Focusing on our past, our present, and our future

A semi-annual publication of the Department of Communication Studies, in the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication, California State University, Northridge CA 91330-8257

Communication studies receives major gift



Robert Barbera

eal estate investor and philanthropist Robert Barbera has established a \$150,000 endowment to support the Forensics program at California State University, Northridge. The Robert Barbera Endowment in Forensics will be used to underwrite the Collegiate Forensics Invitational Tournament each year and other debate

programs as appropriate in the Department of Communication Studies. The \$150,000 endowment is in addition to the \$7,500 gift Mr. Barbera gave to underwrite the cost of the first Robert Barbera Intramural Debate Tournament in the Spring of 2007. The focus of this year's debate will be "eminent domain," a subject that has received national attention, given recent court rulings. Barbera is chairman of the Board of the Americanism Educational League which also has selected the topic of "eminent domain" for its national student essay competition.

Barbera's latest gift, the largest of such endowment to the Communication Studies' Forensics Program, is designed to encourage young people to become more engaged on issues of civic and national importance and to create an opportunity and a platform for such engagement.

Barbera is a longtime supporter of the university. Last year, he established a \$52,000 endowment to support performances by students in the Music department. He has provided support for the university's Italian studies program in the College of Humanities. He also serves on the Imagine the Arts Campaign development committee to raise money for the building of the university's

new performing arts center.

Collegiate forensics, for which Barbera has bestowed his latest gift, is one of the most rigorous academic extra-curricular activities a college student can engage in during their time at CSUN. Forensics students spend hundreds of hours preparing and competing in these events which Communication Studies' Forensics has hosted on this campus for several years. At the CSUN Invitational, students from all over the country compete in the following events: policy debate, parliamentary debate, extemporaneous speaking, impromptu, after dinner speaking, communicational analysis, duo interpretation, dramatic interpretation, prose, programmed oral interpretation, persuasive, and informative speaking. The Invitational is a widely attended event as evidenced by the fact that in past years, the Communication Studies Department has utilized over 100 rooms on the campus to host this competition. Hosting the tournament affords CSUN Forensics the opportunity to give back to forensics colleagues from other institutions, while simultaneously elevating the visibility of the forensics program, the department, and the university at both the regional and the national levels.

CHR gets funding from the Mayor

he department's Center for Human Relations (CHR) has received about \$200,000 from the City of Los Angeles to support a summer youth program in Arts, Media, and Communication beginning this summer. The intensive five-week program offers 200 youth (ages 14-21) from underrepresented groups an academic enrichment curriculum that is designed to develop competencies in oratorical and intercultural

skills, journalism, cinema and television arts, and in music production through practical exercises and experiences at CSUN. These experiences in turn will provide career pathways for students wishing to continue in the arts, media, and communication fields. CHR offers a certificate in communication and conflict management for working professionals in collaboration with the Tseng College of Extended Learning.



Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

Communication Studies gets grant to pilot online public speaking course

The department of communication studies has received more than \$65,000 from the provost's office to support the design and delivery of an alternative hybrid delivery mode (on-line and faceto-face) for its Communication Studies 151/Lab), Fundamentals of Public Speaking. Initially to be designed as a pilot, the program when fully imple-

mented, is expected to improve learning outcomes, accommodate increased demand, and maximize current resources, including space. Communication Studies 151/Lab, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, is a high-enrollment three-unit course that fulfills the Section A.4 Oral Communications General Education requirement at the University.

Average total enrollment in the course each year is around 1350 students (675 students per semester). In Spring semester of 2007, demand for the course increased by an additional 161 students who could not be accommodated. The development of the pilot will begin in Fall 2007 with delivery planned for Spring 2008.

