

TECHNICAL INNOVATION IN TISSUE MOUNTING DURING MOHS MICROGRAPHIC SURGERY

-Kevan G. Lewis, MD, MS Brown Medical School, Dept. of Dermatology



The quality of frozen sections prepared from tissue blocks during Mohs surgery is determined by a confluence of technical factors. Accuracy, reliability and efficiency in the laboratory setting are critical.

Tissue mounting and processing techniques vary but the goal is always the same: 100% margin control through direct visual inspection of the epidermis, dermis, and deeper structures. The quality of slide preparation is dependent in part on the experience of the histotechnician and on the technical difficulty of the procedure. Numerous techniques and devices for mounting tissue blocks have been used over time.

We presented a study describing a mounting technique that produces accurate and reliable frozen section in a time efficient manner and minimizes operator-dependency. Preliminary experience using a prototype nested aluminum jig was first reported by Carter in 1985. We reported on advancements in the technique and long-term experience of incorporating it into a busy academic Mohs surgery practice.

Technique: Following routine excision during Mohs micrographic surgery, the cut surgical margin of the fresh tissue is placed (epidermis facing up) onto a frozen flat polished disc that is permanently mounted to a handheld aluminum block. Using a forceps or the technician's fingers, the tissue is rolled down to create the optimal oblique plane of section. The tissue adheres instantly to the frozen disc and is covered with OCT compound. Embedding medium is also applied to a frozen button (with concentric circular ridges) that rests in a mobile jig. The aluminum block is then inverted and nested with the mobile jig, leaving the tissue apposed with the button and embedded in the medium. When the OCT compound stabilizes, the button adheres to the aluminum block which is lifted from the jig. Lateral pressure dislodges the aluminum block leaving the embedded tissue mounted on the button ready for sectioning.

During the 20-year period from 1988 to 2007, over 20,000 cases of Mohs micrographic surgery have been performed utilizing this technique. The optimal plane of section is quickly and consistently established in a single step by rolling the tissue into contact with the frozen disc. When facing the block, this method minimizes the need to adjust the cryostat yolk (chuck) in order to orient the plane of section perpendicularly to the microtome blade. The extra step required to manually invert the tissue when using a freeze bar in order to arrange the correct plane of section nearest the microtome is also omitted. There is minimal risk of crush artifact from forceps or excessive pressure from a heat extractor. Optimal orientation of the block reduces the number of sections requiring examination and minimizes the risk of skip areas. Fewer passes of the microtome blade are required to obtain adequate sections, minimizing the risk of cutting into tumor and creating a falsely positive marginal edge.

Together these modifications improve the speed and reliability of processing by simplifying the procedure.

Results of this study demonstrated the utility of the modified aluminum jig technique for mounting tissue during Mohs surgery. The report of 20-years experience using the method underscores the simplicity, accuracy, and reproducibility of this procedure. Practice efficiency and patient care may be improved by incorporating this device into routine histologic processing of excised tissue during Mohs micrographic surgery.

(References)

1. Carter VH. A new method for preparing tissue blocks for cryostat sectioning. J Dermatol Surg Oncol. 1985 Jul;11(7):687-9

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ASMH

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: CINDY RICE, HT (ASCP)

Dear Colleagues-

I hope everyone survived the very busy holiday season. As we enter 2008, ASMH has some very exciting upcoming activities. The Annual Meeting Program Committee is working very hard on this year's program. The meeting will take place May 2-3, 2008 at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. For more information on the annual meeting, please see page 6. A preliminary program will be mailed separately in the near future with program and registration information.

Please remember a valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave Canada. You can expect a minimum of 10 weeks to receive your passport / renewal so please start the process now if you haven't already. More information on passports can be found with the Annual Meeting information on page 6.

Ballots for the 2008 ASMH Board of Directors' Election were mailed to all members in early February. Election information can also be found on page 4 of this newsletter. Please take the time to complete the ballot and mail or fax it back to the ASMH office. Your input on the leadership of this society is very important. If you have not received your ballot, please contact the ASMH office at (414) 347-1103 or joliva@execinc.com.

