



NEXT GEN 2011
LIBRARY LEADERSHIP



project sisu

WELCOME TO NEXT GEN/NEXT DECADE

Radical shifts in pedagogy arising from the digital age, and the flexible learning spaces and technologies needed to support them, have seen a digital and spatial transformation take place in university libraries around the world.

Questions about how space is configured; the ratio between print and digital collections; how research output is stored, accessed and shared across broader distribution networks; and how library services cater for different expectations from academics and students, have catapulted some libraries into an intensive change process.

“*There are some things we could be doing faster and differently. I want them to come back from the program fired up and pressurizing me for change.*”

Colin Storey

Library leaders continue to grapple with how to grow a relevant and adaptable organisation that keeps pace with, or outpaces, the changing learning and research trends within their respective university. This is never one person's job alone, but the collective effort of an engaged and well-informed team. Building a shared perspective often requires generational change, fresh thinking, a redistribution of resources, and a sufficient degree of cultural change to enable new structures and behaviours to take hold long enough to see the benefits emerge.

The *NextGen: Next Decade* Library Services Program is designed to:

- > build team leadership skills and capabilities
- > improve collaboration between university libraries in the region
- > develop an overview of the challenges and opportunities available to university libraries in Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai over the next decade.

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*I want them to change the world!
Or, at least, to ask how they are
going to change their world.*”
Steve O'Connor

INTRODUCTION

Three learning streams



The program has three learning streams.

CREATIVE ALIVENESS relates to individual energy, curiosity, experimentation and resilience.

CHANGE refers to appreciating context, and the ability to craft strategies and actions based on the degree of uncertainty and complexity in our working environments.

COLLABORATION is how we get things done with others. It invokes the challenge of working with differences, and how we can consciously design processes that deliver more than the sum of the parts.

The program takes place over four months and is book-ended by two workshops. The intervening months will include regular tele-workshops, small group project meetings, stakeholder research and analysis, and individual learning stretch goals.

INTRODUCTION

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There is no blueprint that you can pull out of your pocket the day you take on a leadership role that remains static for as long as you are a leader.

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich

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SOURCE OF QUOTATIONS

University Librarians: *Alex Byrne, University of Technology Sydney; City University of Hong Kong; Choy Fatt Cheong, Nanyang University Singapore; Ainslie Dewe, La Trobe University Melbourne; Steve O'Connor, Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Peter Sidorko, University of Hong Kong; Colin Storey, Chinese University of Hong Kong; Sylvia Yap, National University of Singapore.*

Plus: *Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, National Librarian of Australia.*

“

I would like participants to come back with increased self knowledge, self confidence and flexibility in the way they go about making decisions and harnessing the strengths and knowledge of the teams they lead.

Sylvia Yap

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CREATIVE ALIVENESS

A group of people, mostly women, are gathered in a hallway. They are looking down at several sheets of paper that are laid out on the floor. The papers appear to be handwritten notes or documents. The people are dressed in business casual attire. The hallway has a carpeted floor and a staircase in the background. The overall atmosphere is one of focused attention and collaboration.

“

Creativity, in the sense of giving meaning, generating meaning in one's life, is available to all of us," says psychoanalyst Michael Parsons. "It is an intrinsic part of being human. Creative aliveness is intensified when "we are open and available to experience that we are not at home with, that is outside our frame of reference.

(Parsons 2009)

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NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS

Being open to experience outside our normal frame of reference is easier said than done. While contemporary neuroscience is showing how ‘plastic’ our brains potentially are, it is also revealing how wedded we can become to a sense of mastery over the things we ‘know’, and how much of our brain’s real estate is dedicated to protecting the ‘known’ from the ‘unknown’. New neural pathways are created, however, when we learn something new, and go about learning it in new ways. Novelty, purpose and emotional engagement, within the context of an enriched learning situation, can trigger the release of hormones associated with deep learning states, facilitating neuroplasticity and leading to an increased confidence about future learning capabilities.

Neurons that fire together, wire together, neuroscientists tell us, but that often means straddling the perplexing gulf between our right and left hemispheres.

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We’re in the middle of a revolution, and it’s not over yet.

Colin Storey

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TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS

The brain's two hemispheres are responsible for different functions and constitute two different funnels through which our attention flows.

While we now know a lot about the respective functionality of the two hemispheres, the exact nature of the subtle and sometimes paradoxical interaction between them still eludes today's neuroscientists. Neuropsychologist Iain McGilchrist believes that our cultural preference for left-brain thinking has taken centre-stage for too long, and that it's time to redress the imbalance.

