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## Relevance of Strategic Planning in Selected Academic Libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study was an examination of the relevance of strategic planning in academic libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Purposive sampling was used to select two academic libraries in Ogun State. These are Moshood Abiola Polytechnic Library and Crescent University Library, Abeokuta. The population of the study comprised 27 library personnel from the two academic libraries. The study adopted a survey method anchored on total enumeration, while the questionnaire was used to collect data. The findings of the study revealed that the digital revolution and competition from IT professionals were among the factors that influence strategic planning among academic librarians. It further found that the major elements of academic libraries' strategic plan include library mission, vision, goals, and objectives. However, the lack of coordination between top level and lower level management was among the factors impeding academic libraries' strategic planning. The study, therefore, recommends improved coordination between library management and their subordinates.*

**Keywords:** *Planning, Strategic Planning, Academic Libraries, Marketing*

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### Introduction

The success or otherwise of any organisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, depends to a large extent, on the organisation's ability to design, coordinate and effectively implement plans, policies, and programmes to meet the demands of the present characterised by competition, and/or challenges of a future full of uncertainties. This is especially because the environments of both public and private organisations have in recent times, become not only increasingly uncertain but also more inextricably connected in such a way that changes anywhere in the system reverberates unpredictably and often drastically throughout the society (Bryson, 2011). According to Kasimu (2011), planning is a process of deciding in advance a course or course of action to take, which when properly executed, could lead to the attainment of organizational goals. It is one activity common to all organisations, public or private, large-scale or small-scale, and even individuals, the essence which is to forecast the future and prepare for it. Since

organisations do not exist in a vacuum, planning enables it to take into consideration, the nature of the environment in which the planning decisions and actions are intended to operate.

In library organisations, the advent of and continuous advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionised the entire library operations and activities, particularly in the way information is created, packaged, stored, sought, and disseminated (Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih, 2014). Changes in information technology and developments in the educational system are rapidly changing the expectations and demands of users and are having considerable impacts on the library's relevance. Academic libraries which are libraries attached to higher education institutions (university, polytechnic, or college of education) to provide information resources, sources, and services that support the teaching, learning, and research needs of the parent institution, are not immune from the ICT revolution (Adegoke, 2015). This is further compounded by the persistent budget decline and the rising costs of library materials. The implication, therefore, is the need for academic libraries to, either constantly develop appropriate strategies that work within each library's peculiarity; or face the risk of being increasingly marginalised by other information organisations/institutions that bank on the ubiquity of the Internet to provide services, without necessarily providing the quality of content or equality of access (Wade, 2012). Given this, strategic planning for academic libraries has become very imperative.

Roberts and Wood (2012) define strategic planning as the systemic process of envisaging a desired future and setting up clearly defined goals, as well as steps to translate those goals into practical actions and outcomes, without which the chances of organisation's success could be hindered. It is an essential management tool usually employed by stakeholders to identify appropriate strategies that best result in desired outcomes and which has serious implications for the organisation's competitive ability (Boateng, Amponsah, Akafo and Yamoah, 2015). In other words, strategic planning is about deciding in advance what should be accomplished; who to do what; how, and when to accomplish it, to move the organisation or individual from where they are, to where they desire to be. Often, the effectiveness of any strategic plan rests on the organisation or individuals' ability to select from among alternatives, the best course or courses of action to accomplish the desired goals. Essentially, this usually requires insight and foresight to be able to interpret past events in order to determine present trends and predict future directions.

In the case of academic libraries (a type of nonprofit organisation) which derive their vision and mission from that of the parent institution, that is, the university, polytechnic, or college of education, planning for the development and management of academic libraries, has been influenced by the contexts in which the current organisations operate (Adeyoyin, 2011). Accordingly, the Salawu Abiola Memorial Library and Alhaja Seliat Olasumbo Adebutu Library are academic libraries established to meet the information needs of staff and students of Moshod Abiola Polytechnic and Crescent University respectively. Although services in these libraries are not for profit motives, strategic planning is indeed necessary for ensuring that the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of both the libraries and their institutions are attained and in time too. The vision, mission, and strategies that are adopted by these institutions as a guide for meeting their core objectives, form the foundation on which the role of academic libraries as a contributor to these core functions, influence the environment within which they design their mission and strategies.

