

Title: From one-to-one to one-to-many: An instrumental case study of a pre-service teacher librarian in the U.S

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This statement certifies that the following paper was conceived and written by the author/s alone. All information and ideas from others are referenced.

Author/s signature/s:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marcia A. Mardis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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# **From one-to-one to one-to-many: An instrumental case study of a pre-service teacher librarian in the U.S.**

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*Pre-service teacher librarians in the United States often are en route from careers as classroom teachers and view field experiences as needless repetitions of student teaching. Meaningful internships can be pivotal in helping students explore potential roles, build collegial networks, and gain valuable on-the-job insight. For an educator in transition from a single classroom to a many-faceted school library, field practica can provide crucial opportunities to shift to the organizational, collaborative mindset outlined in Information Power, the U.S. school library guidelines (1998). This paper presents an instrumental case study gathered as part of an ongoing study of practicum experiences.*

## **Overview**

In database architecture, data tables have either a one-to-one knowledge relationship or a one-to-many knowledge relationship. If the one-to-many relationship is not designed and implemented properly, one table will not be extract knowledge from its many sources and database queries will yield inadequate and confusing results. This metaphor is useful when analyzing a little-recognized problem in school library media. In addition to the overwhelming number of current school library media specialists (SLMS) due to retire in the coming years and being eliminated from their school systems in the United States (Miller & Shontz, 2003), the large number of teachers in transition from the classroom to the school library are not always provided with the understanding and resources they need to shift their professional thinking from that of one person serving a single classroom to that of one person serving the many stakeholders of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. This lack of acculturation into the wide role of school librarianship has the potential to have a profound effect on the profession's future viability.

In the Library and Information Science Program at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, USA, approximately 65% of the 238 (155) teacher librarian program students in the 2005-2006 academic year are currently classroom teachers. All TL students required to participate in a 90 hour field experience, or practicum, before they complete their coursework, receive their master's degree, and gain a school library media endorsement on their teaching certificates. The Michigan Department of Education requires university programs that facilitate teaching endorsements to have field experience requirements of at least an academic semester in duration.

But, many of these TL students are not convinced that the practicum offers any enhancement to their preparation able to or do not see the need for the practicum. As the practicum coordinator for the aforementioned TL program, the research has received many

emotional messages in which students voiced complaints about having to take time from their classroom roles to complete field experiences that they felt were unnecessary duplications of their student teaching years before. Names have been suppressed from these quotes to protect students' privacy. One student wrote,

[I]t is not acceptable to expect working professionals such as myself to take time away from our schools to complete a program requirement... Most of us have already been prepared by (a teacher preparation program) to enter the workforce as an educator having previously completed 2 student teaching assignments totalling over 180 hours (personal communication, December 24, 2005).

Another added,

The problem arises when we have to do this so-called 'practicum' that is supposed to provide us with "experience" that we get every day at our current jobs. I can not [sic] and will not take my personal time off to do this, to even list this as an option...is ludicrous (personal communication, December 23, 2005).

The tone and content of these messages (and the many more like them received by the researcher) suggests that many TL students do not understand why student teaching for classroom teaching is not appropriate preparation for the role of teacher librarian. It is clear, then, that the practicum must be examined more deeply and its effects of student development, especially in the transition from teacher to media specialist, be illuminated and brought more consciously into TL education program design.

The instrumental case study described in this paper will use existing frameworks for teacher development during student teaching to examine the ways in which one student transitions from classroom teacher to teacher librarian during her field experience. The in-depth examination of one student's experience through journal, observation, and questionnaire is intended to illuminate the issue of this professional transition and provide direction for further study.

## **Review of Literature**

In the United States, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (American Association of School Librarians [AASL] & Association for Educational Communications and Technology [AECT], 1998) contains guidelines for the practice of teacher librarianship. In the second edition of this book (the first having been released in 1988), the authors described the functions of school library media programs, from providing resources to students to creating a community of lifelong learners. In aid of these functions, the authors named four overlapping roles for teacher librarians. In the teacher and instructional partner roles, the teacher librarian supports the instructional goals of the school in both content (standards and curriculum) and process (synthesis and exegesis). The information specialist role includes the more traditional responsibilities of the teacher librarian, like developing and providing access to the school library's collections and services. The fourth role, program administrator, includes both management tasks of the library media program and broadly focused training and advocacy functions within the educational organization.

