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# AGLS News

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*The Newsletter of  
the Association for General  
and Liberal Studies*  
WWW.AGLS.ORG  
Volume 24 Number 3  
Spring 2008



## From the President New AGLS Web-Link Promotes General Education Scholarship

Judging by the growing attendance at the recent AGLS and AAC&U general education conferences, higher education has taken a vigorous interest in general and liberal education issues. Should it be surprising? The Spelling's Commission created a national conversation about accountability, ranking systems, and 21st century learning goals. Given that general education outcomes would be at the heart of any "common" learning and rankings, and given Secretary Spelling's concern that 60% of students transferring from community colleges experience loss of credit, time, and money (see her recent keynote address at the National Community College Legislative Summit), general education issues can't be ignored. Add to this national discussion both the demographic realities of younger faculty taking responsibility for the curriculum and the need to reevaluate general education program changes made during 80's and 90's, and the time is right for AGLS to offer new support for this discussion.

In this context, I am pleased to announce a new link on the AGLS website, "AGLS Resources," which will offer AGLS members a variety of general education scholarship. Two "invited papers" have already been posted. John Nichols' "Liberal Education: A 'Both/And' Commitment" argues that "integration" requires a complimentary partnership between general education and the major, without general education outcomes being absorbed by the major. Rob Mauldin and John Hinni's paper, "Administration of General Education: The Tragedy of the Commons" defends the need for a recognized administrator of a general education program, and provides a helpful, extensive list of responsibilities for anyone in that role.

Additional papers are in the works, including contributions from Bob Broad, who will address the ethics of qualitative assessment. The site also currently includes materials from past conference presentations and an AGLS Newsletter Archive, and will include a series of AGLS Position Papers addressing significant issues identified by the Executive Council.

AGLS will use the 2008 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education to provide additional general education scholarship. While the Award will again recognize institutions that apply the principles of the Guide to redesign their general education programs, this year's awards will also recognize institutions that have used assessment to provide evidence that their students have successfully achieved general education goals. Again, thanks in part to the national conversation about accountability, and considering the number of faculty and administrators looking for helpful models, the Executive Council agreed in February that the time was right for AGLS to address that need.

Finally, I would like to say something about the best way to promote the scholarship of general and liberal education on your campus: send a team to the AGLS Conference. Marshall Gregory, in his essay, "Why Are Liberal Education's Friends of So Little Help?" writes: "We are all trained to think well about our disciplines, and within our disciplines we all know how to nurture and protect a high level of talk. But we are not trained to think or talk at a high level about liberal education. Few faculty members in today's universities would even know where to begin to bring themselves up to speed, as

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## From the President, continued

the saying goes, about liberal education in the way they know how to bring themselves up to speed within their disciplines.” Anyone who has learned the academic joy (and sometimes frustration) of a commitment to general and liberal education values can appreciate Gregory’s comments. One place to quickly bring faculty members “up to speed” is the annual AGLS Conference. Talk to conference members who have traveled as part of a team. An AGLS Conference of 150-200 people is small enough that attendees quickly feel a part of the organization, and large enough to give them contact with representatives from all types of institutions, having experience with all types of general and liberal education issues. My institution, Vincennes University, sent a team last year to prepare for our curriculum revision. Adding several people on campus with increased understanding of gen-

eral education issues has undeniably increased the quality of the curriculum conversations.

True to its mission, “AGLS serves colleges and universities by helping students and faculty enjoy the benefits of a liberal education attained through quality general education.” AGLS is committed to the scholarship of general and liberal education, whether through its web offerings, awards, or annual conference. Many thanks go to your hard-working Executive Council and to the many wonderful members of the organization for its successes and benefits. I am looking forward to seeing all of you in Asheville in September.

