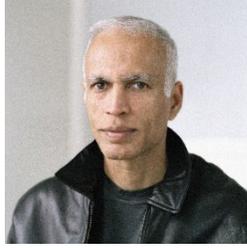




What's New in March

BOOKS: Sloan-Backed Books Nominated for PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award



Two Sloan-funded books – Rachel E. Gross’ [Vagina Obscura: An Anatomical Voyage](#) and Manil Suri’s [The Big Bang of Numbers: How to Build the Universe Using Only Math](#) – were among [five finalists for the prestigious PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award](#) (both authors pictured left). The Award, named in honor of scientist and author Edward O. Wilson, celebrates writing that exemplifies literary excellence on physical or biological sciences and communicates complex scientific concepts to a lay audience. *The Big Bang of Numbers* and *Vagina Obscura* were supported Sloan book grants in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

TELEVISION: *American Masters: Dr. Tony Fauci* Premieres at Santa Barbara International Film Festival Before PBS Premiere on March 21

The Sloan supported documentary [American Masters: Dr. Tony Fauci](#) premiered at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival on February 10 in the documentary competition. The film by Mark Mannucci will premiere on PBS as part of the *American Masters* series on March 21. Beginning with the inauguration of President Biden and spanning two years, the film follows America’s most well-known physician as he reflects on his 50-year career as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and as Chief Medical Advisor to seven U.S. Presidents. The documentary was supported by a 2020 Sloan production grant.



FILM: Sloan Documentary About Author Robert Putnam Premieres at SXSW



[Join or Die](#) by Emmy Award-winning documentary producer Rebecca Davis and author Pete Davis premiered at South by Southwest (SXSW) on March 12. The feature-length documentary follows the 50-year story of America’s civic unravelling through pioneering Harvard social scientist and *Bowling Alone* author, [Robert Putnam](#), as he explores major trends in community engagement, culture wars and economic inequality. Putnam asks what makes democracy work and why American democracy is in crisis. *Join or Die* features Hillary Clinton, Surgeon General Vivek Murty, Pete Buttigieg, and Eddie Glaude Jr., among other scholars, and engages with community building groups across the United States. The film received a trustee grant from the Sloan Foundation in 2020.



Quarterly Highlights

FILM

SUNDANCE 2023: *The Pod Generation* Wins 2023 Sloan Feature Film Prize at Sundance



[The Pod Generation](#) was awarded the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize at this year’s Sundance Film Festival and premiered on opening night. The narrative feature film, directed and written by Sophie Barthes and starring Emilia Clarke (*Game of Thrones*) and Chiwetel Ejiofor (*12 Years a Slave*), is about a couple that uses an artificial womb to conceive their first child. The film was cited by the jury “for its bold, visually-arresting depiction of a brave new parenthood in which AI and artificial wombs provide

technological benefits at the expense of our relationship to nature and to our humanity, and for a woman artist’s exploration of shifting gender roles dissociated from biology.” This year’s Sloan jury included neuroscientist Heather Berlin, chemist Mandë Holford, actor and comedian Jim Gaffigan (*Linoleum*), producer Lydia Dean Pilcher (*Radium Girls*), and filmmaker Shalini Kantayya (*Coded Bias*). *The Pod Generation* has received positive press from [Variety](#) and [The Hollywood Reporter](#), among other outlets. The Sloan Feature Film Prize and other Sloan activities at Sundance are supported by a 2021 grant to the Sundance Institute.

