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I Introduction

You can do a lot in ConTEXt but for sure there are limitations too. There are quite some sub-mechanisms and sometimes there are more solutions for one problem. For instance, we have several table mechanisms and several multi-column mechanisms. In this document we will collect information about what doesn't work (well) and if possible indicate why. Feel free to submit more items. We will also discuss features that do work in most cases but are somewhat unreliable.

Does that mean that we cannot make everything work? No, sometimes demands are too conflicting. Yes, we can implement more, but it simply doesn't pay off to spend time on writing code that is used seldom. Keep in mind that much of ConTEXt is written in spare time without any compensation. Publishers have demands but seldom are willing to pay for it. Users have demands and no means to pay for it. On the other hand, user demands often have challenging properties that trigger development. Sometimes a project has as side effect that some mechanism become better.

The good news that one can often work around it. Not all typesetting has to be fully automatic. And there are always reasonable typographic alternatives. The examples shown here can be run on your machine.

2 Columns and notes

Because T_EX doesn't really support columns we need to cook up some magic to achieve them. Especially a mix between single and multi-columns is sort of tricky. Because notes are inserts and inserts play a role in determining the optimal breakpoints they can interfere badly, depending on the mechanism used. In ConT_EXt we use mixed columns for multi-column itemizations and as these can have footnotes you can end up in troubles.

```
% language=us runpath=texruns:manuals/notnow

\usemodule[art-01]

\starttext

  \samplefile{tufte}
  \footnote{\samplefile{tufte}}

  \startitemize[packed,columns]
    \startitem one   \stopitem
    \startitem two   \stopitem
    \startitem three \footnote{A note (three).}
                    \stopitem
    \startitem four  \stopitem
    \startitem five  \stopitem
    \startitem six   \stopitem
    \startitem seven \stopitem
    \startitem eight \stopitem
  \stopitemize

  \dorecurse {10} {
    \samplefile{ward}
    \footnote{Another note #1!}
    \par
  }

\stoptext
```

In such case the notes are postponed and flushed *after* the itemized list so they can end up on a next page. If this happens depends on how much room there is on the page. Solutions are possible (and the old MkII column handler might behave better in some cases) but it's not worth the trouble to complicate the already complex code more than needed. Also, it will never be perfect anyway.

1

We thrive in information-thick worlds because of our marvelous and everyday capacity to select, edit, single out, structure, highlight, group, pair, merge, harmonize, synthesize, focus, organize, condense, reduce, boil down, choose, categorize, catalog, classify, list, abstract, scan, look into, idealize, isolate, discriminate, distinguish, screen, pigeonhole, pick over, sort, integrate, blend, inspect, filter, lump, skip, smooth, chunk, average, approximate, cluster, aggregate, outline, summarize, itemize, review, dip into, flip through, browse, glance into, leaf through, skim, refine, enumerate, glean, synopsise, winnow the wheat from the chaff and separate the sheep from the goats.¹

- one
- two
- three²
- four
- five
- six
- seven
- eight

The Earth, as a habitat for animal life, is in old age and has a fatal illness. Several, in fact. It would be happening whether humans had ever evolved or not. But our presence is like the effect of an old-age patient who smokes many packs of cigarettes per day—and we humans are the cigarettes.³

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² A note (three).

³ Another note 1!

⁴ Another note 2!

⁵ Another note 3!

⁶ Another note 4!

⁷ Another note 5!

I

2

The Earth, as a habitat for animal life, is in old age and has a fatal illness. Several, in fact. It would be happening whether humans had ever evolved or not. But our presence is like the effect of an old-age patient who smokes many packs of cigarettes per day—and we humans are the cigarettes.⁸

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⁸ Another note 6!

⁹ Another note 7!

¹⁰ Another note 8!

¹¹ Another note 9!

¹² Another note 10!

2

3 Sidefloats

Support for side floats is non-trivial and no solution will serve all intended usage. Over the years we have improved on border cases but it is still not perfect. For that reason the implementation is (apart from solving bugs, mostly) frozen. Here is an example of a use case that we ran into. We manipulate the spacing with an offset parameter.

```
% language=us runpath=texruns:manuals/notnow

\usemodule[art-01]

\definefloat
  [figure-column]

\setupfloat
  [figure-column]
  [default={left,number,none,high}, % high kills sidespacebefore
  topoffset=\strutgap]

\setupfloat
  [sidespacebefore=,
  sidespaceafter=]

\enabletrackers[*float*]

\starttext

\input ward

\placefloat
  [figure-column][[]]{}
  {\externalfigure[t:/sources/cow.pdf][width=3cm,frame=on]}

\input ward

\placefloat
  [figure-column][[]]{}
  {\externalfigure[t:/sources/cow.pdf][width=3cm,frame=on]}

\input ward

\placefloat
  [figure-column][[]]{}
  {\externalfigure[t:/sources/cow.pdf][width=3cm,frame=on]}
```

```
{\externalfigure[t:/sources/cow.pdf][width=3cm,frame=on]}
```

```
\flushsidefloats
```

```
\input ward
```

```
\page
```

```
\setupfloat
[spacebeforeside=3*big,
spaceafterside=5*big]
```

```
\input ward
```

```
\placefloat
[figure-column][[]]{
{\externalfigure[t:/sources/cow.pdf][width=3cm,frame=on]}
```

```
\flushsidefloats
```

```
\input ward
```

```
\stoptext
```

You can best play with these parameters and see what they do. If you use this mechanism in a long term project, use a frozen instance of ConT_EXt!



1



2

The second page has preceding and trailing whitespace outside the sidefloat flow.

Hans Hagen

PRAGMA ADE

Hasselt NL