

**VT Library Lays Off Whole Staff; Librarians Protest**

On December 3, 2012, the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, VT, Board of Trustees announced it would lay off its entire library, docent, and information technology staff, then “ask them to consider applying for the newly formed Athenaeum positions,” Bill Marshall, chair of the Athenaeum Board of Trustees, said in a letter.

The first goal of the radical restructuring is to reduce costs: the library is eating into its endowment. The fund could be depleted in as little as seven years if spending continues at the current rate, which Athenaeum executive director Matthew Powers said was between ten and 20 percent per year, rather than the recommended 4.5 percent. The plan will cut personnel spending by eight percent, or about \$40,000. Powers told *Hotline* that personnel is the “single highest line” in the library-cum-museum’s budget. “Last year, personnel costs were roughly \$340,000 out of a total budget of roughly \$500,000 and that doesn’t take into account the deficit,” he explained.

Although it is the staff restructuring that is raising the most controversy, Powers told *Hotline* it’s far

from the only cut. “Within the overall budget we reduced about \$150,000, so we didn’t just look at the personnel budget,” said Powers.

The other stated goal of the restructuring is to gear the Athenaeum up to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing world of librarianship, including a new focus on digitization, research and technical assistance, superbroadband Internet access, and off-site services, as well as more emphasis on programs and collaboration with other institutions. However, it is not entirely clear how the restructuring would place more emphasis on technology use and support, since it plans to replace a dedicated employee with an IT contractor.

**FACTS IN QUESTION**

According to Laurel Stanley, a retired academic library director, public library trustee, Athenaeum member and donor, and member of the Vermont Library Association Board, a new focus on these goals isn’t necessary. “They’re saying that the Athenaeum is behind in new services and technology, and that’s just not true,” said Stanley.

According to a second letter from the board, the Athenaeum is moving from a team of eight people working

**Interview**

**Tim Rylands**

Winner of the 2012 Edublog Lifetime Achievement Award, UK-based educator Tim Rylands uses gaming and other IT activities to inspire learning and creative writing.



**How did you start using games to teach?**

I was given Riven, the second game in the Myst series. While my daughter, Ellie, sat on my lap, talking about these beautiful

landscapes in such an expressive way, even though she was only little, I realized that I could use them in school.

**How do you use gaming worlds to help children write?**

We get children talking about the game, and they gain confidence, find words, and play with them. Children are very plot-centric. I try to help them develop a sense of setting, character, and atmosphere.

**How has your work impacted kids?**

We were at a school for children with profound learning difficulties. There was a seven-year-old boy who had never spoken a word in his life. He discovered the interactive whiteboard, figured out how to open a virtual door, and exclaimed, “I did it!”

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in the library—most part-time—to a team of four people, two of whom are full-time. Although the board's letter stated that the people hired into the four new positions will be qualified librarians, according to the job posting, an MLS is not required for any of the positions. While Vermont considers someone with a department of library certification to be a qualified librarian, Stanley told *Hotline*, "It is highly unusual that a library the size of the Athenaeum would not have at least one MLS."

Rural Librarians Unite (RuLU), a newly formed volunteer group, organized opposition to the cuts in the form of a "hug" for the library on Saturday, January 12. The group joined with the Vermont Library Association and citizens of St. Johnsbury to hold hands around the library.

#### STATEWIDE RESPONSE

The Vermont Library Association (VLA) said in a statement, "While the Vermont Library Association understands the Board's responsibility for setting direction for their library during a time of financial stress, now, more than ever, Vermonters need libraries—and librarians. The Vermont Library Association feels that the board's actions demonstrate a devaluation of libraries and the library professionals capable of leading them through a time of intense change in information resources and society."

Both RuLU and VLA also called on supporters to contact the Athenae-

um directly, as well as their elected representatives.

Lydia Willoughby, spokesperson for RuLU, told *Hotline*, "While the timing of Rural Librarians Unite was definitely in response to the Athenaeum situation, the story was never about just the Athenaeum library staff...RuLU will serve as an activist force that libraries and librarians can go to whenever they want to get a campaign off the ground for any reason."

