologist George Schaller is slated to be published in 2025 by Sloan Fellow Miriam Horn.





# ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

November 2024

Program Updates from VP and Program Director Doron Weber

## Hit YouTube and TikTok Channel *SciShow* Premieres First Sloan-Supported Episodes



Launching its YouTube/TikTok program this year, new Sloan supported content kicked off on November 15 on the hit YouTube channel [SciShow](#) with a 30-minute deep dive titled “The Shocking Violence of the Chimpanzee War,” which examines the four-year conflict between chimpanzees in Gombe National Park from 1974-1978. The video is hosted by popular science YouTuber Lindsay Nikole. The *SciShow* YouTube channel will also pilot a new series over the next month based on Sloan book *The Inner Clock* by Lynne Peeples,

including three 5-10 minute videos inspired by the science content of the book and eight 60-90 second short form videos on the [SciShow TikTok](#), [Instagram Reels](#), and YouTube Shorts pages. [SciShow](#) was founded by YouTube icon Hank Green, a science communicator, video creator, and entrepreneur who started his YouTube career in 2007 with a joint channel created with his brother John Green. The brothers launched *SciShow* in 2012, which has since become one of the top educational YouTube channels with more than 8.1 million subscribers and more than 2 billion views. *SciShow* is supported by a 2024 Sloan grant.

## First-Ever Sloan Science Prizes for YouTube Awarded November 16

Sloan announced the winners of the first [Sloan Science Prizes for YouTube](#) on November 16 at the second annual [IMI Fest](#). Awarded in partnership with the Independent Media Initiative (IMI), the winner of the \$100,000 Documentary Prize was Xyla Foxlin for “Blueprint to Flight: Building an Airplane from Scratch” and the winner of the \$50,000 Narrative Fiction Prize was Joe Posner for “The 2084 Club,” a story about teens fighting climate change in the future. Winners were selected by an esteemed jury of scientists and creators: YouTuber/engineer Destin Sandlin ([@SmarterEveryDay on YouTube](#)); Hollywood writer/director Jonathan Nolan (*Interstellar*, *Westworld*); co-creator and co-host of the [YouTube channel Answer in Progress](#) Sabrina Cruz; physicist and jazz musician Stephon Alexander; and co-founder of IMI Elaine Sevier. The Festival also included a live recording of the Sloan-supported YouTube channel [Howtown](#), hosted by Joss Fong and Adam Cole, as well as a panel about science on YouTube moderated by IMI co-founder Stuart Sevier featuring Sandlin, journalist and podcast producer Sruthi Pinnamaneni, and mathematician/YouTuber [Henry Segerman](#). The prizes and programming were supported by a 2024 grant to IMI.

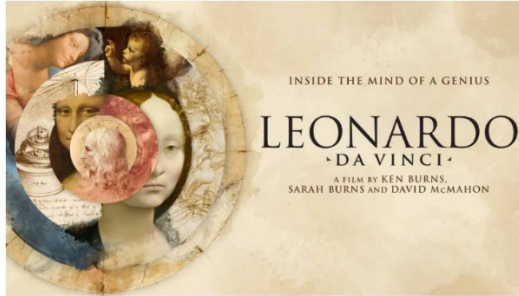




## Other Highlights

### TELEVISION

#### Ken Burns' *Leonardo da Vinci* Premieres on PBS After Telluride Debut



[Leonardo da Vinci](#), a two-part, four-hour documentary directed and produced by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon and written by David McMahon and Sarah Burns, premiered on PBS in two parts on November 18 and November 19. The film tells the story of fifteenth century Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci, known for his work as a painter, scientist, sculptor, engineer, and more. It humanizes one of the most celebrated visionaries of

all time and his profound achievements, beginning with his birth out of wedlock to a peasant woman and weaving through his days as a military architect, apprentice, and muralist and drawing from da Vinci's own personal notebooks and interviews with scholars, artists, and engineers. *Leonardo da Vinci* initially premiered at the 2024 Telluride Film Festival and was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant. The trailer is available to [watch on YouTube](#).

