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AUTOMATED LIBRARY SERVICES: AN ASSESSMENT OF BAZE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ABUJA

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ABSTRACT
This study focused on automated library services: an assessment of Baze university library Abuja, FCT. Related literatures were reviewed for the study. The target population comprised of staff and students in Baze University library, while the sample size was eighty; 17 staffs and 63 students. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire. A response rate of 90% was obtained. Frequency counts, percentage and mean score were used for the data analysis. The study revealed that Baze University Library has made significant progress in automating its services, with over 50% of its service fully automated. Findings also revealed that automation in library services can bring a range of benefits such as convenience, improved user-staff relationships and more. The study recommended that the library should work towards automating all the remaining services such as Serial Control, Inter-library lending, Reference, and User Orientation. This will enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of library operations. The study also recommended that Baze University library should consider backup of resources or contingency plans in case of internet or infrastructure failures. This might include having offline access to library databases.
Keywords*: Impact, Library Automation, Baze University, Automated Library services.*

Introduction

Traditional and conventional libraries, or more sophisticated digital libraries of today remain the centre of learning in any academic institution. The Library is an essential part of every educational establishment and plays a crucial role in our society. It is the centre of teaching and learning activities where students, researchers, and educators explore numerous information resources. In today's digital age, electronic machines such as computers and other Portable Digital Devices (PDAs) are used to carry out day-to-day library routines, which not only save time for the end-users and library professionals but also prevent duplication of tasks. The collection and organization of library products and services have all undergone significant transformations in this ICT era. In addition, users' information-seeking habits have dynamically evolved in that they require prompt access to accurate and relevant information in a single location making it challenging for professional librarians to effectively provide library services. In attempts to stand up to the evolving realities of information needs and consumption, the concept of library automation emerged in library practice and philosophy.

In an earlier work, Adebisi, (2009) describes Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) as revolutionizing tools that enhance the multifaceted development of a nation and have caused changes in libraries, such as automated cataloguing, circulation, information retrieval, electronic document delivery, and CD-ROM. In a recent literature, Jesukon (2023) sees ICTs and digitization tools as synonyms that have improved information sharing and routine library services.

Academic libraries, according to Oyedun (2007), are mainly found in tertiary institution. They are established to support learning, teaching and research processes. Academic library services have been improved by changes in communication and information technology, leading to organizational restructuring, shifts in work habits, job retraining, and role reclassification.

Academic library activities have been impacted by automation, particularly in the form of library collection development techniques, library building, and consortia. Automation has revolutionized academic library activities, providing value-added information service and access to digital resources. It has improved efficiency and effectiveness of traditional library services; changing the role of library and information science profession from intermediary to facilitators, introducing new tools for information dissemination, shifting from physical to virtual service environment, and redirecting conventional information services.

This study examines how automation affects library services at the Baze University library in Abuja. The library was initially conventional, but as it evolved, it expanded in complexity and richness. Using the Koha Integrated Library System, the library completed the automation of her services and resources. Until recently, the library depended on the Librarika program, which has less connectivity to the Internet and a smaller selection of books. One of the most significant recent accomplishments is the integration of Baze Library resources into one digital database, enabling simple campus or global virtual access. The University library provides a wide range of services, including

reference and information support, digital databases, collection development, online searches, research counselling, bibliographies, designated e-library workstations, institutional Wi-Fi facilities, and document delivery services.

It also provides current awareness services (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI), indexing and abstracting services, book reviews, and binding services. This study aims to show that automation of library services can increase user demand and allow more users to share information through the web.

Statement of the Problem

Libraries contain a variety of information resources, but finding a particular resource or piece of content within a collection of resources requires a navigation system. A library database system is an infrastructure that allows users to search books and contents, add/remove, and download selected materials. Users require an efficient method to find a specific book or document in a continuously expanding library. Efficiency requires that the processing time should be relatively the same even as the library contents increase. It is observed that users do not take advantage of the automated library services and thus may not reap the benefits inherent in automated library services of the University library.

