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INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR IN E-ENVIRONMENT: A STUDY OF MASS MEDIA PROFESSIONALS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the Information-Seeking Behavior (ISB) of mass media professionals in E-environment working in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the most important strategic area of Pakistan. To explore the perceptions of mass media professionals towards information seeking in e-environment is significant, because traditional print newspapers, radio and electronic media (TV) face a steady decline in their information sharing due to the growth of free online contents available through internet.

Research Design: A quantitative survey approach was adopted and 130 structured questionnaires were distributed and received back from the working journalists selected through snowball sampling.

Key Findings: Findings of the study indicate that the formal information sources mainly used by respondents were internet, electronic library of reports produced by colleagues, and library. Similarly, the information channels critically important in the opinion of media personnel were internet, mass media (TV, radio, Newspapers agencies), and social media (Face book, Twitter, Whatsapp...etc). The main problems identified during the study, which restricted them from producing high level of news and information for the public were information explosion, lack of time, lack of information searching/retrieval skills.

Conclusions: The study concluded that, the qualification of those media professional should be up-graded through Continuing Professional Development (CPD), who does not possess mass media qualification. The services of in-house media libraries should be improved, as these libraries have good effect on the work of media professionals. Furthermore, overcoming the identified problems would certainly improve the performance of media professionals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behavior, Libraries/Information Centers, Mass Media Professionals, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Background of the Study

The mass media including Radio, TV, Newspapers agencies and particularly, Social media around the globe mainly rely on timely provision of information. This profession undoubtedly has solely responsible to access and communicate the news to masses for keeping them aware of the happenings around the globe and to enhance their wisdom. A researcher, Wainwright (1982) has defined the term journalism in a manner that 'it is an art or skill through which an incident is developed into a few phrases, pictures or sounds and after processing it is communicated to public to satisfy their curiosity. Furthermore, mass media professionals not only inform the masses about the latest news and happenings but, play an important role in the explanation, opinion formation and understanding of news. The profession of journalism stood in an information environment and no doubt, that the media professionals' information needs are much and diversified. It is also true that the media professionals both in print and electronic cannot accomplish their tasks successfully if they do not know how to search, discover, recognize and access the required information at the right time. To perform their roles significantly, they have to fulfill their information needs first and for this they have to consult different channels of information. This act of information acquisition results into the phenomena of Information Seeking Behavior (ISB).

In 2000, Wilson has defined ISB as; it is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goals. In the process of seeking information, the individual may practice different information sources including tangible and intangible information sources such as the World Wide Web (WWW). In other words, information seeking is a mental process of individuals that occurs in the mind of human to satisfy some specific needs. For that he/she searches information through information channels such as library, information Centre, online services or any individual. Information-seeking is a behavior that occurs in response to satisfy the information needs if arises. The mass media professionals both as the consumers of information and providers of information seek specific information to meet their tasks. For that, they access information from all sources available to them including, primary, secondary and tertiary sources. However, the success depends on the right and appropriate choice of information channels. Among the information channels, libraries and information centers are the most effective channel easily available to professionals.

It is a fact that in present-day era the information and communication technologies have changed tremendously. The mass media professionals can now access and get the required information directly from the Internet, data bases and a series of other online resources which were not available earlier. Therefore, there is a great need to investigate their information needs and seeking behavior pattern by which they meet their needs. The mass media professionals in this research simply refer to the professionals currently practicing in television, radio and newspaper or news agencies. These professionals create news, regarding different topics like research programs, health, education, religion, politics, economics, foreign and current affairs, and social issues. These professionals also make different documentaries.

Similarly, the local literature shows that so far only four studies have been conducted on the topic of information needs and seeking or information gathering behavior of mass media professionals in Pakistan. Among those studies, the first research was done on the information needs of TV news producers (Butt 1975) and the second was done on the information needs of newspaper editors in Lahore (Gureja 1975). In the rest of two studies, one was focused on newspaper journalists in Lahore (Anwar and Asghar 2009) and second was media professionals in Karachi (Ansari and Zuberi, 2010). In this connection, the present study is an attempt to find

the information seeking behavior patterns of both print and electronic media professionals working in e-environment in KP, Pakistan. The recommendations from this research would be very helpful for the experts' concerned to mass media house libraries and information centers to design and develop library services in KP, being the most important strategic area of Pakistan.