KNOWING WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

The most dangerous thing about left-brain logic, argues McGilchrist, is that it is self-consistent; because it gravitates towards concrete facts and theoretical constructs, it can miss the subtleties of context and felt experience. It doesn't know what it doesn't know, and it can lead us to blunder on with an overly optimistic and rigid perception of the way things are, or are supposed to be. The right hemisphere prefers a wider aperture when it comes to seeing the world; it takes in context and therefore the complexity of things. Becoming better problem solvers will mean exercising and integrating both hemispheres – exploring things from different perspectives and applying purposeful logic to bringing about change.

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Leaders need to be creative in the way they shape strategic responses. People need to feel inspired to work at their optimum level and with a multitude of different types of other people, within and outside their own library.

Choy Fatt Cheong

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EXERCISING BOTH SIDES OF THE BRAIN

The challenges facing us are big, complex and interconnected. As a leader, you need to master the facts, figures and frameworks that can be grasped by the left hemisphere. But without imagination, intuition, empathy, and an ability to notice what is happening around you, your role in building the library as a social enterprise will be diminished.

No matter what your personal or cultural preferences, the creative aliveness stream will nurture confidence in your own judgement, thereby supporting your independent decision-making as a leader, and your willingness to take risks.

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A key leadership capability is a willingness to work with risk – understanding what risk is and being prepared to engage with it.

Steve O'Connor

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SHINE A LIGHT

While contemporary research supports the value of a dynamic interaction between the two hemispheres, our inbuilt cultural bias towards privileging one hemisphere's gifts over the other, has left the passage between them poorly illuminated. We want to shine a light on this potentially rich source of knowledge. We believe it underpins creative aliveness. No matter what your personal or cultural preferences, the creative aliveness stream will nurture confidence in your own judgement, thereby supporting your independent decision-making as a leader, and your willingness to take risks.

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Transformational leadership skills are needed to lead diverse groups in a rapidly changing environment. Our leaders need to have a networking mindset, and the ability to look beyond the horizon for trends and issues that will impact on their library.

Sylvia Yap

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THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM

We all dance with change using different steps and moving at different rhythms; embracing some changes and resisting others. When it comes to leading an organisation, sometimes incremental change is needed and sometimes a radical break from the past. A lot depends of the relative stability of the system in which you operate.

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We're in transition. We're retaining some aspects of the traditional culture, as well as developing a new breed of librarian. Younger generations are more freethinking and look at things from multiple perspectives. Our challenge is to harness these skills.

Peter Sidorko

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RIDING THE WAVE

In spite of the mountains of books and journals devoted to analysing organisational change, no template for action is an exact fit for the specificities of every situation. Change is often accompanied by uneasiness and uncertainty about when and how things will settle. Good theories, models and case studies can provide helpful signposts. But, as a leader, you still have to put on your wetsuit, grab your surfboard, and ride the wave.

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Where I think we fall down is that we're often too conservative, often too timid, not willing to shout out our strengths and make our case, particularly against other areas that are more willing to self promote. We have to be less shy.

Alex Byrne

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THE NEUTRAL ZONE

During periods of rapid change, old habits are disturbed and relationships dissolved; it is a fertile time in which creative problem solving can flourish. Because old certainties don't look quite so certain, people often become alive to new possibilities. Writer William Bridges calls these transitions, and he makes a distinction between the structural aspects of the change process and the psychological transition needed to support it. An important phase of the transition, Bridges notes, is the neutral zone. A phase in which an ending has occurred but a new beginning has not yet materialised; we have left the shore but we haven't arrived at our destination. This space can feel chaotic but it is also a time in which we can experiment with new ways of doing things.

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There has been a degradation of libraries from the highest pedestal – we are no longer on the radar in universities and we need to raise our profile and increase our advocacy and promotion. Communication is even more important for library leaders than it was in the past.

Peter Sidorko

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DON'T WASTE A TRANSITION

Psychological transitions can be big or small, dramatic or continuous. They can be stressful and riddled with anxiety one day, and be full of optimism about the future the next. Understanding the structural and symbolic gestures needed to support people through transition, is increasingly part of a leader's job. Harnessing the skills and perspectives of different personality styles can help leaders construct a holistic approach. Creative problem solving and experimentation can gently help turn people away from what has been lost and towards the new possibilities they can create.