This is an information age; libraries or information centres anticipate the use of technologies to make information available to their users. Automated library housekeeping is essential for libraries to provide appropriate information to users at the required time, saving time and making it easier to operate (Pandya & Darbar, 2016). This study, therefore, examined the impact of the automation of library services in Baze University Library, in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of automation on Library Services in Baze University Library, Abuja. The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the level of automation of library services in Baze University Library;
2. Find out the areas of library services fully automated in the study area; and
3. Identify the benefits of library automation.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of automation of library service in Baze University Library?
2. What areas of library services are fully automated in the study area of the library?; and
3. What are the benefits of library automation?

Review of related Literature

Overview of Academic Library Services

The prime objective of any library is to meet the information needs of its patrons. Similarly, all authorized users of academic and research libraries have the right to expect library services that are appropriate for their needs, delivered by skilled librarians, and relying on adequate collections that are readily available and accessible.

Academic libraries perform similar responsibilities in helping the universities fulfil their primary missions of providing teaching, learning, and research services. These

institutions are in charge of producing middle and upper-level labour for national growth. How well libraries are supplied with relevant information sources will, to a large extent, determine how successful these institutions can complete their mission. Ugah (2011), is also of the opinion that quality in the content of a library is often treated as the quality of service and the quality of service which also affects the effectiveness of the library is important for each library to survive.

According to Akpan and Akpan (2018), the university library is the principal instrument of the university in the conservation of recorded knowledge. This duty must be properly performed for information to be transmitted and advanced. Nonetheless, regardless of size, all university libraries exist to serve their patrons. In addition, the library must gather information from all fields of knowledge, not just those that are available in the institution but from far and wide; both in print and digital forms.

It becomes important therefore, for the library to offer excellent services and resources to its consumers in developing countries like Nigeria where purchasing books seems to be a luxury due to the exorbitant cost. The library should not only offer adequate and balanced functional resources, but also make those resources available to users. The likelihood that a user will be satisfied and that library use will improve increases with how specifically and humbly assistance is provided. The academic librarian should address the various information needs of both university users and guest-users from outside the institution; to fully justify the enormous investment in library resources and services such as: Lending or Circulation Service, Reservation of Documents, Inter Library Loan, Assistance in the Use of Library and Library Tools, Reference Service, Reader Advisory Service and Library Orientation.

Information and communication technology (ICT) feeds libraries, which in turn form the basis of information retrieval. It is therefore evident that information technology has affected changes to the methods, purpose, and perceived potentials of library services. Being able to access large databases of information through ICT fundamentally changes library services since learners can now be creators and collaborators in the access and construction of discourses of information (Quintin, 2006).

In addition, utilizing computer technology provided in the library improves the educational experience of the students (Balanskat, Blamire, & Kefala, 2006). Moreover, most communities in Nigeria do not have public libraries, but where they do exist, students do not always have a way to get there as they may be out of walking distance. Since students rarely have much money for transport and personal copies, they cannot always afford their own books to supplement a weak or non-existent home library, it becomes imperative for academic libraries to rely on ICT to share digital resources to such disadvantaged users/students. A college library is, for some students, the only place to read or use the internet.

Information and communication technology frees the library from the constraints of space and time and enables the delivery of education services anywhere and anytime, wrote Forester (2010). Therefore, we can foresee a future where physical libraries may be replaced by digital or paperless libraries available to anyone, and that scholars could

cease to be located around a geographical focus and will probably become increasingly "located" around a specialization but physically located anywhere in the world.

The advances in Information and Communication Technology, widespread use of the Internet by users and the use of computers in libraries have brought changes in the way libraries operate and in the services they provide due to changes in users' demands. Most of the basic services provided have now been made more efficient and effective and also provision of additional services like Information Technology (IT) related services have now been adopted by libraries. These library machine-control services includes: Current Awareness Service(CAS), Online Search Service, Written Index, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Stock Verification, Reference Service, Bibliographic Service, Delivery of Documents, Inter-Library Loans and Union Catalogues, Audio-Visual Services, Customer Relations and User Education, ICT-Based New Services, Access to the Internet, Access to Web-Based Resources, Course Material, Subject Gateways, Digital Archives, Reprographic Service, and Translation Service.

