# debmans Documentation

Release ???

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**Python Module Index** 

debmans is a tool to extract documentation (currently manpages) from Debian packages and transform them into HTML for viewing with a normal web browser.

This suite of tools is designed to run on manpages.debian.org, manpages.debian.org, linux.die.net or similar services. Contents:

#### Usage

### 1.1 Example

You can do a test run of this software against your local APT cache, like this:

Your rendered manpages will be available at <http://localhost:8000/>.

Note that you will need dpkg-scanpackages from the dpkg-dev package to run the above test. The warnings can be safely ignored. debmans doesn't normally require dpkg-dev in operation if you use a properly configured mirror.

# 1.2 Common tasks

A more normal run would be to run on a regular mirror. This will extract all manpages from the given mirror and convert to HTML:

debmans --mirror /srv/mirror --output static extract render

This can be ran repeatedly and only extracted manpages will be rendered.

#### 1.2.1 Extraction only

You can also run the process step by step, for example, this will only extract the manpages:

```
debmans -m /srv/mirror -o html extract
```

Note that extract creates a cache in the output directory to avoid re-extracting already found archives. Render also uses a caching mechanism by not converting to HTML if the HTML version is newer than the manpage. Those mechanisms can be disabled with -no-cache.

debmans -m /srv/mirror -o html --no-cache extract

You can make a trial run with the -n flag and enable more verbose logging:

```
debmans -v -n -m /srv/mirror -o manpages extract
```

#### 1.2.2 Rendering only

Rendering the pages can be done separately with:

```
debmans -o html render --srcdir manpages
```

This is especially important if the extraction process was interrupted, as only part of the manpages will be rendered on subsequent runs.

Manpages are currently rendered with man2html but this can be changed with the -r flag, although no other renderer has been tested and the output may not be compatible with man2html.

#### 1.2.3 Static pages rendering

The templating engine is fairly simple, based on Jinja2, which uses standard  $\{ \{ foo \} \}$  placeholders. The template is in static/template.html and should be following debian.org's graphic design conventions.

This should generate the markdown files:

debmans -o html site

Use --prefix if the directory is not at the root of the host.

# **1.3 Installation**

debmans can be installed through pip with:

pip install debmans

Source code can also be found on Gitlab with Git or as a tarball, or on Debian's collab-maint repository.

The source code is should be installed with:

./setup.py install

It can also be ran from the source tree directly with:

python -m debmans render

The dependencies are listed in the setup.py file.

# **1.4 Acknowledgements**

debmans was written by Antoine Beaupré and is licensed under the Affero GPLv3, see License for the complete license.

Parts of this software were inspired by a review of existing tools, most notably the Ubuntu manpages converter and dgilman's converter. The sources.debian.net service source code and design was also directly used in some parts, which is partly why debmans is licensed under the AGPL.

Also thanks to Paul Wise for nudging me along and all the help navigating the various tools and protocols to make all this work.

This project mostly follows the Core Infrastructure best practices, see the full report for details.

### Design

This page explains the design principles and decisions in the project.

# 2.1 Minimum viable product

The Minimum Viable Product for this project is a service that creates an HTML version of all the manpages of all the packages available in Debian, for all supported suites. Basic whatis (1) functionality is also expected.

apropos (1) functionality is considered extra that can be implemented later with already existing tools.

The design is split those components which map to debmans subcommands:

- 1. extract: extracts manpages from Debian packages
- 2. render: renders manpages into HTML
- 3. site: render a static site into HTML
- 4. index: indexes HTML pages for searching (not implemented yet)
- 5. search: the search interface (not implemented, but there is a simple "jump" Javascript tool)

There is also a serve command which starts a local webserver to help with development.

See the Remaining work file for details about the missing bits.

#### 2.1.1 Extract

This part fetches all manpages from the archive and stores them on disk. This makes them usable for tools like dman that browses remote webpages.

The layout options for where to store files were:

- Ubuntu: \$DISTRIB\_CODENAME/\$LOCALE/man\$i/\$PAGE.\$i.gz (see dman)
- original codebase: "\${OUTPUTDIR}/\${pooldir}/\${packagename}\_\${version}" (from manpage-extractor.pl)

Ubuntu's approach was chosen to avoid bitrot and follow more closely the existing filesystem layout. It also happens to be easier to implement.