*Michael E. Gress  
Vincennes University  
AGLS President*

## Don’t miss AGLS in Asheville!!

Remember, our next national conference (September 25-27, 2008), focusing on "General Education and Wholeness," will take place in Asheville, NC, at the Crowne Plaza Mountain Resort close to beautiful downtown Asheville. We'll have a range of excellent plenary speakers and sessions. Asheville is a small, exciting city, with lots of art, music, and good food; it's especially nice to visit in the fall. The city is home to UNC Asheville, one of the top public liberal arts campuses in the U.S., and to

Asheville-Buncombe Tech, an award-winning community college. We're looking forward to hosting this opportunity for faculty and administrators to get together to share ideas, and to relax in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

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2008 AGLS Conference Planner*

## From the Executive Director

### “Wholeness’ in General and Liberal Education” theme for conference

**B**y the time you read this, the schedule for this fall’s national conference should be about set. I hope many of you are making plans to join us in Asheville, North Carolina, at the Crowne Plaza Mountain Resort from September 25-27. Our registration form has been posted on our website, and you should be able to reserve a room as well as pay for your registration fees by credit card right off the links in that form. It takes time to arrange all that technology, but when it works well, it sure saves us all much time.

I want to thank those who submitted proposals for the conference. The number of proposals was up over 25%. Reviewers were

quite excited by the quality. We hope we have constructed an equally strong and exciting program for those attending. Our theme, “Wholeness’ in General and Liberal Education,” will link plenary speakers, workshops, and concurrent sessions. Scheduled to speak are Barbara D. Wright, Associate Director, Western Association of Schools and Colleges; Richard Riegelman, Professor of Epidemiology-Biostatistics, Medicine and Health Policy, and Founding Dean at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services; and J. Scott Lee, Executive Director, The Association for Core Texts and Courses, and

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## From the Executive Director continued

winner of the 2007 AGLS Joseph Katz Award for Outstanding Leadership in General Education.

Let me take a moment with that mention of the AGLS Katz Award to encourage each of you to consider nominating someone, or your institution, for one of our three AGLS awards. Elsewhere President Mike Gress discusses the second annual “AGLS Awards for Improving General Education: Effective Program Practices.” I would like to mention our two awards directed to individuals: the “Joseph Katz Award for Outstanding Leadership in General Education” and the “Jerry G. Gaff Faculty Award.”

The first is given every other year by the AGLS Executive Council to a person who has “contributed greatly to the improvement of the educational experiences of students on his or her campus and to the understanding of the theory and practice of general and liberal education at the national level.” Our 2007 award winner, J. Scott Lee, will speak at this year’s conference in Asheville with the next award to be announced at the 2009 conference. If you have a potential nominee, please submit that name to me or to another member of the Executive Council. Further information is available on the website.

The Gaff awards are given annually to campus leaders who “demonstrate leadership on [their campuses] in the area of general and liberal education, who show evidence of outstanding teaching in general and liberal edu-

cation courses, and who have compiled a record of achievement in curriculum development, innovation, or implementation in general and liberal education on his/her campus.” What a great chance to bring some well-deserved national recognition to your campus leader in general and liberal education! The nomination form for this award is available on the website; the deadline for that form to be returned is July 1, 2008 (deadline extended).

Finally, after the conference planning has settled a bit, I am looking forward to formally announcing a long-term project to accumulate, categorize, and provide analyses of the definitions of “liberal education” and “general education.” Editors will collect definitions from various sources, including AGLS members. Commentaries categorizing and analyzing those definitions will provide the higher education community with a useful reference tool, while illustrating the power of web-based scholarship and publishing in general and liberal studies. Look for an announcement of this project by mid-summer, but if you have ideas to share or comments, please send them to me at [pranieri@bsu.edu](mailto:pranieri@bsu.edu).

I do hope this newsletter finds you all relatively settled after a long winter and spring semester. I hope to see many of you in Asheville soon.

*Paul Ranieri*  
*Executive Director, AGLS*

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### AGLS Indianapolis Conference Article

## Cleveland—A Mature Industrial Center in Transition

The original focus of my 2006 AGLS Conference presentation was to understand globalization through a case study of one mature industrial center (Cleveland, Ohio). Ursuline College, where I have taught for 17 years, is located in the Cleveland area. Cleveland has been my home for 45 years. I am fully aware of its national image and can attest to the city’s severe winters.

