

# Data Models for Conceptual Structures

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**Abstract.** A well-founded data model for Conceptual Structures can help in understanding issues of definitional semantics, efficient implementations and even syntax of proposed languages. This paper presents several useful data models of increasing complexity and applicability that can support Conceptual Structures definitional semantics. The models are presented in Haskell, a non-strict, strongly-typed functional language that allows easy definition of recursive data types, and also in hand generated XML using the proposed Schema standard that allows some of the same features. This paper then goes on to discuss how these models can be used by a schema-based XML version of an interchange format for Conceptual Graphs in comparison with CGIF. For the model presented in Haskell, a Haskell parser for CGIF syntax uses this model as a target, and this allows generation of XML output as a back-end to the parser. An XSLT style sheet that generates CGIF completes the cycle. All of the models are compared and contrasted.

## 1 Usefulness of Data Models

Conceptual Structures, CS, as defined in Sowa's book [1], expresses knowledge as a connected multilabeled bipartite oriented graph. There exists a mapping from each of these graphs, Conceptual Graphs, CG, to formulae in first-order logic. The Conceptual Graph Interchange Format, CGIF, was intended for easy interchange of CGs and until this present year was maintained as an ANSI standard [2] and updated by the community [3]. The definition of CS as presented in [2], among other things, not only gives the interchange format CGIF, but also a semantic model of CG. This paper aims to improve the semantic portion of [2] by tying the semantics of CG to formal data models.

One view of CGIF is that it is a persistent version of the internal data structures that a processor for conceptual structures must maintain. This is not of course its only use, and was not the main focus of its beginnings. Originally CGIF was a means to define a format for transmitting conceptual structures electronically.

However, any processor that uses CGIF as its input-output format has to address the issue of what is the end result of parsing a CGIF file; that is, what internal data structures will be created and filled. One might question if there are good and bad target data structures, or if are they all equally good (or bad).

The authors contend that CGIF has a small number of 'natural' data structures that lead to efficient parsing, and that an examination of the data models for these structures is useful for implementers of conceptual structure processors. Without such an examination, arbitrary choices can lead to inefficient internal data structures for the processors and potential errors.

## 2 Data models

For the authors, the term 'data model' means the first half of an abstract data type (ADT) -- the definition of data types and structures that will support operations on those types. In fact, the model provides a mapping from general knowledge to the definitional element of the ADT. The implementation of the operations is the second half of the ADT, but that is not part of the scope of this paper.

Many issues come to play when defining an ADT for a conceptual structures processor. Probably one of the most important is the efficiency of data structures for implementing the operations in terms of their time and space requirements [4]. Well-designed and well-defined data structures can certainly help in these respects, whereas poorly defined structures lead to inefficiencies. Again, this paper will not address these issues directly because the data model deals with the *definitional aspects* of the ADT, not implementation. Instead we shall concentrate on the data structures for the processors that use CGIF format for communication. This is not to say that a processor is constrained in its internal structures or implementation by CGIF, but it makes sense to examine the correspondence between CGIF and the appropriate data types with a view to minimizing the difficulties of parsing and generating CGIF syntax.

### 2.1 Haskell Data Model

We have chosen to make this discussion more formal by choosing a real language, Haskell, in which to define one of the data models. We could have used more traditional methods, such as those in the database world [[5], [6]] or in the object-oriented world [7], but a language like Haskell has several advantages:

1. It allows recursive data types without pointers, such as are essential for representing graphs.
2. It is strongly typed, which means that the language processor can check the definitions for errors.
3. We can write a parser for CGIF that has the chosen data model as a target. The existence of the Happy parser generator [8] was a bonus here.
4. We can add code to implement operations (not done here).

5. We can add code to generate different output forms -- here we have used XML.

### 2.1.1 Haskell Data Types

Haskell, like its earlier counterpart ML, has three main devices for defining types: the *constructor*, the *list*, and the *tuple*. Constructors allow types to be built as combinations of values (product types) or as enumerations of different alternative values, so a type for a 'Literal' referent can have three separate aspects:

```
data Literal = LitString String | Name String |
             Marker String
```

'String' is a basic type; LitString, Name and Marker can all construct a Literal element. Constructors can have many arguments, and thus can generate compound values:

```
data CompoundName = Name String String String
```

can generate a name consisting of first, middle and last components.