The extractor uses a cache to avoid re-extracting known manpages. We use the Ubuntu layout there as well (\$outputdir/\$suite/.cache/\$packagename\_version), which leads to bitrot, but at least it's constrained to a suite. This will be a problem for unstable, so maybe some garbage-collection may be necessary.

#### 2.1.2 Render

This converts manpages to HTML so they are readable in a web browser.

Possile options for this implementation:

- just the plaintext output of man wrapped in <PRE> tags (current design)
- man2html is an old C program that ships with a bunch of CGI scripts
- there's another man2html that is a perl script, but I couldn't figure out how to use it correctly.
- w3m has another Perl script that is used by the Ubuntu site
- roffit is another perl script. the version in Debian is ancient (2012) and doesn't display the man (1) synopsis correctly (newer versions from github also fail)
- pandoc can't, unfortunately, read manpages (only write)
- man itself can generate an HTML version with man -Hcat man and the output is fairly decent, although there is no cross-referencing

The Makefile here tests possible manpage HTML renderers. Each is timed with time (1) to show its performance.

Pack-	Timing
age	
roffit	0.06user 0.00system 0:00.07elapsed 96%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata
	4852maxresident)k
w3m	0.26user 0.01system 0:00.19elapsed 137%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata
	5456maxresident)k
man	1.63user 0.17system 0:01.81elapsed 99%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata
	27268maxresident)k
man2html	0.00user 0.00system 0:00.01elapsed 61%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata
	1568maxresident)k

Note: Those statistics were created with debmans/test/converters/Makefile in the source tree.

Here is how the actual output compares:

Package	Correctness
roffit	SYNOPSIS fails to display correctly
w3m	includes HTTP headers, links to CGI script, all pre-formatted, no TOC
man	TOC, no cross-referencing
man2html	includes HTTP headers, links to CGI script, index at the end

man2html was originally chosen because it is the fastest, includes an index and is not too opiniated about how the output is formatted. Unfortunately, it would fail to parse a lot of manpages, like the ones from the gnutls project. w3m was used as a fallback, even though it actually calls man itself to do part of the rendering.

#### 2.1.3 Index

This indexes HTML pages in a search engine of some sort.

In the backend, something will need to index the manpages if only to implement apropos (1) functionality, but eventually also full-text search. This should be modular so that new backends can be implemented as needed.

For now, we are considering reusing the existing Xapian infrastructure the Debian project already has.

The indexer would:

- 1. run omindex on the HTML tree and create a database
- 2. process each locale separately so they are isolated (may be tricky for LANG=C) and that the right stemmer is called
- 3. need a CGI script (provided by the xapian-omega package) to query the database the HTML output is generated based on templates, so presumably we could reuse the existing templates.

It is assumed that Xapian can deal with large datasets (10-50GB) considering how it is used in Notmuch (my own mailbox is around ~6GB) and lists.debian.org.

We put the command name in the page <title> tag, the short description in <meta description="..."> and use the magic markers (<!--htdig\_noindex-->ignored<!--/htdig\_noindex-->) to make the indexer ignore redundant bits.

See the Search section for more information about the various search software evaluated and the web interface.

#### **Xapian examples**

Index all documents in html/:

```
$ ominxed --url / --db search --mime-type=gz:ignore html/
11.03user 0.36system 0:12.27elapsed 92%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 29952maxresident)k
18056inputs+15688outputs (0major+7884minor)pagefaults 0swaps
```

--url is the equivalent of the renderer's --prefix, --db is a directory where the database will end up and --mime-type is to ignore raw manpages.

