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## JAMAICA STATISTICS SYMPOSIUM SET FOR LATE OCTOBER

**By Novie Younger-Coleman**

The Jamaica Statistical Society is holding its second biennial Jamaica Statistics Symposium and Preconference Workshops October 27-30 at the University of the West Indies Mona Campus in Kingston.

Symposium activities will introduce participants to and equip them for the management, analysis and interpretation of data related to the development of policies that help improve human welfare. The event is themed “Statistics in Support of Policy” and is expected to attract attendees from local, regional and international organisations.

Symposium activities will highlight the appropriate use of statistical methodology as well as equip attendees with the skills to provide statistical support for investigations that can inform policy and enhance productivity.

Special preconference workshop facilitator Madhu Mazumdar, professor of biostatistics and director of the Institute of Health Care Delivery Science at Mount-Sinai Health System in New York City, will lead a one-day workshop titled “Leveraging Data for Evidence-Based Decision-Making.” This course is designed to provide an understanding of the analytical methods needed by organisation-based decision-makers to critically interpret the findings of comparative effectiveness studies and quality improvement projects. The training will greatly enhance the evidence-based decision-making capabilities of policymakers within the health care and other sectors.

Other preconference workshop titles include “Data Analysis Using Microsoft Excel and R Statistical Packages” featuring descriptive and inferential data analysis methods.

The symposium feature lecture will be presented by Colin Bullock, director general of the Planning Institute of Jamaica. Symposium feature presentations will include “Statistical Methods for Grants and Protocols: What Information Should be Conveyed?” which will be presented by Jonathan D. Mahnken, director of the Data Management and Statistics Core at the University of Kansas Alzheimer’s Disease Center; “A family of Hyperbolic Growth Models with Applications,” which will be presented by Karan P. Singh, professor in the Division of Preventive Medicine (DOPM) and director of the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Shared Facility at the University of Alabama Birmingham; and “Meta-analysis: Planning, Implementation and Interpretation” to be presented by Chris Barker, president and owner of Statistical Planning and Analysis Services, Inc. located in San Carlos, California.

The previous Jamaica Statistics Symposium and Preconference Workshop held in 2013 was good, but the 2015 Symposium promises to be even better as participants will be introduced to information that will equip them for producing systematic reviews, carrying out relevant meta-analyses and effecting the appropriate knowledge translation. Organizers invite you join the Jamaica Statistical Society for this conference as they celebrate statistics in support of policy. Get your registration forms and other relevant event information online [at the event’s Facebook page](#).

*Younger-Coleman is first vice president of the Jamaica Statistical Society and chair of the JASSYM 2015 Planning Committee.*

## **OPEN RUSSIAN STATISTICAL CONGRESS: REVIVING TRADITION**

**By Alexey Ponomarenko**

On August 19, 1872, the headlines of St. Petersburg newspapers focused on the outcomes of a large-scale international meeting that had just concluded in the then-Russian capital: the 8th International Statistical Congress.

The conference's key outcomes were worth discussing. Participants had finally agreed, among other things, to set up a permanent commission that would implement the resolutions of the congress and to produce an international publication on comparative statistics. The reviewers also praised the contribution of Russian statisticians to the proceedings.

This meeting generated unprecedented interest in Russia. The *St. Petersburg News* (No. 213 dated August 6, 1872) declared that the congress was "the first international celebration of science in our homeland". Indeed, the congress that lasted from August 7 to 18, 1872 was the first international meeting of scholars ever held in Russia, so the selection of St. Petersburg as its venue was a great honour. There were 126 foreign participants from 25 countries. The congress programme required 70 printed pages and full verbatim reports from all sessions were published by local newspapers.

The 1872 congress helped align the development of statistics in Russia with the efforts of the international statistical community. The newly established International Statistical Institute held its session in St. Petersburg again in 1897. Statistics then thrived as a science and profession in Russia.



An interesting fact is that Russian statisticians, notwithstanding the growing interest in statistics at home, have never formally set up a professional society. We addressed this shortcoming by establishing the Russian Association of Statisticians (RASt) in 2014. RASt is a membership-based, nongovernmental, nonprofit organisation with the mission to advocate for statistics, promote statistical literacy and statistical education in Russia, and foster international cooperation in statistics.