It is also possible to name an existing compound type:

```
type NewType = (String,String,String)
```

This names the type consisting of a tuple of three strings.

List notation is similar to ML (and Prolog). Square brackets surround a comma-separated sequence of values all of the same type:

```
[1, 2, 3] is of type [Int], and
[LitString "clever", Name "Fred", Marker "23"]
is of type [Literal]
```

These lists are single linked lists that have their origin in Lisp, and must be processed from left to right using operations head and tail. They are *not* arrays, although Haskell does also have arrays through extensions to the language.

The tuple is a finite sequence of values of possibly different types. Parentheses surround the comma-separated list of values:

```
(1, "normal", Marker "42") is of
type (Int, String, Literal)
(1, (2, 3), 4) is of type (Int, (Int, Int), Int)
```

## 2.2 Graph Data Models

We would also like to give data models generated by hand (without the help of a formal language) for CGs.

Graphs can be modeled with many different data structures [9], but as a basic definition of a graph we will use the following terminology [10]. A graph is:

1. Denoted by  $G = \langle V, E \rangle$ , where  $V$  is a finite set of vertices (nodes) and  $E$  is a set of edges, where an edge  $ij$  represents a connection between two nodes,  $i$  and  $j$ .
2. Defined as a set and a relation over that set, where every element of that set is a node and every relation is an edge.
3. If an edge has a direction then it is called an *arc*.

Using this base for a graph, we can now look at several different types of data structures for our data models or ADTs.

### 2.2.1 Pointer Type

This defines an ADT for a general tree structure. That is one can traverse the tree from the top to the leaves moving in a breadth-first fashion. At a definitional level, this is very space efficient because traversing the graph does not involve the creation of intermediate data structures.

There are however drawbacks for this structure [10]:

- if nodes are not connected then more than one tree is produced for a single graph.
- since pointers that denote circularly defined values cannot be manipulated directly, constructing or traversing the graph cannot be achieved in a simple manner.

### 2.2.2 Adjacency List Type

This is a linear structure that holds every node in the graph together with its adjacent nodes (connected with an edge) . This is very useful for retrieving a node and all its edges, because they can be quickly retrieved using any starting node.

There are however drawbacks with this structure especially when the number of edges is dense:

- it is not very space efficient (possible multiple copies of a node).
- takes extra time to insert a node into the graph at storage or modification time in order to maintain the added linkages in the lists.

### 2.2.3 Adjacency Matrix Type

As indicated in the type, this is a matrix (two-dimensional square array) of values of dimension nodes  $X$  nodes. The edges are indicated in the matrix by either the number 1 (true) as oppose to 0 (false) for no edge or a weighed value. This again is very useful for retrieving a node and all of its edges by just following down a column.

There are drawbacks with this structure specially when the number of edges is sparse:

- it is not very space efficient ,  $\text{space} = |V|^2$
- it is not very space efficient when there are weights on the edges, indicating when the edge is non-existent.

### 3 CGIF

The CGIF is a representation for conceptual graphs intended for transmitting CGs across networks and between IT systems that use different internal representations. The CGIF syntax ensures that all necessary syntactic and semantic information about a symbol is available before the symbol is used; therefore, all translations can be performed during a single pass through the input stream [2].

#### 3.1 'Natural' Models for CGIF

CGIF defines a graph as a set of concepts or relations, both of which are optional but there is an asymmetry [11]. Relations may contain concepts (as 'arcs') but concepts may not contain relations. This leads to an inevitable, and unfortunate choice in the representation of any graph with more than a few nodes. The choice comes about because of the optional nature of both concepts and relations. Since a graph may contain disconnected concept nodes, we cannot base a graph purely on relations. Thus the simple graph:

```
(R1 [C1] [C2])
```

actually has three more alternative representations (ignoring the choices in ordering of the nodes):

```
[C1*x] (R1 ?x [C2])  
[C2*y] (R1 [C1] ?y)  
[C1*x] [C2*y] (R1 ?x ?y)
```

As can be seen, the `x` variable becomes a co-reference variable for depicting a pointer to a single concept `C1`. These, however, are unnecessary, since the first simple form given with no co-references is perfectly adequate.

