



Who are the Guardians of Truth and Integrity for 2024?*

Adam Craig and Carl Taswell†

Abstract

On October 9th, Brain Health Alliance (BHA, a 501c3 nonprofit organization) hosted Guardians 2024, our third annual conference entitled “Who are the Guardians of Truth and Integrity?” Open to the public, the conference provided a conversation about current challenges in maintaining the integrity of the scientific record and fostering ethical standards in various domains. The presentations highlighted the critical role of collaboration, transparency, reproducibility, and accountability in scientific research and societal practices. With the focus theme for 2024 devoted to *people talking to people with civility, courtesy, tolerance, and respect*, invited speakers emphasized the importance of collective action and individual commitment to fostering meaningful human connections, promoting research integrity, and advancing medical, scientific, and societal progress.

Keyphrases

Research integrity, citational justice, publishing ethics, scientific truth, academic ghosting, FAIR Metrics.

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Guardians 2024 Program

Guardians Conferences ask the question “*Who are the Guardians of Truth and Integrity?*” and discuss the use of mis-information, dis-information, anti-information, caco-information, and mal-information (S. K. Taswell, Athreya, et al. 2021) in science, engineering, and medicine. Guardians 2024 was held on October 9th as an online event with 5 invited speakers:

- Natalie Burke, Common Health Action, Washington DC
- Philip Koch, Colorado School of Mines, Golden CO
- Maggie Mulqueen, Brookline MA
- Joshua Rubin, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI
- Olivia Sagan, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh UK

- 1 who discussed this year’s focus theme of *people talking to people with civility, courtesy, tolerance, and respect*. The workshop began with recognition of Mr. Peter Ash as our 2024 Guardian of Truth and Integrity.

Guardians 2024 Opening Session

- 2 • 09:00 [Julie Neidich](#), Honoring our BHAVI 2024 Guardian: Peter Ash (2024 Guardian [slides](#) and [video](#))
- 2 • 09:15 [Peter Ash](#), *Under the Same Sun*: Changing Hearts and Minds about Albinism ([Learn More](#) about UTSS and [10 years](#) of UTSS)

Invited Talks

- 4 • 10:00 [Maggie Mulqueen](#), What Does Care Look Like in 2024? Caring for Others in Times of Dissent and Distress ([video](#), [edoc](#))
- 4 • 11:00 [Philip Koch](#), Holding Their Feet to Our Fires: Rural Emergency Services and the Struggle to Serve in the Face of Ignorance and Corruption ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))
- 4 • 12:00 [Natalie Burke](#), The Journey Towards Health Equity: Taking Uncomfortable Steps to Change Hearts and Minds ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))

*Presented at [Guardians 2024](#) with [slides](#) and [video](#).

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- 13:00 [Joshua Rubin](#), Musical Chairs for Darvomanics: How Anti-Learning Systems Enable Systemic Abuses of Power in Academia and What We Can Do Together to Help Them Learn ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))
- 14:00 [Olivia Sagan](#), Loneliness, Social Cohesion and the Role of Art Making ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))

Technical Talks

- 15:00 Micha Burkhardt, UOL Germany, Quantifying Similarities between fMRI Processing Pipelines for Efficient Multiverse Analysis ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))
- 15:20 Pan-Jun Kim, HKBU Hong Kong, Long-Term Innovative Potential of Genetic Research and its Suppression ([slides](#), [video](#))
- 15:40 Adam Craig, BHAUSA USA, From Open Review to Reproducible Review: FAIR Metrics Analysis of Peer Reviews for Brain Informatics Literature ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))

Guardians 2024 Closing Session

- 16:00 Carl Taswell, BHAUSA USA, Reproducibility, Validity, and Integrity in Scholarly Research: Questions Seeking Answers ([slides](#), [video](#), [edoc](#))

All slides and recordings of the talks are also available at [Guardians 2024 Program](#). Background references on reproducibility, validity, and integrity for the Guardians Conferences include [Craig, Ambati, et al. \(2019\)](#); [Athreya, S. K. Taswell, et al. \(2020\)](#); [S. K. Taswell, Triggler, et al. \(2020\)](#); [S. K. Taswell, Athreya, et al. \(2021\)](#); [Craig, Lee, et al. \(2022\)](#); [C. Taswell \(2022\)](#); [Athreya, Craig, et al. \(2023\)](#); [C. Taswell \(2023\)](#).

2024 Guardian: Peter Ash

Brain Health Alliance recognized and honored Peter Ash as the BHAUSA 2024 Guardian of Truth and Integrity.

