



## Challenges and Prospect of Museum Institutions in the 21st Century in Northern Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The museum is one institution that accommodates every aspect of human activities and reminds people of their past to present. Most museum collections have been sustained by preserving and documenting natural and cultural heritage. Museum itself serve as an institution of learning, research has been conducted, and entertain different people with diverse cultural background without discrimination. Today, in Northern Nigeria, most people perceived museums as a place of fetish collections are stored rather than a multifunctional institution that deals with many sectors of life. Museums have the capacity to reflect both continuity and change, to preserve and protect cultural and natural heritage while illustrating the expression of the human imagination and the natural world through the exhibition. Museum in the 21st century has completely transformed due to the advancement of science and technology. But, Northern Nigeria is left behind in such technological development. The paper utilized the qualitative method to enable the researcher to explore the challenges and prospects of museum institutions in Northern Nigeria. This paper used primary and secondary methods of data collection. The paper's objective is to explore the significance and identify the role of science and technology in museums and the challenges and prospects. The paper finds that museums are an integral part of the human experience that transformed as time went on. Many museums have centralized collections and exhibition across the globe. But, museums in Northern Nigeria faces a considerable challenge, and the prospect of the institutions is at stake. The paper recommends that museums should explore other avenues to capture audience desire in line with global base practice.

**Keywords:** *Challenges; Prospect; Museum; Collections; 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Institution*

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### INTRODUCTION

Museum institution dedicated to helping people understand and appreciate their cultural and natural endowment from the past to the next. The museum is a treasure house that storied the history of civilizations, the record of artistic humanities and documentation of classical artefacts. The advancement in science and technology in the 21st century has amicably transformed museum institutions around the world. Li (2015) observed that museum experience can be enhanced by digital technology, the development of digital curation in cultural expression can not only promote the role of museum in this digital era but also boost the value of cultural heritage more than ever before. According to Network of European Museum (2021) further explained that the development of digital strategies has become a cross-sectional task, which has influenced and changed the entire operating system of the museum. Digitalization of museum is not an option anymore, rather a reality of life which museum around the world should embrace. Museums collect objects of aesthetic or historical importance, care for them and interpret, and exhibit them for the public interest and knowledge. There are museums in almost every major city in Africa and trying to connect with the people around them. Ahmed et al. (2017) explained that the largest museums are located in major cities throughout the world, while thousands of local museums exist in smaller cities, towns and rural areas.

Museum institutions offer many benefits to their visitors, their communities, and society as a whole. Museum provides opportunities for self-directed learning and exploration by people of diverse ages, interests, and abilities. They are public gathering places where visitors can be entertained, inspired, and introduced to new ideas. Museums enrich local cultural life and make communities more appealing places to live and to visit. For society as a whole, Museums provide valuable intangible and tangible benefits as sources of national, regional, and local identity. They have a singular capacity to reflect both continuity and change, to preserve and protect cultural and natural heritage while vividly illustrating the expression of the human imagination and the natural world. Ahmed et al. (2017) pointed out that a museum is an institution that cares for (conserves) a collection of artefacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance. But the museum is also a special type of information system. Objects held in a museum are documents, i.e. objects collected and stored in order to inform, to provide information about the object itself, the type of object, its context and relationships to other objects (Buckland, 1997).

Museum institutions in the 21st century are believed to a recreational, relaxations, entertainment, studies, communication, research and educational centres to the public without discrimination using available collections to exhibit to the people. It is an outstanding institution that contributes to the development of any given society. It is also creating awareness and enlightens society of the current global crisis using available information at its disposal. Museums as a storehouse of cultural artefacts transformed for better results. Arinze (1999) posits that museum houses things created by nature and by man and in our modern society it houses the cultural soul of the nation. (It holds the cultural wealth of the nation in trust for all generations and by its function and unique position, it has become the cultural conscience of the nation.). That is why International Council for Museum (ICOM) make an effort to come up with a definition that would accommodate the entire aspect of the museum. Thus, the ICOM meeting which is held on 24th, 2007 in Vienna, Austria. Defined museum as a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for education, study and enjoyment (Merriman N.,1999). Despite these definitions, ICOM calls for the conference and deliberate on the new meaning to comprehend entire museum activities without compromise.

