

NEWSLINE

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH LIBRARIANS

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Chair's Column

by Anne Rottmann, Missouri
LRL Chair

They're here! Most of us are in the throes of another session. It always seems to bring new challenges. I guess that's why we find the work so rewarding. It's never the same from one day to the next.

Jonetta Douglas, Clare Cholik, Susan Southworth and I represented our staff section in New Orleans at the Executive Committee and Legislative Staff Coordinating, January 22-23. Summaries of the task force meetings are included in this issue.

The updates for the 1999 LRL directory are being compiled. Thanks to the regional coordinators for gathering that information. My directory is my bible. I couldn't get along without it.

The officers are beginning to plan for sessions at Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, July 24-28. Several of you have made the suggestion for at least one roundtable discussion. This format seems to be a favorite to exchange ideas and thoughts on issues that interest all of us. That's the reason we've included the question in this issue for topics our members would like to discuss.

Rich Jones of NCSL has graciously agreed to write a follow-up article on our suggestions for NCSLnet that were part of the discussion with him in Harrisburg. In New Orleans, Rich told me that he had given our suggestions to Doug Sacarto and that some of them were going to be implemented in the pending computer upgrade. Thank you, Rich, for taking the time to provide us with an update.

Lynn Randall, Maine Legislative Reference and Law Library, has written about her interesting experiences to provide assistance to the National Assembly of Madagascar's library and evaluation of the general research services available to its members. NCSL was one of the contractors of the project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Thanks, Lynn, for contributing the article on your experience.

Included in this mailing of *Newsline* is the video survey that was developed by the Task Force on Public Service and the Legislative Institution. The survey was sent out through the listserv; but in case some of you didn't get or couldn't read it, we enclosed a copy here also. Thank you for taking the time to either answer it yourself or to forward it on to the appropriate responder.

Also included in this mailing is information on the 1999 LRL Notable Document Award. Please get your nominations to Deb Priest's committee by the end of March.

Remember—spring is just around the corner!

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LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH LIBRARIANS STAFF SECTION

National Conference of State Legislatures

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Chair: Anne Rottmann, Legislative Library, Missouri

NCSL Staff: Rita Thaemert

Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee

January 22-23, 1999
New Orleans, Louisiana



Task Force on Planning and Designing a Legislature for the Future

by Clare Cholik

The task force began its January meeting by focusing on the legislative institution from a historical perspective. Rich Jones of the NCSL staff outlined some of the major changes that have taken place within legislatures over the past 30 years and some of the forces that have driven the changes. From there, the task force turned toward the future and discussed the factors that will likely influence the legislature in the future. Each task force member then selected one of these factors and will do the research that will allow the group to do a more in-depth analysis of its possible implications for the future at the next meeting. The group also spent time discussing how best to accomplish the goals of the task force and worked to develop tentative agendas for future meetings. The task force will require two conference years to complete its efforts to assist legislative staff to prepare for what lies ahead.

Promoting, Developing and Improving NCSL Services and Products Task Force

by Jonetta Douglas

The task force met jointly with Promoting & Developing Professionalism for Legislative Staff Task Force to talk about the trainer database and outreach efforts. We discussed the status of the trainer database project. Right now, the database is available only to NCSL staff, and the discussion continues whether or not to make it open to members on the web page. We talked about including the data that ASI gathers on speakers for those meetings and how to integrate that into the trainer database. Finally on the trainer database, we discussed the liability issue involved with having a system that rates speakers on the web page. Alice Boler Ackerman (CO), chair of the Legal Services Staff Section, will look into that for the next meeting.

On outreach, there was discussion about continuing outreach efforts, a priority not only for NCSL but for the staff sections as well.

The task force then saw a demo from Doug Sacarto of the web site redesign. The proposed changes to the web site were well received, and it appears that

the updated site will be much more user friendly. Right now, the task force will serve as a sounding board for the consulting group and NCSL as they work on the new site. But eventually, LRL may be asked to help with indexing, so please keep your suggestions in mind.

