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THE INFLUENCE OF VISUAL MEDIA ON READING INTEREST AMONG ALPHA GENERATION

Ismi Wildani[1], Suci Ramadani[1*], Musfira Atika[1], Subhan Rahmat[2]
[1]*English Education Department, Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia*
[2]*Engine Department, Politeknik Pelayaran Barombong, Indonesia*
*Email: sucirmdani9999@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze the impact of visual media on the reading interest of Alpha Generation and to identify how illustrations contribute to their comprehension and involvement in reading. The study adopted a qualitative technique with descriptive methods. The subjects consisted of six Alpha Generation from public and private schools aged 9 – 15. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews concentrating on respondents' understandings of picture publications and text-only books. The findings show that visual media plays an important role in increasing reading involvement in Alpha Generation. Most respondents commented that pictures increase their curiosity about the story assistance them visualize the ploy and enable comprehension. Furthermore, picture publications were deemed more engaging, less boring, and heightened motivation to proceed reading. Some respondents even expressed less involvement in reading text-only publications because they deemed them long, boring, and difficult to understand. Pictures also cater as visual facilitates that assistance children remember the story better and boost their imagination. However, a small amount of respondents believed that involvement in reading was more influenced by the storyline than the existence of pictures. These results show that visual media is a crucial component in supporting Alpha Generation reading interest, notoriously in generating a more engaging, understandable, and enjoyable reading experience. Therefore, the application of relevant illustrations in reading materials can be an effective approach for fostering a reading culture in this generation.

Keywords: *Visual Media; Reading Interests; Alpha Generation*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental requirement for expanding one's scientific and cultural horizons. Reading activity and interest are closely related; without interest, a person will not be drawn to reading. Tarigan (1986) states that interest is a key component in every human being. Although motivation is very strong, without interest, we definitely will not do what we are motivated to do. Similarly, involvement in reading occupies the highest level, because without interest, it is difficult for someone to engage in reading activities.

As technology advances, visual media is also increasingly developed. Sabrina et. al (2023) defines visual media as all teaching aids exploited in the learning procedure that can be enjoyed through the five senses. Visual media play a very crucial role in the learning process. Visual media can enable understanding and reinforce memory (p. 4). Sabrina also shows that visual media is separated into non-projected media, reality media (real objects), models, and graphic media.

A generation is a social construct that exists within a group of people. According to Mannheim, as quoted by Putra (2017), a generation is a social construct that includes a group of people who share commonalities and historical experiences. Their characteristics are not much different from the previous generation (Generation Z). Each generation has a sustainable period of years. To date, there have been five generations of life: the traditional generation, the baby boomers, the X, Y, Z generations, and finally the Alpha generation.

Mark McCrindle coined the term "Alpha Generation" when he and a team of researchers conducted a national survey in Australia in 2005 to find out about the next generation after Generation Z. Manuel & Sutanto (2021), "Alpha Generation is the youngest generation alive today, born between 2010 and 2025. Beginning in 2010, it coincided with the beginning of the digital era, dominated by gadgets. The same year saw the release of the first generation of the iPad and Instagram. Alpha Generation is typically the children of Millennials" (p. 245).

The alpha generation's use of digital media has become an indispensable attitude and behaviors. In order to filter information that is disseminated as technology advances, parents and educators must understand how technology functions. As a result, there are significant differences between Alpha Generation and the previous generations, one of which is the ability to read.

Alpha Generation today spend more time with visual media, such as short videos, animations, social media, and image-based platforms. This raises problems that their fascination with visual content may mitigate their engagement in reading longer, more comprehensive texts. However, some argue that visual media can essentially be a crucial utility for capturing children's attention and encouraging them to investigate reading materials. Therefore, the advantage of visual media and its connection to increasing reading interest, notably among Alpha Generation members, necessitates further study.

Visual media has the purpose of increasing reading interest. It can capture uncommon objects or important events, assistance comprehend intricate information by offering it in a more available form, such as through illustrations, and increase children's motivation and passion for learning, enhancing their enthusiasm. However, visual media also has disadvantages. Children prefer watching short videos on social media to reading, their focus concentrate on long texts is also decreasing, and children are becoming accustomed to instant information. Therefore, visual media can have both positive and negative impacts on reading interest, depending on how it is adopted and utilized.

