Baby Steps to Big Impacts: The Evolution of Library Involvement in the Textbook System

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Abstract

This article will discuss how textbook support and open educational resources (OER) have become critical considerations in the evolving library landscape. For years, textbooks have been the purview of the teaching staff at our colleges and universities, but libraries can no longer ignore the high costs, both societal and financial, of the current textbook environment. Library involvement in the textbook dilemma has come in three phases: chosen ignorance, meeting the immediate need, and striving for sustainable solutions. We will discuss each of these phases and will detail the University of South Carolina Libraries' involvement in the textbook system. We will provide suggestions for other libraries interested in growing an OER program, focusing on development, implementation, and assessment for schools operating with limited resources. Finally, we will share our predictions for the future of library involvement in responding to the demand for affordable course materials.

Baby Steps to Big Impacts: The Evolution of Library Involvement in the Textbook System

By Amie Freeman & Tucky Taylor

Introduction

Textbook support and open educational resources have become critical considerations in the evolving library landscape. For years, textbooks have been the purview of the teaching staff at our colleges and universities, but libraries can no longer ignore the high costs, both societal and financial, of the current textbook environment.

Busy librarians across multiple disciplines and departments can participate in the changing landscape of educational resources. These librarians are in a key position to contribute solutions to the exploitive system in which course materials are selected by faculty and selected by students. They are uniquely situated to evaluate content, locate course materials, find alternate learning resources, create guides and finding aids, license and purchase content, analyze copyright concerns, and organize and distribute resources. Large, university-wide initiatives are ideal for many institutions, but even small steps taken by librarians can provide an enormous impact for a struggling student population.

In this article, we provide a historical context of textbook purchasing and library support at the University of South Carolina. Additionally, we will provide a brief history of the open education movement and an overview of current University of South Carolina initiatives, including the e-reserves system, textbook loan program, workshops provided on open and affordable resources, and a grant program to encourage faculty members to convert from traditional textbooks to openly or library licensed resources. Finally, we will share recommendations for academic libraries wishing to implement similar programs and predictions for the future of library involvement in responding to the demand for affordable course materials.

Section One

To provide context for this article, we will provide a brief overview of the history of textbooks in relation to academia and academic libraries. While early literature and therefore the scope of this history is somewhat limited, an overview of collection development policies and those articles and chapters written by librarians in the past allows us insight into library perspectives and policies.

In the traditional academic arena, course materials are developed and produced by publishers. These materials are typically authored, peer-reviewed, and sometimes edited by faculty members. They are then marketed to faculty members by sales representatives, often through in-person visits, touting the quality and convenience of their product and often offering free sample texts and faculty editions. Publishers often work with faculty members to add convenience to their product, supplementing texts with lesson plans, quizzes, study guides, homework sections, tutorials, instructional videos, and more. Once the faculty member has selected, or adopted, the course materials to be used, they are submitted to the campus bookstore to be purchased and resold to students. Students using financial aid to purchase their course materials, in most cases, must purchase their

textbooks directly from the campus bookstore (United States Government Accountability Office, 2013).

Over the past three decades, the cost of textbooks has increased at an astronomical rate. The price of textbooks has risen at three times the rate of inflation over the past several decades (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, 2013). The average full time student at a four-year public college spends, according to the College Board, on average $1298 a year on textbooks and supplies (College Board, 2016).

What causes the high cost of textbooks, and who exactly is profiting from these costs? There are four main reasons contributing to the increasingly high costs of textbooks. The first is that new editions of textbooks are constantly released, both driving up costs and decreasing the resale value of used books. Another reason is that publishers regularly bundle textbooks with supplemental course materials, such as homework modules, CD-ROMs, and practice quizzes, disabling students from paying a comparatively lower cost for the text alone. A third important reason is that the textbook industry exists in a captive market. Faculty members select course materials, which are priced by publishers and bookstores, and students purchase the material. The student does not have the ability to search for the lowest price material that will suit their needs. Instead, they must purchase the assigned material to succeed in their class, regardless of cost. The student does not have the ability to "vote with their wallet", allowing publishers and bookstores to assign unnecessarily high costs to course materials. And finally, 80% of the total profit from textbook sales is from only five publishers, allowing for very little market competition in the industry and allowing for prices to be driven up by these major publishers (U.S. PIRG Education Fund & Student PIRGS,

2014). According to the National Association of College Stores, 77% of sales go directly to the publisher, while only 12% go to the author(s) (Kurtzleben, 2012).