Literature Review

The information needs, it's seeking and using by the individual at different levels and platforms have always been of the fundamental concern to library and information professionals. According to a researcher, Taliya (1992) the information need arises whenever, a person finds himself in a problematic situation. No doubt, the man is truly a wanting being and to survive in the Universe he depends upon a variety of psychological and social needs. In this fast growing technological era, the comparison of all kinds of needs shows that information need is very unique and essential among all needs. To fulfill the information need when a person accesses an information channel, that behavior is known as Information Seeking Behavior. Many researchers have investigated the ISB of different groups. But, the previous literature shows that studies on Information needs and seeking behavior of mass media professionals in the field of library and information science are very less particularly in Pakistan. It also shows that, a comprehensive approach has not been adopted by researchers for studying the information needs and seeking behavior of media professionals. However, there are some relevant literature that is reviewed below.

Nicholas and Martin in 1998 analyzed the information needs and seeking behavior of the study participants and come up with the results that respondents seek information for checking facts and to know the latest news. For these purposes the participants accessed the following sources; email, the internet, and their cell phones. In 2000, Wien studies the online information availability system developed for the journalists in Denmark. The researcher found that almost all newspaper agencies subscribed to national and international resources and these resources are available at desktop of the journalists. It was also discovered that a maximum number of large newspaper agencies subscribe to more online databases than the smaller agencies. Wien research revealed that in Denmark, only one newspaper agency, have a library with only one librarian who assists journalists in the search of information. But, the majority of journalists search for the required information themselves as they don't have the facilities of library and librarians. The researcher suggests that the mass media students should be trained so that they can express the information they need and how to search the required information. Such trainings will improve their information searching skills. Nicholas et al. (2000) explored the impacts of Internet use on the work of Newspaper Journalists in British. It also investigates the effects of the Internet on the use of traditionally existing information services and channels. The data from 300 journalists and media librarians were collected through open-ended interview questionnaires and observations. The results expressed that the all three groups i.e. media librarians, student journalists, and media journalists use Internet comprehensively. They also found a strong influence of internet on their work but, the lack of access to internet and the old age of experienced senior journalists who seldom use the Internet due to lack of training are the two hindrances to get maximum advantages of the internet like, checking latest information, chatting, accessing different statistics, uploading and downloading customized and free softwares and to keep themselves up-to-date of current news. However, the research raised a question of the journalists about the quality and the reliability of data obtained from the Internet. Author clearly

revealed that the use of Internet resources cannot minimize the use of other information sources but instead, it increases the usage of the later.

Another researcher, Chinn in 2001 mapped the information seeking behavior of three journalists during an interval of 8–13 hours per day. The first participant was a sport Director at a local television in Washington D.C, another was a general reporter of education for a daily newspaper in United States, and the third participant was a crime reporter at the same daily newspaper. The results show that the journalists working in educational institutions had less needs compared to the journalists reporting criminal incidents. Similarly, the media professionals reporting sports news required deep background knowledge and statistical information whereas, media professionals linked with educational organizations needed descriptive knowledge only. But, all of them needed latest information. Similarly, mass media workers in education and crime reporter needed mostly online databases, researches reports, news magazines and books for the background information.