Julie Neidich offered a tribute to Peter Ash honoring him as the BHAUSA 2024 Guardian for his tireless advocacy on behalf of individuals with albinism. Ash, the founder of Under the Same Sun, has dedicated his life to protecting and empowering people with albinism, particularly in African nations where superstition and discrimination are rampant. Neidich highlighted the severe challenges faced by individuals with albinism, including social ostracism, physical attacks, and even murder for their body parts, which are believed to possess magical properties (United Nations, 2013). Ash's organization, Under the Same Sun, has been instrumental in creating safe spaces, providing education, and advocating for policy changes to protect the rights of people with albinism.

Following Neidich's tribute, Peter Ash participated in a Q&A session where he addressed the misconceptions and superstitions surrounding albinism, particularly in African countries. Ash discussed the negative portrayal of individuals with albinism in media, the critical issue of skin cancer among people with albinism, and the personal risks he faced during his advocacy work. He emphasized the importance of accurate representation, grassroots education, and international advocacy in improving the lives of individuals with albinism.

Maggie Mulqueen

[Mulqueen \(2024\)](#), "What Does Care Look Like in 2024? Caring for Others in Times of Dissent and Distress", emphasized the profound

importance of human connection in fostering both mental and physical well-being. Central to this connection is the critical role of listening and ability to listen effectively, which enables individuals to feel heard and understood. In a society increasingly dominated by disinformation and contentious dialogue that prioritizes talking over others rather than listening and hearing, improving the skill of listening and understanding remains crucial to building and maintaining meaningful relationships. As [Frank Bruni \(2024\)](#) explains in *The Age of Grievance*, the tendency to filter information through echo chambers and the rise of cancel culture have further complicated the landscape of communication, making authentic listening all the more challenging.

Mulqueen outlined several essential components of effective listening, including genuine interest, trustworthiness, and setting boundaries. Mulqueen posits that the act of listening, often overshadowed by the cultural emphasis on speaking and winning arguments, is a powerful component of care. [Deborah Tannen \(1999\)](#) work on psycholinguistics highlights how varied speech patterns and norms can either facilitate or hinder effective communication. Mulqueen stresses the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining confidentiality to foster an environment conducive to open dialogue. This approach not only ensures that the listener is trustworthy but also that the speaker feels safe and respected.

In the context of professional and personal interactions, Mulqueen emphasizes the distinction between listening and problem-solving. She argues that offering comfort through attentive listening can be more impactful than attempting to solve problems, which can inadvertently create a power imbalance. This perspective aligns with the findings of [Tavris and Aronson \(2020\)](#) in *Mistakes Were Made (but Not By Me)*, which illustrate how individuals often double down on their beliefs rather than remain open to new information. By genuinely listening without the expectation of agreement, one can foster deeper connections and a better understanding of differing viewpoints.

She also explored the complexities of listening in the digital age and stressed the importance of listening to oneself as a form of self-care. Mulqueen also addresses the complexities of communication in the digital age, where the absence of body language and tone can lead to misunderstandings and heightened tensions. She advocates for setting clear expectations and boundaries in digital communications to mitigate these issues. Furthermore, Mulqueen calls for a balanced approach to self-care and caring for others, emphasizing that listening to oneself is essential for sustaining the ability to listen to others effectively. This holistic view of care, which integrates self-awareness and empathy, is crucial in navigating the challenges of contemporary communication and fostering meaningful human connections.

Philip Koch

[Koch \(2024\)](#), "Holding Their Feet to Our Fires: Rural Emergency Services and the Struggle to Serve in the Face of Ignorance and Corruption", provided an insightful overview of the challenges faced by rural emergency services, particularly volunteer firefighters in Colorado. Koch highlighted the systemic issues that impede effective emergency response, including the politicization of board elections and the lack of knowledge among elected officials. He recounted the failed attempt to consolidate three fire protection districts due to misinformation and unethical tactics by opponents. Koch emphasized the need for informed and ethical governance in emergency services to ensure public safety.

At the Guardians 2024 Conference, Philip Koch, a professor at the Colorado School of Mines and a volunteer firefighter, delivered a com-

elling presentation on the critical yet often overlooked challenges faced by rural emergency services. Koch highlighted that military personnel receive more recognition than do emergency service workers, even though both frequently encounter dangerous situations. He illustrated the perilous nature of their work by describing Colorado firefighters' struggle to contain the Quarry Fire near Denver and went on to emphasize that organizational failures unnecessarily exacerbate these risks (Wertz et al., 2024).