Alums present research in San Antonio, Texas

Ten former students from the department presented papers at the 91st Annual Convention of the National Communication Association (NCA) which took place in San Antonio, Texas in November 2006. Some of these former graduates earned their B.A. or M.A. from the department while others earned both their B.A. and M.A. from the department. These alums and their current affiliations are:

Marcy Rose Chvasta Michael leVan Daniel Makagon Lesa Lockford Jon Torn Noemi Marin Alex Lyon Tony Docan Chris Cruz-Boone Nathan Carter

University of South Florida (Assistant Professor)
University of South Florida (Visiting Professor)
DePaul University, Chicago (Assistant Professor)
Bowling Green State University (Associate Professor)
Penn State University
Florida Atlantic University (Assistant Professor)
University of Arkansas, Little Rock
University of Washington (Ph.D. candidate)
California State University, Bakersfield (Lecturer)
California State University, San Bernadino (Assistant Professor)

Dr. Camara joins department

Sakile Camara, who holds a doctorate in Interpersonal Communication from Ohio State University, has joined the department. Camara was assistant professor of communication studies at the University of Houston, Texas, before joining the department in fall 2006. She brings to the department an extensive array of experiences in teaching, research and consulting. Camara's teaching interest reflects her research interest which centers on the relationship between uncertainty reduction and forms of oppression.

Camara currently works on several research projects with the Africana Research Collaborative (ARC) focusing on social cognition and otherness related messages, scripted bodies in the work-place, lesbian constructions of identity in online fora, and uncertainty reduction strategy use in racist, sexist, homophobic, and disability perceived interactions. She has more than 30 scholarly writings and presentations on these issues.

Camara's consulting work focuses on promoting more effective communication in the workplace. She has worked with non-profit community-based organizations on this issue; conducted retreats for organizations; taught kids *Greek Stepping* to promote drug-free and non-violent environments in schools,



conducted pre- and post-test for after school prograpms, and prepared outcome reports about these programs.

Faculty and graduate students share research

Several faculty and current graduate students presented papers, chaired sessions, or served as respondents at various conferences and fora, including the National Communication Association (NCA) Annual Convention held in San Antonio, Texas in November 2006. Others also shared their articles in refereed journals and one faculty member completed her doctoral work.

At NCA, Christie Logan presented a performance, "Rebirthing Mother: Recuperating the past in image, story and song" for the panel, Homesteading: Re-performing place and time. She also served as a respondent to the performance "Incident at Thompson Slough" by Lake Superior State University; chaired the program Flows and convulsions: the city as performance" developed by and featuring alumnus Daniel Makagon, and honorary alumnus Michael leVan; and completed her year as Chair of the Performance Studies Division of NCA. In May, 2006, Logan presented a paper titled: "Re-storying identity through narratives of place and time" at the interdisciplinary conference, Narrative Matters, in Nova Scotia, Canada. In October, she was a Guest Artist and Scholar for the Superior Festival VI: Directors on Directing at Lake Superior State University in Sault ste. Marie, MI. She also gave a keynote lecture, "What I've learned about Directing," and led a workshop, "Envisioning and developing a mise en scene: Non-dramatic literature and performance."

In Nova Scotia, Canada, **Elizabeth Berry** presented a paper titled "Pedagogical story telling" at the Narrative Matters conference held May 24-27, 2006. Berry was also honored by the university's Women's Studies Department as a "Phenomenal Woman" at its biannual Phenomenal Women event. Others honored were Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Radio personality Pat Morrison. (*See story on page 7*)

In St Louis, Missouri, Graduate students **Judy Battaglia Roxeanne Banuelos** and **Rina Canzona** presented papers at the Annual conference of the Organization for the study of communication, language, and gender, held October 12-16, 2006. The papers were presented at the Panel on "Challenging Feminism's Third Wave: The new generation of feminism and the rising fourth wave."

At NCA, **Kathryn Sorrells** and **Gordon Nakagawa** presented a paper titled "Re-mapping Intercultural Communication in the context of globalization."

At NCA, Rebecca Litke presented a paper titled "Disability issues in the Nonverbal course: On (dry) skin and (no) hair/extending the discussion on appearance." Litke also was recently re-elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors for the National Eczema Association, where she also attended this year's meeting.