While doing research, my focus shifted to Cleveland in transition. Globalization was only one of several forces responsible. All too often transition meant decentralization—from city to suburbs, to the south and west, and then around the globe.

In Cleveland’s case, as well as other

mature industrial centers, decentralization was synonymous with decline in population, employment, and income. So, my presentation became a story of decline of a once great city struggling to find a new identity in the so-called knowledge economy and facing increasing competition everywhere it looks.

In 1950, Cleveland was the nation’s sixth largest city. “Made in Cleveland” was a phrase that served as a testament to its manufacturing strength. “The best location in the nation” was a proud blue collar town with plenty of jobs in factories that dotted its ethnic neighborhoods.

A transition became evident during the next two decades. Especially notable was the movement from the city to the

suburbs. City population flowed to the suburbs. Larger homes with bigger yards were easily accessible with the new interstates. Retail operations sprouted up to serve the suburban population. The city also experienced employment decline, countered by employment gains in the suburbs. Firms found it easy to buy cheap suburban land and put up one story buildings for their manufacturing operations. While the larger Cleveland region remained a strong manufacturing center, the city of Cleveland was left with an increasing supply of rentals, abandoned homes, empty factories, and a poorer population.

During the early seventies another

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**Cleveland in Transition article continued**

transition became evident. Southern states entered the competition for manufacturing firms. Cleveland firms were prime pickings for relocation to warmer climates and a low-cost work force. For a part of the seventies I worked in the City of Cleveland's Economic Development Division. I recall various economic development agencies from southern states coming to Cleveland, camping out in downtown hotels, placing full page ads of their presence, and offering financial incentives for Cleveland firms to relocate. The city was not attracting firms. Nor was it retaining them. Some firms latched on to enticing inducements to move operations south.

Yet there was a bright spot. The Cleveland region performed well in the advanced services sector of headquarters and related work such as accounting, law, and engineering. A good part of this sector was concentrated in the city's central business district even though evidence revealed decentralization to suburban office parks. If certain manufacturing functions, such as making axles or tires, moved south, many advanced service functions remained. Cleveland was the nation's third largest corporate headquarters center in the seventies.

But competition from the south and west continued. In addition, globalization emerged full-force on the horizon. These forces have dealt serious blows to Cleveland and its region. Population continues to decline. A recent March 2007 census report indicates that Cuyahoga County, of which Cleveland is the major city, ranked sixth in population decline between 2005 and 2006. Had it not been for the counties affected by Katrina, Cleveland would have ranked second, behind Detroit's Wayne County. In 2006 Cleveland (now the thirty-third largest city) was crowned the poorest city in America.

Cleveland faces competition for manufacturing and advanced services (including major headquarters) from cities today that were specks on the map thirty years ago. Witness the phenomenal rise of Charlotte, Portland, Phoenix, Raleigh and Austin. These places not only are gaining in population but are developing new types of manufacturing driven by first-rate research firms and universities. In addition global competition is getting stiffer—not only for low skilled manufacturing functions but also for higher skilled advanced services. China, Malaysia and Vietnam all are get-

ting in on the act.

Perhaps most telling is a recent Plain Dealer article stating that the Cleveland region during the 1990s boom lost manufacturing faster and grew the rest of its economy slower (measured by total employment, population, personal income) than Ohio, the nation as a whole, key regional competitors, and cities in the south and west. We continue to face southern and global competition. Between 1969 and 1999 the region's share of national employment has declined by 29 percent, population by 30 percent, and personal income by 35 percent.

The question now becomes what, if anything, can we do about our deteriorating condition? Is there hope or is continued decline inevitable? Cleveland's past and recent efforts at revitalization would be a good subject for another presentation or even discussion in a classroom. Students could become actively involved in renewing their community. Or they could move to warm cities such as Charlotte or Austin.