Modern-day Library Services and Facilities for Automation

The services the academic library provides to its patrons in the traditional library have been transformed to modern or contemporary services which is propelled by unimaginable information explosion, the introduction of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in every aspect of library work, and the evolving users' information needs. Modern or contemporary service allows mutual relationship to exist between the librarian and the patrons and among the patrons themselves owing to social interaction and knowledge shared. Hence, modern library services create more value for the patrons because it has added relational side to all its processes as against traditional library services which is transactional in outlook (Jesukon, 2023). There are many types of contemporary services in academic libraries and they include: Web- Mogens, 2020 based library services, Social media services, Maker spaces, Innovative library services, Research/project support services, embedded library services, personalized library services.

Web-based Library Services

Web-based library services are services that are offered online or through the web. Bhatnager (2005) gave examples of web-based library services to include; Virtual library tours, Ask-a-librarian, Real Time services, Web-based user education, Web forms, Bulletin Boards among others.

Social Media Services

Academic libraries of the 21st century need to adopt social media platforms to meet users' current requirements as well as marketing library resources and services (LeBlanc and Kim, 2014). Social media services not only market library services and products but also make the libraries and librarians visible among the library users, their institutions and beyond. With social media, users interact with librarians in the digital environment. Social media services can be offered in academic libraries using social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, Blogs, Twitter, YouTube, to mention but a few.

Makerspace

Makerspace is a service offered by academic libraries to enable researchers to create, innovate, collaborate, and share ideas. It is seen as a way of connecting with technology and resisting dystopian predictions. Libraries can provide this service if they are able to provide space and handle the cost implications associated with it. To make Makerspace achievable in academic libraries, Okpala (2016) listed the technologies, tools, and activities as: space, 3D printers, 3D scanners, digitization technology, software, hardware, furniture, electricity, internet access, soldering irons, cutting machines, cameras, sewing machines, needles, basic consumables such papers, toners, scissors, and audio equipment.

Innovative Services

The impact of technology on the delivery of information services has transformed the traditional academic library services to modern services. These changes affect both the library and the librarian. Academic libraries need to evolve from focusing on the management of physical resources and related services to transforming resources and services into digital formats to support teaching, learning and research (Abubakar &Attahir, 2018). Librarians on their part need to be innovative and creative if they are to remain relevant in their institutions, profession and the society at large. Libraries and librarians need to engage in the following innovative services which are also part of contemporary services in the academic library: Electronic services and e-Resources, 24-hour Library Services, Chat services, Provision of Space in the Library, Liaison program, Research Commons, Digital Library, Gaming, Open Access Catalogue (OPAC), Research/Project Support Services (RPS).

Embedded Library Services

Embedded library services are library services provided by librarians outside the confines of the library. The librarians instead of waiting in the library to be consulted by the users take the services to their comfort zones. This service can be taken to the user online or to the physical location of the user e.g., classroom or lecture hall, hostels, offices, departments/faculties among others.

Personalized Services

GAO, Xing, Du and Wang (2007), defined personalized service system as an effective way to help library users obtain recommendations for unseen items. Within the enormous volume of information available based on their preferences. Library service offered with the intention to solve unique information needs of a particular user or group of users is called customized or personalized service. In this service, the users' profile should be known i.e. the users field of study, research interest, preferences, contact information e.g. email address among others. This information would help the librarians to assist the researchers in providing relevant materials, packaging and making them available for use.