It has been challenging to come out with an everlasting definition of the museum because the museum changes along with society. The changes in definition have occurred. They must properly reflect museums as the memory of humankind and museums are different in their functions, ownership, purpose, collection, and audiences (Amadi, 2014) Nevertheless, the museum is a database that reflects the memory of humankind in the area of history, society and boosts the economic potential of a country through tourism and deaccessioning of cultural heritage.

Despite the above subject matter, museums across the globe encounter many challenges, including recession and other critical factors. According to Ilde (2010), the recession has negatively impacted the public and the private sector, implying, among other things, a drastic reduction of public budgets. Indeed, Northern Nigeria museums mainly depend on government financial support whenever there is economic difficulty in the country, and museums face significant challenges. However, apart from the recession, people perception, crisis, inconsistency, unprofessionalism, enlightenment, networking, and cultural policy are the most challenging part hampering museums in Northern Nigeria. It is against this background that the author developed the paper.

### **Objectives**

The following are the objectives set to achieve are to:

- i. explore the significance of museums in the 21st century
- ii. assess the role of science and technology in a museum institution
- iii. examine the challenges and prospects of the museum in Northern Nigeria

### **Research Question**

The following are the research questions set to answer:

- i. What is the significance of museums in the 21st century?
- ii. What role has science and technology played in a museum institution?
- iii. Identify the challenges and prospects of the museum in Northern Nigeria?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The paper utilized qualitative research methods to explore the challenges and prospects of museum institutions in the 21st century in Northern Nigeria. This paper used primary and secondary data collection. Those who formed the primary data source include museum staff and staff of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) through interviews. At the same time, secondary data focused on the literature related to the paper, such as pamphlets, textbooks, articles in Journals, newspapers etc.

Observation and interview served as an instrument of data collection. The author gathered the primary data through interview guides, and trained research assistants were hired to help in the field. The interview was conducted because the study required the respondents to express their experiences and knowledge freely without limitation. In contrast, observation of the museums was made by the author to enable him critic and deliberate on the discussion. As Hitesh (2020) explained, the observation method is described as a method to observe and describe the behavior of a subject or as a way of collecting relevant data by observing physically.

The purposive sampling was utilized in sampling the respondents. North is clustered into three (3) geopolitical zones in Nigeria: Northwest, Northcentral, and Northeast. Two (2) respondents from each of the geopolitical zone and two (2) from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) headquarter makes it eight (8) respondents. National museum Jos staff were selected from the Northcentral, Kidan Makama Kano museum from

the Northwest while National museum Borno from Northeast using Key Informant Interview (KII) for the respondents. The data gathered were presented and analyzed accordingly.

## **CONCEPTUALISATION**

### **Significance of Museum Institutions**

Different scholars in different perspectives have conceptualized the significance of museum institutions in the 21st century. The paper tries to overlook the scholarly discourse of museums and their importance in the service of humanity. According to Dhriti Ray et al. (2012) explained that a museum is a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are exhibited. Generally, museums contribute essentially to social and human development through various means. Significantly, museums do not discriminate but accommodate people of all ages, classes, religions, and regions. Those who visit and those who don't visit are all welcome. UNESCO (2015) stated that museums are vital public spaces that should address all of society and play an essential role in developing social ties and cohesion, building citizenship and reflecting on collective identities. Chris (2008) further observed that museums are very crucial to the development of nation and a lack of true meaning of the term might be major reason for underdevelopment of many African nations. The intellectual observation made by the museum professionals and other related discipliner has shown clearly that the museum is a societal representation that absorbs critical aspects of human development.

