

PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday April 10, 2000 Intelligent Video Cameras on the Web!

Keith Sproul

Learn about using video over the web
for communication and web design.

At
Lawrence Library

Meeting Rooms 1 & 2

US Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

☆☆

*Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in No Way implies endorsement of its programs*

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Vic Laurie presenting his "You Can Get Something for Nothing" Windows Tip & Tricks at the March 2000 meeting.

Digital Photo by Ed Weiss

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library.

Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00-7:45 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order

8 PM: Featured Presentation

Board Meetings

Third Monday of the Month

8 PM at Lawrenceville Library.

Board meetings are open to All.

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Voice Mail System

For information about, meetings, etc. call 908-281-3107 to leave a message.

Web Site

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is \$25 per year.

New Members Only: after February, the rate is \$2 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

Published Monthly by: Princeton PC Users Group
PO Box 291 Rocky Hill, NJ 08553©
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Coming Events

May 6 & 7, 2000 - TCF2000, Edison, NJ

Sign up to help out at the PPCUG Parcel Pickup Area and then see the show!

May 8, 2000 - MGI Software

Randy Whittle will be here to demo the latest offerings from MGI Software, makes of VideoWave III, video editing software.

June 12, 2000 - Web Lifestyles by Microsoft

Sonal Shah will be back to talk about using the internet to organize, communicate and improve your life.

July 10, 2000 - Create Your Own Personal Web Page



Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

I want to start this months Presidents message thanking all of our members who have renewed their membership and the new members for joining. We are seventy-nine members strong. Not the one hundred members we would like, but we are not too far away.

One of the objectives for the remainder of the year to for all our members to tell their friends and neighbors about your computer group. Get them to come out for a meeting, see what we are all about, share their interests in computing and even join the group. I am looking for a member to chair a membership committee that would create the publicity flyers, press releases and mailings that will let us reach the one hundred-member goal before the end of the summer.

The second objective is to purchase a new SVGA LCD projector that at minimum will do 800 x 600 by the end of the summer. The cost for the new LCD projector is between two to three thousand dollars. Quite a bit of money for a small group, where about ten dollars a year per member goes for the newsletter printing and postage. Here again, I am looking for a member to chair a committee for doing the research into the purchase of the new projector.

If we can meet our objectives, we will be a stronger group offering a larger audience to prospective presenters along with the tools for successful presentations, which finally benefits all our members with presentations that are more diverse and raffle items.

TCF 2000 fits somewhat into our objectives that I described above. It is our only other source of funding for our group besides our dues and it is a good place to advertise. We were able to collect over three hundred dollars last year through the efforts of a handful of dedicated members. Quite possibly with additional help could have easily collected more by visiting the vendors inside the exhibit hall and out in the flea market advertising our services. In fact, we could possibly ask many of the vendors for donations if we only had the people to go ask. We are still short on staff for Saturday and in trouble for Sunday. We need three to four people to work the Saturday afternoon shift and five to six people of all day Sunday. It is only one day to work; you get into the show free and can make the difference for our group. The sign up sheet will be out on the registration table at Aprils meeting. Please sign up.

I look forward to seeing you all on April 10th.

Windows 9X Tips: Barbarians at the Gates!

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

How secure are our computers? In recent months we have been bombarded with warnings about hosts of new viruses, worms, Trojan Horses, and other malevolent software. Anti-virus software now has to be updated every few days. Not only that, but Microsoft has so many patches for various security holes in the operating system that it requires a special effort to even attempt to keep track. (Just take a look at the Windows update site.) To add to our problems, various new ways of invading our privacy are constantly springing up (see Sol Libes' article in the January Newsletter at <http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltr.html#past>). Advertisers are tracking us in great detail, hackers are breaking into our machines; we seem to be under constant assault.

Short of never going on-line, what can an average PC user do? A full-fledged discussion of security issues is far beyond the scope of our limited space, but in this article are outlines of some of the most important steps to be taken. A few basic precautions will go a long way towards lessening security problems.