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Library leaders today need to be outgoing and brave; quick thinking and articulate; persistent and steadfast; they need a sharp political sense and a global perspective; and they have to be vigilant with money.

Colin Storey

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COLLABORATION

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I like collaborations because a number of things happen that don't happen easily on your own...you see your ideas through someone else's eyes," said legendary musician and producer, Brian Eno, during his curatorial stint at Vivid Live in Sydney during 2009. The Australian Chamber Orchestra's Richard Tognetti has built an international reputation for unlikely musical collaborations. He says: "Look, every collaboration is risky, but you risk dying if you don't do it.

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KEY OPERATING PRINCIPLE

Persistent multidimensional problems also benefit from collaboration, states the 2009 Creative Places and Spaces Conference held in Toronto to explore the notion of the 'collaborative city'. Creatives, entrepreneurs, business leaders, community visionaries and social sector mavericks wrestled with the challenge of 'building bridges across boundaries in order to solve problems, generate new ideas, or foster transformation'. One visionary in attendance, the educator Sir Ken Robinson, argued that 'collaboration is the key operating principle for the twenty-first century'. Creativity can be defined as original ideas that have value, but it's collaboration that fuels innovation and puts these ideas to work.

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The perception of the value and role of libraries has the greatest impact on the future of academic libraries; it will determine the funding we attract and direction we take, even our ongoing existence.

Choy Fatt Cheong

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COLLABORATION

MAKING THINGS WORK

When questions abound with no immediate answers; when a problem seems insurmountable; when the task ahead involves many players; when the convergence of two or more different perspectives will yield a new creative product or act – it's collaboration that takes centre stage. Whether its science, art, music or business, there are millions of examples of collaborative endeavours having seeded the new, the striking, the beautiful, or just things that work brilliantly for people.

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Mobility will make or break us. Our content needs to be accessible via mobile devices. If we don't get our content in the right format, we're dead!

Peter Sodorko

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GETTING THROUGH THE MIDDLE

Collaboration is hard work. It can involve rubbing up against differences, compromising to avoid conflict, getting nowhere fast, and collapsing into chaos when dead ends outweigh lively new beginnings. As veteran business academic Rosabeth Moss Kanter once said: “Everything looks like a failure in the middle.” There are no guarantees that anything one starts will be successful. But if we can design collaborative projects that value process as much as the product or outcome; that make space for shared learning and constructive feedback; and that help us cultivate patience and generosity towards others when things get tough – then there is a greater chance that we will navigate our way through the ‘middle’ without being tempted to pack up our toys and run away.

Good collaboration brings the thoughts, knowledge, skills, passion, interest and commitment of individuals and systems together into the same space. When combined with a robust problem-solving framework, the potential to generate ideas beyond what any one individual might conceive, is enlarged and emboldened.

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We’ve got to continue to challenge assumptions – like ‘academics should come to the library’, and whether librarians can fulfil all the roles needed to reinvent ourselves and deliver new services.”

Steve O’Connor

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DISCOVERY MINDSET

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Designing options worthy of implementation calls for levels of inspiration and passionate creativity that, until recently, have been more the sphere of artists and artistic processes than the domain of most managers.

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These are the words of Canadian academic Nancy Adler. The phrase ‘worthy of implementation’ is relevant to the collective project implied in our title: Next Gen/Next Decade: Library Services 2011-2020.

The fundamental assumption behind our approach is that there are few predetermined answers to the questions facing decision-makers in university libraries today; and there is no one way of addressing these strategic challenges. There are many options available and, given the challenges university libraries now face, our guiding question is which of these options are worthy of implementation?

We will venture into the heart of this project by taking a discovery mindset and asking two interconnected questions:

- 1. what will the next generation of library services look like?**
- 2. how will the next generation of leaders and managers shape this future (or futures)?**



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It is important for libraries to constantly keep track of users' behaviour and respond quickly to meet their information and learning needs. At the same time, libraries cannot just pamper to every whim, there is an equally important role to educate users in areas where they may not have adequate knowledge.

Choy Fatt Cheong

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QUESTION ONE

The first question will engage with the first two steps in the action learning cycle: **observing** and **reflecting**. This phase will involve identifying the groups and individuals who have a stake in the question under review (see diagram right). Regular tele-workshops and our BaseCamp project management medium, will enable the whole group to be updated on activities and insights gained during this phase. It will be important, however, to have a realistic scope for this project. The primary purpose of the program is a learning and development one, not a research one.