Previous studies have discussed the absence of reading interest among Alpha Generation in the decade of technological advancement. Some studies have focused on the correlation between technological development and Alpha Generation reading interest, suggesting that excessive technology adopt can decrease reading interest that technological interpretation can be utilized to increase reading interest. Other studies have emphasized the advantage of visual media as a learning tool to enhance children writing literacy. Research conducted from Medan State University examined the urgency of Alpha Generation reading interest amidst the growth of smartphone adopt through library research. Some studies concluded that visual media can facilitate comprehension through images or illustrations, while other findings elucidated that excessive exposure to visual media can essentially reduce children's concentration when reading long texts.

Understanding the connection between visual media and reading interest is critical because they grew up in a technology-dominated environment. This shift in their reading interest compared to prior generations. They perceive publications dominated by text as

difficult to understand, a concept that poses a great challenge in fostering their reading interest. Therefore, this research is required to show that visual media can increase children's reading interest, notably among Alpha Generation.

Based on the interpretation above, this paper seeks to investigate how visual media can increase reading interest. This research is supposed to contribute to broader discussions about literacy and visual media and have a substantial influence on the world of literacy.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative technique with a descriptive method to determine the impact of visual media on the reading interests of Alpha Generation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018). "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." (p. 4.). The descriptive method is where researchers go directly into the field as observers, record the results of their observations, and do not manipulate the data, and emphasize natural observations.

The participant in this study was Alpha Generation aged 9-15. Because this age group falls within the Alpha Generation category, as stated by Mark McCrindle. Furthermore, respondents, in this age range are easier for researchers to find and reach, allowing for in-person interviews. Data were collected through a simple reading activity undertaken with two respondents for approximately 30 minutes. During the activity, participants were requested two read two reading texts with the same title and content but different presentations. The first text consisted of plain text without visual elements, while the second incorporated supporting illustrations. After reading both texts, participants answered seven questions made to explore their reading preferences, interest levels, comprehension, and perceptions regarding the advantage of visual media in reading materials. This procedure was undertaken to identify whether visual elements influenced participants reading interest and engagement with the texts.

After data collection, the researchers analysed participant responses utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach. Answers to seven questions were examined to identify participants reading inclinations and their perceptions of two kinds of reading materials. The analysis focused on numerous aspects, comprising reading interest, attention comprehension, engagement, and reading comfort. Responses were then assessed to ascertain whether the texts with visual elements produced greater interest and engagement than texts presented without illustrations. This analysis permitted the researchers to gain a deeper insight on the influence of visual media on reading interest among Alpha Generation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings and their interpretation in relation to existing theory and previous research. The results are organized into several major themes derived from interview data with respondents, who were provided with reading materials consisting of text-only books and picture publications books. This section also proves how visual media influences reading interest among Alpha Generation.

Respondents Distribution

This study involved 6 respondents from different types of schools. Respondents came from public and private schools, consisting of 2 respondents from public schools and 4 respondents from private schools. Respondents were Alpha Generation aged between 9-15

years. The involvement of children from different types of schools provided a wider perspective on children's reading interests between text-only books and picture publications books. Data collection was borne out by providing reading books and followed by a 30-minute interview afterward. Each 2 respondents were given various kinds of books to read within 15 minutes, and after that 15 minutes were adopted for interview session. This study focused on respondents understanding of picture publications books and text-only books. The result showed that visual media plays a crucial role in increasing reading interest in Alpha Generation. Most respondents stated that pictures increased their curiosity about the story, helped them visualize the storyline, and facilitated comprehension.

Curiosity Toward Books

To examine the influence of visual media on reading interest among Alpha Generation, the authors produced two storybooks for their research. The stories, each with the identical title and content, "Impian Ingin Pergi ke Bulan," tell the story of a boy who dreams of becoming an astronaut and traveling to the moon. The first book features a range of supporting illustrations, while the second contains only the text of the story without any visual media.

