

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

The Center Comes Alive

The Center for Jewish History is no longer just an imposing plan on an architect's drawing board or a bold vision, waiting to happen. Months before the official opening convocation, The Center is taking on a life of its own.

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research moved in first, followed by the American Jewish Historical Society and the American

that was nearing completion. Still to come in this atrium area are five touch-screen interactive displays to introduce visitors to the five organizations, help them navigate The Center and inform them about scheduled events.

From this core atrium area, visitors enter the state-of-the-art 250-seat Theater/Auditorium. This venue was the site for a major lecture presented in February, in collaboration with the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the city-wide observance of the 100th anniversary of composer Kurt Weill's birth. In the not too distant future there will be "Live from The Center" Web broadcasts of conferences and other Center events.

Upstairs, in the impressive two-level skylit Reading Room, wired with power jacks for computer use at all work stations, librarians from YIVO and

the American Jewish Historical Society are already assisting readers and researchers who arrive with laptops in hand. High-tech equipment includes a high-optic scanner to digitize visual materials for use throughout The Center, and the latest in copier equipment designed for library use.

"The rapid transition to full function as each organization takes its place, and the reaction of everyone to the facility, affirms

\$1 Million Challenge Grant

The Center for Jewish History has been awarded a \$1 million challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation, one of the country's most prestigious independent, private foundations. The one million dollars will be released upon the successful completion of The Center's capital campaign in December 2000 and will contribute toward the completion of The Center facility at 15 West 16th Street. Announcing its 1999 grants, John W. Marshall, III, President and CEO of The Kresge Foundation, said that each of the recipients is responding to the new challenges presented by their communities or sustaining activities that have demonstrated their effectiveness. "This is a wonderful show of support for The Center and its mission," said Bruce Slovin, Center Chairman. "The Kresge Foundation is well regarded nationwide for its work with leading institutions that contribute significantly to the fabric of American life. The Kresge name is a powerful fundraising tool, and we plan to meet our challenge, building on the excitement this grant has generated." ■



The Lillian Goldman Main Reading Room.

Sephardi Federation. The Yeshiva University Museum is now also in place, and the Leo Baeck Institute is scheduled to relocate later this spring.

How far along is The Center? Take a "virtual" tour, entering at 16th Street. The imposing two-story Great Hall was the site of The Center's first event: a book launch with Dr. Henry Kissinger as featured speaker. Guest Bess Meyerson joined others in marveling at the herculean Center endeavor

A New Archive and a Landmark Structure

From the very outset, The Center for Jewish History was intended as the central address for Jewish research, a secure repository where the records of modern Diaspora Jewish history are easily accessible for study. Nothing better illustrates The Center's catalytic role than the recently completed archival agreement between the American Jewish Historical Society and Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Under the agreement, Hadassah will be relocating its significant archives to The Center.

"The transfer of the Hadassah archives to The Center under the auspices of the American Jewish Historical Society is important for the Society, for Hadassah and for the entire research community," says Michael Feldberg, AJHS

Executive Director. "These 900 feet of materials will now be well-preserved in a state-of-the-art facility. Equally important, researchers can study these papers within the broader context of the Jewish experience and Jewish history." The Hadassah archivist, Susan Woodland, is relocating to the offices of the American Jewish Historical Society and will be available to assist researchers using the Hadassah collection in The Center's reading room.

The Hadassah Archives document the founding, development and achievements of the organization since its founding in 1912 by Henrietta Szold. Included is the history of Hadassah's health care, education and youth projects in Israel as well as the programs developed for chapters in the United States. Among the earliest documents is the



Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah, Jerusalem, c. 1940s.

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.

original employment agreement between Ms. Szold and the nurses sent to Palestine in 1918 as part of the American Zionist Medical Unit – the seeds for establishing Hadassah Hospital. There is also early material relating to Hadassah's involvement with Youth Aliyah.