### *Perceived roles vs. performed roles*

Several researchers have identified a gap between the theoretical description of *Information Power* roles and actual teacher librarian practice. Person (1993) found a discrepancy between the real and ideal role perceptions of TL. While the participating TLs were aware of the roles identified in the 1988 edition *Information Power* (American Association of School Librarians [AASL] & Association for Educational Communications and Technology [AECT], 1988), they were not able to perform those roles as often as they would have liked. Pickard (1993) also studied the gap between theory and practice of teacher librarians performing the instructional role and found that less than 10% of the study sample appeared to be practicing the role to a great extent.

In McCarthy's 1997 study, about 58% of award-winning media specialists stated that the performance of the *Information Power* (1988) roles was complicated and often derailed by organizational and professional barriers. Jones (1997) detailed one of the possible barriers and found that few teacher librarians in Georgia were involved in the curriculum development process to a significant extent. McCracken (2000) in a national survey of more than 500 teacher librarians, found that they perceived that they practiced the role of information specialist (i.e., the traditional role of the librarian) to a greater extent than that of program administrator, teacher, or instructional partner. Van Deusen (1996) investigated the difficulties inherent in collaborative relationships between teachers and teacher librarians; teacher librarians were perceived as outsiders to planning and instruction and had to carefully and strategically build collaborative relationships with teachers. An important aspect of the practicum is to expose students to the "other side of the table" and to help them appreciate the complexities of instructional partnering.

### *Current state of internships and practica*

Though a small body of research has addressed the existence and the extent of teacher librarian practica, a few studies have explored the experience. A rigorous study (Lyders & Wilson, 1991) of school library media specialist field experience requirements in library and information science programs in United States concluded that practicum requirements were widespread because program administrators felt that field experience fostered theoretical and practical learning. Most practicum programs were externally structured as traditional classes with syllabi, requirements for field mentors, and prerequisite coursework for students. Many practicum program coordinators placed students in sites of their own choosing and included periodic reporting assignments like journals and seminar meetings. Shannon's (2004) survey results revealed that 87.5% of ALA accredited teacher librarian preparation programs required field experiences of 100 hours or more; the survey respondents also reported that, for students who were currently working as teachers, completing internships was seen as a nuisance and that they often had difficulty negotiating release time from their teaching contracts.

Vansickle (2000) linked the content and duration of the practicum to teacher librarians' ability to perform key leadership roles in the school. The researcher found that internships, on the whole, were too brief and did not require adequate student reflection and debriefing in order to elucidate the skills necessary to be prepared to act as leaders and change agents. In further explanation of the shortcomings of many current internship experiences, Callison (1995) opined four main common deficiencies of internship experiences: those that focus only on management tasks; those that expose students to only

one mentor; those that do not allow adequate exposure to the collaborative role; and those that focus on “how-to” at the expense of leadership skills. Callison called for reform of practicum experiences in 1995.

### *Teacher development and acculturation*

The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) of teacher development has helped to illustrate the ways in which teachers progress personally and professionally in their practice. Fuller (1969) and Fuller & Bown (1975) described a concerns-based approach to research to pre-service teacher education in which three stages occur. Stage one occurs prior to individuals’ exposure to the classroom environment. This stage is characterized by non-concern with the mutual effects of teachers and students upon one another. In the second stage, new teachers are concerned with their own performance and control in the classroom. The stages culminate in the third stage, when teachers have become more fluent and confident in their classroom practice and shift their central areas of concern to students.

Later, Rutherford and Hall (1990) revisited Fuller’s conceptualization of teacher development. In their view, the three stages were:

1. Concern for self: image and perceptions of competency;
2. Concern for instructional tasks and situations;
3. Concerned with instructional impact on students.

Common to both sets of views of teacher development was an outward trajectory from self to student.