However, the graph:

```
[C1] (R1[C2])
```

has only one alternative (ignoring changes in the order of the nodes):

```
[C1] [C2*x] (R1 ?x)
```

since the unconnected node C1 must be kept separate.

We shall call the most compact form, with the least number of co-references, the 'minimum' form, and the one with the most co-references, the 'maximum' form. There are thus two 'natural' data models for CGIF, corresponding to these two extremes.

### 3.2 Haskell-based Data Model for CGIF

Our Haskell model for CGIF supports both minimum and maximum forms since there is no simple way to signal co-references between nodes, except as outlined above in the ‘pointer’ model. If we neglect actors and special contexts for the moment, as well as lambda expressions in place of type labels, the model is:

```
type CG = ([CNode], [RNode])
type Label = String
data CNode = Concept Label Referent
data RNode = Relation Label InArcs OutArc
type InArcs = [CNode]
type OutArc = CNode
data Referent = Nil | Literal Literal | Graph CG
data Literal = LitString String | Name String | Marker String
```

Since Haskell can use the pointer model outlined above, a simple graph with one co-reference link can be represented by an expression that includes two mentions of the same variable:

```
let sit = Concept "Sit" Nil in
    ([],[Relation "AGT" [sit] Concept "Cat" Literal Name "Fred",
      Relation "LOC" [sit] Concept "Mat" Nil])
```

is the sentence “The cat Fred sitting on a mat”. Since Haskell is non-strict, the expression does not imply that a copy of the expression bound to the variable `sit` by the `let` form is inserted in the two places it is referred to, but each will be evaluated as necessary. This is the ‘lazy’ evaluation style of Haskell. It is also possible to explicitly include the co-reference links in the data model:

```
type CG = ([CNode], [RNode])
type Label = String
data CNode = Concept Label Referent | DefConcept Label CoRef
Referent | BoundConcept CoRef
type CoRef = String
data RNode = Relation Label InArcs OutArc
type InArcs = [CNode]
type OutArc = CNode
data Referent = Nil | Literal Literal | Graph CG
data Literal = LitString String | Name String | Marker String
```

The sentence then becomes:

```
([],[Relation "AGT" [DefConcept "Sit" "x" Nil]
      Concept "Cat" Literal Name "Fred",
      Relation "LOC" [BoundConcept "x"] Concept "Mat" Nil])
```

The latter is closer to the ideas of co-reference links in the CGIF definition. The final data model, sufficient to capture all the information in the example files on the CGTools CD [12] is:

```
type CG = ([CNode],[RNode],[ANode],[NNode])
type CoRef = String
data Node = CNode CNode | RNode RNode | ANode ANode | NNode NNode
data CNode = Concept String CoRef Referent |
            CLambda AList CG CoRef Referent
data RNode = Relation String [CNode] | RLambda AList CG [CNode]
```

```

data ANode = Actor String [CNode] [CNode]
data Type = TypeLabel String | Lambda AList CG
data NNode = Negation CG
data Quantifier = QuantifierNum Int | QuantifierId String
data Referent = Nil | Literal Literal | Graph CG |
               Quantifier Quantifier | LiteralGraph Literal CG |
               QuantifierGraph Quantifier CG
data Literal = LitString String | Name String | Marker String |
              Set [Literal] | List [Literal] | Array [Literal]
              | Tuple [Literal]

```

This model includes actors, lambda expressions, negation contexts, quantifiers and the CP style of collections [11].

## 4 A Haskell-based Parser for CGIF

The existence of the ‘Happy’ Haskell parser generator [8] led to a series of trials with the aim of parsing CGIF with different data models as targets. A total of twelve different versions were tried, and the degree of difficulty noted.

