

# Towards Graph Foundation Models

## WWW 2024 Tutorial

**Philip S. Yu, Chuan Shi, Cheng Yang, Yuan Fang, Lichao Sun**



SINGAPORE  
MANAGEMENT  
UNIVERSITY



# Welcome to Big AI era!

## ➤ Driving Forces:

- Technology advances
- Availability of big data for training
- Availability of powerful GPU

## ➤ Performance improves with size.

- “The race to scale” begins...

## ➤ The new thing (2021--)

- **HUGE** neural networks
- **VAST** amounts of training data
- **MASSIVE** compute power for training

## On the Opportunities and Risks of

Bommasani\* Drew A. Hudson Ehsan Adeli Russ Altman Simran Arora Rishi  
Arx Michael S. Bernstein Jeannette Bohg Antoine Bosselut Emma Brunskill Sydney von  
O’Neil Shyamal Buch Dallas Card Rodrigo Castellon Niladri Chatterji Erik Bry  
ceen Kathleen Creel Jared Quincy Davis Dorottya Demszky Chris Donahue Annie Cl  
mentum umbouya Esin Durmus Stefano Ermon John Etchemendy Kawin Ethayarajh Moussa Do  
nato Chelsea Finn Trevor Gale Lauren Gillespie Karan Goel Noah Goodman Li Fei-Fei  
Grossman Neel Guha Tatsunori Hashimoto Peter Henderson John Hewitt Shelby C  
El E. Ho Jenny Hong Kyle Hsu Jing Huang Thomas Icard Saahil Jain Dani  
Shankar Pratyusha Kalluri Siddharth Karamcheti Geoff Keeling Fereshte Khani Dan Juraf  
Khattab Pang Wei Koh Mark Krass Ranjay Krishna Rohith Kuditipudi Omar  
Kumar Faisal Ladhak Mina Lee Tony Lee Jure Leskovec Isabelle Levent Ananya  
Ling Lisa Li Xuechen Li Tengyu Ma Ali Malik Christopher D. Manning Xia  
Chen Kiran Birchandani Eric Mitchell Zanele Munyikwa Suraj Nair Avani Narayan Suvir M  
Neyyavaran Ben Newman Allen Nie Juan Carlos Niebles Hamed Nilforoshan Deepak N  
Ouyang Giray Ogut Laurel Orr Isabel Papadimitriou Joon Sung Park Chris Piech Julian Nyarl  
Percy Liang Christopher Potts Aditi Raghunathan Rob Reich Hongyu Ren Eva Pe  
roni Yong Cheng Yusuf Roohani Camilo Ruiz Jack Ryan Christopher Ré Dorsa Sadigh Frieda Sc  
hlagawa Keshav Santhanam Andy Shih Krishnan Srinivasan Alex Tamkin Shiori S  
Tan Armin W. Thomas Florian Tramèr Rose E. Wang William Wang Bohan Wu Rohan Taori  
Yuhuai Wu Sang Michael Xie Michihiro Yasunaga Jiaxuan You Matei Zaharia Jiajun Wu  
Zhang Tianyi Zhang Xikun Zhang Yuhui Zhang Lucia Zheng Kaitlyn Zhou Michael Zi

Center for Research on Foundation Models (CRFM)  
Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI)  
Stanford University

...ing a paradigm shift with the rise of models (e.g., BERT, DALL-E, GPT-3) trained on broad AI is undergo  
ly using self-supervision at scale) that can be adapted to a wide range of downstream tasks. data (general  
models) foundation models to underscore their critically central yet incomplete character. We call these  
provides a thorough account of the opportunities and risks of foundation models, ranging This report p  
abilities to ~~language~~ vision robotic manipulation reasoning human interaction) and ~~from their en~~

# Foundation Models

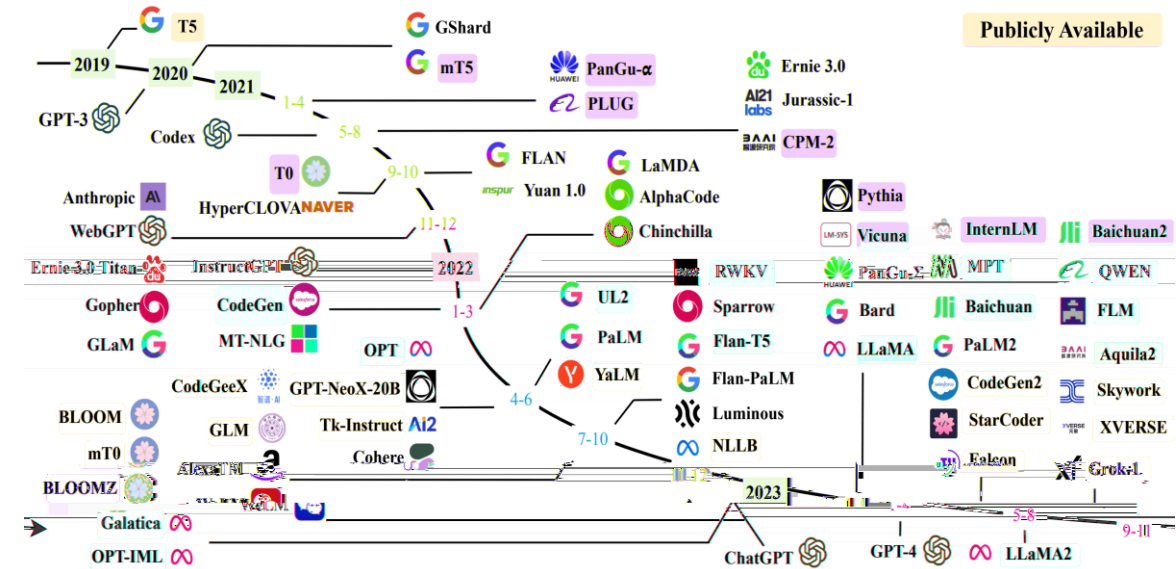
A foundation model is a model that is *trained on broad data* and can be *adapted to a wide range of downstream tasks*.

## ➤ Big Idea

- Pretrain model, then fine-tune
- Revolutionize many research domains
  - Language
  - Video...

## ➤ Representative Examples

- Large Language Models (LLMs)
  - E.g., ELMo with millions of parameters to GPT-4 with trillions of parameters.
- Video Models: SORA



# Graph Foundation Models

A graph foundation model (GFM) is a model *pre-trained on extensive graph data*, adapted for *diverse downstream graph tasks*.

## ➤ Motivation

- Existing LLMs struggle to model graph data
  - Euclidean data v.s. non-Euclidean data
- Existing LLMs struggle to handle graph tasks
  - node/edge/graph-level tasks

## ➤ Scope of this tutorial

- Concept of graph foundation model
- Recent progress
  - GNN-based methods
  - LLM-based methods
  - GNN+LLM-based methods
- Future directions

## Towards Graph Foundation Models: A Survey and Beyond

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ZHUYUAN LU, JUNZE CHEN, YIBO LI, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, China  
MENGMEI ZHANG, TING BAI, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, China  
YUAN FANG, Singapore Management University, Singapore  
LICHAO SUN, Lehigh University, USA  
PHILIP S. YU, University of Illinois Chicago, USA  
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Foundation models have emerged as critical components in a variety of artificial intelligence applications, and the field of foundation models has witnessed significant success in natural language processing and several other domains. Meanwhile, the field of graph machine learning is witnessing a paradigm transition from shallow methods to more sophisticated deep graph machine learning approaches. The capabilities of foundation models to generalize and adapt to various graph tasks. Despite this burgeoning interest, there is a noticeable lack of clear definitions and systematic analyses pertaining to Graph Foundation Models (GFMs), and this new domain. To this end, this article introduces the concept of Graph Foundation Models (GFMs), and offers an exhaustive explanation of their key characteristics and underlying technologies. We proceed to classify the existing work related to GFMs into three distinct categories, based on their dependence on graph neural networks and large language models. In addition to providing a thorough review of the current state of GFMs, this article also outlooks potential avenues for future research in this rapidly evolving domain.