The American Jewish Historical Society has also reached an agreement with the Gomez Foundation for Mill House under which the Society will administer the Gomez Mill House historic site and museum. Gomez Mill House is America's old-

est extant Jewish homestead, located six miles north of Newburgh, New York. The original structure was built in 1714 by Louis Gomez, a refugee from the Spanish Inquisition, as a trading post with the Indians. It is listed on the Register of Historic Places of the National Trust and since 1984 has been the property of the Gomez Foundation, which operates the house as a museum and educational landmark that reflects the diverse roles Jews played during different eras of this country's history. ■



First AJHS lecture in the Leo and Julia Forchheimer Auditorium.

New Initiatives for the New Century

The move of the American Sephardi Federation into The Center for Jewish History marks the beginning of a major effort to consolidate and build a comprehensive library and archives that will document the rich mosaic of the Sephardic heritage.

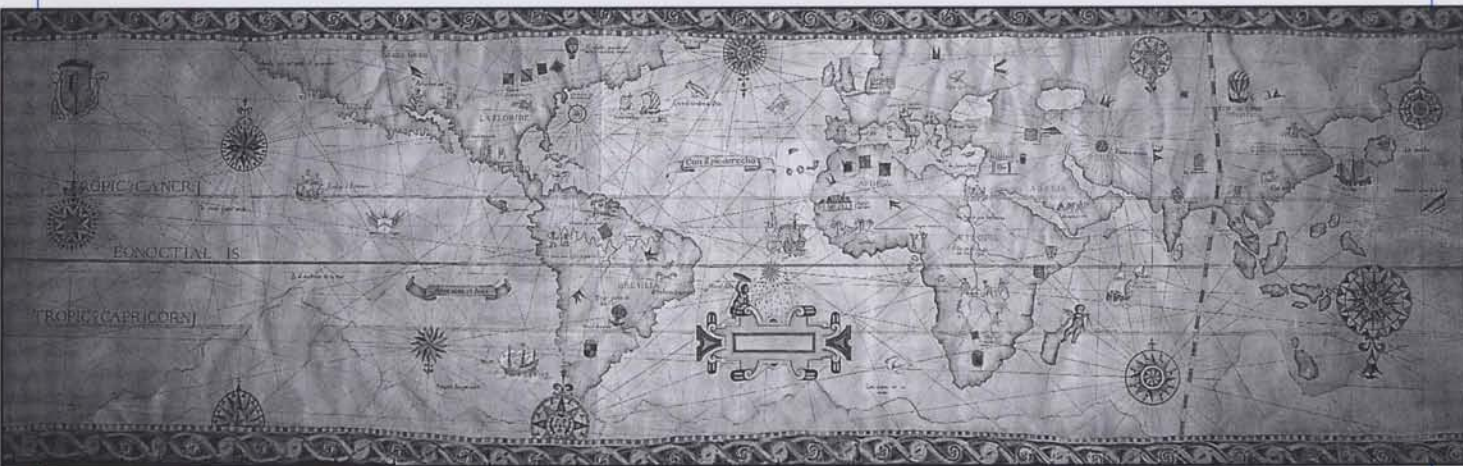
“We’re excited about launching this effort at The Center, a synergistic partnership that will unify the richly textured histories of all the Jewish people,” says Elizabeth Mizrahi, Director of the Federation. “We are just beginning,” says ASF’s new Director of Library and Archives, Vivienne Roumani-Denn, who was formerly the Judaica librarian at the University of California, Berkeley. “But our goal is to create a true knowledge center for the preservation and transmission of the Sephardic memory – before priceless artifacts, documents and stories are lost forever.”

The archives will include print, sound and visual materials, from the Golden Age to the present. The collections will represent all languages including Ladino and Judeo-Arabic, and all countries with a Sephardi/Mizrahi presence, including the Americas, the Balkans, the Iberian Peninsula,

the Middle East, Mediterranean countries, North Africa and Turkey.

Ms. Roumani-Denn has begun reaching out to individual donors and Sephardic groups throughout the world. “There is a lot of interest,” she says, “the response has been encouraging.” Holdings already include recordings of Ladino songs, marriage contracts, turn of the century textiles from Turkey and North Africa, books and photographs. Archival and library priorities include historical documents, materials dealing with the effects of the Holocaust on Sephardim, family and organization papers, artifacts, and other materials on Sephardic studies.