The Malevolent Zoo

An essential step is to use a good anti-virus program and to keep it updated. The major anti-virus software firms such as Norton and McAfee continually update their database of virus definitions to meet the threat from the creation of ever-newer versions of viruses, etc. The updated versions of virus definitions are made available at frequent intervals on the Web sites of the various companies. A listing of a number of these sites is given at http://updates.zdnet.com/articles/ax_50664.htm. Also, virus news can be found at <http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/stories/main/0.5594.2340483.00.html>. In today's conditions, checking for updates should be done at least weekly. Programs such as Norton Anti-Virus contain applets that make updates easy.

Sticklers make distinctions among viruses, worms, and Trojan Horses. For the purists, the term "virus" is limited to self-replicating programs that make use of one of your own files (called the "host") to carry out its actions. Worms are like viruses in that they make copies of themselves but they do not require a "host." Trojan horses do not replicate themselves but carry out destructive actions while masquerading as a benign application. For most of us, these are distinctions without a difference since they are all bad news and are often lumped together under the single category of "virus." They are all dealt with by the major anti-virus software packages.

Mail Bombs

In recent times, the greatest source of danger to the average user from viruses has become e-mail, in particular for those using Outlook and Outlook Express. Because they are widely used e-mail clients and because of their high degree of integration with other Microsoft components, they have become a major target of hackers. No matter what your e-mail client, however, there are some general rules to follow. Beware of all attachments.

Do not assume that e-mail from a friend is to be trusted. The friend may be an unwitting victim of a Trojan or worm that is using his or her address book to send out malicious mail. Never open an attachment with the extension .exe without doing a virus scan, and even then only when you are sure what the file is. Better, never open any attached file without doing a virus scan; many file types can contain dangerous code. Microsoft Word files (with .doc extensions) are a favorite these days. Also extensions can be faked and executable files may be disguised to seem harmless.

Unfortunately, even the body of a message may contain evil-doing scripts or code if it is in HTML format. Even if you only preview a message, it may cause the scripts or code to be executed. Those using Internet Explorer and Outlook Express should use the precautions that are given in Dave Methvin's articles at <http://www.winmag.com/fixes/mailsec.htm> and <http://www.winmag.com/fixes/ie/restrict.htm>. In the Internet Explorer menu bar choose Tools | Internet Options (or View | Internet Options for IE4) and click the Security tab. Then select the Restricted Sites icon and select Custom Level. Click the Settings button. Now choose Disable for Java, Disable for Active Scripting, and Disable for Scripting of signed ActiveX controls. Click OK twice to close. Now open Outlook Express. In the menu bar select Tools | Options | Security. In the Security Zones section, click the button for Restricted Sites. Click OK. Now messages in Outlook Express should be unable to carry out any included scripts. If you prefer, you can put the IE Restricted Site settings at Prompt instead of Disable but more vigilance will then be necessary on your part when viewing a message. Incidentally, here is one case where the primitive nature of AOL's mail client and its inability to handle HTML is actually an advantage. Also, Netscape does not execute ActiveX (but may do certain Java operations).

Guarding the Gates

Viruses and their ilk are not the only security problem. The Internet is much more of a two-way channel than many users realize. With the typical Windows setup, perfect strangers can come into a system at will. Did you know that there are 65,535 TCP/IP ports or entryways by which a hacker (or cracker if you prefer) can theoretically gain access to your computer when you are on the Internet? Unfortunately, on most home PC systems there are likely to be a number of these ports wide open to the Internet for anyone to come in. For a list of ports commonly used by Trojans go to <http://www.simovits.com/nyheter9902.html>. For an excellent discussion of this problem and what to do about it, go to Steve Gibson's comprehensive site at

<http://grc.com/su-explain.htm>. There you can have some of the common ports on your machine probed to see how vulnerable you are. Those with cable or DSL connections have special problems, due to their having a permanent IP address assigned

to their machine. Once a hacker finds the address with scanning software, he can probe the machine for weaknesses at his leisure. Thus, it is advisable for computers with permanent addresses to have firewall software installed. There is freeware called Zone Alarm that many recommend, which can be found at <http://www.zonelabs.com/>. Gibson has a discussion of firewalls with recommendations at <http://grc.com/su-firewalls.htm>. Although dial-up connections typically have dynamic assignment of IP addresses (they change every time you sign on), they still are subject to attack and Gibson gives step by step procedures for making your connection more secure. All in all, the various features on Gibson's site are a must visit for anyone who surfs the Internet.

