



# Introduction to the Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality

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## Abstract

In this introductory chapter, the authors outline the background of the handbook and the sad reasons why Lars Elleström could not finalize the project that he had sketched. Following this, a few of the “slogans” of intermedial studies are briefly mentioned and discussed, before all chapters in the handbook receive an opening comment.

## Keywords

Intermediality · Intermedial studies · Handbook in intermedial studies

The Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality aims to offer an updated overview of intermedial studies. Intermediality is broadly understood in this handbook as the study of interrelations and interactions among all forms of communicative media types, including transmedial phenomena, but with a certain emphasis on artistic media types. The handbook offers overviews of traditional research areas within the realm of intermediality. It also includes emerging and innovative perspectives on the field considering, for instance, neomaterialist approaches that extend the notion of medium and materiality. The authors represent a very broad range of scholarly

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disciplines and geographical contexts, and features contributions from established authorities as well as promising young researchers.

When Lars Elleström was approached by Palgrave Macmillan in 2020 with the request of editing a handbook on intermedial studies, he accepted after some hesitation, because he understood that it would be an enormous task to sketch the outlines of a handbook as well as to access and later edit all the material that such a handbook would demand. Elleström accepted the invitation and then gathered an editorial group of scholars from North and South America as well as Europe, namely Jørgen Bruhn, Asun López-Varela Azcárate, Miriam de Paiva Vieira, and Mary Simonson, and the group started working on the overall layout and sending out call for papers as well as addressing individual scholars with particular research topics that should be covered.

Lars Elleström and the editorial group agreed on having an overview that covered intermediality as a deep historical and geographically broad phenomenon, because we wished to end the tendency to contemplate intermediality as something contemporary and centered in Europe and North America. It was vital to cover both artistic and nonartistic phenomena, which is an important trend in contemporary intermedial studies – and we were eager to provide some kind of overview of intermedial studies as an academic endeavor. In the middle of the productive editorial process, Lars Elleström unexpectedly and shockingly passed away in December 2021, leaving family, friends, and colleagues in sorrow and distress. The new editorial group, namely Jørgen Bruhn, Asun López-Varela Azcárate, and Miriam de Paiva Vieira, accepted the request from Palgrave to continue the editing process.

The handbook offers extensive overviews of classical and emerging research areas within the realm of intermediality. The goal is to guide readers in discovering the many facets of intermedial theories and practices, without excluding innovative perspectives. The volume is conceived at a moment of increasing interdisciplinarity and media convergence, and it is ever more vital for scholars to think and understand debates across disciplinary boundaries. Intermedial studies already do this on some level, and it is in their very nature to model cross-disciplinary and comparative work. Therefore, the handbook is not just about demonstrating the range, variety, and conceptual differences within the field, but about placing different perspectives and approaches in dialogue with one another, and demonstrate the permeability, and perhaps even the inadequacy of disciplinary, historical, and other boundaries that have traditionally been used to organize knowledge production. This includes discussing how intermedial studies engage in or depart from adjacent but distinct areas of inquiry such as media history, media studies, media archaeology, and image studies, among others.

Historically, Europe was probably the initial center of intermedial research, but the handbook looks toward scholarship about or rooted in other geographical and cultural contexts, where interest in the field has been growing for decades and where crucial work is being done. The book is thus an invitation and an introduction to a global field of intermedial studies that acknowledges worldwide flows and counter-flows of media and knowledge production, and the contributions consider intermediality across multiple spatiotemporal dimensions involving intra-actions

and inter-actions of all components. The framework is organized centripetally, seeking to organize ideas and concepts, and at the same time centrifugally, broadening the discussion of various geographically and culturally defined theories and practices.