The Federation will complement holdings available in the collections of other partners in The Center and local institutions, and plans to digitize materials available in outside collections and make them accessible at The Center. Ms. Roumani-Denn would like to hear from anyone who has material to donate, knows of interesting items, or wishes to become involved in the American Sephardi Federation’s oral history and genealogical projects. She can be reached at 212-294-8350. ■



“Sephard 1492.” Oil painting of the world as it would have been perceived by a cartographer in 1492, created for the quinquennial commemoration of the Spanish Inquisition.

Continued from page 1

the vision for The Center and the building’s design,” says Dr. Lois S. Cronholm, Center Vice President. “That vision became a reality as soon as the organizations moved in.”

Librarians, archivists, curators, executive directors – the professional staff of each organization meet in fascinating planning sessions as they consider the ways in which their traditional programs will be expressed in these new surroundings, and ways in which new traditions will emerge through joint programming.

Synergy among the partners is taking hold on many fronts. “Researchers come to The Center with genealogical queries,” explains an archivist for the American Jewish Historical Society. “Often, we’re finding that YIVO has relevant material about the family’s origins in Eastern Europe, and then we take over with information about the family’s history in the U.S. This collaboration will broaden when the Leo Baeck Institute

holdings are here at The Center. We’re already all working together.”

Word about The Center is out. Groups are planning visits. Jewish organizations want to hold meetings and receptions at The Center; schools want lectures and tours. In addition to the Kurt Weill lecture, in January the American Sephardi Federation (ASF) welcomed Shelley Berkley (Las Vegas), the first Sephardic member of Congress. In March, ASF hosted a reception welcoming Ambassador and Mrs. Yehuda Lancry, Israel’s new Ambassador to the United Nations. In April, twenty-four German school teachers are visiting The Center as part of a study tour on “Jewish Life in the USA.” In May, the Harry G. Friedman Society will hold its annual seminar, and Roots and Branches Theater will have a benefit performance and reception. The Center for Jewish History is coming to life! ■

Resources More Accessible Than Ever



Faculty of the *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, rabbinical seminary for Liberal branch of Judaism in Germany, Berlin, 1930s. Leo Baeck is seated in the first row, far right.

The *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, published since 1956 by the LBI in London, is an annual collection of essays on the religious, social, political and social history of German-speaking Jewry. The preeminent publication in its field, the *Year Book* is a treasure trove of information and interpretation, reflecting ongoing scholarship and changes in academic study and outlook over the decades. It has had three editors since its founding: Robert Weltsch (to 1978), Arnold Paucker (to 1992), and John Grenville (since 1992).

Every article, visual and photo published in the first forty *Year Book* volumes – more than 20,000 pages of text and images that appeared from 1956 to 1995 – is now available on one CD-ROM. Researchers at libraries, colleges and universities throughout the world can have the entire spectrum of German-Jewish history at their fingertips. The CD-ROM includes the “Annual Bibliography of Books and Articles on German Jewry” from each volume – some 32,000 entries for the forty year period.

A researcher can type in any key word – for example, a city, like Frankfurt; a subject

or an organization, like the *Central Verein der Deutschen Juden*; or a name, like Martin Buber – and have immediate access to every reference, in whatever context it was mentioned, in any of the forty volumes. It is also possible to create a package of college course materials by reprinting individual articles or excerpts from them.

The CD-ROM was developed with the financial support of the Jewish Philanthropic Fund of 1933 and the technological support of Integrated Technology Systems, Inc. It can be purchased directly from the LBI, or from Berghahn Books in New York.

In another move to make

the collections of the LBI accessible to students and scholars around the world, and especially in Germany where the interest is intense, a branch of the New York Leo Baeck Institute archives and library will open in the new Jewish Museum in Berlin. “The German-Jewish experience has evolved into an active and vital field of study in Germany,” says LBI Executive Director Carol Kahn Strauss. “There is a great and growing desire to learn more about the Jewish dimension of Germany’s national heritage.” The Institute hopes to open its office in Berlin later this year. ■

YUM – Downtown at Last!

Yeshiva University Museum recently moved into The Center for Jewish History, and is currently putting final touches on the plans for its inaugural season of exhibitions and programs.