In October this year, RASt will hold its flagship event, the Open Russian Statistical Congress. It will kick off October 20, a date that coincides with the United Nation's World Statistics Day, and will last for two days in Novosibirsk city. The co-organisers include the Russian statistical office—Russian Federal State Statistics Service—and the Novosibirsk State University of Economics and Management. The congress has been conceived as an open event for professionals and those interested in statistics.

Do we intend to emulate the success of the 1872 Congress in St. Petersburg? Well, I shall acknowledge that it comes to mind when we discuss the upcoming event at RASt. I would say that we—rather—strive to adhere to the open mindedness of our 19th century colleagues. Since then, statistics has become a routine part of our lives. However, there is still room for enhancing statistical literacy and raising awareness of statistics as a universal language of knowledge.

We look forward to an engaging event and expect contributions from everyone who is interested in the advocacy of statistics!

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

*Ponomarenko is a professor at the National Research University Higher School of Economics and chairman of the Russian Association of Statisticians.*

## 2015 YOUNG STATISTICIANS WRITING COMPETITION WINNER ANNOUNCED

**By Brian Tarran**

James Skeffington was named the winner of the 2015 Young Statisticians Writing Competition during the Royal Statistical Society's (RSS) International Conference in Exeter earlier this month. Skeffington presented a talk based on his article, "Warren Buffett: Oracle or Orangutan."

His article sets out to answer a question many in the world of stocks and shares and investments have long asked themselves: is Warren Buffett—the "oracle of Omaha"—extremely brilliant or extremely lucky. Skeffington's article will be published in the October edition of [Significance](#).

Skeffington graduated magna cum laude in economics from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2009, where he also studied for a degree in finance. He currently is working toward a graduate certificate in applied statistics at Penn State University while simultaneously serving as a field artillery officer in the United States Marine Corp.

The two runner-up articles—Annie Herbert's "The Great British Bayes-off: How Much Difference (statistically) Does a Soggy Bottom Make?" and Samantha Tyner's "The Joy of Clustering (with Bob Ross)"—will be published on the *Significance* website later this year.

The Young Statisticians Writing Competition is jointly organised by *Significance* and the RSS' Young Statisticians Section. Congratulations to this year's winner and runners-up and thanks to all those who took part in the 2015 contest. Details of the 2016 competition will be announced early next year.

*Tarran is editor of Significance magazine.*

## THE WORLD OF STATISTICS ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Following are The World of Statistics participating organization-sponsored events and activities around the world scheduled for the remainder of this month and October. [Click here](#) to see the complete 2015 calendar. Remember to submit your organization's events for the calendar by [using this convenient form](#). And, start sending us your 2016 activities and events [using the same form](#).

### September:

- **September 19-22, 2015**—[2015 International Total Survey Error Conference](#), Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS), Baltimore, Maryland, USA

- **September 20-23, 2015**—[Applied Statistics 2015](#); Statistical Society of Slovenia, University of Ljubljana and Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia; Ribno (Bled), Slovenia
- **September 26, 2015**—[2015 New England Symposium on Statistics in Sports](#), NESSIS, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

