

## Leadership Skills for Library Professionals in Modern Era

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### Abstract:

*Library Professionals will have to learn to lead change their strategic role to meet patron demands and effectively meet the wide spectrum of user's choice. A strong, dynamic and visionary leadership is the need of the hour in order to preserve the past, convene the present and work to build a better future. If library wishes to sustain, remain competitive and viable, transformational and evidence-based library leadership must be developed among the library leaders. This paper mainly highlights for what is Leadership? ,What Makes a Good Leader?, Types, Role, Importance, Character and Traits, Qualities, Styles, Ten Characteristics of Superior Leaders, Development, Developing Leadership Skills and Gaining Experience, Practical Soft Skills for Librarians, Qualities for Future Library Leaders, Major Competencies those library Professionals, Leadership versus Management (Librarian Vs Manager) and Challenges before Librarians of Libraries Future Library Leader.*

**Key words:** Leadership, Library Administration, Library Leader, Qualities, Competencies.

### 1. Introduction:

Leadership is necessary based on challenges facing organizational leaders, in the emerging environment, such as

the increased scrutiny of leaders and organizations by the media and a range of stakeholders, an increased emphasis on accountability, the growing number of competitors for all types of organizations, the proliferation of communication and information technology, limited financial resources, and the opportunities for ethical abuses. The complexity of leadership tasks in libraries is growing, and can no longer be sufficiently met by good managers who go by the book. Leadership in libraries is based in relationship. It is mostly art, but partly technique. Being a library leader is not just what you do; it's also about what other people do. Leaders must have a visible, credible commitment to ideas that people can understand and sign onto. And they must have or develop the authority that makes people want to listen.

### **1.1. What is Leadership?**

- A Simple definition of leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal.
- Leadership is an essential ingredient for successful organization. It refers to the relationship in which one person influences others to work together willingly on related tasks to attain defined objectives or goals enthusiastically desired by the reader.
- Leadership has been described as “a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task”. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leadership>)

### **1.2. What Makes a Good Leader?**

There are two films that illustrate how leadership qualities are dependent on context:

- The Admirable Crichton (originally a play) in which the context changes but the personnel remain the same. When a Lord and butler are shipwrecked, their natural

qualities result in them swapping roles as leader and servant.

- Twelve O'clock High in which the personnel change but the context remains the same. A failing squadron is saved when a participative leader is replaced by an executive leader.

### **1.3. Types of Leaders:**

- Autocratic Leaders
- Bureaucratic Leaders
- Democratic Leaders
- Impoverished Leaders
- Laissez-Faire Leaders
- Charismatic Leaders

### **1.4. What is the Role of Leadership?**

You may have the following questions about your peer leaders.

- What do long-term school reform leaders view as their essential professional competencies?
- What do they see as their role in sustaining reform?
- How do they engage teachers, families, and communities in partnerships that build programs to help children meet challenging standards?
- How do such leaders know when they are doing a good job?

## **2. Importance of Leadership:**

### **2.1. Motivating the Employee**

### **2.2. Creating Confidence**

**2.1. Motivating the Employee:** A good leadership motivates the employee for better results and for better work performance.

**2.2. Creating Confidence:** A good leader may create confidence among his followers by directing them, giving advice getting through them for good results.

### **3. Character & Traits in Leadership:**

Compiled by the Santa Clara University and the Tom Peters Group:

#### **3.1. Traits of a Good Leader:**

3.1.1. Honest

3.1.2. Competent

3.1.3. Forward-looking

3.1.4. Inspiring

3.1.5. Intelligent

3.1.6. Fair-minded

3.1.7. Broad-minded

3.1.8. Courageous

3.1.9. Straightforward

3.1.10. Imaginative

**3.1.1. Honest:** Display sincerity, integrity, and candor in all your actions. Deceptive behavior will not inspire trust.

**3.1.2. Competent:** Base your actions on reason and moral principles. Do not make decisions based on childlike emotional desires or feelings.

**3.1.3. Forward-looking:** Set goals and have a vision of the future. The vision must be owned throughout the organization. Effective leaders envision what they want and how to get it. They habitually pick priorities stemming from their basic values.