The information seeking and use behavior of journalists at a national British newspaper agency at Artfield was studied by Dowell in 2003. Twenty five interviews of the journalist working in the “The Times” news agency were conducted in London. The study findings show that Journalists seek information so that they may provide readers the detail explanation of events for their personal understanding. The researchers have given a model that shows journalists’ research and writing process. This model has basically three stages, first is initiation, second is preparation and last one is production. In the year 2004, Anwar, Al-Ansari and Abdullah had done a research to investigate the information seeking behavior of journalists in Kuwait. The main findings depicts that in view of the journalists information plays a significant role to check and verify the events or incidents. The professionals also needed information for making news and to write a feature article. The formal sources of information which the journalists used were; the Internet and press releases. The respondents were very satisfied from these two formal information resources. Moreover, the reason for using the Internet by a large number of journalists was that this facility was provided to them by their organization. Similarly, the reasons for using the library/information Centre by the journalists were that they need to search databases and read materials available online. However, they were faced with the problems like, time shortage, lack of information searching skills, and lack of training that needs to consider for solution. Following to the previous study, in 2009 Anwar and Asghar investigated the information seeking behavior of Pakistani journalists. It revealed that the journalists in Pakistan use a large variety of information sources including both formal and informal resources. They searched and access information for writing a news item and article. They give high importance to daily news dairy, their personal collection of information sources, and conversation. They showed much satisfaction with the Internet resources. Journalists used in-house electronic library for getting the idea for a storyline and for background information too. Similar to the previous study conducted in 2004 they found that majority of the journalists faced with the difficulty of searching information. The reasons for this problem are lack of training and also the difficulties in accessing international information sources. Zahangs (2011) research was related to’ information behavior in China. The aim of this research was to help producers to collect information and develop more electronic resources. The results of the study revealed that the purpose of using electronic information resources was to conduct scientific research, perform teaching and the self-development.

Singh and Sharma (2013) did a research to find the ISB of newspaper journalists working in Delhi and explored that journalists mainly used most frequently used periodicals,

news magazines, current issues of newspapers, clipping files and reference books. They also revealed that journalist were faced with difficulties like, lack of modern communication gadgets, lack of time to look information not readily available and inadequate library services. Similarly, Chavan (2014) investigated the ISB of Journalist working in the Dharwad district Karnataka and found that the journalist should be provided with more number of electronic information sources. He also recommended the provision of quality reference material in different languages and the conducting of hands on training sessions, orientation programs on web surfing, and training of information retrieval skills. Gupta (2016) researched the ISB of print-media journalists in Riwa Division, India. He witnessed that journalists were using a variety of information resources to meet their information needs including, latest periodicals, newspapers, clipping and reference material. He suggested that the Indian media houses should be equipped with advanced communication tools in order to help journalists in sharing information.

The review of the above literature shows that the media professionals/journalists working in different departments need and seek information in order to provide public with up to date news and information. To assist media professionals in searching and accessing the required information, it is very essential to investigate their information seeking behaviors.

Methodology

Quantitative research design was applied by using questionnaire as a data collection tool. This method was used because it has been successfully used in previous researches (Anwar and Asghar, 2009; Singh and Sharma, 2013; and Chavan, 2014). According to Gupta (2016) the questionnaire is a skillful translation of the objectives into a set of questions intended to be answered in writing. Therefore, for data collection a questionnaire was developed after thorough review of the previous literature. It was thoroughly viewed by two experts one from library science and one senior media professional. The questionnaire was revised in the light of feedback received from the two experts.

The population of the study was consisted of all the mass media professionals working in Television, Radio and Newspapers agencies in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There were about 1100 journalists working in the field of Mass Media as Journalists (Personal Communication, Rahimullah Yousafzai). There are a total of twenty-four districts in KP. Out of that only four districts, Peshawar, Swat, Abbotabad, and Kohat on basis of the high numbers of mass media professionals working in mass media institutions in these districts were selected. The estimated number of media professionals in these four districts was about 300 and the data was collected from about 130 (43.3%) professionals through snowball sampling technique.

The filled questionnaires were checked for the completeness of information and all the complete questionnaires 130 were analyzed with the help of SPSS (Special Package for Social Science). The data was presented in tables and graphs for understanding and interpretation.

Delimitation of the study

This study is restricted to the ISB of working mass media professionals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It focuses on their ISB related to professional activities and will not cover the area of their personal academic or health information needs.

Objectives

The research was intended to meet the following research objectives.

1. To find out what information sources the mass media professionals needs?

2. To find out what channels of information they used to access the required information?
3. To find out that for what purpose do they used the gathered information?
4. To find what information services they required and what effects have of the use of in-house library on journalists work?
5. To find out that how journalists rate their information retrieval skills and what problems they face while searching for information?

Findings

The findings of this study, according to the objectives set, are presented below.

