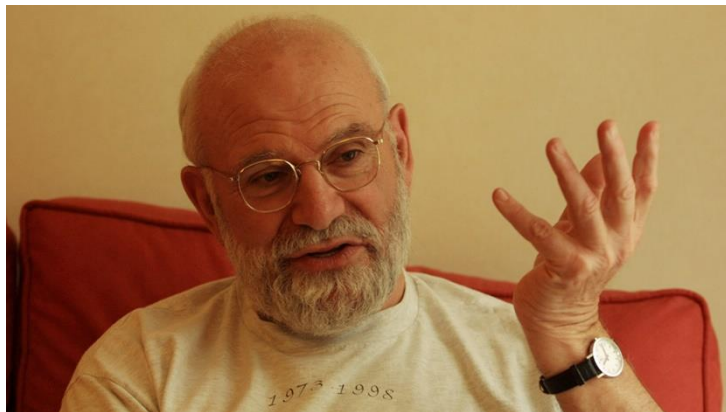## TELEVISION

Oliver Sacks Documentary Premieres at Leading Film Festivals

Oliver Sacks: His Own Life, a Sloan-backed documentary on the world-renowned neurologist, clinician, and writer, premiered at the New York Film Festival and the Telluride Film Festival in September 2019.

Upon receiving a fatal diagnosis in 2015, Sacks invited award-winning documentary filmmaker Ric Burns and his team to film his final days. The film draws on eighty hours of this unique footage, in addition to telling the story of Sacks' remarkable life and career. It has received positive coverage from *The Hollywood Reporter, Variety,* and *Vice,* among others. After its festival run, it will air on American Masters PBS. *Oliver Sacks: His Own Life* was supported by a 2017 Sloan Foundation grant to the filmmakers.

"Chasing the Moon" Celebrates 50th Anniversary of the Moon Landing

"Chasing the Moon," the latest documentary in the Sloan-supported *American Experience* series and the PBS centerpiece project of 2019, premiered across three nights in July to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. The film explores the events leading up to the historic journey to the moon, covering a range of topics from the little-known but important role of women to the influence of former Nazi Wernher von Braun on NASA's rocket program to the civil rights activists who protested the use of

U.S. resources for space exploration rather than other pressing issues. The film is now available to view on the PBS website, as well as on other streaming platforms and DVD. The documentary received positive coverage from *The Washington Post, Space.com,* and *Physics Today.* This show is one of four produced through Sloan's two-million-dollar grant to *American Experience,* which supports projects such as "Sealab," "The Eugenics Crusade," "The Secret of Tuxedo Park," "Rachel Carson," and "The Race Underground."

Inaugural Winner of the Sloan/North Fork TV Film Festival Science + Tech Competition Premieres

The [first winner of the Sloan/ North Fork TV Festival Science + Tech Script Competition](#), *Distemper* written by Maxwell Pitagno and shot by award-winning filmmaker Elias Plagianos, premiered at the 2019 North Fork TV Festival in Greenport, Long Island. One of only five pilots screened at the festival,

Distemper follows the story of pathologist and LGBT icon Louise Pearce, played by Abigail Hawk (*Blue Bloods*, pictured left), as she works to find a cure for African Trypanosomiasis, also known as African sleeping sickness. The award received positive coverage from [*PopCulture*](#), [*TV Insider*](#), and [*Build*](#). The award and production of *Distemper* is supported by a 2019 grant to the North Fork TV Festival. This is the first television festival, a popular new type of media festival, that the Foundation has supported.