I would also like to sincerely thank the 2008 Nominating Committee for their time in confirming the candidates for this election. The members of the 2008 Nominating Committee were:

Beth Uri, HT (ASCP) – Chair

Michael Tavares, HT

Andrew Montemarano, DO

The dues renewal process is also underway. All members should have received their dues invoice in December. A second notice was also included with the election ballot for those who had not yet paid. Your dues must be current in order to vote in the 2008 election so please send in your payment.

Happy New Year and I will look forward to seeing everyone in Vancouver in May!

All the best,

Cindy Rice, HT (ASCP)
ASMH President

2008 Annual Meeting Planning Committee

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Cindy Rice, HT (ASCP), Co-Chair

Norma Anderson, HT (ASCP)

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Mickie Johnson, HTL (ASCP)

Alex Lutz, BS

Fatat Sleiman, HT

Jeanie Wade, HT (ASCP)

2008 Nominating Committee

Beth Uri, HT (ASCP), Chair

Andrew Montemarano, DO

Barbara Beck, HT (ASCP)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

-Kim Brock, HT (ASCP)

Greetings Mohs Techs!

I hope you are getting excited about the next meeting coming up in May in Vancouver. I have heard so many wonderful things about the area and I am sure it will be a terrific time. Get your passports ready and make your plans to join your colleagues in the great Canadian Northwest. In this newsletter you will find preliminary information so you can make reservations and take advantage of any low fares you might be able to find. There will be one more mailing before the meeting which will contain your final meeting program and travel information. In the meantime, I hope you

enjoy this newsletter and make good use of the information that is provided here. I'd love to hear your ideas on what you might like to see in the future, so be thinking because I'll be asking! Look for a suggestion form with your meeting packets that you can fill out. Take care and travel safely.

Kim Brock, HT



Newsletter Editor

TIPS FROM THE OLD PRO'S

Learned from attending the annual meeting

-Kim Brock, HT (ASCP)

Annual meetings are a great way to network with fellow techs and find out little tricks of the trade that you won't find in any textbook. To prove this point and encourage you to attend this year's meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, the following article is a collaboration. Your Board of Directors consists of Mohs techs who have years and years of experience both in general histology and in Mohs. They have all attended many annual meetings of the ASMH and have still managed to learn something at every meeting. They have graciously each submitted only 5 of the tips they picked up at meetings over the years.

Barbara Beck: YEARS AS A HISTOTECH: 36; YEARS AS A MOHS TECH: 20

Other functions performed as part of job: training, consulting and routine assistance in derm office

1. To remove glue from slides - detachol
2. Freeze fat with LN2 rather than cryo-spray (have been using this since I picked it up about 10 years ago)
3. New embedding techniques for different types of tissue
4. Easier mapping
5. Dryer sheets to cut down on static in cryostat especially in winter months!

Kim Brock: YEARS AS A HISTOTECH: 26; YEARS AS A MOHS TECH: 23

Other functions performed as part of job: assisting with surgery, scheduling/counseling patients, wound care, OSHA and CLIA coordinating and training

1. Cutting fat fast really helps.
2. Labeling chucks can be done easily.
3. You don't need solvents at the end of your staining sequence if you use the right coverslipping medium.
4. How to cut larger specimens (thanks Charles).
5. Several different indirect methods for mounting tissue to use as alternatives to my standard (direct) method.

Cindy Rice: YEARS AS A HISTOTECH: 20; YEARS AS A MOHS TECH: 18

Other functions performed as a daily part of job: assisting with surgery, doing wound care, answer calls, order lab supplies, scan office notes into patient charts.

1. When cutting cartilage, after you put the section on the slide warm the slide with your hand before staining and it will help it not wash off.
2. Get fat really really cold and use sharp knife.
3. Different coverslipping methods.
4. Everybody has their own way of doing! It's not wrong or right but it's what works for you.
5. Keeping my chucks at room temp keeps the specimen from popping off when I cut.