The word museum is derived from the Greek word "Mouseion", which means temple dedicated to "Muses". This temple was considered as a storehouse of knowledge of an encyclopedic nature where knowledge was acquired through the inspiration of Muses (Günay, 2012). Since then, museums have changed their functions and definitions to catch up with social needs. However, the museum is an integral part of human society and eventually existed across the globe. The Merriam Webster dictionary museum is an institution devoted to the procurement, care, study, and display of lasting interest or value objects. Thus, Merriman Nick (1999) posits that there are approximately 25,000 museums worldwide, of which an unknown number feature archaeological collections and undertake activities. While, contrary to the Johnson (2003) clarify that some 40,000 museums worldwide, of which 19,000 are in Europe and with more than 50% of existing museums created in the last 50 years. Ahmed et al. (2017) further argued that ICOM projected museums across the globe and further revealed more than 55,000 museums in 202 countries in the world. In Nigeria, the famous museum established was in Esie Soap Stone in 1943 and Nigeria alone has about 46 museums (Ezeokeke & Nwosu, 2015). These numbers are being grown daily due to the impact on human and community life. However, the museum is an institution that accommodates things created by nature, humanistic values, and devotion to human service. The museum holds the cultural wealth of a nation, region and states for present and upcoming generations. It is a fact that without collections, there would be no meaningful museum.

Museum definition by ICOM. It is not a profit body that would compete with any business entity; instead is aimed to satisfy the general public with the available objects in the museum. Museums maintain a relationship with their immediate community, especially mobile museums that connect with people. Therefore, they are there in the service of society to grant them the opportunity to appreciate their cultural value. The museum is a multitasking body that virtually deals with all disciplines depending on the purpose and the functions of the institutions considering the kindness and outstanding duties of the museum in education institutions, entertainment industry, research and studies which surround human endeavor.

### **Role of Science and Technology in Museum Institution**

These are some of the development that needs to be recorded in the museum's institution in Northern Nigeria. These should play roles in disseminating information that would benefit the present generation and generation to come.

Information Technology (IT) deals with devices that would retrieve, store and disseminate information in areas of endeavor. Technology plays a vital role in sustaining and connecting museums and their audiences. Though the museum differs from the collection does around the world, the main thrust of this paper would focus on multi-disciplinary or universal museums. This is to say that the issues discussed here could apply to any and every museum around the globe. Looking at the museum in general, we attempt to assess the role of science and technology and plan for the transformative, tremendous progress to link the museum with the next generation and create awareness among the museum audience. This can be done by recreating museums online, which is not common among the Northern Nigerian museum's experts, software, and another internet network online, bearing in mind the needs and desires of its user population.

Therefore, we should note that information technology is at the forefront of socio-economic and political transformation in every society today. Like every other institution, a museum must not just learn to cope with it but also thrive in a network society and bear its relevance and connectivity to the next level of the global world. It is

undeniable that when museums go entirely digital. It will have more comprehensive coverage, and her audiences would no longer be limited in what they can see or generally benefit from the museum services. For instance, museums in the digital era would expose every collection using digitalization. Museums can engage people who can't physically come to the museum premises. This means digital capturing would enable preservation, exhibitions and visitors friendly. Museum visitors could be transformed into participants, learn or become part of the museum family. The digitalization of museums would address the issue of illicit traffic and illegal marketing of museum collections that became one of the public outcries. Furthermore, for museums to connect with the next generation in the era of information technology, the digitalization of museums and installations would facilitate as they could help clarify the collections and explain some of the objects appropriately, especially on display or exhibitions.

Therefore, museums wouldn't longer be so relevant physical space unless they would reach out to the global audience through digital networks such as web pages and other related mobile media networks. There is a clear indication that museum service in the contemporary period needs to annex or transform to a certain standard to reach its services to the target audience and upgrade to the evitable level that everybody could access the collections. The only way and manner in which museums reach out to people and touch the life of museum admirers are through digitalizing museum set up. The museum is a memory of humankind, which contributes significantly to the national development by every intent and purpose, is a root of the culture and tradition of every living creature on the face of the earth (Binkat, 2014).

With the new technology fast reshaping our lives, there is a severe need for museums to use digital technology in exhibitions and develop software for smartphone applications to access the different museums and their collections easily. Indeed, measures should be put in place to ensure digitalization and the information communication is not seen as a threat to the mission and vision of museums of the distinct area by uploading every piece of the museum collection online. Physical objects always spark a stronger spiritual and emotional reaction than digital ones. The people may not get the true feelings of the natural things like in the "museum of natural history" Digitalized museums only give access to those who can't visit the museum to see the collections physically. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, virtually every aspect of human activities has come to stand still or decline due to restriction complies and other Covid-19 protocols. Indeed, when the museums go digital, there is no way people disconnect themselves from accessing it and its activities.