RuLU's future plans include building library and literacy services for correctional facilities and reentry programs in Vermont, an alternative email electronic list for rural librarians in which they make action plans and share resources, support for safe physical spaces for vulnerable learners and library users, meet-ups at independent bookstores, un conferences, collaboration with Every Library on State-wide advocacy, and reaching out to the Association for Rural & Small Libraries and other peer organizations. While RuLU is focused on Vermont right now, Willoughby doesn't rule out expanding nationally and/or working with nearby Canadian libraries.

### WILL Act Reintroduced in House of Representatives

On January 3, Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) reintroduced H.R. 113, the Workforce Investment Through Local Libraries (WILL) Act. The bill, if passed, would include libraries in the Workforce Investment Act, thus making

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library representation possible on state and local workforce investment boards; helping coordinate employment, training, and literacy services carried out by public libraries; recognizing public libraries as an allowable

“One-Stop” partner; and authorizing new demonstration and pilot projects to establish employment resources in public libraries.

The bill, which is cosponsored by Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), and Rep.

Jared Polis (D-CO), was referred to the House Education and the Workforce Committee, on which Holt serves. However, GovTrack gives it only a six percent chance of getting out of that committee (and a one percent chance of being enacted), based on other bills’ record of passage. Holt previously introduced the same bill in April 2011, during the previous congressional session, but it died in committee.

## NYC Library Service Grows; Inequities Persist

The Center for an Urban Future reports that New York City’s public libraries have increased circulation by 59 percent and program attendance by 40 percent in the past decade. Computer sessions grew 62 percent in the past five years. Growth was the highest in the Bronx, which showed a whopping 134 percent increase in program attendance and 102 percent increase in circulation. (The report covers all three systems in the city: the Brooklyn Public Library, the Queens Library, and the New York Public Library (NYPL), which provides service to the boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island.)

Over the same decade, the libraries have seen an eight percent cut in funding (adjusted for inflation) and are open fewer hours than libraries in Chicago, Boston, Toronto, Columbus, OH, or even Detroit.

“The public libraries are hugely undervalued by city policymakers,” the report concludes, with the exception of Queens, where libraries have been a priority for local elected officials. Between 2003 and 2012, the Queens borough president spent \$24.33 per person on libraries; the Bronx borough president spent \$14.37 per person on libraries; and the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten

## School Library Ditches Print Collection

High school principal Sue Skinner removed nearly all of the physical books from Minnesota’s Benilde-St. Margaret’s school library, St. Louis Park, in 2011, but the Moore Library remains a vital educational space where students still research, investigate, and—above all—learn, she said. Students from both the junior and high school grades convene there with their laptops, get help from math and literacy coaches, or read quietly (sometimes even from books).

“We used to think of a library as a building with stacks of books,” said Skinner, who has served as high school principal of the Catholic preparatory school since 2007. “Now we should think of it as a space where people come together to share ideas, be creative, access information, and even read. Instead of thinking of it so literally, we should think of it as a more active space and evolving.”

The expansive use of digital tools at Benilde-St. Margaret’s plays a major role in the success of the “no books” library, Skinner said. Since 2010, the entire school is 1:1, with each student receiving a MacBook plus user access to online databases from companies like Gale and ProQuest.

Another key to the library’s success? A robust community of neighboring public branch and university libraries in the surrounding area. There are 50 public libraries alone in a 15-mile radius of the school, Skinner pointed out. “We weren’t saying no to hardcopy books,” she said. “But let’s not duplicate what public and other libraries have.” The school’s librarian and teachers help students request online the books they need and want from local branches.

Before distributing the library’s print stacks to local centers and donation sites in Africa, said Skinner, she had teachers comb through the physical books and pull anything they wanted for their curricula. Then she allocated additional funding toward purchasing new and used fiction in physical form, since her students, Skinner said, prefer to read this genre on the printed page. These titles, too, went into classrooms.