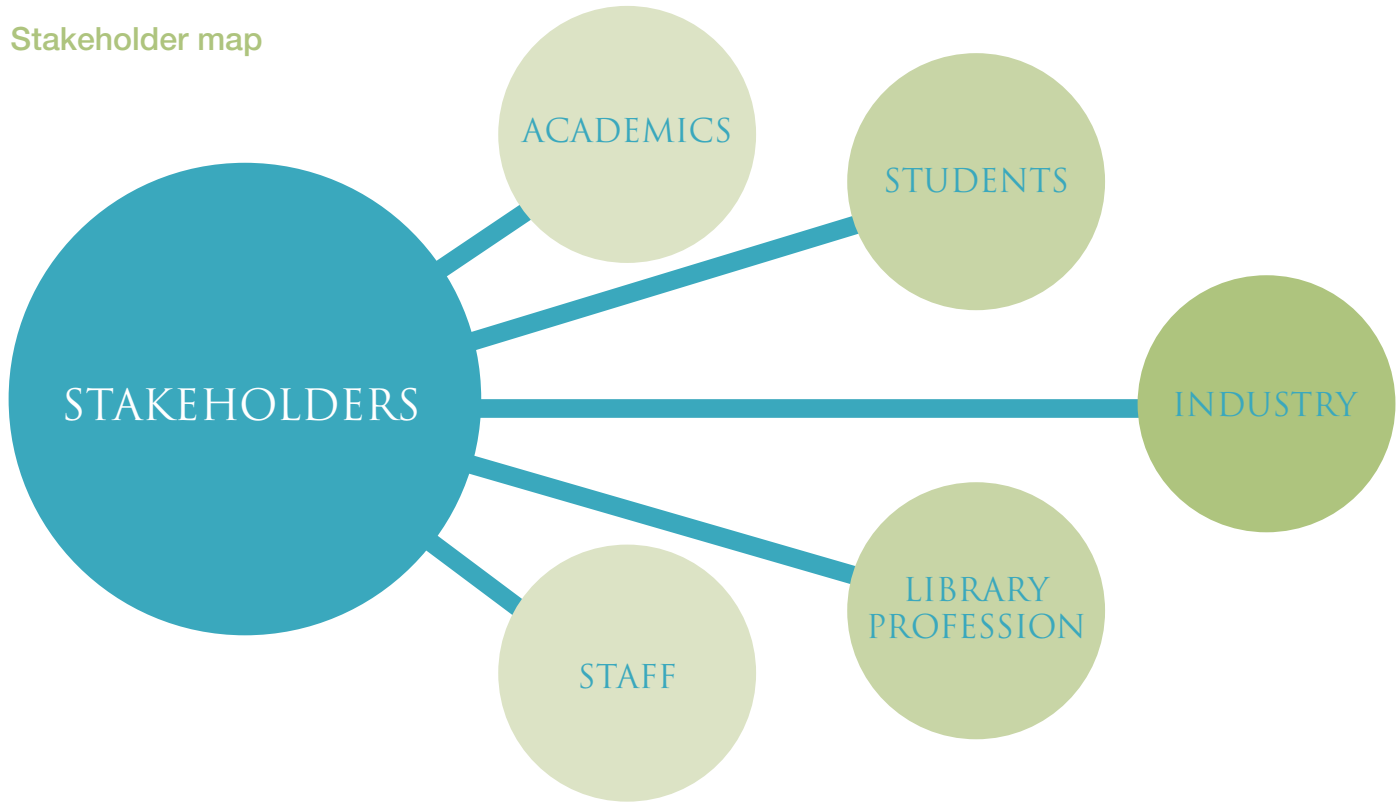
The process of project scoping, negotiating with supervising managers in relation to time and resources, and aligning individual learning goals with the larger collective project, are vital leadership skills that will benefit you and your library.

“

Discoverability is the other big thing. We have a huge collection here and we've been aggressive with digital content. You have got to make it accessible and match it to people's needs.”

Peter Sidorko

Stakeholder map



QUESTION TWO

The second question will involve the next two steps of the cycle: **planning** and **acting**. This phase will involve drawing out patterns and implications from the preliminary research. This phase will involve analytical and narrative-based skills. Synthesising disparate types of information will require project team members to draw on the different skills, experiences and temperaments they bring to the program. You will be encouraged to experiment with less conventional ways of undertaking both of these steps. The aim is to extend your repertoire of skills by providing an opportunity to design and test a mini-service improvement idea based on implications from the initial research. The following diagram gives an example of categories from which ideas might be drawn.

