Digital Advocacy Stories: A Pedagogical Tool for Communicating and Strengthening Library Values

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Digital Advocacy Stories: A Pedagogical Tool for Communicating and Strengthening Library Values is a case study conducted in LS5633: The Art of Storytelling. The purpose of this study was to investigate graduate student candidates' development of library values through the use of digital tools to create and disseminate advocacy stories. While discussing, creating, sharing, revising, and reflecting on digital advocacy stories, candidates gave voice to values based on ALA and other competences. They also increased their expertise in communicating those values to library stakeholders via electronic and Web 2.0 tools. The researchers conducted a content analysis of several assignment data sources, including candidates' online discussions, advocacy stories, and digital reflection scripts. The findings suggest this pedagogical process strengthened candidates' library-related values as well as shored up their ability to advocate for those values and use social networking and digital tools to do so.

Keywords: LIS education, competences, digital storytelling, advocacy, reflective practice, social media

Introduction

Standards are used to prescribe "what" should be taught and assessed (Heck, Banilower, Weiss, & Rosenberg, 2008; Stiggins & DuFour, 2009; Tomlinson, 2000). ALA has developed standards, or competences, that form a framework for assessing the achievement of library professionals who earn their Master's degrees in ALA-accredited programs (ALA, 2010). Librarian educators use the competences to guide program decision-making and course-level student learning outcomes. In addition, each ALA division has standards and guidelines for pre-service librarian educators to consider. When educators align student learning outcomes and instruction with standards, they strive to achieve a guaranteed, viable curriculum that supports student achievement (Marzano, 2007).

Adopting and embodying the values of library science is one important part of an LIS education and can be viewed as enculturation into a profession or community of practice (Wenger, 1998). It is an aspect of professional preparation that can lead to passion for, and sustainability in, the profession (Schön, 1987; Welch, Reynolds, & Carroll, 2013). Candidates may begin their coursework with little or no knowledge of the core tenets of librarianship. Educators of pre-service librarians intend candidates to increase their understanding of the foundations on which their future careers rest as they matriculate through the program, learn about the history of library science, and develop the competences set out by the profession. In the process, candidates

can learn to tell a "library story" that reso-nates with the values of the profession.

Advocacy is a story. The aim of advo-cacy is to influence outcomes. In order to achieve their goals, advocates make a case, an argument or a claim about a decision that needs to be made or a direction that should be taken. Effective advocates sup-port their claims with data and evidence. They then tell their story in order to help others see the problem, issue or solution from their point of view in order to enlist others to take up the cause and join the ef-fort. Being able to frame a story in such a way that others respond positively is an essential advocacy skill (Lakoff, Dean, & Hazen, 2007; Reinsborough & Canning, 2010). Advocacy is mentioned twice in the ALA Core Competences: Competence I: H and Competence 5: E (ALA, 2009).

As librarian educators who are commit-ted to sustaining the profession, the au-thors of this paper, an assistant professor and a doctoral student/graduate assistant, are interested in pre-service librarians in-tegrating the values of librarianship into their worldviews during their library sci-ence education. Taking those values and turning them into advocacy stories was a way to address competences in the profes-sion. Using digital tools to do so, situated candidates in current practices in librari-anship. In developing this assignment, the researchers hoped to support candidates in doing professional work during their preparation program. This effort attests to the fact that the university classroom is a laboratory for the practice of librarianship. In this context, what is learned is the direct result of what learners "do" during their coursework (Jeng, 2011).

Study Context, Problem, and Purposes

One goal of LS5633 is for graduate student candidates to consider storytell-ing as a vehicle for their advocacy work. The case study participants were public and school librarian candidates who were enrolled in a 15-week online course dur-ing spring 2013. The course is designed with a constructivist learning framework in which candidates take responsibility for their own learning by building on their prior experiences, interacting with course materials and one another, and developing skills as storytellers. For the study, three candidates gave full consent to use all data sources for the project: online discussion postings, digital advocacy stories and digi-tal reflections. Three additional candidates gave consent to post their digital advocacy stories and reflections on the course wiki at http://tinyurl.com/LS5633-DAS-DR.