Skills necessary for Automated Library Services

Librarianship like most other professions is evolving. As such, most academic library services are actually moving away from the conventional library services to contemporary

services. Okpala (2016) and Mogens (2020) affirm that new technologies are introduced in the libraries and users are now tailoring their needs and demands towards that. Librarians too are striving to catch up with the new technologies and user demands. For librarians to be able to serve the present-day users or fit into job advertisement, Jesukon (2023) is of the opinion that librarians should be expected to acquire appropriate skills, embrace technology, make good decisions about how to implement them, use them and sell them out to users. It also requires librarians who have the right skills, more radical thinking skill and knowledge to maintain group cohesion, and to propel dynamic services to meet the needs of users. Librarians should therefore possess wealth of skills such as: Information Literacy Skill, Digital Literacy Skill, Evaluative Skill, Collaborative Skill, Social Media Skills, Ability to Embrace Change, Internet Literacy Skill, and skill to Learn New Technologies, Creativity and Innovative Skill, and Marketing Skill.

Research Methodology

The purpose of the study was to examine automated library services in Baze University Library, Abuja. The study had three (3) objectives. The study employed descriptive survey design. The research population consisted of eighty (80) respondents. Random sampling technique was used to select the eighty (80) respondents for the study. Purposely designed Questionnaire was used for data collection. The collected data was analysed by the use of statistics in form of frequencies and percentages. The collected data was organized and presented in tables.

Research Questions

What is the level of automation of library services in Baze University library, Abuja?

Table 1: Level of automation of library services in Baze University library, Abuja

S/N	Statements	TOTAL No	SA	A	TOTAL Agreement	D	SD	TOTAL Disagreement	Decision
			No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	
1.	The level of your library automation is above 50%	80 100%	44 (55%)	31 (38.75%)	75 (93.75%)	5 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	5 (6.25%)	Agreed
2.	Your university collections are accessible online		21 (26.2 %)	57 (71.25%)	78 (97.5%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.5%)	Agreed
3.	Your library has internet Connections		62 (77.5%)	17 (21.25%)	79 (98.75%)	1 (1.25%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.25%)	Agreed
4.	The internet is strong and steady in the library		59 (73.75%)	18 (22.5%)	77 (96.25%)	3 (3.75%)	0 (0%)	3 (3.75%)	Agreed

5.	Your library collections are on OPAC	67 (83.75%)	13 (16.25%)	80 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Agreed
6.	Patrons have been trained on the use of automated system	33 (41.25%)	45 (56.25%)	78 (97.5%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.5%)	Agreed
7.	The library has enough computers for users to use	29 (36.25%)	46 (57.5%)	75 (93.75%)	5 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	5 (6.25%)	Agreed
8.	Your institution has a virtual library	61 (76.25%)	15 (18.75%)	76 (95%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (5%)	Agreed
9.	Are your library staff skilled in the use of ICT?	53 (66.25%)	25 (31.25%)	78 (97.5%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.5%)	Agreed
10.	The library offers an online reference services	27 (33.75%)	46 (57.5%)	73 (91.25%)	7 (8.75%)	0 (0%)	7 (8.75%)	Agreed

Table 1 presents data on the level of automation of library services in Baze University library, Abuja. 75(93.75%) of the respondents agreed that the level of automation of the library services is above 50% with the mean of 3.5 while 5(6.25%) disagreed. 78(97.5%) of respondents agreed that the University collections are accessible online with the mean of 3.2 while 2(2.5%) disagreed. 79(98.75%) of the respondents agreed that the library is internet connected with the mean of 3.8 while 1(1.25%) disagreed. 77(96.25%) of the respondents agreed that the internet is strong and steady in the library with the mean of 3.7 while 3(3.75%) disagreed. 80(100%) of the respondents agreed that the library collections are on OPAC with the mean of 3.8 while 0(0%) disagreed. 78(97.5%) of the respondents agreed that patrons are trained on the use of automated system of the library with the mean of 3.4 while 2(2.5%) disagreed. 75(93.75%) of the respondents agreed that the library has enough computers for users to use with the mean of 3.3 while 5(6.25%) disagreed. 76(95%) of the respondents agreed that the institution has virtual library with the mean of 3.7 while 4(5%) disagreed. 78(97.5%) of the respondents agreed that the library staffs are skilled in the use of ICT with the mean of 3.6 while 2(2.5%) disagreed. 73(91.25%) of the respondents agreed that the library offers online reference services with the mean of 3.2 while 7(8.75%) disagreed.