Koch's dual roles as a scholar and firefighter provided a unique perspective on the financial and operational challenges faced by rural fire departments. He noted the high costs of essential equipment and the necessity for regular replacements to meet safety standards. Most fire departments in Colorado, organized as fire protection districts (FPDs), rely on property taxes for funding, which requires community approval (Colorado Legislature, 2023). Koch criticized the politicized nature of FPD board elections, which often lead to mismanagement due to the lack of expertise among board members.

The presentation also addressed the detrimental effects of political corruption within FPDs. Koch distinguished between financial and moral corruption, with the latter going beyond inappropriate acceptance of financial or political gains to obstruction of those working selflessly to protect public safety. He provided specific examples of how corrupt board members promote personal agendas at the expense of addressing critical issues such as increasing fire incidents and rising costs. Koch, who serves on both the Elk Creek and Hartsel FPDs, advocated for Consolidation of the two districts, which would combine them to reduce overhead, improve mutual aid, and enhance operational efficiency (Elk Creek FPD, 2024b). However, this proposal faced resistance from politically motivated opponents. He and his colleagues countered this by proposing Unification, a similar process to Consolidation that does not require changes to property taxes or voter approval and has garnered preliminary support from the respective Boards (Elk Creek FPD, 2024c). Koch's advocacy for Unification aims to improve public safety and support the dedicated emergency service workers who brave life-threatening blazes to serve their communities.

Koch concluded by emphasizing the importance of informed and proactive citizen involvement in addressing these structural challenges. His presentation underscored the need for fact-based governance and the prioritization of public safety over political agendas.

Natalie Burke

Burke (2024), "The Journey Towards Health Equity: Taking Uncomfortable Steps to Change Hearts and Minds", focused on the persistent inequities in healthcare and the broader implications of social identity, bias, and systemic racism for health outcomes. Burke highlighted the stark disparities in care practices, such as the lack of vaginal births after cesarean sections (VBACs) for African-American women. She emphasized the importance of addressing these inequities by embracing discomfort and understanding the impact of social identity on health equity. Burke provided actionable steps to achieve health equity, including disrupting bias and racism, re-examining racially biased algorithms, and teaching the history of systemic inequities.

At the Guardians 2024 conference, Natalie Burke made a powerful case for the need to confront uncomfortable truths to achieve substantial change. Burke, a renowned advocate for health equity, highlighted systemic inequities in healthcare, particularly those affecting African-American women and infants. She illustrated these disparities through a study revealing that, over a twelve-month period, African-American

women did not experience a single successful vaginal birth after cesarean section (VBAC) at a hospital where women of other racial groups did. This discrepancy underscored the urgent need for systemic transformation.

Burke's approach to addressing health inequities is rooted in Jack Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, which posits that changes in knowledge, thinking, and beliefs compel individuals to act differently (Mezirow, 1978). She argued that fostering perspective transformation requires a combination of logic, data, and compelling arguments grounded in fairness and justice. Burke shared her personal background as the child of Jamaican immigrants, which shaped her understanding of health equity, and recounted how her grandparents faced significant healthcare barriers upon moving to Georgia, sparking her interest in health outcomes and motivating her advocacy work.

Central to Burke's argument is the concept of social identity and its impact on health outcomes. She explained that social identity, defined by group affiliations, plays a crucial role in shaping experiences of privilege and oppression. Burke highlighted historical examples of public policies rooted in social identity, such as the state-sanctioned extermination of Native Americans and the Chinese Exclusion Act, demonstrating their long-lasting impacts on marginalized communities. She emphasized the distinction between health disparities, mere differences in outcomes, and health inequities, meaning disparities resulting from systemic, preventable, and unjust policies and practices.

Burke concluded by outlining steps to achieve health equity, advocating for embracing the complexity of social identity, fostering meaningful relationships across different identities, and equipping individuals with the tools to address bias and racism. She called for a re-examination of race-based algorithms and education on the history of systemic inequities. Ultimately, Burke's message was one of hope and action, urging the audience to commit to creating a more equitable healthcare system by addressing uncomfortable truths and fostering transformative change.

Joshua Rubin

Rubin (2024), "Musical Chairs for Darvomanics: How Anti-Learning Systems Enable Systemic Abuses of Power in Academia and What We Can Do Together to Help Them Learn", addressed systemic abuses of power within academic institutions, focusing on issues of sexual predation, racism, and the stifling of free speech. Rubin highlighted the importance of transparency, accountability, and the role of individuals in fostering institutional change. He recounted the systemic sexual abuse perpetrated by Dr. Robert Anderson at the University of Michigan and the critical role of survivors and allies in demanding accountability and justice. Rubin emphasized the need for learning health systems to prevent future abuses and promote institutional integrity.