In 2006, Jim Hasenauer was involved in speaking, training and conference participation events as follows: leadership training with Board of Directors of Minnesota Mountain

Bike Association, Minneapolis, MN October 23; "Balancing recreation and land preservation: Managing the environmental and social impacts of mountain biking" presentation to the Sustainable Sault Coalition, Sault Ste. Marie, MI. October 13; "User Conflict on Public Lands" guest lecture to Professor Childs' class in Outdoor Recreation at Lake Superior State University, Sault Ste. Marie, October 13; leadership training with the Board of Directors of Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association, Asheville, North Carolina, August 12; "Building a strong partnership for trails" presentation to a panel at the World Mountain Bike Conference, Whistler, BC, Canada, June; and "Partnering for Conservation" presentation to the plenary session of World Mountain Bike Conference, Whistler, BC, Canada, June 22. Hasenauer has also been active with the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism, which is planning a conference on Outdoor Recreation and Public Health to be held in Sacramento in December 2007.

Peter Nwosu authored two articles titled Indexing Africa: Revisiting the issue of knowledge production and distribution, In Africa Media Review, Special Issue, Volume 14, Number 1, 2006 (with Elizabeth Le Roux, University of South Africa) and Indexing for communication journals in Africa: The global knowledge economy and the politics of knowledge distribution, also In Africa Media Review, Special Issue, Volume 14, Number 1, 2006. Nwosu co-authored the first ever study on grade inflation at CSUN in 25 years (with Professor Shirley Svorny, Economics Department, and Professor James Sefton, History Department). Titled: "Grade Inflation at California State University, Northridge: 1990-2004—A First Look," the study was designed to engage faculty in continuing efforts to improve the quality of instruction and the value of degree programs at the university. The study can be found on the website of the Council of Chairs: http://www.csun.edu/councilofchairs. Nwosu also was keynote speaker at a breakfast meeting of Los Angeles Business and Industry Leaders on the topic "Managing differences through communication" hosted by CSUN Tseng College of Extended Learning, and presented another paper titled: "That's not fair: Some communication and cultural considerations for managing differences," at the Southern California Mediators Association Annual Conference, held November 4th in Pasadena, California. In addition, Nwosu was Special Consultant for the five-year Program Review in Communications for California State University, Bakersfield (2006) and continued his service as Delegate-at-Large, Legislative Assembly, Western States Communication Association.

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What's Buzzing? Alums in Action

What's buzzing is the new name for the section of your newsletter that focuses on what you are doing. It is still your spot--to share the wonderful things about what's buzzing in your neck of the wood. As always, we are excited to learn and to celebrate with you, and to share the info with the more than 4,000 readers who receive Alumnews. These alumni sent us the following:

Mike Blair (B.A., 1997) who owns Plumbing Solutions Inc. writes "Thank you for a fantastic education. People always ask 'What do you do with a communications degree, you're still a plumber.' The ability to communicate to customers the scope of work required to realistically meet their expectations is the most valuable tool I possess. With a communications degree, I went to work for myself in 1997 as a plumbing contractor. Currently with my oldest son, we have eight full time employees, and an extremely diverse customer base. Our core market is commercial and industrial work, but we have a percentage of residential jobs mainly through the customers and contractors that we work with. Our customers include film developing laboratories, Lithograph facilities, Surgery centers, and large retail chains."

Amy London (M.A., 2002) has received early tenure at Oxnard College.

Julio Cesar Ortiz (B.A., Cum Laude, 2000) who has spent five years in Phoenix, Arizona working with KTVW-33 Univision Arizona has transferred to KMEX-34 Univision to continue work as a reporter covering the Spanish-speaking audience.

Sachi Sekimoto (M.A., 2005) is working on her Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico with full funding for three years. She is also a Teaching Associate in the department.

Sheri Margolis, nee Sedlik (B.A. 1990) writes: I always enjoy reading the Alumni news and decided it was time to send you my update. My first job after graduating from CSUN was with a feature film production company. After deciding that I wanted to work in publicity, I accepted a job for the Walt Disney Company (Buena Vista Pictures Marketing) as a publicity coordinator in the broadcast publicity department promoting such films as "Pocahontas," "101 Dalmatians," "The Rock," and "Con Air," among others. Since then, I have worked as a publicist and subsequently manager of publicity for USA Network. I was responsible for publicity efforts for several original movies, series and specials and received a Television Publicity Executive Committee (TPEC) award for best publicity campaign for the season of "Monk." I have also freelanced for 20th Century Fox Television. I married a wonderful man in June 2004 and gave birth to a beautiful baby girl in November 2005. Staying home taking care of my daughter is the most incredible and rewarding job I've ever had. When she gets older, I will probably freelance part-time from home—until then, I'm treasuring the time I have with my family. Please say hello to Gordon Nakagawa who was my favorite professor.