Today, the library is nearly devoid of books, save for a few reference titles and any books that students bring in themselves, Skinner said. She noted, however, that the library still is a work in progress. While it contains some tables and chairs where students can work alone or in groups, Skinner hopes for even more resources. On her wish list? An interactive whiteboard, a big monitor where students “can throw up things on a screen” as they work collaboratively, and even more power stations—although she’s “not convinced” yet that a coffee shop, a popular request from students, is needed.

At the top of the wish list, though, is a new school librarian, because Moore’s current librarian, Lynn Bottge, is retiring after 20 years at Benilde-St. Margaret’s. Skinner is looking for someone who shares her vision that student learning isn’t based solely on digital or physical resources but a hybrid of both, she said. “I want someone who understands the role of a librarian as an instructional partner, an information specialist, a program administrator, and a school leader...I am excited to get someone with a strong vision.”

Island borough presidents all spent less than \$8 per person.

Other criticism in the report states that many branches remain subpar, libraries meet only a fraction of the demand for English as a Second Language and General Educational Development (GED) Test prep, and the amounts raised for renovations and new construction vary drastically by borough. While Queens has \$68.79 capital expenditures per person and all of NYPL, \$62.41 per person, Brooklyn has just \$40.50. (Staten Island, though part of NYPL, has much less than Manhattan.)

### Douglas County Refines Self-Pub Selection Tools

Completing a deal originally announced in August 2012, Douglas County Libraries (DCL), CO, acquired almost 10,000 ebooks from indie distributor Smashwords, using the company's new Library Direct service. The transaction took much longer than initially expected, but it ultimately helped both parties discover ways to weed, filter, and tweak a list of independent titles to develop an optimal collection for DCL's patrons.

"It was a lot more complicated for us than we expected," said Smashwords founder Mark Coker. "We're giving libraries the option to slice and dice by multiple categories and multiple filters. Along the way we discovered some cool ways to surface titles more accurately that we think better reflect the interests of readers."

The list began with Smashwords' top 10,000 best sellers—titles that have proven their appeal through sales. However, DCL and Smashwords soon realized that relying exclusively on a sales ranking could cause problems, such as leaving popular book series incomplete. Focusing instead on best-selling authors and simply purchasing everything



Renovations have come slowly to the **Forest Hills Branch** (pictured) of San Antonio Public Library (SAPL), but each has been significant. The 1988 building expanded in 1999 to a total of 12,040 square feet and installed a \$90,000 ecofriendly Dura-Last roof in 2012. The latest four-week rehab, celebrated on January 4, included interior and exterior painting; the installation of new carpeting throughout the library; upgraded fixtures, partitions, and accessories in the restrooms; new carpentry and mechanical fixes; and landscape improvements. The work came in on time and under its \$102,000 budget. Fresh furnishings costing \$25,000 are expected soon. Additionally for SAPL, the **Thousand Oaks Library** will be closed from January 21 to February 3 for interior upgrades that

designs from architects Foster + Partners feature a renovation of the 1911 Beaux Art structure to the tune of \$300 million. "British architect Norman Foster's design will open up the back of the building that is now occupied by seven floors of stacks, creating a 100,000 square foot contemporary space with books, reading areas, and desks," wrote ArtDaily.org. The classic Rose Reading Room would be fireproofed as well. A new four-story atrium would look out toward the west, over Bryant Park and Sixth Avenue. The project would be funded through the City of New York and the sale of other library properties. There are numerous voices chiming in with comments on the plan, which has not been universally well received. It must still be approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

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they had written wasn't an ideal solution either. Smashwords responded by developing a simple new mathematical ratings model—total sales by author divided by their total number of books—to help identify titles that were truly in demand. The best sellers list was then based on this model, and specific filters requested by DCL were applied. DCL then had the opportunity to weed the proposed collection further using an early version of a new online procurement system that Smashwords developed for the Library Direct service.

These filters can include price caps and limits on specific genres. For example, DCL asked for erotica to be excluded from its selection, and collection services manager Sharon Nemechek also personally weeded out many more romance titles.