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**AGLS Indianapolis Conference Article****Knowing Our Place: General Education and the Honors Community**

One of the best critical thinking exercises I have used in teaching general education courses is self-assessment writing. To examine the perception and value of general education for students in the Honors Program at Vincennes University, a community college in rural Indiana, I asked my students to write a self-assessment essay as part of their midterm exam in Honors Contemporary Civilization. The results of that effort became our 2006 AGLS presentation: *Knowing Our Place: General Education and the Honors Community*.

In the Contemporary Civilization course, we study the dynamics of identity, community, and culture for people in the United States. We look at ethnic and religious diversity, economic issues, gender, and politics. The midterm essay required each of my students to consider his or her identity as a learner in a particular learning community, the Honors Program, that is part of the broader cul-

ture of higher education.

I know how I define the goals and benefits of the Honors Program at VU, but I did not know how the students would assess the Honors Program for themselves. The responses I received presented personal stories and strong arguments in favor of having both an Honors Program and a strong general education curriculum. Here is a sample from my students' essays:

- Students who feel pressure to enter the workforce may not believe that they have time to "waste" on general studies classes. Yet these classes are a benefit, helping us adjust to the world around us. Without them, we might take little away from our college experience other than job preparation. It is not always easy to see the larger picture. We are a society expecting instant gratification. We do not always go willingly down the path best suited for us.

- As an Honors Program student at

VU, I have developed a sense of self-worth. I take pride in my work, as it has been my work that set me up for this wonderful opportunity. In that pride I am trapped.

- Why bother with an Honors Program? Is it worth the time, effort, and money? As Honors Programs continue to prosper on community college campuses, the positive aspects of the program are becoming more recognizable. An Honors Program is a vital component of any community college campus because of its many student benefits, the effectiveness of the curriculum, and the significance of intensive course requirements in general education.

- On a personal note, I was thrilled to find out about the VU Honors Program. It is nice to know that my input is valued, even encouraged. As a single mother, I need support, and I feel that I am receiving it ten-fold.

- While community colleges as a

**Gen Ed and the Honors Community article continued**

whole benefit all students and their respective communities, the Honors Program at a community college enables exceptional and outstanding students to develop their intellectual talents to the fullest and go beyond the standard curriculum. Through a variety of special courses, smaller classes, intensive academic pursuits, and regular social events, the Honors Program enhances the aca-

demical lives of participating students, like me, and provides the school with a distinguished community of learning.

Critical thinking does not give us the final answer to a question but leads to more discussion, more questions, and more ideas. What impresses me most about the collaborative narrative my students prepared for the 2006 AGLS Conference is the range of questions and

ideas the students exchanged with each other and the pride of ownership they shared both for the project and for the process of exploring possibilities.

General education as process, not product, is the objective and value of our best work as teachers and students.

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**AGLS Indianapolis Conference Article****Beginning at the End: Student Learning Outcomes for a Liberal Education****Background**

A session presented at the fall 2006 AGLS conference highlighted the evolution of the Liberal Studies revision at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). We titled the presentation "Beginning at the End" since the first item to be accomplished in the revision process was approval of student learning outcomes (SLOs), or what we envisioned as the "end" product of a revised liberal program.

To understand our environment, IUP is the largest of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools and has approximately 14,000 undergraduate students in six colleges. A major revision of the general education program was initiated in 1987-88 and implemented as Liberal Studies (LS) in 1989.

**The Beginning**

The need for revision of the current LS package became clear because of growing discontent among students and faculty, the results of a campus satisfaction survey, student feedback on the Senior Synthesis and writing courses, and increased petitions for exceptions to LS requirements. In 2002, PASSHE mandated that all undergraduate programs reduce graduation requirements to 120 credits. This resulted in a review of the Liberal Studies program and further highlighted the need for revision. A more comprehensive review included in the Middle States Self-Study indicated that assessment of LS emphasized self-reported and satisfaction data, that the assessment plan was inadequate, that curriculum goals were not measurable, and that the curriculum was designed with disciplinary "silos."