As elegant and concise as these three stage approaches appear, they have been criticized for their central emphasis on the teacher person not the teacher role. Critics like Buchmann (1986; Buchmann, 1993) argued that teacher preparation and development study should emphasize role expectations as articulated in professional standards and by the community-at-large. The claim has also been made by Zeichner and Teitelbaum (1982) that using a concerns-based lens for viewing the value of teacher education field experiences promotes personalism and undermines inquiry-based program themes. Ultimately, these oppositions can be reconciled through the understanding that the individual en route to becoming a teacher (or teacher librarian) constructs personal meaning (including concerns) of their professional experiences.

In a later and groundbreaking study of pre-service teacher development, Conway and Clark (2003) reconciled these seemingly conflicting viewpoints on concerns-based teacher development models by defining concerns as fears and by also including in their analysis a study of strengths and aspirations. By looking at a broader spectrum of individuals’ feelings about their pre-service education and field experiences, the researchers were able to probe more deeply teachers’ beliefs and motives in their own practice and to identify patterns across pre-service teachers’ experiences. Their findings supported Fuller’s notion of outward expansion, but they also discerned an inward path observed among pre-service teachers in their field experiences toward heightened reflexivity and enriched engagement. A main strand of their study emphasized that understanding of self through the consideration of both hopes and fears was the hallmark of an effective pre-service experience. This paper will report on

the transition from teacher to teacher librarian in an innovative application and extension of CBAM analysis.

### *The Research Study*

The case study reported in this paper occurred during Winter semester 2006 and spans January through April. The case study is part of a larger study funded by the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). Participants for the study were drawn from practicum cohorts led by the researcher. Within the practicum cohorts, the researcher asked students who were currently classroom teachers to participate. This paper reports the journey of one student who participated in the study.

*Description of student participant and mentors.* The case study presented in this paper includes the experience of one student. Suzanne (a pseudonym) is from southeastern Michigan and graduated from high school in 1996. She attended the University of Michigan where she completed a bachelor's degree in early elementary education in 2001. Suzanne is a certified elementary school teacher and a certified middle school special education teacher. She is also a certified Orton Gillingham Reading Technique consultant. Her one semester of full time student teaching occurred in three classrooms of an elementary school near the University of Michigan. Currently, Suzanne teaches first grade at an elementary school in metropolitan Detroit.

Suzanne completed her teacher librarian practicum in her final semester at Wayne State University. She completed her practicum at two sites. The first site was in a rural district about an hour away from her home. Her mentor, June (a pseudonym), was a very experienced teacher librarian who has the responsibility for two elementary school libraries. Her second practicum site was the school library in an elementary school near the school where Suzanne currently teaches. Her mentor, Ruth (a pseudonym), was a very experienced teacher librarian with over 30 years in the library and two years in district-level curriculum coordination. Suzanne began her practicum by working with both June and Ruth for about 30 hours; she completed her remaining hours with Ruth.

*Data collection techniques* Because the methods used in this study were mainly qualitative and an aim of the study is to issue recommendations for future study, three data collection methods will be used to aid triangulation and consensual validation.

The participant provided the researcher with a journal that formed the main source of data for the analysis. Though journals are required of all students who enroll in a teacher librarian practicum, Suzanne was asked to keep her journal in an autoethnographic format and to submit it to the researcher at 30-hour intervals during her semester-long experience. In her autoethnography, Suzanne reflected upon her membership in her native (teacher) culture and her move into another (teacher librarian) culture. Autoethnography blends autobiography with ethnography through critical self-reflexive discourse in performance, articulating the intersections of culture. Performers of autoethnography become conscious of their own reality constructions and interpreting culture through the self-reflections (Spry, 2001). As a result of the autoethnographic experience, performers often experience a deepened rapport with members of their cultures and more reflective approach to practice (Berger, 2001).

The second source of data was collected through Stages of Concern Questionnaires (SoCQ) distributed before and during the practicum. The questionnaire used in this study was

a combination of the SoCQ developed by the researchers of the CBAM to gather the changing concerns of educators involved in professional change and the additional collection of strengths and aspirations as suggested by Conway & Parker (2003). Each questionnaire used in this study contained two questions and prompted respondents to provide three items in response:

1. What teacher strength do you [hope to] find to be the most helpful in practicum activities?
2. What are your current concerns about your practicum site and/or your performance during the practicum and/or the practicum process?