Until recently, a large number of academic libraries were disinclined to build a comprehensive textbook collection because textbook support was not considered a major role for academic libraries. Students were seen as responsible for their own course materials, much as they were responsible for their own provision of notebooks and pencils. Historically, most published collection development guides and policies suggested that collection development funds should not be allotted towards a textbook collection for a number of legitimate reasons (Laskowski, 2007). Because of competition between limited funds for research, teaching, learning items, and textbooks, textbook purchases were often discouraged due to their inability to support curriculum over an extended period of time. Textbooks, available at high costs and with frequent new editions, naturally saw significant turnover between changing faculty members, new courses, and changing curriculum. In addition, textbooks often failed to provide any lasting value to research collections. Jeremy Sayles (1994), one of the few early advocates of the inclusion of textbooks into library collections, stated that "evidence and opinion suggest that it would be wise to eliminate the 'textbook' label, treat those resources as 'books', and apply to them the standard collection development criteria" (p. 81). However, the majority of articles and books on the subject and examples of collection development policies up until the early 2000's reflect the opinion that textbooks should not be included in the collection. For example, in an excerpt from the October 1997-2000 Collection Development Policy of Springfield College (Hoffman & Wood, 2005), the section on textbooks reads:

"The library does not ordinarily purchase textbooks used for courses at Springfield College, but focuses on supplementary resources to support the curriculum. However, textbooks may be selected if they enhance the collection as a whole." (p.55)

It was not until the past two decades that librarians began to impact the textbook arena. Heavily influenced by Student Government textbook resolutions, general student requests, and faculty assumptions that textbooks should be included in the collection, libraries began to explore ways to incorporate textbooks into their collections. While it remained unsustainable to purchase enough copies of every textbook, innovative librarians founds ways to provide access to course content for students (Hsieh & Runner, 2005). Between 2000 and 2008 and beyond, a large number of universities, including the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and Texas Tech, incorporated textbook reserve collections through a variety of funding methods. Some libraries depended on funds from their internal budgets, some re-used items already in their collections, and others collected textbooks from professors willing to donate. Carolyn Crouse (2008) reviewed a successful three-semester textbook reserve project at the University of Minnesota, facilitated in part with a small allotment from library funds but primarily by collecting extra copies of textbooks from professors. Crouse found that textbooks circulated at a significantly higher rate than the remainder of the collection.

Electronic course reserves (e-reserves), or course reserves, a process in which course materials are made electronically available to students, were initially developed independently from physical textbook collections. An article from Brett Butler (1996) discussed e-reserves as the latest "major discussion topic among American academic libraries" (p.194). Compared by some librarians and faculty to traditional course packs, e-reserves allowed the library to take a greater role in the direct involvement of teaching and learning resources. E-reserves has grown across libraries from home-grown, standalone systems to complex and integrated systems incorporating seamless processes, copyright permission procurement, and minimal work for faculty members interested in providing electronic access to course materials to students. While some libraries still prefer to use homegrown e-reserves systems, recent developments in software such as SIPX, Ereserves Plus, Docutek, Ares, and Blackboard have made procuring course reserves for students as simple as a faculty member submitting a syllabus, while offering librarians the opportunity to perform fair use analyses, purchase licenses and materials, and link to owned materials within one system.

Section Two

Alongside the evolution of the textbook and e-reserves system within academia and the library, another movement was taking shape and transforming: Open Educational Resources (OER), or freely and openly available course materials that have been released under a license allowing for their reuse and repurposing by others. Libraries have been profoundly affected by the technological changes of the last few decades, particularly the internet. We began to access resources online, and with these changes came many crises centered on intellectual property law. We no longer own information; we rent it with restrictions. This pay for access model creates a structure that makes it difficult for libraries to share among each other via interlibrary loan or online with our students in the e-reserves setting. Responding to these problems is a large part of what pulled us closer to the open movement.