#### October:

- **October 2-3, 2015** — [Computation+Journalism Symposium 2015](#), Columbia University School of Journalism and Brown Institute for Media Innovation, New York City, New York, USA
- **October 7-9, 2015** — [11th International Conference on Health Policy Statistics](#), Health Policy Statistics Section of the American Statistical Association, Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- **October 8-9, 2015** — [59th annual Fall Technical Conference](#), American Society for Quality and American Statistical Association, Houston, Texas, USA
- **October 9-11, 2015** — [Teachers Stats Conference: STAKAN 2015](#), Czech Statistical Society and Slovak Statistical and Demographical Society, Soláň, Czech Republic
- **October 13-15, 2015** — [5th OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy: Transforming Policy, Changing Lives](#); Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Mexican National Statistical Institute (INEGI); Guadalajara, Mexico
- **October 20, 2015** — [World Statistics Day in Switzerland](#), Swiss Statistical Society, Olten, Switzerland
- **October 20, 2015** — [World Statistics Day Celebration: Talks and Networking](#), Swiss Statistical Society, Olten, Switzerland
- **October 20-22, 2015** — [1st Open Russian Statistical Congress](#); Russian Association of Statisticians, Federal State Statistics Service and Novosibirsk State University of Economics and Management; Novosibirsk, Russia
- **October 22-23, 2015** — [6th National Conference on Medical Statistics: MedStat 2015](#); Catholic University Faculty of Health, Slovak Statistical and Demographical Society, Institute of Medical Biology, Comenius University Genetics and Clinical Genetics Faculty of Medicine, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava Institute the Physiotherapy, Balneology and Therapeutic Rehabilitation, and Central Military Hospital; Ružomberok, Slovakia
- **October 28-30, 2015** — [Jamaica Statistics Symposium and Pre-Conference Workshop 2015: “Statistics in Support of Policy”](#), Jamaica Statistics Symposium, Kingston, Jamaica
- **October 29-31, 2015** — [6th Annual Stevens Conference on High Frequency Finance and Analytics](#), Stevens Institute of Technology and CME Group Foundation, Hoboken, New Jersey, USA

#### PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION NEWS & EVENTS

Following is the latest news and information from statistical organizations participating in The World of Statistics:

**Costa Rica**—The First School of Big Data and Statistics was held August 18-19 at the School of Statistics at the University of Costa Rica to promote the study and application of concepts and key methods in this area. This educational activity enjoyed the full support of the university's Association of Statistics Students.

Specific objectives included familiarizing participants with the main concepts and frameworks of reference associated with Big Data and its relation with statistics, exposing them to theoretical and methodological developments regarding management of large amounts of data and variables, and offering alternatives for data collection, processing and analyzing. To promote equity, participation was free. Approximately 60% of participants were statistics students.



*Students fill a lecture hall for the University of Costa Rica's inaugural School of Big Data and Statistics.*

The three instructors for the school are experts of international recognition. They were:

- **Edwin Diday**, who is with the Université Paris Dauphine, is considered the father of symbolic data analysis (SDA) and was awarded the Montyon Prize by the French Academy of Science in 1988
- **Derek Ruths** of McGill University in Montréal is a young and prolific scholar whose research interests include social informatics—the science of networks and language processing
- **Oldemar Rodriguez**, a mathematical statistician and Big Data professor at the University of Costa Rica and the 2004 recipient of the Gold Medal for the distinguished inventor of the year

The school consisted of three groups of lessons—a half-day each—taught by the three experts. The fourth session was dedicated to presentations of Big Data applications in Costa Rica by young professionals, and later, a panel discussion of statistics professors about challenges and issues regarding the teaching of these topics.

**Canada**—Organizers are calling for submission of papers for the [NIPS 2015 Workshop: Bayesian Nonparametrics: The Next Generation](#). The workshop, which is supported by the International Society for Bayesian Analysis, will be held December 12 in Montréal.

In theory, Bayesian nonparametric (BNP) methods are perfectly suited to the modern-day, large data sets that arise in the physical, natural and social sciences as well as in technology and the humanities. By making use of infinite-dimensional mathematical structures, Bayesian nonparametric statistics allows the complexity of a learned model to grow as the size of a data set grows—exhibiting desirable Bayesian regularization properties for small data sets and allowing the practitioner to continue learning as their data set grows in size.

This flexibility, however, presents both computational and modeling challenges. While there have been recent developments in accelerated inference for Bayesian nonparametric models, many of these approaches are not appropriate for large datasets. Additionally, while there has been an increase in new models for applied problems that move beyond the foundational Dirichlet and Gaussian processes, the widespread adoption of BNP methods has been limited in applied fields. This workshop will address the modeling, theoretical and computational challenges that limit adoption of Bayesian nonparametrics and discuss how these challenges can be circumvented.