**3.1.4. Inspiring:** Display confidence in all that you do. By showing endurance in mental, physical, and spiritual stamina, you will inspire others to reach for new heights. Take charge when necessary.

**3.1.5. Intelligent:** Read, study, and seek challenging assignments.

**3.1.6. Fair-minded:** Show fair treatment to all people. Prejudice is the enemy of justice. Display empathy by being sensitive to the feelings, values, interests, and well-being of others.

**3.1.7. Broad-minded:** Seek out diversity.

**3.1.8. Courageous:** Have the perseverance to accomplish a goal, regardless of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Display a confident calmness when under stress.

**3.1.9. Straightforward:** Use sound judgment to make a good decision at the right time.

**3.1.10. Imaginative:** Make timely and appropriate changes in your thinking, plans, and methods. Show creativity by thinking of new and better goals, ideas, and solutions to problems. Be innovative!

### **3.2. Attributes:**

Attributes establish what leaders are, and every leader needs at least three of them (U.S. Army Handbook, 1973):

3.2.1. Standard Bearers

3.2.2. Developers

3.2.3. Integrators

**3.2.1. Standard Bearers:** Establish the ethical framework within an organization. These demands a commitment to live and defend the climate and culture that you want to permeate your organization. What you set as an example will soon become the rule as unlike knowledge, ethical behavior is learned more by observing than by listening. And in fast moving situations, examples become certainty. Being a standard bearer creates trust and openness in your employees, who in turn, fulfill your visions.

**3.2.2. Developers:** Help others learn through teaching, training, and coaching. This creates an exciting place to work and learn. Never miss an opportunity to teach or learn something new yourself. Coaching suggests someone who cares

enough to get involved by encouraging and developing others who are less experienced. Employees who work for developers know that they can take risks, learn by making mistakes, and winning in the end.

**3.2.3. Integrators:** Orchestrate the many activities that take place throughout an organization by providing a view of the future and the ability to obtain it. Success can only be achieved when there is a unity of effort. Integrators have a sixth sense about where problems will occur and make their presence felt during critical times. They know that their employees do their best when they are left to work within a vision-based framework.

#### **4. Leadership Qualities:**

What makes a good leader depends on the context. The leadership qualities that enable you to become a better leader are a complex interaction of:

- The values, culture, and personalities of the industry, organization and team that you are leading.
- Your leadership style and traits.

For example, the most widely appreciated leadership qualities are honesty, confidence, and knowledge. However, in times of war what makes a good leader is the ability to *lie* convincingly, e.g. to hide plans from the enemy. Winston Churchill illustrates this principle of context-dependence: he was in the political wilderness in the 1930s, but adopted as Britain's leader during World War Two.

#### **4.1. Leadership Styles:**

Participative and executive leadership are two of eight basic leadership styles. In theory, the ideal scenario is for a leader to have infinite flexibility. That means you are able to adapt your leadership style according to the situation and/or the state of the team - e.g.: to be an **Executive Leader** when a team's

organization is poor, but to be a **Participative Leader** when there is a need to increase motivation and commitment.

However, the perfect, infinitely-flexible leader does not exist. Everyone has strengths and weakness, and there is a need to strike a balance between your preferred styles and meeting the needs of the situation in which you lead. The modern goal is to develop 'good enough' leadership.

#### **4.2. Dimensions of Sustaining Leadership:**

- Partnership and voice
- Vision and values
- Knowledge and daring
- Savvy and persistence
- Personal qualities (passion, humor, and empathy strength of character, general maturity, patience, wisdom, common sense, trustworthiness, reliability, creativity, sensitivity)

#### **4.3. Ten Characteristics of Superior Leaders:**

Successful Leaders share the following characteristics;

- Mission
- Vision
- Goal
- Competency
- A strong team
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- A "can do, get it done" attitude
- Inspiration
- Ambition

#### **4.4. Leadership Development:**

This relationship (between contextual needs and individual preferences) reflects two interests that need to be served when developing leadership potential - organizational and individual. Organizations need leaders who will support the organizational

culture and aims. Individuals need to develop their natural qualities. These interests lead to very different strategies for leadership development:

**Table.1: Relationship between Organizational needs and Individual preferences:**

Sl.No.	Organizational	Individual
1.	Identify the leadership characteristics and/or profiles of people who will enhance organizational performance.	Discover your natural leadership style and qualities.
2.	Select/recruit individuals whose character, skills and potential closely match that profile.	Develop those qualities into tangible skills.
3.	Develop the skills/abilities within those individuals so they can fulfill their leadership potential within the organization.	Find a role or organization that values the type of leadership you have to offer

These interests might co-operate or compete - depending on whether your natural qualities are valued by the organization in which you work. The Leadership Report compares your leadership profile with the demands of being a leader in various industries/disciplines.