SUNDANCE 2023: Three New Sloan-Winning Projects Celebrated at Award Ceremony

[Three exciting new projects](#) featuring scientific themes and characters were celebrated at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and will now be developed via the nationwide Sloan film pipeline. John Lopez was awarded the Sloan Commissioning Grant for *Incompleteness*, about logician Kurt Gödel’s relationship with his wife Adele and his discovery of two proofs that changed mathematics and philosophy; Cynthia Lowen received the Sloan Development Fund for *Light Mass Energy*, about Mileva Marić

Einstein’s confrontation with rampant discrimination and her contribution to the theory of relativity; and Benjy Steinberg was awarded the Sloan Episodic Fellowship for *The Professor and the Spy*, about Maria Mayer, Columbia’s first female physics professor, as she joins the Manhattan Project and discovers her research partner is a notorious Soviet spy. At the event, Sophie Barthes



also accepted the Sloan Feature Film Prize on behalf of her film *The Pod Generation*.



ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

March 2023

Program Updates from VP and Program Director Doron Weber

SUNDANCE 2023: Sloan Panel Brings Together Scientists and Filmmakers in Park City

Two scientists and two filmmakers gathered to discuss the bright side of science and the ethical framework scientists and storytellers bring to the idea of progress at this year's Sloan panel at Sundance. *The Big Conversation: Appetite for Construction* was moderated by actor and musician Ahmed Best, and featured [Drew Endy](#), researcher of bioengineering at Stanford University and founder of the global genetic-engineering Olympics [iGEM](#); neuroscientist and science communicator [Yewande Pearse](#); award-winning writer and co-director of the upcoming Apple TV series about climate change [Richie Mehta](#); and filmmaker [Sophie Barthes](#) (*The Pod Generation*). The full panel discussion is available to stream via the [Festival's YouTube page](#).



Sloan/SFFILM Science on Screen Winner *Linoleum* Released in Theaters February 24



Linoleum, an original, quirky film that explores the powerful role of memory in our lives, was released in theaters on February 24. The film by writer/director Colin West starring actor/comedian Jim Gaffigan (*Tesla*, *Experimenter*) was the first recipient of the [Sloan Science on Screen Award at SFFILM](#), which recognizes the compelling depiction of science in a narrative film. This off-beat, surreal-seeming dramatic comedy about an engineer and aspiring astronomer in small town America whose life is unraveling, is also a poignant story about a contemporary American family, complete with marriage problems, gender nonconformity and the dark mysteries of how memory and love function across time. *Linoleum* has received positive reviews in [The Hollywood Reporter](#), [The New York Times](#), and [Slash Film](#), among others. The Sloan Science on Screen Award is supported by a 2021 grant to SFFILM.

Sloan Documentary About Iconic Photographer Premieres at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival



[Vishniac](#), by award-winning documentary filmmaker Laura Bialis and producer Nancy Spielberg, premiered at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival on February 17. The feature length documentary explores the career of renowned photographer Roman Vishniac, who is best known for his photographs of Jewish life in Eastern Europe from 1935 to 1938 but was also a pioneer in the field of microscopic

photography of nature. Many of his scientific images were featured in magazines such as *Nature* and popular biology textbooks of the time. Narrated by his daughter, Mara Vishniac Kohn, the film delves into the stories behind the photographs in his collection of over 10,000 images. The film received a Sloan production grant in 2021.

Student Film Prize Winners Celebrated at Awards Reception



The winners of the Sloan Grand Jury and Student Discovery Prizes were [announced at an awards reception](#) hosted by Sloan and the Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI) on January 5. The Sloan Grand Jury Prize celebrates the “best of the best” winning screenplays submitted by Sloan’s six film school partners. The 2023 winner was Samantha Sewell (above, left) from the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Theater. Her pilot script *Until Then We Keep Breathing* tells the

story of a boy diagnosed with cystic fibrosis in 1963 and his will to live a full and normal life. The Sloan Student Discovery Prize celebrates an exceptional science or technology script from one of six new public universities added to the program. Gerard Shaka (above, right), from Florida State University, won the 2023 award for his script *Woodside*, about a queer Bahamian boy who works with a marine conservationist to cope with an abusive father. The two scripts were selected by a jury that included chemist Kate Biberdorf ([Kate the Chemist](#)), producer Jessica Hargrave (*Good Night Oppy*), actor Naomi Lorrain (*Orange is the New Black*), author and UCLA professor Hannah Landecker, NYU professor Anita Perr, and writer Franklin jin Rho (*Panchinko*). MoMI received a 2022 grant to manage these awards for the Sloan Film Program.