### THEATER

#### *Franklinland*, New Play About Ben Franklin and His Son, Debuts at Ensemble Studio Theatre

Sloan-commissioned play [Franklinland](#), written by Lloyd Suh and directed by Chika Ike, debuted as the Ensemble Studio Theatre (EST)/Sloan Mainstage Production on October 9 and ran until November 3. The play is a comedy set during the American Revolution that looks at the strained relationship between William Franklin and his father Benjamin, one of America's Founding Fathers and greatest scientific minds who invented the lightning rod, urinary catheter, glass harmonica and bifocal glasses.



EST hosted two post-show panels to discuss Benjamin and William Franklin, 18<sup>th</sup> century science, and the American experiment: on October 26 with Columbia professor of History Christopher L. Brown, author Philip Dray and Executive Director of the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Rosalind Remer and another on November 2 with Harvard Professor of Early American History Joyce Chaplin, Harvard Professor of the History of Science and African and African American Studies Evelyn Hammonds, and NYU Professor of History Nicole Eustance. The play received a positive review in [The New York Times](#). *Franklinland* was supported by a 2011 Sloan/EST commissioning grant to Lloyd Suh and the mainstage production was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant to EST, one of Sloan's two flagship theater partners.



## Live Readings for 3 New Sloan Plays to be Featured at New York City Center



Excerpts from three new science plays commissioned through [Sloan's partnership with the Manhattan Theatre Club \(MTC\)](#) will be featured at New York City Center on December 2. The selected plays are *For External Use Only* by Shayok Misha Chowdhury about mustard oil and cultural differences in public health policy; *Untitled* by Noah Diaz about d/Deaf culture, communication and ASL

acquisition; and *Untitled* by Max Posner about the different treatments for multiple sclerosis. After the reading, directed by Caitlin Sullivan, the playwrights will be joined for a discussion moderated by Museum Curator and MTC/Sloan Committee member Dr. Ruth Angus of the Department of Astrophysics, and a panel of scientists. The event was supported by a 2021 grant to MTC to commission, develop, and produce new plays with science and technology themes.

## EST Hosts Virtual Artist Cultivation Panel for Sloan Theater Program



The Ensemble Studio Theatre hosted a Sloan Artist Cultivation Panel on October 29 to publicize the unique opportunities afforded by the EST/Sloan commissioning program, which commissions 10-12 new plays every year. At the event, science and technology journalist Sophie Bushwick moderated a discussion on what makes a great science play with EST/Sloan playwrights Lloyd Suh (*Franklinland*) and Sam Chanse (*what you are now*). The panel also included Dr. Mandë Holford, Associate Professor in Chemistry at Hunter College, Dr. Daniela Schiller, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychiatry at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and Latif Nasser, co-host of the award-winning Sloan-supported show

Radiolab. The 2024 cultivation event was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant to EST.



# ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

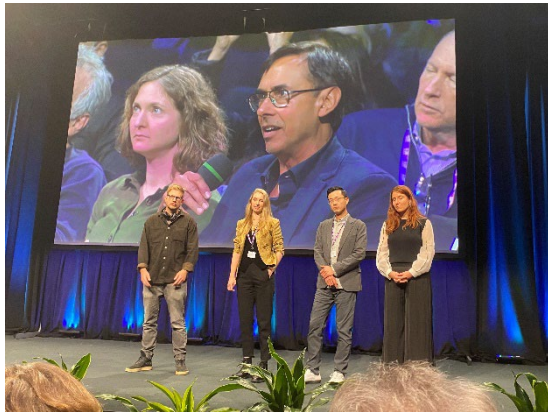
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Program Updates from VP and Program Director Doron Weber

## FILM

### Sloan Celebrates New Partnership with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)

[Sloan Showcase Screening](#): Sloan kicked off the second year of its new partnership with TIFF, the largest public international film festival in the world, on September 7 with a Sloan Showcase, featuring a Festival screening of *Daniela Forever* by Nacho Vigalondo. The film starring Henry Golding and Beatrice Granno follows a grieving man who enrolls in a clinical trial for a drug that induces lucid dreams. The screening was followed by a Q&A with the writer/director, the stars of the film, and Dr. Michelle Carr, Director of the Dream Engineering Laboratory and Assistant Professor in Psychiatry and Addictology at the University of Montreal. The Q&A is available to [stream on YouTube](#).