### **Problem Statement**

Academic libraries are generally regarded as the bedrock of educational activities in tertiary institutions because they play a tremendous role in providing information resources, sources, and services that support users' teaching, learning, and research activities; and even recreation or entertainment. Academic libraries all over the world are currently faced with the challenges of coping with the rapid development and changes in both the environment and in the information technology system. Such issues typically revolve around the ubiquity of the Internet, integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in library operations, issues of open access, budget cuts versus rising costs of materials, marketing to promote awareness of library resources and services, personnel issues, storage challenges, all of which combine to threaten the relevance of most academic libraries. However, it has been observed that academic libraries particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria have not adequately risen to the challenges posed by the digital revolution and other factors threatening their relevance, unlike their counterparts in the developed countries. The implication, therefore, is that academic libraries in Nigeria may soon become relegated by competing with information technology professionals and information vendors, if it does not develop appropriate strategic plans with a focus on how to prioritise and allocate resources (human, material, and financial resources) in alignment with the mission and goals of both the library and its parent institution, for the achievement of overall institutional goals.

### **Research questions**

Given the problems above, the study posed the following questions to guide the realisation of the objectives:

1. What are the factors that promote academic libraries' strategic planning?
2. What are the major features of the academic libraries' strategic plan?
3. What are the roles of marketing in ensuring the continued relevance of academic libraries?
4. What is the relevance of strategic planning on academic libraries?
5. What are the challenges facing the development of strategic planning in academic libraries?

### **Literature Review**

Bryson (2011) defines strategic planning as a set of concepts, procedures, and management tools that organisations adopt when deciding in advance, their overall strategic objectives, and the direction and resources required to achieve them. It is the systematic process of envisaging a desired future and translating the vision into clearly defined goals or objectives and outlining a sequence of steps to achieve them (Roberts and Woods, 2012). Arguably, strategic planning is not the same as other forms of planning such as business planning, program, or community planning, despite sharing some similarities. As further noted by Bryson (2011), strategic planning is important to all organisations, although, its application processes are usually organisation-specific and often carefully tailored in line with their peculiarities. Suffice therefore to say that strategic planning is primarily concerned with establishing organisational direction, setting priorities, and identifying the strengths/opportunities that will enhance the achievement of organisation's goals and objectives, as well as the weaknesses/threats that may hinder it.

While extant literature suggests that the idea of strategic planning had its origin in the military organisation, modern practices are traced to the business organisation of the early twentieth century (Albon, Iqbal, and Pearson, 2016). Candy and Gordon (2011) submitted that strategic planning was initially considered a standard business management tool suitable to only profit organisations; so, academic libraries paid little or no attention to its practice until the late 1970s, precisely after the Second World War when it began to gain prominence in higher institution libraries in Europe and the United States. Also, according to Hinton (2012), academic libraries initial reluctance to adopt strategic planning was borne out of the belief that they served no customers; therefore, the idea of product development, industry growth, market share, and risk management which are the crux of strategic planning, all appeared unknown to their culture. However, the 1980s and 1990s marked a major turning point in the history of academic libraries strategic planning; as there was already a paradigm shift or rather change in perspectives as strategic planning had emerged in tertiary institutions as a potential panacea in an environment of increasing competition and declining students' enrolments, changing students demographics, dwindling funding and rising costs of library materials (Albon, Iqbal, and Pearson, 2016).