The interview results demonstrated that children curiosity about a book was influenced by two factors, the story content and the visual media comprised within the book. Some respondents commented that they wanted to know the plot of the book, while others elucidated that the visual media generated them curious about the book's content. Most respondents revealed that picture publications book were more interesting to read than text-only books.

It was found that story content plays an important role in arousing children's curiosity. Several respondents commented that the plot of the book piqued their curiosity. This demonstrates indicates that children are eager to learn how the story continues. Therefore, this demonstrates indicates that engaging stories can be a potent starting point for encouraging children to begin reading.

Besides the story content, another important element in increasing children's interest in reading is the visuals comprised in the book. Several respondents said that visuals can help them gain an initial insight on the story's content. The existence of visuals and generates books appear more engaging and less boring. For alpha generation, who grew up in an environment rich in visual information, visuals are an effective method to capture their attention and engage with reading.

According to Richard Mayer in his Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2001), information is more conveniently understood when presented through a combination of text and visuals. Images can help readers expand a preliminary insight on the content before reading the entire text. Therefore, with visual media, children's curiosity about the content of the reading can be stimulated through visuals as an initial clue, permitting them to learn about the story's content.

In addition of this study also align with multiple previous studies, such as that by Sipe (1998), which indicated that visual elements play an important role in increasing children's and adolescents' interest. Illustrations can capture readers' attention, reduce the insight that reading is boring and help readers comprehend the content more easily. This, visual media not just serves as a supplement but also as a determinant capable of increasing children interest in reading activities.

Furthermore, the study's findings show that two key elements story content and visual media have an influence on children interest in books. Media visual have been shown to grab children attention right away and inspire them to read more, even though the plot is still very important. These findings indicate that visual media can act as a first connection between children's and reading activities. Illustrations can help create a favorable first impression of reading material for Alpha generation, who are accustomed to visual content in their daily lives. As a result, incorporating visual media into books not only makes them more appealing to read, but it may also support children expand good reading habits and become more involved in the literacy process.

Feelings About Pictures Publication Book vs. Text-Only Books

Based on the question "How does it feel to read a book with pictures compared to one with only text?", 5 out of 6 respondents felt that picture publications books were more enjoyable because they helped them imagine and the story could be immediately imagined. Picture publications books were also investigated to create the story feel shorter because readers could already comprehend the key idea of the reading through the pictures. However, there was one exemption for respondents who felt that picture publications book actually divided their focus between the pictures and the text.

These findings also show that story content plays an important role in arousing children's curiosity. Several respondents stated that what piqued their curiosity was the content or storyline within the book. This shows, that children's have a need to understand more about the story and seek out fresh knowledge through the reading material they encounter. In other words, engaging stories can be the initial lure that motivated the alpha generation to begin reading.

In addition to story content, visual media has also been observed to be a component in increasing children's curiosity about books. Several respondents explained that illustrations and pictures helped them gain an initial insight on the story's content. For Alpha Generation, who grew up in a visually rich environment, images are an effective component in capturing their attention.

The role of visual media was evident in the responses of several respondents. One respondent stated that text-only books didn't pique her curiosity, while picture publications books generated her more interested because the story became clearer and easier to understand. Similarly, another respondent explained that picture publications books made her curious about the story, although she was similarly interested in text-only books. These results indicate that pictures can increase children's initial interest in exploring the content of a reading material further.

These findings can be explained through the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) theory evolved by Keller (1987), which explains that attention is the first step in the learning motivation process. In the context of reading, an attractive book display, such as the application of pictures and illustrations, can increase children's attention, thus promoting them to explore the content further. Therefore, visual elements in picture publications books serve not just as decoration but also as a stimulus that can build children's interest and curiosity about the book's contents.

The results of this study are in accord with research from the Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities "Building Reading Interest in Early Childhood Using Picture Story Books" Vol. 1, No. 3, September 2023, showing that images in reading have an influence on reading interest in children. Picture books offer encouragement of appreciation and love. In addition

to interesting verbal stories, books containing pictures or visuals influence interest, motivation to learn and read. With picture books, children are helped in the process of understanding illustrated stories.

