

Between the Stacks and the Statehouses: Archivists Perceptions of Legislation and the Workplace

Preliminary Results

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2024 SAA Research Forum

A dark blue diagonal graphic that starts from the bottom left corner and extends towards the top right corner, creating a triangular shape in the bottom right of the slide.

About our perception survey



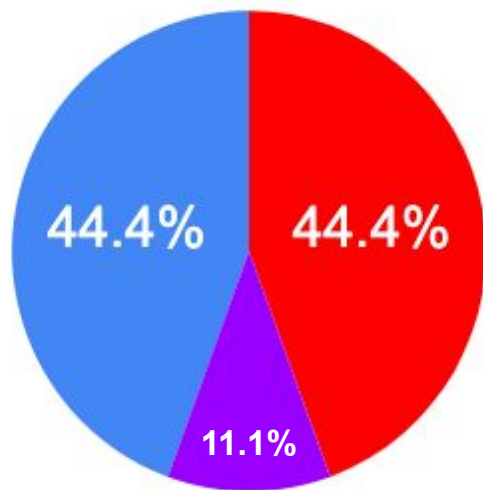
Recruited participants via SAA
Announcements

Live between March 13th and
April 5th, 2024

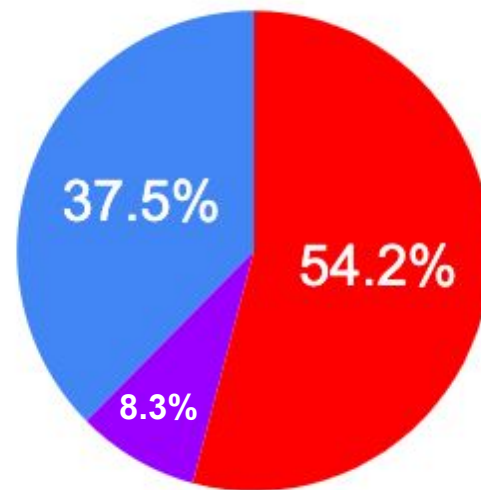
Garnered **49** respondents

Potential response bias

Demographics: Working state

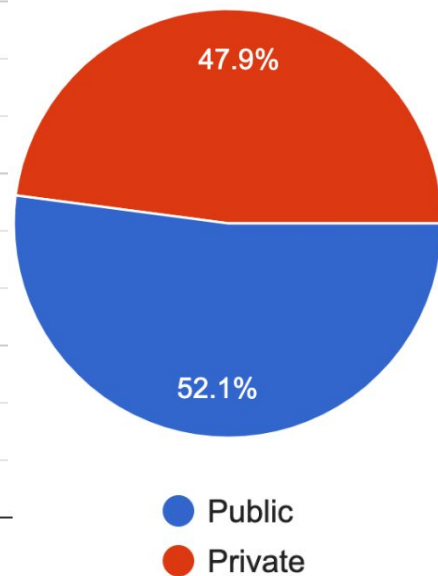
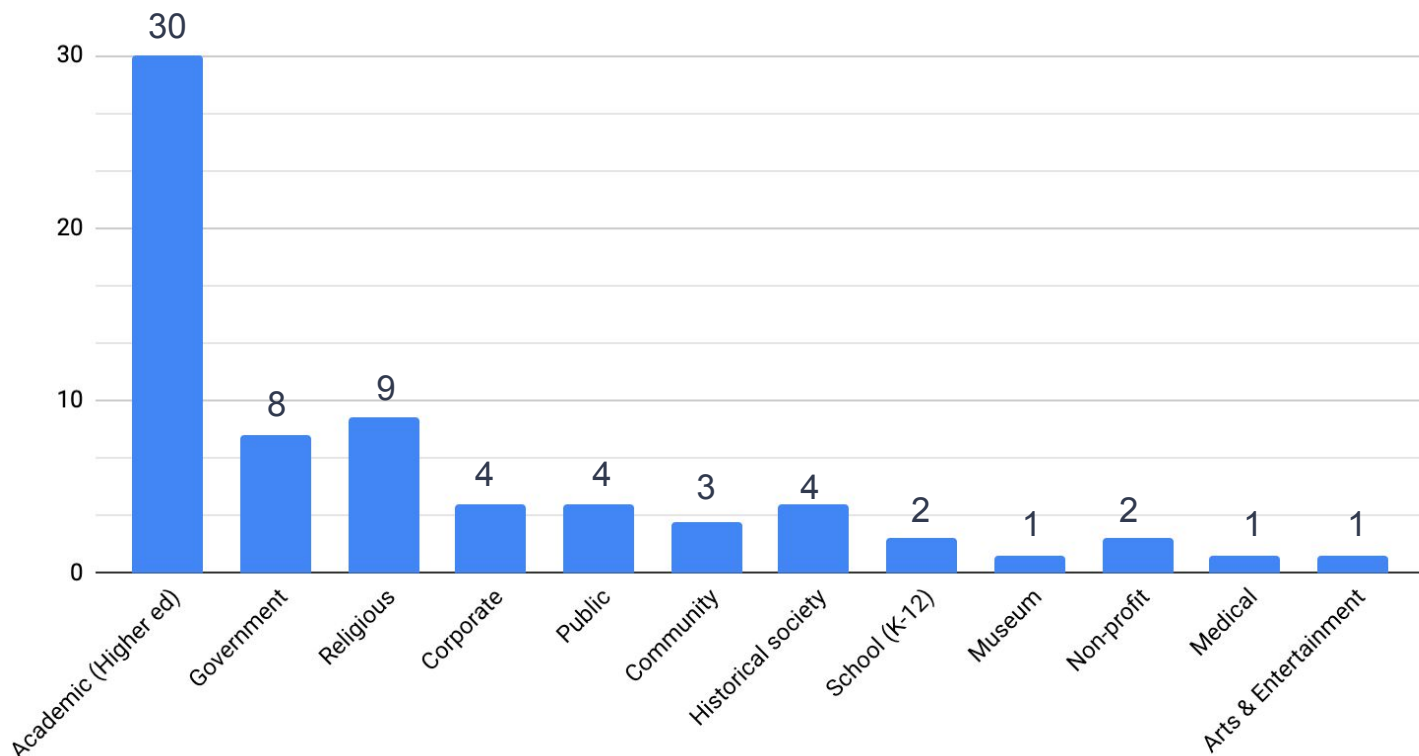


States **represented** in
survey responses
(26 + Washington D.C.)