In its Main Floor Galleries, YUM will present *Major Intersections* — treasures from the collections of The Center partners: rare artifacts, paintings, manuscripts and documents organized in a thematic interpretation of Jewish history. This exhibition has been developed together with a Scholars Committee of historians from major NYC academic institutions, chaired by Prof. Lawrence Schiffman of New York University. It is being designed by Constantin Boym, a leading American designer, whose work is currently featured in the Cooper-Hewitt Design Triennial.

Israeli artist Ivan Schwebel's *David The King* will be displayed in the Contemporary Gallery. Schwebel's dramatic paintings portray the protagonists of the biblical story juxtaposed against the cityscapes of present-day Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and New York, grappling with the issues and concerns of ancient/modern society.

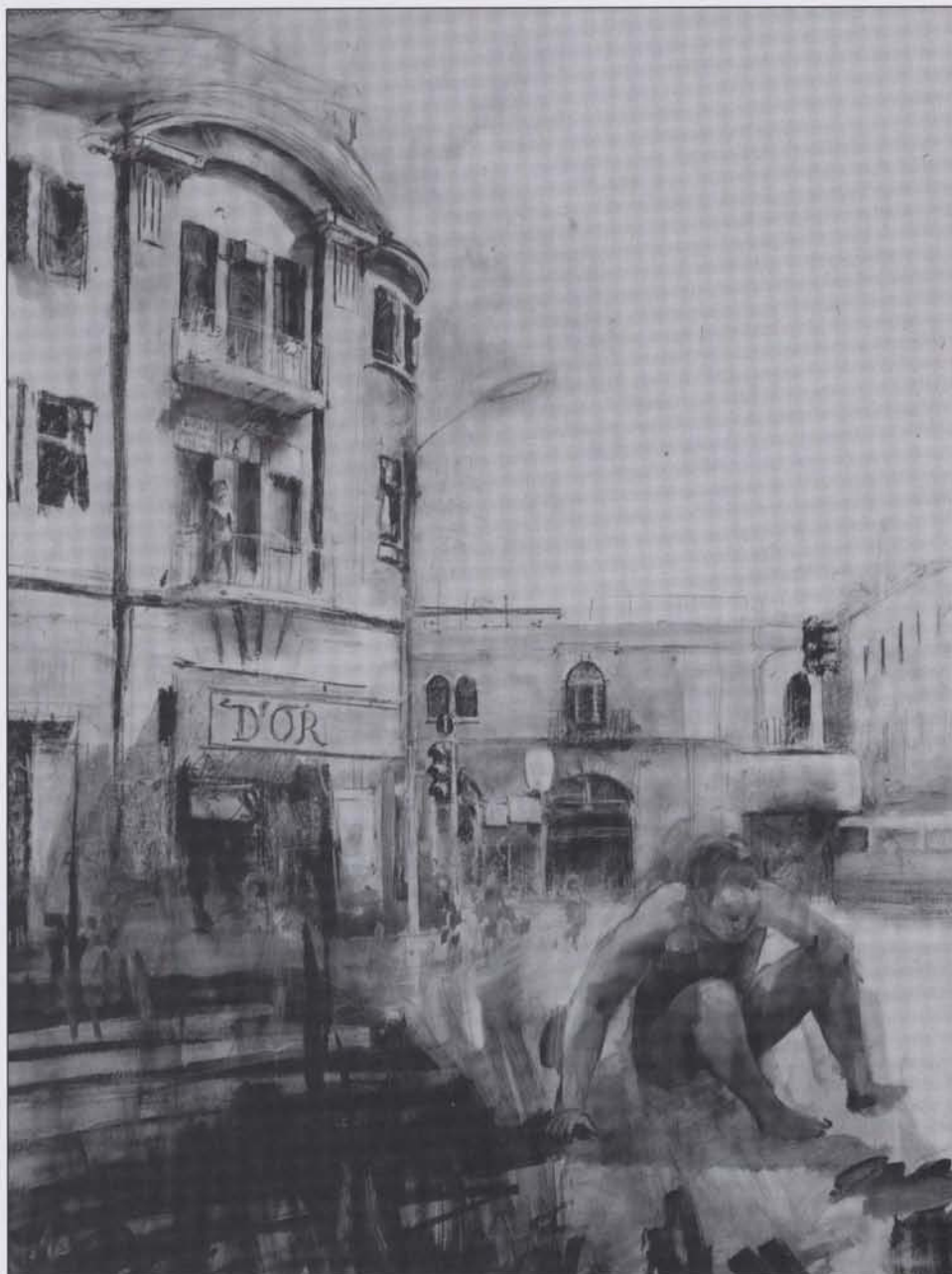
From Tent to Temple: Daily Life in Ancient Israel, an interactive youth exhibition with more than 50 hands-on activity workstations, will be presented in the Children's Gallery. This traveling exhibition, organized by the Jewish Children's Learning Lab, enables children to explore and interact with the implements and artifacts of biblical times. The Museum's outdoor Sculpture Garden will feature *Noah Summons the Animals*, stylized metal sculptures by Manuel Bennet of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Several grants from Federal agencies have recently recognized YUM's achievements and future plans. The Institute of Museum