The third source of data for this study was researcher observation. This observation was performed near the end of Suzanne's practicum experience and involved the observation of her interactions with students at her practicum sites for one hour. The researcher observed Suzanne introducing a complicated geography distance-learning unit to fourth graders. The class included 21 students working in small groups and receiving instruction as a class. The researcher audio-recorded and took notes during this observation. This observations also included some interview aspects since Ruth, Suzanne's practicum site mentor was present and offered opinions about the observed environment.

*Data analysis techniques* The researcher will suggest possible areas for further research through the analysis of the participants' perceptions of and experiences with the practicum and their professional practice as expressed through the three previously described sources of data. The study was bounded to include a single case, consistent with exploratory case study design. The analysis was conducted in the constructionist tradition and incorporated the paradigm assumptions of an emerging design, a context-dependent inquiry, and an inductive data analysis.

The intent of the case study data analysis is to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of pre-service teacher librarians as they progress through their practica? To what extent do these attitudes reflect the phases of CBAM and the roles of *Information Power* (1998)?
2. What do mentors and students identify as the critical incidents in the practicum experience that either entrench classroom-based thinking or promote school-wide, collaborative foci?

The researcher will use intersect two conceptual frameworks in the proposed study. The three phases of the CBAM, described in the literature review section of this proposal, will be used inform and categorize descriptions of student experiences as they progress through their practicum. The *Information Power* (1998) roles will be used to categorize and organize descriptions of their student performance of school library tasks.

## Results

This section will present the results of the three sources of data collected for this project: Suzanne's journal; her SoCQs; and the researcher's observation. One overriding theme emerged from the integrated analysis of these data: control.

In Suzanne's first journal entry, she described her first two years of classroom teaching. She described her motivation to become a teacher by saying, "I became a teacher because I wanted to touch at least one child's life the way a few of my teachers had done for me." She wrote that after a year in her first job, the classroom behaviour situation had gotten quickly out of hand. "My second year I thought I would quit... I literally cried every night, gained twenty pounds and each day dreaded going into school." Ultimately, Suzanne devised a way to gain control in the classroom and was satisfied with the results:

I felt I was failing my entire class because of [the] four severe behaviour problems...But it was those kids who made me a tougher, stronger teacher...I knew if I made it through that year it could only get better. And it has.

Indeed, having positive control in the classroom is a source of personal satisfaction for Suzanne. She described the aspects of teaching she liked the most by stating, "I love having my own room where I can organize and adjust things to fit the needs of my students. I like having control of the learning that goes on...I enjoy creating projects for the students to do..." When describing her motivations to become a teacher librarian, again the theme of control reappears as Suzanne notes, "I basically want to take what I am doing in my own classroom and spread it out throughout all of the classes."

As Suzanne's practicum progressed, it becomes clear from different data points that her concern is not so much that she has to be *in control*, but more that others (e.g., students, teachers) not be *out of control*. Suzanne learned classroom management techniques to cope in her own classroom and is frustrated when she sees situations in which behavioural techniques could be used with the students to improve the learning environment. During the researcher's observation of Suzanne, she kept the students' attention focused by using a voice amplifier, and by telling students, "When you're done [with your assignment], put your pencils down," and "Put your finger on your paper so that I can see you're at the right spot." Each of these techniques kept the class focused and on-task.

Her practicum experience with June was marked with a lack of student control. Suzanne's reaction to the school library situation in one of June's two elementaries was,

[T]hough I could tell the staff respected [June], it was clear that they did not see the [school library as a classroom...kids ran through without any reprimands...I felt it should have been of utmost importance to have them be silent on their way through. As a teacher I would have expected it from my students and as the [teacher librarian] I would have expected it from the staff.

Suzanne is keenly tuned into the need to address disruptive behaviour through classroom management. It is the part of the teacher culture that she seems to inject the most into her practice as a teacher librarian, so much so, that June expressed her weakness in this area and asked Suzanne how to assert control in her own practice:



After [June's] first reading of a biography of Abe Lincoln, she asked me what I would have done differently to keep the students from shouting out and fidgeting as well as keeping their attention...I talked to her about some of the techniques I use with my own kids and how I keep them focused during this time and she tried a few suggestions on the next group and they worked. One thing she said she finds difficult is being somewhat of a disciplinarian with the students because she hasn't been in a classroom in so long that she has lost some of her 'management techniques'...I can tell she is uneasy about the students clambering through the [school library] when she is teaching, but she doesn't say anything. She mentioned several times that she felt at a disadvantage because she had been away from the classroom for so long and even when she was in one, it wasn't for very long.