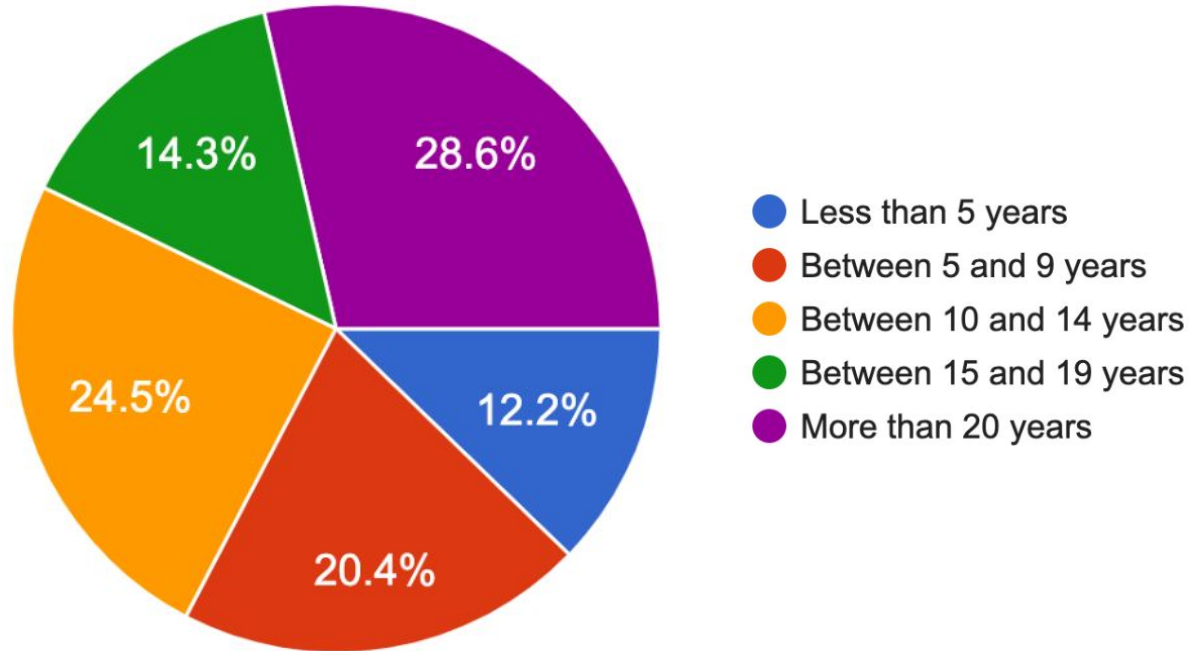


States **NOT** represented in
survey responses
(24 + Puerto Rico)

Demographics: Type of repository



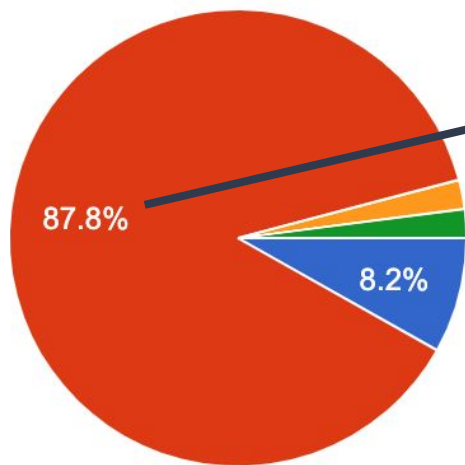
Demographics: Years of experience in the field



Feelings about the political climate

5. Please select the statement that best describes your feelings about the impact of the current United States political climate on archival work:

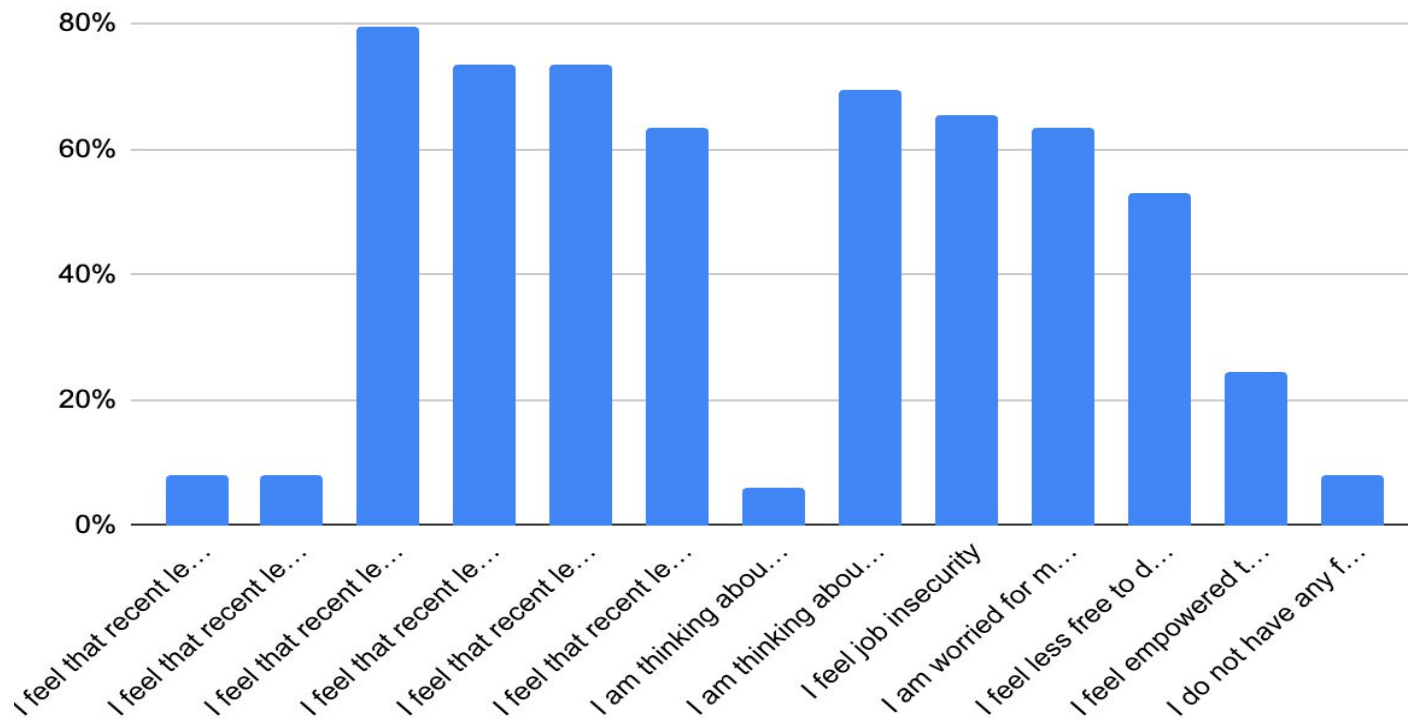
- The political climate has some positive impact on archival work
- The political climate has some negative impact on archival work
- The political climate has no impact on archival work
- I don't have any feelings about the impact of the political climate on archival work



