

2024

Annual Report



PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION



Rotman Institute
of Philosophy

ENGAGING SCIENCE.



Western

INSTITUTE AT A GLANCE

At the [Rotman Institute of Philosophy](#), we foster an inclusive interdisciplinary environment to explore collaborative opportunities on topics of societal relevance.

We are dedicated to convening and supporting interdisciplinary teams of experts as they work to advance research and to create knowledge.

Our focus on partnership with community organizations, policymakers, and academic colleagues worldwide, enables us to translate knowledge into action and impact.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Knowledge in the 21st Century



Societal Impact of Emerging Technologies



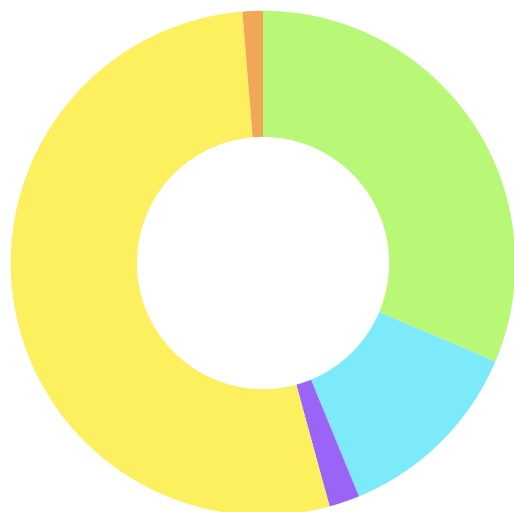
Foundations of Physics & the Mind



Challenges in Public Health

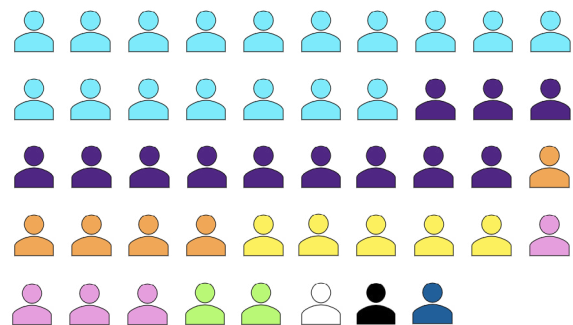


MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW



■ Faculty (48)
 ■ Graduate Students (81)
 ■ External Faculty (19)
 ■ Staff (2)
 ■ Postdoctoral Scholars (3)