As claimed by Kamilla Elliot when discussing the field of adaptation studies, the “best places to find larger issues addressed today and tomorrow are field companions and handbooks, as a brief survey of their contents attests” (Elliott 2017, n.p.). Earlier works do exist that explicitly or implicitly have attempted to give an overview of intermedial studies, such as *Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality* (2007, Eds.: Arvidson; Askander, Bruhn, Führer), *Media inter Media: Essays in Honor of Claus Clüver* (2009, Ed. Glaser), parts of the important series *Studies in Intermediality* (2006–2019, Ed. Bernhart et al). Two recent volumes are perhaps particularly important to mention: In 2015, Gabriele Rippl edited the ambitious and comprehensive *Handbook of Intermediality. Literature – Image – Sound – Music* (Rippl 2015). In the “Introduction,” the editor gives a thorough and engaging introduction to discussions and terminology as well as many of the thorny questions in the field. After the “Introduction” follows 34 chapters, often by established scholars, divided into three parts: first “Text and Image” (the largest section), followed by “Music, Sound, and Performance,” and finally a short section on “Intermedial Methodology and Intersectionalities.” Its focus is intermediality and literature but in a wide variety of forms which is not surprising given Rippl’s research interests. It also reflects that the handbook was the first volume in a De Gruyter series, *Handbooks of English and American Studies: Texts and Theory*. Less comprehensive, but covering a wider field of communicative forms, Jørgen Bruhn and Beate Schirmmacher’s *Intermedial Studies: An Introduction to Meaning Across Media* (Bruhn and Schirmmacher 2021) offers an entrance to the field of intermedial studies, very much based on the multimodal framework of intermediality constructed by Lars Elleström and colleagues at the Linnaeus University Center for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies in Sweden. Conceptualized more as a kind of advanced textbook and less as a theoretical or historical overview, Bruhn and Schirmmacher’s book is meant to facilitate intermedial analysis of anything from ekphrasis and video games to rock music performances and climate change communication. The goal of *The Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality* – as hinted above – is to offer an outline of the productive position of intermedial studies today. We both hope and believe that this handbook testifies to this.

The purpose of this short introduction is not to offer an overview of intermedial studies or intermedial phenomena as it stands today or how the field developed. Instead, it might be useful to point out a few simple guiding principles that are perhaps best covered by way of some of the slogans or catchphrases that for some reason has been part and parcel of the development of media and intermedial studies. The earliest one arguably being McLuhan’s notion from the 1960s that “media are the extensions of man” and that we, because of the new medial conditions, live in a “global village” (some of the ideas are collected in McLuhan 2001), which opened up media studies to study the extremely broad field of anything that in some sense

facilitates human beings' relation to the world. Later on, another North-American scholar, W.J.T. Mitchell, coined the intermedial slogan that "all media are mixed media" (2005), basically expressing opposition to Clement Greenberg's arch-modernist idea of pure medial forms, and thus carving out an aesthetic and ideological field of intermedial studies. In a distinctly more European tradition of thinking, Friedrich Kittler offered a darker war metaphor that "media define our situation" where "situation" referred to a "military strategic" discourse (as discussed in Kittler et al. 1999; Mitchell and Hansen 2010).

McLuhan's understanding of media as "extensions of man" marks the increasingly widespread practice of seeing a conventional and delimited understanding of media as unproductive. Instead, media and intermedial studies are not limited to fictional or artistic works but can deal with basically all imaginable medial expressions. Mitchell's oft-repeated catchphrase "all media are mixed media" is an argument for seeing all communicative forms as being mixed and worked as something of a rallying cry in intermedial studies in the 2000's. Today the slogan appears less provocative, but the idea that intermedial studies, in parallel with multimodal insights, offer a privileged vision of the hybridity of all imaginable meaning production is still pertinent. Kittler's war rhetoric should remind us, like Mitchell did and still does, that media practices and histories are always embedded in power relations that need to be untangled, as several writers in this handbook do. More recently, in what turned out to be his last interview, Lars Elleström, in an uncharacteristically broad and almost casual phrase, claimed that "everything is intermedial" (Elleström et al. 2020). Apparently, this phrase cumulates the other slogans into one suggestive research program: why not see all the human and more than human relationships to the world as extended, medially mixed relations to a world embedded in power relations but probably also exhibiting some relatively consistent though historically changing structures? This, in a sense, is what the many brilliant contributions to this handbook, seen as a collective effort, manage to do.

The handbook follows an outline of four parts, where the first includes broader, systematic overviews of general questions, and the three following parts are very roughly divided into a chronological sequence. **Part I**, "Histories, Schools, Theories, and Methods of Intermedial Research," offers accounts of the development of the field of intermediality and its core issues. It contains articles on histories, theories, and methods of intermediality. Because intermedial studies have grown out of a variety of cultural roots and research fields, there are several stories to tell about the historical development and theoretical positions.