Kari Spencer-Hollis (B.A., 1978) is the Regional Director for the United Way of Inland Valleys, managing the satellite office in Temecula, California for 11 years. "This position," she writes, "has provided avenue to develop speaking skills first learned in the speech and persuasion courses taken at CSUN. I'm considered a "golden orator" today by my peers.... I graduated with a BA in Speech Communication with a Public Relations option. The PR option was new and not well developed at the time. I'm sure it is much more extensive today. I've worked on some major events: San Diego Super Bowl XXIII Task Force (1986-88), and America's Cup Organizing Committee-San Diego (1990). I've literally delivered hundreds of oral presentations to businesses and community-based organizations. I am nearing the end of my year-long term as President of my local Rotary Club, the oldest and largest international service club dedicated to providing "service above self." I can't say I 've achieved great wealth, but I believe I have been truly successful by having a career which has been rewarding on so many levels and knowing I have helped raise millions of dollars for charity. Thank you CSUN, and especially Dr. Elizabeth Berry, my mentor and advisor at CSUN.

Jesus "Jess" Duran (B.A., 2000) now works as the spokesperson for ACT, the organization that administers the college entrance exam, based in Iowa City, Iowa. "I'm loving the job here," he writes, "but truly miss being out in the field chasing stories." Prior to joining ACT, Jesus worked as a television reporter in Palm Springs, Los Angeles, San Diego, New York, among other cities.

Jean Weber (B.A., 2003) is Management Assistant to the Dean of the College of Engineering at Boise State University, where she is developing guidelines for gender communication for faculty in the college. "I continue to be grateful for the excellent education I received from the faculty at CSUN," she writes.

Julia Johnson (M.A 1992) formerly Assistant Professor at University of Rhode Island is now at Southwestern University.

Derek White (B.A., 1968) is the founder of Residential Inventory Specialists, a company that assists homeowners in protecting their most valued assets. He has more than 38 years of experi-

ence in a variety of senior management roles centered on retail operations and merchandising management.

Suzanne Lopez Luetjen (B.A., 1994) is Director of the College Bookstore at Mt San Antonio College. She was formerly at University of California, Los Angeles, where she served as Manager of Custom Publishing. She is active in state and national committees of college bookstores and has presented several educational sessions at these conferences.

Chris Cruz-Boone (M.A., 2006) has accepted a lecturer position at California State University, Bakersfield.

Laura Hauser (B.A., 1987) is a management and training consultant with Leadership Strategies, International, based in Santa Clarita, California. She writes: "My roots in communication studies through CSUN serves as a strong foundation in my personal and professional work. In March 2006, I traveled to China with my Pepperdine University graduate students who are earning their masters degree in Business and Organizational Development. I serve as a commissioner for the City of Santa Clarita appointed by the City Council and the Mayor. My most recent article, "Team Innovation", was published in 2006 in the Wisdom of ASTD-LA 2006 Celebrating 60 Years. This article can be found at www.leadership-strategies.com."

"I am not a technophobe"

By Karen Peck

nd, I am not what anyone who is in the know would call "technologically competent" or "technologically savvy." Maybe you can relate?

Last semester 2006 (as a result of a schedule conflict), I had an opportunity to finally push through some of my computer-induced fears and take two of my COMS 356 classes and one COMS 321 class online to WebCT, all offered as hybrid courses. That is to say that I physically met with students Monday and Wednesday each week and we held virtual or online Friday classes.

A close look at our Intercultural Communication and Rhetorical Discourse course objectives helped to identify important challenges of each course and seek answers to these challenges with online activities. Let me begin by separating what the challenges were for each course, and then offering the pedagogical "solutions" introduced.

COMS 356/two challenges addressed:

1. Because both culture and communication are what we are and what we do every moment of our lives, to adopt a truly working definition of culture and a definition and deep understanding of what constitutes authentic, normative communication is a challenge for every student. These concepts must be reintroduced again and again and in real world daily interactions in order for students to develop necessary awareness for lasting individual change. One, quick chapter in class hardly offers enough exposure.