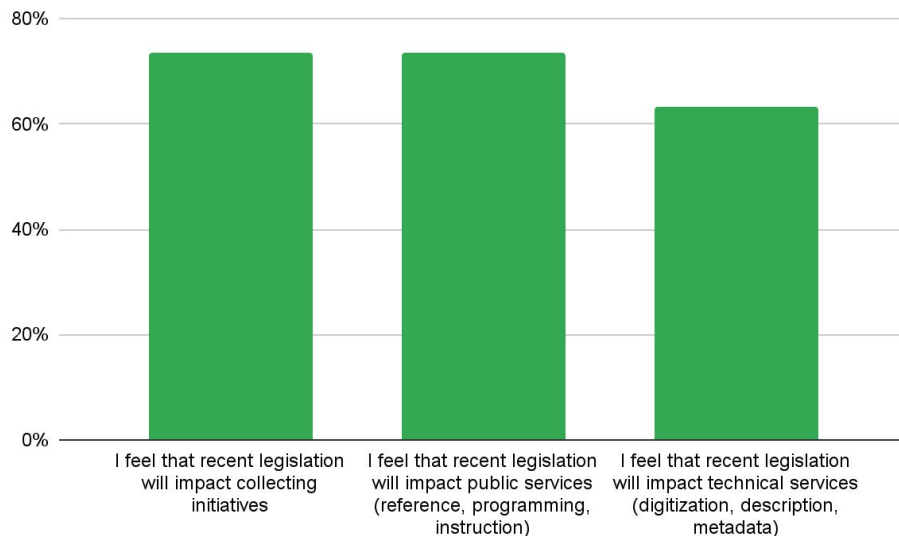
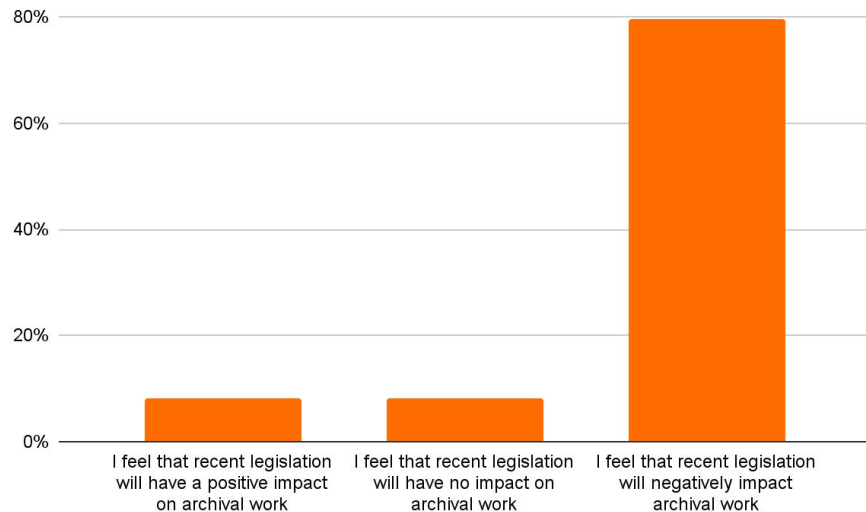
Thinking about the impact on...