There is a joint sub task force on the CD-ROM Project for an introductory CD-ROM that will be sent out to legislators and new legislative staff to inform them about NCSL services. This project was started last year, but the amount of information to be used in it was too overwhelming. We are trying again and hoping to entice people to want more information and not scare them away with too much. The group went over the draft storyboard and made suggestions. We should see a sample CD-ROM by the April meeting, and the final product is scheduled to be released at Annual Meeting.

NCSL is Redesigning Its Web Site

by Rich Jones

The redesign of the NCSL web site, which began last fall, is moving closer to fruition. NCSL contracted with Intellinet, a Denver based corporation with web design and on-line service experience, to assess its site and offer recommendations for its redesign. Intellinet recommended changes to meet two goals: (1) to provide legislative and legislative staff with easy access to the content and enhanced navigation of the NCSL web site and (2) to streamline the process for NCSL publishers and editors to add content to the web site.

A number of Intellinet's recommendations address issues raised by LRL members during the discussion of the NCSL web site at the Harrisburg meeting. For example, the redesign will include a navigation bar with menu buttons that will appear on each page to allow quick and easy access to information on the web site. An expanded capability for searching the web site and an enhanced site map will also be included as part of the navigation bar.

The designers recommend that the NCSL home page feature three topic areas: *Issues This Week*, *Meetings and NCSL Services*. These topic areas will be updated regularly and alert users to new information that has been added to the web site. By using "mouseovers" and other design techniques NCSL will be able to display all its critical information on the front page within the online screen viewing space thus alleviating the need to scroll down the page to access NCSL information.

Intellinet also recommended that NCSL provide enhanced search capabilities to minimize the number of levels users have to go down to access information on the web site. NCSL will index its documents on the web site and provide both keyword and free text searching to make it easier for users to find documents that match their specific search criteria. There are currently over 4,000 documents on the site with more being added daily. Other changes include an on-line registration form for NCSL meetings, a prominent display of where users are on the site so they can more easily navigate the site, and the ability for users to personalize the content to match their interests. A "My NCSL" button will be placed on the top navigation bar/header so members can quickly access their personalized pages.

NCSL staff is working with a task force of the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC) to review the proposed redesign and to get feedback on it. Clare Cholik and Jonetta Douglas serve on the LSCC and have participated in the initial review of the redesign. We hope to have a redesigned site up and operating by the Annual Meeting in July. As it becomes more functional it will be opened more broadly so staff can take a "test drive" and provide feedback. Your input and comments on the web site are encouraged and much appreciated.

Assembly on State Issues

by Diane Bolender, Iowa
ASI Staff Chair

As the Staff Chair of the Assembly on State Issues (ASI), I invite you to attend ASI's Spring Meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, April 9-11, 1999. In addition to informative sessions, the meeting provides a great opportunity for you to share ideas, insights, and information with your staff colleagues from around the nation. The focus for the plenary sessions on Saturday and Sunday is designed to help legislators and staff to prepare for the challenges and changes of a new century. The plenary session speakers will discuss the changing face and age of Americans and how these changes will affect state legislatures and public policy.

In addition to the plenary sessions, five special programs have been scheduled for Friday, April 9 and Saturday, April 10. Each of the Friday programs focuses on a timely topic for state legislatures. These programs include a late afternoon presentation on "Me and kids by Attorney General Janet Reno (invited), and all day programs relating to ways to reduce juvenile crime in the next millenium, an

update on Year 2000 issues, and a National Summit of the Low-level Radioactive Waste Working Group assessing low-level radioactive waste disposal in the United States. On Saturday, a tobacco settlement briefing in which speakers will discuss the latest details of implementing the settlement and the actions by the federal government to recoup money from the states will be on the agenda.

The eight committees and one task force of ASI will hold timely and informative sessions on Saturday. Their different topic areas include Economic and Cultural Development; Children, Families, and Health; Communications and Information Policy; Criminal Justice; Education; Fiscal, Oversight, and Intergovernmental Affairs; Legislative Effectiveness; and Science, Energy, and Environmental Resources. The Redistricting Task Force will also meet. You don't need to be a member of these committees and task forces to attend any of these sessions.