Candidates used creativity and critical-thinking skills to navigate this complex assignment. They identified their library values based on standards in librarianship. Candidates discussed their values in three separate online forums. They shared their ideas, beliefs and considerations and re-sponded to at least two other classmates' postings. The candidates also discussed the audiences for their stories, reaching out for feedback via social media and se-lecting appropriate tools for telling their stories.

Candidates selected Web 2.0 tools from a menu to build their storyboards http://tinyurl.com/LS5633-DS. Candidates thought critically about the visual and au-ditory media that would appeal to their tar-get audiences. Candidates were asked to post their memes or slogans, one-sentence themes, audiences, and social networking venues to the class wiki. The instructor responded with ideas and questions about the direction for their stories to help them narrow their audiences and hone their foci before drafting an initial version of their advocacy stories.

Candidates used various tools to cre-ate their digital stories. In order to receive feedback, they shared their stories with targeted audiences via social networks. Based on feedback, the candidates re-vised their scripts, stories, and published final versions on the Web. At the end of the assignment, the candidates produced

a digital reflection using a Web 2.0 tool that addressed three main components: the content of their story (values), the process of developing the story and selecting media, and finally, eliciting and responding to audience feedback. The researchers aligned candidates' digital reflection questions with the research questions for this study.

Research Questions

1. How did candidates determine on which library value to focus their digital advocacy stories?
2. What were their considerations as they determined the content used to communicate their selected values?
3. How did they use social media or participatory culture to reach an audience in order to disseminate their work, seek feedback and/or revise their stories?

The researchers' intent for this assignment was to help candidates articulate their professional values and increase their passion for the profession. One way to inspire and sustain the profession may be to construct passionate practitioners during preservice education (Reynolds, Welch, & Carroll, 2012). LIS educators who are concerned about sustaining the profession want to instill values in candidates and develop coursework that inspires passion. The purpose of this study, then, was to investigate the effectiveness of digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool for communicating and strengthening candidates' library science values.

Literature Review

Communities of practice, social networking tools and metacognition form the conceptual framework for the digital advocacy story assignment and this study. In a community of practice, members use the technologies of everyday practice with each other, based on shared passions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In a constructiv-

ist university classroom, a community of practice, professors develop assignments and students become co-constructors of knowledge as well as active, collaborative and passionate participants in their new [librarian] culture (Yukawa, 2010). When LS5633 candidates participated in the digital advocacy story project, the instructors had a goal of igniting their passion for library values, digital storytelling and advocacy work.

Social networking tools help adult learners to become more engaged and motivated to learn (LeNoue, Hall, & Eighmy, 2011). Applied in the university classroom, these tools can facilitate meaningful, communicative and collaborative practices. Since social media allows users to build networking relationships, it provides an excellent way to share beliefs, passions or values and to reach wider audiences with content, ideas and opinions (Berger, 2010). When learners connect with others inside and outside of class, their experiences deepen (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robison, 2009). By publishing their advocacy stories to social media, these candidates had multiple chances to build a larger network for advocacy and assess the impact of their stories.

The central role of reflective practice as an essential habit of mind (Costa & Kallick, 2008) relates to the concept of metacognition, in which learners think about their own thinking processes. Reflective practice is a way to self-assess one's behavior in order to further develop workplace skills (Dequoy & Stefl-Mabry, 2012; Schön, 1987). "Through self-reflection, learners can effectively determine what they learned, how they learned it and how they integrated it into their prior knowledge or how it changed their schema" (Moreillon, 2013). Self-reflection helps people develop the skills and behaviors associated with metacognition. Learners who are able to employ metacognitive skills are more confident about what they know and are more successful at indepen-

dent learning (Coffield, Mosely, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004; Marzano, 1998).

Some researchers recognize that metacognition is not only a private internal activity but it is also socially situated (Akyol & Garrison, 2011; Moreillon, 2013). Responding to instructors' prompts and other classmates' responses in online discussions is effective for synthesizing learning (Rice & Gattiker, 2001) and promotes socio-emotional course components in which discussants exchange empathetic messages and engage in self-disclosure (Fulton, Botticelli, & Bradley, 2011). In their book, *The Connected Educator: Learning and Leading in the Digital Age,* Nussbaum-Beach and Hall suggest that reflection is an essential component of self-evaluation for 21st-century productive citizens who use "collaborative tools to reveal and clarify conceptual understanding and thinking, planning, and creative processes, such as the ability to create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia" (Nussbaum-Beach & Hall, 2012, p. 15). Similar to an instructor's prompts in an online discussion, a guided self-reflection provides learners with a framework for metacognition.