- Public awareness
- DEI initiatives
- The historical record
- Colleagues in other states
- Day-to-day work

Feelings about recent legislative activities

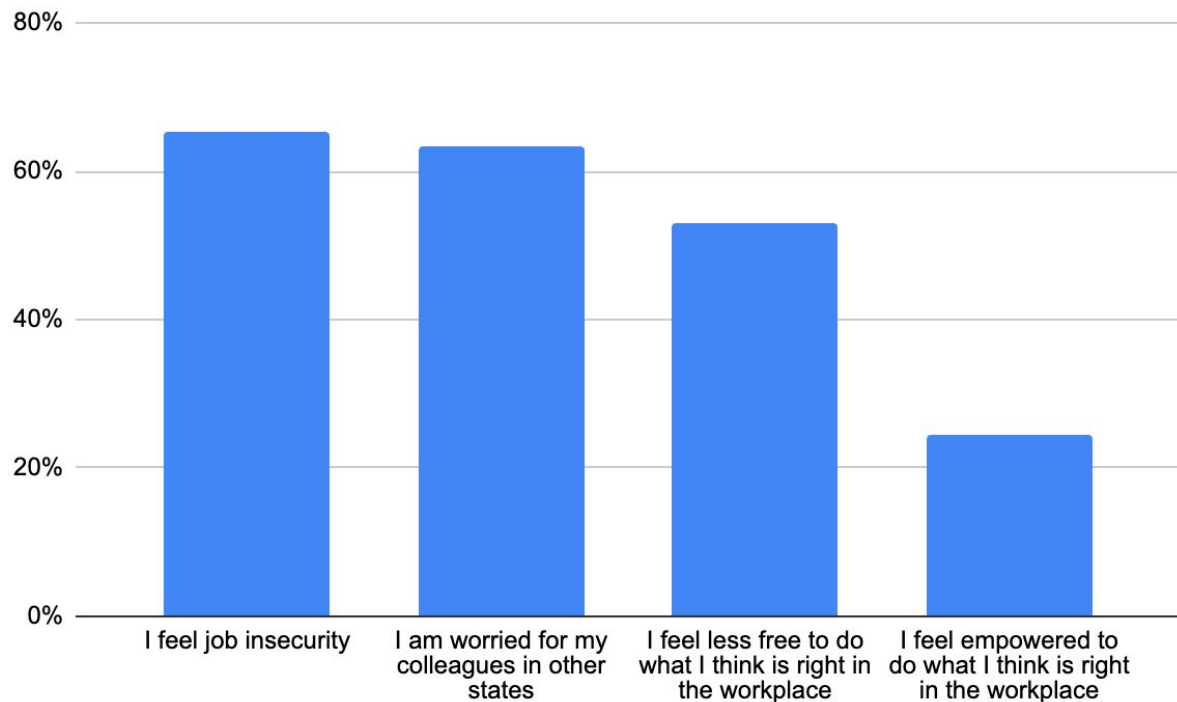


Feelings of impact and areas impacted



“Restrictive legislation can certainly negatively impact our work. But the political backlash to it can create a wave of benefits. And each thing we can’t explicitly do - at least so far - has been cause for thinking creatively about what we can do.”

Additional feelings

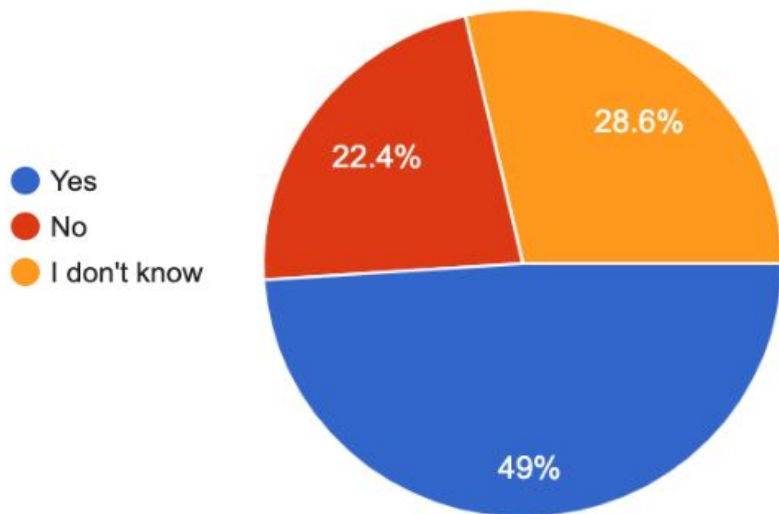


“It’s not just about archival work, it’s about their personhood and rights, but how can that not affect archivists and archives work too?”