In Africa, the emergence of strategic planning in academic libraries followed the commissioning of a study on the cost-effectiveness and cost efficiency of strategic planning in African universities between 1990 and 1991, by the Association of African Universities (AAU) (Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih, 2014). The findings of the AAU study were later adopted by the National Universities Commission which further directed all Nigerian universities to embark on strategic planning. Although, before this time, shreds of evidence had shown that Kashim Ibrahim Library of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria already had in place, a form of the strategic plan. Since then, the use of strategic planning by the African universities and Nigeria, in particular, has become widespread since many institutions now find themselves in circumstances where old management planning and methods are no longer effective in guaranteeing a steady future.

Factors that influenced strategic planning in academic libraries according to Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih (2014) are both external and internal. The external factors include those that are beyond the control of academic libraries such as the political, economic, social, and technological environments within which they exist and operate; while the internal factors typically revolve around the library and its parent institution, staff, facilities, services and users respectively. Specifically, government policies at various levels, such as, on taxation and censorship; inflation and exchange rate; a shift to knowledge and information society; competition; as well as changing technological environment, are practical examples of external factors which usually have a direct or indirect influence on academic libraries (Diafiaghor, 2012; Rifaudeen, 2015; Onuoha and Obialor, 2015; and Aboh, Omame, and Isaac, 2019). To cope with these factors, academic libraries must as a matter of urgent necessity, plan strategically (Aliyu, 2015; and Mkpojiogu and Udoma, 2018).

Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih (2014) further highlighted some essential features of academic libraries' strategic plan to include library mission, vision, goals or objectives, strategy, and policy. The mission statement defines the library's purpose of existence; while the vision statement describes the desired future of the library's organisation and what it wants to achieve within a particular period of time (Nous, 2015; and Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih, 2014). The goals or objectives, on the other hand, represent what academic libraries want to achieve within

a particular period of time, all things being equal. (Ruvio, Rosenblatt and Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010). In addition, Saunders (2015) stressed that SWOT and PEST analyses are also integral features of academic libraries' strategic planning. SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; while PEST (sometimes called environmental scan) is an acronym for Political, Economical, Social, and Technological environments and both are used to assess the internal and external environment of academic libraries respectively (Morgenstern and Jones, 2012). Notably, these features, often, vary considerably from one academic library to another, depending on the environmental peculiarities and institutional priorities. However, by its nature and purpose, academic libraries' vision, mission, and goal statements must in addition to being original and unique, be SMART which is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

Scholars have argued that lack of strategic marketing also accounts for the reason why some organisations do not create or maintain a competitive edge in their environments. Hence, Germano and Stretch-Stephenson (2012) suggest that incorporating marketing in academic libraries strategic plan has the potentials to raise the chances of achieving the overall goals. Smith (2011) also opines that marketing helps to raise awareness of library resources and services. Wade (2013) further reveals that strategic marketing helped academic libraries in Scotland to secure the passage of library-related legislation by the Scottish Parliament. Generally, strategic planning helps to clarify academic libraries purposes, identify critical issues and challenges, determine future priorities and direction, create discussion, keep it focused, keep the library abreast of current issues and trends, foster closer personnel tie, navigate through change, inform the efficient allocation of resources and ultimately survive (McNicol, 2005; Piorun, 2011; and Abdulkareem, Akinnubi and Oyeniran, 2012).