2. Race and ethnicity are difficult topics to discuss, personally

apply, and institutionally recognize. Students' good intentions and empathy limit their classroom contributions, through fear of embarrassing themselves and/or hurting others in the classroom. For many students, this may be the first time they have discussed these issues in public.

COMS 356/solutions adopted: Since the super majority of our students are comfortable privately and safely "communicating" with their monitor screens, I had students respond to online prompts. Early in the course, students submitted assignment/responses to me, and later, to a public class discussion board. The significant advantage to students responding online was that I asked for cultural/communication examples to be included through online research. Simply attaching a link to the research and providing a summary of the information they'd located continually drew student focus outside themselves. Noting the historical, geographical, institutional network, biological, interpersonal communication norms for each cultural example reinforced predominant U.S. cultural communication expectations, as well as norms and expectations for cultures not the U.S. An additional advantage was that this assignment offered opportunities to discuss the credibility and reliability of various online sources. Thus, students had numerous opportunities to find examples and interact with and test out their early definitions of culture and communication.

As for the second 356 challenge, I was

fortunate to discover a PBS website that offers background information, short video clips, and interactive exercises that engagingly reinforce and extend textbook material. For instance, one interactive exercise asks students to play a "match" game. The game includes photos of 16 individuals where students are asked to accurately match each individual by their race. (You may try this exercise at pbs.org. Also, please check out the profile offered of the lives of two individuals in Southern California. I have never before seen a more startling example to share with students of the possible consequences of institutional racism.) Now, had I tried this exercise in class, I suspect I'd have garnered little student interaction, for reasons previously noted. Yet, having students perform this online exercise offers them a "safety net" that I believe respectfully considers students' anxiety about the topic. Later, I was surprised during classroom debriefing of the exercise, how many students noted that they are OFTEN asked, "What are you?" Individual struggles over discovering and meaningfully answering this one question could keep us busy an entire semester in 356!

COMS 321/three challenges addressed: 1. Diagnostic testing is required to determine students' writing weaknesses. Regardless of whether instructors "should

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be" addressing remedial writing in a 300 level course, the reality is that an efficient method of evaluating student writing competency is necessary. 2. Learning how to conduct academically sound research and learning how to evaluate what is then credible online research is essential. Students try to complete all of their coursework without leaving their computers. How to successfully accomplish this task AND complete logically and ethically sound work is a necessary 321 objective. 3. Peer reviews of student work (e.g., reviews of assignments crafted to meet course objectives) need to be more efficiently completed, in terms of student thoroughness WHILE not using so much class time presently allocated to peer reviews.

COMS 321/solutions adopted: 1. Diagnostic testing: Textbook publishers are now offering online diagnostic writing tests, creatively formulated to allow students to pinpoint their writing weakness areas and work individually with their instructors utilizing individualized crafted writing programs. I adopted "Catalyst" to use with the text, Reading and Writing Short Arguments by WilliamVesterman. Unfortunately, this "solution" turned out to be a bit of a nightmare, since online access was frequently interrupted. This spring semester I am relying instead on a CD that is bundled with the text, where students are able to load their own material and send their completed diagnostic tests to me online, where results are catalogued individually for each student.

2. Here, I enlisted the assistance of our Communication Studies Librarian. Stu-

dents worked on their assignments at the library technology room, with instruction on how to access academic sources online. Our librarian Kathy Dabbours, follows class assignments I provide her ahead of time, to direct students to appropriate research. One student wrote in an end-ofthe semester note to me, that he was proud of the fact that he in fact had not been allowed to graduate with a degree not knowing how to find, evaluated and incorporate academic journal material into his writing (phew - small successes are still gratifying J). 3. Peer reviews: This was another feature of offering an online I was excited about -- that classes would conduct online peer reviews of student work. Disappointingly, this element of my hybrid online course also did not materialize, sorry to say, mostly due to my under preparation. Since I didn't clearly enough understand how to complete this task online (and, don't rely too heavily on your publisher rep to guide you through new endeavors online, either. I've found that my rep at least, was LESS technologically savvy than I am!), it became clear that I couldn't assign and/or teach it to my class. Although we wound up completing the reviews with class time, I now know that they CAN be completed online quite simply AND using the virtual/online classroom day for this activity is a perfect fit.

