The Boston Computer Society TI-99/4A User Group Meeting Newsletter April 1989

Edited by J. Peter Hoddie

The May Meeting

The May meeting of The Boston Computer Society's TI-99/4A User Group will be held on Wednesday May 17 1989 at 7:30 PM. As usual, the meeting will be located on the fifth floor (room 541?) of the Massachusetts College of Art on Huntington Avenue in Boston.

The latest rumors say that Press will be released at the Ottawa Show at the end of this month (April). This makes some sense because (1) it is the home turf of the author (Charles Earl) and (2) it is long over due (at least in the public's perception of things...). Needless to say (but I'm sayin' it anyway) if it is available, we will do everything in our power to get a copy to demonstrate.

I'll give a demo of Paul Charlton's GenPROG, which is Paul's development system for the 9640. It has a mess of neat features and is rather blindingly fast. If I can find some time to sit down and play with Roger Merritt's (I spelled Roger's name wrong but I don't know how to spell it right...) Form Shop program which has been gaining a rather dedicated following.

Other topics may include a demo of TI's P-Code card, including a simple demo of how to get a Pascal program to run. I recently acquired Al Beard's Fortran 99/9640 package, so perhaps I'll do a demo of how to do a Fortran program on the 99/4A and/or 9640 - again depending on time.

Unless something terribly unexpected happens, I should be making a rather major announcement at the May meeting. It may confirm a few well placed rumors you've heard. If you've been attending BCS meetings for any length of time (or even if you're a new comer) please make every effort to attend the May meeting. -jph

April Fool's Day By Justin Dowling

Come this October, we will be into the orphanage six years. That's a long time to enjoy a computer system that does anything the big guys can do with their computer, on a home budget too! All that's preamble to this review of our FAYUH. And once again, the fair was a success.

But how many years can we keep it up? Every year there's something new but the well must be running dry. MYARC did the GENEVE. They did the Hard and Floppy Disk Controller. There are Artist programs, word processors, data base programs, telecommunications programs, spreadsheets, in short, every software genre has been covered and we are in at least the second generation of software. (Take MACFLIX for example; there's a real good advance: if we can't draw an 80 column picture, MACFLIX lets us print pictures from a computer that can.) We have RAMDISKS and 80 column cards for the screen like DIJIT and Mechatronics. We can run 80 track disk drives—that's 2880 sectors per disk!

How long can we keep it up? A loooong time.... If you have a 99/4A system, it will do anything you need a computer at home to do—including transferring PC work from the job and back again. Just think, HAM radio operators have flea markets all the time. They write newsletters and share tips and tricks about their gear. They network all over the world to lay lines of communication from one end to another.

We can continue to expand our systems in any of the many directions available nowdays. Get a RAMDISK, get a HFDC and some 80 track drives. Get an NX1000 printer and unlock the graphics in your machine. Just get some double sided 40 track drives (Make sure you get low power ones if you plan to put two half-heights in your P box.) If you came to the recent FAYUH at the Woburn Ramada, you would have had a chance to make these decisions without having to wait for the U S SNAIL or UPS to bring you the merchandise. There were vendors for just about anything you need. Of course, DIJIT didn't come all the way from San Diego, but you had

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your choice from two of the three RAMDISK vendors in this country: Rave99 and Horizon. In no particular order, Lou Phillips was there for MYARC, and locally, Frank Billeri was there from the House of Computers in Attleboro. Mickey Schmitt was there for ASGARD and Jim Horn was there for Disk Only Software and for Compuserve. Peter Hoddie was between the Genial Computerware and the BCS booths. The New Hampshire 99ers were there. The NUTMEG user group was up from Connecticut. Club 99 was there from the east, and M.U.N.C.H. from the west. KEN'S TV was there from Dedham; Ken Gilchrist has a lot of stuff for the TI. The Pioneer Valley User Group was there, and Harrison Software was there from Maryland to demonstrate the musical capabilities of the 99/4A. These are just a few of the folks that made this FAYUH such a success. You were there I think. (Didn't I see you at the BCS table looking at the MACFLIX pictures Tom Ward put together for the show? Tom, you must have downloaded the bluejay with your PC clone because it won't load unless you press the <"> from MACFLIX to disable the MAC heading error checking it does.)