Gina Ackley: YEARS AS A HISTOTECH: 25; YEARS AS A MOHS TECH: 10

Other functions performed as a daily part of job: Often help with patient care when I have time.

1. I've learned to not be afraid to manipulate tissue to get a better edge for embedding.
2. I do immunohisto chemical staining on melanoma in situ's. It is nice to speak to other techs doing it and keep updated on where to get the supplies and perfecting it in a short amount of time.
3. Cutting larger specimens
4. Ideas on cutting good fat specimens.
5. Reviewing different types of tumors under the microscope.

Maureen Gagnot: YEARS AS A HISTOTECH: 27; YEARS AS A MOHS TECH: 15

Other functions performed as a daily part of job: Being in the surgical room to receive tissue, map, ink and any scoring and manipulating of the tissue for ease in cutting and for complete margin control. I am also responsible for all the administrative duties for running a lab, including laboratory compliance. I also do Immuno-Peroxidase staining for Melanoma and unusual tumors.

1. Cutting full fat sections at 5 microns.
2. Cutting single full pieces of tissue with complete margins without having to divide all because of scoring and relaxing techniques demonstrated at meetings.
3. Compliance rules and regulations for the Mohs lab.
4. I have had the opportunity to interact and become involved with the organizational committees and the board of directors for ASMH. Very rewarding!

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2008 ASMH BOARD OF DIRECTORS' ELECTION

ASMH is holding an election this year. One President, one Vice-President and one Director will be elected to the Board of Directors by the membership for the next term. The President and Vice-President serve two-year terms. Directors serve three-year terms. Official ballots will be mailed to the membership in February.

2008 CANDIDATES

■ PRESIDENT (ONE POSITION AVAILABLE)



Barbara Beck, HT/HTL (ASCP)

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:
Mohs Technical Consulting – Highlands, NC

AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Dr. Armand Cognetta

YEARS EMPLOYED AS HISTOTECH:
36 years (20 in Mohs)

Hello members, I am interested in running for President of our society. I have been a registered histotech for 36 years, and have worked in Mohs for over 20 years. I have been involved in the society since its inception. I am very interested in its members, and the direction we head in the future. I am working very closely with The National Society of Histotechnology and the American Society of Clinical Pathology to implement a board certification for Mohs technicians. I look forward to working with the Mohs surgeons, our board, and members, for the future of our society.

■ VICE-PRESIDENT (ONE POSITION AVAILABLE)



Charles Marino

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:
Anne Arundel Dermatology – Annapolis, MD

AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Dr. Alan Harrington

YEARS EMPLOYED AS HISTOTECH: 8 years

I have worked for Dr. Harrington at Anne Arundel Derm. For 8 years and in that time I have trained 6 histo techs who are now working as productive histo techs. I have given 2 talks at the Mohs meetings on the subject of cutting large tissue. I am currently in charge of 3 labs and in the past I have run 5 labs at one time. As Vice-President I think that I might be able to add some new ideas, goals and hopefully make us a stronger group.



Cindy Rice, HT (ASCP)

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:
Emory Clinic Department of Dermatology
– Atlanta, GA

AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Carl V. Washington, MD

YEARS EMPLOYED AS HISTOTECH: 19 years

I have been the Mohs tech for Dr. Washington for 19 years. I have been a member of the American Society for Mohs Histotechnology from the day it started. This society is something I really believe in. It is a great opportunity for networking with other people that do what I do. It gives me a chance to share my experience with others. I would really like to see the society become a large network of communication between Mohs techs across the country.