Athena Film Festival Sloan Screenwriter Celebrated at Reception and Reading



Athena Film Festival hosted a reception and staged reading at Barnard College in December to celebrate the [winner of the 2022 Alfred P. Sloan Athena List Development Grant, Jennifer Vanderbes](#), for her script *The Gatekeeper*. The award is part of the Festival's year-round Creative Development Program to support outstanding science-themed projects by and about women. *The Gatekeeper* is a historical drama based on the story of Frances Kelsey, the FDA medical reviewer who bravely confronted a major pharmaceutical firm to keep the dangerous drug thalidomide off

the American market in the early 1960s. Kelsey discovers that thalidomide created a range of disabilities in babies including deformities to the limbs and digits, facial disfigurement and damage to the brain. The script is based on Vanderbes' own non-fiction book *Wonder Drug*, which received a 2018 Sloan book grant and is slated for publication in June. The Athena Film Festival is supported by a 2021 Sloan grant to Barnard College.

Athena Film Festival Hosts Annual STEM Showcase with Screening and Panel

Athena Film Festival hosted a screening of *Blueback* followed by a panel as part the [Sloan STEM Showcase](#) in Athena's Festival on March 5. Based on a 1997 novella of the same name, the film explores a marine biologist's relationship with her mother and the conflict between an activist mother and her daughter's determination to pursue a scientific career through formal education. The panel focused on climate change and environmental action, and brought together scientists, educators, activists, and creatives to discuss how young people are advancing climate action and the compelling ways their stories can be told. The STEM Showcase and panel at the Athena Film Festival are supported by a 2021 Sloan grant to Barnard College.



Sloan Script on Women Pilots Featured on Inaugural Grey List

[The Widowmaker](#), a feature film script by Denise Meyers, was [featured on the 2023 Grey List](#). The script, formerly titled *Lucky 13*, won the 2019 Sloan/Athena List Development Grant through the Athena Film Festival. Based on a true story, *The Widowmaker* is about a handpicked team of hotshot women pilots trained at the only all-female airbase in American history who battle prejudice as they race to learn why a notorious bomber essential to the D-Day invasion of Normandy has such a high fatality rate. The inaugural Grey List was presented on February 28 to celebrate original, high-quality, market-ready feature and pilot scripts from writers over the age of 40.



Sloan Student Short Wins Audience Award At 2022 New Orleans Film Festival



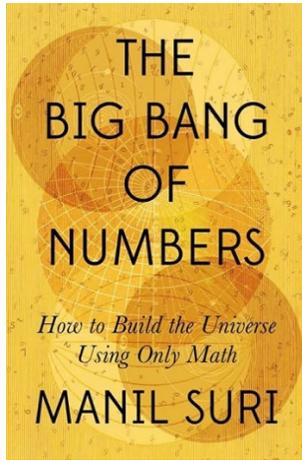
[Sound to Sea](#), a short film by [Ryan Craver](#), premiered at the 2022 New Orleans Film Festival where it won the Audience Award for Best Narrative Short. Supported by a Sloan Production Grant to Columbia University in 2019, the film tells the story of a middle schooler who must confront his queer identity and his

uncomfortable niche in the ecosystem known as eighth grade at a sleep-away ecology trip. The film will also be competing at the Miami International Film Festival in March. *Sound to Sea* is a prequel to Craver's most recent feature film, [Tadpole](#), which was awarded the 2020 Sloan Screenplay Development Award through the Tribeca Film Institute and the 2021 Sloan Science in Cinema Filmmaker Fellowship through SFFILM.