## **5. Leadership in Library Professionals:**

In Library, the Librarian should motivate the staff and the users. He should motivate them to use the library effectively. The librarian should set effective plans & policies and the subordinates will take all the efforts to achieve the goals. The participant model is very much applicable in the library because the users are highly motivated.

- The user's ideas & suggestions are given much importance in order to attain the aims.
- They share the responsibility with superior
- It provides stability to the library by raising moral attitudes of users which are high and favorable.

So, the word “participate model” itself identifies that everyone should take part and it is democratic model. It is a model which involves mental and emotional involvement. Hence, participate model is very suitable for the library.

### **5.1. Developing Leadership Skills and Gaining Experience:**

Librarians wanting to move up the career ladder need to develop their leadership skills and abilities. Leadership expert James McGregor Burns defines leadership as the mobilization of others and self to achieve goals. He further defines “transformational leadership” as the ability to raise and transform the goals of followers. In their 1985 book, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus also identified four qualities commonly found in transformative leaders. In her study of library leaders, Brooke E. Sheldon confirmed that these four qualities frequently appear in library leaders. These qualities are:

- Vision
- Communication
- Trustworthiness
- Positive Self-Regard

Fortunately, Library employees interested in developing these Qualities have many avenues to explore.

5.1. Leadership Opportunities

5.2. Focus Your Vision

5.3. Power of Communication

5.4. Stand for Trust

5.5. Learn Positive Self-Regard

5.6. Final Thoughts

**5.1. Leadership Opportunities:** Those truly interested in gaining leadership experience can find opportunities in a variety of places. Community involvement, professional associations, and your employer provide several places to gain

leadership skills and practice the skills listed above. Within your own organization, you have many opportunities, such as when working in teams, to develop these abilities. Professional associations such as ALA give further opportunities to exercise leadership. ALA's New Members Round Table (NMRT) offers new librarians a chance to get involved immediately and to develop leadership skills. You can also develop leadership skills through community involvement, such as in churches, city boards and hobbyist clubs. The possibilities are endless.

**5.2. Focus Your Vision:** Bennis's first leadership quality involves vision. A leader possesses a vision and embraces it. Visions attract others and grab their attention; a leader is able to convey his or her vision to others and use it to motivate them. This can be a vision of where the organization is headed, how a department or unit will contribute to the organization's mission, the completion of a project, or any number of things. While developing your leadership skills, learn to recognize a vision and pursue it. Visions present themselves to library and information professionals in a variety of settings. Most likely your place of employment will even provide you with either a written vision statement or an informal, understood vision. Professional associations, their units, and local organizations also have visions. The Membership Promotion and Relations Committee of NMRT seek to recruit new members and retain current members, for example. As a member of this committee, Brent Spencer embraced this vision and acted on it; seeking ways to inform new librarians about NMRT, he initiated a project to contact recently-hired librarians.

**5.3. Power of Communication:** In order to motivate others with your vision, you must be able to communicate it to them. Sheldon provides a simplified formula of successful communication:

1. Emphasize simply stated values and one or two dominant themes,

2. Listen,
3. “Understand that the value of power is sharing it.”

The first two aspects of this formula are vital to reducing miscommunication and misunderstandings. Try keeping oral and written communication concise and simple. Listen actively. Repeat what you have heard, even when you think you understood the first time. The third part of Sheldon’s formula relates to maintaining relationships. Not only must you listen, but you must also allow input. Dana Newman developed an understanding of the importance of this aspect of communication on Anne Arundel County’s Learning Libraries team in Maryland. She now consults with her co-workers when completing major projects, and incorporates input for best results.