The exciting part is for museums to use social media to showcase and encourage the people to familiarize the museum collection when on a visit, a lot of captivating digital programs must be installed according to the audience's desire and needs. For instance, in developed countries, museums went digitalized to the extent that in the entrance of the museum doors, some digital brief boards guide the audiences to the direction of their choice and images of collections were displayed to welcome people into the museum. For instance, the museum of natural history United States of America had digitalized most of the museum's pieces to the extent that some images appeared like reality collections to captivate the mind and attention of the museum visitors. Duthie (2011) explained that the British Museum was founded in 1753 as one of the world's first national, public and secular museums. British Museum is one of the largest and prominent museums incorporating distinct collections with highly digitalized sections and departments exhibits collections that help connect with the audience.

The integration of the digital display into the museum galleries should be facilitated so that it would politely encourage museum visitors. Thus, to start with, there might be a navigator screen to search for the whole activity of the museum work. Audiences should be able to use a remote control to click on the desired site that might display the direction of their mind, be it collections of their choices, festivals, ceramics sections, paintings, and library or art history sections. This is to say, different sections of museums audiences would access. It could also be provisions for debate, research, game and recreational area to captivate the museum visitors' minds. On the other way round, we call it museum packaging or marketing. Museums are in different forms and sizes depending on the space, objects exhibited in the gallery, and devices used to showcase the museum collection. Museum, in whatsoever record reflects the human society, museum changes along with society (Amadi, 2014). Therefore, a museum could be thoroughly packaged digitally to attract the general public's attention and create some relationship between the museums and the people.

### **Challenges and Prospect of Museum in Northern Nigeria**

Museums in sub-Saharan Africa, precisely Nigeria, Chad, and the Niger Republic, are in the grudge of setback due to many factors surrounding the cultural institutions. In every state in the region, one can find outstanding museums full of cultural, archaeological, and historical value objects. Still, patronage and standardization are mostly affected by many factors, including religious perception, economic challenges, crisis, unprofessionalism, enlightenment, networking and cultural policy are the measure challenges hampering Museums. Arinze (1999) outlined that in many "developing" nations, museums are seen as places where unwanted objects or materials are deposited; they are also regarded as places where things associated with idolatry and fetish religions are kept. While NCM (2013) with the view that some people in Nigeria believed and inspired that museums are shrines or fetish places or that it

is a place of storing and ancient objects depository that is against religion. The religious perception and lack of awareness have impacted huge challenges in museums institutions in that region; only a few individuals are eager to patronize cultural institutions.

Crisis can be seen as an unstable situation of extreme danger against the individual or group in the society, which Northern Nigeria has been witnessing such devastation in recent years. Indeed, the region has virtually hinted by the insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, communal crisis, and political tension that led to a setback in the region's social, economic, and political development. According to Lohman (2010), the crisis can offer opportunities to enhance the relationship with the public, increase and qualify the relationships across institutions, and change the attitude toward society. Even though some crises provide opportunities to explore public relations more, the Northern Nigeria crisis is beyond human experience. The activities of the informal armed group have exacerbated instability that many countries forbid their citizens from visiting the region. Tourism has been short down for foreign visitors from different parts of the world in the cultural sector. Cultural centers have been destroyed and looted by the insurgents in Northern Nigeria. Garba et al. (2016) postulate that the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa and some parts of the Middle East became an impetus and epitome for the destruction of local, national and global cultural heritage reflected either in relics, monuments, manuscript, temples and shrines by the radicalized insurgents.

The unprofessional managers in the sector that held key positions without the proper background of cultural studies are in the system killing the administration style of the museums. Tagowa (2011) outlined that the tourism sector in Nigeria has been preoccupied with the not befitting people that caused a phantom setback considering the value of Museums around the globe, which play a crucial role in educating, instructing, entertaining, uniting and exploring the potentiality. It is momentous to note that most of the museum collections are the cultural heritage of mankind. The museum serves as an institution where knowledge has been given and entertains different people with different perceptions without restriction or discrimination. Therefore, the treasure house virtually turns into a ghost house with unskillful and untrained managers.