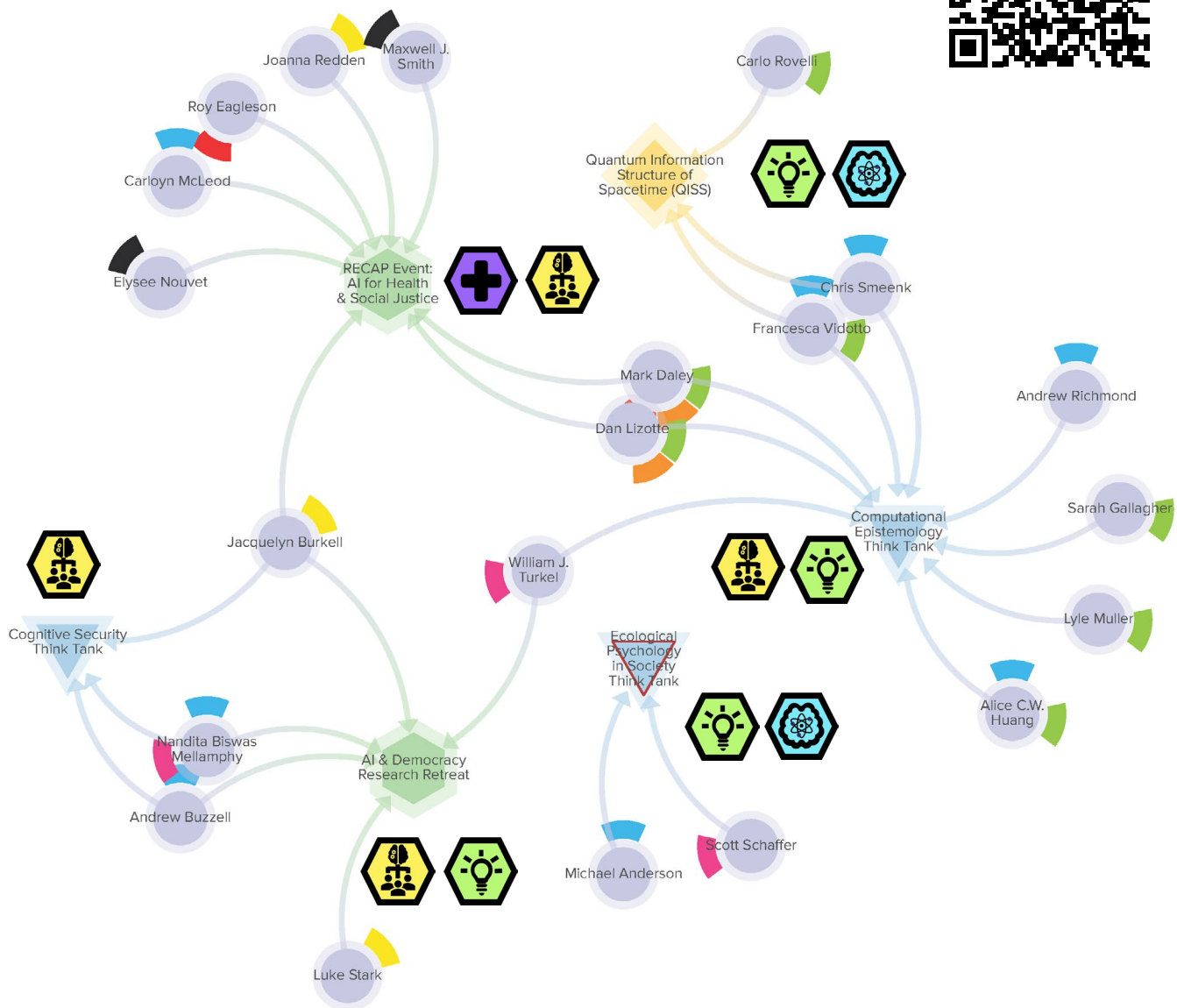
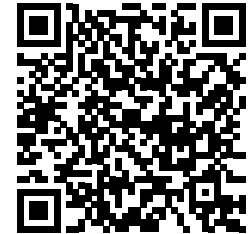
FACULTY DISTRIBUTION



■ Arts & Humanities (17)
 ■ Science (12)
 ■ Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry (5)
 ■ Social Science (5)
 ■ Information & Media Studies (4)
 ■ Health Sciences (2)
 ■ Engineering (1)
 ■ Ivey Business School (1)
 ■ Law (1)

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS MAP

This map shows some of the many connections among members and interdisciplinary activities the institute supports. Explore more connections in our [interactive map](#).



- Faculty of Arts & Humanities
- Faculty of Information & Media Studies
- Faculty of Science
- Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Social Science
- Faculty of Health Sciences

Activities:

- RECAP Event: AI for Health & Social Justice
- AI & Democracy Research Retreat
- Quantum Information Structure of Spacetime (QISS)
- Computational Epistemology Think Tank
- Cognitive Security Think Tank
- Ecological Psychology in Society Think Tank

AI FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



To explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used to advance health and social justice, members [Maxwell Smith](#) and [Dan Lizotte](#) were supported by the institute to bring together voices from a wide range of community and academic experts, including from social services, health care, public health, social science, philosophy, business, technology, education, engineering, and computer science.

Key themes discussed related to AI literacy, privacy, trust, power dynamics, and responsible use of various tools and technologies. Broader implications of AI, such as ethical frameworks, policy development, funding, and infrastructure, were also discussed.

The institute will continue to build on these conversations into 2025, with the goal of securing partnerships and funding that will enable collaborative research efforts that drive positive societal impact.