Methodology

Study data were analyzed through the collection and comparison among participants' online discussion postings, digital stories and digital advocacy story assignment reflection scripts. Hand coding was used to interrogate these data in several ways. First, the researchers developed a biographical sketch of each participant in order to put her data in the context of her background and personal goals for librarianship. Next, they collated the data from three discussion posting threads focused on values and developing the stories. Finally, they considered these three participants' stories and digital reflections.

Using a content analysis approach, these data were then coded and analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to determine common themes in how participants arrived at and described their values, the stories they told, the tools they employed and the feedback they solicited and used to revise their stories. Each researcher interrogated the data for each participant separately. After their initial coding, they shared their analyses and repeated the process with each participant's data to verify the validity of the process and directions taken to further interrogate the data. Throughout this process, the researchers maintained a stance that both acknowledged their impact on the data and honored the emergent nature of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). By posing open-ended questions in the discussion board and providing open-ended guiding questions for the assignment reflection, the researchers attempted to minimize their impact on the study participants' postings and scripts. It should be noted that the researchers did not participate directly in any online discussions during the semester. Instead, the instructor summarized feedback in twice-a-week announcements, whole-class emails or private responses to individual candidates.

For the digital reflection, the instructor provided participants with guiding questions related to three assignment objectives: determining a value, crafting a story and selecting media, and seeking feedback from a target audience in order to evaluate their advocacy story before revising it. Participants were required to compose a script as well as develop the reflection product. The goal of the self-reflection was for learners to uncover the meaning they ascribed to their digital advocacy stories by showing their thinking, describing their planning and sharing the data they used to analyze and revise their stories. The researchers were then able to use the participants' own words and images to describe their meaning-making process.

These data are presented as vignettes that preserve the participants' own words. This format is most appropriate for sharing data from a storytelling course and re-

flects the naturalistic quality of qualitative research; story represents a way of knowing and thinking about values and action (Carter, 1993). The narrative format of these vignettes expresses respect for the participants' "lived through experience" of this assignment while it represents an attempt to be "sensitive to the *storied* quality of many qualitative data" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 52). The participants provided member checks by reviewing and approving the vignettes that follow.

Vignette: "Global Exploration is Just around the Corner"

At the time of this study, Amy was in her final semester of study. Her career goal was to support youth in the public library. She had worked as a library page and had volunteered in the library. Amy's passions focused on "early literacy outreach to educate parents/caregivers."

In LS5633: The Art of Storytelling, Amy was an active participant in the online discussions. When prompts were posted by the instructor, candidates were required to make an initial posting based on course readings and at least two thoughtful responses to classmates. [In all, a minimum of three postings was required.] Amy's participation rates doubled the required amount for each discussion. She was a dynamic contributor in the synchronous group office hours chats.

Amy aligned her values with ALSC Competencies (ALSC, 2009) related to knowledge of client group, communication skills and user and references services. Amy produced her story with the Web 2.0 tool Prezi (http://tinyurl.com/Amys-Digital-Story). She composed her digital reflection with another Web 2.0 tool, VoiceThread, shown in Figure 1 (http://tinyurl.com/Amys-Digital-Reflection).

In Her Own Words

Amy's digital advocacy story one-sentence theme was: "The public library

Figure 1. Amy's Digital Advocacy Project Reflection Using VoiceThread.

encourages children to learn and practice empathy and compassion by encouraging curiosity, understanding and respect for diversity in cultural and ethnic values as evidenced by materials, services and programming." In "Reflections on Our Values in Librarianship and Education" online discussion, Amy conveyed "curiosity as the most important value." She explained the basis for her value choice. "Libraries give users resources to investigate, inspire and create." Amy's background also influenced her choice since her "family valued questioning and curiosity." As a future librarian, Amy believed in "encouraging users to continue being curious."