Sloan-Supported *Black Hole Apocalypse* Nominated for Emmy

Black Hole Apocalypse, the first NOVA special to be hosted by a woman scientist, [was nominated for an Emmy](#) in the writing category. This is the first time NOVA has been nominated for an Emmy in the general writing category, rather than the science writing category. Astrophysicist and author Janna Levin, professor of physics and astronomy at Barnard College of Columbia University, hosted the two-hour special, which explores cutting-edge research at the frontiers of black-hole science. The documentary includes interviews with leading astronomers and physicists such as Priyamvada

Natarajan, author and professor of Astronomy and Physics at Yale University, and Shep Doeleman, director of the Event Horizon Telescope Project and astrophysicist at the Harvard Smithsonian Center. The film was also recently awarded a [2019 Science Communication Award](#) in the Broadcast and New Media category from the American Institute of Physics. Sloan supported the documentary and an accompanying app with a major production grant in 2014.

The Open Mind Features Interviews with Three Sloan Grantees

Over the summer, three Sloan grantees were interviewed by *The Open Mind,* a Sloan-funded program hosted by journalist Alexander Heffner and airing on PBS. John Bracken, executive director of the Sloan-supported Digital Public Library of America, discussed the vital role of libraries to preserve democracy in the digital age. Science journalist M.R. O'Connor gave insight into her new Sloan book *Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World*. Science journalist Jon Gertner spoke about his recent Sloan book *The Ice at the End of the World: An Epic Journey into Greenland's Buried Past and Our Perilous Future*. These interviews, as well as others featuring Sloan grantees, are free to view on *The Open Mind's* website. The show is supported by a 2017 Sloan grant to The Open Mind Legacy Project.
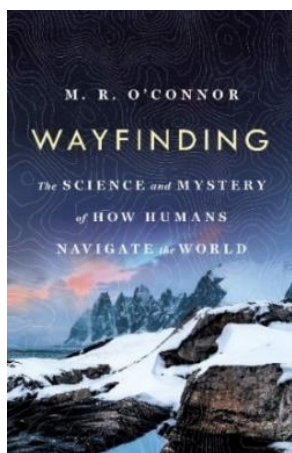

John Bracken

M.R. O'Connor

Jon Gertner

BOOKS _____

Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World by M. R. O'Connor Published

Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World by journalist and author M. R. O'Connor was published earlier this year. The book examines the evolution of our species' navigational faculties from our ancient ancestors to the age of GPS and AI today, drawing on the perspectives of neuroscientists, anthropologists, biologists, and master navigators. It looks at topics such as the neurological basis of spatial orientation within the hippocampus and how organisms are able to precisely migrate and orient. *Wayfinding* has received positive reviews from *Publisher's Weekly*, *Science Magazine,* and *Kirkus,* where it received a starred review and was called "a marvel of storytelling." O'Connor received a Sloan grant in 2018 to support the research and writing of this book.
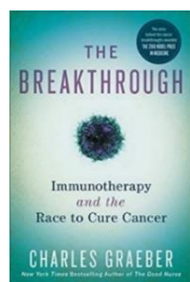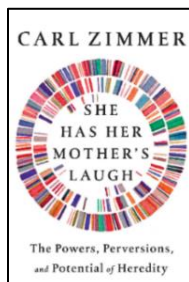
House Passes Congressional Gold Medal Bill to Honor *Hidden Figures* Women Scientists

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill to award the highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the real-life women scientists portrayed in the Sloan-supported book and Oscar-nominated film (pictured left) *Hidden Figures.* Having cleared its final hurdle, the House bill will now go to the Senate for pro forma approval and will then go to the president to be signed. The bill honors Katherine Johnson and Christine Darden and posthumously honors Mary Jackson and Dorothy Vaughan, as well as all the women computers, mathematicians, and engineers at NASA, for their contributions to science during the space race. A companion bill passed in the Senate earlier this year. Sloan has been involved behind the scenes in getting the bill introduced since 2018.