All were successful without having to write too much extra code to ‘squeeze’ the data from a CGIF file into the target data model. Co-references can be handled either by the pointer model or the explicit model and the minimum or maximum forms can be targeted.

The grammar<sup>1</sup> used for input to the Happy parser generator is very close to CGIF but eliminates some of the difficulties and cleans up a little of what was left. The more complex models enabled all five levels of the CGIF examples on the CGTools workshop CD [12] to be parsed into Haskell data, without any loss of information. This has been verified by generating XML version of the parsed file that can be turned back into CGIF syntax with an XSLT stylesheet, and comparing the newly generated version with the original. This work will be presented below.

## 5 XML Schema-based models

### 5.1 Generating XML from the Haskell Model

The last data model in section 3 was used as the source of an XML schema-based model. The schema generation tool in XMLSpy was used for this work since it guarantees that the resulting schema is valid. Appendix A presents this schema.

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<sup>1</sup> Full grammar may be viewed at web site:  
[http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~hdp/XML/NMSU/happy\\_grammar.txt](http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~hdp/XML/NMSU/happy_grammar.txt)

Each data type in the Haskell model becomes a complex type in the XML version. XML actually has a little more flexibility than Haskell data types when it comes to ordering of components of compound types. Taking advantage of the XML flexibility co-references are handled by an optional attribute on a concept tag. Thus the “cat on a mat” example becomes:

```

<CGFile>
  <CG>
    <RNode>
      <Label>AGT</Label>
      <InArc CoRef="x">
        <Label>Sit</Label>
      </InArc>
      <OutArc>
        <Label>Cat</Label>
        <Referent>
          <Literal>
            <Name>Fred</Name>
          </Literal>
        </Referent>
      </OutArc>
    </RNode>
    <RNode>
      <Label>LOC</Label>
      <InArc CoRef="x"/>
      <OutArc>
        <Label>Mat</Label>
      </OutArc>
    </RNode>
  </CG>
</CGFile>

```

Haskell code was written to generate this XML output from the data generated by the Haskell parser. This was made simple by the monad style of I/O allowed in Haskell, that turns a tricky task in a functional language into something like Basic programming.

## 5.2 Generating XML for Graph Models

As discussed in section 2.2., many different types of graph data models can be produced by hand besides using the Haskell language to produce a data model.

We have created data models for some of the graph types discussed in the previous section. The adjacency list and matrix types are efficient for retrieving concepts and their links for sparse and dense node sets, respectively. However, when they are converted to XML, by hand, the space problem seen in the abstract data model is carried over into the XML schema produced. For the adjacency list data model, the XML for the actual conceptual graph becomes five lists with the following basic structure<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> Full XML Schema can be seen at the following web site:  
<http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~hdp/XML/NMSU/listcgif.txt>

```

<cgraph>
  <con-list>
    <conceptref>Cat</conceptref>
    <conceptref>Sit</conceptref>
    <conceptref>Mat</conceptref>
  </con-list>
  <RC-list>
    <pair>
      <relationref>AGT</relationref>
      <conceptref>Cat</conceptref>
    </pair>
    <pair>
      <relationref>LOC</relationref>
      <conceptref>Mat</conceptref>
    </pair>
  </RC-list>
  <CR-list>
    <pair>
      <conceptref>Sit</conceptref>
      <relationref>AGT</relationref>
    </pair>
    <pair>
      <conceptref>Sit</conceptref>
      <relationref>LOC</relationref>
    </pair>
  </CR-list>
  <AC-list/>
  <CA-list/>
</cgraph>

```

The adjacency matrix data model would have the same space problem, but even worse if there were a sparse number of edges in the model.

We did discover that if we hand coded the XML schema to be more like the graph pointer data type discussed in section 2.2.1, space was not so much of a problem. However, to make retrieval of the concept nodes faster and more efficient, we did not use a tree structure, but instead used the tuple data structure from database technology [5].

This produced a very similar data model to both the Haskell and adjacency list data models when it came to the internal node structure, but a much more efficient data model for the actual conceptual graph. The final XML Schema can be seen in Appendix B that was constructed using XMLSpy.