In the "Further Thoughts on Values" thread, Amy refined her thoughts on library values. "I am still trying to figure out how to translate words into visuals, but I'm thinking that will come as I continue to re-define this value." Amy considered the focus of her story. "I can see how focusing on one segment of parents would make this project more effective. After some thought, I've decided to focus on parents/caregivers."

Assignment Reflection

Amy, as directed by the assignment sheet, framed her reflection using the guiding questions related the content of the story, the process of developing it and the digital advocacy story feedback venues and revision process.

Content: "As I explored children's programming and literature and work[ed] with children, I was able to clarify the values that drew me to children's librarianship . . . I wanted to create a story to highlight how children's services can help children learn, grow, explore, discover, and become successful citizens."

Process: "When I began this project I struggled [with] how I could develop [my] value into a story. After brainstorming, I was able to come up with my slogan, 'Global Exploration is Just Around the Corner!'. . . Once I had this slogan, I

planned my storyboard with Popplet . . . Then [in Prezi], I decided which visuals to use. The final touch was to add a musical soundtrack, and to post the project on social networking sites for feedback."

Audience Feedback: "I posted a link to my project on Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ pages. I also posted a link on two personal blogs. This project allowed me to synthesize my values in a visual way that invited others to engage and act."

Vignette: "Building Readers, Building Communities"

Audrey's career goal was children's services in a public library setting. At the time she participated in this course, Audrey was a stay-at-home mother. Throughout the semester, Audrey averaged more than twice the minimum required postings on the online discussions and was an active participant in the synchronous group office hours chats.

Audrey's value for public library programming was a consistent theme throughout this assignment. Audrey ascribed many benefits to the "power of programming," including "educational, community building, and entertaining activities." In her outreach, she targeted mothers, in particular, in order to reach her goal of building lifelong learning habits in library patrons. She connected her story to the ALSC Competencies related to programming skills. Audrey used Windows Live Movie Maker as the production tool for her digital story and uploaded it to YouTube (http://tinyurl.com/Audreys-Digital-Story). She presented her final digital story reflection using Prezi, shown in Figure 2 (http://tinyurl.com/Audreys-Digital-Reflection).

In Her Own Words

Audrey's one-sentence theme was: "Public library children's programming offers an invaluable venue to build and share a love for reading, to begin voyages

"Building Readers, Building Communities" Reflection

Figure 2. Audrey's Digital Story Project Reflection Using Prezi.

of learning exploration and to build friendships and a spirit of community." Audrey wrote, "An excellent library will offer a variety of well prepared, well targeted programs to their community as a way to promote outreach, highlight the value of the library in the community and find a way to serve those who often go unnoticed."

In threaded discussions, Audrey shared her background as a library page in a county library system. She talked about how the library became a "busy and vibrant" environment frequented by children, teens and families for the summer reading program. Audrey also promoted staying current with technology and noted that digital advocacy stories are a pathway to leadership within an organization. "Digital advocacy stories are a terrific way to distinguish ourselves as leaders within our organizations, motivate change in others and insert our voice into the policy and planning conversations of our organizations."

Assignment Reflection

Content: "I want to meet the profes-sional value of excellent programming skills because I believe these skills will make my library relevant and valuable in the lives of my community. Digital advocacy stories help spread the word about what is available to patrons and aid in reaching out to the community to inform them why they want to continue supporting their local library."

Process: "Once I identified the professional competency I wanted to share and wrote my one-sentence theme, I then began my project by collecting data on the benefits public library programming offers children and families. As I pulled this data and condensed it down into bite-sized pieces I began thinking of how to represent my information visually. I knew this was going to be a visual project where my pictures said just as much as, if not more than, my text . . ."

Audience Feedback: "I asked for feedback from my target audience through social media tools like Facebook, my personal blog and my book review blog, YouTube and personal email invitations. I also asked my personal network to share my

video with their friends and family… This feedback told me that I had overshot my audience by a more-academic tone rather than a personal one . . .”

Vignette: "Cultivating Community through School Library Programming"

Wendy was living her career goal. She served as a librarian in an elementary and middle school in Korea. She has worked as a classroom teacher in the U.S. and China. In LS5633, Wendy contributed her library experiences and added her insights to online discussions; her participation rates doubled and several times tripled the requirements.