The origin of OER as a concept is unknown, but does predate both Wikipedia and the Creative Commons by several years. David Wiley used the term *open content* in 1998 (Wiley & Gurrell, 2009), four years before MIT Open Courseware was launched, another landmark open learning project. Several large projects began in mid-late 2000's including OER Commons and Flatworld Knowledge. Now, large government initiatives have efforts to support and promote OER, including Affordable Learning Georgia and BC Campus. The OER movement has exploded into a plethora of diverse projects, creating an opportunity for librarians to provide assistance in locating and evaluating open materials.

The current state of Open Educational Resources is evolving in a promising way. Although the movement has not progressed through every level of our educational systems, significant inroads have been made in the creation, availability, and adoption of these resources through large well-funded projects, smaller collaborative efforts, and the hard work of many librarians as individuals. The proliferation of OER offers opportunities for newly-invested librarians to utilize content, resources, and tools generated by these large projects and other OER creators.

One large project that provides support for OER initiatives to many academic libraries in its state is Affordable Learning Georgia. This project began as a funded initiative at the start of the 2014 fiscal year, and has saved students over $9 million in textbook costs to date. Funded centrally through Georgia's academic library consortium, Galileo, this project has created several paths for faculty to make their classes affordable and has provided support for faculty and librarians alike. This support includes funding for grants that encourage faculty to adopt affordable learning and the provision of an expertly trained

librarian who travels the state to promote these programs and educate faculty and librarians about open educational resources (Gallant, 2015).

Affordable Learning Georgia has been tremendously beneficial to academic libraries in Georgia. Many of these libraries are small and do not have dedicated scholarly communications librarians (Affordable Learning Georgia, 2017). Having an expert available to inexperienced OER practitioners provides the necessary support for many librarians whose competency may be access services or reference, enabling them the ability to execute programs without requiring them to be the expert. Even if a library has a scholarly communications librarian, these librarians have other duties. Having well-crafted paths to help guide faculty toward OER adoption removes the time consuming barrier of research and planning for these initiatives.

Alas, we cannot create state-wide affordable learning projects overnight. Fortunately, valuable contributions are being made by individual librarians every day. For example, in 2013, Furman University, a small liberal arts college in South Carolina, hosted a series of scholarly communications workshops, including one about open access and open educational resources. These workshops were publicized to faculty and librarians at Furman as well as other libraries and library science students in South Carolina. They were live streamed as well as recorded, making the content easy to access. These workshops provided a convenient way for librarians at Furman and in South Carolina to access national experts and learn more about open access issues, particularly OER. These workshops were designed to inspire excitement in the attendees, encourage them to investigate the possibilities the open education movement brings to academia, and legitimize

these issues as competencies relevant to librarians (Wright, 2013). It's important to note that these workshops were planned and executed primarily by one librarian, Andrea Wright, Furman University's science librarian, highlighting the significant contributions an individual can make outside of primary job responsibilities. These workshops provided a breeding ground for collaboration and started discussions that were the genesis of two other initiatives, the South Carolina Library Association Scholarly Communications Interest Group (SCIG) and the CHEER collaboration.

The CHEER repository (http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cheer) began as a collaborative effort among Furman University, Clemson, and the University of South Carolina to provide a repository for scholarly communication tools for librarians. CHEER has since expanded to contain presentations, tools and resources for open educational resources. The repository provides the building blocks and tools that anyone can use to develop education and awareness programming at their institution. These tools are all licensed for reuse, allowing librarians to customize their elements to best fit the needs of the situation and audience. Being able to reuse the presentations, guides and handouts created by librarians and other experts will help librarians in their efforts to educate others about OER by making it easier to create their own tools and programming by working from these originals.

This collaboration was accomplished by a small working group of four librarians from these institutions, with Clemson University hosting this project in its institutional repository. To date, CHEER has had almost 2000 worldwide resource downloads (Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, 2016). Having tools that can be reused and revised helps lower the threshold for librarians starting an

OER project. It's much simpler and time-efficient to build on the work of others than it is to create new works. Using tools that have been vetted by people who are experts in open education helps lend confidence that we are using credible sources. The funding for this project came initially from a small grant from the Associated Colleges of the South, and was supplemented by a small amount of funding from the participating libraries, the University of South Carolina, Furman, and Clemson. Sharing the burden to create this repository among 4 librarians at different schools proved to be the right formula to create this resource.