[Sloan Science and Technology Pitch Forum](#): On September 10, four screenwriters with draft screenplays pitched their science and technology-themed projects at a special Industry Conference in front of a panel of leading producers and film executives who provided feedback. [This year's selected participants](#) included Anton Källrot for his project "Push the Button," a dark comedy about a reformed tech billionaire's crusade against AI; Mia Mullarkey for her project "Lucid," about the ethical implications of AI gaining consciousness; Norman Yi Li for his project "Liberation," about a vegan scientist who discovers a strain of mosquitos capable of infecting humans with a severe meat allergy; and Justine Beed for her project "La Forza," a historical romantic comedy series about Italian physicist Laura Bassi, the first woman ever to receive a doctorate in science. Beed was also the recipient of a 2023 Sloan Screenwriting Award at USC and the 2023 Sloan Grand Jury Prize. The Pitch Forum was hosted by comedian Carolyn Taylor with panelists Tony Ducret of Universal Pictures; Sara Colvin of NEON; Damon D'Oliveira of Conquering Lion Pictures; writer John Collee; and Apolline Bertly of Searchlight Pictures. Sloan programming at TIFF is supported by a 2023 grant.

### ***The White House Effect* About Climate Crisis Featured at NYC Climate Week**



[The White House Effect](#) by award-winning directors Bonni Cohen, Pedro Kos, and Jon Shenk premiered on August 30 at the 2024 Telluride Film Festival. The feature-length documentary exclusively uses archival footage to recount the origin story of the modern climate crisis: from 1988 when scientists testified before Congress confirming global warming was underway, to the present day where climate change is highly politicized. The main protagonist is climatologist Stephen Schneider, professor of Environmental Biology and Global

Change at Stanford and head of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, who led the efforts to advise the federal government and communicate the problem to the public. The film premiered in New York City as part of the Hollywood Climate Summit during NYC Climate Week on September 23. The screening was followed by remarks from former Vice President Al Gore (pictured above) and a panel discussion moderated by climate advisor and columnist Melissa Jun Rowley with filmmakers Shenk and Stahl, as well as climate activist Saad Amer. *The White House Effect* was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.

### **Sloan/USC Grantee Wins Bronze at 2024 Student Academy Awards**

[Robin Wang](#), recipient of the 2022 Sloan Production Award at the University of Southern California, was the bronze medal winner in the Narrative category at the [2024 Student Academy Awards](#) for his Sloan-supported short film, *Neither Donkey Nor Horse*. The film is a historical drama about Nobel Prize-nominated scientist Dr. Wu Lien-teh, the first Chinese medical student at Cambridge, and his efforts to combat the 1910 Manchurian Plague. Wang thanked Sloan in his acceptance speech at the Student Academy Awards, which is available to [watch on YouTube](#) (1:33:30). USC is one of Sloan's six founding partner film schools.



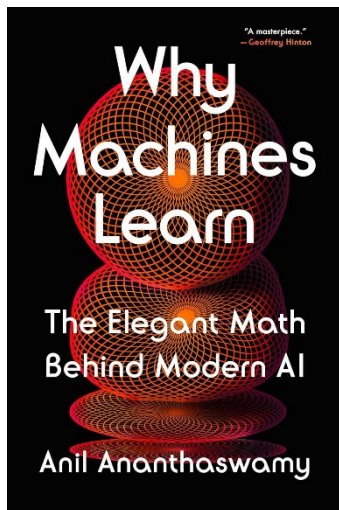


### Sloan Supported Film *Advanced Chemistry* Premieres in New York City

[Advanced Chemistry](#) by Etana Jacobson opened at select theaters nationwide and screened in New York City at the landmark 1920s historic theater Village East by Angelika on September 4. The film, about a scientist who injects his best friend with a compound he created to help her remain faithful to her wife, began as a short film titled [Elemental](#) supported by Sloan in 2008 through a UCLA Production Award. The film previously had a sold-out world premiere at Regal Union Square and a west coast premiere at the iconic Chinese Theater in Hollywood. *Advanced Chemistry* received positive reviews and was featured in [Deadline](#) and [Collider](#). The film was released digitally on Prime Video, Apple TV, and Google Play on October 8 and will premiere on STARZ on January 15, 2025. The trailer is [available on YouTube](#). UCLA is one of Sloan's six founding partner film schools.