Co-hosted and facilitated a full-day partnership event with the [Research Engagement Collaborative Alliance with Partners \(RECAP\) program](#) team.



Leveraged diverse perspectives and developed relationships among 62 experts from multiple sectors.



Engaged with 19 external organizations, including Middlesex-London Health Unit, YMCA, London Health Sciences Centre, and London Cross Cultural Learner Centre.

PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES:

- Led to an “AI in Education Think Tank” submission.
- Established a partnership with the Thames Valley District School Board.
- Received a SSHRC Connection grant to implement a summer school for high school students.

INTERDISCIPLINARY THINK TANKS



The institute's [Interdisciplinary Think Tank Awards Program](#) encourages teams to look at research topics from diverse perspectives and different expert lenses. The goal is to advance knowledge and find solutions to longstanding and/or complex problems through interdisciplinary connections.

The awards help teams build their expertise and reputation to secure major external funding for strategic projects that will drive research excellence and lead to greater impact.

Three interdisciplinary teams funded in 2024, which led to three external grant submissions.

THINK TANK FEATURE: COMPUTATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY



Principal investigator [Chris Smeenk](#) assembled an interdisciplinary think tank team to study the opportunities and challenges of integrating new computational tools as part of scientific practice.



The team included nine faculty members, one postdoctoral scholar, and three trainees across three faculties.

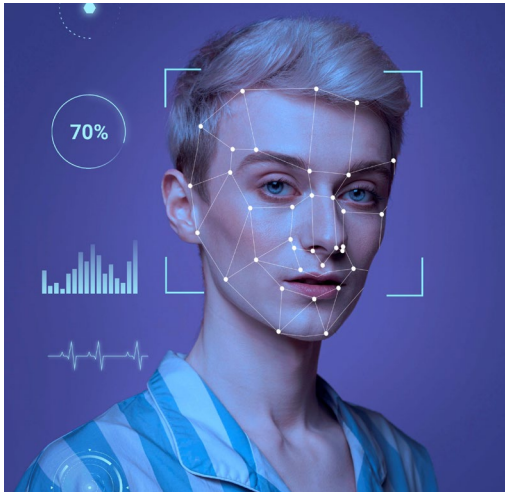
PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES:

- Recruited two new Rotman members to the team.
- Submitted a SSHRC Insight Development Grant application.
- Hosted a research retreat on “[Human-AI Relationships](#)” attended by 65 researchers.
- Launched a project titled “A Hybrid Human-AI Approach to Collective Biography in Technoscience” that will study the history of how computation aids human cognition.



EVENT SPOTLIGHT

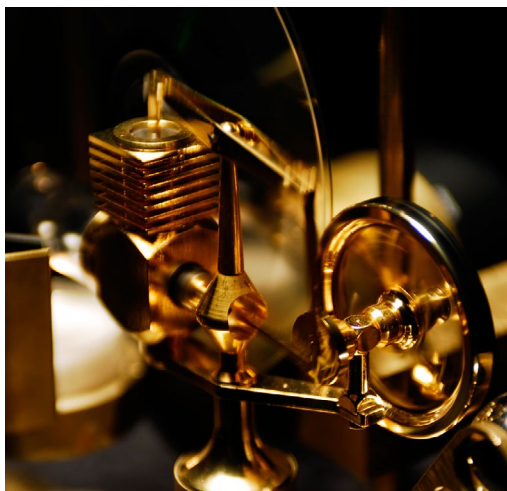
AI & DEMOCRACY RESEARCH RETREAT



With rapidly changing technologies and policies, this retreat focused on the future normative, political, and technological dimensions of anticipated effects AI will have on democracies. For this event, more than 40 researchers came together from across various disciplines at Western.

May 2024

PHILOSOPHY OF PHYSICS: FOUNDATION OF THERMODYNAMICS



This three-day workshop united 60 philosophers and physicists to explore how recent shifts in thermodynamics are reshaping foundational debates with an emphasis on the role of philosophy.