Building on these and other efforts, the South Carolina Library Association formed a scholarly communications interest group (SCIG) in 2014. Since then, this group has maintained a steadily growing emphasis on educating librarians in South Carolina about scholarly communications issues, including OER. Many academic libraries in South Carolina are small or poorly funded, and thus face barriers when implementing new programs and services. Librarians in small or underfunded libraries are generalists by necessity, and open access is regarded by many as either niche or the purview of large or well-funded schools. As the open movement is still relatively new, many of the librarians in South Carolina have had neither the time nor the resources to educate themselves about these issues so that they could be aware of the substantial benefits that open educational resources bring to those they serve. This state library association has begun the educational process so that these libraries can avail themselves of the benefits these resources will give to their faculty and students.

The process of bringing this information to the state has been one of steady growth. During the first year, 2014, the main emphasis of SCIG was to ensure that scholarly communications

sessions were included in the state conference to provide an introduction to these issues. Building on that effort, in 2015, the group hosted an all-day preconference to the SCLA conference that included OER education, and also conducted a session about OER during the conference itself. For 2016, in addition to participation at the conference, SCLA was able to secure funding from the statewide academic library consortia, PASCAL, to cover the cost of several all-day workshops held in different regions of the state. These workshops included a session about OER to provide a solid and encouraging entry to this subject for these librarians.

Another project that has been started by the SCIG is the creation of toolkits for librarians to use to promote scholarly communications events, including Open Educational Resources Week. These toolkits will create opportunity for librarians to become involved with OER who don't have time or resources to create these outreach programs alone. By having librarians experienced in OER working with others who want to learn more, this toolkit project will bring a higher level of OER competency and involvement among librarians in the state. Several volunteers have been identified to lead the creation of these toolkits, which will mainly be compilations of what leaders in the field have already created. This project is low cost, high involvement, and manageable by a few expert librarians. It represents another way that individual librarians can contribute outside of large, well-funded programs.

Section Three

The recent history of textbooks at the University of South Carolina represents a case of merging the traditional textbook system with the OER movement within an academic library. It parallels movements by other libraries such as George Mason University and North Carolina State University (Ferguson, 2016).

Last modified on December 3, 2009, the USC Libraries Collection Development policy states that "The purchase of textbooks by the Library is discouraged as much as possible. Library funds are limited, and the purchase of textbooks may preclude the purchase of important monographs not otherwise available. Textbooks may, however, be acquired if they represent significant contributions to the presentation of a subject or if there is a scarcity of other material in the field" (University of South Carolina University Libraries, 2009).

While the collection development policy discourages purchasing textbooks for the collection, USC has made positive strides towards the inclusion of textbooks in a library service separate from our research collection. For over a century, with records dating back to 1912, the library has made available purchased or donated course materials for classroom use (University of South Carolina, 1912). In fall of 2007, the University of South Carolina library first moved towards an e-reserve service with the library discovery that Blackboard, University of South Carolina's learning management system, could support the input of content directly by librarians for faculty members. Although this popular service does not include the copyright management or tracking information that other e-reserve software may offer, it has served to provide a simple and direct process for including e-reserve content for faculty members.

While e-reserves is marketed to faculty members, in 2008, the library responded directly to the textbook needs of students. In response to a student government initiative, the library developed a textbook purchasing program. The library purchases at least one copy of all textbooks used for classes with over 100 students enrolled. While the financial cost of this program has been high, it is one of the

library's most utilized services. The program has seen dramatic growth since its inception. In the 2009-2010 fiscal year, 6,887 textbooks circulated, while in the 2014-2015 year, 23,414 textbooks were circulated. Total circulation has decreased by 30% from 2009 to 2015, while textbook circulation has increased by nearly 400%.

Librarians at the University of South Carolina recognize the necessity of this program and plan for its continuation into the future. We support the needs of students, and, in the current academic environment, a vast majority of University of South Carolina faculty members use traditional textbooks in their courses. However, due to the high cost of this service and the subsequent negative impact on our remaining library budget, and because we recognize the detrimental effect that the high costs of textbooks have on students, we realized that it was our ethical and professional responsibility to take on a transformative role in changing the textbook system to an open model. Intending to continue our current program to help students currently affected by the high costs of textbooks but motivated by the movements made by institutions worldwide towards Open Educational Resources (OER), we initiated the process of reviewing the current state of OER, ranging from large to small scale projects devoted to the funding, creation, promotion, and organization of these open resources.