Wendy valued cultivating a community through library programs. This theme re-occurred in her discussions, story and reflection. In her discussions, she explained programming was "the catalyst for inspiring already-readers and for igniting sparks in students who are still discovering." In her reflection, Wendy wanted "to convey the fun [in] school library programming."

Wendy's values aligned with ALA/AASL Standards related to literacy and reading, and reading promotion and ALSC Competencies related to programming. For her story, Wendy used the Web 2.0 tool, Animoto, shown in Figure 3 (http://tinyurl.com/Wendys-Digital-Story).

She recorded her reflection as an mp4 podcast shared in a Google Drive Doc (http://tinyurl.com/Wendys-Digital-Reflection).

In Her Own Words

Wendy's one sentence theme was "Programs in school libraries help cultivate community by creating excitement, fostering learning, stimulating exploration and inviting inquiry." In discussions, she described how a "variety of programs can reach so many people." As a school librarian, she could see the far-reaching "effects as a result of quality and diverse programming." Wendy wrote, my "passion for programs in libraries was instilled in me when I was young. . . . My most powerful memories are about programs."

In discussions she noted, "If we plan our programs with a purpose, they will have greater impact." She stated, "social media can be used as a tool to reach pa-
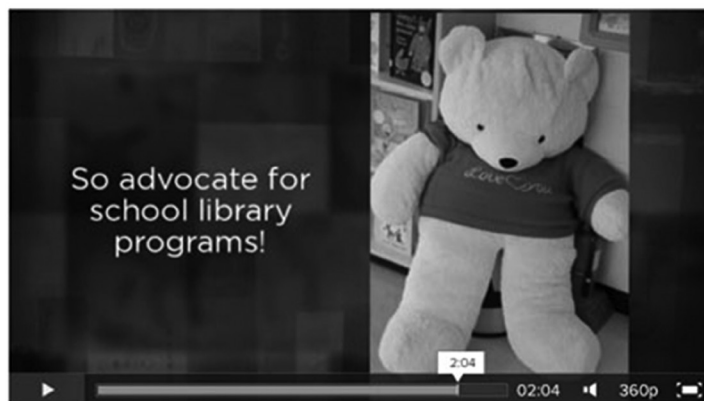
Figure 3. Wendy's Digital Advocacy Story Using Animoto.

trons more effectively." However, "using social media effectively takes planning." It can "engage our communities in the life of our libraries."

Assignment Reflection

Content: "I thought about what I wanted in my digital advocacy story. I wanted to talk about library programming, but couldn't decide how to encapsulate it . . . Finally, I decided that since my target audience would be my community's administration, governing board and parent organization, it made sense to focus on my library programs . . . Then, I had to decide which programs to include in my story... I wanted my end product to be something people felt invigorated by."

Process: "I struggled with how to present my story . . . I ran through several memes before deciding on 'Cultivating Community' . . . Deciding on a tool to produce my story was another speed bump . . . I considered iMovie. . . . It simply wasn't flowing very well . . . I considered using Animoto . . . I was thrilled with how much easier Animoto was compared to iMovie!"

Audience Feedback: "I began eliciting feedback from my target audience . . . I posted the video to Facebook and You-Tube and I embedded the video in an email to several specific people . . . Finally, I altered my original meme from 'Cultivating Community' to 'Cultivating Community through School Library Programming' . . . I wanted to make sure my message wasn't lost in the video."

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate graduate student candidates' use of digital tools to create and disseminate advocacy stories in order to strengthen their values. An analysis of the participants' discussion posts, digital stories, and reflections revealed that they had been developing these values based on library standards and competencies as well as their work and life experiences. Amy noted that curiosity is a personal and family value and she related that to library user services for children and families. Audrey connected her value for lifelong learning to public library programming that reaches children through their mothers. She collected data from the published literature to support the benefits of programming to families. Wendy, a practicing school librarian, also focused her story on library programming, a value she has held since childhood and throughout her library career.

The digital story framework helped participants determine the content of their stories. They set their value related to a standard and determined a one-sentence theme, and a meme, or slogan, for their stories. They also took their target audience into consideration as they selected content and media tools. Candidates refined and articulated their values, which were both personal and professional, through the online discussions and during the story-making process. Amy and Audrey worked to translate words into visuals in order to reach their target audiences, parents of young children. In developing the meme for her story, Wendy refined her focus on school library programming as a vehicle for cultivating community.