Second runs are much faster:

```
$ time omindex --url / --db search --mime-type=gz:ignore html/
0.01user 0.00system 0:00.02elapsed 88%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 4656maxresident)k
0inputs+0outputs (0major+300minor)pagefaults 0swaps
```

Display information about the search database:

```
$ delve search.db
UUID = 6fd4d4ab-2529-4d67-bbff-32b88fd888fa
number of documents = 452
average document length = 3976.96
document length lower bound = 78
document length upper bound = 243183
highest document id ever used = 452
has positional information = true
```

#### Example searches:

\$ quest -d search.db man2html | grep ^url url=/cache/man/fr/man1/man2html.1.html url=/cache/man/man1/man2html.1.html url=/cache/man/ro/man1/man2html.1.html url=/cache/man/it/man1/man2html.1.html \$ quest -d search.db setreg | grep ^url url=/cache/man/man1/setreg.1.html url=/cache/man/man1/mozroots.1.html url=/cache/man/man1/chktrust.1.html url=/cache/man/man1/certmgr.1.html

This would search only <title> fields: --prefix=title:S 'title:foo'.

### 2.1.4 Searching

The search interface itself would be a CGI or WSGI tool (if written in Python) interface that would hook into the webserver to perform searches.

Currently only a browser-based, Javascript search tool implements basic whatis (1) functionality. It looks up the manpage using a XMLHttpRequest to see if the requested page exists and redirects appropriately. It doesn't look at different locales yet.

This should be extended to a full search interface, using omega's web interface or other pluggable interfaces.

#### Search software evaluation

Various search were evaluated:

- Xapian:
  - used by Notmuch, craigslist, search.debian.org, lists.debian.org, wiki.debian.org, old gmane.org
  - no web API, would need to index directly through the Python API
  - harder to use
  - no extra server necessary
  - internal knowledge already present in debian.org
  - bound to use their CGI interface (Omega)
  - written in C++
- Lucene / Solr:
  - requires another server and API communications
  - per-index user/password access control
  - mature solution that has been around for a long time
  - may support indexing HTML?
  - JSON or XML data entry
  - large contributor community
  - usually faster than ES
  - based on Apache Lucene
  - written in Java
  - used by Netflix, Cnet
- Elasticsearch:
  - requires a server
  - packaged in Debian
  - REST/JSON API
  - documentation may be lacking when compared so Solr, e.g. had to ask on IRC to see if \_id can be a string (yes, it can)
  - Python API, but could also be operated with a Javascript library
  - may be easier to scale than Solr

- performance comparable with Solr
- was designed to replace Solr
- supports indexing HTML directly by stripping tags and entities
- based on Apache Lucene as well
- written in Java as well
- requires a CLA for contributing
- used by Github, Foursquare, presumably new gmane.org
- created in 2010, ~18 months support lifetime?
- sphinx: not well known, ignored
- mngosearch: considered dead, ignored
- homegrown:
  - codesearch uses Postgresql
  - David's uses sqlite
  - Readthedocs has a custom-built Javascript-based search engine
  - we could use a simple Flask REST API for searches, but then the extractor (or renderer?) would need to write stuff to some database sqlite reads fails when writing, so maybe not a good candidate?

Sources:

- http://stackoverflow.com/questions/10213009/solr-vs-elasticsearch
- http://solr-vs-elasticsearch.com/

# 2.2 Infrastructure

At least the extractor and renderer would run on manziarly. The output would be stored on the static.d.o CDN (see below). parts 3 could be a separate (pair or?) server(s?) to run the search cluster.

In the above setup, manziarly would be a master server for static file servers in the Debian.org infrastructure. Files saved there would be rsync'd to multiple frontend servers. How this is configured is detailed in the static-mirroring DSA documentation, but basically, we would need to ask the DSA team for an extra entry for manpages.d.o there to server static files.

# 2.3 Gitlab vs Alioth

The project was originally hosted in the Collaborative Maintenance repositories, but those quickly showed their limitations, which included lack of continuous integration, issue tracking and automatic rendering of markdown files.

A project was created on Gitlab for this purpose, in anarcat's personnal repositories (for now). On Gitlab, the project "mirrors" the public git URL of the collab-maint repo. On collab-maint, there is a cronjob in my personnal account which runs this command to synchronize the changes from Gitlab at the 17th minute of the hour:

git -C /git/collab-maint/debmans.git fetch --quiet gitlab master:master

This was found to be the best compromise in adding the extra gitlab features while still keeping access threshold for Debian members low. Do note that there is no conflict resolution whatsoever on collab-maint's side, and the behavior of Gitlab in case of conflicts isn't determined yet. This may require manual fixing of merge conflicts.