Furthermore, children curiosity about picture publications books is influenced not just by the story itself, but also by how the information is presented. Books with engaging stories and supported by visual elements can generate a more enjoyable reading experience for children's. This suggests that presenting picture publications books appropriately to the characteristics of Alpha generation can be an important component in building interest and encouraging reading habits.

Motivation to Continue Reading

Most respondents stated that they were motivated to continue reading because they wanted to know what occurred next. Curiosity about the ending, a compelling plot, and an interest in the characters were the main motivations they continued reading. These findings indicate that engaging stories can maintain children's engagement interest in reading.

One of the key elements motivating children to continue reading is curiosity about the story's development. Several respondents explained that they wanted to know how the story's conflict was solved and how it ended. Therefore, suspense and plot advancement play an important role in maintaining their interest in reading.

Besides curiosity, children's motivation to read also stems from their interest in the characters and storylines. Several respondents stated that they wanted to know the fate of their favorite characters and how the story ended. This suggests that emotional engagement with characters can strengthen Alpha Generation's motivation to continue reading.

Although most children demonstrated high motivation to continue reading, there were differences among some respondents. Some children admitted they would only continue reading if the story was interesting, while others tended to prevent reading when they felt bored. These results indicate that reading motivation is influenced by individual inclinations and interests.

In the Journal "Use of Interactive Picture Media on Student Learning Motivation" Volume 10 Number 04, December 2025, states that motivation plays an important role because it is an internal drive that makes children enthusiastic, proactive, and actively engaged in learning activities. The use of image media, comprising interactive images, has proven effective as a catalyst to increase motivation and children learning abilities. Various children illustrate an increase in the percentage of student learning motivation after the application of image media, because the learning atmosphere becomes more recreational, interesting, and not boring.

The outcome of this study aligned with various previous studies. Birketveit & Rimmereide (2012) examined how storybooks and graphic novels influence children engagement. They found that potent character identification, or when children like or feel similar to the characters in a story, can trigger cognitive empathy, which makes children hope to keep reading until the story is finished. This suggests that engaging stories and potent characters can increase children reading motivation. Narrative elements that can arouse curiosity and emotional engagement will make readers more continual in reading activities. Thus, storybooks can be an effective medium for building reading habits in Alpha Generation.

Memorable Parts of the Story

Interview results showed that children tended to remember specific sections of the story that conveyed potent emotional meaning. Humorous, suspenseful, touching scenes, and modules containing moral messages were the most commonly recalled by respondents. This finding posits that emotional elements in stories play an important role in creating a memorable reading experience. Several respondents stated that the most memorable modules were engaging scenes that evoked specific emotions. Humorous, suspenseful, or touching moments generated the story more memorable even after the reading session was over. These results indicate that emotional engagement during reading plays an important role in creating a memorable reading experience.

In addition to the interesting parts, several children also remembered the moral messages comprised in the stories. They explained that the values conveyed through the characters and events in the stories provided meaningful lessons for them. This shows that stories are not just entertaining but can also be a learning tool that leaves a lasting impression on readers. Although there were similarities in some answers, each children had a most memorable section of the story based on their experiences and interests. Some respondents remembered more interesting events, while others focused more on the characters or the message conveyed in the story. These results indicate that the reading experience is subjective and influenced by individual perspectives.

Several respondents stated that the most memorable parts modules were engaging scenes that evoked specific emotions. Humorous, suspenseful, or touching moments generated the story more memorable even after the reading session was over. These results indicate that emotional engagement during reading plays an important role in creating a memorable reading experience.

In "The Picture-Superiority Effect: Harness the Power of Visuals" written by Sara Paul, April 26, 2024, it states that people tend to remember pictures better than words. The phenomenon where children more easily remember certain parts of a story is often owing to the influence of images. A theory of cognitive psychology proposed by Alan Paivio through Dual-Coding Theory, according to which humans have the ability to process information through visual images and text. When a story is accompanied by illustrations, the child's brain not just records the words but also imagines the visuals of the story simultaneously. This process generates a strong and long-lasting memory trace, compared to if the child only reads the text.