### BOOKS



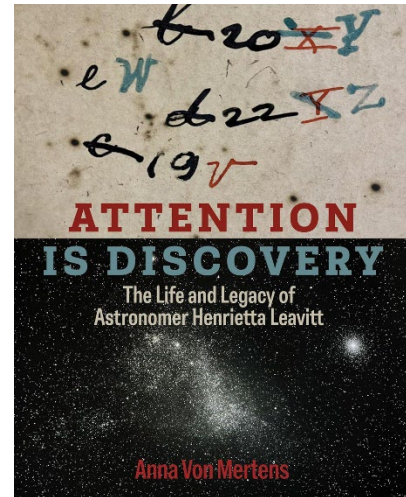
*Why Machines Learn: The Elegant Math Behind Modern AI* by Anil Ananthaswamy Published on July 16

[Why Machines Learn: The Elegant Math Behind Modern AI](#) by science journalist Anil Ananthaswamy was published on July 16. The book provides a fundamental understanding of the math behind machine learning, including linear algebra and calculus, and explores whether the same math underpins both artificial and natural intelligence. The author argues that the relatively simple math behind artificial intelligence provides a path to understand its profound capabilities and limitations, ultimately allowing us to make safe and effective use of AI. The book received positive reviews in [New Scientist](#), [Physics World](#), and [Kirkus Reviews](#), among others. *Why Machines Learn* was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.

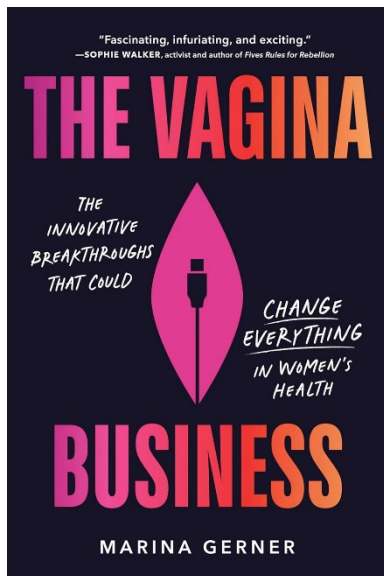


***Attention is Discovery: The Life and Legacy of Astronomer Henrietta Leavitt* by Anna von Mertens Published on September 17**

[\*Attention is Discovery: The Life and Legacy of Astronomer Henrietta Leavitt\*](#) by conceptual artist and writer Anna von Mertens was published on September 17. The book is a collection of essays that explore the life of Henrietta Leavitt, who spent decades studying glass plate photographs of the night sky and laid the foundation for modern cosmology by discovering how to measure vast distances to remote galaxies. Interspersed with the essays are collaborations with art historian Jennifer L. Roberts, cosmologist Wendy Freedman, astrophysicist João Alves, and novelist Rebecca Dinerstein Knight, including photographs of Leavitt's astronomical logbooks and ink notations on glass plates. *Attention is Discovery* was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.



***The Vagina Business: The Innovative Breakthroughs that Could Change Everything in Women's Health* by Marina Gerner Published on September 17**

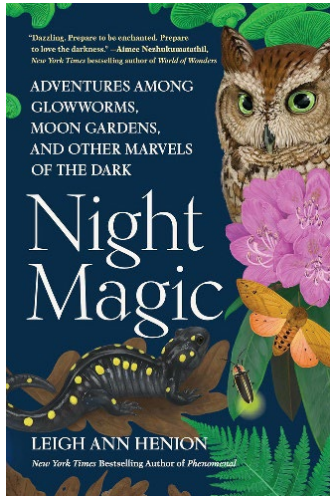


[\*The Vagina Business: The Innovative Breakthroughs that Could Change Everything in Women's Health\*](#) by tech and finance journalist Marina Gerner was published on September 17. With only 4% of medical research and development focused on women's health issues, the book provides an inside look at the future of women's health through the products developed by female-focused companies. These include a smart bra with EKG technology that can predict heart attacks, an in-home fertility gadget to track ovulation using saliva, and devices that can prevent birth injuries and restore the pelvic floor and vagina during menopause. Pulling from 100 interviews across 15 countries, Gerner takes readers inside the boardroom, where only 2.1% of venture capital dollars go toward companies founded by women. The book received positive reviews in [The Financial Times](#) and [Kirkus Reviews](#), among others. *The Vagina Business* was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.