An overview of intermedial studies is offered by ► [Chap. 2, "Intermediality: Introducing Terminology and Approaches in the Field"](#) delineated by Marina Grishakova, who aims at both conveying and opening the idea of intermediality as it is understood in recent and contemporary research literature. In ► [Chap. 3, "An Updated Survey of Early Interart and Intermediality Roots: Claus Clüver"](#), Thaïs Diniz and Solange Oliveira trace the progress of Claus Clüver's work on intermedial studies and his recent concerns with the future of the discipline.

In ► [Chap. 4, "Ekphrasis: Intermedial and Anglophone Perspectives"](#), Gabriele Rippl and Sofie Behluli give a concise overview of the research field in the Western

tradition and highlight newer trends that bring ekphrasis in conversation with, for instance, ecocriticism, the cognitive sciences, and digital humanities. Also from a historical perspective, Jarkko Toikkanen surveys in ► [Chap. 5, “Intermediality and Medium Specificity”](#) through its core concept. In ► [Chap. 6, “Intermedialities, Societies, and Power Histories,”](#) Jürgen E. Müller tackles a selection of paradigmatic intermedial power plays based on several historical cases, ranging from prehistorical caves, medieval mystery plays, tapestries, nodes of intermedial networks of colporteurs/pedlars in modern times, TV news, and internet platforms to postmodern documentaries. The chapter’s major challenge lies in the development of historical and stable categories for the reconstruction of social functions of intermedial phenomena.

Relating to some historically strong environments, Rémy Besson presents the intermedial perspective developed by the so-called Montreal School of Intermedial Studies in ► [Chap. 7, “Montreal School of Intermediality: Beyond Media Studies.”](#) Including the work of Despoix, Mariniello, Méchoulan, and Villeneuve, the work related to the Montreal School aims less at the study of media for its own sake, than at a reflection of political and philosophical issues connected to media and mediation. Also taking as a starting point the Montreal-based, international, and peer-reviewed journal *Intermédialités/Intermediality*, ► [Chap. 8, “Case Studies as a Heuristic of Intermediality,”](#) by Marion Froger and Caroline Bem, explores how case studies published between the journal’s inception in 2003 have given rise to a heuristic of intermediality. By delving into this archive, the chapter performs itself as a case study.

Written by Beate Schirmacher and Jørgen Bruhn, ► [Chap. 9, “Linnaeus University Center for Intermedial and Multimodal Studies and the Legacy of Lars Elleström,”](#) provides an overview of the main contributions of the so-called Växjö school to the field of intermedial studies. The chapter also presents Elleström’s rich contribution to the field. To encompass the reach of intermedial studies in non-European centers, Camila Figueiredo, Miriam Vieira, Ana Domingos, and Érika Vieira offer ► [Chap. 10, “Intermediality in Brazil: A Diachronic Survey,”](#) while Rong Ou makes in ► [Chap. 11, “An Overview of Intermedial Studies in China.”](#)

From a theoretical position, Tomáš Chudý and Richard Müller argue for a reversal in weighing the importance of the cognitive versus the technical dimension of the medium as this can be observed in intermedial studies. The consequence has been that intermedial research has tended to lose sight of the internal logic of media evolution. ► [Chapter 12, “Intermediality, Semiotics, and Media Theory,”](#) presents a reconceptualization that contributes to the qualification of the medium where technics and semiotics are studied together. In ► [Chap. 13, “Intermediality and/in Translation,”](#) Marta Kaźmierczak discusses intersemiotic transformation into a different medium and its similarities with interlingual translation. In ► [Chap. 14, “Visual Citation in Intermedial Relations,”](#) Ana Luiza Ramazzina-Ghirardi offers a critical overview of the different uses of visual citations and examines its working when applied to different media and intermedial processes. Meanwhile, in ► [Chap. 15, “Reformulating the Theory of Literary Intermediality: A Genealogy from \*Ut Pictura Poesis\* to Poststructuralist In-Betweenness,”](#) Bowen Wang argues that the notion of intermediality should be

reformulated as a conceptual and ideological extension of *ut pictura poesis* framed within a poststructuralist in-betweenness.