Later, Suzanne confides, "[There] were many kids I wanted to talk to about appropriate behaviour. I found it odd that the teachers didn't step in and help either; most of them just allowed their students to be disruptive." Suzanne is signalling that she sees classroom management as a tradition of the teacher culture and expects teachers to exercise it even in the school library.

Suzanne's frustration with the teacher's lack of attention to student behaviour is a frustration she has felt with teacher partnerships and collaborative relationships in the past. As she reflected early in her journal:

Collaborating with teachers is really important to me, but not always easy to do. I try to work with my teaching partners, but conflicting ideas get in the way sometimes. I feel that teachers should be able to share ideas with each other and not try to compete AGAINST each other. I wish more teachers could just be open about things and willing to talk rather than be spiteful.

Suzanne's concerns about the difficulty of collaborative relationships are echoed in her commitment to professional competence. As she also states early in her journal:

I am a teacher that has a lot of passion. I have high expectations of myself, my students, my colleagues and the community...When something needs to be done I don't like to just sit around and talk about how to get it done, I like to actually get it done...I am not popular with other staff members because of some of the extra things that I do and because of my relationship with my administrator. But I have learned that that is ok and I do not have to be friends with everyone I work with. I can't please everyone as I once thought I could... maybe collaborating won't be as difficult [as a teacher librarian] because I will only be enhancing what the teacher is already doing.

Her experience with June awakened the awareness that some school libraries are situated as the hubs of a school and are inherently busy places:

The [library] is in the middle which means the only way for classes to get to where they need to, they must walk on either side of the [library]. There is constant movement in this area [and] it was frustrating to watch because if there had been teaching going on, it would have been disturbed by all of the classes walking through.

Suzanne began to see that she could not view a school library through a classroom lens. As her practicum continued, Suzanne also began to see that she would not be able to

accomplish all of the tasks for every teacher and student who uses the school library alone. The unit Suzanne introduced during the observation was extensive and prepared without the help of Ruth (who had a personal crisis) and the classroom teacher. During the observation, the teacher told the researcher, "I had no time to prepare this...[Suzanne] took a huge load off me." In her journal, Suzanne relayed, "I am putting together the beginning part because the teachers...agreed to do this project a long time ago and didn't remember it until recently." In the midst of the preparation for this project, Ruth had family emergency and Suzanne took on even more solo tasks:

[Ruth] has been planning a reading event for her school for reading month and was planning on sending out a list of things that parents and students could do together to get ready for the big night. They are having a night where students and their families can come and watch the new *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* movie. In order to tie in reading with this event, I put together a list of ideas that the families could do each night before the viewing. I found a great deal of websites to help promote this and submitted them to Jean. She [had intended] put them together in a format that is suitable to her, but she just didn't have time to get the resources together. She said I could do it on my own time if I wanted...

Suzanne soon found herself deluged with work and was having difficulty completing tasks without substantial after school time investment. During the researcher's observation, Ruth said, "The biggest thing she has to learn is that you are constantly interrupted in the library. You have a million things happening at once."

Integrating the additional duties that are part of the resource specialist and program administrator roles of the teacher librarian presented additional challenges and time demands to Suzanne. Suzanne's coursework did not impart the same sense of confidence she felt with instructional tasks:

I learned a great deal from many of my classes, but I felt several of them were way too general to make me feel prepared for my actual duties as a [teacher librarian]. I felt that cataloguing and collection development [courses] should have separate sections just for [teacher librarians] and that both classes should have had hands on activities that were relative to today's work... I am concerned about what happens when I have my own [school library] and I am supposed to put this all together. I have found that many of the schools in my district have old collections and several [teacher librarians] that do not live up to the standards that they should. This makes more work for the incoming media specialists because we then have to begin transforming the collection along with beginning collaboration projects.