and Library Services awarded YUM a major Conservation Grant for its important ceremonial textile collection. This Federal agency also awarded YUM a highly competitive two-year General Operating Support grant for "outstanding achievements."

As YUM prepares for its exciting opening season at The Center, it continues to prepare for future exhibitions. The Museum was also recently awarded a

prestigious National Endowment for the Humanities planning grant for an exhibition entitled *A Perfect Fit: The Garment Industry and American Jewry*, to be presented in the Museum's new galleries in 2003. "Receiving grants like these" said Sylvia Herskowitz, YUM Director, "is a tremendous shot in the arm, for they confirm the highest professional recognition of YUM's accomplishments." ■



Ivan Schwebel, *David Arose from the Earth / Zion Square*, (Samuel II 12:20-23), oil and graphite on canvas, 1983, from the YUM exhibition *David The King*.

Bringing the Past to the Future

Since its founding in Vilna in 1925, YIVO has been the central force in recording, studying, preserving and honoring every aspect of the Eastern European Jewish experience. "We celebrate our 75th anniversary in our new home, keenly aware of YIVO's historic responsibility to pass to future generations the power and depth of the Eastern European Jewish past," says Executive Director Carl J. Rheins.

YIVO launched this milestone year with the announcement of several new publications. The first is *Poyln - Jewish Life in the Old Country*, a volume of pre-Holocaust photographs by the renowned Yiddish author and photographer, Alter Kacyzne. Taken during the 1920s, when Kacyzne was photo correspondent in Poland for the New York *Jewish Daily Forward*, the photographs offer a window into the lost world of Polish Jewry through the eyes of one of its keenest observers. The book, edited by YIVO Chief Archivist Marek Web, in March was named winner of the 1999 National Jewish Book Award in Yiddish Language and Culture.

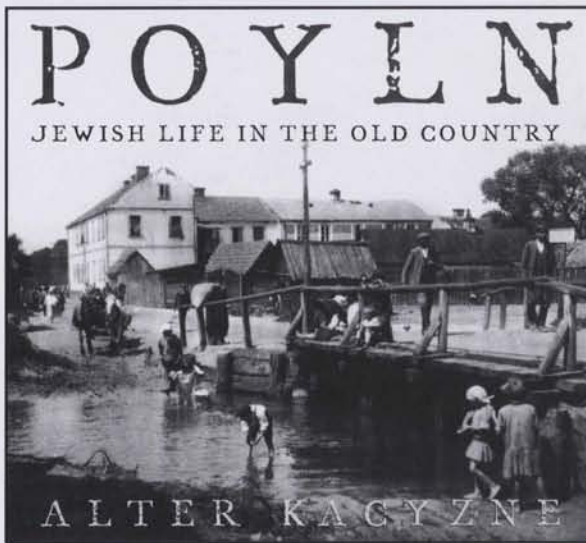
Just completed is the English translation of Max Weinreich's seminal four-volume *History of the Yiddish Language*, completed by YIVO Yiddish linguist, Dr. Paul Glasser.