Moving beyond the library's historical exclusion of textbooks based on the collection development policy towards the standing e-reserve and reserve textbook programs, USC librarians recently became interested in the subject of OER. It was not until 2015 that we truly began to pursue the promotion of open learning materials across campus.

In February of 2015, representatives from the University of South Carolina University

Libraries and the Student Body Government were invited to attend the Partnerships to Advance Open Access Initiatives at SEC Universities, hosted by the Texas A&M University Libraries. With no scholarly communication structure within our library in place at the time, two librarians in unrelated departments, Interlibrary Loan and Library Systems, were invited to attend this event. Motivated by a series of expert speakers and activities, the librarians and student body representatives returned motivated to encourage the use of OER across campus. While initially intimidating to align our goals with other institutions that had created successful, high budget OER programs, we realized that even with our limited budget and resources, our skills were appropriate to lead the campus towards the adoption of open learning materials. In fact, as organized researchers, skilled programmers, and experts in information retrieval, the library staff had the necessary skills to develop, implement, and lead a comprehensive OER program across campus.

The first necessary step to creating an OER program was to secure campus allies and administrative support. Bolstered by the recent SEC workshop, we worked with student government to pass a resolution supporting the use of open educational resources by faculty on campus. Student support granted a level of legitimacy to our program that reinforced our claim that an OER program administered by the library was gaining support on campus. With student support, we approached library administration with a detailed proposal to begin an OER program that would award selected faculty members with prize money to review an OER and consider it for use in the classroom. Knowing that we would be unable to obtain funding similar to some other institutions for this program, we were realistic in what amount would be both reasonable

within our library budget and sufficient to motivate and reward participating faculty members.

The proposal included background information on programs implemented by peer institutions (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, 2017), a thorough timeline, step-by-step processes of the program, funding amounts, and details on overseeing and administering the program. We also clarified that this program was intended as a pilot, giving us some leeway to adjust the process as it unfolded, to provide room for error, and to revisit and adjust to the successes and failures of the program after the first year.

The library administration was receptive to our proposal for multiple key reasons: it was backed by students, it was planned with a low budget, and librarians were able to fit the creation and administration of the program within the course of their usual job duties without sacrificing other responsibilities. In fact, the first two years of the program proved highly successful: the library spent a mere $2,800 on eight faculty awards, resulting in over $38,000 of cost savings for students. We were able to adjust and renew the program for another year, while planning to offer awards for faculty members for many more years.

While we operated on a small scale, we believe that we learned many lessons that are important for other librarians interested in creating an OER program with a small budget and no library employees exclusively dedicated to scholarly communications or OER. While each library will find the course of action best suited for its needs, this model represents one that could be easily replicated by most libraries. We will provide a number of practical tips for other libraries to create their own OER program.

First and foremost, seek out library employees who are suited to and willing to dedicate time to open materials. It initially surprised us to discover that almost everyone within the library had at least one piece of the skillset necessary to work with OER. For example, circulation staff has experience working with faculty on textbook and electronic reserves, interlibrary loan employees regularly work with copyright and open access, reference librarians are well suited to search for and evaluate course materials for faculty members, collection development librarians are experienced in locating and adding materials that are curriculum-relevant to the collection, and systems staff have the technological knowledge to create supporting websites and promotional materials. Find the combination of employees that is best suited to your institution's particular needs. In our case, based on interest and current job responsibilities, an interlibrary loan librarian and the head of systems were the right fit to lead the program, with support from circulation, reference, and collection development librarians. Logistically, we found that it was necessary for one person to serve as a primary leader for the program. The leader could hold any position, but must be able to manage a team of people, maintain timelines, and have experience with outreach to faculty.