■ DIRECTOR (ONE POSITION AVAILABLE)



Alex Lutz, BS

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:
TRAVEL TECH Mohs Services, Inc. -
Torrance, CA

AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Edward Glassberg, MD

YEARS EMPLOYED AS A HISTOTECH: 18 years

My name is Alex Lutz. I am a charter member of the ASMH and a working Mohs tech for the past 18 years. My experience is unique in that I have owned a mobile lab service for Mohs histology for the past 16 years and have worked with hundreds of physicians that are college affiliated, society affiliated and non-affiliated dermatologists. I have also been active in the American Society for Mohs Surgery as Co-Director for their "Fundamentals for Mohs Course" for the Mohs technicians the past 6 years and Program Coordinator for their "Annual Clinical Symposium" also for the technicians the past 4 years. I have been on the program committee for our last year's meeting as well as this year's meeting, and have had a great experience as part of the process.

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Marilyn McCulloch, CLT

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:
NYPH/Columbia University – New York, NY
AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Dr. Desireé Ratner
YEARS EMPLOYED AS A HISTOTECH: 10 years

In 1995, I began medical assisting at Columbia, where I first trained for Mohs surgery. Shortly thereafter, I began cross training for the laboratory. I have been a member of the ASMH since 1998. In 2001, I spent two years in Dermatopathology while also working general and Cosmetic Clinic. On occasion, I assist in Hair Restoration Surgery cutting follicular units and planting. I participated in the development of the MHQA Training Initiative, and served as an MHQA trainer during 2007. Recently, I contributed to the soon to be released Mohs Training Manual. Currently I am a Licensed Clinical Laboratory Technician, and enjoy working with our Mohs Fellows practicing full specimen analysis and tissue preparation. My intention is to work with the Mohs College, Established Surgeons, Board and Membership to develop a laboratory-training/rotation criterion for the Mohs Fellowship Program and possibly, for the Mohs surgery assistants newly identified for cross training. I believe this would create an opportunity for a different exchange of information that could potentially clarify the mystery of why the overall quality of some lab slides is consistently better than others. Alternatively, at the very least expand upon our technical and communication skills. I am proud to be associated with such an amazing group of people that constitute our Mohs extended family. Thank you kindly for this nomination.



Fatat Sleiman, HT

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT: University of Rochester – Rochester, New York
AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Marc D. Brown, MD
YEARS EMPLOYED AS A HISTOTECH: 5½ years

I would like to be elected to the Board because I want to be more involved with the ASMH and I think this is a perfect way to help and give what I can to fulfill my position. I love what I do and I like the challenge. I will try my best and give all that I have from experience and knowledge to help and to fulfill my position.



Jeanie Wade, HT (ASCP)

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT:
Dermatology Associates of Tyler - Tyler, Texas
AFFILIATED MOHS COLLEGE SURGEON:
Lawrence L. Anderson, MD, FACP
YEARS EMPLOYED AS HISTOTECH:
18 years (7 years – Mohs)

I have been a histology technician for 18 years (11 years in routine histology lab, 7 years in a Mohs lab). I am currently the Mohs Lab Coordinator and assist with supervision of the Pathology Laboratory. The Mohs Histology technique is an art within itself. During the past 7 years, I have gained valuable information by attending the ASMH annual meetings. The people willing to sacrifice their time to share with us the skill and knowledge that they have gained over the years enables all of us to become a better technician to provide the best in patient care. I feel this is a very valuable organization and I would like the opportunity to be an active participant.

Please note: According to the ASMH Bylaws, Charter members of the ASMH are eligible to run for office regardless of whether or not they work directly for a Mohs College affiliated physician.

Please look for your election ballot in the mail and be sure to return it to the ASMH office no later than March 3, 2008.

Renew for 2008!

The ASMH 2008 dues renewal process is underway. With your 2008 membership renewal, you will be able to continue taking advantage of the many **benefits** ASMH has to offer, including the quarterly **newsletter**, ASMH **elections** and reduced fees for the **14th Annual Meeting, May 2-3, 2008** in Vancouver, Canada.



If you have not yet renewed for 2008, you may do so by contacting the ASMH Office at (414) 347-1103.