The findings revealed that the level of automation of the library service in Baze University Library, Abuja is over 50% and that the University collection can be accessed online as it is revealed that the library is internet connected and the internet is strong and steady. Also, the library collections are on OPAC and patrons are trained on how to use the automated system of the library. It is also revealed that the institution has a virtual library and enough computers for users to use, offers online reference services and the library staffs are ICT skilled.

Table 2: Areas of library services fully automated in Baze University library, Abuja.

S/N	Statements	TOTAL No	Fully Automated	TOTAL Agreement	Partially Automated	Not Automated	TOTAL Disagreement	Decision
			No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	
1.	Cataloguing and Classification		66 (82.5%)	66 (82.5%)	14 (17.5%)	0 (0%)	14 (17.5%)	Agreed
2.	Acquisitions		42 (52.5%)	42 (52.5%)	29 (36.25%)	9 (11.25%)	38 (47.5%)	Agreed
3.	Circulation	80	72 (90%)	72 (90%)	8 (10%)	0 (0%)	8 (10%)	Agreed
4.	Serials control	100%	31 (38.75%)	31 (38.75%)	49 (61.25%)	0 (0%)	49 (61.25%)	Disagreed
5.	Inter-library lending service		12 (15%)	12 (15%)	66 (82.5%)	2 (2.5%)	68 (85%)	Disagreed
6.	Reference		20 (25%)	20 (25%)	60 (75%)	0 (0%)	60 (75%)	Disagreed
7.	User orientation		17 (21.25%)	17 (21.25%)	55 (68.75%)	8 (10%)	63 (78.75%)	Disagreed

Table 2 presents data on areas of library services that fully automated in Baze University Library, Abuja. 66(82.5%) of the respondents agreed that Cataloguing and Classification area is fully automated with the mean of 2.8 while 14(17.5%) disagreed. 42(52.5%) of respondents agreed that the Acquisition area of the library is fully automated with the mean of 2.4 while 38(47.5%) disagreed. 72(90%) of the respondents agreed that the Circulation area of the library is fully automated with the mean of 2.9 while 8(10%) disagreed. 49(61.25%) of the respondents disagreed that the Serial Control area is fully automated with the mean of 2.3 while 31(38.75%) agreed. 68(85%) of the respondents disagreed that the inter-library lending service of the library is fully automated with the mean of 2.1 while 12(15%) agreed. 60(75%) of the respondents disagreed that the reference service area of the library is fully automated with the mean of 2.2 while 20(25%) agreed. 63(78.75%) of the respondents disagreed that the User Orientation service is fully automated with the mean of 2.1 while 17(21.25%) agreed.

The findings revealed that only Cataloguing and Classification, Acquisition and Circulation service areas of the library are fully automated while Serial Control, Inter-library lending, Reference, and User Orientation services are not fully automated yet.

3. What are the benefits of library automation?

Table 3: Benefits of library automation

S/N	Statements	TOTAL No	SA	A	TOTAL Agreement	D	SD	TOTAL Disagreement	Decision
			No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	No of resp. %	
1.	It is convenient	80 100 %	62 (77.5%)	18 (22.5%)	80 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Agreed
2.	It is time-Saving		69 (86.25%)	11 (13.75%)	80 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	Agreed
3.	It increases access to the Library		46 (57.5%)	32 (40%)	78 (97.5%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.5%)	Agreed
4.	24hours Service		29 (36.25%)	45 (56.25%)	74 (92.5%)	6 (7.5%)	0 (0%)	6 (7.5%)	Agreed
5.	It reduces Staff workload		41 (51.25%)	36 (45%)	77 (96.25%)	3 (3.75%)	0 (0%)	3 (3.75%)	Agreed
6.	It saves space in the Library		22 (27.5%)	39 (48.75%)	61 (76.25%)	19 (23.75%)	0 (0%)	19 (23.75%)	Agreed
7.	It eliminates duplication of data and resources		42 (52.5%)	27 (33.75%)	69 (86.25%)	8 (10%)	3 (3.75%)	11 (13.75%)	Agreed
8.	It increases user and Staff relationship		13 (16.25%)	62 (77.5%)	75 (93.75%)	5 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	5 (6.25%)	Agreed