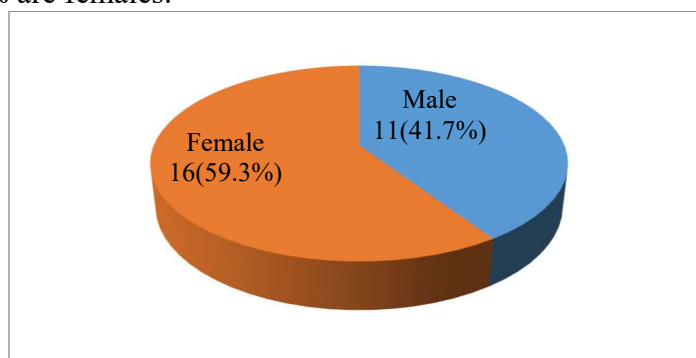
Despite these, Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih (2014) revealed that some factors such as inadequate resources, unstable environment, rigid institutional policy, organisational politics, and vested interests, among others, combine to affect the success of strategic planning in academic libraries. Nazemi, Asadi, and Asadi (2015) further categorised the challenges of academic libraries' strategic planning into cultural, structural, human resource management, ineffective performance measures, managerial and environmental barriers, and insufficient resources. In Kenya, Gichohi (2015) revealed that low staff morale; poor communication; management style, structure and system; unforeseeable environmental changes; lack of administrative support; inadequate personnel; financial constraints; and lack of skills and competencies among personnel, were among the major factors affecting academic libraries strategic planning.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey method to examine the relevance of strategic planning in selected academic libraries in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the 14 library personnel from Salawu Abiola Memorial Library and 13 library personnel from the Seliat Adebutu Library; thus, bringing the total population to twenty-seven (27). Due to the small number of the study population from the two academic libraries, the total enumeration method was adopted, and all respondents were sampled. The main instrument of data collection was a questionnaire, which was administered to all the sample respondents. The rate of response was encouraging, as all the 27 copies of questionnaire administered, were duly completed and returned (100%). Results were analysed using tables, simple percentage, and frequency counts.

### **Results**

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. Finding shows that 40.7% are males, while 59.3% are females.



**Figure 1: Gender of Respondents**

**Table 1: Respondents' Qualification and Professional Cadre (N = 27)**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSCE	06	22.2
B.Sc./BA	11	40.8
M.Sc./MLIS	04	14.8
PhD	06	22.2
Others	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

Personnel category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Library Assistant	06	22.2
Library Officer	10	37.0
Librarian	11	40.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above presents information on respondents' academic qualifications and a professional cadre. Data on academic qualification of respondents indicated that 40.8% are holders of first degree certificates while only 22.2% are Ph.D. holders. Responses on the respondents' cadre also indicated that 40.8% are professional librarians. This implies that the majority of the respondents are qualified library personnel who have good knowledge of library management practices.

**Table 2: Factors that Promote Academic Libraries Strategic Planning (N = 27)**

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)	Ranking
Digital revolution	27(100)	0(0)	27(100)	1 <sup>st</sup>
Competition from IT professionals, information vendors, etc.	26(96.3)	1(3.7)	27(100)	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Inadequate funding	26(96.3)	1(3.7)	27(100)	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Government policy such as on Value Added Tax	23(85.2)	4(14.8)	27(100)	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Rising inflation and high exchange rate	22(81.5)	(18.5)	27(100)	4 <sup>th</sup>



Changing users expectation and preferences	19(70.4)	8(29.6)	27(100)	5 <sup>th</sup>
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Table 2 shows the factors promoting strategic planning in academic libraries. Results indicated that the digital revolution ranked first among the factors promoting strategic planning in academic libraries as indicated by 100% of the respondents. Other notable factors include competition from IT professionals/information vendors and inadequate funding.

**Table 3: Elements/Components of Academic Libraries Strategic Plan (N = 27)**

Item	SAML		SAL		TOTAL	
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
Library mission	14(51.9)	0(0)	13(48.1)	0(0%)	27(100%)	0(0%)
Library vision	14(51.9)	0(0)	13(48.1)	0(0%)	27(100%)	0(0%)
Library goals and objectives	13(48.1)	1(3.7)	13(48.1)	0(0)	26(96.3)	1(3.7)
Library marketing	12(44.4)	2(7.4)	13(48.1)	0(0)	25(92.6)	2(7.4)
PEST analysis	12(44.4)	2(7.4)	13(48.1)	0(0%)	25(92.6)	2(7.4%)
Library core value	14(51.9)	0(0)	9(33.3)	4(14.8%)	23(85.2%)	4(14.8%)
SWOT analysis	10(37.0)	4(14.8)	12(44.4)	1(3.7)	22(81.4)	5(18.5)
Library environmental scan	4(14.8)	10(37.0)	2(7.4)	11(40.7)	6(22.2)	21(77.8)

**Note:** SAML = Salawu Abiola Memorial Library and SAL = Seliat Adebutu Library

The respondents were asked to indicate the elements of components of their library's strategic plan. Results in Table 3 above show that library mission and vision are the most prominent features of academic libraries' strategic plan as indicated by 100% of the respondents respectively.