The only thing missing from this society of 99/4A users is a "raison d'etre," a purpose outside ourselves and our computing objectives. I had a chance to discuss with Jim Horn the idea of having "new blood" in our society. Jim comes from a slightly different direction than we do (see the article entitled "Kids" in our February issue). Jim seeks teachers who will manage donated systems in their classrooms where we propose that members become system engineers to a manageable klatch of kids (like one kid) using a donated system at home. So I took from Jim the good parts of his program and am grafting them onto ours. See the ad elsewhere in this issue. You'll know it when you see it. Be warned.

The response so far has been underwhelming. The bottom of the barrel is close by despite the successes of the round of fairs. There's no reason for it all to end unless a few people are left to do most of the vending and using until they crash and burn.

My Genealogy on my TI-99/4A By John M. Geisinger, CDP Lehigh 99'er Computer Group (Pa.)

Our newsletter editor has been encouraging me to write an article on my genealogy efforts but I always say "I'll do it when I'm done." At the rate I'm going I'll never be done, so this is just a progress report.

My purpose in writing this is to stimulate your interest in genealogy and to use your TI for your records. As the proverbial pastor says "Do as I say, not as I do", don't necessarily do as I do, you may find a better way.

I have had an interest in genealogy for many years and have so many records I don't know what I have. I wanted to use my TI to help me know what records I have and where they are. Rather than having a well defined system and goal, my system has just "evolved" and I expect it will change as my knowledge of TI, files, data bases, equipment configuration and goals change.

There are two basic forms for collecting genealogical data. First is the "Pedigree Chart" which starts with one person, 2 parents, 4 grandparents etc. Once filled in I seldom refer to it. The second is the "Family Group Sheet". This contains data for each family unit or marriage. A second marriage requires a second PGS.

I have so many (1000+) family group sheets with many having the same given names that I don't know what I really have. This, along with my illegible penmanship, is why I went to my TI for help. There may be "accepted" numbering systems, some using letters to denote generation, some number each individual.

I was most fortunate to find a local county history and biography set of books which had my paternal immigrant ancestor, born in 1701, down to my dad listed. From this I made up a PGS on each descendant on plain notebook paper. On the left side I list the male info and on the right the female info, starting with their names, their parents names, dates, and personal data on each. Below this I listed their children, in sequence, with dates. Aside this I enter the child's spouse, if married.

In my system I number each PGS, not each individual. The immigrant is PGS #1. Each new PGS is given the next consecutive number, regardless of generation or relationship. Each chart contains three types of numbers: the PGS#; aside the husband or wife their parent's PGS#; and for each married child his PGS#. It is these three numbers that tie the records together.

My genealogy class instructor stressed to always research from the known to the unknown, but I often research from the unknown to the unknown. Instead of gathering information on only known descendants, I am collecting any information on any Geisinger/Geissinger/Gisinger I can find. I am going both up and down the trees. This complicates both my manual and computer systems.

Many times the information is insufficient to definitely identify the person. In these cases I make up a FGS and number it "UN" for unnumbered or "NI" for not indexed, if I did not enter it in my manual index yet. If the information spans 3 generations and I can not tie it to the immigrant an alphabetic series such as A1, A2, A3... is used. When I can tie the A1 to the immigrant I renumber it to a numeric number. I file my sheets in numeric sequence in loose leaf binders.

Since I have so many duplicate names (often the same person) I want to print lists of all the Geis(ss)ingers in alphabetic sequence with a major sort on first name and a minor sort on date of birth.

To do this I needed a database which contains a multi-level sort on non-adjacent fields. The only such data base in our library at that time was Easy Data. As I become familiar with newer and better data bases I plan to write quick and dirty programs to convert my files to a better data base.

To minimize wasted disk space I blocked 4 63 I/F byte records to a sector. The fields are: FGS#; male first, init, last, parent#; female first, init, last, parent#; generation; and birth date.

Many times I do not have a birth date, but one is required for the minor sort. I use an 8 digit number YYYYMMDD and print it as "YYYY.MMDD". If the date is unknown I make an educated guess and span the parent/child about 25 years. Some tombstones have years only. To distinguish which dates are guesses I enter the year YYYY, then MMDD 0000 for a correct year only and 9999 for a guess.