Furthermore, various previous studies have suggested the same thing. Tyng et al. (2017), state that emotions have a significant influence on cognitive processes, particularly memory. When readers are emotionally engaged, the brain releases neuromodulators like dopamine, which strengthen the amygdala and hippocampus. As a result, information encoding is more efficient, solidifying the content of the reading in long-term memory. Therefore, emotional engagement and meaningful story content can boost readers' retention of the content. Stories with compelling events and meaningful messages tend to leave a deeper impression on readers.

Willingness to Read Without Pictures

Interview results showed that children responses to text-only books were quite varied. Some respondents stated that they were still willing to read even without illustrations, especially if the story was interesting. However, several children admitted that the existence of images generate reading more enjoyable and helped them maintain their interest. These

results indicate that images play a role in increasing the desirability of reading, although they are not the sole determinant influencing children interest.

Several respondents explained that they would still read text-only books if the content was engaging and easy to understand. Interest in the storyline and a need to know the ending were the main reasons that motivated them to keep reading. These results indicate that engaging content can be an important component in maintaining children reading motivation.

In addition to the story content, some respondents stated that the existence of images generated reading more enjoyable and less boring. The images helped them comprehend the story and produced a more engaging reading experience. This suggests that visual media can increase children comfort and engagement during reading.

While some are still willing to read text-only books, others prefer pictures publication books. This difference shows that each child's reading preferences are not always the same. Reading experience and interest contribution in visual media can influence children reading choices.

In the book "Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior" written by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in 1985, it explains that intrinsic motivation drives individuals to do an activity because of the interest and satisfaction established from the activity. In the perspective of this study, children who are still willing to read without pictures show that interest in the content of the story can be a source of intrinsic motivation that drives them to continue reading.

Several earlier studies have also shown that reading interest is not just influenced by the existence of visual media, but also by the quality of the reading content. As stated by Hidi, S., & Renninger, K. A. (2006) (Hidi & Ann Renninger, 2006), where the existence of attractive images and bright colors only triggers temporary situational interest. To turn it into a permanent individual interest and form a reading habit, children need content or story content that is meaningful, challenging, and related to their world. That way, stories that are interesting and in accord with readers' interests can maintain their engagement in reading activities. Thus, illustrations function as a support, while the story content remains the main important component in building a reading habit.

Furthermore, the study findings indicate that most children are still willing to read pictures publications books if the story is engaging. While the existence of illustrations can enhance reading enjoyment and enjoyment, motivation to read is not entirely dependent on visual media. These findings indicate that the combination of engaging stories and visual corroborate can generate a more efficient and meaningful reading experience for Alpha Generation.

Feeling About Long Stories Without Pictures

Based on the question posed to respondents, "If the story is long but has no pictures, how would you feel?" it shows that children have ranging feelings about long stories without pictures. Some respondents felt that reading long stories without illustrations can be more boring and require higher concentration. However, some children still enjoyed the reading if the story content was interesting. This finding suggests that the existence of pictures and the quality of the story both influence children reading experience.

Several respondents indicated that long stories without pictures generated them bored more quickly and lost interest in reading. They explained that the absence of illustrations

generated reading more complex and less engaging. These results indicate that visual media can help maintain children attention during the reading process.

Despite this, several respondents stated that they still enjoyed long stories without illustrations as long as the plot was engaging and easy to understand. Their interest in the story's content kept them motivated to read to the end. This suggests that the story's appeal plays an important role in creating a positive reading experience.

Research results indicate that each children have different reading preferences. Some children rely more on images to maintain reading interest, while others focus more on the story content. These differences indicate that reading experiences are influenced by each individual's interests and learning styles.

The diversity of children responses in this study can be comprehensively explained through the Reader Response Theory evolved by Rosenblatt L.M, 1994. This theory emphasizes that a text does not have a single, passive meaning, but rather that meaning is born from an active, transactional relationship between the reader and the text. This explains why some children are able to enjoy long narratives without images, while others simply find them boring. Children who enjoy these texts tend to engage in aesthetic reading, where they independently bring to life the emotions and imagination of the fictional strings of words. Conversely, children who feel bored are suspected of not having a personal relationship or the readiness of past experiences that align with the text's content, consequently requiring additional visual stimuli to enable the transaction of meaning.