Another valuable discussion of Internet security measures is given by Fred Langa in a three-part series, "Secure Your PC Online", at <http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/04.htm> <http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/05.htm>

<http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/06.htm>.

At a minimum, there are two steps all users should take. Make sure that you have file and print sharing either disabled or properly password protected. Go to Control Panel-Network, click File and Print Sharing, and either uncheck both boxes or set up proper passwords. As mentioned above, the default setup for Windows contains several glaring gaps in system security. One of the most notorious is the NetBIOS (port 139) problem and everyone should take steps that will plug this open port. The procedure is somewhat complex and will not be described here, but both Gibson at <http://grc.com/su-bondage.htm> and Langa at <http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/04.htm> give details of methods to be used. They differ somewhat in their approach and I prefer the longer but more thorough method of Gibson. Another, very simple method recommended by others (I have not tested it-you are on your own) is to go to C:\Windows\System, find the file named *vnbt.386*, rename it to *vnbt386.closed*, and reboot your system. If you ever need to use NetBIOS put the file name back to the original.

Who Wants to Be a Linux Dabbler?

By: J.D. Abolins - PPCUG

This article was going to be a review of Caldera Open Linux 2.3 but several computer mishaps and some recent discussions lead to a look at some things to consider before dabbling with Linux. This article is intended for Windows users with little or no Unix experience

Why Dabble?

There are good reason for trying out Linux. It is an easy route to practicing with Unix-type of environments. It presents a great challenge for computerists and, as the business world is taking a good look at Linux, a way of developing a skill that can help at work.

Linux's ability to run on PCs makes it very accessible for many computerists. This strength of Linux, however, can be a mixed blessing as we'll see in a moment.

Dabble Trouble

The safest way to dabble with Linux or another other operating system is to do it on a spare PC, not on the Windows PC we use daily. But the lack of a spare PC and related equipment plus the availability of multi-booting utilities make it tempting to dabble on the day-to-day "production" PC. Products such as Caldera Open Linux 2.3 make it even more tempting with its special version of Partition Magic utility. Just keep in mind that any experimentation with the same computer we use for work or other daily activities runs extra risks. *If possible, use a spare PC for Linux dabbling.* Even if nothing goes wrong, there's the pleasure of not having to reboot to switch between Windows and Linux use.

tion that stepping into Linux will be a breeze. I have talked with some fellow computerists who perceived Linux to be an easy-to-use operating system, an easy step from Windows. While there is some truth to that, Linux is by no means as easy as Windows to install or to configure. Yes, there are several Linux graphical user interfaces (GUIs), such as KDE and GNOME, we have to go through a lot of steps to get there.

The partitioning process is somewhat different than that for DOS or Windows. Unix and Linux have a distinctly different mode of referring to disks and partitions. Pay special attention to partition instructions in the manuals. Some Linux packages provide partitioning software to help Unix/Linux newbies along.

Speaking of disks and partitions, examine your system's disks before starting the Linux installation. Make sure you have space for the Linux partition, preferably on a second drive. The manuals may tell you that you need as little as a couple hundred megabytes for Linux. Don't believe it. If you want to dabble with different Linux applications rather than a stripped down system, figure about 1.6 or 1.8 gigabytes. Also run disk checks such as Scandisk utility to make sure there aren't problems.

Incidentally, Linux can be more demanding of the PC than Windows. In several Linux installations over the past couple of years, I have Linux to stop installation with an error message if it finds problems with the PC's memory or other items, problems that Windows doesn't seem to notice. (Or not tell us.) So it is possible that Linux might install on some of our PCs without some hardware swaps. It will help to avoid oddball hardware that might not have Linux drivers.