As for listings I list all my files in columnar format, which produces a neat appearing list. I want the flexibility to list any of the records in any format and in any sequence. I keep each file on separate floppies. So far I have only created my master (numeric), alphabetic, and male Geisinger child files.

The first set of printouts were of the complete files. First in numeric sequence, second sorted on the male (last, first) name, third sorted on the female (last, first) name. I then selected only male "GEIS" records from all files, combined them, and then sorted them (major on first name, minor on date of birth). As I get more files created I will make larger combined files.

My fear is that I may soon have files which are too large to sort. I assume I would then have to sort the files first, then merge them. If you have a program which can merge files on major and minor non-adjacent fields (if such a thing is possible) I would appreciate knowing about it.

After I had my master file (immigrant descendants) created I wrote an EXB program called FGS/SEARCH. I enter any FGS# and it prints that record and all the ancestors back to the immigrant. If necessary it switches male/female so that all descendants are on the left and the spouses on the right. It then advances for the next FGS#.

I have used TI-Writer to print descendant charts. The format and size will be limited by the capacity of the printer. On my old 80 column printer I printed descendants of the 5th generation. I summarized 1st to 4th, and detailed 6th to 9th adding spouse and the FGS#. Each generation is indented one inch after the 6th.

I want the ability to change fields, record sizes, file lengths or data bases without re-keying any data. My original system was EXB, 32K, single SSSD disk and 80 column printer.

Should any of you other genealogists care to send me your articles on genealogy or data bases, or Geis(ss)inger family group sheets, or want further details on my system, my

address is RD #2-Box 741; Zionsville, Pa. 18092; ph (215) 966-5233.

I hope this will encourage you, my fellow orphaned siblings, to get an interest in genealogy and use your TI. Drink lots of ROOT beer, the preferred drink of genealogists.

Fortran 99 Conference

The follow is an edited extract from a conference held on Delphi's TI-Net. The topic was 99 Fortran and 9640 Fortran from LGMA Products and written by AI Beard. This conference extract is presented here in the hopes that it will provide you with some more information on the Fortran development environments which are becoming rather popular within the TI community. I have editing the text to try to make it a bit more readable. Speakers names appear in all capital letters and are followed by a > so that if Art was speaking it appears as "ART>" and so on. The abbreviation "ga" means "go ahead". -jph

.Art> OK, The speaker is here, Let's get under weigh... ABEARD> Can I make an opening comment?

.Art> The advertised topic is MDOS and Fortran..but we won't hold you to that Al if you wander a bit. Do you have anything you want to say at the start? ga al

ABEARD'S Thanks Art. Primarily I'd like to say that 1988 has been a very good year for 99 FORTRAN, for the following reasons:

• sales have remained strong, and had really good response to the

version 3 upgrade

• The 3.1.3 version of FORTRAN has been stable for a LONG time now

(about 7 months)

Significant progress has been made on an MDOS version

▼1988 had the first commercial program released written in 99 PORTRAN

The next version promises to be even better. So, thanks for the support, I am still very excited about the next FORTRAN release, and I'll turn it back to you, Art.

Art> Let's throw the floor open to Questions - hopefully on the topic of FORTRAN, both 99 and MDOS. IERRYC>?

.Art> ga jerry

JERRYC> Al, can you tell us about that commercial release you mentioned?

ABEARD> Sure. It is a game, and was authored by Chris Bobbitt, called Column Attack... He wrote it in X-BASIC some years back, and it was too slow, so he didn't release it. According to Chris (who is one of my biggest supporters), the conversion took a single weekend, basically because the PORTRAN and BASIC subroutine calls are similar. ga COUNTERMAN>?

.Art> Was it sold by Chris at Chicago, I didn't see it at his table?

JERRYC> I assume he used the runtime module you provided this year?