To receive a copy of the meeting agenda (as well as registration and housing information), please call NCSL's fax on demand number (800) 380-7280 and request Document 106. The agenda is also available through the Internet on NCSL's website (www.ncsl.org). The information available through these two sources will be continually updated as additional details are available.

I look forward to seeing you in Jacksonville.

Coordinators' Corner

News for this column is gathered by a dedicated team of coordinators who call and fax to libraries and librarians in their regions to get the latest news and ask preassigned questions.

This time we're asking for topic suggestions for the focus of our staff section roundtable discussion at Annual Meeting in Indianapolis?

**Coordinator CLARE CHOLIK, South Dakota
Legislative Research Council**
from Clare

I would like to see continued emphasis on the topic of "performing legal research on the Internet." The session we had on this at the PDS was very beneficial, and I would like to see others like it. I think it is a topic that would be appropriate for a roundtable discussion as well. I am also always interested in keeping up with new innovations or approaches in document preservation.

Marilyn Cathcart, Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

What about a program on Myers-Briggs (interpretation but also the value of understanding Myers-Briggs types in managing and working with people)? I'm not sure about libraries to visit, but Conner Prairie is a wonderful place to visit. It is a replica of a prairie village and most enjoyable (also they cater meals). The web site address <http://www.connerprairie.org>. They might have "behind the scenes" tours. Also, the art museum complex is phenomenal. The web address is <http://indplsartcenter.org>.

Also, the Speedway has a museum. When my husband and I were in Indianapolis for an MG car get together, we heard one of the archivists from the museum speak. He was completely fascinating - but some of it was car talk!

Mary Rasmussen, Nebraska Legislative Reference Library

Developing innovative ways of marketing our services to the legislative members and staff is an ongoing issue of importance to us. It's fairly simple to identify and describe our services but it's another thing entirely to explain how our services can be used by several hundred people, all with different needs and issues.

Additionally, as we continue to move forward in the electronic age, it would be instructive to know what changes library staff need to anticipate with regard to the services they provide, such as dependable web sites, and how to write and implement policy to accommodate the new technology.

Either of these comments might serve as good topics for either a program or roundtable discussion.

Coordinator MARIAN ROGERS, Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau
from Marian

Wisconsin LRB librarians suggest the following topics for roundtable discussion:

How legislative libraries are dealing with electronic documents. How do you decide which documents to save in paper form?

How legislative libraries promote use and visibility of their libraries. What are some library outreach activities? Do you do bibliographic instruction and to whom do you provide the instruction?

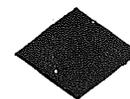
What new technologies are legislative libraries planning? What innovations are being implemented? Do other states have state documents depository programs? Do other legislative libraries participate in a state documents depository program? What are the retention policies for state documents and for documents from other sources?

Debbie Tavenner, Ohio Legislative Service Commission

I am interested in experiences of libraries that have put online catalogs on intranets or the Internet. I am also interested always in document preservation. It seemed from some discussion on the web question about electronic archives that libraries in our staff section were moving away from microfilm, even though all the presentations we have had lately have indicated, at least I thought so, that microfilm was still the most reliable medium for documents that need to be permanently preserved.

Taran Ley, Illinois Legislative Research Unit

At the roundtable it would be nice to discuss the various professional responsibilities for everyone and how they juggle these responsibilities during a hectic legislative session.



Coordinator TRACEY KIMBALL New Mexico Legislative Council Service Library
from Tracey

What are the best practices for providing information about Internet research sites to legislative staff? For example, how to create and update bibliographies? How to track, and catalog or index, Internet sites, especially for intranet users?

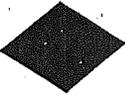
How about something on the 2000 census-taking to get acquainted with the procedures and controversies?

Coordinator JOYCE GRIMES, South Carolina Legislative Library
from Joyce

I'd recommend a roundtable discussion on "The Glass Ceiling in Librarianship—Cracked or Shattered?" In my opinion, it's an ideal time in our professional growth to use advances in technology to upgrade the professional status of librarians and ultimately our salaries.

Emerging technologies require us to not only be adept in people skills to determine quickly what information is needed, but also to quickly find the information from a reliable electronic database. On a daily basis, with each request, we exercise the ability to make sound judgments as to information content.