Last notes (AKA what I learned and would change). 1). I would definitely recommend spending even more time with the online resource folks in preparing the course content AND course assignments. A couple of my assignments needed significant fixing for this upcoming semester, yet, the assignments I had online resource

folks helping me, were "homerun: assignments. They have confronted and helped to solve so many instructor problems! 2). Form online student chat groups early in the semester. Students work together well to identify assignment/course concerns and problems and it is much more likely that you will hear about the problems if students are talking with and working together early on in the semester. 3. Be sure that assignment directions given in class exactly match directions written online! 4. Keep an icon on your WebCT homepage with syllabus highlights/due dates. Wonderful because this schedule can always be current and accurate. 5. Using Fridays (of Monday-Wednesday-Friday) classes for students to attend speeches, complete group work, attend library orientation, visit career center orientations, listen to invited campus guests (JADE, ACT, etc.) I find is an excellent extension to "traditional" classroom meetings, and answers the tired student lament that school lacks real world referent! WebCT is, overall (there are exceptions!) user-friendly system. Now that Blackboard has purchased WebCT, AND that we have a friendly, interactive duo in Kate and Randall daily (1-5pm, call ahead) over in Sierra Hall 402 Online Resource Lab to help you get up and running, I doubt it's going to get much easier to take your classes online. An added personal benefit is elevated technological self esteem. After all, gaining competence in a culturally valued area does feels good, especially if you now consider yourself less than "technologically savvy."

*Karen Peck has been part time faculty in the department of communication studies since 1998.

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Ben Attias received the "Best Paper in Media Studies Award" at the 2006 Annual Convention of the Western States Communication Association held in February in Palm Springs, California. The award also carried a cash prize of \$100.00.

Tony Perucci received the 2005-2006 CSUN Exceptional Creative Accomplishment Award. The prestigious award given by the university each year carries with it a stipend of \$1000.00, and is in recognition of Tony's work as the Artistic Director of the Department's Performance Ensemble.

Daisy Lemus has completed her Ph.D. in Organizational Communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Sakile Camara, Daisy Lemus, and Sylvia Symonds facilitated the first-ever online discussion forum as part of CSUN's Speak Your Mind Lecture Series, an exciting new program that brings discussion of compelling national and global issues to the university. The facilitated online discussion forum involving the use of the technology Elluminate, focused on the Middle East, and involved students from various disciplines and programs on campus.

Picture News

Elizabeth Berry Honored

The Women Studies Department recently honored Elizabeth Berry as the Phenomenal Woman for 2006. Berry helped found that department. Now faculty emeritus, she started the annual faculty retreat when she was Faculty President. A recipient of the university's Distinguished Teaching award, she created the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the New Faculty Orientation program (both programs are now with the new Center for Innovative and Engaged Learning Opportunity-CIELO). Berry joined CSUN faculty in 1973. Other recipients of the 2006 Phenomenal Woman Award include Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Radio personality Pat Morrison.



Students in Brazil



Two of our Communication students Nick Felix and James Gatts spent one month on an educational, cultural exchange in Brazil in Fall 2006. Here they share dinner with a host family.

Your news spot

Name:
Grad year/ Degree:
Address:
Email Address:
Type of Work:
Personal News:

Please mail to: Peter O. Nwosu, Department of Communication Studies
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18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge CA 91330-8257 or Email:pnwosu@csun.edu

What do you do with your Communication Studies degree?

Students frequently ask the above question. If you are a Communication Studies alumnus and you graduated from our department, we would love to hear from you. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing... we would like to showcase what you are doing and to show our students what they too can do with a Communication Studies degree! Send us your business cards; we would like to place them in the display case in the hallways of our department. Please forward your cards to: Editor, AlumNews, Department of Communication Studies, California State University, Northridge 18111 Nordhoff, Northridge, CA 91330-8257.

We're on the web: www.csun.edu/coms

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