"There were just some really racy covers," Nemechek explained. "As you know, our catalogs are very visual now. It's not that we don't buy that stuff, but I was afraid that there would be so much of it and that it was going to flood our system. So I was a little more careful with cov-

Photo courtesy of San Antonio Public Library

A grant of \$250,000 from the **Institute of Museum and Library Services** will allow the **Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC)** to convert obsolete formats to digital audio. NEDCC will be partnering with the **Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, CA**, to bring in the necessary technology.

The **Public Computer Center (PCC)** at the **Julia Boyer Reinstein Library** in Cheektowaga, NY, has received grants from the **Praxair Foundation, Walmart** in Lancaster, NY, and Walmart in Cheektowaga totaling \$9,500 to continue providing free computer training.

**PEMSoft**, an online clinical library, was just acquired by **EBSCO Publishing**. PEMSsoft was founded by **Ronald Dieckmann, M.D.**, and **Rob Pitt, M.D.**, in 2003.

**Yaws' Critical Property Data for Chemical Engineers and Chemists** will now include many additional tables and records. The database was created in July 2012 by **Knovel**.

**Newport News Public Library**, through Virginia's Can Your Fines program, gave patrons the opportunity to pay an overdue fine with a nonperishable food item or other personal

item, which were then donated to the **Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula**. The program ran from November 24 to December 29, 2012.

**EBSCO** has introduced a new database to its collection. The **Poetry & Short Story Reference Center** offers American and international poems and short stories, as well as analytical essays and educational resources for students and teachers.

Copublished by **Nature Publishing Group** and the **Korean Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology**, the biomedical journal **Experimental & Molecular Medicine** has relaunched on nature.com as a fully open access title. It has taken on a new editorial board led by editor in chief professor **Dae-Myung Jue** and associate editors professors **Kyungho Choi, Sangdun Choi, Yoon-Keun Kim, and Young-Han Lee**.

**Gale**, part of Cengage Learning, is launching **National Geographic: People, Animals, and the World** as a new multimedia resource in its **National Geographic Virtual Library** product line.

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ers than I probably otherwise would have been.... We usually select erotica based on professional reviews or sometimes patron demand. But we try to sift through that stuff more carefully. Given that we had 10,000 titles to work with, excluding the erotica would give us more sf, mystery, romance, and the genre fiction that our readers really love."

Coker is hoping that Smashwords can take these lessons and apply them to Library Direct in a way that may ultimately allow the service to be used for smaller orders.

"Right now, for Library Direct, it's still a very manual process that involves our engineering team doing hard-core database queries to assemble lists and

then a lot of manual activity between us and the library," Coker said.

As a result, the minimum for Library Direct orders is currently around \$20,000.

"As we add more self-serve tools to it—so that libraries can do their own queries against our database and construct their own lists without the intervention of our engineering team—then it becomes cost-effective for us to do smaller, more incremental orders," Coker explained.

Working with DCL has also encouraged the Smashwords team to redouble their efforts toward generating recommended buy lists for ebook aggregators, such as their top 1,000 fiction titles or top 1,000 mystery titles.

Meanwhile, DCL is looking for ways to help patrons discover these ebooks from new authors who may be unfamiliar to many readers.

"What we're trying to do is create a bridge between what they know and like, what they come in looking for, and the new stuff," said Nemechek. "Old-school" reader recommendation tools like read-alike lists and genre lists are playing a role, Nemechek said. In addition, DCL already has a team of volunteers giving reviews to content from small presses, and Smashwords content will eventually start getting reviews as well.

## LC Acquires Sports Audio Interview Archive

The Library of Congress (LC) January 9 announced the acquisition of an audio archive of 15 years' worth of athlete interviews from the radio network program *Sports Byline USA*, recorded between 1988 and 2003. LC said that the acquisition "marks the beginning of a three-year collaboration with the program's producers to preserve these historic interviews and to make them available for listening on a streaming basis free to the public on the library's website. Programs produced from 2004 to 2014 will be added to the collection over the next two years."