We need to be highly skilled to conduct efficient searches to provide the right information. As legislative librarians we are unique with our special area of knowledge. Technology is making us even more special with the demand to access mega databases to get the right information quickly. Based on the roundtable discussion, we could develop a position paper with goals and objectives over a specific time period in our legislative libraries.



Strengthening the Madagascar National Assembly: A Librarian's Perspective

by Lynn Randall, Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library

As librarians we help and support each other regularly. Probably all of you have given assistance at some time to libraries in our city, state, region and even elsewhere in the country. However, until I had the opportunity to travel to Madagascar as part of a legislative strengthening project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, I had not viewed this mutual aid as international in scope. What assistance could I offer to a library in a very far-away country with a different political system, a different language, and a culture and economy that were foreign to me? I discovered that we do have a great deal to share with people in countries that have a shorter experience with democracy, but my biggest discovery was how much the trip changed me and enlarged my perspective on my own country and work.

I first became interested in international programs in 1995 when NCSL brought a delegation from francophone Africa (Bénin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger) to visit the Maine Legislature as part of a study tour of American legislatures. Although this group included one archivist and no librarians, the group was scheduled to visit our legislative library. Since most members of the group had limited English skills, translators accompanied them. I decided that I should be able to put my college French to use by providing a simple introduction to the library and an explanation of our services.

Although my French is far from perfect, I was pleased to be able to communicate directly with such wonderful people who were so interested in the library.

Shortly after this visit I received a letter from NCSL asking for applicants for a training group traveling to Africa. I was not selected for this project since the plans did not include a library component. However, in 1998 I was invited to participate in the Madagascar project that would include an assessment of the library, or Documentation Service, of the National Assembly as well as an evaluation of research services available to the National Assembly. The project also included orientation of new legislators, legislative ethics and committee functioning.

NCSL was a sub-contractor selected by the State University of New York. After the contract was signed things happened quickly. I prepared by polishing my French, gathering information about our library and trying to anticipate what might be helpful to the librarians in Madagascar. NCSL Project Manager Jeremy Meadows sent much helpful information about the project goals and about Madagascar, and also set up a conference call with the other project librarian, Constant Honnougan, Director of the Library of the National Assembly of Bénin, a country in West Africa. Of course, I also had to get a number of shots and a large supply of medicines.

The capital city of Madagascar, Antananarivo or Tana, has nearly seven hundred thousand people but hardly any of the services and infrastructure found in American cities of comparable size. We stayed at the Hilton Hotel, the city's only skyscraper, which was quite a contrast with the many muddy streets crowded with people. From my hotel window I watched carts go by pulled by a type of oxen called zebu. A short distance away were a variety of small street vendors, and under the trees outdoor barbers were at work. The beautiful purple jacaranda trees surrounded a lake that was being dredged by hand. In the middle of the lake there is an impressive French World War I memorial, constructed during the French colonial period, which extended from 1895 to 1960. On a hill overlooking the lake sits the shell of the former Queen's Palace, a nineteenth century landmark that burned in a disastrous fire in 1995.

We began our work quickly, since Jeremy had scheduled interviews for Constant and me before we arrived. We talked with the service directors and

service chiefs of the National Assembly staff offices dealing with legislation, studies, automation and documentation (library services). It quickly became clear that each of these services could be improved by working cooperatively, but the rather complex organizational structure presented difficulties. For example, the studies service depended on library resources to complete its work, but these two services had been placed in separate directorates without consultation with the service chiefs. As far as we could determine there were few if any opportunities for these services to meet.

I also began to see how Madagascar's parliamentary system differs from ours. In Madagascar the executive takes the initiative and the popularly elected legislative body discusses and amends. Members of the National Assembly introduce very few of their own bills, even though the Constitution gives them the right to do so. There is a rather low level of interest among citizens in the actions of the National Assembly, but there is also little opportunity for input. Legislative hearings are not considered public.

Instead of hearing from citizens, the deputies receive information from government ministers. The legislative capacity for independent research and analysis seems quite limited. Ultimately many of the deputies don't find it worth their while to attend legislative sessions. The most pressing issue while we were there was the proposal to purchase new 4x4 vehicles for each deputy, which the government opposed. (The deputies later did get their 4x4's.)

