Footnotes on the Web

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HTML pages have no limits to their vertical dimension so footnotes on a long scrolling page will need a hypertext link made from the reference to the footnote.

In this example it is difficult to target the correct point with mouse or finger.

Sidenotes (sometimes called Margin Notes)

Clearly the page layout needs to provide the space in the margins for this to be an option. Unless this is a large-format book, the measure of the notes (width of the text), is likely to be narrow, so don't design for this option if the notes are long or there are lots of them and, the book is small.

Sidenotes fall outside the text block unlike footnotes that will be inside the text block.

Sidenotes do not necessarily need superscript numbers within the text (and they themselves do not need to be numbered), if it is obvious what the sidenote refers to.

Footnotes with InDesign

InDesign will help us build footnotes and the software will even import the footnotes from Microsoft Word. InDesign users get their very own configuration panel seen in the image alongside here. In this we can set the way the references are displayed in the text (superscript etc), and how the footnotes appear at the bottom of the page. We need a paragraph style set up for the display of the footnotes themselves and we can (optionally), use a character style for the reference figure in the text.

As you can see from the first example spread the footnote list figure is aligned to the left edge of the text box. You will often see this in the books on your shelves, however, a more attractive arrangement is to 'outdent' these listed figures so that the footnotes are are aligned to the text and the number figures are offset from this text box.

InDesign does **not** provide the means to set footnotes outside the text box, so we need to plan for this by indenting all of the text inside the text box by an amount that we then remove from the left margins. This way we can outdent the footnote numbers. You will see from the image provided here that we are using guides to make sure that these items align. My footnote style is using a 4mm offset for the numbers and my paragraph styles are using a 4mm indent.

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