# 2.4 Other implementations

There were already three known implementations of "man to web" archive generators when this project was started.

After careful consideration of existing alternatives, it was determined it was easier and simpler to write a cleanroom implementation, based in part on the lessons learned from the existing implementations and the more mature debsources project.

#### 2.4.1 Original manpages.d.o codebase

The original codebase is a set of Perl and bash CGI scripts that dynamically generate (and search through) manpages.

The original codebase extracts manpages with dpkg --fsys-tarfile and the tartar commands. It also creates indexes using man -k for future searches. Manpages are stored in a directory for each package-version pair, so it doesn't garbage-collect disappeared manpages. It also appears that packages are always extracted, even if they had been parsed before.

The CGI script just calls man and outputs plain text wrapped in <PRE> tags without any cross-referencing or further formatting.

There is also a copy of the Ubuntu scripts in the source code.

# 2.5 Ubuntu

Ubuntu has their own manpage repository at https://manpages.ubuntu.com/. Their codebase is partly Python, Perl and Bash.

It looks like there's a bash ''and'' python implementation of the same thing. They process the whole archive on the local filesystem and create a timestamp file for every package found, which avoids processing packages repeatedly (but all packages from the Packages listing are stat'd at every run). In the bash version, the manpages are extracted with dpkg -x, in the Python version as well, athough it uses the apt python package to list files. It uses a simple regex (^usr/share/man/.\*\.gz\$) to find manpages.

It keeps a cache of the md5sum of the package in "\$PUBLIC\_HTML\_DIR/manpages/\$dist/.cache/\$name to avoid looking at known packages. The bash version only looks at the timestamp of the file versus the package, and only checks at the modification *year*.

To generate the HTML version of the manpage, both programs use the /usr/lib/w3m/cgi-bin/w3mman2html.cgi shipped with the w3m package.

Seach is operated by a custom Python script that looks through manpages filenames or uses Google to do a full text search.

#### 2.5.1 dgilman codebase

A new codebase written by dgilman is available in github. It is a simple Python script with a sqlite backend. It extracts the tarfile with dpkg --fsys-tarfile then parses it with the Python tarfile library. It uses rather complicated regexes to find manpages and stores various apropos and metadata about manpages in the sqlite database. All manpages are unconditionnally extracted.

# Contributing

The debmans project welcomes contributions of all sort.

A broader discussion about the service is in the manpages.debian.org wiki page.

# 3.1 Source code

The source code should be available in this Gitlab repository. Gitlab was chosen because this project hopes to be reused by other Debian derivatives and we prefer to have a neutral space to develop the software. Gitlab also provides an issue queue to report a new issue.

Debian developers not desiring to use a semi-proprietary platform like Gitlab may still use the collab-maint repository, see CollaborativeMaintenance for more information on how to collaborate on those repositories. The two repositories are synchronized every hour.

# 3.2 Issues, feature requests and security

Patches can be sent by email (see below) or with Gitlab Merge Requests.

Security issues can be privately reported on Gitlab or directly to the author, at anarcat@debian.org. You can use this OpenPGP public key to encrypt messages for confidential security issues:

8DC9 01CE 6414 6C04 8AD5 0FBB 7921 5252 7B75 921E

# 3.3 Test suite

Make sure you run tests before you send a patch. Also add tests for new functionalities you add or for bugs you find. Tests are done with pytest:

py.test

Test coverage can be verified with:

py.test --cov debmans

Exact lines lacking test coverage are available in the HTML report that can be generated with:

py.test --cov debmans --cov-report html

The test suite requires the dget and dpkg-scansources commands from the devscripts package to build a test mirror. Network access is required if packages are not locally cached in /var/cache/apt/archives or where dget can find them (see DGET\_PATH in the dget (1) manpage).

# 3.4 Release process

1. make sure tests pass (see above for details):

py.test

2. create a signed and annotated tag:

git tag -s x.y.z

3. build and test Python "wheel":

```
python setup.py bdist_wheel
sudo pip install dist/*.whl
debmans --version
debmans -m /var/cache/apt/archives -o html -v --progress extract render site serve
sudo pip uninstall debmans
```

4. push commits and tags to the git repository:

git push git push --tags

5. publish Python "wheel" on PyPI:

twine upload dist/\*

6. announce on debian-doc@lists.debian.org

#### API

This is the API documentation of Debmans. It should be stable across major releases. See the Design document for more details about the design.