**Table 4: Roles of Marketing in Academic Libraries Strategic Planning (N = 27)**

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Creates awareness of available library products and services	21(77.8)	6(22.2)	0(0)	0(0)
Increases academic libraries global visibility	17(63.0)	10(37.0)	0(0)	0(0)
Encourages user patronage	14(51.9)	12(44.4)	1(3.7)	0(0)
Promotes institutional webometric ranking	19(70.4)	6(22.2)	1(3.7)	1(3.7)
Promotes the image of the library	4(14.8)	21(77.8)	2(7.4)	0(0)
Changes user's perception	11(40.7)	13(48.1)	1(3.7)	2(7.4)
Maintains good public relations	12(44.4)	12(44.4)	2(7.4)	1(3.7)
Enhances fund generation of the library	5(18.5)	7(29.0)	10(37.0)	5(18.5)

**Note:** SA = strongly agree; A = agree, D = disagree and SD = strongly disagree

Table 4 shows the roles of marketing in academic strategic planning towards ensuring continued relevance. Results indicated that marketing creates awareness of available library products and services as agreed by 100% of the respondents. Also 100% of the respondents agreed that marketing helps to increase academic libraries' global visibility. However, the majority (55.5%) of the respondents claimed that marketing does not increase fund generation for academic libraries.

**Table 5: Relevance of Strategic Planning in Academic Libraries (N = 27)**

Relevance	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Strategic planning enables academic libraries to predict the future and prepare for it	18(66.7)	09(33.3)	0(0)	0(0)
Strategic planning helps academic libraries to achieve their mission, vision, and goals	14(51.8)	12(44.5)	0(0)	1(3.7)
It also ensures that the library selects only the best course or courses of action from among alternatives	11(40.8)	14(51.8)	1(3.7)	1(3.7)
It helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of academic libraries as well as windows of opportunities and threats	17(63.0)	8(29.6)	1(3.7)	1(3.7)
It ensures that academic library resources are allocated and utilised in the most efficient and effective way	11(40.8)	13(48.1)	1(11.1)	0(0)
It ensures that the goals and objectives of academic libraries align with that of their parent institutions	15(55.6)	8(29.6)	3(11.1)	1(3.7)

**Note:** SA = strongly agree; A = agree, D = disagree and SD = strongly disagree

Table 5 shows the relevance of strategic planning in academic libraries. Findings indicated that all the respondents (100%) agreed that strategic planning enables academic libraries to predict the future and prepare for it.

**Table 6: Challenges of Strategic Development Planning in Academic Libraries N = (27)**

Item	Very Serious (%)	Serious (%)	Not a challenge (%)
Absence of coordination between top and lower management levels	17(63.0)	10(37.0)	0(0)
Inadequate resources	19(70.4)	8(29.6)	0(0)
Rigid institutional policy unresponsive to emergency situation	4(14.8)	21(77.8)	2(7.4)
Low staff morale due to inadequate motivation	12(44.4)	12(44.4)	3(11.1)
Ambiguity in strategic plan causing personnel misunderstanding	11(40.7)	12(44.4)	4(14.8)
Lack of top management support	10(37.0)	12(44.4)	5(18.5)
Non-involvement of personnel during strategy formulation	9(33.3)	12(44.4)	6(22.2)
Poor communication of strategy to the personnel	8(29.6)	13(48.1)	6(22.2)
Unforeseen environmental changes and organisational instability	11(40.7)	9(33.3)	7(26.0)
Inadequacy of qualified employees to execute planned strategy	7(26.0)	6(22.2)	14(51.8)



Table 6 above shows the various challenges facing the development of strategic planning in academic libraries. Results indicated that the absence of coordination between the top and lower management levels and inadequate resources were major impediments with 100% agreement respectively.