Today, in Northern Nigeria, some people perceived museums as a place of primitive person (s) who are reluctant to accept changes or new ideas are there to visit. While, in a real sense, museums give room for transformation, and it is a centre for knowledge, research and education. For instance, museums manage information about their collections in museum galleries, and every collection is classified by a different accession number for identification in the custody of the curator. An object's permanent record includes basic facts about the acquisition, including the donor or source. The object record also contains information on the artist or maker, provenance (ownership history), creation date or period, description of the object, purchase price, measurements, identifying marks, condition, and related publications. Correspondence, clippings, and legal documents may also be included. They were looking at the processes of museum documentation which is educational base studies. Therefore, the museum serves as a beneficial database of mankind where a person (s) can explore new knowledge, education, and new ideas.

### **Rural Development**

The concept of rural development has evolved through time as perceptions of development techniques and goals have shifted. Focusing on the human capital development dimension in the rural region, Singh (2009) refers to rural development as the total development of rural areas to raise the quality of life of rural residents. The definition appears narrow in scope because rural development extends beyond a sequence of qualitative changes among rural dwellers to quantitative changes in the population. Changes in the quality of the population without a corresponding change in quantity and vice versa does not guarantee a balanced rural development. It is a process in which a set of social, cultural, technical and institutional initiatives are deployed for residents of rural areas to improve the rural populace's socio-economic conditions. Consequent upon the foregoing, rural development can be defined as a development effort aimed at improving rural inhabitants' consciousness and living standards. It follows that rural development entails a marked improvement in the social ties that control technology, access to land, labor, physical infrastructure, land tenure, access to service and socio-political organizations of society. The productivity, welfare, and quality of life of rural people are the core goals of rural development (Ullah, 2013). Rural development, Ogidefa (2010) entails providing and expanding chances for rural people to reach their full potential through education and participation in decisions and actions that affect their lives. He further elucidates that rural development is a measure to boost rural productivity, generate jobs, and eradicate poverty, diseases and ignorance in its most basic forms. In a similar vein, rural development could be defined as the long-term enhancement of the population's living conditions or wellbeing (Gustav and Kostas, 2007). It is a strategy for achieving long-term structural changes in the rural sector, such as higher productivity and output, significant modifications in industrial equipment and procedures, and a higher standard of living. Suggesting how to achieve the objective of rural development, Tenuche and Ogwo (2005) observed that it should entail the mobilization and distribution of human and material resources existing in rural regions for the wellbeing of rural residents and the overall improvement of their living conditions.

However, it has been realized that the achievement of the objectives of rural development is often clouded with a series of challenges. Omale (2005) attributes the problems of rural development to the following factors namely: a scarcity of professionals in the design and execution of projects and programs, policy and plan inconsistencies which do not create room to pursue long enough rural development for lessons to be learnt. Others are public officials' lack of dedication to duty, greed, and fraud that constitute avenues to rob the country for personal gain. And above all, the non-involvement of the community in development projects is one of the recurring decimals in the problem of Nigerian rural development from the colonial era to the present. Shedding light on the obstacles to the actualization of goals of rural development, Iyoha and Aiya (2003) identify and attribute the problem of rural development to the following: Bad governance, the poor financial base of the local government and reverse resource flow. In the light of the above, it is pertinent to state that the implementation of rural development in Nigeria is shrouded with so many factors, hence, the need to investigate and ascertain factors thwarting the effective implementation of rural development projects in the study location.

## **DISCUSSION**

The challenges in museum institutions are there and continue to be there as far as museums dealing with people and their cultural and natural endowment. People change as time goes on, while the activities of museums transform to catch up with the people desire. Therefore, change is constant and occurs in all human ramifications; it can be a manmade set of actions or a natural phenomenon. It can also be negative or positive, depending on the scenario surrounding the event of discourse. The recent global crisis has revealed challenges in museum institutions across the globe, especially in the two economic and health sectors. Most countries' recession has negatively impacted museum institutions, specifically government funding museums. Many people were sacked from their work, and some were temporarily suspended in order to cope with the challenges. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic has completely restricted many people from their workplaces and endangered the people's cultural heritage. Toader, T. et al. (2021) asserts that many plan put in place to curtail the situation among the additional measures to battle Covid-19 infection was the one regarding the suspension of the educational process in a classic, face-to-face format, movement restriction, distancing among others. The museum managers and serious government officials have directions to curtail the cultural institutions' challenges, but that doesn't yield any positive results. The Northern part of Nigeria is not exceptional because of the multiple challenges, be it the nature of the people and the system decay.