Coming soon is *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland Before the Holocaust*. These translations from Yiddish and Polish offer yet another window to the past – revealing glimpses into the daily lives of Jewish youth during the pre-war decade. They were written by 16 to 21 year old Jews, in response to three contests sponsored by YIVO during the 1930s. Some 300 autobiographies survived the war years. This new translation of selected autobiographies is being edited by Dr. Jeffrey Shandler of New York University.

Another new publication is *Profiles of a Lost World: Memoirs of East European Life Before World War II*, a translation of

Hirsz Abramowicz's evocative 1958 volume on Jewish life in Eastern Europe. These essays offer uniquely perceptive accounts of many facets of Jewish life before the Holocaust. The translations were edited by Dina Abramowicz, daughter of the author.

Also coinciding with YIVO's anniversary is a series of programs planned for the formal opening of The Center, to which YIVO plans to invite members from YIVO Chicago and YIVO Miami. A 75th anniversary exhibition will trace YIVO's origins. YIVO will also present an anniversary series of concerts, theatrical presentations, poetry readings and lectures. ■



New award-winning YIVO publication features pre-Holocaust photographs.

Technology FAQs

How would you describe The Center's technology capabilities?

The Center's infrastructure was designed to maximize internal communication and provide high-speed, high quality Internet access. The Center currently has over 60 internal users, the ability to support hundreds more, and the capability of serving people throughout the world through the Internet.

How does technology further The Center's mission?

Technology is the backbone of the information exchange

among people in The Center and between The Center and the external world. The Center's archivists, librarians and curators are working together to produce an integrated collection management system which will provide seamless access to the full scope of collections at The Center, greatly expanding the value of each partner's collections.

Modern service requires Internet access: does The Center have a Web site?

A test Web site is available at www.centerforjewishhistory.org. This site is currently being developed for viewing

this summer. The Center's Web site is linked to the sites of the partner organizations, and will be linked to the Kiosks which will be installed in the Great Hall.

When will I be able to access The Center's collections from the Internet?

The Center is now in the process of creating a technology-based integrated management system for the collections of all the partners. After this system is created, an on line public access catalogue will become available, and eventually digitized materials also will be available on line. The digitization of our catalogues and collections is a long-term process. In the

interim The Center will provide an overview of the collections on its Web site.

In addition to the collections, are there Center activities that will be available via the Internet?

Along with the new Web site, the public will have access to a current calendar with the schedule of all public events. This should be available by June. Within a year, The Center will be capable of broadcasting events on the Internet; when The Center has a major event, such as a lecture or performance, that event can be transmitted in real time, or it can be filmed with The Center's digital cameras for rebroadcast. ■

Sharing Our Commitment

The Center for Jewish History thanks the following donors for their most generous participation in this exciting endeavor to preserve our Jewish past.

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Campaign for The Center for Jewish History

The Center offers a unique opportunity to support and maintain what will be the most substantial repository of Diaspora Jewish cultural history — an essential link between the past and generations to come. A joint enterprise of five major entities of Jewish learning, history and art, The Center will house a stunning collection of 100 million archival documents, 500,000 library volumes and tens of thousands of artifacts and works of art.

The official opening convocation is scheduled for this fall. Your participation in this remarkable project is needed **now** to insure that The Center will meet The Kresge Foundation's \$1 million challenge to complete our Capital Campaign by December 2000. We hope you will join the thousands of contributors across the country who have already made their commitment.

There are many opportunities for general and specific giving through participation in our Building and Endowment Funds. All gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, and are welcome in cash, securities or property. If you wish to perpetuate your commitment to The Center, arrangements can be made for you to join our Planned Giving Program. You may name The Center as a beneficiary in your existing Will. Or you may choose from a variety of naming opportunities, endowment gifts and planned giving programs including charitable remainder trusts, charitable gift annuities, charitable lead trusts and other plans. You may also designate The Center as a beneficiary of a retirement account or a life insurance policy.

Call now for information about this exciting endeavor to preserve our Jewish heritage and build on the Jewish past. To discuss your valued participation, please contact Jamie Kamp, Director of Development, at 212-294-8312. ■

An investment in The Center is an investment in the Jewish future.

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- Please call me to discuss my gift. I want to become a Founder/Benefactor/Patron, etc.
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