ABEARD> He had it at Harrisburg. And yes, he used the runtime module I provided this year. ga
.Art> Bob, GA

COUNTERMAN> Al, what would you consider the advantages of 99 fortran compared to C99 (which I am using extensively) and the new pascal compiler (which I have not) in terms of both features and suitability for particular applications. ga

ABEARD> I'm going to come out strong on this, I haven't in the past, but after discussions with users in Harrisburg, I feel I have thier unbiased support. 99 FORTRAN is very similar to BASIC, BASIC kind of "grew out" of FORTRAN originally. It is not as cheap as c99, but has some features that c99 doesn't, like:

- No need to assemble as a seperate step
- Symbolic Debugger
- Extensive Floating Point Library
- Interfaces to TI features very similar to X-BASIC
- Integrated programming environment (editor, compiler, linker, and debugger

all in a single package). I DON'T have any experience with the new PASCAL, I have discussed it with several people, and shouldn't comment on it furthur (since I have a bias) other than to say I think price wise, if you want to do graphics functions, 99 FORTRAN is cheaper (at least the prices I've seen, PASCAL is extra for these functions). ga .Art> Bob, do you have a followup question?

COUNTERMAN> yes...will the geneve version offer any sort of concurrency (ie multitaski ng)

ABEARD> No more than standard MDOS provides, i.e. you can call the standard MDOS "execute program concurrently" function (which doesn't work for me in MDOS 1.08, hope to check it in later versions soon). However, MDOS does not handle concurrent I/O very well. ga COUNTERMAN> Have you had any problem getting technical info from Myarc? ga

ABEARD> Paul Charlton has been very helpful, Jeff Guide has been super about organizing GENEVE support for everyone, including myself. MYARC as a

company. ABEARD> has not been involved in this project to any degree (and I have not solicited MYARC's help, in their defense). ga

Art> As MYARC changes their MDOS to newer versions, does that louse up the work you've done to date?

ABEARD> To some degree. Each release so far has its own set of quirks. The biggest difficulty by far is in the graphics interface, which is my real problem in released 9640

FORTRAN commercially, ga

COUNTERMAN>?

.Art> ga Bob

COUNTERMAN> I haven't seen any documentation on the MDOS task management calls. Is this available in a collected form somewhere?

ABEARD> Paul Charlton would be a better one to answer this, but the utility library documentation opcode 9 is "load program image task", which Paul tells me will set a program running concurrently. ga

COUNTERMAN> thanks. done

JERRYC>?

.Art> ga Jerry

JERRYC> Al, do you have MDOS ver 1.14 running now? ABEARD> Yes. Right now I am going through every graphics library call and validating whether it works or not.

Some are working better, some broke. I have been passing my results to Paul who has been passing to appropriate parties. I like the screen scroll rate in the new MDOS, but it has a curious "ghosting" problem with the top line. ga JERRYC> Haven't noticed the "ghost" - can you describe it? ABEARD> Occasionally when using 80-column mode (perhaps after switching screen modes, back and forth), the top line will always look like the bottom line, and some middle line is missing. My fix is to MODE 80, and it goes back to normal. ga

Art> I note some trend toward higher priced software -ie: \$49.50 for FIRSTBASE and \$59.95 for PRESS. Are you planning a nd increase for MDOS/FORTRAN?

JERRYC> How many lines per screen?

ABEARD> (Haven't counted, Jerry). ABEARD> I am not planning any price increases, my biggest cost for producing 99 FORTRAN package is the manual, and I've procured some equipment to try and keep the costs down on that. ga JERRYC> The control-shift-alt toggle does something like that.

.Art> ga al

ABEARD> I'd like to point out some new features of 9640 FORTRAN:

- Integer *1 (byte) and Integer *4 (longword) arithmetic, so that you can now load character strings directly into arrays, and you can have integers greater than 32,767.
- Real libraries, you can now create your own libraries which scan very quickly, and are easy to copy to a ramdisk.
- Command line driven. So that "auto-compile/link/run" command files can be built.
- Extensions for assembly language subroutines (can now REF and multiple DEF).
- Much larger user addressing space (>400 to EFFF for user task).
- Extensive MDOS library interface COUNTERMAN> c

.Art> ga bob

COUNTERMAN> if you are still taking suggestions, I have one...

ABEARD> (love suggestions)

COUNTERMAN> wildcard expansion for command line args. (I know MDOS should really be doing this...) ga
ABEARD> Umm, current command line structure would go something like this. To compile a file: F9640 /OTES TOBJ
TEST. To link a file: FLINK /OTESTOBJ, OBJE /LCR /IFL
TESTEXE. Options on assembly are a "/" followed by single letter, followed by

the option string. I'm open to suggestions on the format, not sure where the wildcard would fit in (unless you want one command line to perform multiple compilations, multiple links?) ga

COUNTERMAN> well, that would be icing on the cake, but I meant more as part of the file handling library. So that your application could just import a "DOWILD" function and would have access to the expanded wildcard list from the MDOS command line. ga

ABEARD> I see. Well, I'd add it to my suggestion list, which I periodically review and prioriterize (and yes, I actually do a number of them). ga
COUNTERMAN> done

.Art> May I ask how many copies of 99 FORTRAN have been sold? or is that classified info?