Northern Nigeria is one of the early regions in the country that established museums with huge potentials, but in recent times, the declivity of cultural institutions has been witnessed, and most of the significant activities were declined drastically. However, despite what seems to be notable transformation of museums over the years, there is need to for museums to move from being a memory place to being institutions that facilitate increase in the creation and diffusion of knowledge (Oluwayinka, Emmanuel & Samuel, 2014).

Furthermore, there were huge challenges in the museum sector in Northern Nigeria. The number of visitors is declining daily, although the population is growing. Education institutions have been increasing, and awareness has been there but not in the cultural sectors. The education unit, research, communication, and management are entirely vague, bringing the issue of disconnection between people and the museum. Some of the museums in the region have been mismanaged, mishandled, and misplaced due to mistrust and unprofessionalism. It is a fact that some museums dumped their collections in the store without proper monitoring, inspection and evaluation. They have been there for so many years; some are even affected by insects and rodents, especially wooden objects, while the iron, silver and bronze were rusted. The gallery where the valuable collections have been exhibited was mostly covered by cobwebs, dust, and stains, which is essentially out of museum ethics and guidelines. Some of these museums' environments and structures are outdated because of the deterioration. According to McTavish (2003) museums in contemporary societies are declining. This necessitates the need for a dramatic shift in the museological paradigm in order to remedy the deficiencies eminent in museum practices in the contemporary times.

The paper generally finds that Museums are an integral part of the human experience that transformed as time went on, especially in the 21st century with the advancement of science and technology. But, the Northern region has been left behind by this wind of positive change. Many museums institutions have launched the digitalization of Museum collections and online exhibition across the globe, while others were clamoring to take a step. Though museums in Northern Nigeria face numerous challenges, the prospect of the cultural institutions is virtual at stake because no critical measures have been put in place to positively transform the institutions for good.

In Southern Nigeria, some museums are sparkler and well-presented that attract visitors from all over the world despite the challenges of funding. The professional museum officials engage in so many activities that attract other donor agencies to key into the affairs of museums. Lagos museum, for instance, has different educational activities that are supported by private companies and other philanthropic for children, physically impaired people and women. During vocations, in a bid to keep the students, guardians and audience meaningfully engaged. The museum

embarks on a holidays' program for the people without exception. This would aim to keep them off the streets and engage them busy in a productive way during the break. For instance, the museum would be able to organize a different competition such as debate, dancing, drawing, support, and singing competition for the young children. Some museums even take the museum to the people in rural areas, especially mobile museums, to educate the value of cultural heritage. If the Northern counterpart would be able to emulate the activities of some Southern Nigerian museums, that would strengthen the cultural institutions in the North, and the museums would have the prospect to compete with others. In dealing with the sustainable transformation of museums in contemporary society, some researchers opined that museums should be about its users and not just their collections (Weil, 1999).

## RECOMMENDATION

The paper recommends the significance of information technology and the emergence of modern digitalization in the 21st century as a key area of investment. Museums need to explore a necessary avenue to go with the time to capture a wider audience and to sustain these audiences by maintaining museum institutions. The challenge to do so would even be more significant in the next generation. Thus, the time to start is now. Generally, it is expected that in the next generation, museums should be more audience centered. Museum galleries should be more accommodative and user friendly, with a higher degree of audience participation. Training and retraining of the museum officials need to be overemphasized to go with the international base practice. Kyiv (2012) postulated that the priority tasks for UNESCO and ICOM include developing cooperation in the area of museum work, establishing a framework of partner interactions and international collaboration. The government and other cultural organizations need to partner and come up with a proper master plan that would enable the standardization of cultural institutions across the globe. Funding and support of Museums need to be reconsidered and facilitated for museum sustainability in Northern Nigeria.

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