In ► [Chap. 16, “Transmedial Narratology and Transmedia Storytelling,”](#) Raphaël Baroni, Anaïs Goudmand, and Marie-Laure Ryan explore the differences in the notion of transmediality, exemplified by transmedial narratology and transmedia storytelling. The chapter describes the evolution of narratology from a language-centered to a transmedial field of study as well as the various manifestations of transmedia storytelling and its theoretical implications. Liviu Lutas proposes that narration is a transmedial phenomenon in ► [Chap. 17, “The Narrator: A Transmedial Device,”](#) as a mental construction in the process of communication at the basis of several media types.

► [Chapter 18, “Intermediality, Teaching, and Literacy,”](#) by Ana Domingos, Érika Vieira, Miriam Vieira, and Camila Figueiredo, assembles and comments upon methods of intermediality to discuss the issue of literacy and the systematic teaching of intermediality. ► [Chapter 19, “Intermedia, Multimedia, and Media,”](#) by Ken Friedman and Lily Diaz-Kommonen aims at recovering the lost history of intermedia with a focus on the contribution by Dick Higgins and the international laboratory for experimental art, design, and music, known as Fluxus (of which Friedman was himself a member). To close the first part, in ► [Chap. 20, “Citational Aesthetics: For Intermediality as Interrelation,”](#) Mieke Bal brings intermediality in contact with a concept of inter-temporality called “preposterous history,” in which quotation and citation are specific ways of integrating older and newer media products and their connections to different media. The chapter develops a variety of forms of citation through a close look at cases from recent media history. The integration of theory and the practice of analysis of concrete cases is also an element of the chapter’s insights regarding the teachability of intermediality.

**Part II, “Intermedial Perspectives on Media Until the Nineteenth Century: A Living Legacy,”** and **Part III, “Intermedial Perspectives on Media in the Twentieth Century: New Mediascapes in a Growing World,”** explore intermedial facets of communication from ancient times and to the turn of the twenty-first century. The parts demonstrate the broad applicability of intermedial theories, methods, and concepts. Importantly, each part includes articles on a broad variety of cultural settings (not only Western), media types (including nonartistic as well as artistic), and themes and topics (what the media communicate). Following the terminology of Elleström, “media integration” perspectives as well as “media transformation” perspectives are applied, or in other words, synchronic as well as diachronic analyses of intermedial relations are covered.

In her ► [Chap. 21, “Traditional Chinese Painting: An Intermedial Play of Sister Arts Since the Eleventh Century,”](#) Rong Ou explores the complex interaction of different media in traditional Chinese painting. In ► [Chap. 22, “The Anchor and the Dolphin: A History of Emblems,”](#) Heidrun Führer, Cecilia Mustaf, and Viktor Kovács explore the history of emblems in relation to tropes such as symbol, ekphrasis, or allegory, and deconstruct the common narrative of emblems. With early modern and contemporary examples, the chapter demonstrates the historical,

technological, and sociocultural background directing the fluid expectations on this genre.

In ► [Chap. 23, “The Age of Wonder and Entertainment: An Introduction to Intermedial Networks in Baroque Culture,”](#) Massimo Fusillo and Mattia Petricola study the baroque mediascape in Europe from the perspective of intermedial studies, including baroque aesthetics and the emotional responses that baroque media products strived to elicit. ► [Chapter 24, “Intermediality in Seventeenth-Century Baroque Celebrations in Hispanic America: Commissions, Poetry, and Ephemeral Architecture,”](#) by Mauricio Vásquez Arias and Andrés Burbano Valdés, is concerned chiefly with a set of early forms of media convergence and intermediality in the Hispanic-American context, associated with what is now defined as curation, poetry, and ephemeral architecture. As for ► [Chap. 25, “Cabinets of Curiosities as a Transhistorical and Intermedial Phenomenon,”](#) Dominika Bugno-Narecka considers cabinets of curiosities as intermedial composites, with objects connected to the significance, power, and intellectual abilities of the collector. The author claims that, despite the changes, the media type still convey the image of the world and communicate states of knowledge of a particular era and a specific collector. Moreover, Víctor Huertas-Martín discusses the relations between Shakespeare’s dramas and intermediality on stage, screen, and in social media. ► [Chapter 26, “Crossing Media Borders: From Intermedial Shakespeares to Shakespearean Intermediality”](#) shows that in this case, intermediality depends on creative interpretive decisions and receivers’ perceptions.