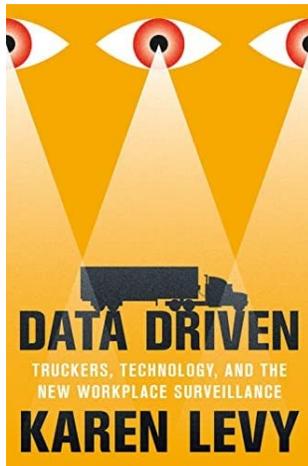
BOOKS

***The Big Bang of Numbers: How to Build the Universe Using Only Math* by Manil Suri**
Published on September 20



[*The Big Bang of Numbers: How to Build the Universe Using Only Math*](#) by Manil Suri, professor at University of Maryland Baltimore County's Department of Mathematics and Statistics, was published on September 20. From geometry and algebra to imaginary numbers and calculus, the book uses illustrations and real-world applications to explore the mathematical underpinnings of the universe. With examples such as multidimensional crochet and Mona Lisa's famous asymmetrical smile, Suri reveals the unexpected patterns that connect lifeforms to galaxies to prove that "mathematics is the fundamental source of creation, with reality trying to follow its dictates as best it can." The book received positive reviews in [The Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#) and [Kirkus Reviews](#). *The Big Bang of Numbers* was supported by a 2019 Sloan grant.

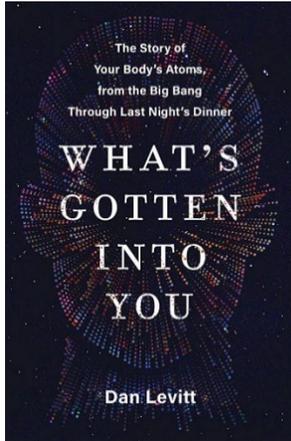
***Data Driven: Truckers, Technology, and the New Workplace Surveillance* by Karen Levy**
Published on December 6



[*Data Driven: Truckers, Technology, and the New Workplace Surveillance*](#) by Karen Levy, professor at Cornell University's Department of Information Science, was published on December 6. The book provides a behind-the-scenes look at how digital surveillance is affecting truckers' way of life. Through her travels to industry trade shows, law offices, and truck-stop bars, Levy explores the realities of new federal regulations requiring truck drivers to buy and install digital monitors that capture data about their locations and behaviors. Intended to address trucker fatigue, these devices also allow trucking firms and other companies to collect such data to provide invasive tools for managerial and legal control. *Data Driven* received positive reviews in [The Wall Street Journal](#) and [FreightWaves](#), among others. Levy also contributed articles on the subject in [Slate](#) and [The Boston Review](#) and interviewed with [KQED](#) and [The Guardian](#). The book was supported by a 2017 Sloan grant.

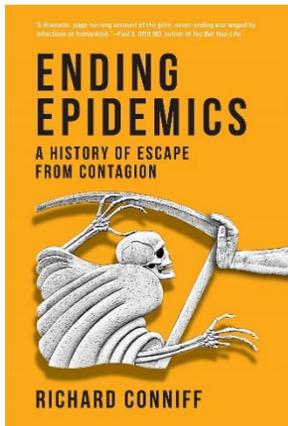


***What's Gotten Into You: The Story of Your Body's Atoms from the Big Bang Through Last Night's Dinner* by Dan Levitt Published January 24**



[What's Gotten Into You: The Story of Your Body's Atoms from the Big Bang Through Last Night's Dinner](#) by the award-winning writer and documentary director Dan Levitt was published on January 24. The book explores the history of atoms, from the Big Bang and the creation of stars to the assembly of planet Earth and the formation of life. Levitt also delves into the lives of the scientists behind the discoveries and the culture of scientific research that led to the understanding of the universe we have today. The book received positive reviews in [Undark](#) and [CNN](#), with [Kirkus Reviews](#) saying readers will feel “a continual source of wonder, stupefaction, exhilaration, and gratitude.” *What's Gotten Into You* was supported by a 2019 Sloan grant.