**5.4. Stand for Trust:** Bennis states that “trust implies accountability, predictability, reliability.” Good leaders maintain consistency in their words and actions. Not only do they tell us what they plan to do, and do what they say they will do, but good leaders also repeatedly make decisions that support their vision and stance. Maintaining a stance involves patience and persistence. Don’t be afraid to share your ideas or suggest plans of actions. Give others the chance to consider your ideas, but don’t allow them to forget them. Let your actions reflect your vision.

Gaining trust also requires that you take your responsibilities seriously. As past NMRT President Joseph Yue stated: “Bad reputation [sticks] on people’s minds and [travels] faster than a good one across ALA units.” This is true within any organization and across the field in general.

**5.5. Learn Positive Self-Regard:** In addition to the qualities discussed above, leaders are also learners. Leaders learn from books, mentors, observation and experience. To gain experience, we often must step out of our comfort zones. This requires

positive self-regard and further strengthens it. According to Bennis, positive self-regard consists of:

- Knowing your strengths;
- Further developing and enhancing these strengths; and,
- Determining the fit between your strengths/weaknesses and the organization's needs.

Learn to take chances. If you know your strengths and weaknesses, you will be able to decide if you truly have the ability to take on a role or task. Compensate for your weaknesses by learning to remedy them (by reading books, attending seminars, etc.), or by sharing tasks with others whose strengths balance yours. Also, learn to learn from failure. There will be times you make mistakes - don't dwell on these mistakes, but do look for the lessons in them.

**5.6. Final Thoughts:** Most leadership skills can be obtained and practiced at any level of an organization. Nevertheless, if you plan to seek a management position, formal leadership positions could provide a boost to your resume. As mentioned above, NMRT provides many opportunities. You can also seek committee appointments with your current employer by volunteering or by informing your supervisor of your interest in committee work.

Like most opportunities, you will gain from leadership positions what you put into them. To fully develop vision, communication, trustworthiness, and positive self regard, you must practice these skills. Bennis and Nanus teach us that learning to lead is "a deeply human process." Reading and observation will provide you with the theories, but only experience and application will allow you to develop leadership skills.

## **6. Practical Soft Skills for Librarians:**

Leadership in libraries can have many different faces and does not require that you supervise people in your paid position.

Leadership roles can be found throughout the library, from the paraprofessional at the circulation desk to the new library school graduate working at the reference desk. Leadership opportunities can include working with small groups or committees within a library, becoming involved in local and/or regional library associations, and presenting papers at local or national conferences.

Today's Librarians having professional degrees in library and information science is not sufficient unlike in the past. There is demand for librarians having multidimensional aptitude in the areas of technical work, administrative work and also in providing user oriented services along with soft skills. Like any other profession, the soft skills are required in day-to-day working for carrying out routine jobs more effectively. The librarians working in large organizations like corporate offices are already practicing these skills through by experience or training.

Following Practical Soft Skills required becoming a successful Library Professional:

- 6.1. Listening skills
- 6.2. Communications skills
- 6.3. Interpersonal skills
- 6.4. Public relations
- 6.5. Customer service
- 6.6. Leadership skills & Teamwork
- 6.7. Negotiating skills
- 6.8. Writing skills
- 6.9. Project management skills
- 6.10. Presentation skills
- 6.11. Teaching skills

**6.1. Listening skills:** The library professionals must have good listening skills as he/she has to interact with different types of users all the time. By carefully listening to users' he/she can identify the exact requirement and then provide the service

accordingly.

**6.2. Communications skills:** Command on language especially English and also regional one will improve the communication. Good communication skills also require understanding people, self-confidence. With this one can achieve lot and solve problems too.

**6.3. Interpersonal skills:** Librarians have to deal with all levels of people like Management, users, colleagues in library, vendors etc. To deal with each one on them in rightful manner requires interpersonal skills. When you work in large organization, it is most important to build rapport with all departments, which helps in managing the library and providing better service to every one.

**6.4. Public relations:** One needs to use PR very effectively to attract users in libraries through various ways. It also helps to bond with users and vendors too. Also gives ability to work with other professionals.

**6.5. Customer service:** Customer is library user and to satisfy his information needs is customer service. The librarians are always giving attention to their users and providing services through CAS, SDI or other specialized services. The customer service emphasizes the customer satisfaction, which guarantees that user will always come back to library.

