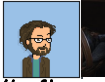


# Knight News Challenge (/)



[/profiles/036/](#)

CHALLENGE

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READ THE BRIEF (/CHALLENGE/LIBRARIES/BRIEF.HTML)

INSPIRATION 44% contributions	SUBMISSIONS 676 entries	FEEDBACK 676 final entries	REFINEMENT 46 final entries	EVALUATION 46 final entries	WINNERS Announced!
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ACTIVITY FEED


 **MalditoMendez** (<http://twitter.com/MalditoMendez>) tweeted: Some join the conversation from the #newschallenge challenge: <https://t.co/1NyK3QHfGE> (<http://twitter.com/MalditoMendez/status/594286599053058049>)

 **rebuilbetter** (<http://twitter.com/rebuilbetter>) tweeted: @knightfdn: 19 advisers gather in #Miami to review Knight #NewsChallenge: #Elections entries <http://t.co/AAI0QUnKsa> <http://t.co/wxiY4YBv...> (<http://twitter.com/rebuilbetter/status/594265898862665728>)

 **jessicahodder** (<http://twitter.com/jessicahodder>) tweeted: @knightfdn: 19 advisers gather in #Miami to review Knight #NewsChallenge: #Elections entries <http://t.co/AAI0QUnKsa> <http://t.co/wxiY4YBv...> (<http://twitter.com/jessicahodder/status/594260117392089088>)

 **michaelbolden** (<http://twitter.com/michaelbolden>) tweeted: @knightfdn: 19 advisers gather in #Miami to review Knight #NewsChallenge: #Elections entries <http://t.co/AAI0QUnKsa> <http://t.co/wxiY4YBv...> (<http://twitter.com/michaelbolden/status/594251160036515840>)

 **knightfdn** (<http://twitter.com/knightfdn>) tweeted: 19 advisers gather in #Miami to review Knight #NewsChallenge: #Elections entries <http://t.co/AAI0QUnKsa> <http://t.co/wxiY4YBv7x> (<http://twitter.com/knightfdn/status/594248948291805184>)

 **SAchambermusic** (<http://twitter.com/SAchambermusic>) tweeted: RT @heychrisbarr: "Outreach & civic engagement shouldn't be last on your plan, it should

ENTRY

BACK TO LIST () 108 OF 676

# Civic Ticker: Libraries Mobilizing Citizens to Inform and be Informed

Civic Ticker is a model that enables libraries to take an active role in coordinating the production of the local content that informed communities require. We propose a set of extensions to the LocalWiki platform including a novel incentivization approach, a contributor reputation system, and advanced reporting tools. Our goal is to encourage and streamline the production and archiving of a community's information, engaging broad new audiences of all ages in the civic life of their community.

Support from the Knight Foundation will enable the development of the infrastructure necessary to launch Civic Ticker and begin mobilizing Ann Arbor citizens to inform and be informed, serving as a replicable example for other public libraries.

**In one sentence, describe your idea as simply as possible.**

Ann Arbor District Library will pioneer a new way for libraries to inform their communities, transforming libraries from passive collectors to active producers of news and information.

**Briefly describe the need that you're trying to address.**

Public libraries are well-positioned to take the lead in producing and archiving reports on local happenings, but few libraries have the technical infrastructure or experience to fill the gap as the scope of for-profit coverage contracts. In Ann Arbor, we've learned that citizens value historical context not provided by the traditional narrative news paradigm, crave local updates on a broad range of community issues, and are more willing to participate constructively in community-based coverage when it's publicly-owned. Libraries need a simple, standardized toolset that can capture and coordinate the results of public happenings, and they need to see this idea in action as a natural fit for Public Libraries, that can help them build a more informed citizenry in any community.

**What progress have you made so far?**

The six-year run of the web-only Ann Arbor Chronicle demonstrated the community interest in meticulous, fact-driven local government



(/profiles/ulotrichous)

Submitted by:  
**Eli Neiburger (/profiles/ulotrichous)**  
September 27, 2014,  
21:21PM

4055 views  
18 comments  
54 applause

Applaud this

be first." @knightfdn  
#newschallenge reviewer  
http... (http://twitter.com  
/SAchambermusic/status  
/594235248839274496)



**scarletjedi**  
(http://twitter.com  
/scarletjedi) tweeted:  
RT @heychrissarr:  
"Outreach & civic  
engagement shouldn't be  
last on your plan, it should  
be first." @knightfdn  
#newschallenge reviewer  
http... (http://twitter.com  
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/594204875006709760)