This workshop invites paper submissions that will be presented in either oral or poster form. Organizers encourage submissions from the following (non-exhaustive) list of areas:

- New Bayesian nonparametric models, including new theoretical developments
- Computational inference algorithms applicable to new or existing Bayesian nonparametric models including MCMC, SMC, variational methods and others
- Software packages that allow the widespread use of BNP methods, including probabilistic programming languages and implementations of general-purpose inference algorithms
- The application of Bayesian nonparametric methods to new application domains

This workshop will bring together core researchers in Bayesian nonparametrics from a number of fields such as machine learning, statistics, engineering applied mathematics and others, including researchers working in a variety of application domains. It will focus on the next-generation of BNP research by highlighting the contributions of younger researchers in the BNP community.

Participants will leave the workshop with a foundation for understanding BNP methods, a perspective on recent advances in the field via a number of invited and contributed talks and poster presentations, and a framework of the challenges facing the field and future opportunities via talks and a panel discussion featuring experts both within and outside the BNP community.

Invited speakers are Amr Ahmed of Google; Michael Hughes, Brown University; Jeff Miller, Duke University; Scott Moser, University of Texas at Austin; Peter Orbanz, Columbia University; Isabel Valera, Max Planck Institute; and Sara Wade, Warwick University.

Invited Panelists include David Dunson, Duke University; Emily Fox, University of Washington; Lauren Hannah, Columbia University; Erik Sudderth, Brown University; and Yee Whye Teh, Oxford University.

Submissions are solicited in the form of an extended abstract of two to four pages in PDF format using the NIPS style available here (author names do not need to be anonymized and references may extend as far as needed beyond the four-page limit). If an author's research previously has appeared in a journal, workshop or conference—including last year's NIPS conference—his or her workshop submission should extend that previous work. Submissions may include a supplement/appendix, but reviewers are not responsible for reading the supplementary material.

Submissions will be accepted either as contributed talks or poster presentations. There will be no published workshop proceedings; the organizers hope authors will find discussion and feedback at the workshop beneficial for developing the research they present and encourage authors to submit their resulting work for publication in other venues following the workshop.

Extended abstracts should be submitted by October 2. [Refer to the workshop website for submission details.](#) Decisions will be communicated to authors by October 30 and the type of presentation notification will be made November 5 to accepted authors. Final paper submissions will be due December 1.

**United States**—The Biopharmaceutical Applied Statistics Symposium (BASS) XXII will be held November 2-6 at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in Rockville, Maryland. As usual, the event will feature a great mix of biopharmaceutical and regulatory topics and faculty. BASS, founded by Karl E. Peace, a fellow of the American Statistical Association, provides a forum for pharmaceutical and medical researchers and regulators to share timely information concerning the application of biostatistics in pharmaceutical environments and funding to support graduate studies in biostatistics.



Visit the [BASS XXII | 22nd Annual Biopharmaceutical Applied Statistics Symposium](#) website to view the detailed program and registration options. You must register on the event website for BASS and reserve your lodging separately with the hotel requesting the BASS room rate (see hotel reservation instructions on the event website). Contact Karl Peace ([peacekarl@frontier.com](mailto:peacekarl@frontier.com)), Ruth Whitworth ([rewhitworth@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:rewhitworth@georgiasouthern.edu)) or Andreas Sashegyi ([sashegyi\\_andreas@lilly.com](mailto:sashegyi_andreas@lilly.com)) with questions.

**United States**—The 71st Deming Conference on Applied Statistics will be held December 7-11 in Atlantic City, New Jersey in the United States. It is cosponsored by the Metropolitan Section of the American

Society for Quality and the American Statistical Association's Biopharmaceutical Section. The purpose of the conference is to provide a learning experience on recent developments in statistical methodologies. The conference is comprised of a dozen three-hour tutorials on current statistical topics of interest that are based on recently published texts. The conference is followed by two, two-day parallel short courses. The books used for the tutorial sessions and short courses as well as books written by invited speakers will be sold at an appreciable discounted prices during the conference. Attendees are welcome to submit abstracts for poster presentation sessions during the conference. The poster sessions provide a forum for attendees to present concepts and issues of relevance to their peers. For more details about the conference, program, registration or submission of poster abstracts, [visit the conference website](#).