In formalizing the initiative, an eight-person team attended the Asheville Institute on General Education Reform in summer 2003. The eight people represented the six academic colleges, Student Affairs, and the administration. This team, the Liberal Studies Revision Steering Committee (LSRSC), made a commitment to see the revision through to implementation. Following Asheville, the team presented recommendations to the Provost and developed a six-step plan and timeline.

**The Middle**

Step One of the plan was "Sharing the Vision." Members of the group met with campus constituencies, including faculty union leadership, the University President, the Council of Trustees, the Deans Council, the Council of Chairs, and hosted luncheons to discuss trends in general education and the IUP revision.

The team was committed to making the revision process open for discussion by the university community and believed the first two steps of "Sharing the Vision" and "Building Consensus" were critical to the success of the revision. To build consensus a web site was developed with FAQs. The team members also met with departments concerned about revision and clearly articulated the revision rationale.

Step Three was "Creating the Blueprint." An interdisciplinary group, including two members of the LSRSC, was charged with drafting student learning outcomes (SLOs). After a year of work the draft of SLOs was disseminated to the university community. After receiving much feedback on the draft and responding to that feedback, a revised document was advanced to the

University Senate for debate. The tenth revision of the SLOs was unanimously approved by this body in May 2006. This process succeeded in part because the team engaged the university community, made the process transparent, distributed seminal readings to departments, shared the vision, and allowed time for adequate input.

Following approval of the SLOs, we began Step Four of our plan "Designing the Curriculum Framework" by holding a week long LSRSC retreat where we created a draft curriculum framework. During this process we focused on the needs of students and the future challenges they will face. The guiding principles for this framework included designing a program that addresses the deficiencies of the current program and builds bridges with Student Affairs and between LS and the major. At the same time, the program needed to be easily transferable, user-friendly, and attractive to prospective students and parents.

After the retreat, the group conducted summer meetings with liaisons from every academic department as well as other interested non-teaching areas. We used feedback from these meetings to refine the draft and disseminated a conceptual framework to the university community. The draft included six knowledge areas, a learning skills core, a First Year Experience, and a senior capstone. A month later, the draft was presented to the University Senate for discussion. During the fall 2006 semester members of the committee continued to meet with department representatives and used this feedback to revise the framework that was taken back to the Senate in November.

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**SLO's for a Liberal Education article continued****The End**

Once the framework is adopted, the LSRSC will begin the allocation of credits for each area. The team will continue to use a participative process to involve the university community with a goal of

approval of a revised curriculum by April 2007. Future work includes step five, "Developing the Courses" and step six "Approving Courses and Program Revisions." The projected implementation date is fall 2008.

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**AGLS Indianapolis Conference Article****Can Art inform Science? (teaching the Second Law of thermodynamics)**

No law of nature has broader explanatory power than the Second Law of thermodynamics, and C. P. Snow (1959) considered it as important for an educated person to understand the Second Law as it is to be familiar with Shakespeare. Because it dictates every transaction of energy, and therefore every interaction between society and nature, it lends itself particularly well to interdisciplinary teaching. Both science majors and non-majors benefit from this approach: science majors gain an appreciation of the influence of this scientific concept in economic history, philosophy, literature and the visual arts, while non-majors discover the scientific basis of their intuitive understanding of the direction of energy flow.

In our Honors section of Science, Technology and Society, we begin with the recent decision of a monastery near to our campus (the Abbey in Portsmouth, Rhode Island) to install a windmill, in order to minimize its dependence on fossil fuels[please contact author for figures and references]. There is some irony in this, seeing as our current dependence on fossil fuels can be traced back a thousand years to the improvement and dissemination of water wheel technology by the Cistercian order of monks, for whom self-sufficiency was an expression of religious devotion. The Domesday Book (1086) records over 5000 mills for a population of one and a half million, and the earliest capitalist ventures were joint-stock companies engaged in the financing and construction of mills. Why then, by 1600, had windmills come to represent something monstrous to Miguel de Cervantes?