**klrn** (http://twitter.com  
/klrn) tweeted:  
RT @heychrissarr:  
"Outreach & civic  
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be first." @knightfdn  
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**activefree**  
(http://twitter.com  
/activefree) tweeted:  
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be first." @knightfdn  
#newschallenge reviewer  
http... (http://twitter.com  
/activefree/status  
/594187553525239808)



**rachelannyes**  
(http://twitter.com  
/rachelannyes) tweeted:  
RT @heychrissarr:  
"Outreach & civic  
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last on your plan, it should  
be first." @knightfdn  
#newschallenge reviewer  
http... (http://twitter.com  
/rachelannyes/status  
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project, was adopted by Ann Arbor District Library, and has become a vibrant LocalWiki site with thousands of articles, tens of thousands of unique visitors a day, and a dedicated group of moderators and contributors. The AADL is a national leader with vast experience digitizing and presenting historical news, incentivizing civic engagement for citizens of all ages, and providing innovative digital infrastructure to diverse community projects.

**What would be a successful outcome for your project?**

In the first six months, tools for LocalWiki will be implemented that merge reporting and archiving actions into a single activity, and enable extraction of ready-made information feeds from edits. Within one year, Ann Arbor Civic Ticker begins using these tools in conjunction with a platform that supports contribution incentives, and reporter reputation. By one year after launch, AADL will have worked with at least three partner library systems that are interested in implementing a Civic Ticker.

**Please list your team members and their relevant experiences/skills.**

Eli Neiburger - Deputy Director, AADL / Amy Cantu - Production Librarian, AADL / Mariah Cherem - Production Librarian, AADL / Andrew MacLaren - Production Librarian, AADL / Sara Wedell - Production Librarian, AADL / Dave Askins - Co-founder, The Ann Arbor Chronicle / Mary Morgan - Co-founder, The Ann Arbor Chronicle / Philip Neustrom - Executive Director, LocalWiki / Matt Hampel - Creator, ArborWiki; Co-founder, LocalData / Al McWilliams - Principal, Quack Media

**Location**

Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA



Civic Ticker Logo



We've got a pickle here in Ann Arbor, and it's a pickle that is increasingly facing communities of all sizes. The scope of corporate media coverage has retracted (<http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/business-news/the-biz-blog/96340/why-ann-arbor-will-be-the-first-city-to-lose-its-only-daily-newspaper/>), leaving residents

major impact on their lives. The Ann Arbor Chronicle (<http://annarborchronicle.com>) had provided in-depth online coverage of local government for six years. After it stopped publishing (<http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/08/the-ann-arbor-chronicle-a-quirky-local-news-startup-is-shutting-down-after-six-years>) in September 2014, the community's response was overwhelming: Where can we turn now to find out what's going on?

We also learned a lot about what is missing from the mainstream news when the Ann Arbor News was closed in 2009 after 175 years of publication. AADL negotiated a deal (<http://annarborchronicle.com/2009/11/18/library-nears-deal-on-newspaper-archives/>) to take possession of its paper and photo archives, including permission to post those documents on the open web (<http://oldnews.aadl.org>). As our staff and our community has explored this archive, we feel keenly how much more informed the community used to be about local issues, actions of government bodies, and even arts and culture events.

There simply isn't a business case anymore for providing the kind of coverage that communities need to make informed decisions. Not even government institutions themselves can be relied upon to make their actions public; a recent city website upgrade, while bringing great new features and usability to the site, expunged years of operating documents. The city's response to questions is that the city website is a communication tool, not an archive.

Well, libraries feel differently about this sort of thing. As an independent authority with an elected board ([http://oldnews.aadl.org/aa\\_news\\_19960611-taxpayers\\_give\\_nod](http://oldnews.aadl.org/aa_news_19960611-taxpayers_give_nod)), AADL is well-positioned to make sure that documents stay viewable online in as close to perpetuity as we can imagine. Traditionally, that role has been limited to the passive preservation of commercially published material.

What we see now, for our community and for others, is an opportunity for libraries to ensure that such critical information is accessible to the public. With a focus on the facts of the community, and a new approach to reporting, Civic Ticker fuses the powers of librarians, journalists, and citizens into a portable, publicly-owned news source built for sustainability.

We think this will succeed because AADL and the founders of The Ann Arbor Chronicle have extensive experience working to inform our community, and are well aware of the challenges of community engagement, factual reporting, and online moderation. The Chronicle demonstrated that local residents are hungry for detailed reports by a trusted entity. The reputations of both the Library and The Chronicle are a solid foundation upon which to build Civic Ticker, a new solution to the problem of community news.

Incentivized Reporting, Contributor Reputation, and Streamlined Production.