**United States**—The 2015 Lloyd Roeling University of Louisiana at Lafayette Mathematics Conference will be held November 20-21. The conference, which is themed "Statistics," also serves as the fall meeting of the [Louisiana Chapter of the American Statistical Association](#). During the conference, researchers and students in statistics and related fields will network, present their research and learn from each other. Cross-disciplinary and applied-paper submissions are welcomed. The event's program will consist of invited and contributed talks. Organizers welcome all participants and encourage everyone to present a talk. Dinner will be provided for all participants the event's first evening. There is no registration fee, however, to aid in planning, attendees are asked to register by October 30 [at the conference website](#). [Click here for more information about the mathematics conference](#).

**Data Revolution**—An excellent article titled "Implications of the Data Revolution for Statistics Education" and written by Jim Ridgway is now available for free download from [the \*International Statistical Review\* website](#).

The article's abstract: "There has never been a more exciting time to be involved in statistics. Emerging data sources provide new sorts of evidence, provoke new sorts of questions, make possible new sorts of answers and shape the ways that evidence is used to influence policy, public opinion and business practices. Significant developments include open data, big data, data visualization and the rise of data-driven journalism. These developments are changing the nature of the evidence that is available, the ways in which it is presented and used and the skills needed for its interpretation. Educators should place less emphasis on small samples and linear models and more emphasis on large samples, multivariate description and data visualization. Techniques used to analyze big data need to be taught. The increasing diversity of data usage requires deeper conceptual analysis in the curriculum; this should include explorations of the functions of modelling, and the politics of data and ethics. The data revolution can invigorate the existing curriculum by exemplifying the perils of biased sampling, corruption of measures and modelling failures. Students need to learn to think statistically and to develop an aesthetic for data handling and modelling based on solving practical problems."

**General Interest**—From time to time, we come across articles that are of interest to participants in The World of Statistics. Following are three such articles from the American Statistical Association's "This is Statistics" public awareness campaign website and the Royal Statistical Society's "StatsLife" page:

- ["I Wish I Had Taken a Class in Statistics," Writes Journalist](#)

- [Statistician Among Top Three Jobs for Millennials](#)
- [We need to rethink how we teach statistics from the ground up](#)

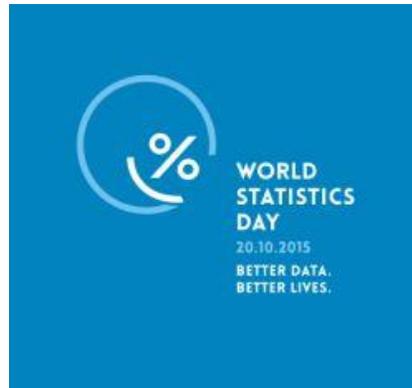
**World Statistics Day 2015**—Buttons promoting this year’s celebration of [World Statistics Day](#) (WSD) were a hot commodity at recent international statistics meetings. The buttons were distributed at the [2015 Joint Statistical Meetings \(JSM\)](#) in Seattle as well as the [2015 International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress](#) in Rio. In Seattle, the buttons were handed out at the [American Statistical Association’s](#) booth in the heavily trafficked Exhibit Hall. Many JSM 2015 attendees were spotted around the convention center and on streets nearby sporting the WSD button. More than 6,800 people attended the largest gathering of statisticians in the world and were introduced to WSD during the event. The 60th World Statistics Congress took place in Rio de Janeiro. This bi-annual conference was attended by more than 1,500 participants from more than 100 countries. Almost 1,000 buttons were distributed at the [ISI booth](#) and could be seen around Riocentro, where 1,250 papers were presented in 282 sessions. World Statistics Day 2015 will be celebrated October 20.



*Megan Murphy, ASA communications manager, (seated) wearing the WSD button and Regan Li of Genetech. They are in the ASA booth in the JSM 2015 Exhibit Hall.*

In commemoration of World Statistics Day, Mark Elbert of the [Energy Information Administration \(EIA\)](#) and Jay Meisenheimer of the [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#) will talk about the exciting innovate ways their agencies are making their data available to the public to make it more accessible, insightful, and appealing during a webinar October 20. Meisenheimer will discuss how BLS uses data visualizations to tell interesting stories about the labor market and economy, while Elbert will discuss how EIA uses relational metadata to create a data-ecosystem of interlinked online query tools, interactive charts and maps, and a robust open data program. The event is cosponsored by the [American Statistical Association](#) and the [Association of Public Data Users](#). For more information and to register, [click here](#) or [here](#).