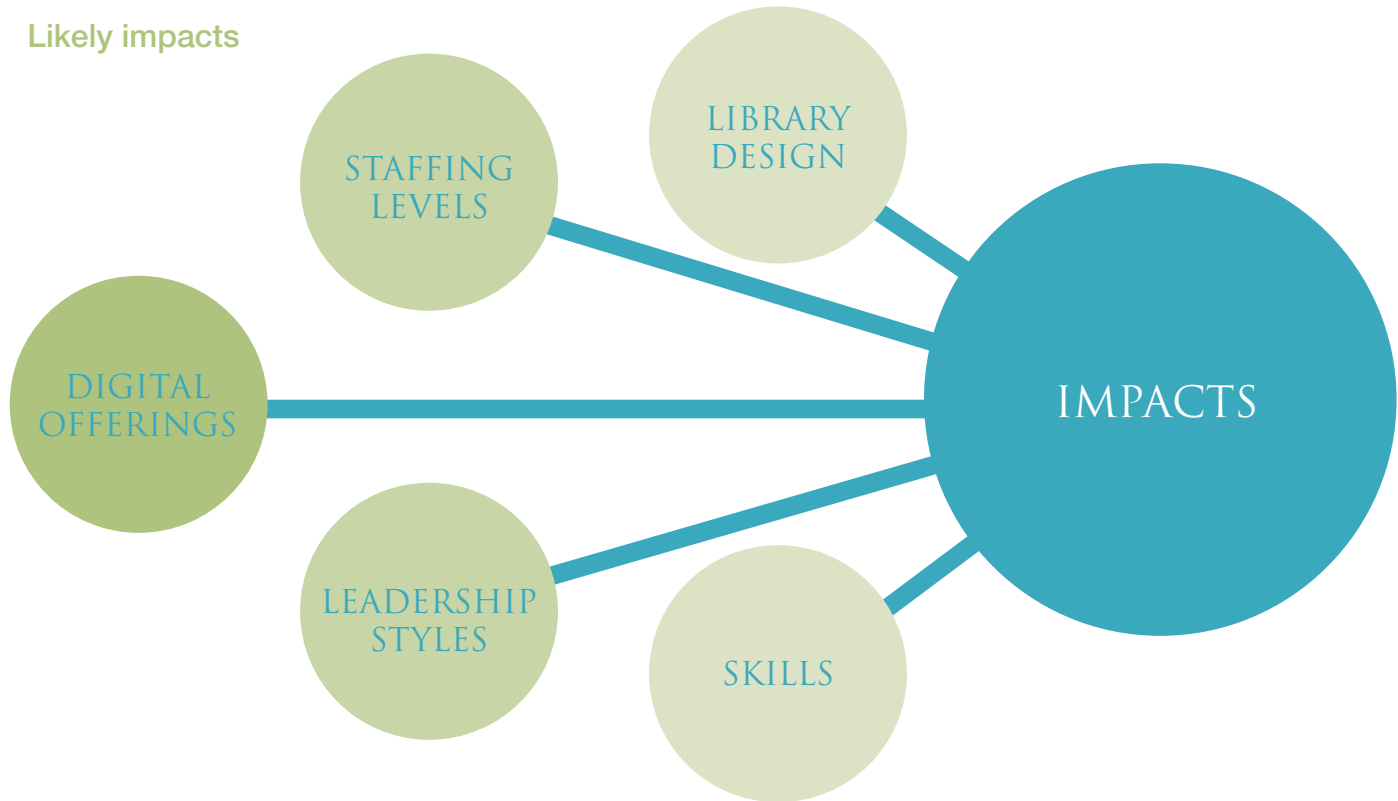


You need to have a really spirited discussion inside the organisation because every single one of us needs to tell the story.

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich



Likely impacts



PHILOSOPHY

“There is no learning without action; and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning,” said Reg Revans, one of the seminal figures in the action learning movement. The nexus between them is where knowledge arises – knowledge that comes from objective sources, and knowledge we create for ourselves through reflection and action. Next Gen/Next Decade aspires to be a medium through which this can happen.

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While knowledge can't be managed in the same way as information, the physical and organisational environment in which knowledge is used can be managed.

Ainslie Dewe

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