► [Chapter 27, “Metareference in the Nineteenth-Century Pictorial Press and Beyond”](#) by Sonya Petersson explores metareference as a medial and semiotic phenomenon within the nineteenth-century pictorial press and art culture. In particular, the chapter examines the Swedish journal *Ny illustrerad tidning* (1865–1900). The chapter’s metareferential examples are highlighted as tools to reexamine established discourses on media, mediation, and representation. In ► [Chap. 28, “Picturing Music in the Nineteenth century,”](#) Bálint Veres discusses the interplay of music and its surrounding verbal and visual discourses, such as its depiction in a painting, considering also early examples of the audiovisual experience and their aesthetic and historical preconditions in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chiel Kattenbelt and Robin Nelson present a threefold proposal in ► [Chap. 29, “Prototype Models of Intermedial Praxis \(Wagner, Kandinsky, Brecht\) and Their Resonances in Contemporary Performance.”](#) Firstly, they identify historical prototypes of interrelations between mediums from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, which sought new intermedial forms of artistic expression aimed at particular ends. Secondly, the authors focus on the effects and affects intended to be achieved in their historical contexts. Finally, the chapter updates the trajectories of these prototypes as they have impacted the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

**Part III** opens with ► [Chap. 30, “Intermediality and Liveness at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,”](#) by Mary Simonson. It surveys scholarship on intermedial performance at the turn of the twentieth century focusing particularly on its invocation in interdisciplinary studies of both live theatre and pre- and early cinema technologies. Niklas Salmose contextualizes the historical and aesthetic era of high

modernist fiction (1918–1939) in ► [Chap. 31, “The Sonification of Modernist Fiction: A Critical Review”](#) by concentrating specifically on its multimodal and sonorous qualities. The chapter briefly discusses conceptualizations and taxonomies of musico-literary theory as well as musico-literary criticism. Kate Newell, in ► [Chap. 32, “Adaptation and Sound,”](#) considers intermedial relations in terms of sound technologies and the related adaptive engagement, as well as the critical and historical conversation generated in response to those relationships. Beate Schirmmacher explores in ► [Chap. 33, “Music Transformation in Literature”](#) how intermedial relations with music transform literary narration and expression. Elleström’s concept of media transformation and structures of transmediation are also explored.

From a visual perspective, Márcia Arbex-Enrico studies collage from its emergence in the avant-garde (from cubism, dadaism, and futurism to surrealism). Thus, ► [Chap. 34, “Collage as a Creative Act: Emergence, Displacement, and Re-signification”](#) relates to intertextual practices, such as citation, by sharing the principles of borrowing and of appropriation as well as hybrid forms of media combination, such as the object-poem and the collage-novel. In ► [Chap. 35, “Anthropophagic Appropriation and Intermediality,”](#) Anna Camati argues that anthropophagic appropriation or cultural anthropophagy is a form of non-subaltern intertextuality and that, seen from a diachronic perspective, it is a specific mode of creative media transformation that can be located within the broader scholarly field of intermediality. In ► [Chap. 36, “Late Twentieth-Century Intermedia Poetry in the Americas,”](#) Rebecca Kosick relies on Irina Rajewsky’s work to demonstrate the breadth of intermedial practices within the Americas and the elasticity of recent American poetry by drawing examples primarily from the interval between two peaks of intermedia fervor, roughly from the 1960s to the 1990s.

► [Chapter 37, “Photojournalism and Beyond,”](#) by Jan Baetens and Domingo Sánchez-Mesa, considers photojournalism as an intermedial practice and tackles historical and theoretical questions, both intermediality as the copresence and interaction of different media within a single medium as well as transmediality as the distribution of a story in a different medium. ► [Chapter 38, “Media Borders in a Post-Media Age: The Historical and Conceptual Co-evolution of Cinema, Television, Video, and Computer Screens,”](#) by Andrea Virginás, offers an overview of literature theorizing the current condition defined by electronic screens, often called a post-cinema age, the age of expanded or fragmented cinema, or indeed named the spatial turn in the analysis of electronically mediated audiovisual communication.