**6.6. Leadership skills & Teamwork:** Library management especially the big library is team exercise. Hence it is required to have leadership skills to manage and guiding the team time to time, as every subordinate is important for carrying out their work efficiently for smooth running of library.

**6.7. Negotiating skills:** These skills are required on special occasions such as handling bulk purchases, specialized

databases subscription with vendors etc. Also some times in delicate situations like library committee meetings or avoiding undue requirements from arrogant users.

**6.8. Writing skills:** The librarians are sometimes asked to submit/help in writing research proposal/ business proposal/project report, which requires good writing skills. Today there are many library professionals who are contributing to various publications even in-house or even by blogging for sharing their experiences and helping users.

**6.9. Project management skills:** In corporate sector many times, librarians are part of some project team and assigned specialized jobs such as knowledge management or digital institutional repository. These require dedication, understanding of the project, time management for completion of work, teamwork and reporting back the results etc.

**6.10. Presentation skills:** The presentation skills are required in report writing, library committee meetings and even in daily work which represents the library management overall for users. It not only emphasizes the individual skills but also from library presentation by means of its decoration, user's guides, and library ambience.

**6.11. Teaching skills:** This is essential for new user orientations or in case new service is introduced such as online database searching. It also includes motivating reading habits in users.

## **7. Leadership Qualities for Future Library Leaders:**

**By: Carol A. Brey-Casiano's 10 Steps to Being a Great Library Leader**

- Find a good mentor/ BE a good mentor
- Learn how to follow first

- Be Visionary
- Be a Good Servant
- Take risks
- Take care of yourself
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Never turn down a leadership position...even if it means managing your kid's soccer team.
- Learn how to motivate people effectively
- Keep your sense of humor

### **7.1. Major Competencies those Library Professionals:**

Some of the competencies Library Leaders should have are;

#### 7.1.1. Managerial Effectiveness

#### 7.1.2. Cognitive Skills

#### 7.1.3. Social Skills

#### 7.1.4. Motivational

#### 7.1.5. Occupational

#### **7.1.1. Managerial Effectiveness:**

- Develop plans and strategies
- Sets proprieties and focuses on what is critical
- Confronts and solves problems
- Makes sound and timely decisions
- Evaluates subordinates fairly
- Monitors tasks implementation
- Decisive
- Negotiates effectively
- Manages and organizes time effectively
- Realizes the need for change and manages change effectively
- Develops subordinates abilities
- Delegates authority

#### **7.1.2. Cognitive Skills:**

- Envisions future trends
- Is open minded and accept new ideas

- Diagnoses situations accurately
- Creative
- Analyzes information effectively

### **7.1.3. Social Skills:**

- Communicates effectively/Builds good work relationships
- Understands other needs and emotions
- Listens actively
- Appreciates and respects the ideas of others
- Able to function in a political environment
- Has a sense of humor

### **7.1.4. Motivational:**

- Has high motivation to achieve and motivate staff
- Is committed to achieving organizational goals
- Takes initiative and ready to act
- Keeps an optimistic view personal
- Controls own emotions
- Has self-confidence
- Knows own strengths and weaknesses
- Trustworthy
- Accepts criticisms (Singh,2012),

### **7.1.5. Occupational:**

- Committed to high ethical and professional standards

## **7.2. Leadership Skills for Library Professionals in Modern Era:**

Leadership, as a process, shapes the goals of a group or organization, motivates behavior toward the achievement of those goals, and helps define group or organizational culture. Leadership skills like other profession our library professionals are also required in modern environment. They are;

- Integrity
- Vision/Strategy

- Communication
- Relationships
- Persuasion
- Adaptability
- Teamwork
- Coaching and Development
- Decision-Making
- Planning

### **7.3. Challenges before Librarians of Libraries:**

Library Managers are facing various Challenges. Some of them listed below;

- Changed users information behavior and reading habits
- Concept of 24 hours and 7 days library and information services
- Demand for web based products and services
- Demand for effective monitoring and feedback system
- Demand for quality based library and information products and services
- Demand for the creation of culture for creativity
- Diversity of programs and emerging thrust areas
- Emergence of library networking and networks
- Expectation for resource generation
- Explosive growth of electronic information and products
- Impact of ICT on library practices
- Increased and diversified users information thrust and need
- Increased cost of information materials
- Marketing of library and information products and services
- Need for effective and efficient users interface
- Need for interaction with external environment
- Need for the development of information infrastructure
- Need to create specialized databases
- Need to develop sustainable collection building strategy
- New electronic information environment