ABEARD> No, not classified. About 400 so far (last three months have been wonderful). ga

Art> fantastic! I hope we see 400 good programs released as a result.

.Art> We have a languages data base.. I'd love to see some 99 FORTRAN programs uploaded for it by TI NET members.ga ABEARD> I agree Art. The interest in Harrisburg was very good indeed, I'd love to see some of those programs talked about actually out somewhere. I have tried very hard to put up good examples of using 99 FORTRAN in various data libraries, including games, a KERMIT, utilities, and most recently, several MDOS graphics demos and an MDOS file sector editor. ga

.Art>Next ? from anyone?

JERRYC> c

.Art> ga Jerry

JERRYC> Al, I think your demo programs were an inspiration — really got everyone's attention.

Random Ramblings By J. Peter Hoddie

It is about 3:01 in the morning. The meetings starts in about 16 hours, and I am somewhat tired. I won't be at this meeting (April) due to what you might term "family obligations." I have tried (not only did I try, but according to Sam Hunting, editor of the BCS Update and The Active Window, I also succeeded - I should be more positive...) to line up a few top notch speakers for your entertainment and enlightenment. Enjoy. I'll be back next month with more of the usual insanity.

The Fayuh was pulled off one more time. This is primarily due to the efforts of my distinguished co-director Justin Dowling, who took care of nearly all the arrangements for the show. About all I did was some panic stricken running around the week before the show when Justin was out of town on business. He gets the credit for the show this year. His efforts were outstanding and overwhelming. If you get a chance, thank him, eh?

Justin has also been spending many long hours down at the BCS office learning how to work the Macintosh so that he too can turn out newsletters that look this pretty. We have already mailed out one of his newsletters produced on the Mac, and they should keep coming. Justin has been working at a disadvantage however - he's had to do most of his learning from - and I have never been noted for being any good at teaching people how to use computers.

The software library did get updated and enhanced for the Fayuh, as promised. Unforunately, there was not enough time to get the catalogs printed - although the catalog master was made up. At the show I picked up a bunch more disks for the library and they should make it into the library by next month. At that point there should also be a new catalog. In the meantime, I have printed out a sheet listing

all the updated versions and so on. It is somewhere in this newsletter. Probably on the page after this one.

I've been playing around with the scanner at the BCS office. You probably already noticed. Anyhow. It is rather nice, because it means that we can include pictures in the newsletter. Unforunately, it takes up tons of disk space and lots of time. The results would probably be better if I wasn't using a picture of me for testing..... If you have any clever ideas on how to use this nifty capabilities, let me know.

There were many of you who helped out at the show. In particular, and in no particular order: Tom Ward, Bill Tormey, Ed Kraft, Bill Clark, Joe Rawlins, Louie Holmes, Corson Wyman, Walt Howe, Mike Wright, Donald Mahler, Ron Williams, and the half dozen or so of you that I can't think of (it is now 4:22AM - distractions, I don't type that slowly!). Dinner at the Hilltop Steakhouse was the idea of the visiting folks from the Pittsburgh - they always go there after the show. Their fearless president has promised to speak at next year's show. Don't anyone forget!

The Magnetic Users Group was at the show despite no indication of this. They shared space with Brockton. If you didn't get by the Harrison Software table during the show you missed some really fantastic music software. MYARC was there in the person of Lou Phillips. The BCS and I really appreciate Lou attending for the fourth consecutive year. His appearance at the first show got us off to a tremendous start! Three cheers for the Pioneer Valley Group (Springfield MA) for finally taking out a table this year. Thanks to Bud Mills for driving out from Ohio again this year - that van is getting a lot of use going to TI shows. The Ottawa contingent wasn't as strong as in the past but who can complain when Jane LaFlamme and Ruth O'Neil are their representatives? Bob Boone, an almost Ottawa type (Bob recently moved a few hundred miles) was also there - thanks Bob! The Sherbrooke Canada group was also present in force. My apologies to Rave 99 for leaving their address out of the Fayuh program (I would print it here, but I don't have around...Rave: Send me some PR material and I'll give you a free plug next month). Warren Agee was heard muttering something about fuzzy searches and being abandoned....