Sloan-Supported *She Has Her Mother's Laugh* and *The Breakthrough* Honored

Two Sloan books have received special honors this quarter. *She Has Her Mother's Laugh: The Powers, Perversions, and Potential of Heredity*, by *New York Times* science columnist Carl Zimmer, won the Best Book Award from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine as part of the 2019 Communication Awards and the 2019 Science in Society Journalism Award in the Book Category from the National Association of Science Writers. The book presents a history of our understanding of heredity, from the birth of genetics in the early 1900s to at-home genetic tests today. *The Breakthrough: Immunotherapy and the Race to Cure Cancer,* by *New York Times* bestselling author Charles Graeber, was highly commended by the British Medical Association's 2019 Book Awards. Weaving together history, science, and the stories of patients, doctors, and caregivers, the book examines the intersection between cancer and immunology and its potential to impact the course of cancer care.

FILM

NOVA Documentary on Autonomous Vehicles to Debut October 23

Look Who's Driving, NOVA's Sloan-supported documentary film on autonomous vehicles, will debut on October 23 on PBS. The one-hour special will explore topics from the history of driverless cars to today's state of the art autonomous vehicle technology and its possible pitfalls. The documentary aims to separate the hype surrounding driverless cars from the science and what is truly possible today. The award-winning team at Kikim Media, who also produced the Sloan-backed documentary *Silicon Valley: The Untold Story,* which provided television's first comprehensive look at the century-and-a-half history of this unique region and its unending stream of innovation, produced the film. Portions of the film have already been screened at the "Our Driverless Futures" forum at the Museum of Science in Boston and will be screened at other expert convenings next year. The production of *Look Who's Driving* was supported by a 2018 grant to Catticus Corporation.

Sloan-Supported *The Sound of Silence* Premieres in Theaters

The Sound of Silence, directed by Michael Tyburski and written Ben Nabors, was released in theaters on September 13. The film, whose script won the 2014 Sloan Screenwriting Grant at the Hamptons International Film Festival, follows Peter Lucien, a New York City "house tuner," who manipulates the sounds in people's apartments to improve their moods. Peter Sarsgaard (*Garden State*) plays the house tuner and Rashida Jones (*Parks and Recreation*) plays one of his clients. *The Sound of Silence* premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and has received positive reviews from [The Hollywood Reporter](#), [Variety](#), and [IndieWire](#), among others. It is also currently available to stream via IFC Films.

Sequel to Sloan Feature Film Prize Winner *Searching* Announced

As a sign of its unexpected popularity, [Searching](#), which won the Sloan Feature Film Prize and the Next Audience Award at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, will be getting a sequel. *Searching* followed a widowed father as he uses technology to try to find his missing daughter. The film, told entirely on screens through videos, messages, and browser windows, was hailed for its innovative storytelling method and was one of the highest performing acquisitions in the 2018 festival, ultimately reaching over $75 million in worldwide box office revenue. While the sequel will not feature the original cast and storyline, director Aneesh Chaganty (pictured left) writes that, "We all see this second installment as a wonderful opportunity to tell another original tech-driven thriller."

NEW MEDIA

Retro Report Releases Sloan-Supported Video on Driverless Cars

In July, documentary news organization Retro Report released a short, Sloan-supported film that examines how close we are to having driverless cars. From the challenge of creating a detailed map to guide autonomous cars to the safety features installed in regular cars as a result of research into self-driving vehicles, the documentary shows how, while this technology is advancing, there's still a long way to go. Upon its release, the video was featured in the *New York Times* article "[Driverless Cars Are Taking Longer Than We Expected. Here's Why](#)" by Clyde Haberman and was picked by Apple News as a must-see video. The research and production of this short digital documentary was supported by a 2018 Sloan Foundation grant to Retro Report.

Carnegie Mellon Immersive Theater Piece on Privacy Premieres

Project Amelia, Bricolage Production Company's immersive theater piece that incorporates the audience's personal data to increase understanding of the ethics of computer science and data collection, premiered on September 20 in Pittsburgh. During the play, audience members are transformed into guests visiting the launch of a groundbreaking intelligence product at the R&D lab of Aura, a prestigious tech giant. "The show addresses in a fundamental way what actually is true about AI versus what we're being told is true with AI," said creator Michael Skirpan, Ph.D., Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). *Project Amelia* was produced in partnership with leaders in the field of data and privacy at CMU. It has received positive coverage from 90.5 WESA, Pittsburgh's NPR News Station; *Pittsburgh City Paper*; and *Pittsburgh Current.* Due to the unexpected success of the piece, it has been extended. *Project Amelia* was supported by a 2019 officer grant to Bricolage Production Company.