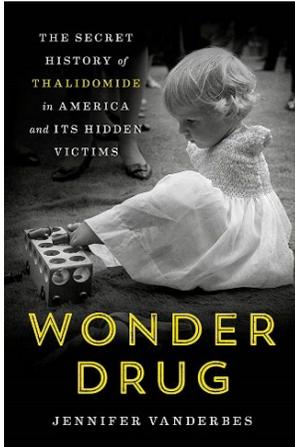
***Ending Epidemics: A History of Escape from Contagion* by Richard Conniff to be Published on April 11**



[Ending Epidemics: A History of Escape from Contagion](#) by award-winning writer and science journalist Richard Conniff will be published on April 11. The book chronicles the history of infectious diseases, beginning with the medical establishment's consensus that disease was the result of noxious miasmas, bodily humors, and divine dyspepsia and leading into germ theory, pivotal sanitation improvements, and the discovery of antibiotics. Conniff also recounts the crucial role of lesser-known figures in pressuring institutions and governments to act in the name of public health. *Ending Epidemics* was supported by a 2020 Sloan grant.

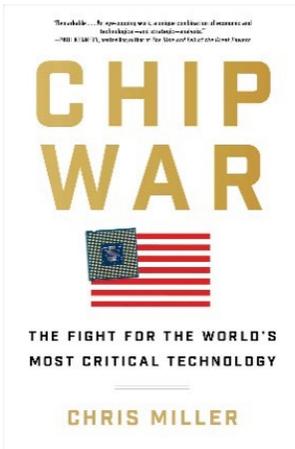


***Wonder Drug: The Secret History of Thalidomide in America and Its Hidden Victims* by Jennifer Vanderbes to be Published on June 20**



[*Wonder Drug: The Secret History of Thalidomide in America and Its Hidden Victims*](#) by award-winning novelist, journalist, and screenwriter Jennifer Vanderbes will be published on June 20. Through government and corporate archives, court records, and hundreds of interviews, the book exposes the deceptive practices of Big Pharma in the 1960s to legalize thalidomide, a drug that causes catastrophic birth abnormalities. Vanderbes explores the impact on the hundreds of thousands of Americans exposed to this drug and the continuing flaws in pharmaceutical practices today. Vanderbes also received a Sloan development grant through the Athena Film Festival for her screenplay on the same subject in 2022. *Wonder Drug* was supported by a 2018 Sloan grant.

***Chip War: The Fight For the World's Most Critical Technology* Wins Financial Times' Best Business Book of the Year**



[*Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*](#) by Chris Miller, Professor of International History at the Fletcher School at Tufts University, won the [Financial Times' 2022 award for Best Business Book of the Year](#). The award recognizes books that provide “compelling and enjoyable insight into modern business issues.” *Chip War* explains the history of the microchip and its vital role in the current state of politics, economics and technology. The book is especially timely given the ongoing semiconductor shortage that has caused hundreds of billions of dollars in economic damage and the recently passed CHIPS Act, an effort by the U.S. government to boost support for the semiconductor industry amid rising tensions between the United States and China over the future of semiconductor technology. Miller received a 2021 Sloan grant for the research and writing of this book.



TELEVISION

Zora Neale Hurston: Claiming a Space Airs on PBS



[Zora Neale Hurston: Claiming a Space](#), a documentary in the Sloan-supported *American Experience* series, premiered on PBS on January 17. The film is an in-depth biography of Hurston, whose seminal anthropological work challenged assumptions about long-held prejudices on race and gender. The documentary tells her story, from her key role in the Harlem Renaissance and her acclaimed novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to her love of anthropology and her

documentation of the lives of rural Black people in the American South and the Caribbean. On February 13, *American Experience* also presented [a virtual PAST FORWARD conversation](#) about the film moderated by the founder and Executive Director of *Well-Read Black Girl*, Glory Edim, featuring Duke University Professor of Cultural Anthropology and African American Studies Dr. Lee D. Baker, Executive Producer of American Experience Cameo George, and Tracy Heather Strain, writer/director of the film. *Hurston* received positive reviews in the [Los Angeles Times](#) and [Amsterdam News](#) and was featured in [The New York Times](#) as a “[Show to Keep an Eye On.](#)” This documentary is the first of two produced through a major Sloan production grant to the WGBH Educational Foundation in 2022.