The assignment required candidates to use social media and participatory culture tools. For some, this was a new experience. Amy created a Twitter account specifically for this project. Candidates did not receive the robust feedback they had hoped for from their postings on some sites, including their personal blogs. As a result, they also emailed their colleagues, friends, and family members who met their target audience criteria to seek additional feedback. Table 1 shows the tools used by the study participants.

Amy noted that using social media allowed her to invite others to "engage and act." Audrey learned from feedback that her original story was too academic; she revised her story to achieve a more personal tone in order to reach parents. Wendy

Table 1. Communication Tools Used by the Participants.

Tools	Amy	Audrey	Wendy
Blogs	X		
Email		X	X
Facebook	X	X	X
Google+	X		
Twitter	X		
YouTube		X	X

used feedback to specify her meme as cultivating communities specifically through school library programming.

After all candidates completed the digital advocacy storytelling assignment, the researchers administered an anonymous two-question survey as a regular course procedure. Twenty of twenty-one candidates enrolled in the course responded. The responses in Table 2 show the candidates' perspectives on the process and overall value of this assignment.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers learned that candidates in LS5633: The Art of Storytelling could articulate a value, develop a credible digital advocacy story targeted to a specific audience, seek feedback from that audience using social media and, through reflection, strengthen their library science values. The candidates identified developing the advocacy story as the most important part of the assignment in terms

of solidifying their values. In their assignment reflections, the three participants in the study further confirmed the importance of the creative process. Half the class noted that the online discussions and the digital reflection also contributed to strengthening their library values.

Although the results of this case study are not generalizable, they do indicate the potential of similar assignments focused on digital advocacy stories to engage preservice librarians in exploring their library values. In her final course reflection, Amy noted that she is now clear about how to use story elements to "create stronger, more enticing stories." Audrey noted that she plans on "making more digital advocacy stories in the future." Wendy realized that storytellers get a "mental 'high'" when they tell a story and someone connects to it." If advocacy is about passionately telling effective stories, these candidates appear to be better prepared to do so as a result of this assignment.

Originally, the researchers intended to analyze data regarding the participants' involvement with social networking sites for both personal and professional purposes. In the past, the researchers noted that many graduate students in this particular program are late adopters of these tools. The researchers also wanted to examine how engaging in this assignment may have changed candidates' belief in the potential of social media and participatory culture tools to influence or change people's perceptions, values and behaviors. They also

Table 2. Post-assignment Survey.

Question	Response	Percentage
Which part(s) of the process of participating in A.2.3 helped you solidify your library/education value? Choose as many as appropriate.	Online Discussions	50
	Developing the Story	65
	Seeking Feedback	40
	Revising the Story	25
	Reflecting on the Story	50
As a result of participating in this assignment, the value I selected:	Strengthened	60
	Remained the Same	40
	Diminished	0

wanted to know about participants' previous involvement in advocacy campaigns. The researchers administered a pre- and post-assignment survey to collect data on these topics. However, since only three candidates agreed to fully participate in the study, the data was not robust enough to analyze.

From this case study, the researchers learned that candidates need to develop larger personal learning networks in order to gather more meaningful feedback and make an impact on a wider audience. Positioning the assignment at the end of the course rather than toward the beginning could have supported candidates in using social media more effectively. Had candidates had the opportunity to develop social networks earlier in the course, they may have had more robust feedback, which could have strengthened their sense of their stories making a difference. Future research could also include how the assignment influenced participants' use of digital stories in their professional lives outside of a course—in other courses, in their current library work, and post-graduation.

This multi-faceted assignment incorporated several components in which candidates demonstrated a passion for the profession. The participants practiced 21st-century communication skills through sharing and discussing and seeking feedback. They embedded themselves in communities of practice and employed social media to share their ideas, which supported the authenticity of their communication and allowed for a more powerful impact outside of the classroom. In their assignment reflections, candidates had the opportunity to practice metacognition and think deeply about their values. Taken together, the assignment achieved its pedagogical goals.

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