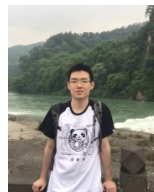
# Outline



**Philip S. Yu** University of Illinois Chicago  
09:00-09:05 Introduction (5mins)



**Chuan Shi** Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications  
09:05-09:40 Overview (35mins)



**Cheng Yang** Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications  
09:40-10:30 GNN-based Methods (50mins)



10:30-11:00 Break (30mins)



**Yuan Fang** Singapore Management University  
11:00-12:00 LLM/GNN+LLM-based Methods (50mins)



**Host: Chuan Shi** Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications  
12:00-12:30 Panel (30mins)



北京邮电大学

Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications

# Towards Graph Foundation Models

## Part I: Overview

**Prof. Chuan Shi**

**[shichuan@bupt.edu.cn](mailto:shichuan@bupt.edu.cn)**

**BEIJING UNIVERSITY OF POSTS AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS**



## √ Graph Foundation Models

- Progress in Related Work
- Challenges and Future Direction

# Foundation Models

*A foundation model is any model that is **trained on broad data** and can be **adapted to a wide range of downstream tasks**.<sup>[1]</sup>*

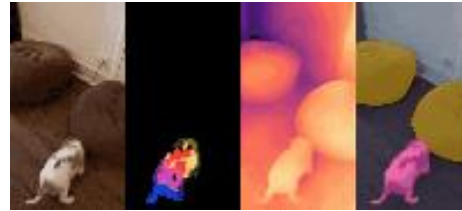
## Language



 **OpenAI** × **GPT4**

Language foundation models show initial signs of universal AI capabilities.

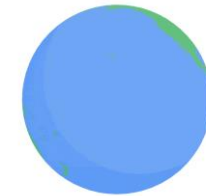
## Vision



 **Meta** × **DINOv2**

Vision foundation models exhibit strong image understanding capabilities.

## Speech



 × **USM**

Speech foundation models show the capability to recognize hundreds of languages.

Foundation models have become a reality in domains like language, vision, and speech.

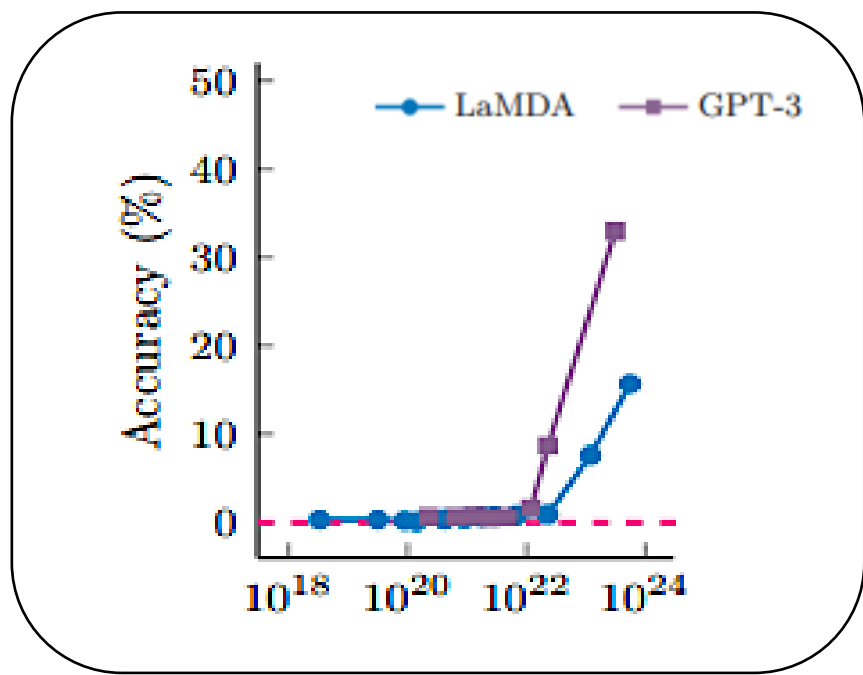
[1] R. Bommasani, D. A. Hudson, E. Adeli, R. Altman, S. Arora, S. von Arx, M. S. Bernstein, J. Bohg, A. Bosselut, E. Brun-skill, et al., “On the opportunities and risks of foundation models,” arXiv preprint arXiv:2108.07258, 2021.



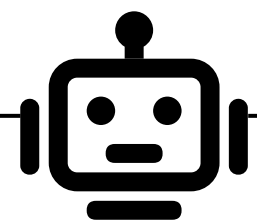
# Characteristics of Foundation Models

## *Two Characteristics of Foundation Models:*

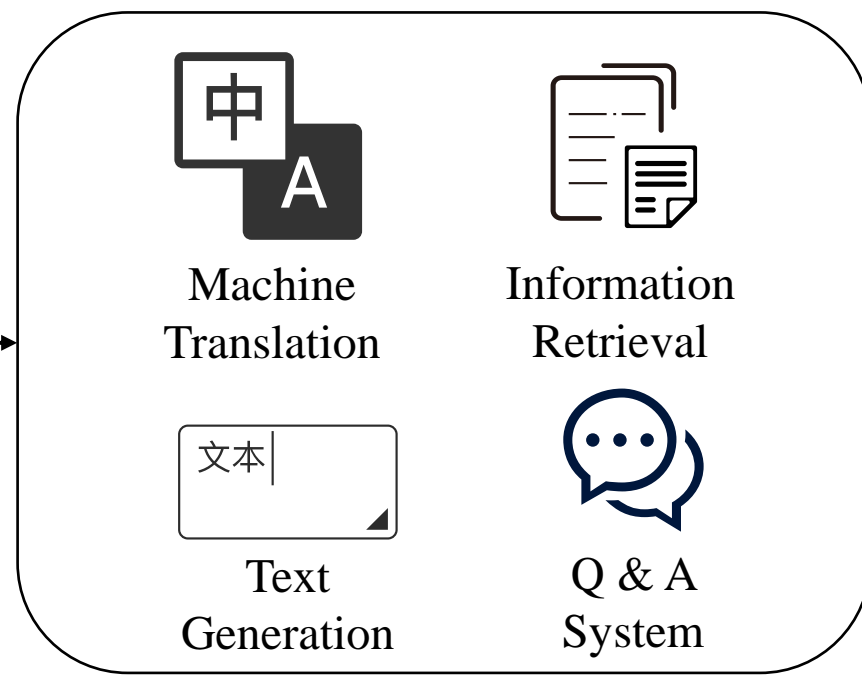
- **Emergence:** As a foundation model scales up, it spontaneously manifests novel capabilities.
- **Homogenization:** The model's versatility enables its deployment across diverse applications.



Emergence



Foundation Models

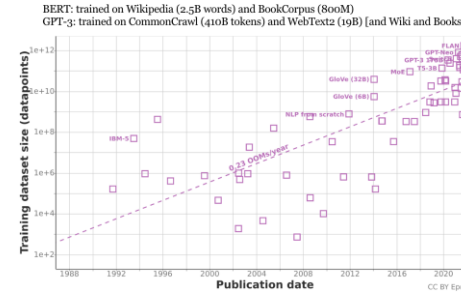


Homogenization

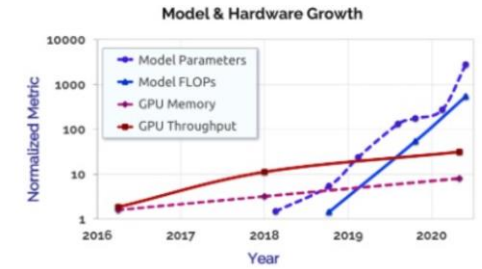
# Factors Driving Foundation Model Success

## Data

- The increasing number of data-collecting devices results in a massive growth in data volume.