THEATER

Ensemble Studio Theatre Hosts Artist Cultivation Panel for Sloan Theater Program

The Ensemble Studio Theatre (EST) hosted a [Sloan Artist Cultivation Panel](#) in December 2022 to publicize the unique opportunities afforded by the EST/Sloan commissioning program, which commissions 10-12 new plays every year. At the virtual event, Columbia neurobiologist and Sloan/EST Committee member Stuart Firestein moderated a discussion on what makes a great science play with EST/Sloan commission award-winner Carla Ching and former EST Artistic Director William Carden. The panel also included scientist and STEM advocate Shree Bose and Karine Gibbs, Associate Professor in the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology at the University of California, Berkeley. The event was free and open to any playwright interested in writing a science play. The 2023 cultivation event was supported by a 2022 Sloan grant to EST.





RADIO

Sloan Podcasters Launch *Lost Women of Science Shorts*



Author and former New York Times technology reporter Katie Hafner and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center bioethicist Amy Scharf launched the inaugural episode of [Lost Women of Science Shorts](#) in January. Each 30-minute episode of this new series tells the story of an uncredited or underappreciated woman scientist. So far, *Shorts* has told the story of [Leona Zacharias](#), a biologist who discovered the

root cause of a blindness epidemic in premature newborns in the 1940s, and [Flora Patterson](#), a mycologist who identified the cause of dying American chestnut tree forests and helped make the USDA’s National Fungus Collection the largest in the world. This series is an extension of *the Lost Women of Science* podcast, where each four-to-six-episode season dives into the life of a single female scientist. The next season of *Lost Women of Science* will premiere in March. *Lost Women of Science* and *Lost Women of Science Shorts* are both supported by a 2022 Sloan grant.

EFF Launches Third 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, launched its third season in January. The series, hosted by American civil liberties attorney, internet law expert and EFF Executive Director Cindy Cohn and Associate Director of Digital Strategy Jason Kelley (both pictured left), include

episodes such as “[The Right to Imagine Your Own Future](#),” about rejecting the inevitability of the self-interested future that tech moguls describe; “[When Tech Comes to Town](#),” about the effects on cities when a tech company moves in; and “[Don’t Be Afraid to Poke the Tigers](#),” about our current patent and copyright culture. *How to Fix the Internet* is supported by a 2022 grant to EFF.



SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Knicht Foundation and the Digital Public Library of America Host Annual Library Conference



The Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and the Knight Foundation welcomed three dozen public library directors and civic and philanthropic leaders in February for a high-level discussion on libraries, their fundamental role in enhancing informed and engaged communities, and how these institutions can be well positioned for the future. The

conference, held in Miami, included panels such as “Libraries in This American Moment,” “Libraries and the National Fabric,” “Community, Connection and Content,” and “Pandemic Lessons: What’s Changed Since 2020?” Doron Weber, Vice President and Program Director at the Sloan Foundation, participated in a panel titled “Views from the Funders” with Gene Cochrane (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation), Patricia Hswe (Mellon Foundation), Crosby Kemper (Institute of Museum and Library Services), and moderator Charles Thomas (Knight Foundation). The panels are [available to stream on the Knight Foundation website](#).

Program Team: Doron Weber, *Vice President, Programs and Program Director* | Shriya Bhindwale, *Program Associate* | Delia DiBiasi, *Senior Program and Investments Assistant*