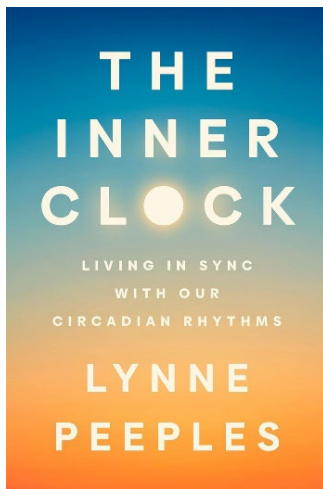


***Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark***  
by Leigh Ann Henion Published on September 24



[\*Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark\*](#) by nature writer Leigh Ann Henion was published on September 24. With artificial light pollution increasing nearly 50% over the past 25 years, this book deepens readers' relationship to natural darkness by framing it as an extraordinary force that should be explored and appreciated. Henion details the marvels of nature at night in the author's home region of Appalachia, including synchronous fireflies, nocturnal salamanders, and bioluminescent mushrooms. Along the way, the author introduces naturalists, biologists, and other experts who have dedicated their lives to exploring and understanding darkness. *Night Magic* received positive reviews in [Science News](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), and [Scientific American](#), among others. The book was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.

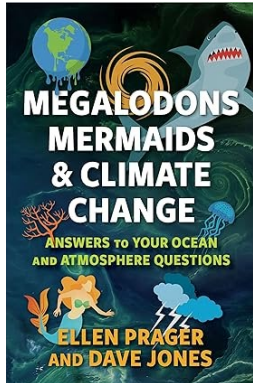
***The Inner Clock: Living in Sync with Our Circadian Rhythms*** by Lynne Peeples Published on September 24



[\*The Inner Clock: Living in Sync with Our Circadian Rhythms\*](#) by science journalist Lynne Peeples was published on September 24. The book explores the science of our circadian rhythms and how increased understanding of sleep cycles can improve sleep, mental health, and physical health. With interviews from scientists, astronauts, athletes, and patients involved in the latest research, Peeples explains how artificial light, arbitrary time zones, and our diets can wreak havoc on our internal clocks and how emerging science can help correct these issues. *The Inner Clock* received positive reviews in [Publishers Weekly](#) and [The Times](#), among others, and Peeples was interviewed in [The Guardian](#) and the Sloan-supported WNYC segment, [The Brian Lehrer Show](#). The book was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant, and will be featured in SciShow's new YouTube and TikTok series.

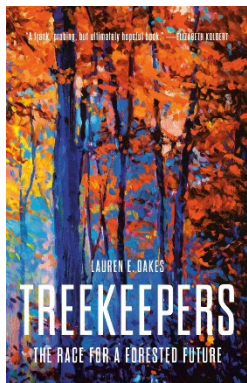


***Megalodons, Mermaids and Climate Change: Answers to Your Ocean and Atmosphere Questions* by Ellen Prager and Dave Jones Published on October 22**



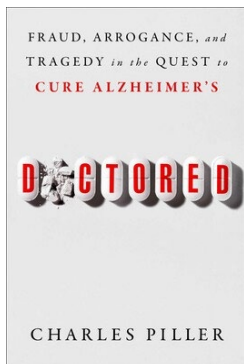
[\*Megalodons, Mermaids and Climate Change: Answers to Your Ocean and Atmosphere Questions\*](#) by marine scientist Ellen Prager and meteorologist Dave Jones was published on October 22. The book uses humor, straightforward language, and whimsical illustrations to answer frequently asked questions about the ocean and atmosphere. Prager and Jones discuss everything from coral reefs and lightning to hurricanes and the Sun to correct common misconceptions and combat misinformation. *Megaladons, Mermaids, and Climate Change* received positive reviews in [Kirkus Reviews](#) and the [Severna Park Voice](#), among others. The book was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.