Table 3 presents data on the benefits of library automation. 80(100%) of the respondents agreed that library automation make the library convenient with the mean of 3.8 while 0(0%) disagreed. 80(100%) of the respondents agreed that it saves the time of the library staffs and the users with the mean of 3.9 while 0(0%) disagreed. 78(97.5%) of the respondents agreed that library automation increases access to the library with the mean of 3.5 while 2(2.5%) disagreed. 74(92.5%) of the respondents agreed that it allows for 24hours library service with the mean of 3.3 while 6(7.5%) disagreed. 77(96.25%) agreed that library automation reduces the staff workload with the mean of 3.5 while 3(3.75%) disagreed. 61(76.25%) agreed that library automation saves space in the library with the mean of 3.0 while 19(23.75%) disagreed. 69(86.25%) of the respondents agreed that it eliminates duplication of data and resources with the mean of 3.4 while 11(13.75%) disagreed. 75(93.75%) of the respondents agreed that library automation increases user

and staff relationship with the mean of 3.1 while 5(6.25%) disagreed.

The findings revealed that library automation makes the library convenient to use, saves time, allows users to access the library at their convenient time by providing them with 24hours service, reduces staff workload, saves space in the library for other important use, eliminates data and resources duplication and also increases user and staff relationship.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated automation of library services in Baze University Library Abuja. Findings revealed that the level of automation of the library services is over 50% and that the University collection can be accessed online as it is revealed that the library is internet connected and the internet is strong and steady. Also, the library collection are on OPAC and patrons are trained on how to use the automated system of the library. It is also revealed that the institution has a virtual library and enough computers for users to use, offer reference services and the library staffs are ICT skilled.

Automation of OPAC/cataloguing is very important as agreed by Singh (2003) and Abbas (2014) who agreed that the automation process commenced in this direction in the academic libraries they studied, that is, University of Roorkee, India and University of Ibadan, Nigeria; respectively. Also, the findings are consistent with the findings of Jesukon (2023) where it was reported that library users are better served through social media platforms with digitized or electronic resources.

Findings revealed that only Cataloguing and Classification, Acquisition and Circulation service areas of the library are fully automated while Serial Control, Inter-library lending, Reference, and User Orientation services are not fully automated. The finding is in line with a similar study by Abbas (2014) who revealed that University of Ibadan have fully automated cataloguing module, with acquisition and serials partially implemented while reference and circulation are still at the proposal stage.

The findings revealed that library automation makes the library convenient to use, saves time, allow users to access the library at their convenient time by providing them with 24hours service, reduces staff workload, saves space in the library for other important use, eliminates data and resources duplication and also increases user and staff relationship.

The findings revealed that the major challenges encountered when automating the library services are compatibility of software, internet fluctuation, cost, and lack of support from the parent institution.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and the results of the study, the following conclusions were reached. The study showed that Baze University Library, Abuja has a high level of automated library services. It is also evident that the University's collection can be accessed online, given the strong and steady Internet connection. Additionally, patrons are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to use the library's automated system through training. Overall, the library's automation and online accessibility can help improve the efficiency and accessibility of its services for users.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1 Baze University Library management should work towards automating the remaining services such as Serial Control, Inter-library lending, Reference, and User Orientation. This will enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of library operations;

2 The University Library should continue to educate users on the availability of its services and collections that can be accessed online. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, workshops, training sessions and other marketing strategies;

3 The library should continue to motivate staff by training and retraining to improve their ICT skills to ensure that they are up to date with the latest technological advancements.

4 There is need to maintain library's network infrastructure to ensure that the library's online services are accessible every time.

5 Baze University Library should establish regular user feedback mechanisms to understand users' needs and expectations. This will enable the library design services that are customized to meet the needs of its users.

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