Through a combination of events in her practicum, Suzanne realized that a key aspect of teacher librarianship is to have a different, looser, approach to her practice:

I took from today's experience the yearning to be a *support* person for all classes... I was in awe at the craziness of everything that went on at once. [June] had several things to get done and if I hadn't been there, she would have had to put them off to do some other things that were asked of her at the last minute.

Though in her initial SoCQ Suzanne listed one of her strengths as, "I am eager to help others...I also truly enjoy working with all of the different people involved in making the schools work!" Yet, in the SoCQ completed over half way through her practicum, Suzanne

seemed that have adjusted expectations of her ability to maintain the same level of control in the school library as in the classroom:

I fear that I will expect too much of myself and get burnt out. I enjoy doing projects as a teacher and one thing I look forward to as a media specialist is helping teachers integrate technology and library skills into their curriculum...I am concerned about what happens when I have my own [school library] and I am supposed to put this all together...I sometimes get overwhelmed by my inability to turn my brain off from all of the ideas that constantly pop into my head about how I want to do things...Now that I am looking into media, it is a daunting task to start over in a new position.

## Discussion

The data analysis suggests that the issue of control plays out very differently in the classroom and in the school library. Classroom teachers strive to master both the content and disposition of their classrooms, or in Suzanne's words, it is the "ability to manage a classroom effectively and [be] able to integrate the curriculum to make it more cohesive and learner-centered." This mastery produces a tremendous sense of autonomy, personal satisfaction, and professional confidence.

In response to the first research question about the changing attitudes of pre-service teacher librarians as they progress through their practica the extent to which the changing attitudes reflected the phases of CBAM and the roles of *Information Power* (1998), the findings of this case study suggest that the school library is a very dynamic place that plays a supporting and extending role to classroom activities. The myriad resources and lively space of the school library undermine control and often generate excitement, variety, and stimulation. The case study indicates that a teacher's control of the classroom does not translate well into this environment and can affect a new teacher librarian's ability to manage workflow and to build truly collaborative relationships. If, as Van Deusen (1996) suggested, collaboration between teachers and teacher librarians is hindered by teachers' views of teacher librarians as "outsiders," perhaps a corollary to that viewpoint is that some teacher librarians internalized self-identification as teachers who are in control of both content and behaviour is similarly obstructive. For Suzanne, the strengths of autonomy and instructional confidence she stated in her initial SoCQ led her to situations in which she was overwhelmed and not developing her competencies in the unfamiliar roles of resource specialist and program administrator.

The response to failed collaboration should not be for the teacher librarian to attempt to accomplish tasks for every stakeholder without help. Though teachers who become teacher librarians do often have deeper knowledge of curriculum and classroom management, the fluid and active nature of the school library demands that teacher librarians work in supporting and instructional partnering roles. The additional roles of program administrator and resource specialist require competencies and attention that make a substantial focus on solo instruction nearly impossible, the opposite situation to the one described by McCracken (2000).

In response to the second research question that pertained to critical incidents that altered student thinking, the events preceding the researcher's observation. Prior to the

observation, Suzanne took the lead on a long and complex unit that teachers had forgotten about as well as the preparation for a large family reading program. The change in Suzanne's thinking is marked since on the SoCQ prior to these events she stressed her "ability to put projects together with (and without) the help of others, and...willingness to do things that are not considered 'my job,'" but after these events stressed a concern that she hone her ability to "ability to multi-task and be flexible." This critical incident illustrates the student's progression through the first two phases of CBAM since she was initially concerned that she be recognized and valued for her classroom teaching competencies, but later became more concerned with finding a work style better suited to all of the tasks she must accomplish as a teacher librarian.

The voice of a single teacher librarian students and the observation of her performance of the *Information Power* (1998) roles and responsibilities during the practicum provides the powerful beginnings to a chart of student development and suggestions for teacher librarian education program design and further research. Clearly, further research must be done into the power dynamics of collaborative relationships and the depth of professional identity of educators who begin as classroom teacher but later move to other roles. If field experience continues to be part of teacher preparation and the intent of this preparation remains the production of dynamic school library professionals, then it is essential that the practicum help students culminate their coursework and knowledge in the mindset of an effective, collaborative school library media specialist who engages the whole school instead of a single classroom.

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