AADL has found huge success in appropriately incentivizing both amateurs and professionals to produce content of value to the community. AADL's breakthrough Summer Game (<http://play.aadl.org/go/sgv>) has harnessed the efforts of thousands of players to add catalog metadata, moderate reviews, tag photos, and correct OCR (<http://play.aadl.org/pointsomatic>) at very little cost to the library.

The Summer Game infrastructure (<http://play.aadl.org/badgelist>) has been used to encourage public commentary (<http://annarborchronicle.com/2014/07/31/aadl-makes-infrastructure-investments/>) at Board meetings, and drive exploration of local history (<http://play.aadl.org/summergame/badge/412>) documents. Collaborating with The Chronicle (<http://annarborchronicle.com/2014/08/04/column-help-collect-early-election-results/>), the Summer Game even gave points to players who visited a polling place on election day to help collect early canvass reports. In addition, AADL has begun commissioning paid work from professional writers ([http://oldnews.aadl.org/features/sister\\_cities](http://oldnews.aadl.org/features/sister_cities)), reporters, and broadcasters (<http://www.aadl.org/undercovers>) to keep them producing high-quality local-interest content as mainstream media discontinued coverage.

This combination of a reward system for amateurs, and actual paid work for professionals, has kept the content flowing into the library's archives and websites while allowing the library staff to focus on what they do best; organizing the content and making it broadly accessible. Civic Ticker will utilize this combination of incentivized and compensated work to bring back coverage of local entities and events.

AADL also has the will and the experience to manage reputations in a vibrant online community of contributors that encompass a range of perspectives. The Chronicle's approach to comment threads succeeded in part because of its simple "Be Generous" policy and its fact-based, non-sensationalized reporting. AADL also has cultivated a Culture of Generosity at the heart of its customer service model, including years of experience in moderating comment threads professionally, while benefiting from the simple fact that many users will behave differently on a library website. However, we understand that this is not a complete solution to the differing perspectives that will come from the broad base of contributors that Civic Ticker hopes to build.

To address this, Civic Ticker will include some extensions to AADL's Drupal-based user management system that handle contributor reputation through community and staff feedback. One possibility is that each user will have a few skill categories that other users can help rate in response to posts or comments. For example, each contributor

and Cooperation. These ratings change in response to the equivalent of upvoting and downvoting on articles, comments, posts, and updates by users. This approach not only helps readers know the level of engagement and expertise of each poster, but also gives the library a powerful tool to identify contributors who are ready for paid assignments.

Finally, AADL proposes a set of enhancements to LocalWiki intended to streamline production and reduce the overhead of reporting, and simplify the extraction of meaningful feeds from ArborWiki updates.

We will work with the LocalWiki team to develop a new tool that integrates the maintenance of the historical record into the reporting process. A new set of editorial tools will allow Civic Ticker editors to easily produce a news feed based on selected changes to ArborWiki articles. The toolset will also include support for users who have been granted the ability to mark an update as newsworthy, and boil it down quickly into tweet-sized updates that can link to the entire history of a topic.

It's this leap from the ephemeral updates and the historical context of an issue that newspapers, limited by space, struggled with for centuries. Although the space limitations are no longer an issue, the fundamental units of reporting haven't changed much. LocalWiki shines when it provides context for an issue that can't be found anywhere else, and Civic Ticker's Reporting tools for LocalWiki will combine just-in-time archiving and participatory reporting into an open news source, where the sum of a living archive's updates are boiled down into community news that's also the sum of local history.

Public Libraries excel at telling fact from fiction and keeping things private in public settings. They're not as good at choosing software platforms. Building these reporting tools into LocalWiki's open infrastructure will enable Public Libraries of all sizes and levels of sophistication to take a more active role in building knowledgeable communities.

With the help of the Knight News Challenge, we hope to create a new model for publicly-owned community news, with the universal access and archival values of the public library at its heart, ready for adoption by other libraries.

What we want to know from you is what you think about the public library at the heart of community news? What would incentivize you to participate in this project? What concerns would you have about the integrity or reliability of news from your library? Do you want to try Civic Ticker at your Library? What's unclear about our idea, what challenges do you see in our plan, and how this might work in your town?

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(/profiles/ulotrichous)

Entry submitted by:

**Eli Neiburger** (/profiles/ulotrichous)

September 27, 2014, 21:21PM

4055 views

18 comments

54 applause

**Applaud**

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COMMENTS

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*Join the conversation and post a comment.*

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**Post a comment**

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**Patrick Hogan** (/profiles/1388886584/)

Link

October 16, 2014, 15:39PM

dba

I think the library is an excellent place for community news, which is a public good. An informed citizenry is critical to democracy. Examples like AOL's Patch and newspaper hyperlocal efforts show that private enterprise has a difficult time delivering community news profitably.