Also, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) will celebrate World Statistics Day October 19-22 with an international conference that will highlight emerging issues and challenges in official statistics through presentations by representatives of the regional and international statistical community.



The conference, which will be held at the Cultural Palace in Ramallah, will consist of activities and events that highlight the role of official statistics to the progress of society. The event's main objective is to bring proper attention within the national statistics system on the data revolution and its impact on official statistics. Broader awareness of the data revolution in the official statistics community is crucial because of the current Big Data movement internationally and regionally.

The WSD-inspired event also will mark the launch of the regional Code of Practices (COP), which highlight the post-2015 United Nations development indicators from different views and perspectives, emphasizing future core competencies in national statistics (i.e., data visualization, use of big data, spatial data), discussing strategies to cope with information revolution and focusing on advance innovation and analysis.



*Celebrating World Statistics 2015 with Palestinian Flavor*

Conference participants will include representatives of Arab and international statistical institutions as well as international experts in the field of official statistics and from official research institutions and local and international media agencies.

It will feature reputable keynote speakers, panel discussions, data visualization presentations and videos. Specific country experiences from different fields also will be presented.

The event will be organized as follows:

- The first day will kick off the conference with an evening reception for official delegations
- The second day will feature presentations of submitted papers

- The third day will be highlighted with tours of Palestinian historical and religious sites for guest delegations

For more information, email the following PCSB representatives: Loay Shehadeh, director general of public relations at [loays@pcbs.gov.ps](mailto:loays@pcbs.gov.ps); or Halima Saeed, director general of international relations at [haleema@pcbs.gov.ps](mailto:haleema@pcbs.gov.ps); or the general information PCBS office e-mail at [diwan@pcbs.gov.ps](mailto:diwan@pcbs.gov.ps).

Tell us about your organization's plans to mark World Statistics Day 2015 by emailing your event information to us at [jeffrey@amstat.org](mailto:jeffrey@amstat.org).

**Ethiopia**—The Bahir Dar University-sponsored International Conference on Mathematics and Statistics Education, originally scheduled for this month, has been rescheduled to October 15-18. Conference information is available on the [event webpage](#).

**India**—The Department of Statistics at the Institute of Science located in Nagpur celebrated its diamond jubilee August 14 with a presentation by J. R. Rao, who is assistant vice president of planning, analytics and regulatory practices for the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation of Canada. Rao delivered a talk titled “Big Data: How It is Changing Everything” to the department's undergraduate and post-graduate students. Emphasizing the importance of Big Data, Rao explained in depth its five dimensions: volume, velocity, variety, variability and complexity. He also discussed the concerns it raised and ended his lecture by explaining to the students their role as statisticians in dealing with Big Data.



*J. R. Rao makes a point during his Big Data presentation to students of the Department of Statistics at the Institute of Science*

**Undergraduate Statistics Education**—The Consortium for the Advancement of Undergraduate Statistics Education (CAUSE) is offering two free workshops prior to the 2016 Joint Mathematics Meetings in Seattle in January:

- **January 4: [Bringing Passion to Your Introductory Statistics Classroom: A Supportive, Multidisciplinary Project-based Approach](#)** with Lisa Dierker of Wesleyan University. [Click here for more information and registration.](#)
- **January 5: [Teaching the Statistical Investigation Process with Randomization-Based Inference](#)** with Nathan Tintle, Dordt College; Todd Swanson, Hope College; and Robin Lock, St. Lawrence University. [Click here for more information and registration.](#)

CAUSE is a national organization whose mission is to support and advance undergraduate statistics education in four target areas: resources, professional development, outreach and research. [Click here for more information.](#)

### **JOIN THE WORLD OF STATISTICS**

If your organization or an organization you know of isn't yet participating in The World of Statistics, encourage them to join today. Joining is easy; just ask a representative of the group to go to [www.worldofstatistics.org](http://www.worldofstatistics.org) and click on the "Join" icon on the top right-hand side of the homepage to become an official participating organization in The World of Statistics. Participation is valuable and is absolutely free!

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