#### Todo

the click module decorators make all the click.command() functions hidden from Sphinx. This is presumably because the signature changes from a func to a cls, but remains to be confirmed.

### 4.1 Extractor

The extractor processes Debian packages and extracts specific patterns into a target directory. It uses a cache file that is named according to the package name and version to avoid the costly operation of opening the same package file multiple times.

# 4.2 Renderer

The Renderer module takes care of turning extracted documentation into HTML format. It uses Jinja templates and simple timestamp-based caching.

# 4.3 Main entry point

The main entry point of debmans is in the debmans.\_\_main\_\_ module. This is to make it possible to call debmans directly from the source code through the Python interpreter with:

python -m debmans

All this code is here rather than in \_\_init\_\_.py to avoid requiring too many dependencies in the base module, which contains useful metadata for setup.py.

This uses the click module to define the base command and options, which then get passed to subcommands through the obj parameter, see pass\_obj in the click documentation.

# 4.4 Logger

This is a simple helper module to configure the logging module consistently.

debmans.logger.setup\_logging(name='debmans', level='info', syslog=False, stream=None)
 setup logging module according to the arguments provided

# 4.5 Utilities

Those are various utilities reused in multiple modules that did not fit anywhere else. various utilities for debmans

```
debmans.utils.find_parent_module()
```

find the name of a the first module calling this module

if we cannot find it, we return the current module's name (\_\_\_name\_\_) instead.

```
debmans.utils.find_static_file(path)
```

locate a file in the distribution

this will look in the shipped files in the package

this assumes the files are at the root of the package or the source tree (if not packaged)

this does not check if the file actually exists.

**Parameters path** (*str*) – path for the file, relative to the source tree root

Returns the absolute path to the file

debmans.utils.mkdirp(path)

make directories without error

this is a simple wrapper around os.makedirs() to avoid failing if the directory already exists.

it also logs to the DEBUG logging facility when a directory is created.

# **Remaining work**

Those are the known issues and limitations of the debmans software, serving as an internal, ad-hoc issue tracker.

# 5.1 Blocking

Those are the things that need to be done to complete the restoration of the manpages service.

- test run on manziarly
  - requires access to manpages group? see RT#6485
  - missing dependencies to run properly (even as plain user): setuptools, click, apt, debian, patch to mirror/debian.org.git
- setup virtual host configuration, include:
  - redirections for previous links (see man-cgi/INSTALL and maybe more)
  - 404 handler to point to 404.html
  - edit cii badge when done, future section
  - CSP and various other SSL flags?
- provide DSA team with Puppet ruleset (see dsa-puppet manifests) or config documentation
- ask DSA to deploy the new code, test
- if it works, fix the manpages.debian.org DNS to point to the static.d.o DNS. at this point, the MVP is in place

# 5.2 Important

Those are not part of the Minimum Viable Product, but would be important to implement to make this software complete.

- · search functionality, in that order
  - 1. whatis(1): find manpages by name (done with custom Javascript)
  - 2. apropos(1): find manpages by description
  - 3. full text search

# 5.3 Nice to have

Those are not really necessary but could improve the service.

- unify site and render? a .mdwn file is like a .1.gz file, basically, except it's not extracted from a .deb
- 100% test coverage (about 80% now), edit cii badge when done (quality section)
- move apt\_cache optimizations upstream
- rotated -logfile
- add sections browser to the index page?
- debian packaging, edit cii badge when done (future and other sections)
- use tox to test against different py envs
- CII suggestions, edit cii badge when done:
  - continuous integration through Gitlab CI? (quality section)
  - hook pyflakes in test suite (quality section)
  - static code analysis with pylint (analysis section)
- i18n: we parse all languages, but should auto-detect the web browser's language with fallbacks and everything. Apache auto-negociation? Could be like debian.org language menus...
- embed test suite in main program
- consider a plugin system for extending to more than manpages, would provide the default for --plugin
  - pluggy: used by py.test, tox and devpi
  - yapsy
  - PluginBase
  - plugnplay
  - SO also suggests using the standard library imp.load\_module() or just the builtin \_\_import\_\_()