This finding aligns with the theory from Levie and Lentz's (1982) research, which explains that illustrations in texts have critical attentional and affective functions to enhance readers' attention and comprehension. Therefore, the absence of images in long stories can lead to a decrease in interest and engagement for some children while reading. When visual stimuli, which serve as attentional functions, are removed, children cognitive burden in processing long, linear texts become heavier, ultimately triggering boredom and reducing their enjoyment of reading.

Furthermore, the study results demonstrated that children had ranging feelings about long stories without illustrations. Some found them more boring and challenging, while others continued to enjoy reading as long as the content was engaging. These findings indicate that the reading experience is influenced not simply by the existence of illustrations, but also by the quality of the story and each children's individual reading preferences. Therefore, the combination of engaging story content and visual corroborate can assistance create a more positive reading experience for Alpha Generation.

Comprehension Speed Illustrated Books

Interview results showed that most respondents felt that picture publications books helped them comprehend the story more quickly. The existence of illustrations enables children to get a sense of the story's content before reading the entire text, generating the reading comprehension procedure easier and more efficient. These findings demonstrate that visual media can support children comprehension speed while reading.

Some respondents explained that images helped them comprehend the story's content without having to read the entire text in detail. Illustrations provide indications about characters, settings, and events, permitting them to comprehend the story more quickly. These results indicate that visuals help children acquire further information that supports reading comprehension.

Besides speeding up comprehension, several respondents stated that images generated reading feel easier and less challenging. The presence of illustrations helped them grasp the story's meaning more easily, reducing the necessity to spend as much time comprehending the text. This suggests that visual media can alleviate cognitive load during the reading process.

Although most respondents perceived the uses of images in accelerating comprehension, some children may have felt that their reading capability was more influenced by their comprehension speed than by the existence of illustrations. This finding posits that the usefulness of visual media can alter among individuals, depending on reading inclinations and text comprehension abilities.

Richard C. Anderson (1977) proved that text does not carry meaning in itself. It merely guides readers to unlock information or schemas already found in their brains. Visual illustrations act as scaffolding, accelerating the activation in these schemas. When children see a picture of a rocket, their brains immediately recall all their memories of planets, the sky, and outer space, making reading the explanatory text much quicker and easier to understand.

Joan Peeck (1987) conducted extensive research on "The Role of Illustrations in Processing Didactic Texts." illustrations facilitate comprehension because they enable cognitive assimilation. Text often requires linear or word-by-word cognitive processing time, while images activate schemas simultaneously or instantly. This reduces children's mental load and enables for more effective comprehension.

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that picture publications books help children comprehend story content more quickly. The presence of illustrations makes it easier for children to acquire information, reduces complexity understanding the text, and creates a more effective reading experience. These findings indicate that visual media plays an important role in supporting reading comprehension speed in Alpha Generation.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion Visual media is a necessary part in supporting and fostering reading interest among Alpha Generation. They grew up in a decade rich in visual information, resulting in them being accustomed to digital content such as short videos, animations, visual images, and other social media platforms. They would feel bored without colorful and engaging illustrations, and they would perceive publications with lengthy text as tedious and difficult to understand. Visual media provides a bridge that connects their attention, enables information access, and generates a more enjoyable reading experience, eventually fostering reading interest.

When reading a story demonstrated by pictures, the human brain focuses not merely on the words but also on the visuals, generation stronger and more lasting memory traces. Furthermore, visual media also provides indications about the setting, plot, and characters of a story. Children can conveniently understand the story's content without having to read every detail of the text.

Visual elements can increase children's engagement and motivation to read. When children read a book comprising visual elements, this automatically enhances their desire and attention. Because the pictures offer an engaging and engaging stimulus, they are directly motivated to proceed reading until the end.

With visual media that evidence the storyline, children feel more comfortable, less bored, and more enthusiastic about studying the book's contents. A pleasurable reading experience can be produced when the reading materials aligns with the properties of Alpha Generation. Illustrations serve not simply as decoration but also as a tool to convenience children's cognitive load while reading.

Therefore, visual media is a scheme to transform the perspective of reading as a difficult and tedious activity into an engaging and enjoyable experience. Therefore, adding visual media to children's reading literacy is a significant step in building a reading culture for Alpha Generation.

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