Respondents Personal Information

The detail of respondents' gender in Table 1 shows that out of 130 respondents 73.9% were male and the rest of 26.1% were female. This shows less tendency of female's towards the profession of media or the scarcity of female in this profession might be due to the conservativeness of Pashtoon society in KP. So for the age of respondents was concerned, data shows that a large majority 51.53% of the respondents belong to the age group 26-30 years. Whereas, the respondents having age group 21 to 25 years and 30+ were more or less the same. Similarly, the data also revealed that majority 86 (66.15%) respondents possessed mass media qualification but, it is important to note that about 44 (33.84%) of the respondents did not possess qualification in mass media. Those who are working as media professionals and do not possess qualification in mass communication might have learned through practicing or observation, these people must be trained through Continuing professionals development (CPD) trainings and courses.

Table 1, Frequency Distribution of Respondents Gender, Age and Qualification (N=130)

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	117	73.9
Female	13	26.1
Age		
Up-to 20 years	0	0%
21-25 years	31	23.82%
26-30 years	67	51.53%
30+ years	32	24.61%
Qualification		
Mass media	86	66.15%
Other than mass media	44	33.84%

Types of Formal and Informal Information Sources Used by the Respondents

The participants were asked to specify the type of information they used and to show the importance of each formal and informal information source in their work. The data in Table 2 shows that among the formal information resources; internet, electronic library of reports produced by colleagues and library got the first three ranks and were found critically important in the opinion of media specialists. Similarly, respondents considered TV, Radio broadcasts as important. The information sources found less important in media professionals' opinion are; Daily news diary and press releases. Respondents' revealed two information sources; personal collection at home and other libraries in the cities as unimportant.

Among the informal information resources, Conversations/Interviews (face to face) and Colleagues in other agencies were declared as critically important for their work. So far, the rest three informal information sources are concerned, respondents thought those as important for their work.

Table 2, Formal information Sources Respondents Used

Formal information sources and their importance	Mean	Ranked
Internet	4.21	1 st
Electronic library of reports produced by your colleague	4.00	2 nd
Library (online databases, annual reports, almanacs', encyclopedias, handbook, yearbook, dictionaries,)	3.96	3 rd
TV	3.87	4 th
Radio broadcasts	3.50	5 th
Daily news diary	3.10	6 th
Press releases	3.00	7 th
Your personal collection at home	2.30	8 th
Other libraries in the cities	2.30	8 th
Informal information sources and their importance		
Conversations/Interviews (face to face)	4.54	1 st
Colleagues in other agencies (face to face)	3.97	2 nd
Letters/faxes from general public	3.78	3 rd
Phone call that you receive	3.67	4 th
Information received from colleagues in your agency	3.46	5 th

Scale: 1=Not important to 5= critically important

Types of Information Channels Media Professional Used

The media professionals working in the three media houses TV, Radio and Newspapers agencies were asked to show the frequency of use of the listed information channels. The responses were measured on a five points Likert type scale. Table 3, indicates that they most frequently used Internet (mean, 4.56), Mass Media (mean, 4.23) and Information and Documentation Center/Record center (mean 4.11). The data also reveals that they use Library and Social media but, with less frequency. However, among the information channels, direct purchasing (mean, 2.99) received the smallest mean score showing the participants' less interest in using this channel.

Table 3, Types of Information Channels Media Professional Used

Information Channel used	Mean	Ranked
Internet (Search engines, directories, online databases, etc)	4.56	1 st
Mass media (TV, Radio, Newspapers/magazines)	4.23	2 nd
Information and Documentation Center/Record center	4.11	3 rd
Library	3.87	4 th
Social media (Face book, twitter, Whatsapp, Imo, etc)	3.77	5 th
Direct purchasing (Books and other information resources)	2.99	6 th

Scale: 1= Never to 5=Most frequently

Purpose for Which the Media Professionals Used the Gathered Information

The detail of the responses that for what purposes do these media professionals acquire information is presented in Table 4. It expresses the respondents' agreement of using the gathered information for writing, editing a news item (mean, 4.12 and 4.00) respectively and writing an editorial (mean, 4.03). They also agreed with the opinion of using information for writing an article (mean, 3.98) and writing a column (mean, 3.91). Moreover, they were somewhat agreed to use the gathered information for general knowledge, writing a feature and writing personality profile.