Your Fearless Editor. Scanned from a picture taken while on vacation in sunny San Diego. It was windy. I really do look

like this. Perhaps this will put an end, once and for all to those groundless rumors about

horns....



Version: 4.13 Author: Will and Tony McGovern Requires: XB or EA or TIW Language: AL, XB Updated: 3/28/89 Eliminates the need for the TI-Writer and Editor/Assembler cartridges while supplying many additional features. A truely integrated environment for the TI including an editor, formatter, disk manager, assembler, disk sector editor, Forth loader, c99 compiler, terminal emulator loader, and the ability to add features and customize. Perhaps the most important TI disk ever. Requires BCS disk 61. (10/22/87) 50 Disk RAG Assembler Version: 7.0 Author: Art Greene Requires: EA Updated: 3/20/89 Language: AL A complete MACRO assembler for the TI. Allows you to build and use complex macros for us ein your assembly language programs. Comes with terminal emulator and disk cataloger programs as examples. This is the assembler that TI should have written! Disk RAG Assembler 51 Version: 7.0 Author: Requires: Updated: 3/20/89 Language: See disk 50 Disk 61 Funnelweb disk #2 Version: 4.13 Author: Will and Tony McGovern Requires: Language: Updated: 3/28/89 This is the second disk of the Funnelweb system. Requires disk #46 Disk 77 **RAG Linker** Version: 3.0 Author: Art Greene Requires: EA Updated: 3/1/89 Language: AL A powerful sytem for converting DIS/FIX 80 assembly object code files to PROGRAM image. This allows files to load faster and take up less space on disk. Extremely flexible with complete documentation. Disk 100 Telco - Program Disk Author: Charles Earl و و: Version Requires: EA or XB Updated: 3/28/89 Language: AL The most user friendly and perhaps powerful terminal emulator for the 99/4A. Includes many modes of terminal operation including VT100, supports 80 columns, full catalog, print spooling, macros, on-line editor, and much more. Highly acclaimed. Disk 101 Telco - Documentation Version: 2.3 Author: Charles Earl Requires: Updated: 3/28/89 Language: Complete documentation for disk 100. You will need to really make use of Telco. Disk c99 for MDOS Version: Author: Clint Pulley Requires: Updated: 3/28/89 Language: Clint Pulley's popular c99 compiler, modified to run under MDOS mode on the 9640. Allows creation of MDOS programs when used with QnD Linker (disk 107). Disk 109 Ti-Writer Version: 4.2 Author: Art Greene Requires: XB, MM, TIW, or EA Language: Assembly Updated: 3/20/89 An enhanced version of TI-Writer including much faster Moving, Deleting, and Copying of Lines in the Editor, many new Formatter commands and bug fixes. An absolute must for 99/4A owners.

Disk

46

Funnelweb

DO YOU OWN A TEXAS INSTRUMENTS 99/4A HOME COMPUTER?

The Texas Instruments 99/4A Home Computer as advertised by Bill Cosby in 1983. This computer once sold for \$2,000 with accessories.

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Donate your 99/4A system to The Boston Computer Society TI-99/4A User Group. Teachers can use the 99/4A to teach computer subjects such as BASIC, FORTRAN, LOGO, Pascal, c, Pilot, FORTH, GEE, COMPUTER ARCHITECTURE....

Common educational subjects are available, like: math, spelling, language, spatial relationships, biology and of course, games.

We can put your old 99/4A back to work. We can also use those peripheral devices you bought and can no longer use in your updated system, like the Extended BASIC cartridge, the speech synthesizer..... Perhaps you bought a cassette recorder from TI or someone else; perhaps, a monitor or TV, an expansion box.... Our members can become system engineers to offer the support no one can give a school kid trying to puzzle out an unfamiliar technology. Put your old 99/4A to work.

Put your old stuff in a box. You can send it UPS or US Mail, there's no hurry. Just send it to:

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^{*} A nonprofit society