At the Guardians 2024 conference, Joshua Rubin presented a critical analysis of the systemic issues plaguing academic healthcare systems, which hinder the realization of Learning Health Systems (LHSs). Rubin highlighted that despite the aspiration to become LHSs, these systems are often entrenched in anti-learning cultures due to ingrained structures and incentives that perpetuate abuses of power (Bravo-Moreno, 2022). He identified various manifestations of these systemic problems, including sexual predation, racism, antisemitism, plagiarism, and the suppression of free speech, which persist despite significant efforts to address them (Svrluga, 2022).

Rubin emphasized that these pervasive problems are interconnected, representing different facets of the same underlying issue: systemic

abuses of power. He introduced the concept of 'darvomanics,' individuals who exploit power through tactics like Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender roles (DARVO), which obstruct organizational learning and perpetuate harmful dynamics (Freyd, 1997; Harsey & Freyd, 2020). Rubin argued that fostering moral courage within these systems is essential to counteract these abuses and promote a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

In his professional capacity, Rubin has worked extensively to advance LHSs, which aim to use data from experiences to generate actionable knowledge and empower decision-makers (Friedman et al., 2015). He described the challenges of transforming non-learning systems into learning systems, particularly in environments where anti-learning cultures prevail. Rubin's advocacy for systemic change includes promoting transparency, supporting survivors of abuses, and leveraging his expertise to catalyze a novel academic discipline that addresses these systemic issues (Rubin & Ocepek, 2024).

Rubin concluded by advocating for three key actions to combat systemic abuses of power: speaking out when witnessing wrongdoing, supporting those affected by these abuses, and using one's skills to drive change. He underscored the importance of moral courage and collective action in creating environments that prioritize learning and improvement. By addressing these systemic challenges, Rubin envisions a future where academic healthcare systems can truly fulfill the promise of Learning Health Systems (Gladwell, 2015).

Olivia Sagan

Sagan (2024), "Loneliness, Social Cohesion and the Role of Art Making", explored how art can mitigate loneliness and enhance social cohesion. Sagan emphasized her phenomenological approach and the importance of understanding the cultural context and heterogeneity of loneliness experiences. She discussed the positive impact of community art making on well-being and social cohesion, citing studies that support the role of the arts in fostering human connection and alleviating loneliness. Sagan advocated for accessible, equitable, and inclusive community art programs to enhance social cohesion and well-being.

At the Guardians 2024 Conference, Olivia Sagan, a psychology professor at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, provided a compelling presentation on the interplay between loneliness, social cohesion, and the therapeutic potential of art making. Utilizing a phenomenological approach, Sagan explored how engaging in art can mitigate loneliness and enhance social cohesion within communities, thereby addressing significant public health concerns.

Sagan began by contextualizing the increasing academic and societal focus on loneliness, highlighting its detrimental effects on well-being and its complex relationship with social cohesion (Sagan, 2023). She cited the work of Hannah Arendt to frame her argument, demonstrating how art making facilitates the processes of being seen and showing oneself, which are crucial for alleviating loneliness and enhancing individual agency and social cohesion (Arendt, 1973; Arendt, 2018). Sagan emphasized that loneliness, often termed a "global health crisis" and a "behavioral epidemic," is intertwined with broader socio-economic factors and requires holistic, integrated approaches to be effectively addressed (Hayden-Nygren, 2019; Jeste et al., 2020).

Central to Sagan's discussion was the critique of the current literature on loneliness, which she argued often depoliticizes and medicalizes the issue, thus overlooking its socio-economic dimensions (McLennan and Ulijaszek, 2018). She pointed out the limitations of viewing loneliness as a personal failure and stressed the need for a broader understanding

that includes cultural context and social contagion (Van Staden and Coetzee, 2010). Additionally, Sagan called attention to the lack of research on loneliness among minoritized communities and individuals with severe mental illness or those living in poverty (Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017).

Sagan concluded by advocating for the integration of art making into community-building initiatives. She argued that participatory community arts projects can foster social cohesion by building social capital through bridging and bonding connections (Putnam, 2000; Putnam, 2020). Sagan's reanalysis of data from community arts activities demonstrated that art making facilitates connections on multiple levels, leading to a sense of validation, agency, and belonging. Drawing on Arendt's concept of agency, Sagan posited that art making allows individuals to appear as unique selves in the world, counteracting isolation and vulnerability, and promoting democratic participation and social cohesion (Arendt, 1973; Lucas, 2019).