2008 ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION



ASMH 14TH ANNUAL MEETING

May 2-3, 2008

Hyatt Regency Vancouver

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

ANNUAL MEETING LOCATION

Hyatt Regency Vancouver

655 Burrard Street

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6C 2R7

Phone: +1-604-683-1234

Fax: +1-604-689-3707

Web site: www.vancouver.hyatt.com

ANNUAL MEETING TOPICS

Some of the tentative topics to be covered at the Annual Meeting include:

- Principals of Mohs Surgery
- Embedding Techniques
- Troubleshooting Open Forum
- Mohs Tissue Processing Video Session
- Communication Between Mohs Technicians and Physicians
- CLIA
- Cryostat Workshops for Technical Training
- Slide Troubleshooting Workshop

ANNUAL MEETING TRAVEL

Traveling to Canada

A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave Canada. Passport processing times have increased due to high volume. Expect a minimum of 10 weeks to receive your passport / renewal. For more information on obtaining a passport, visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

AIRPORT INFORMATION

The following airport is near the Hyatt Regency:
Vancouver International Airport (YVR)

Airport Shuttle Information

YVR Airporter (www.yvrairporter.com, +1-800-668-3141). Departs from both the domestic and international terminals on a regular basis and will drop off directly at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver. Tickets may be purchased at the hotel, airport or on the bus. Cost is \$13.00 CAD one way, \$20.00 CAD roundtrip per adult, \$6.00 CAD one way, \$12.00 CAD roundtrip for children. Senior and family discounts are available.

Limojet Gold Express (www.limojetgold.com, +1-800-278-8742), provides exclusive town car service which comfortably seats 1-3 passengers with plenty of leg room and trunk space. Sedan rate between YVR airport & downtown Vancouver is \$39.00+GST CAD, per vehicle, one way (gratuities are not included).

Taxis are available at the airport 24 hours a day, including wheelchair accessible vans. Taxi queue areas are located at both the domestic and international arrivals terminals. Approximate cost to the Hyatt: \$30.00 CAD.

ANNUAL MEETING HOTEL

Hyatt Regency Vancouver

The ACMS/ASMH has secured the following reduced group room rate package:

- \$239 /CAD per night – Single/Double Occupancy
- \$289/ CAD per night – Triple Occupancy
- \$314/ CAD per night – Quadruple Occupancy
- \$329/ CAD per night – Regency Club

To receive this discounted rate you must identify yourself as a participant of the ACMS/ASMH Annual Meeting.

Make your reservations early. These reduced, special group rates will be available only through Thursday, April 3, 2008. Reservation requests after the cut-off date will be based on availability at the group rate.

Reservations may be made either by phone or online.

Phone Reservations: Hyatt Regency at +1-604-683-1234 or by calling Central Reservations at +1-888-421-1442. Please refer to the group and meeting name.

Online Reservations: Go to the ASMH Web site for a link to the Hyatt online reservations page: <http://www.mohscollege.org/asmh/>

Hotel check-in time is 4:00 pm and check-out time is 12:00 pm.

This group rate is available three (3) days before and three (3) days after the main meeting dates, based on room availability. Hotel rates are subject to the appropriate provincial, local and any occupancy taxes in effect at the time of the ASMH meeting. These taxes are currently ten percent (10%) Provincial Rooms Tax and six percent (6%) Goods & Services Tax per room night occupied. The G.S.T. portion is refundable to non-Canadian residents as defined under the current legislation and upon receipt of the required documentation.

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Hyatt Regency Parking

- Valet parking \$35/CAD per day
- Self parking \$28/CAD per day

The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver

900 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, V6C 2W6
www.fairmont.com/HotelVancouver

- \$239 /CAD per night – Fairmont Room Single/Double Occupancy
- \$339 /CAD per night – Fairmont Gold Room Single/Double Occupancy
- \$339 /CAD per night – Courtyard Suite Single/Double Occupancy

Hotel check-in time is 3:00 pm and check-out time is 12:00 pm.

Phone Reservations: Fairmont Hotel Vancouver at +1-604-684-3131 or by calling the Global Reservations Centre at +1-800-441-1414. Please refer to the group and meeting name. Reservations must be made by April 3, 2008.

ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION INFORMATION

REGISTRATION IS NOT YET OPEN FOR THE MEETING.

Check the ASMH Web site at <http://www.mohscollege.org/asmh/> for updates.

A Preliminary Program with a registration form will be sent to all ASMH members via US mail. Registration will also be available online as soon as the program is confirmed.

ASMH Member \$225 (\$250 after April 4)
Non-Member \$525 (\$550 after April 4)
Fellow (ACMS) \$150 (\$175 after April 4)

ANNUAL MEETING EXHIBITS

The ASMH Exhibit/Workshop Area provides an invaluable resource for Mohs Histotechs, and other meeting participants, to learn about the newest equipment, supplies, and services related to Mohs Surgery. Please consider exhibiting at the ASMH 14th Annual Meeting. For more information, please contact Jenny Oliva, Executive Director, at the ASMH office at (414) 347-1103.

ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship opportunities are available for the ASMH 14th Annual Meeting. Gain invaluable visibility of your products and services and provide your organization with exposure to over 200 Mohs technicians who work in Mohs laboratories every day. Sponsorship opportunities begin at \$500 and can be tailored to meet your company's needs. For more information, please contact Jenny Oliva, Executive Director, at the ASMH office at (414) 347-1103.

5. I have recognized how specialized I am in this ever-growing field of Mohs Surgery. It's nice to have another level of expertise that so many Histotechs do not and I'm eager to share it.

Michael A. Tavares: YEARS AS A HISTOTECH: 25; YEARS AS A MOHS TECH: 18
Other functions performed as a daily part of job: Generating post-op reports with photos.

1. Using colored slides and cryochrome to organize patients and specimens.
2. Keeping a small post-it note or days schedule near you with all the patients' info.
example: name, med. rec.#, mohs #, area, layer and # of spec., slide color, cryochrome color.
3. Be neat and organized in the lab and with what you are doing.
4. Alternate ways to mount specimens to achieve a full skin edge.
5. What to do with/ for large fatty specimens.

Advertise in the ASMH Newsletter!



The ASMH Newsletter is printed quarterly for distribution to Mohs histotechnicians and surgeons.

Each issue is also posted online as a PDF file at <http://www.mohscollege.org/ASMH.htm>

Go to this page or contact **Jennifer Oliva at (414) 347-1103** for the advertising schedule and rates.

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- The ad must include information on where applicants are to send their resume
- Ad should also include the city and state of the available position
- Include any job requirements and brief details about the work environment

Palo Alto, California – Full-time Mohs histotech position in dynamic and busy Mohs surgery private practice - beautiful office, team-oriented staff and kind doctor. Responsibilities include laboratory management and equipment maintenance for a 3 room surgery suite. Pay is commensurate with experience. Benefits include health insurance, paid vacation, and 401K plan with profit sharing. Please visit our website at www.drstarr.com. Ph 650-326-7222, FAX 650-326-7332 or email resume to jonstarr@pacbell.net

St. Petersburg, Florida – Need histotechnologist for busy Mohs surgery practice in multispecialty group. Excellent pay and full benefits with friendly staff. Back-up technicians will assist. Full or part time position. Experience preferred. New Leica microtomes and modern clean environment. Minutes from beach! Email resumes to nhemani@suncoastmed.com or fax 727-824-7125

West Dundee, Illinois – Dermatology and Mohs Surgery clinic in the Chicagoland metropolitan area seeks experienced Histotech. Position requires preparation, processing, and/or staining of patient tissues, maintaining slide storage, documentation and attention for all equipment in lab. Additional duties include reviewing slides for orientation to determine further slide preparation. Please email resume to jhawkinson@dundeedermatology.com.

Austin, Texas – Full-time Mohs Histotech position in busy Mohs surgery private practice. You will be working with a team-oriented group consisting of a Mohs surgeon and staff. Applicant should be experienced in the preparation of high quality frozen sections, and be comfortable with a high case volume. Outstanding compensation and benefits package. Please e-mail your resume to ms7521@yahoo.com.

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