Once installed, Linux configuration and maintenance is some-

My Favorite Freeware

By: Don Arrowsmith - PPCUG

I really enjoyed Vic Laurie's program on freeware at the March meeting of the PPCUG. He has inspired me to write this article describing a few of my favorite freeware programs. I use each of them but, of course, cannot vouch that they will not cause you any problems on your system. Please take the usual precautions. I have included links to obtain the programs - Please be careful to note any line wraps that may have been introduced by printing.

1. All Thumbs

This program converts standard images to thumbnails. BMP, JPG, PCX, PNG, TGA, and TIF formats are supported. Source images are chosen from the contents of a user selected directory. Processed as a group, selected images are converted according to user specified options: output filename prefix, output filename case conversion, output format, thumbnail size, image sharpening, brightness, contrast and gamma correction. Conversion results are logged and available for review. There are other programs available which will generate HTML pages along with the thumbnails but I like this one for its simplicity. The current version is 1.2.0.7. The author's page is:

<http://home.att.net/~vaportrail/SSFree.html>

download the program at:

<http://hotfiles.zdnet.com/cgi-bin/texis/swlib/hotfiles/info.html?fcode=0013H9>

2. AboutTime

AboutTime is a superior source of time for your computer. As a time client, it will acquire time from the Internet with great accuracy. If you wish, it can work as a server to provide four kinds of time signals to other computers on your local network. AboutTime uses advanced signal-processing techniques to correct for network delays, making high accuracy possible even over a slow modem connection. AboutTime can be instructed to perform its tasks automatically, at startup or at chosen time intervals. It is a small program that can be run in the background without requiring many resources. As I have cable Internet service, I have the program set to run when Windows starts and at three hour intervals. The current version is 4.8.

<http://www.arachnoid.com/abouttime/>

3. TypeItIn

TypeItIn lets you define buttons that will enter any information you want into any application. I use TypeItIn to fill out registration forms at web sites and for entering user names and passwords. It's also a great tool for applications where you frequently type the same thing like creating HTML code or writing standard letters or emails and it can automatically type in the time, date, month, or day of the week. You can also launch applications or web sites with the click of a button. There is a limit of 50 buttons in the free version. There's also a Professional version with up to 50 password protected groups. Its easy enough to configure that you can efficiently set a button just for a short term use. The current version is 2.1.

<http://www.wavget.com/typeitin.html>

4. EndItAll

EndItAll lets you terminate all non-essential programs for the purpose of eliminating problems when installing new software, defragging your hard drive, eliminating open files while backing up your hard drive, running finicky games, or preventing buffer underruns while writing to CD-Rs. It automates the process of Ctrl-Alt-Delete and kill one program at a time. The essential system programs Explorer and Systray cannot be terminated. EndItAll's main window presents a list of running processes and you can protect any process in the list from termination. EndItAll was written by Neil J. Rubenking, and first appeared on the PC Magazine Web site. The current version is 1.0

<http://hotfiles.zdnet.com/cgi-bin/texis/swlib/hotfiles/info.html?fcode=0011NB>

5. Viewers for MS Office Application files.

If you don't have MS Office installed you can still view Word, Excel or PowerPoint files by using these free viewers. They have been updated to view Office 2000 file formats.

Word 97/2000 Document Viewer

<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/2000/downloadDetails/wd97vwr32.htm#=/downloadCatalog/dldWord.asp>

Excel 97/2000 Spreadsheet File Viewer

<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/downloadDetails/xlviewer.htm?s=/downloadCatalog/dldExcel.asp>

PowerPoint 97/2000 Viewer

<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/2000/downloadDetails/Ppview97.htm?s=/downloadCatalog/dldPowerPoint.asp>

6. WS_FTP LE

This FTP client makes it very easy to transfer files with its double pane window. It can store multiple FTP site information including host, user and password data. I use this mostly for moving files from my PC to my web host. The current version is 5.08.