### **Discussion of findings**

The findings of the study revealed that the digital revolution ranked first among factors promoting strategic planning in academic libraries. This may be because technology provides an opportunity for users to remotely access large amounts of information which otherwise could have been sought from the academic libraries. This finding corroborates the finding of Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih (2014) on strategic planning as a viable tool for university libraries in Nigeria's survival in a competitive environment, which also found that internet explosion due to development in ICT, was a major factor promoting strategic planning in academic libraries.

Another finding of the study indicates that the major features of academic libraries' strategic plan are library mission and vision. This finding complements the finding of Saunders' (2015) research on strategic planning among academic libraries participating in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) National Summit and Assessment in Action (AiA) programme, which revealed that library mission and vision were the major features of academic libraries strategic plan. It also corroborates the finding of Jantz (2014) whose study on strategic planning among selected university libraries in the United States of America (USA), revealed that library mission and vision are a crucial component of academic libraries' strategic plan that provides direction for the change process.

The study also found that strategic marketing is indispensable for the continued relevance of academic libraries. This finding supports the findings of Smith (2011) and Germano and Stretch-Stephen (2012) at Adelphi University Library and California State University library, USA respectively, which revealed that strategic marketing is a key element of academic strategic planning. Also, the finding agrees with the finding of Wade (2013) at the National Library of Scotland that strategic marketing is very essential for the continued relevance of academic libraries. Another finding revealed that strategic planning enables academic libraries to predict the future and prepare for it. This finding corroborates the finding of Albon, Iqbal, and Pearson (2016) at the University of British Columbia which revealed that strategic planning helps academic libraries to predict their future and prepare for it.

A further finding of the study revealed that the absence of coordination between top level and lower level management was a major challenge facing the development of strategic planning in academic libraries. This result agrees with the finding of Adeyemi, Awojobi, and Orbih (2014) which revealed that lack of coordination among levels of management of academic libraries in Nigeria accounts for the major reasons why strategic planning fails. The finding also supports the position of Nazemi, Asadi, and Asadi (2015) that lack of coordination among levels of management, is a major challenge affecting the success of strategic planning in many organisations, including academic libraries.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the above study findings, it can be concluded that strategic planning is necessary for the continued relevance of academic libraries, and it is largely influenced by the digital revolution. The study also concludes that library mission and vision are the major features of academic libraries' strategic plan; while strategic marketing is also an indispensable factor in academic libraries' strategic planning process. The study further concludes that a lack of coordination between top and lower-level management is a major challenge facing the development of strategic planning in academic libraries. This study, therefore, contributes to the ongoing debate on the need for academic libraries to adopt strategic planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterised by continuous advancement in information and communication technology which threatens their relevance. It, therefore, contributes fresh empirical data that will be most useful to academic libraries administrators and decision-makers and help them in future strategic planning processes. It will also provide relevant literature for scholars and researchers who may wish to undertake further studies on the same or similar subject matter.

### Recommendations

Given the above study findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

Academic libraries need to embrace the opportunities provided by the digital revolution and as well, develop strategies to cope with the challenges it brings, to remain relevant. This could be done by redefining their vision, mission, and goals to meet the emerging realities. Adequate marketing of academic libraries products and services through exhibition and display, publicity and user education programmes, could be done by carrying out extensive market research to identify the areas where efforts are most needed. Academic libraries management should recognise the importance of the lower-level managers and subordinates in achieving strategic planning goals of their respective libraries, and therefore, coordinate properly with them even from the formulation stage.

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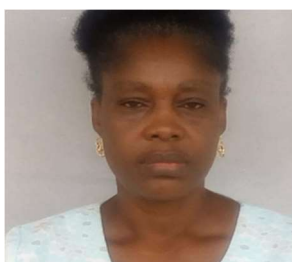
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