Once water and wind power had been harnessed, ownership of these sources of concentrated energy became a lucrative but contentious business. There are historical accounts of abbots who claimed ownership of the wind in their district or confiscated family millstones,

thereby obliging peasants to rely on the abbot's mill, in exchange for a portion of their grain. Monasteries not only became self-sufficient but, thanks to water wheels, generated a surplus in goods or produce that could be sold in the surrounding region. The wealth that rapidly accrued proved a challenge to those monastic orders that were committed to a simple existence. The commodification and monopolization of energy, and the accelerated movement of goods and people, hastened the end of the feudal, land-based, serf-powered economic order, and of the social values associated with it. How better to depict this upheaval of values than the encounter of Don Quixote with these mechanical giants? There is an intriguing parallel here, between the disorder caused by the introduction of a surplus of energy, beyond that which had sufficed to accomplish the traditional need for work in the feudal system, and the increase in disorder predicted by the Second Law of thermodynamics (the law of entropy) in physical systems.

The Second Law is a refinement of the First Law of thermodynamics: the law of conservation of energy. According to the First Law, energy is conserved in any system that we care to define as "closed" by drawing a box around it and isolating it from the rest of the universe. Energy may be transformed into motion or order or heat, but the total amount of energy remains the same. The First Law makes no prediction about the direction in which energy will flow, but the Second Law predicts that over time, more useful or concentrated forms of energy will eventually be degraded to less useful forms, and ultimately heat (the random motion of individual molecules). Thus we can think of every example of work as beginning with an energy package made up of two parts, the first consisting of the energy that is actually converted into work, the second a sur-

plus released as heat, but without which work could not be done in the first place.

The inexorable increase in entropy in an isolated, or closed system confirms our intuition that life can only be maintained in an open system that exchanges matter and energy with its surroundings. Every living cell absorbs high quality energy in the form of sunlight or glucose (chemical energy derived from sunlight), allowing it to maintain a high degree of biological order. This local increase in internal order achieved by a cell is more than offset by the accompanying release of heat, so there is an overall increase in disorder or entropy:  $DS > 0$ . Since we really cannot enclose nature in a box, we find that on any scale we care to examine, heat is being transferred to the next higher scale.

While mill technology initiated the competition for energy sources that still preoccupies us today, it harnessed, but did not add to, the total amount of heat energy in our oceans and atmosphere. This was not so in the case of fossil fuels. Their use changed both the pace of life, and the balance of energy flow on the earth's surface, as depicted in Turner's painting of a sailing ship, *The Fighting Temeraire*. Our appetite for energy has superimposed (onto the recycling of energy that is normally available on the earth's surface) the net addition of fossilized solar energy hauled up from coal, gas and oil beds beneath the earth's crust: energy-rich molecules that dropped out of the global carbon cycle hundreds of millions of years ago. As predicted by the Second Law of thermodynamics, it was only a matter of time before the inevitable byproducts of burning fossil fuels, heat and heat-trapping carbon dioxide, resulted in global warming.

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# AGLS Executive Council

*The following is a list of Executive Council members. If you have any issues, concerns or questions you would like taken up by the Executive Council, please contact us. We would like to hear from you.*

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<p><i>AGLS News</i> is the newsletter of the Association for General and Liberal Studies</p> <p>Send news, information, or queries to: <b>Marianne Hopper, AGLS News Editor</b> See listing above for address</p> <p><b>AGLS News online: <a href="http://www.agls.org">www.agls.org</a></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGLS Mission</b></p> <p>AGLS serves colleges and universities by helping students and faculty enjoy the benefits of a liberal education attained through quality general education.</p> <p>AGLS is a community of learners - faculty, students, administrators, alumni - intent upon improving general and liberal education at two-year and four-year institutions. AGLS identifies and supports the benefits of students' liberal education attained through general education programs. As an advocate, AGLS tracks changes in general education and liberal studies, and sponsors professional activities that promote successful teaching, curricular innovation, and effective learning.</p> <p><b>AGLS Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Quality and Centrality of General and Liberal Education in the United States and Abroad</li> <li>• Clarify the Relationship between Assessment and Learning in General and Liberal Education</li> <li>• Foster a Stronger Relationship between Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges in General and Liberal Education</li> </ul>
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