Table 4, The Purpose of Gathering Information

Purpose for which the gathered information was used	Mean	Ranked
Writing a news item	4.12	1 st
Editing a news item	4.09	2 nd
Writing an editorial	4.03	3 rd
Writing an article	3.98	4 th
Writing a column	3.91	5 th
General knowledge	3.77	6 th
Writing a feature	3.67	7 th
Personality profile	3.24	8 th

Scale: 1=Not agreed to 5=Strongly agreed

What Effects have of the Use of In-House Print/Electronic Library on Media professional Works

The media professionals were also asked to express the use impact of the in-house print/electronic library on their work. Some of the respondents did not provide answers to all the queries listed in the Table 5. Data below indicates that about 59 respondents out of 104 felt that their use of library staff for reference help was increased. Sixty-seven (67) believed that the amount of background information was increased. Some 39 individuals out of 56 felt that the amount of time to get information was decreased however, 4 respondents mentioned that it has no effect. About 74 professionals revealed that the instances for fact checking were increased and some 40 out of 61 believed that the number of errors in the paper was decreased.

Table 5, Effects on the Use of in-house Print/Electronic Library on Respondents' Work

Nature of Effect	n	Decreased	No Effect	Increased	Don't Know
Use of library staff for reference help	104	30	6	59	9
The amount of background information used by reporter	89	14	8	67	0
The amount of time to get information	56	39	4	2	11
Instances for fact checking	90	1	5	74	11
Number of fact error in the paper	61	40	3	1	17

The Information Services the Media Professional Required

The professionals were asked to show their agreement about the current information services provided by the library. The detail in Table 6 discloses that media professionals were critically agreed with SDI services (mean, 4.69), Internet services (mean, 4.11) and provision of Audio/Visual (mean, 4.00) that they need for their work. They showed their agreement for the current content services (mean, 3.90), reference services (mean, 3.80), newspaper clipping services (mean, 3.66). But, they indicated less agreement with inter-library loan and translation services.

Table 6, The Information Services Required by the Respondents

Information Services	Mean	Ranked
SDI Services	4.69	1 st
Internet service	4.11	2 nd
Provision of Audio/Visual information	4.00	3 rd
Current content services/New arrival services	3.90	4 th
Reference services	3.80	5 th
Newspapers clipping services	3.66	6 th
Inter library loan services	3.54	7 th
Translation services	3.08	8 th

Scale: 1=Not agreed to 5=Critically agreed

The Respondents' Opinion about their Information Searching/Retrieval Skills

The detail of the respondents' opinions regarding information searching/retrieval skills is presented in Table 7. It demonstrates that a large majority 67(51.53%) having moderate information searching/retrieval skills. There were about 43 respondents having high or very high level of information searching/retrieval skills. Ten (7.69%) respondents disclosed that they have low level of information searching/retrieval skills which need to be focused by the concerned authorities.

Table 7, Respondents' Opinion about the Information Searching/Retrieval Skills

Respondents' opinion about Information searching and retrieval skills	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
	0 (0%)	10(7.69%)	67(51.53%)	40(30.76%)	13(10%)

Problem Media Professionals Face in Searching Information

The respondents were asked to express the intensity of each problem faced in searching the required information. The problems listed below in Table 8, show that highest number i.e. more than half of the respondents 93(71.53%) mentioned the 'information explosion/too much information' as the top-most problem, followed by lack of time 81(61.53%) and lack of information searching skills 75(57.69%). Fifty four (41.53%) respondents consider 'difficulty in accessing international information' as somewhat important and lack of digital/online information and lack of support of library staff as the least important problem.