## 6 Completing the Cycle: An XSLT Style Sheet for CGIF

In order to verify the data models used the authors decided to ‘complete the cycle’ and generate CGIF syntax from the XML output of the Happy-generated parser. (CGIF -> Haskell data -> XML -> CGIF ). This is most easily accomplished with an XSLT stylesheet, rather than using an XML parser.

The stylesheet contains commands for transforming XML input into a desired output form with the help of the parser built into the Internet Explorer browser (we used version 6 since it has the most up-to-date version of the XML parser and XSL transform engine built into it.) XMLSpy also has an IE6-compatible transform engine that we used for testing. The style sheet is unremarkable except for its handling of whitespace which is something of a black art. When in readable form, the style sheet produces unwanted whitespace in the output<sup>3</sup>.

## 7 Conclusions

The authors have found that exploring different data models that can support conceptual structures separately from a detailed implementation has been very instructive. The range of models described in this paper covers many issues in defining the ADT of processors for conceptual structures. The use of Haskell as a data definition language means that different data models can be compared easily, and then used as the target of a parser for CGIF. Design of an XML schema is then simplified since the raw material of type definitions had already been worked through. A comparison with an existing data structures, designed in the traditional way, was also made easier. The authors plan to improve their data structures in the future with a study of data models such as the ones presented here. They also plan to look at the implementation (internal data structures) of the graph operations that are the second half of the ADT. Having a range of formally defined data types will lead to easy analysis of these operations.

## References

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<sup>3</sup> Full XSL Style Sheet may be viewed at web site: [http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~hdp/XML/NMSU/xsl\\_stylesheet.txt](http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~hdp/XML/NMSU/xsl_stylesheet.txt)

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## Appendix A: The XML Schema produced from the Haskell data model

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<xs:schema xmlns:xs="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema" elementFormDefault="qualified"
  attributeFormDefault="unqualified">
  <xs:element name="CGFile">
    <xs:complexType>
      <xs:sequence><xs:element ref="CG" minOccurs="0" maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
      </xs:sequence></xs:complexType></xs:element>
  <xs:element name="CG" type="CGType"/>
  <xs:complexType name="NodeType">
    <xs:choice>
      <xs:element name="Label" minOccurs="0">
        <xs:complexType>
          <xs:simpleContent><xs:extension base="xs:string"/>
          </xs:simpleContent></xs:complexType></xs:element>
        <xs:element name="LambdaExpression">
          <xs:complexType>
            <xs:sequence>
              <xs:element name="Param" maxOccurs="unbounded">
                <xs:complexType>
                  <xs:complexContent>
                    <xs:restriction base="CNodeType">
                      <xs:sequence>
                        <xs:element name="Label">
                          <xs:complexType>
                            <xs:simpleContent>
                              <xs:extension base="xs:string"/>
                            </xs:simpleContent>
                          </xs:complexType>
                        </xs:element></xs:sequence></xs:restriction>
                      </xs:complexContent> </xs:complexType></xs:element>
                    <xs:element ref="CG"/>
                  </xs:sequence></xs:complexType> </xs:element></xs:choice>
                </xs:complexType>
              </xs:sequence></xs:complexType> </xs:element></xs:choice>
            </xs:complexType>
          </xs:element>
        </xs:choice>
      </xs:complexType>
    </xs:choice>
  </xs:complexType>

```