Data Growth



GPU Development

## Hardware

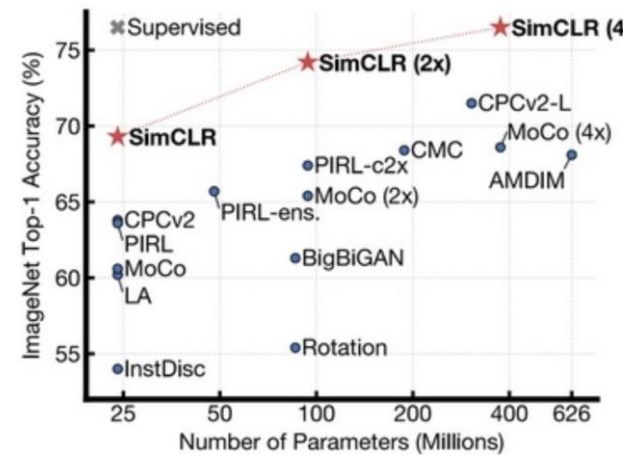
- the rapid advancement of GPU hardware

## Self-supervised Learning (SSL)

- exploiting raw unlabeled data

## Transformer Architectures

- attention mechanism



SSL

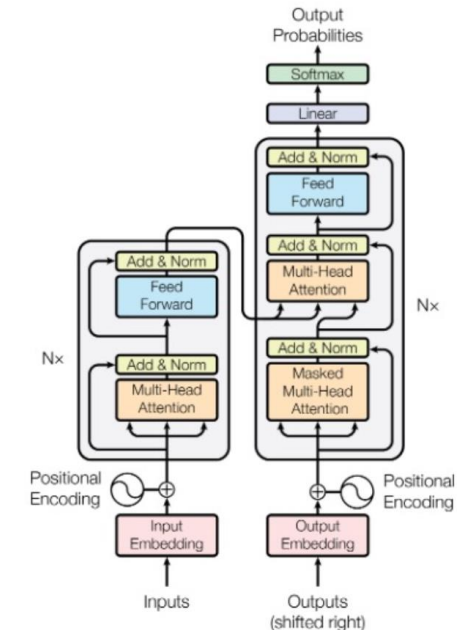


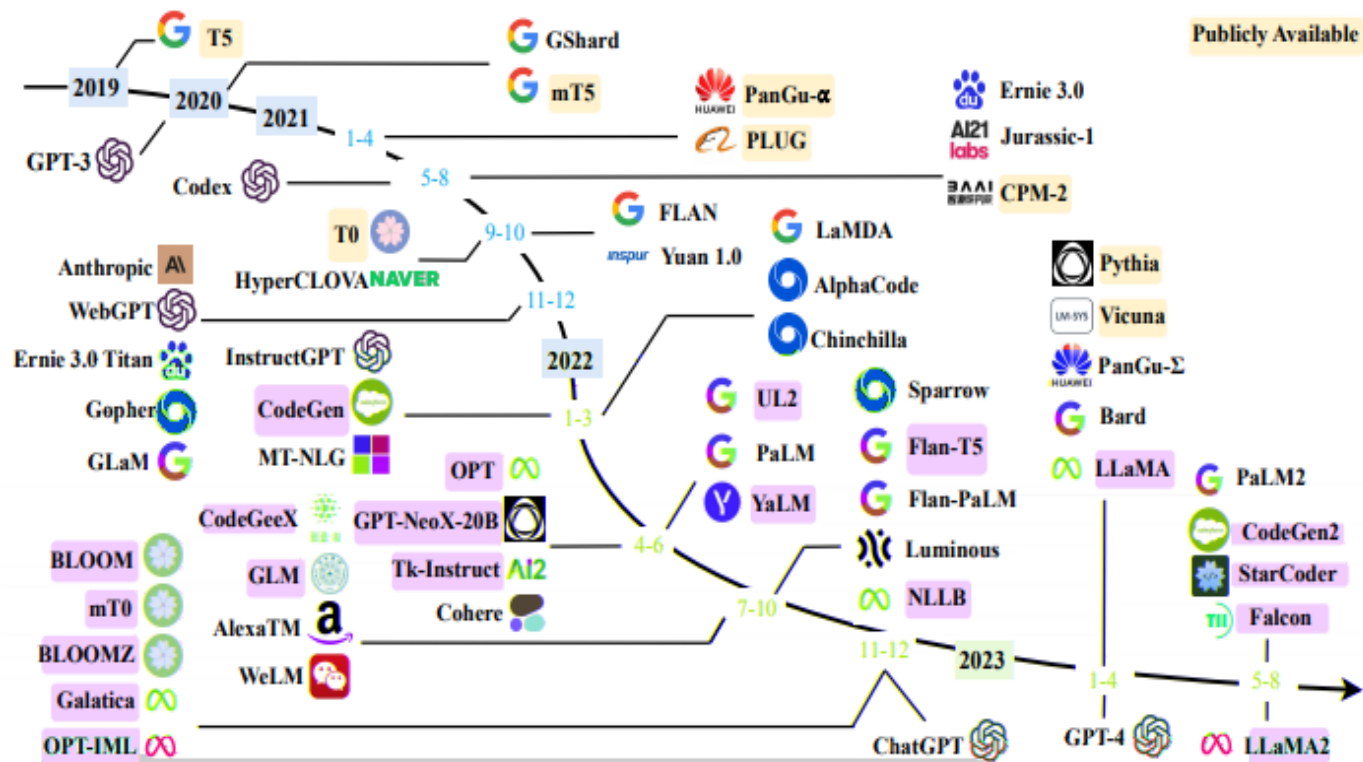
Figure 1: The Transformer - model architecture.

Transformer

# Language Foundation Models

*Large Language Models (LLMs) refer to pre-trained language models with massive parameters and are typical representatives of foundation models.*

- LLMs have progressed from models like ELMo with millions of parameters to GPT-4 with trillions of parameters.
- LLMs showcase key AI abilities like comprehension, generation, logic, and memory, hinting at the path towards artificial general intelligence (AGI).



# Large Language Models

## Data

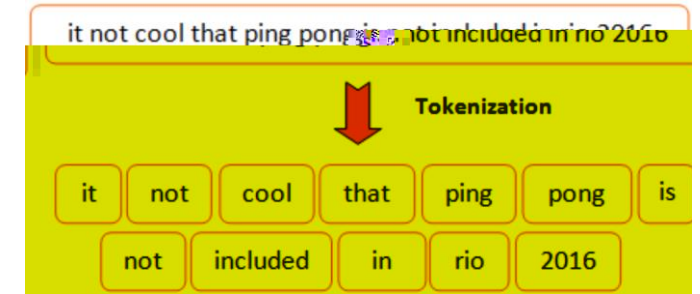
- Language data: text or spoken content in a human language
  - sequential data
  - Euclidean data

## Backbone Architectures

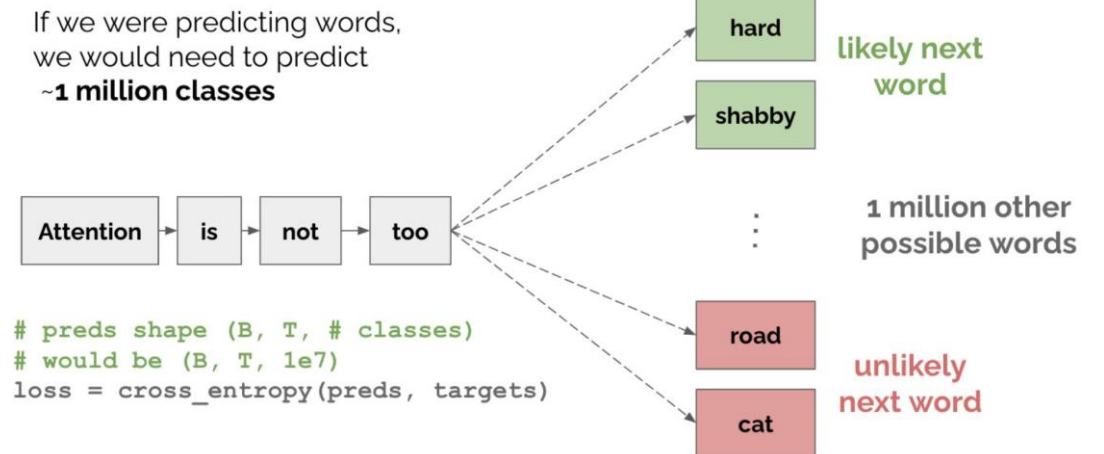
- Mostly based on Transformer
  - e.g., BERT<sup>[1]</sup>, GPT-3<sup>[2]</sup>
- Pre-trained with pretext tasks:
  - next word prediction (NWP)
  - masked language modeling (MLM)...

## Downstream Tasks

- Hundreds of downstream tasks
  - e.g., machine translation, sentiment analysis...



Language Data



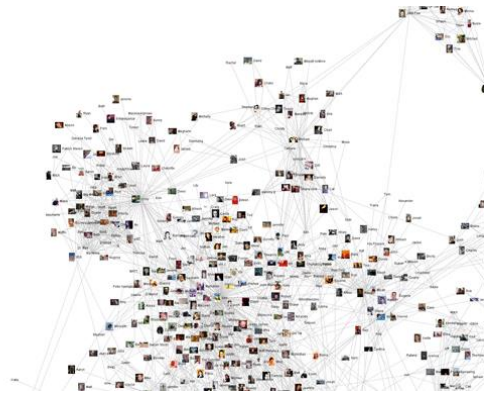
Next Word Prediction (NWP)

[1] Devlin J, Chang M W, Lee K, et al. Bert: Pre-training of deep bidirectional transformers for language understanding[J]. arXiv preprint arXiv:1810.04805, 2018.