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Scaling from information, like minutes from a board meeting, to news and analysis, such as platforms of candidates for elected office will be a challenge, and there trained journalists will be needed. The reward system and incentiization, with some paid contributions is critical, allowing librarians to focus on organization and access, and for the project to stay within scope.

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I like that you propose a platform that other libraries can use and adapt.

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0 Applaud

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**Post a reply**

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**Eli Neiburger** (/profiles/ulotrichous/)

Link

October 13, 2014, 16:24PM

to-i

Last week, a local AM radio news show did a segment on our proposal, including project participant Dave Askins and AADL Director Josie Parker. You can listen to it here:

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and

<http://lucyannlance.com/?episode=the-lucy-ann-lance-show-monday-october-6-2014> (<http://lucyannlance.com/?episode=the-lucy-ann-lance-show-monday-october-6-2014>)

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0 Applaud

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**Post a reply**

**Pete Baker** (/profiles/1267420170/)

Link

September 30, 2014, 23:02PM

The AADL has shown itself to be the best organization in our community at fostering curiosity and attention. This proposal is exactly why the library is so well respected and interesting; they are truly at the forefront of where libraries are headed. This project deserves full support, because there is no other organization more capable of shoring up a lack of local civic information while simultaneously engaging the community to participate in it.

1 Applaud

**Melody Kramer (/profiles/1043541181/)**

[Link](#)

September 30, 2014, 14:07PM

I really like this idea.

1 Applaud

**Post a reply**

**Emily Puckett Rodgers (/profiles/508223410/)**

[Link](#)

September 30, 2014, 12:52PM

I think this is a great project for our community, especially from an institution like the public library. Our community is increasingly lacking in representative and reliable news sources that are truly representative of the individuals and the groups that compose our city and region.

I love this especially: we hope to create a new model for publicly-owned community news, with the universal access and archival values of the public library at its heart, ready for adoption by other libraries.

2 Applaud

**Post a reply**

**Edward Vielmetti (/profiles/2226249/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 16:47PM

It is an ambitious challenge, and if anyone can pull it off it's the Ann Arbor library.

2 Applaud

**Post a reply**

**Kristin Fontichiaro & Silvia Lindtner (/profiles/activelearning/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 15:40PM

Howdy from down the street. Good luck -- we can use a project like this in Ann Arbor!

2 Applaud

**Post a reply**

**Ryan Burns (/profiles/579366004/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 15:27PM

All I know, is that the AADL Summer Game has been a huge success, and Dave and Mary at the Chronicle have been amazing and incredibly diligent. Whether this works or not, I'd love to see what comes of the experiment. I'm a big advocate of trialing lots of things to see what works, and there's no better time than now to experiment with ways to make public libraries even more useful to their communities.

2 Applaud

**Post a reply**

**David Cahill (/profiles/davidcahill/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 10:32AM

I am thrilled to see this Knight Challenge! I strongly support the Ann Arbor

I am particularly glad to see that the former staff of the Ann Arbor Chronicle are involved. I know both Dave Askins and Mary Morgan personally. They are dedicated journalists.

In addition, Matt Hampel has done a lot to insure public access to government documents by developing an online archive for them.

I am a former member of the AADL Board. As such, I am well aware of Eli Neiburger's abilities. He is a national leader in helping libraries adjust to the new digital environment and recruit younger citizens as library users.

This proposal has a solid team. It deserves your support.

4 Applaud

### Post a reply

**Kathy Griswold (/profiles/2257126/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 09:00AM

This is an interesting concept for the most noncommunicative local governmental board. The AADL board refuses to video record their meeting and their committee meetings are not open to the public. This stealth organization now wants "to control" a local media site.

I applaud the individuals involved, but does the AADL have the credibility for this endeavor?

In addition, the AADL needs to focus some of it "innovative energies" on serving the children in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. The gap in services is being addressed by other local non-profits with minuscule budgets compared to the AADL. Kiwanis recently donated funding for a modified "book mobile" and other groups provide books and tutoring to children in their neighborhoods. Research clearly supports the need for children to read by the third grade to be successful, not to mention the increased risk of incarceration.

At a recent board meeting when I raised this topic, the AADL board became defensive and listed what they already do. Can the AADL develop some innovative practices in this critical area?

1 Applaud

**Donald Harrison (/profiles/whoisonald/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 11:10AM

To call the AADL a "stealth" organization is disingenuous. The access to information and scope of services they deliver to our community, including children in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods, is outstanding. Yes, the AADL does have the credibility and know-how for this important endeavor.