#### 5.3.1 Possible optimizations

Optimization ideas:

- extract only targeted files from the archive instead of iterating over it? not sure it's an improvement...
- use os.scandir() where relevant, instead of os.walk() and stat
- use multiprocessor.Pool for background job rendering? maybe by firing up rendering as soon as pages are created
- use md5sums to check if files were modified, edit cii badge when implemented (security section)
- pre-compile all regexes

Those will be implemented as needed, remember:

Premature optimization is the root of all evil. - Donald Knuth

# 5.4 Internal code tasks

Those are todo items extracted from the code. Priority of those is indeterminate unless otherwise noted.

#### Todo

the click module decorators make all the click.command() functions hidden from Sphinx. This is presumably because the signature changes from a func to a cls, but remains to be confirmed.

(The original entry is located in /home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user\_builds/debmans/checkouts/1.0.0/doc/api.rst, line 8.)

# License

# 6.1 GNU AFFERO GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE

Version 3, 19 November 2007

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# 6.2 Preamble

The GNU Affero General Public License is a free, copyleft license for software and other kinds of works, specifically designed to ensure cooperation with the community in the case of network server software.

The licenses for most software and other practical works are designed to take away your freedom to share and change the works. By contrast, our General Public Licenses are intended to guarantee your freedom to share and change all versions of a program–to make sure it remains free software for all its users.

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A secondary benefit of defending all users' freedom is that improvements made in alternate versions of the program, if they receive widespread use, become available for other developers to incorporate. Many developers of free software are heartened and encouraged by the resulting cooperation. However, in the case of software used on network servers, this result may fail to come about. The GNU General Public License permits making a modified version and letting the public access it on a server without ever releasing its source code to the public.

The GNU Affero General Public License is designed specifically to ensure that, in such cases, the modified source code becomes available to the community. It requires the operator of a network server to provide the source code of the modified version running there to the users of that server. Therefore, public use of a modified version, on a publicly accessible server, gives the public access to the source code of the modified version.

An older license, called the Affero General Public License and published by Affero, was designed to accomplish similar goals. This is a different license, not a version of the Affero GPL, but Affero has released a new version of the Affero GPL which permits relicensing under this license.

The precise terms and conditions for copying, distribution and modification follow.

# 6.3 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

#### 6.3.1 0. Definitions.

"This License" refers to version 3 of the GNU Affero General Public License.

"Copyright" also means copyright-like laws that apply to other kinds of works, such as semiconductor masks.

"The Program" refers to any copyrightable work licensed under this License. Each licensee is addressed as "you". "Licensees" and "recipients" may be individuals or organizations.

To "modify" a work means to copy from or adapt all or part of the work in a fashion requiring copyright permission, other than the making of an exact copy. The resulting work is called a "modified version" of the earlier work or a work "based on" the earlier work.

A "covered work" means either the unmodified Program or a work based on the Program.

To "propagate" a work means to do anything with it that, without permission, would make you directly or secondarily liable for infringement under applicable copyright law, except executing it on a computer or modifying a private copy. Propagation includes copying, distribution (with or without modification), making available to the public, and in some countries other activities as well.

To "convey" a work means any kind of propagation that enables other parties to make or receive copies. Mere interaction with a user through a computer network, with no transfer of a copy, is not conveying.

An interactive user interface displays "Appropriate Legal Notices" to the extent that it includes a convenient and prominently visible feature that (1) displays an appropriate copyright notice, and (2) tells the user that there is no warranty for the work (except to the extent that warranties are provided), that licensees may convey the work under this License, and how to view a copy of this License. If the interface presents a list of user commands or options, such as a menu, a prominent item in the list meets this criterion.

# 6.3.2 1. Source Code.

The "source code" for a work means the preferred form of the work for making modifications to it. "Object code" means any non-source form of a work.

A "Standard Interface" means an interface that either is an official standard defined by a recognized standards body, or, in the case of interfaces specified for a particular programming language, one that is widely used among developers working in that language.

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CHAPTER 7

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