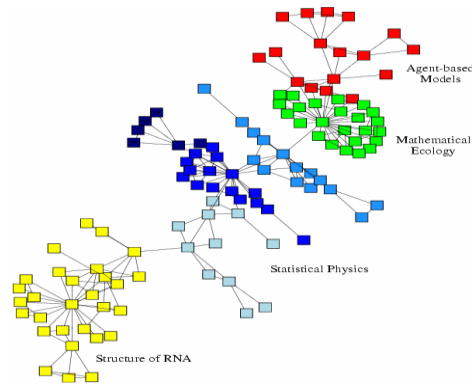
[2] Brown T, Mann B, Ryder N, et al. Language models are few-shot learners[C]. NeurIPS 2020, 33: 1877-1901.

# Graphs

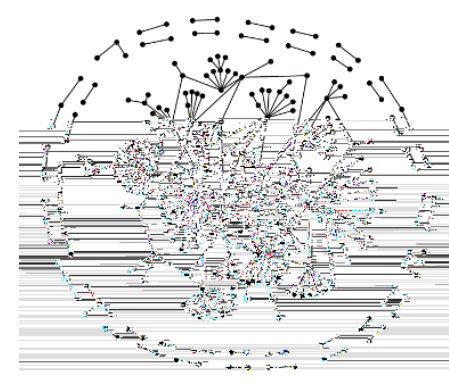
*Graphs are a general language for describing and modeling complex systems.*



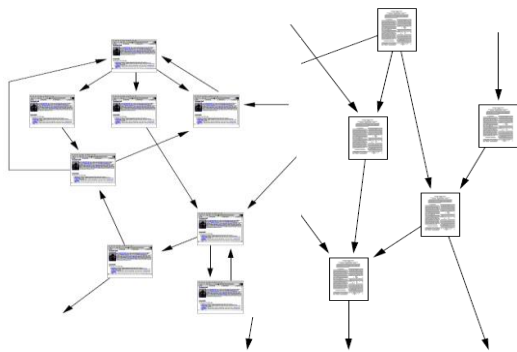
**Social networks**



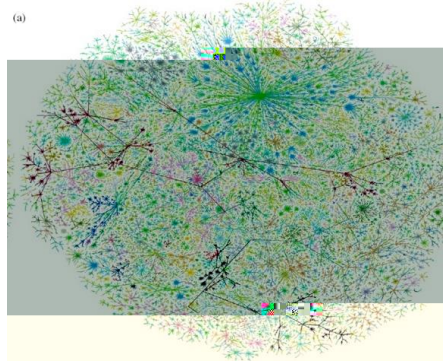
**Economic networks**



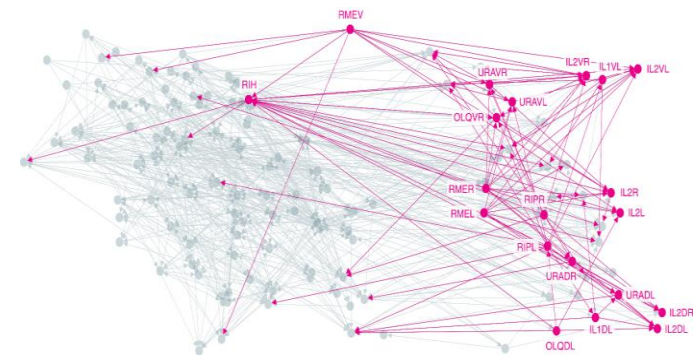
**Biomedical networks**



**Information networks**



**Internet**

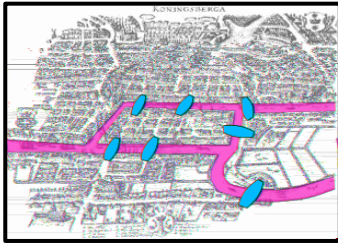


**Networks of neurons**

# Graph Machine Learning

- Graph  $G$  is an ordered pair  $(V, E)$ , where  $V$  is the node set and  $E$  is the edge set.
- Graph machine learning refers to the application of machine learning to graph data, commonly known as graph learning or graph models.

Seven Bridges of Königsberg

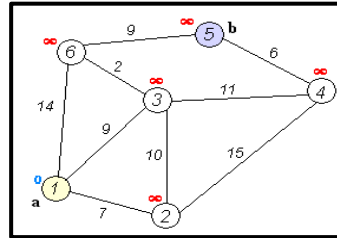


Graph theory

- Euler

1736

Shortest Path Problem

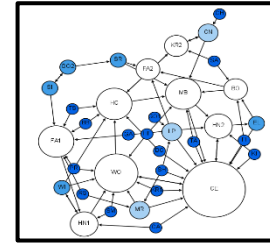


Graph algorithms

- Dijkstra

1956

Long Tail Distribution



Network Science

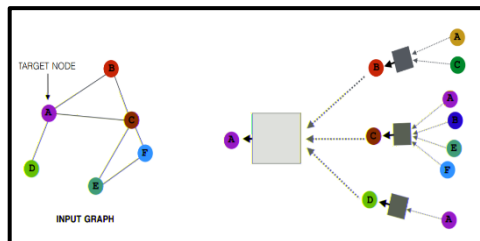
- Barabasi

2002

2017

Graph neural networks

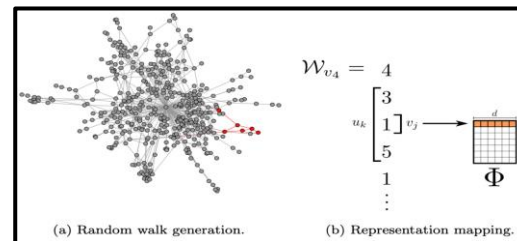
- GCN



2014

Graph embedding

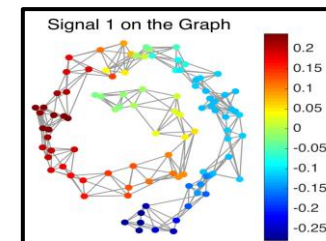
- DeepWalk



2013

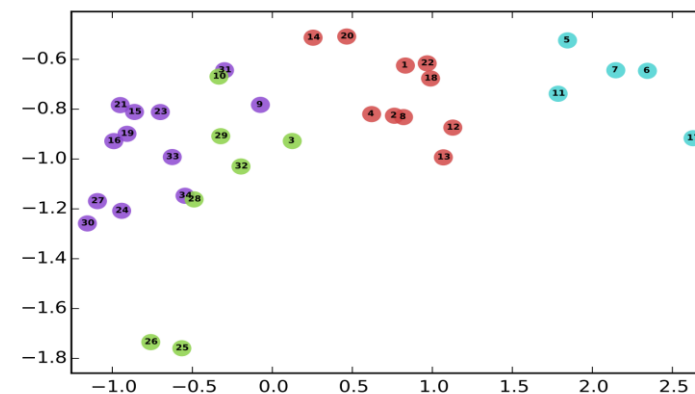
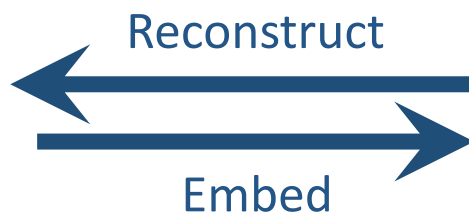
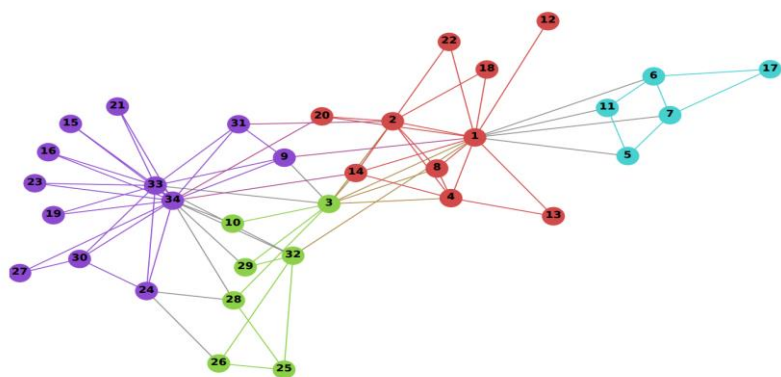
Graph signal processing

- Shuman



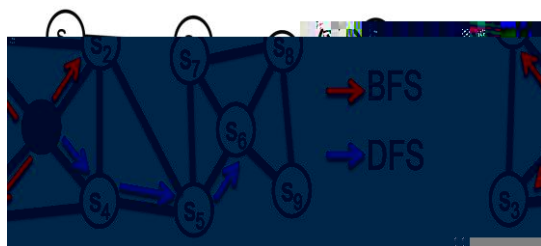
# Graph Representation Learning

*Graph Representation Learning (GRL): embed each node of a graph into a low-dimensional vector space*



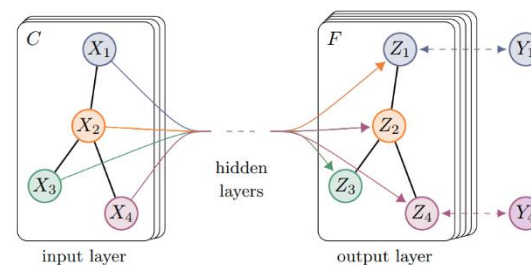
## Shallow model

- Random walk based
  - e.g., DeepWalk, node2vec



## Deep model

- GNN based
  - e.g., GCN, GraphSage, GAT



# Data in GNN

## Data

### ➤ Graph data

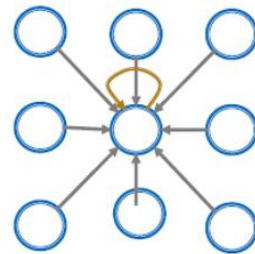
- non-Euclidean data

### ➤ Various domains

- social networks
- molecules
- E-commerce...