1 Applaud

**Kathy Griswold (/profiles/2257126/)**

[Link](#)

September 29, 2014, 12:40PM

My stealth reference is to the organization's governance, not its operation. Why does a board that meets in a room equipped for live broadcasting and video recording, refuse to "turn on the cameras" or hold open committee meetings, as is the norm in this community?

I have great respect for the library employees and agree they provide outstanding services. However, there is an unmet need in this community and the AADL has the talent and financial resources to do more to ensure that every child is reading at

grade level by the third grade.

0 Applaud

**Ryan Burns (/profiles/579366004/)**

Link

September 29, 2014, 15:18PM

I applaud your focus on ensuring the library provides a support system for literacy at all socioeconomic levels. A bookmobile would be cool!

I don't see how that relates to this proposal though. Surely they shouldn't have to halt innovation in all areas until they solve the literacy gap?

5 Applaud

**Post a reply****Patti Smith (/profiles/670451493/)**

Link

September 28, 2014, 18:28PM

As a local history fan (and soon to be published author about local history!), I cannot say enough about how important it is to have archived news available and accessible on-line. I can't say I know what it was like to really live here in the 1880s, but I have a much better idea from reading the AADL's invaluable and outstanding Old News website. I hope that people in 2114 (and beyond) can look back and get a feel for what life was like in Ann Arbor at this time, in this place.

4 Applaud

**Post a reply****Rita Mitchell (/profiles/100000732297036/)**

Link

September 28, 2014, 17:44PM

I like the idea of trying to obtain information on Ann Arbor community issues. The service that the Chronicle provided was excellent, and I miss it greatly. What is not clear to me is how the information will be made available, how topics will be chosen, whether there will be continuity of tracking issues, and whether there will be editorial management. What is the incentive that is described, other than pay for the professionals? Will the library have an editorial role? Who will determine whether a professional or an amateur/volunteer provides information?

Thank you.

0 Applaud

**Donald Harrison (/profiles/whoisdonald/)**

Link

September 29, 2014, 11:15AM

The AADL's commitment to creating accessible archives of our community's news and history is of tremendous value. This proposal aligns with their efforts, expertise and addresses an important need in our community.

0 Applaud

**Rita Mitchell (/profiles/100000732297036/)**

Link

September 29, 2014, 11:21AM

What I meant in my first message on this proposal is that I don't understand what is being offered. Further, without a sample of the product, I don't have any way to judge its quality. Is this in the mission of the library? The proposal is unclear and confusing to me.

1 Applaud

Erin Neuberger (@profile/erinneuberger)  
September 29, 2014, 13:13PM

Rita, thanks for your questions. The answers are things that will be fleshed out if this project is selected for refinement, but I'll take a stab at some responses here.

We envision that the updates will be made available online as news feeds that are posted to a website for response and discussion. Updates might take the form of a headline, a paragraph of explanation, and a link to the Arborwiki article that was updated.

Topics would be chosen by the reporters and the editorial team; reporters would be able to post about whatever they'd like, but editors and the community would be able to highlight or feature updates that are factual and timely.

The whole idea is to integrate reporting and tracking issues as you say, so each update would include links to the history articles of the relevant issues, including the new additions that are being reported.

There will definitely be editors who manage the release of news and edit posts for quality and accuracy.

The incentive for novice reporters is something similar to AADL's Summer Game; a point system where reporters get credit for informal updates or posts. You might find the second image above helpful to explain this.

The library's role will be one of producer. Editors need to have independence, and the library's resources will help make the production happen, but, for example, the library would not be in a position to exercise editorial control over its own coverage. Librarians are focused on facts, and library moderators could work to make sure posts and comments can be verified as factual.

Finally, while the infrastructure we've envisioned allows anyone to post an update, the editors and the library will work together to spread out resources to things that need to be covered based on their understanding of the community and feedback from readers. As you can see in the image, the hope is that public meetings are mostly covered by vetted professionals.

AADL's mission is to "... assure public ownership of print collections, digital resources, and gathering spaces for the citizens of the library district. We are committed to sustaining the value of public library services for the greater Ann Arbor community through the use of traditional and innovative technologies." We think this proposal fits right in.

Thanks for your feedback, Rita, and let us know if you have other questions!

5 Applaud

**Post a reply**

FIND US ON:

OUR MISSION

13 of 14 Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the

5/1/15, 8:20 PM

News Challenge. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged.

(//privacy.truste.com/privacy-seal/John-S--and-James-L--Knight-Foundation/validation?rid=79db376d-1136-440e-8866-18ce2d42ac84)



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