By taking computer games as a qualified medium situated in an intermedial network of other qualified and technical media and media cultures, ► [Chapter 39, “The Qualified Medium of Computer Games: Form and Matter, Technology, and Use,”](#) by Ida Kathrine Hammeleff Jørgensen, offers an overview of the state of the art of gaming studies and sheds light on the relations between games and other media.

**Part IV**, “Intermedial Perspectives on Media in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges in Contemporary Society,” is the last in the handbook, and it is devoted to contemporary intermedial perspectives, including recent technological developments,



with a special emphasis on urgent societal issues. This last part introduces the theme of ► [Chap. 40, “The Ecological Crisis and Intermedial Studies”](#) in which Jørgen Bruhn, Matilda Davidsson, and Niklas Salmose argue that there is a need for a method of intermedial comparison that can encompass different disciplines and media types dealing with the ecological crisis. In the chapter, an intermedial toolbox is combined with the field of ecocriticism. Understanding video games as tools for representing complexity, ► [Chap. 41, “Simulated Climate in Ecological Games: Mediating Climate Change to Endow Players with Transformative Agency,”](#) by Péter Kristóf Makai and Kazimierz Wielki, introduces the reader to the challenges of using games as media for communicating climate change and how to use ecocritical analysis done on climate change games in order to raise awareness.

In ► [Chap. 42, “Intermediality in Theme Parks,”](#) Florian Freitag provides readers with a broad overview of the plurimediality of theme parks and their multisensory, immersive experiences. The chapter also studies transmedia conglomerates and the distribution of transmedia franchises, as well as the paramediality associated with theme parks. Vadim Keylin, in his turn, offers an overview of contemporary research into technological and aesthetic aspects of interactive audio from the fields of sound studies, video games studies, media studies, and, to a lesser extent, music sociology and HCI. His ► [Chap. 43, “Interactive and Participatory Sound”](#) concentrates on three principal domains: interactive and participatory sound art; sound in immersive media (video games and VR); and sound practices of online participatory cultures. Jens Schröter relates to crucial phenomena in digital media culture in ► [Chap. 44, “Intermediality and Computer Simulation”](#) by doing a close analysis of a popular movie, *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), to show how computer simulation allows for new forms of “transmaterial” intermediality. As for ► [Chap. 45, “Intermediality and Digital Fiction,”](#) Bartosz Lutostański presents an overview of the evolution of digital environments from hypertext to apps and digital fiction in connection to intermediality.

From historical analysis to elaborations on the relationship between metamedia and metacommunication, ► [Chap. 46, “Intermediality and Metamediality: From Analog Representations to Digital Resources,”](#) by Klaus Bruhn Jensen, explores the ethical and political implications of metamedia. Meanwhile, the spatiotemporal and sensorial affordances of Spotify’s musical advice to the complex semiotic modalities of the “Popular Highlights” in the Kindle interface is discussed in Maja Bak Herrie’s ► [Chap. 47, “The Recommended Experience: Engaging Networked Media Platforms with Intermediality.”](#) Lastly, the chapter by Asun López-Varela Azcárate, ► [Chap. 48, “Posthuman Intermedial Semiotics and Distributed Agency for Sustainable Development,”](#) introduces intermediality in a discussion on the possible scaling of agentive capacities beyond the human and onto the material medium itself. The chapter summarizes main ideas in the neomaterialist mind-matter continuum of philosophical posthumanism and their relation to Charles S. Peirce to offer a theorization of semiotic process ontology that aligns intermedial studies with sustainable development.

The handbook’s editors hold a strong belief that Lars Elleström would have deeply appreciated the final outcome of the project he initiated. We feel he would

have cherished the project's high-quality and diverse contributions, especially knowing many of the contributors personally. Elleström would probably have been even happier to see that a host of new, talented scholars were interested in contributing to the collective work. He would have been enthusiastic about the fact that there is now a thriving international community that, with both divergent and convergent views as well as recognizable terms, discusses what had come to be his grand academic task, to both organize, rethink, to participate in intermedial studies making it a blooming field within contemporary humanities.

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