- New roles and responsibilities
- New tools and techniques of information handling
- Philosophy of information at door
- Responsiveness and dynamism in special library systems and services
- Timely delivery of information materials to end-users

## **8. Leadership versus Management (Librarian Vs Manager):**

The distinction between Leader and Manager is a troublesome work. If we look at the formal positions of leaders and managers in organizations, the leader's job requires a broader perspective on the operation and on the moral significance of policies and actions of the organization. The manager's domain of perspective is usually more narrowly defined as people whose job is to ensure that a set of tasks are completed.

Leaders are different from manager. Managers are delegated with power to develop, organize, and implement processes and people whereas leader deals with the complexities of emotion, influence, motivation and ideas in order to inspire people and to achieve the desired behaviors or actions. Employees get directions from managers on specific activities or processes in order to meet an organizational mission, but leaders shape individuals idea, thoughts, and emotions which in turn, influence motivation, loyalty, ethics and equality of work, and ultimately, organizational culture and its success. Leaders have a profound influence upon the way working and willingness to adapt to changes or exploit those changes in the form of new innovations. (Imam, 2012),

Mason & Wetherbee has mentioned the following distinction between Leadership and Management.

**Table 2: Leadership versus Management as proposed by Mason & Wetherbee (2004)**

Sl.No.	Leadership	Management
1.	A leader does the right things	A good manager does things right
2.	Leadership is about effectiveness	Management is largely about efficiency
3.	Leading is about what and why	Management is about how to do the things
4.	Leadership is about trust and about people	Management is about systems, controls, procedure, policies and structure
5.	Leadership is about innovating and initiating	Management is about copying, about managing the status quo
6.	Leadership looks at the horizon, not just the bottom line	Management is about the bottom line

**Table 3: Manager versus Leader (Librarian)**

Sl.No.	Manager	Leader (Librarian)
1	Reactive	Proactive
2.	Find faults	Coaches
3.	Doesn't care to understand process	Understand process
4.	Sits in his chair	Moves around
5.	Maintains process	Improve process
6.	Communicate rarely	Communicate frequently
7.	Ask Questions	Seeks Suggestions
8.	Give lip service to quality	Exemplary quality
9.	Perform R & D	Innovate products and services
10.	Maintain status quo	Continuous Improvement
11.	Focus on system	Focus on people
12.	Keep eyes on the horizon	Keep eyes on the bottom line
13.	Ask how and when	Ask what and why
14.	Flexible	Rigid

### 8.1. Skills to be Good Library Leader:

The major skills required becoming a successful library professional and a Leader. They are;

- Leadership Skills & Teamwork
- Listening Skills
- Communications Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Public Relations
- Negotiating Skills
- Writing Skills
- Project Management Skills

- Presentation Skills
- Teaching Skills (Dran, 2005)

## **8.2. Future Library Leader:**

The following initiatives are desirable and could be found to have new Library Leaders.

They are;

- Integration of leadership development into the library/information centre strategic planning
- Self development in leadership skills by Librarians and Information Professionals
- Creation of awareness for need of leadership development skills and competencies among professionals
- Leadership development programmer to run through the ladder of top to bottom positions
- Library & Information Schools to integrate leadership skills development into their curricula
- Need for librarians to maintain strong network within and without their organization to enhance development of skills and knowledge (Singh, 2012),

## **9. Conclusion:**

Leadership skills create a niche for the librarian in the workplace and collectively serve as a variable in organizational success. It is rooted in the values of librarianship and library service. It is committed to improve the library's programs and services. Leadership is a central component in the strategic and operational practices and success of librarianship. Leadership in libraries can no longer be pushed aside and ignored; it must be brought to centre stage, and treated with a capital. With strong, dynamic, and visionary leadership, libraries are certain to drift forward into the bright future. Also the Library leadership cultivates relationships and shared responsibility for

fulfilling the library's mission and realizing the vision of future success.

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