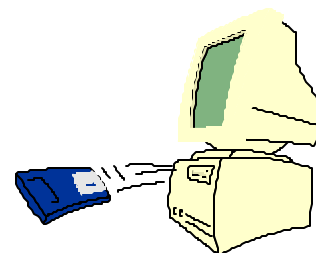
http://www.ipswitch.com/cgi/download_eval.pl?product=main

7. 1st Page 2000

This is a commercial grade HTML editor with more features than I can list here. I especially like having a preview pane easily available. A spelling checker and a syntax checker are built-in. There's an HTML Source Compressor, a collection of 450+ scripts, Web-Safe Color Palette, Side Color Picker and a tool to convert text files into HTML documents. There is a note that the name of the program will be changing soon due to copyright problems. The current version is v2.0.

<http://www.evrsoft.com/1stpage/>

I hope you discover something useful in the above list. Maybe you'll be encouraged to share your treasured finds in an article of your own.



what different from Windows. So be patient, read the manuals and other documentation, and allow time. One bad move that some people have done with Linux or any other new operating system is install it and expect to be using it for productive work within a week. It might be possible if they have a lot of help and training but for us dabblers, allow time to learn and grow.

Do You Have Your Lifelines?

Installing Linux is not like installing a regular Windows application. It is a complete operating system. Although it is easier these days to run a PC with multiple operating systems than ever before, there are many things that can go wrong. Should we seek to dabble with Linux on our regular Windows system, we should have several lifelines ready, just in case.

In my first attempt to install Caldera Open Linux, a mishap occurred with the Partition Magic CE software supplied with the Linux to make it easier to prepare a Linux partition. The size was wrong and I sought to uninstall the partition and Partition Magic software. Things went wrong and I had to format the C: drive to get the system working again. Fortunately, I had my lifelines for restoring my system on hand.

One of the lifelines is a current Windows startup diskette. If you are using Windows 95, the startup diskette won't automatically include CD drive support. You will need to modify the startup diskette to include the proper CD-Rom drivers and support software for your PC. Windows 98 startup diskettes do provide CD drive support.

Another lifeline is the complete collection of diskettes and CDs to rebuilt your system. It is amazing how all those CDs and

diskettes can crawl into the woodwork when we need them. So gather them together before you need them. If you have the upgrade version of Windows, be sure to have the diskettes for CDs for an earlier version of Windows. Pay special attention if your PC came with all the software but you didn't get the CDs and diskettes. This is living dangerously. If you need to rebuild the system or even do some future upgrades, you'll run into problems.

Another lifeline is the Web. Yes, this can be a Catch-22. If the PC is down then we can't get on the Web. But if there is another PC we can use for Web access, it can be a significant lifeline. We can look up tech support info from the product vendors, get contact email addresses & phone numbers, post queries, and get drivers. If you have only one computer, see if a fellow computerist can help out in case of an emergency.

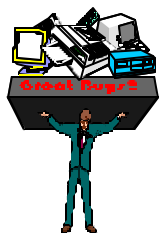
When the Linux operating system is successfully installed, we still need to have the lifelines. Oh, and there is a special Linux lifeline we should keep available. Unlike the Windows login screen, Linux doesn't allow us to bypass it with the Escape key. The root password and the password for the daily use ID(s) are important lifelines. There are ways to get back in Linux if we lose the root password but it is better to remember the root password. (On the other hand, there are some security issues, if we make the root password super-easy to remember. This is a subject for a separate article about password security.)

Is This My Final Answer?

No. I hope have review of the Caldera Open Linux in a future newsletter. Meanwhile, go ahead and be a Linux dabbler, just be prudent and have your lifelines available.



May 6 & 7



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(Last Update: 2 April 2000)

Send Updates to kurivchack_p@compuserve.com for inclusion in this listing.

Consultants Corner

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Consultants Corner

You can advertise your consulting business for \$25 per year in addition to your normal membership fee. The text space is your or your company's name plus five lines.