### ➤ Various types

- homogenous graph
- heterogenous graph
- hypergraph...



Graph

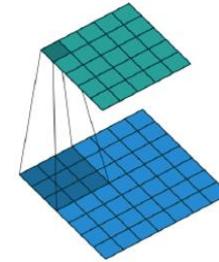


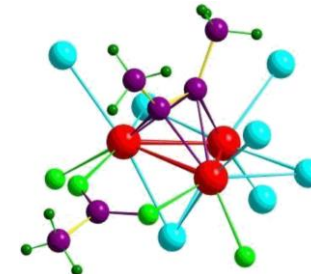
Image (Grid)



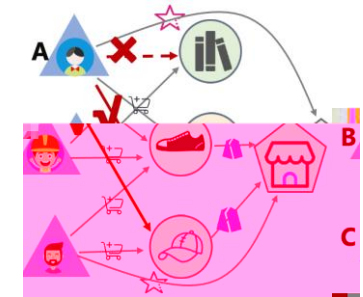
Language (Seq.)



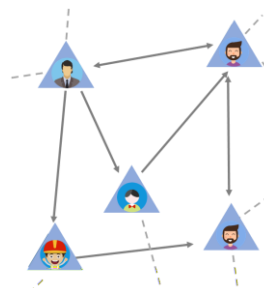
Social Networks



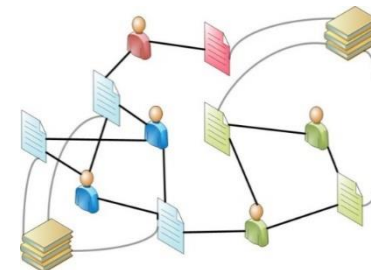
Molecules



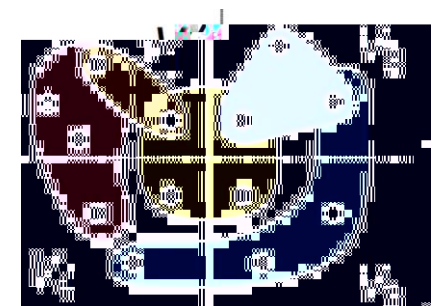
E-commerce



Homogeneous



Heterogeneous



Hypergraph

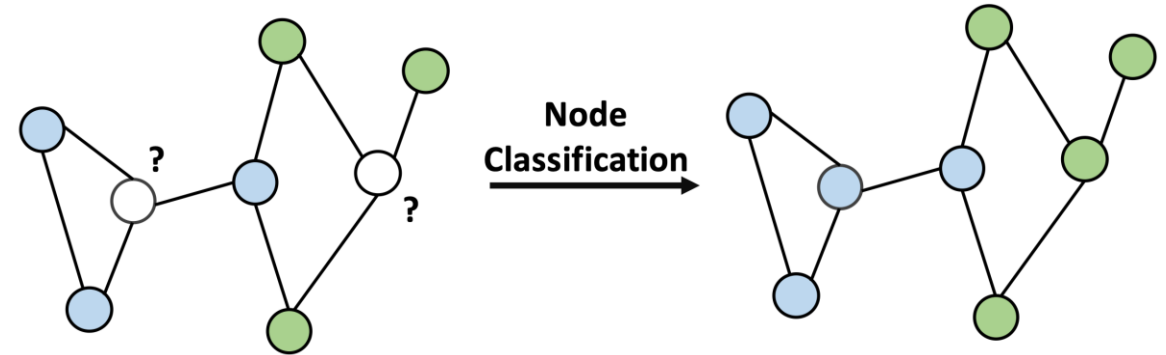


# Tasks in GNN

## Downstream Tasks

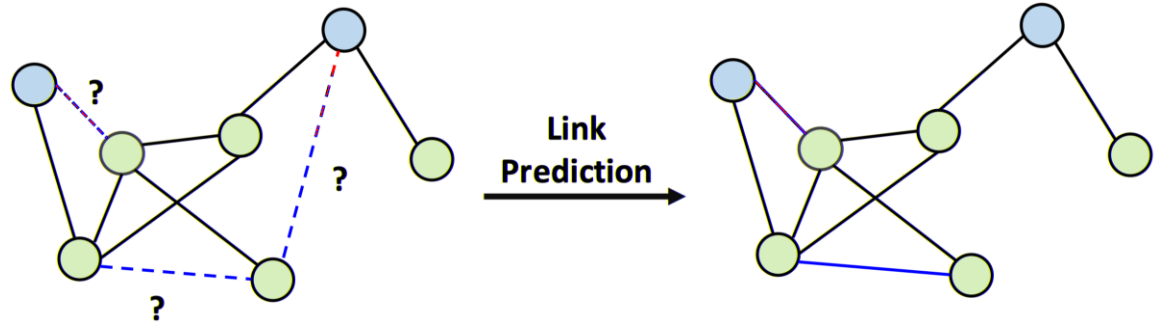
### ➤ Node-level tasks

- node classification
- node regression
- node clustering...



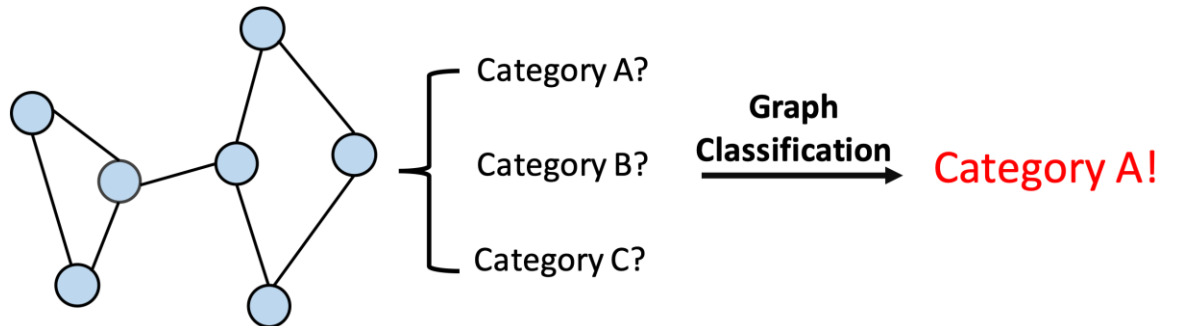
### ➤ Edge-level tasks

- link prediction
- shortest path prediction
- maximum flow prediction...



### ➤ Graph-level tasks

- graph classification
- graph generation
- graph condensation...

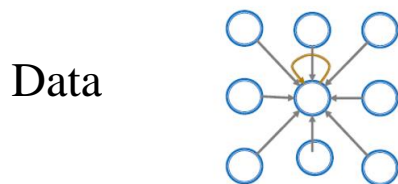


# Graph Models Meet Large Language Models

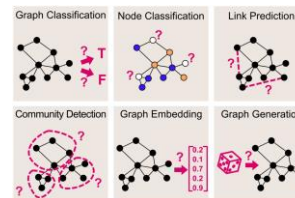
*LLMs cannot solve graph-related problems.*

- LLMs struggle to model graph structure semantics.
- LLMs struggle to handle diverse graph tasks.