```

<xs:complexType name="CGType">
  <xs:sequence>
    <xs:element name="CNode" type="CNodeType" minOccurs="0"
      maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
    <xs:element name="RNode" type="RNodeType" minOccurs="0"
      maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
    <xs:element name="ANode" type="ANodeType" minOccurs="0"
      maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
    <xs:element name="NNode" minOccurs="0" maxOccurs="unbounded">
      <xs:complexType>
        <xs:sequence><xs:element ref="CG"/>
        </xs:sequence> </xs:complexType></xs:element></xs:sequence>
  </xs:complexType>
</xs:complexType name="CNodeType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="NodeType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="Referent" minOccurs="0">
          <xs:complexType>
            <xs:all>
              <xs:element ref="Literal" minOccurs="0"/>
              <xs:element ref="CG" minOccurs="0"/>
              <xs:element name="Quantifier" minOccurs="0">
                <xs:complexType>
                  <xs:choice>
                    <xs:element name="Number"
                      type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
                    <xs:element name="Type" type="xs:string"/>
                  </xs:choice> </xs:complexType></xs:element>
                </xs:all> </xs:complexType></xs:element> </xs:sequence>
              <xs:attribute name="CoRef" type="xs:string" use="optional"/>
            </xs:extension>
          </xs:complexContent>
        </xs:complexType>
</xs:complexType name="RNodeType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:extension base="NodeType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="OutArc" type="CNodeType"/>
        <xs:element name="InArc" type="CNodeType" minOccurs="0"
          maxOccurs="unbounded"/></xs:sequence>
      </xs:extension></xs:complexContent> </xs:complexType>
</xs:complexType name="ANodeType">
  <xs:complexContent>
    <xs:restriction base="NodeType">
      <xs:sequence>
        <xs:element name="Label">
          <xs:complexType>
            <xs:simpleContent>
              <xs:extension base="xs:string">
                <xs:attribute name="XPos" type="xs:short"
                  use="optional"/>
                <xs:attribute name="Ypos" type="xs:short"
                  use="optional"/>
              </xs:extension></xs:simpleContent>
            </xs:complexType></xs:element>
          <xs:element name="Input" type="CNodeType" maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
          <xs:element name="Output" type="CNodeType"
            maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
        </xs:restriction>
      </xs:complexContent>
    </xs:complexType>
  </xs:complexContent>

```

```

        </xs:sequence>
    </xs:restriction>
</xs:complexContent>
</xs:complexType>
<xs:element name="Literal">
    <xs:complexType>
        <xs:choice>
            <xs:element name="Marker" type="xs:positiveInteger"/>
            <xs:element name="Name" type="xs:string"/>
            <xs:element name="LitString" type="xs:string"/>
            <xs:element name="Set">
                <xs:complexType>
                    <xs:sequence>
                        <xs:element ref="Literal" minOccurs="0"
                            maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
                    </xs:sequence></xs:complexType> </xs:element>
            <xs:element name="Array">
                <xs:complexType>
                    <xs:sequence>
                        <xs:element ref="Literal" minOccurs="0"
                            maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
                    </xs:sequence></xs:complexType> </xs:element>
            <xs:element name="List">
                <xs:complexType>
                    <xs:sequence>
                        <xs:element ref="Literal" minOccurs="0"
                            maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
                    </xs:sequence></xs:complexType></xs:element>
            <xs:element name="Tuple">
                <xs:complexType>
                    <xs:sequence>
                        <xs:element ref="Literal" minOccurs="0"
                            maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
                    </xs:sequence></xs:complexType> </xs:element>
        </xs:choice> </xs:complexType>
    </xs:element>
</xs:schema>

```

## Appendix B: The XML Schema produced by hand as an efficient data model

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<xs:schema xmlns:xs="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema" elementFormDefault="qualified"
    attributeFormDefault="unqualified">
    <xs:element name="cgraph">
        <xs:complexType>
            <xs:all>
                <xs:element name="con-list" type="conceptType"/>
                <xs:element name="RCC-tuple" type="RCC-tupleType" minOccurs="0"/>
                <xs:element name="ACC-tuple" type="ACC-tupleType"/>
            </xs:all>
            <xs:attribute name="uniquegraph" type="xs:ID" use="required"/>
        </xs:complexType>
    </xs:element>
    <xs:element name="c-in-out" type="c-in-outType"></xs:element>

```

```

<xs:element name="c-posin-out" type="c-posin-outType"/></xs:element>
<xs:complexType name="ACC-tupleType">
  <xs:sequence minOccurs="0" maxOccurs="unbounded">
    <xs:element ref="actor"/>
    <xs:element ref="c-in-out"/>
  </xs:sequence></xs:complexType>
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