Highlights from the candid interviews conducted by *Sports Byline USA*'s Emmy Award-winning host Ron Barr include Mickey Mantle discussing his father's early death and his alcoholism (1994), Willie Mays on his impact on baseball (1988), and Bill Russell setting the record straight about his relationship with fellow NBA great Wilt Chamberlain (2001).

The interviews will be digitally preserved at LC's Packard Campus for Audiovisual Conservation in Culpeper, VA. The *Sports Byline* collection will join the facility's extensive holdings of sports recordings, which

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**Paul Alford** is now Library Services Manager, Lake County Library System, FL. He was Library Experience Coordinator, Hernando County Public Library System, FL.

**Meaghan Fukunaga** has been given the position of Video Content Management Specialist at the University of Michigan Library. Her former position was Digital Archivist at the university's Center for the History of Medicine.

**Keith Gorman** will be the new Head of the Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-Greensboro), following **William Finley's** retirement. Gorman was previously Assistant Head of Special Collections and University Archives, and Digital Collections Coordinator at Greensboro.

**Elaine Kitagawa** is now CFO of online video education company lynda.com. She previously served as CFO of Saba Software Inc.

Dominican University's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, River Forest, IL, has appointed **Stacy T. Kowalczyk** as an assistant professor.

**Jennifer Snoek-Brown** joined the Mt. Hood Community College Library, Gresham, OR, as

Faculty Librarian and will coordinate the Library Instruction program. She was previously Faculty Librarian at Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

There will be two new Special Projects Librarians at the University of Michigan Library. **Sarah Barbrow** will be working with Library Administration while **Emily Puckett** will be working with the Learning and Teaching, Operations, and Research Divisions.

The Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium has elected three new members to its Board of Directors for the 2013–15 term: **Jill Ausel** (Library Director, Chatham University), **Joseph Lucia**, also elected Vice President/President-elect (Library Director, Villanova University), and **BethAnn Zambella** (Director of the Library, Elizabethtown College). Additionally, new officers beginning their duties this month include **Barbara Dewey** (Dean of University Libraries and Scholarly Communications, Pennsylvania State University), now Secretary; **Donald Dilmore** (Associate Vice President for University Libraries, Edinboro University), now Treasurer; and **Peggy Seiden** (College Librarian, Swarthmore College), now President.

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include Clem McCarthy's classic calls of the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling rematch (1938) and the match race between Seabiscuit and War Admiral (1938), as well as many broadcasts featuring such sportscasting notables as Bill Stearns and Mel Allen.

## EveryLibrary Supports Spokane Ballot Initiative

EveryLibrary, the political action committee (PAC) that launched last September, is announcing support for a ballot initiative in Spokane.

The initiative (Proposition 3) is for a special library tax levy. The mail-

in ballot will be sent in the next two weeks and must be returned by February 12, 2013.

John Chrastka, founder and executive director of EveryLibrary, said that the PAC is pledging \$5,000 in funding to the "Yes for Spokane Libraries" committee for voter education and get out the vote activities.

Said Chrastka, "The citizens of Spokane have an amazing library, but the current budget climate threatens the valuable services provided to the community. We are pledging our support to 'Yes for Spokane Libraries' to help ensure that Proposition 3—which asks voters for .07¢

per \$1,000 of property value—passes on February 12. Almost 950,000 visitors used the Spokane Public Library last year. Without the passage of Prop 3, branches could close, downtown branch hours could be reduced, and the community would simply have fewer books, computers with Internet access, and other materials."

This is the first ballot initiative that EveryLibrary has supported since its launch.

## Open Access Advocate Commits Suicide

Aaron Swartz, Internet activist and software developer, committed suicide in New York City on January 11 at the age of 26.

Swartz was perhaps best known for his legal clash with the federal government over access to information: in July 2011, he was indicted for using the MIT computer system to download a large archive of articles from the JSTOR database (many in the public domain) with the intent to distribute them. (He had previously downloaded legal information from PACER.)