Secondly, locate your allies. A program performed in a library vacuum will be far less successful than one supported by outside organizations. Garner student support by arranging meetings or workshops for student leaders and by providing tips on ways in which they can support and promote OER. Find faculty members on an individual basis who might be able to serve as examples or success stories to highlight in your promotional materials. Many OER providers are willing to provide lists of faculty members within your institution using their materials. These faculty

members are natural allies and may be willing to co-write an editorial with you, or to be interviewed by student news sources. If possible, engage institutional administration. A letter of support from a high ranking official grants legitimacy and acts to motivate faculty members beyond the ways in which a librarian might provide motivation. Many institutions have found monetary partners in provost and research offices, which could help to alleviate budget strain on the library.

Thirdly, have reasonable expectations for implementing the program. Know the amount of money that could motivate a faculty member within your campus, and be willing to adjust your expectations accordingly. We knew that offering a low amount of money could possibly lead to a low number of applicants for the program. Because of our low budget, we were very proactive in promoting the program and in expressing the many ways in which participation in the program could provide significant benefits beyond the monetary aspect.

Fourth, be absolutely clear to administration and participating faculty members that your initial program is a pilot. You will make mistakes, and you will need to make adjustments during and after the program, or may even need to completely rewrite your program. If faculty members are aware that they are participating in a pilot, they will be more willing to accept changes and provide helpful feedback. Be receptive to this feedback from faculty in the program, and be willing to adjust the program accordingly. We recommend surveying your faculty after the completion of the program and again after a semester or a year. This feedback will help you to shape a long-term successful program. Above all else, don't be discouraged if your program is not an immediate success. It takes

time to garner support, gain word-of-mouth recognition, and to form campus partners.

Finally, consult the work of others. Many librarians have forged the path of implementing OER projects (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, 2017). Take advantage of their experiences. Most OER advocates are strong proponents of sharing their work and are eager to provide examples to others. There is a cornucopia of resources available for librarians newly interested in the field of OER. A few highly recommended top resources for building an OER program include:

- SPARC Open Education (http://sparcopen.org/open-education)

- Copyright in Higher Education Elements Resources (CHEER) (http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cheer)

- Association of Research Libraries SPEC Kit 351: Affordable Course Content and Open Educational Resources (http://publications.arl.org/Affordable-Course-Content-Open-Educational-Resources-SPEC-Kit-351)

- Affordable Learning Georgia (http://affordablelearninggeorgia.org)

With the use of these resources, all librarians, regardless of skillset, time-restraints, and budgets, have the ability to make a profound impact across the college campus through OER.

Conclusion

It is the responsibility of librarians to merge the current needs of patrons while acting as catalysts of change within the textbook system. It is likely that librarians will continue support for traditional textbook reserve and e-reserve systems. However, with the support of the

library community, librarians in all situations from any background can become involved in OER efforts.

South Carolina still has much untapped potential to help our educators learn about and adopt OER. Individually, librarians can better educate themselves through workshops or by reading about OER. Academic librarians can work with faculty to help them learn how to find, evaluate, and adopt OER. Efforts by individuals can be facilitated by using works shared through CHEER to create programming, workshops, handouts, and guides.

For libraries, the opportunities are even greater. Libraries can choose to provide time and funding to educate staff. Productive efforts can come via library committees or specifically-added OER job responsibilities. Academic libraries can work within their institutions to help bring OER forward as a sustainable solution to the textbook cost crisis. Libraries can help provide awards for deserving faculty who adopt OER for their classes.

Organizations should also play a strong role. Library associations can host workshops and ensure OER sessions are represented at conferences. Interest groups can help foster cross-pollination of ideas as well as provide a home for OER initiatives such as regional workshops. Funds from organizations could be allocated to many types of projects, from educating librarians and their faculty to funding creation of OER. Both libraries and organizations have the opportunity to join groups that advocate and support OER such as SPARC or the Open Textbook Network so that they can avail themselves of the expertise and support of these and similar organizations. Librarians working together will strengthen existing ties and forge new ones, allowing librarians to help each other through mentoring and sharing ideas.

The range of library efforts to disseminate and promote open educational resources are as different and as varied as these libraries themselves. It's important to note that libraries are all limited by their resources; however, this does not abdicate them from their responsibilities to meet the needs of their patrons. It's difficult to argue that these open resources could not play a strong role in almost any academic institution. Libraries should realize that budgets or partnerships with large projects are not the only path to supporting the open movement. Our time and effort are also important resources, and many librarians are working hard to share their efforts so that others can reuse, alter or build on these works. It's far easier to start with help from others.

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