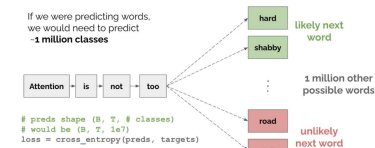
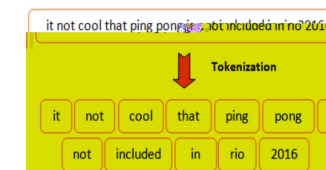
Graph Models



Tasks

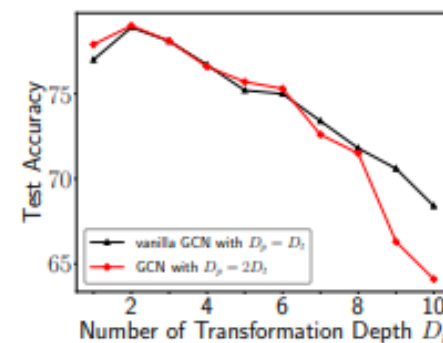


LLMs

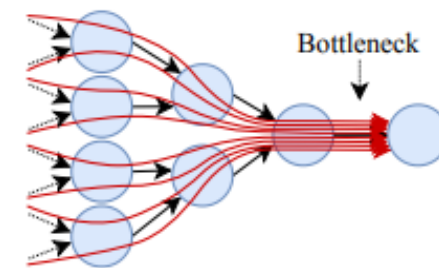


*Graph models do not possess the capabilities of LLMs.*

- Limited expressive power
- Deep GNNs: over-smoothing/over-squassion issues
- Lack emergence capability
- Cannot support multiple tasks



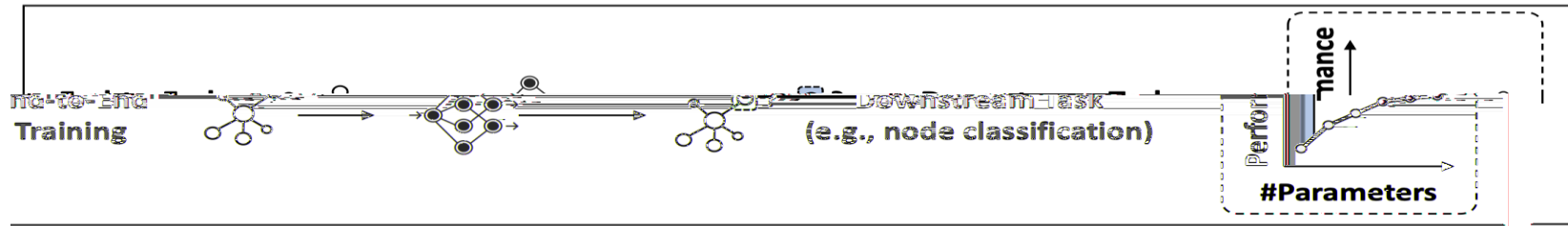
Performance Decline  
of Deep GNNs



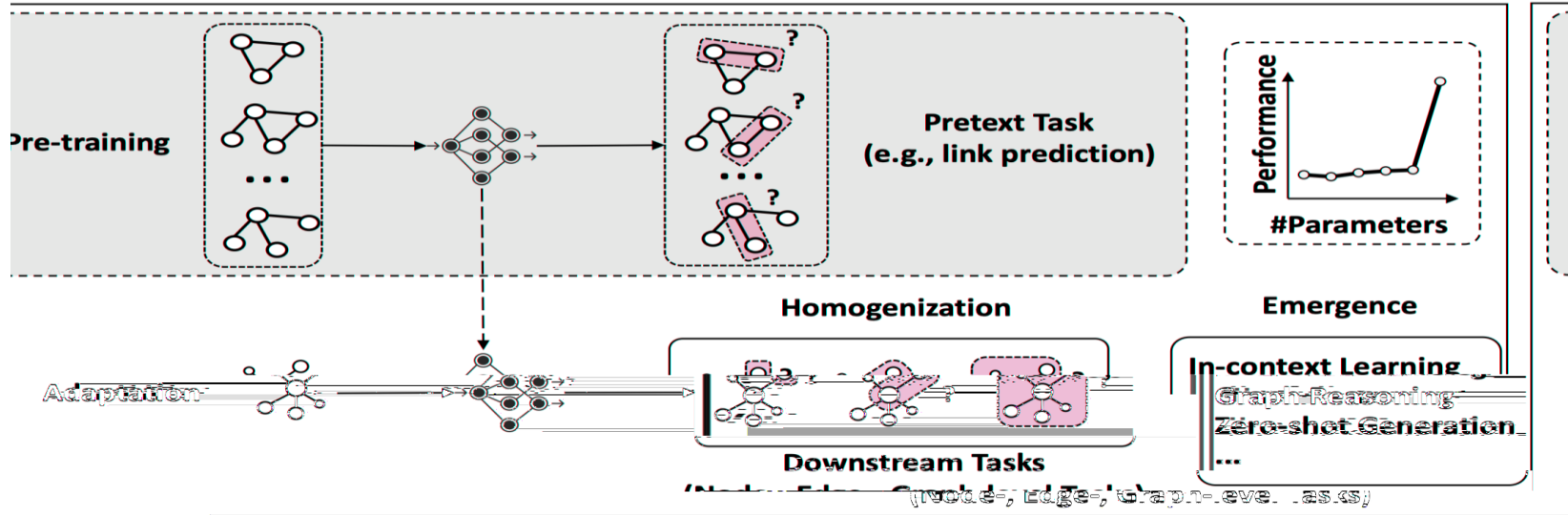
Information Bottleneck  
in GNNs

# Graph Foundation Models

A graph foundation model (GFM) is a model *pre-trained on extensive graph data*, adapted for *diverse downstream graph tasks*.



(a) Deep Graph Learning.



(b) Graph Foundation Models.

# Characteristics of Graph Foundation Models

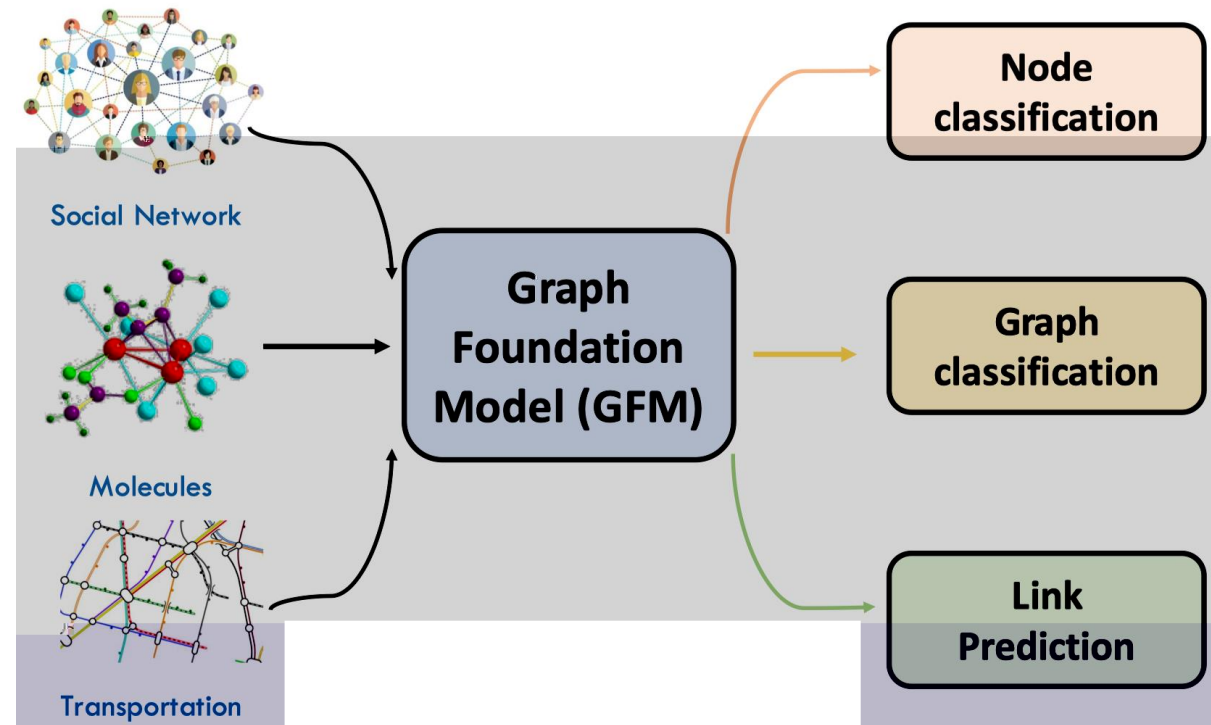
## *Two Characteristics*

### **Emergence**

- Novel capability when larger model or more graph data
  - graph reasoning
  - graph generation...