SCI-Arc Hosts Sloan-Backed Fear and Wonder II Symposium

The Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) organized a day-long, Sloan-backed storytelling symposium on campus. The symposium, called Fear & Wonder II, brought together directors, concept artists, video game designers, and storytellers to share their approach to imagining alternative worlds as a means to understanding our own. The event played a key role in informing and

inspiring the project development of the 16 Sloan-supported students in the Fiction and Entertainment program, who will incorporate the latest research in AI and automation technologies into multimedia fictional narratives including short films, animations, documentaries, video games, VR environments, music videos, and web series. The full program is free to watch online on Vimeo. The 2019 Fear and Wonder II symposium was supported by a 2018 grant to SCI-Arc.

THEATER

Sloan-Commissioned Play to Be Developed into TV Series by AMC

AMC recently announced that *Fast Company,* an Ensemble Studio Theatre/Sloan Commission, will be developed by actor Daniel Dae Kim into a television series. The play tells the story of a family of con-artists who use game theory to improve their grifts and has been produced by South Coast Rep, Pork Filled Productions, Lyric Stage, and Ensemble Studio Theatre, where it was the 2014 Sloan mainstage production (pictured left). It was the winner 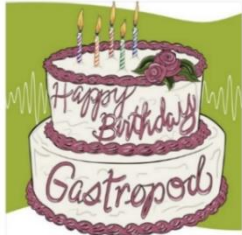of the Edgerton New American Play Award and Seattle Times Footlights Award as one of the year's best New Plays on a Small Stage.

RADIO

Female-Hosted *Gastropod* on the Science of Food Celebrates 5th Birthday

Gastropod, the award-winning Sloan-supported podcast hosted by Cynthia Graber and Nicola Twilley which brings a scientific approach to the popular subject of food, celebrated its 5th birthday in September. In honor of this milestone, the hosts released a list of 25 of their favorite fun facts from *Gastropod*, five from each year since the podcast began. The facts range from "using gold (or gold-plated) cutlery makes food taste sweeter" to "the first pasta machine was designed by Leonardo da Vinci." A new episode with highlights from the last five years was also released in celebration. The production of *Gastropod* is supported by a 2018 grant to the Food & Environment Reporting Network.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

DPLA Receives Digital Book World Award for Best Non-Fiction Book

In a testament to its Sloan-Foundation-supported initiative to expand its role in providing eBooks, the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) recently won a 2019 Digital Book World Award for Best Non-Fiction Book for its digital edition of the Mueller Report. The Internet Archive, a former Sloan grantee, was the co-winner. The 440-page government document was published as an eBook on its Sloan-supported platform Open Bookshelf. The eBook is free for all to read on a phone or tablet via SimplyE, the New York Public Library's eReader app. To access the Mueller Report via SimplyE, you may follow the directions on the DPLA website. Open Bookshelf is supported by a 2017 and 2019 grant to DPLA.

Consumer Reports Finds Many Wireless Routers Lack Security Protections

Consumer Reports (CR) tested over 25 wireless routers for more than 60 indicators of good security practices. While some routers include important privacy protections, such as automatic firmware updates that make it harder for hackers to access networks, others were missing basic protections, such as prohibiting weak passwords. CR made recommendations for the top routers based on these tests, as well as a list of what consumers can do to make their current routers safer. The testing done on these routers utilized the Sloan-supported Digital Standard, digital privacy and security criteria. Work with the Digital Standard is part of a 2018 grant to Consumer Reports to research consumer attitudes on digital privacy, convene experts and test technology platforms on their privacy practices, and educate consumers about digital privacy and security.

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