Swartz returned the data to JSTOR without distributing it, and JSTOR settled its civil claims and urged the government to drop the charges, but the proceedings continued and a trial was scheduled for April 2013. Had he been convicted, Swartz could have faced up to 35 years in jail.

Swartz was also well known for helping to develop RSS (Really Simple Syndication) in his early teens, creating Infogami (which later merged with Reddit, making him a co-owner), co-founding Demand Progress, and developing the Internet Archive's free public catalog of books, OpenLibrary.org.

Prior to his death, Swartz was nominated for the American Library Association's James Madison Award. Reminiscences can be contributed at [www.rememberaaronsw.com](http://www.rememberaaronsw.com).

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**BREAKING NEWS FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION DECISION MAKERS**

**Congress Cuts LSTA; Obama To Approve**

President Obama is expected to sign the \$915 billion budget bill for FY12 that Congress passed in December 2011, with reduced appropriations for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Government Printing Office (GPO), whose top administrator, the public printer, will soon be out of a job.

LSTA funding stands at \$185 million, a 2.3 percent cut from the \$189 million received in FY11. Susan Hildreth, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), said she which administrators LSTA, said she was pleased Congress recognized the need for federal support of museums and libraries. "Ideally, there would be a higher level of funding, but fiscal constraint is currently a fact of life at the federal level," Hildreth said.

Under LSTA, Grants to States was appropriated at \$156.6 million (down from \$160 million); Native American Library Services was funded at \$3.8 million (down from \$3.9 million); National Leadership for Libraries was funded at \$11.9 million (down from \$12.2 million); and the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian received \$12.5 million (down from \$12.8 million).

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**LSTA is a major source of revenue for IMLS, the agency responsible for distributing the majority of federal library program funds to the states. IMLS had requested \$193.2 million for LSTA. The House passed the final budget 296-121 on December 16, and the Senate passed it on December 17, with a 67-32 vote.**

**GPO and the Superintendent of Documents both avoided the substantial cuts that an earlier House version of the budget had envisioned this past summer about the impact on the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and the Federal Digital System (FDsys).**

**BOARMAN'S NOMINATION KILLED**

GPO was appropriated at \$126.2 million, down from \$135.1 million, and the Superintendent of Documents will be funded this year at \$35 million, down from \$39.8 million.

"It's more money than the House was initially proposing, but we can't say how GPO is going to spend the dollars," said Jessica McGilvry, an assistant director for government relations at the American Library Association's Washington office. "They have greater concerns at the moment about the upheaval there, and we are not sure what direction that will take and how that will affect FDLP and FDsys," she said.

McGilvry was referring to William Boorman, the public printer, who will soon be out of a job. Boorman was first nominated for the GPO's top job in April 2010, and he received a recess appointment from President Obama in 2011. But unspecified ob-

**Caldecott Winner Simms Taback Dies**

Simms Taback, author, graphic artist, illustrator, and winner of the Caldecott Medal for *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* (Viking, 2000), died December 25; he was 79.

Taback wrote or illustrated more than 40 children's books, winning many awards, including the Caldecott Medal for his adaptation of a Yiddish folk song and a Caldecott honor for *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* (Viking, 1997). He also received several notable book designations from the American Library Association, Parents' Choice Gold awards, and the Sibert/Taylor Award.

He designed the first McDonald's Happy Meal box in 1977.

Taback also was a founding president of the Illustrators Guild, which later merged and became the New York Graphic Artists Guild, where he was a founding member and president. He was an advocate for artists' rights with his service as author, editor, and production supervisor for *Graphic Artists Guild Handbook: Pricing and Ethical Guidelines*.

**Last Call for 2012 Paralibrarian of the Year!**

Library Journal is looking for a top state to honor with its 13th annual Paralibrarian of the Year award, sponsored by LEARN, to be featured in the March 13, 2012, issue. Deadline: January 18, 2012. For guidelines, go to [ow.ly/SIR825](http://ow.ly/SIR825). Email submissions to [mckelvey@mediasource.com](mailto:mckelvey@mediasource.com).

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