The limited capacity to support legislative research could be seen clearly in the library, which suffers serious budget problems. One result is an incomplete set of the Official Journal of the National Assembly, a fundamental tool. This and the lack of coordination with the Studies Service often results in staff of the Studies Service going to other libraries to complete their research, spending time in travel that could have been used for analysis. The library has two computers, one devoted to the catalog and the other used for word-processing, e-mail and Internet access; however, the single line for the phone, fax and Internet connection is definitely a limiting factor. Cataloging of most titles in the collection is very good, and cataloging software common to other francophone legislative libraries is used that allows production of a union catalog with a powerful search capability. Although traffic in the library is quite high, most use of library materials is limited to newspapers and dictionaries. Some of the staff confided that they never saw deputies in the library.

Many titles in the collection, which numbers under a thousand titles, are either outdated or not relevant to the work of the National Assembly; but there are also a number of recent and highly useful titles in the areas of economics, management and law. However, circulation of these appeared to be low.

As Constant and I worked together, we discovered many similarities in our own libraries. Constant has spent two and a half months in a legislative library in New Jersey under an NCSL program and has led his library in Bénin to a very high level of service. Among the activities and services common to our two libraries are newspaper clipping and publicity for recent acquisitions. Both of these services were included in our recommendations for the library. Constant brought software to generate bibliographies using the online catalog; we recommended that this be used to produce a list of new acquisitions that then could be posted in the lobby of the Assembly next to the daily schedule.

We also recommended that a newspaper clipping service be started to provide access to the articles by topic. (In the future someone is going to want to revisit the discussion of the 4x4's.) This could be accomplished without much additional expense, since current staff could quite easily take on the newspaper clipping service. In addition, we recommended that reference books be separated from the lending collection to facilitate reference services, which appeared to be limited to searching the online catalog. Although we were both disappointed that all library materials were in locked cabinets, the real danger of theft prevented us from making a strong recommendation that the doors be removed.

Internet access is another area of common ground for Constant and me. Constant is responsible for maintaining the entire legislative site in Bénin, and he worked especially hard to help the Madagascar library staff keep the National Assembly site updated regularly. We interviewed the Internet service provider, who also came to the library to discuss updating procedures. We showed our Internet sites at an Internet workshop for legislative staff and tried to highlight its value as a research tool. I shared an actual question from a legislator and demonstrated how I had used the Internet to find an article that answered the question. I was able to show the article in French translation, so people could read it themselves and understand how it was relevant. I had also compiled a manual of search documentation for the Internet in French, which I left with the library staff.

We presented another workshop on legislative library services in Bénin and in the state of Maine. I was pleased by the size of the audience, which numbered about forty, and by the attendance of directors and service chiefs as well as staff. Interest was high, and there were a number of questions. I showed photos of our State House and shared some of our legislative publications. I also tried to describe our tradition of free public library services in the United States and concluded with a short discussion of the importance of legislative libraries. We expect legislators to establish policy in a wide variety of areas in which they are not experts and to wisely dispense public funds, but they can succeed only if relevant information is available to them. In addition, citizens in a democracy need to have information about the work of the legislature and their government to make informed choices, to participate in their government and to understand the development of the laws that affect them. The legislative library plays a fundamental role in filling all of these information needs. The applause I received following my presentation was my proudest moment.

Now that I'm home I realize how much I gained from participating in this project. I know now that it is possible to look at a situation very different from your own and use what you know to analyze the issues and make suggestions. I'm more aware now of what I do know, and I'm proud of what I took for granted before this trip, such as the high level of cooperation among our legislative service offices. My perspective has been broadened from library reference services to embrace all legislative research. I made many new friends, and I am still very impressed how open and helpful everyone was at the National Assembly. I discovered that language and culture don't have to be barriers. This project offered many challenges and required a great deal of hard work, but I received far more than I gave.