### **Homogenization**

- Apply to different formats of tasks
  - node/edge/graph tasks



# Key Techniques of Graph Foundation Models

*Key Techniques of G*

# GFM v.s. LLMs

*Similarities:* common goal and similar learning paradigm

*Differences:* (1) different data and tasks; (2) technological differences

	Language Foundation Model	Graph Foundation Model
<b>Similarities</b>	Enhancing the model's expressive power and its generalization across various tasks.	
<b>Paradigm</b>	Pre-training and Adaptation	
<b>Intrinsic Data</b>	Euclidean data (text)	Non-Euclidean data (graphs) or a mixture of Euclidean (e.g., graph attributes) and non-Euclidean data
<b>differences</b>		
<b>Tasks</b>	Many tasks, similar formats	Limited number of tasks, diverse formats
<b>Backbone Architectures</b>	Mostly based on Transformer	No unified architecture
<b>Extrinsic differences</b>		
<b>Homogenization</b>	Easy to homogenize	Difficult to homogenize
<b>Domain Generalization</b>	Strong generalization capability	Weak generalization across datasets
<b>Emergent abilities as of the time of writing</b>	Emergence	Has demonstrated emergent abilities
		No/unclear

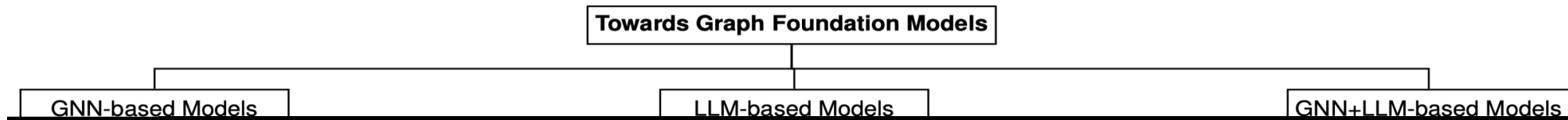
# Outline

- Graph Foundation Models
- ✓ Progress in Related Work
- Challenges and Future Direction

# Taxonomy of Related Work

*No GFMs until now, but a lot of explorations is on the way.*

*Categorize existing explorations into three distinct groups according to the dependence on GNNs and LLMs*

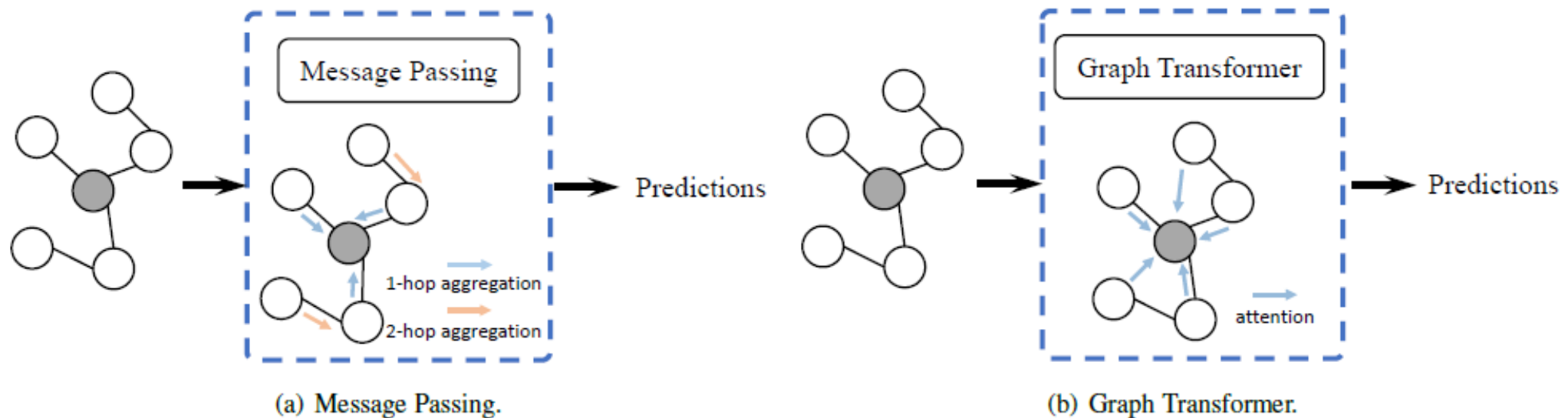




# GNN-based Models

*Seeking to enhance current graph learning through innovative approaches in GNN model architectures, pre-training, and adaptation.*

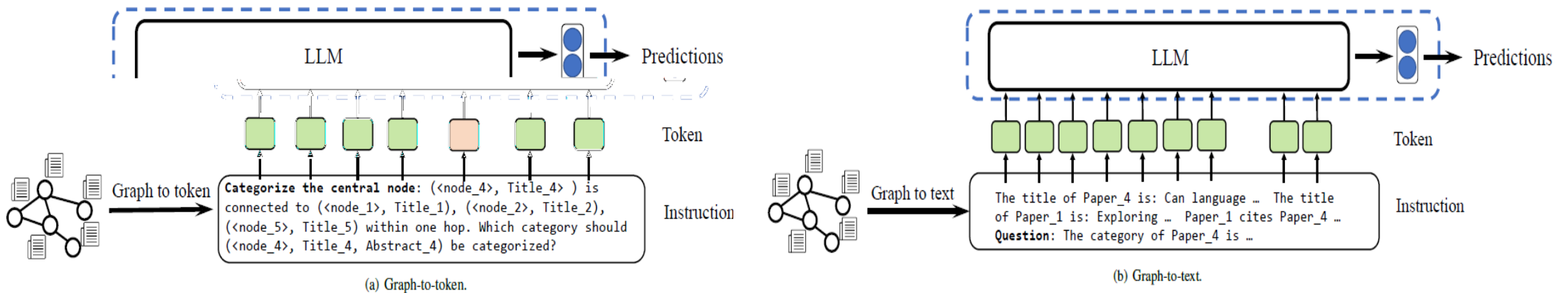
- Architectures: Graph Transformer, e.g., Specformer (ICLR23), CoBFormer (ICML24)
- Pre-training: Graph Pretraining, e.g., PT-HGNN (KDD21), GraphPAR (WWW24)
- Adaptation: Graph Prompt, e.g., All In One (KDD23), MultiGPrompt (WWW24)



# LLM-based Models

*Exploring the feasibility of transforming graphs into text or tokens to leverage LLMs as foundation models.*

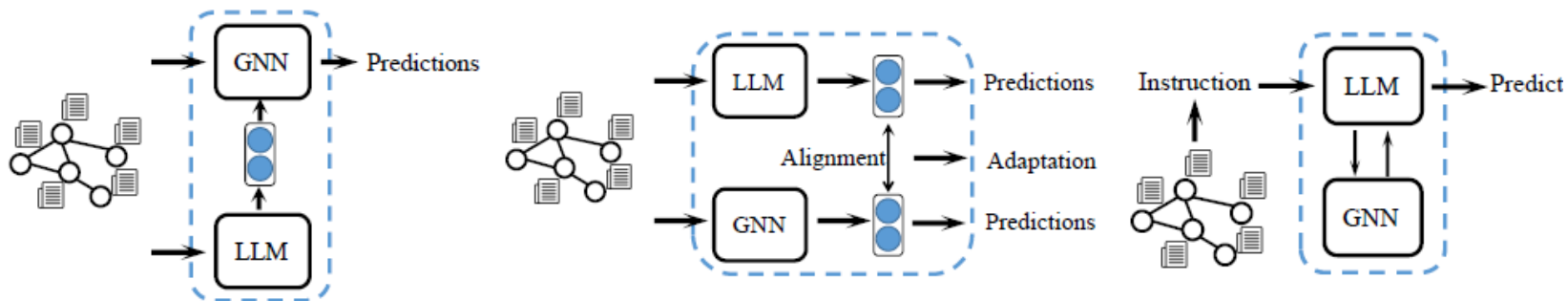
- Graph-to-Token: transform graphs into tokens and then input them into LLMs
  - e.g., InstructGLM
- Graph-to-Text: transform graphs into texts and then input them into LLMs
  - e.g., NLGraph (NIPS24), LLM4Mol



# GNN+LLM-based Models

*Exploring synergies between GNNs and LLMs to enhance graph learning.*

- GNN-centric Models: utilize LLM to extract node feature and make predictions using GNN
  - e.g., SimTeG, TAPE
- Symmetric Models: align the embeddings of GNN and LLM
  - e.g., GraphTranslator (WWW24), G2P2 (SIGIR23), ConGrat
- LLM-centric Models: utilize GNNs to enhance the performance of LLM
  - e.g., Graph-Toolformer



# Outline

- Graph Foundation Models
- Progress in Related Work
- ✓ **Challenges and Future Direction**