***Treekeepers: The Race for a Forested Future* by Lauren Oakes Published on November 12**



[\*Treekeepers: The Race for a Forested Future\*](#) by conservation scientist and science writer Lauren Oakes was published on November 12. The book offers an honest yet optimistic look at the role of the world's forests in combating climate change, and more specifically, whether efforts to plant trees – by individuals and corporations – offer real benefits. *Treekeepers* features scientists, innovators, and local citizens from the Scottish Highlands to the Panamanian jungle to highlight the effort required to grow or regrow a forest and protect what remains. The book has received positive reviews in [Scientific American](#), [Publishers Weekly](#), and [Kirkus Reviews](#) among others. *Treekeepers* was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.

***Doctored: Fraud, Arrogance, and Tragedy in the Quest to Cure Alzheimer's* by Charles Piller to be Published on February 4, 2025**



[\*Doctored: Fraud, Arrogance, and Tragedy in the Quest to Cure Alzheimer's\*](#) by investigative journalist Charles Piller will be published on February 4, 2025. The book uncovers how self-interested researchers and corporate greed have led to decades of misleading Alzheimer's research. Beginning with whistleblower Matthew Schrag, a Vanderbilt professor whose work revealed that the leading hypothesis about the disease contained deliberately falsified data, Piller not only exposes a vast network of deceit, but also shows how other scientists are pushing back against it in service of science and the patients who have been subject to questionable drugs. *Doctored* was supported by a 2023 Sloan grant.



## NEW MEDIA

### Sloan to Host Presentation at the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers



Vice President and Program Director Doron Weber will lead an in-person session focused on the Sloan film program's work with factual content and new grantmaking in YouTube and TikTok, including past success stories and future priorities, at the [2024 World Congress of Science and Factual Producers](#) (WCSFP) in Morocco this December. The presentation will feature trailers and clips from traditional Sloan supported documentaries, such as *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story*, *How to Survive a Pandemic*, and *Coded Bias*. This year the presentation will also focus on Sloan's new priorities on YouTube and TikTok, spotlighting recent and upcoming projects such as [SciShow](#), the [Sloan Science Prizes for YouTube](#), and [Howtown](#). The presentation will be followed by a Q&A. Sloan support for WCSFP will also include a sponsorship of a separate session relating to Sloan interests and initiatives as well as travel funds for two American-based emerging science content producers from historically underrepresented groups to attend the 2024 conference. Sloan programming at the WCSFP was supported by a 2024 presidential grant.

## RADIO

### EFF Completes Fifth Season of *How to Fix the Internet*



[How to Fix the Internet](#), a Sloan supported podcast from the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) that tackles the thorniest issues of the modern web, completed its fifth season in July with a growing series of accolades. Recent episodes of the season, hosted by EFF's Executive Director Cindy Cohn and Associate Director of Digital Strategy Jason Kelley, include "AI in Kitopia" about the importance of transparency in AI and "About Face (Recognition)" on privacy issues and racial biases in facial recognition technologies. Guests this season included Taiwan's first Digital Minister Audrey Tang (top left),

New York Times reporter Kashmir Hill (top right), former Special Assistant to the President for Technology and Competition Policy Timothy Wu (bottom left), and U.S. Senator for Oregon Ronald Wyden (bottom right). The podcast also won several awards this year, including the Gold Award and a Listener's Choice Award in the Technology Shows category of the 2024 Signal Awards, Silver Award in the General Series-Science & Technology category of the w3 Awards, and Award of Excellence in the Technology Podcast Series category of the 30th Annual Communicator Awards. *How to Fix the Internet* is supported by a 2023 grant to EFF.



## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

### California Becomes Second State to Pass Legislation to Protect Neural Data



Working with Sloan grantee the Neurorights Foundation, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a [new law to protect consumers against misuse and abuse of neural data](#). The Neurorights Act, which passed the California State Assembly and Senate with no opposition, defines neurodata as sensitive personal information and extends the protection of the California Consumer Privacy Act, which requires businesses to only use sensitive personal information for limited purposes, such as

providing requested services. A similar law was passed earlier this year in Colorado. These laws were passed in response to the rapid growth in the highly unregulated neurotechnology market, which is expected to reach \$21 billion by 2026. Both state bills were adapted from model legislation developed by the Neurorights Foundation, whose work protecting consumer privacy is supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.

**Program Team:** Doron Weber, *Vice President, Programs and Program Director* | Shriya Bhindwale, *Program Associate* | Swan Griffith, *Program Assistant*