Table 8, Problems Faced in Searching Information

Problems	Frequency	Percentage	Ranked
Information explosion/too much information	93	71.53%	1 st
Lack of time	81	61.53%	2 nd
Lack of information searching skills	75	57.69%	3 th
Difficulty in accessing international information sources	54	41.53%	4 th
Lack of digital/online information	47	36.15%	5 rd
Lack of support of library staff	12	9.20%	6 th

Scale: 1=Not important to 5=critically important

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this quantitative research was to investigate the information seeking behavior of media professionals currently working in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study results indicate that media professionals working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are mostly male and a majority possessed qualification in mass communication. The reason for having less number of female i.e 26.1% only in the profession of mass media is might be that in the conservative Pashtoon society parents do not like to allow their daughters to work in field among the male dominant societies. Similarly, a large number of respondents do not possessed mass qualification but, they are working as media professionals on the basis of their experience in the mass media. In the same connection, the age of more than half of the respondents was between 21 to 25 years. Media professionals more obviously need such sources and channels of information which could satisfy their information requirements. The results showed that the top three formal information sources that the respondents used were internet, electronic library of reports produced by colleagues, and library. These findings are similar to the findings of (Anwar, Al-Ansari and Abdullah, 2004). Similarly, table 2 shows that the three mostly used informal sources are conservation/interviews, colleagues in other agencies, and letters/faxes from general public. They consult channels which they thought could be fruitful for meeting their information requirement. The first three channels were internet, mass media (TV, radio, Newspapers agencies). These finding are in the line with the findings of Nicholas, et al. (2000) where he found that media journalists used internet extensively but, the senior journalists used internet seldom due to less understanding of how to use it. Moreover, Anwar (2009) found that journalists used internet more as this facility was provided by their organization.

The information which the media professionals gathered from the formal and informal sources and easily accessible channels uses for the mainly writing a news item, editing a news item, or an editorial. So far the impact of in-house library upon the output of media professionals was concerned, the findings shows that the in-house print/electronic library has increased the consultation of library staff for reference help. Similarly, the amount of background information used by the professionals as well as the instances for fact checking has also increased among the media people. However, the use of in-house print/electronic libraries has encouragingly decreased the amount of time to get information and the number of facts errors in the papers. The findings show that the media professionals need the following, SDI services, internet services, provision of Audio/visual information, and current content services (Table, 6).

About 30.76% of the media professionals expressed that they possessed high level of information searching/retrieval skills and only 10% declared that they possessed very high level of information searching/retrieval skills. Whereas, more than half of the respondents declared

their information searching /retrieval skills as moderate (Table 8), therefore, it is very much obvious that these respondents need to be given trainings. Similarly, Wein (2000) suggested training journalists in the information searching and retrieval. The most faced problems in the information searching were information explosion/too much information, lack of time, lack of information searching/retrieval skills. The latter two problems were also identified by Anwar (2004).

During the data collection and personal visits of the media houses it was found that in the media houses of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are not the state of the art libraries and documentation centers and it was also found that some of the media houses were without libraries. This research clearly shows that the provision of information sources and services through proper information channels could improve the performance of the media professionals. The researcher, Chavan (2014) also suggested in his research the provision of electronic information resources and quality reference materials for the best output of the journalists in their relevant fields.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made to improve the situation regarding the information provision to media professionals by libraries and information centers keeping in view their information behaviors.

1. The study recommends encouraging parents through media to allow their daughters to opt this profession. Because, females have very less tendency towards this profession.
2. One of the recommendations is to up-grade the qualification of those media professionals through Continuing Professional Development (CPD), who do not possess mass media qualification.
3. The authorities should provide the efficient internet and Information Technology (IT) facilities to all the working media professionals.
4. Keeping in view the importance of electronic library in the opinion of media professionals, it is recommended to strengthen these electronic libraries. If electronic library does not exist in any media house then, it is recommended to establish it for the efficient information provision to media professional.
5. The in-house libraries have very good impacts upon the work of media professionals therefore, it is strongly recommended to improve more the condition of these libraries focusing on the following significantly needed library services, SDI services, internet services, provision of Audio/visual information, and current content services.
6. As there were more than half of the respondents possessing moderate information searching/retrieval skills therefore, it is strongly recommended to start the information literacy training programs to enhance the information search, the ways to access information, its evaluation and purposeful use for developing correct and up-to-date news and information to public.
7. Furthermore, it is also recommended that the institutions disseminating mass communication education should review the curriculum and should include the instructions keeping in view the revealed information behaviors of the media professionals in this research.

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