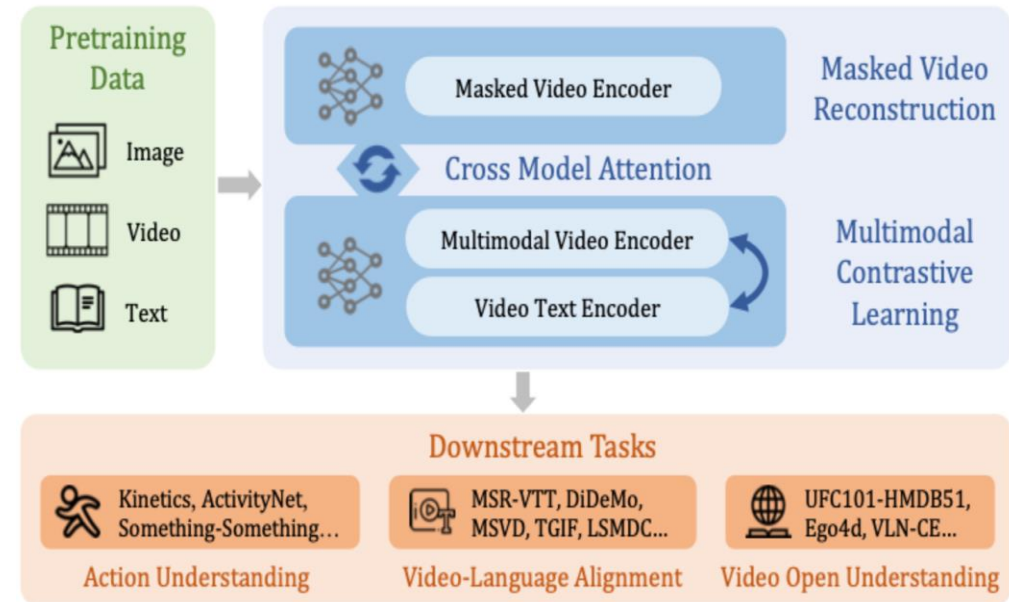
# Challenges in Model

## Model Architectures

- It remains unknown whether current architectures are optimal choices.
- Multimodal foundation models
  - Using graph to extend the multiple modalities...

## Model Training

- Is there uniform pretext tasks for graph
- Some ideas from other directions
  - knowledge distillation
  - reinforcement learning from human feedback
  - model editing...



## Multimodal Foundation Models

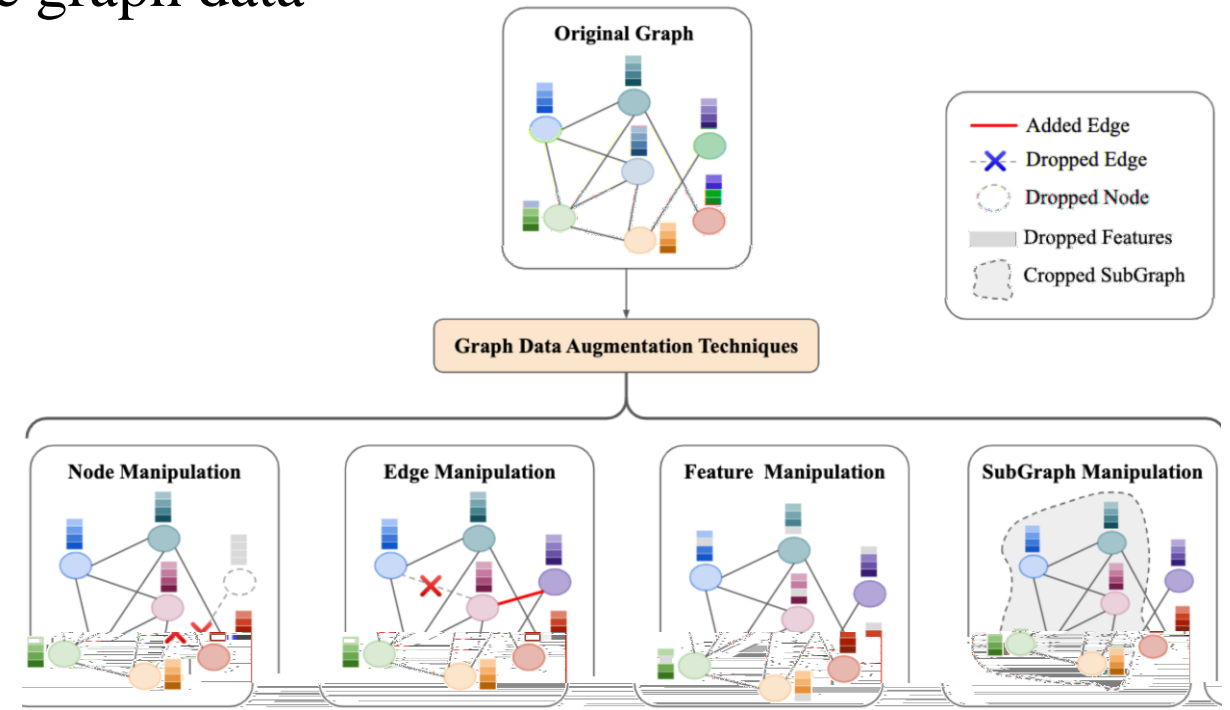
# Challenges in Data and Evaluation

## Data Quantity and Quality

- Limited amount of open-source large-scale graph data
  - concentrated in a single domain
- Using augmentation strategies
  - graph structure learning
  - feature completion
  - label mixing...

## Evaluation

- Lacking labels in open-ended tasks
  - human evaluation
  - meta-evaluation
- Evaluating robustness, trustworthiness, holistic performance...



Graph Augmentation

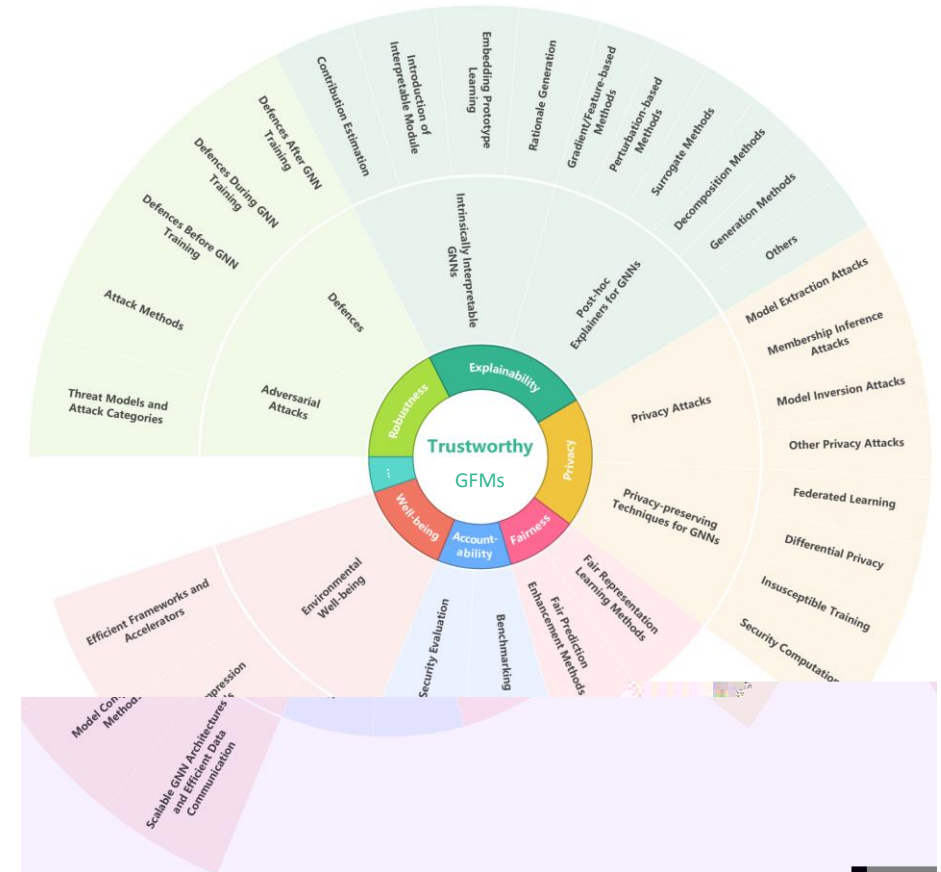
# Challenges in Applications

## Killer Applications

- It is not yet clear that graph foundation models can similarly catalyze groundbreaking applications in graph tasks.
- Promising fields
  - urban computing
  - drug development...

## Safety

- Black-box nature introduces safety concerns.
  - hallucination
  - privacy leaks
- Promising technologies
  - counterfactual reasoning...



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Thanks

Q&A