Micha Burkhardt

Burkhardt et al. (2024), "Quantifying Similarities Between fMRI Processing Pipelines for Efficient Multiverse Analysis", focused on developing methods to improve the robustness and reproducibility of fMRI data analysis. Burkhardt highlighted the challenges associated with the inherent noise and complexity of fMRI data and the need for multiverse analysis to address the many choices researchers face when selecting a processing pipeline. He discussed the limitations of current approaches and proposed a novel method based on a graph convolutional neural network to assess the similarity between pipelines. Burkhardt emphasized the potential of this method to improve data analysis efficiency and reproducibility.

Pan-Jun Kim

Pan-Jun Kim's presentation, "Long-Term Innovative Potential of Genetic Research and its Suppression", focused on the impact of commercial pressures on scientific research, using genetic research as a case study. Kim discussed how industry-supported research often favors short-term gains and risk aversion, which can stifle long-term innovation. He analyzed data from papers and patents to examine the influence of commercial pressures on genetic research and highlighted the importance of new combinations of genes in fostering innovation. Kim emphasized the need for a balanced approach to research funding and direction to sustain long-term progress.

Adam Craig

Craig and C. Taswell (2024), "From Open Review to Reproducible Review: FAIR Metrics Analysis of Peer Reviews for Brain Informatics Literature", addressed the importance of developing the Fair Attribution to Indexed Reports (FAIR) Metrics to evaluate the quality of open peer reviews. Craig highlighted the challenges associated with assessing peer review quality and the need for metrics that encourage proper attribution and rigorous referencing practices. He discussed the design principles for FAIR Metrics and their application to peer reviews. Craig emphasized the potential of these metrics to improve the transparency, reproducibility, and overall quality of peer reviews.

Carl Taswell

C. Taswell (2024) delivered the closing remarks on “reproducibility, validity, and integrity” with “questions seeking answers”, emphasizing the importance of ongoing inquiry and reflection in the scientific community. He reiterated the need to address the persistent issue of willful disregard for reproducibility and integrity in scholarly research and the need for better accountability. Taswell termed the common pattern of abusive behavior by those in positions of power “grooming, gaslighting, ghosting, and gleaning” (4G) and encouraged the development of new metrics to measure collective, community, social, and public health. He called for societal action to promote civility, courtesy, tolerance, and respect in public discourse and concluded by urging attendees to contribute positively to their communities through volunteerism and acts of kindness.

In his closing remarks at the Guardians 2024 conference, Carl Taswell addressed the conference’s core themes of reproducibility, validity, and integrity in experimental science research. He emphasized the importance of maintaining rigorous standards and avoiding common fallacies and pitfalls to ensure the credibility and reliability of scientific findings. Taswell highlighted the 2024 focus on fostering civility, courtesy, tolerance, and respect in scholarly communication, as exemplified by the contributions of the invited speakers: Maggie Mulqueen, Philip Koch, Natalie Burke, Joshua Rubin, and Olivia Sagan.

Taswell discussed the persistent challenges in academia, particularly the “4G problem” of Grooming, Gleaning, Gaslighting, and Ghosting. He advocated for promoting citational justice and other forms of epistemic justice to counter these issues (Taswell, 2022). He also called for the development of new nosology and metrics to evaluate collective, community, social, and public health, emphasizing the need for accountability in scholarly research (Taswell, 2024). Taswell underscored the significance of peer review and collegiality among scholars to uphold the integrity of research and foster a collaborative academic environment (Craig et al., 2022).

In his presentation, Taswell referenced historical quotes from American Presidents to illustrate the importance of democracy and collective responsibility. He highlighted the role of effective communication and leadership in promoting understanding, trust, and collaboration to solve societal problems. Taswell’s advocacy for “people talking to people”, including “scholars talking to scholars”, with respect and civility aims to create a more inclusive and productive academic community (Maxwell, 2016; Stanier, 2016).

Looking ahead to the Guardians 2025 conference, Taswell emphasized the continuation of these discussions, with a specific focus on rebuilding commitments to peer review and addressing the information wars threatening global democracy (Athreya et al., 2023). He called for scholars to engage in meaningful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving to promote truth in science and integrity in research, ultimately contributing to a better world for all.

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