It is a privilege to participate in an international program; I would encourage all legislative staff, especially librarians, to look for opportunities to develop contacts with our colleagues in other countries. Legislative staffs around the world actually have a lot in common these days. We are often working with the same technology, thanks in large part to the Internet, and many of the issues we face are global. As legislative staff we know how valuable assistance from colleagues can be. International programs give us a way we can extend mutual support to colleagues in other countries who are striving to support their legislative institutions just as we are. The rewards are tremendous.

News from the States

Delores Lanier has retired from the Colorado Legislative Council library. Karen Stewart replaces her as library manager. Alex Duvall is their new librarian. He came to Colorado from a law firm in Boston.

The Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau is pleased to announce that Arden Rice Sujewicz began working as Wisconsin Documents Librarian on February 15th. She succeeds Teresa Pellitteri who resigned in August.

Mary Bone at CSG has been replaced by Donald Hunter. He is the manager of the States Information Center. Don previously served as director of the New Hampshire Office of Legislative Services, having been with that office since 1979. He also served on the executive committee of the Research and Committee Staff Section. So Don has a history with NCSL and looks forward to seeing and working with old friends.

What's New?



LRL Acquisitions List

Check out the new Acquisitions List section of the LRL homepage. It contains monthly acquisition lists from LRL libraries, and we want your lists. Please forward them in electronic form, if possible, to Rita Thaemert or Janna Goodwin at NCSL. The database is searchable and will contain lists for the last six months.

New Reminder

1999 LRL Professional Development Seminar, Sacramento, California, October 14-16. Hotel is the Hyatt at \$118 per night. Registration fee will be about \$200.

from Marilyn Guttromson, North Dakota
Year 2000: State Compliance Efforts. National State Auditors Association. January 1999.
 and
State Tax Handbook, Commerce Clearinghouse, 1999. 1-800-248-3248 (\$41.95)

NCSL Publications

Copies of all NCSL publications listed here are available from the Marketing Department at 303/830-2200, unless otherwise noted.

BOOKS

Model Electricity Consumer Protection Disclosures
 Label Testing: Results of Mall Intercept Study
 Consumer Research on Tracking Approaches and Product
 vs. Supplier Labeling
 Synthesis Report: A Summary of Research on Information
 Disclosure
 State Environmental Audit Laws and Policies: An
 Evaluation
 Performance Contracting: A Survey and Overview of State
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 Inside the Legislative Process 1997
 Adolescent Health: State Actions 1998
 Child Support Legislative Summary 1998
 Children, Youth and Families Legislative Summary 1998
 Redistricting Law 2000
 Transmitting Wind Energy: Issues and Options in
 Competitive Electric Markets
 Teens and Traffic: Reducing the Risk
 CHIP Annual Report and CHIP Enabling Legislation
 State Tax Actions 1998

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 Your ideas and submissions are always welcome.
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LEGISBRIEFS

School Violence Update, Vol.7, No.1
 Criminal Penalties for Transmission of HIV, Vol.7, No.2
 Parental Responsibility in Juvenile Justice, Vol.7, No.3
 Personal Watercraft Safety, Vol.7, No.4
 License Restrictions and Child Support, Vol.7, No.5
 The Brady Act and Its Aftermath, Vol.7, No.6
 Funding Coordinated School Health Programs, Vol.7, No.7
 Identity Theft, Vol.7, No.8
 Access Barriers to Primary Health Care, Vol.7, No.9
 Recycling Market Development, Vol.7, No.10
 Drug-Free Workplaces, Vol.7, No.11
 Legislators' Tax Home, Vol.7, No.12
 School-Based Nutrition Services, Vol.7, No.13
 On the Road to Cleaner Cars, Vol.7, No.14
 Developmental Disabilities and Aging, Vol.7, No.15
 School-to-Work: Past and Future, Vol.7, No.16
 Cellular Telephones and Highway Safety, Vol.7, No.17
 Mandatory Social Security for State Government
 Employees, Vol.7, No.18

STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORTS

State Crime Legislation 1998
 State Child Support Programs: Necessity Inspires
 Ingenuity
 Juvenile Crime and Justice Legislation: 1998
 Personal Assistance for People with Disabilities
 The Challenge of Siting Low-Level Radioactive Waste
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