April 2000

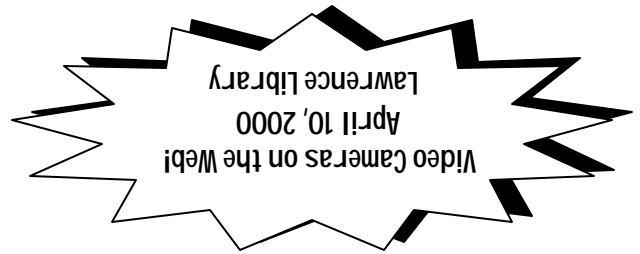
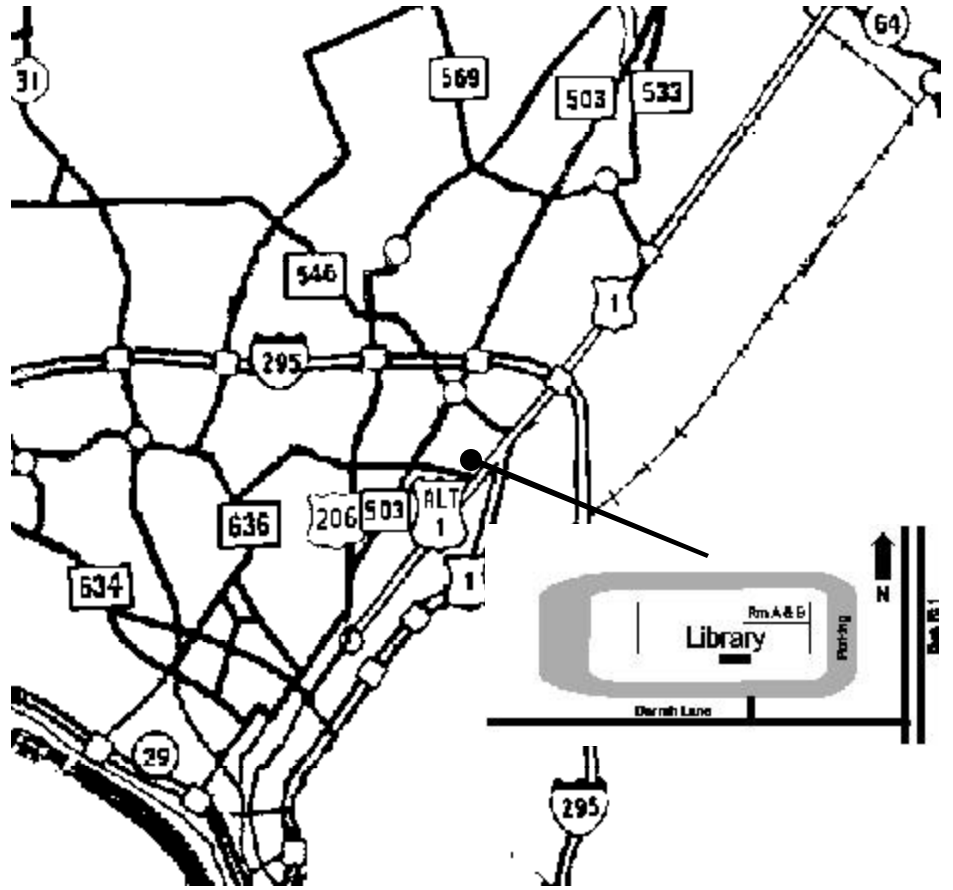
<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>



The Lawrence Library is at the corner of Business Route 1 South and Darrah Lane.

From Princeton and North: Take US Route 1 South, past the Quaker Bridge / Mercer Shopping Centers. Continue on approximately 1 3/4 mile past I295 to the Route 1 split, stay to the right to Business Route 1 (Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main entrance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

From Trenton and South: Take I295 North to US Route 1 South. Library is approximately 1 3/4 miles south of I295. Continue south to Business Route 1 (Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main entrance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.



Princeton PC Users Group
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