“Just a general fear of political backlash. Stand and fight or pay my mortgage.”

State-level legislation

9. Has any legislation been introduced or passed in your state that you believe may impact the work of archivists?



Texas SB 17 (Passed July 2023)

Nebraska LB 1330* (Postponed)

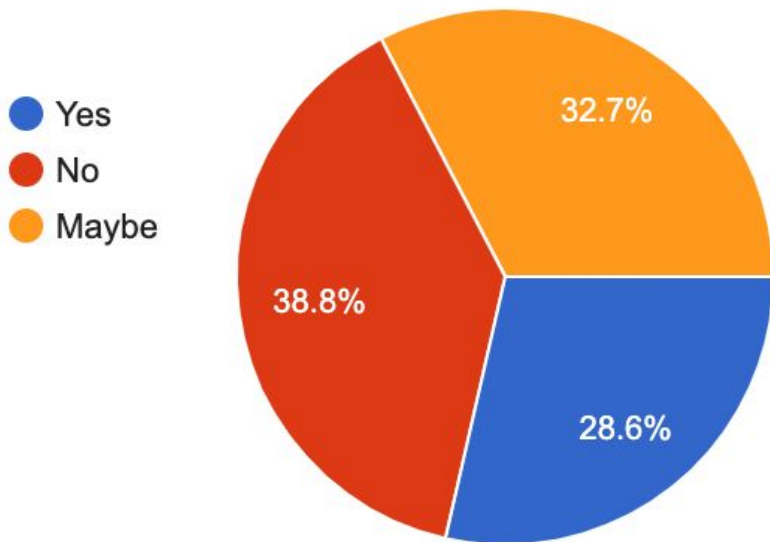
Nebraska LB 1064* (Postponed)

Georgia SB 390 (In committee)

*Both Nebraska bills were indefinitely postponed as of April 18, 2024, after the survey closed

Bracing for impact?

12. Have you experienced or anticipate experiencing any impact from state legislation on your day-to-day work?



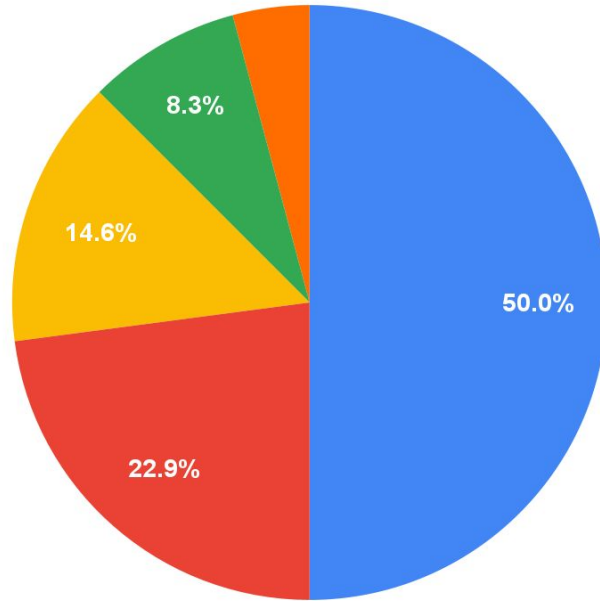
“I do not feel safe doing targeted DEI outreach and certain initiatives at this point in time.”

“I work at a private institution with endowed funds for the archives in a blue-to-purple state. I’m very lucky to be in a place where I don’t have a ton of worries about my own work, as this affects it.”

“[A]s more teachers get fired for teaching history, and parents get more involved, and more books get banned, I anticipate and am very scared for what will happen to archives...”

“I believe archivists should actively combat attacks on intellectual freedom.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Moderately agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



“Protecting intellectual freedom through our collecting and access policies and activities is at the heart of what our profession does.”

“Now more than ever we need to be loud about what we do and the valuable role we have in a safe, open society.”

“As information professionals we have a duty to ensure that all information is accessible to the widest possible range of people. Intellectual freedom is paramount in that duty.”

Next steps

Extend research to other audiences and domains (e.g., LIS graduate students, academic librarians)

Expand scope among archivists

Thank you!

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