The event was funded by a SSHRC Connection Grant, the department of philosophy, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, and Western Research.

June 2024

PRAGMATISM & PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE CONFERENCE

Funded by a SSHRC Connection Grant, this three-day event examined how pragmatism sheds lights on scientific practice, success, and the interplay between metaphysics and epistemology.

More than 60 experts from Canada, USA, UK, Germany, and Australia participated.

September 2024



LIBRARY LECTURE SERIES: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our annual public lecture series is co-sponsored by and co-organized with the London Public Library and the department of philosophy.

Four experts from Western, York University and the University of Vermont presented on climate change as a moral and social crisis.

October 2024



INTERNATIONAL SPACETIME RESEARCH NETWORK



The [Quantum Information Structure of Spacetime \(QISS\)](#) grant supports a network of more than 100 fundamental physics and computer science researchers.

Our institute is one of 18 nodes stationed around the world, providing our members access to scholarly workshops, academic conferences, as well as faculty and student exchange programs.

This year, we hosted two long-term visiting fellows from Switzerland and Belgium; three medium-term fellows from the United States, Germany, and Switzerland; and four short-term fellows from Italy, Switzerland, Germany and the United States.

QISS NODES AROUND THE WORLD



THINK TANKS IN ACTION

COGNITIVE SECURITY

The cognitive security think tank studied the balance between legitimate influence and information threats, such as mis/dis-information, security, public interest, democratic norms, and risks of harm. It has led to an academic article and public outreach through [an article in *The Conversation*](#) and interviews with national and local media. A [workshop](#) is planned for 2025 to engage researchers across campus.



ECOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY

The ecological psychology in society think tank explored how the concept of 'affordances' can shed light on complex cognitive-social phenomena in the social sciences. It led to the submission of a SSHRC Insight Development Grant application and to planning a [workshop](#) to engage with international experts in the spring of 2025.

ROTMAN TRAINEES IN ACTION

ROTMAN GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE: SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY



Organized by graduate students, this [conference](#) featured student speakers from a range of disciplines, including physics, neuroscience, philosophy, and cultural studies. It was co-sponsored by the Society of Graduate Students, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, and the department of philosophy. A total of 35 people attended from across campus, including faculty members, graduate, and undergraduate students.



[Rotman's YouTube channel](#) had more than **9,400 subscribers**, more than **62,700 views**, and **810,800 impressions** in 2024 alone. Its reach extended beyond Canada to include the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, India, and many other countries.

EXTERNAL ADVISORY RETREAT



[Michael Anderson](#), who served as interim director of the institute from 2023 to 2024, collaborated with the chair of the [external advisory committee \(EAC\)](#), C. Kenneth Waters, and associate directors, Francesca Vidotto, Maxwell Smith, and Chris Smeenck, to organize a strategic retreat in September. The event featured an open research showcase in the morning, followed by a facilitated discussion of strategic priorities. The strategic session engaged EAC members, research advisory committee members, executive committee members, and Western leadership.

LOOKING AHEAD

In September 2024, Rotman Institute of Philosophy members convened to celebrate our successes, to discuss our motivation and goals, and to think about how to describe what we do.

The phrase that resonated most strongly with me was that our work is “philosophy, in conversation” with other sectors and disciplines.

The best conversations are never one-sided – they require both generosity and active participation by all parties. They lead us to shared understanding and closer connections. They surprise us by revealing what we have in common, and they help us to see the way forward.

I have been fortunate to participate in many conversations with Rotman members in my time at Western. As the institute’s new Director, I have the privilege of continuing those conversations, sparking new ones, and ensuring that our work has reach and impact to reflect the excellence and dedication of our members. I look forward to many new and exciting conversations in the years to come.

Dan Lizotte

Director, Rotman Institute of Philosophy



We extend our sincere gratitude to Michael Anderson for his dedicated service and exemplary leadership throughout his tenure as interim director.



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of Philosophy**

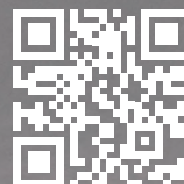
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