Out of the reading flow:
Footnotes, endnotes and supplementary content

Chris Jennings 2017

Introduction

This paper sets out to explore the relationship between the footnote in the printed work and equivalent devices in screen based medium.

What are the conventions in print publishing to display footnotes, side notes and other forms of deviations from the narrative flow? We will look at some examples of the way information is cross linked and where this information is typically displayed in the printed work.

The Proposal for a Paper

Footnotes and Asides

How can footnotes, endnotes, margin notes and other deviations from the narrative flow, work best in a screen based medium?

Abstract

When Edward Gibbon published his 6 volume *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* towards the end of the 18th Century, he included almost 8,000 footnotes and asides. He wasn't the first to incorporate supplementary information but Gibbon's work established the standard for academic publications.

Footnotes are marvellous things. They can provide extra information that helps to elaborate or to cite sources. Publishers don't like footnotes[1]; they prefer endnotes, because they are far easier to manage and encourage buyers to purchase the complete book rather than download a sample.

However, endnotes are a burden for the reader who need to memorise the reference number, page number and even the chapter number before heading off to the back of the book to track down the elusive note.

Footnotes are an endangered species; notes are often relegated to end of the chapter or at the end of the book. The internet gave us to the *hyperlink* and it was thought to solve the referencing paradigm.

The hyperlink introduces another problem; the *back button*.

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[1]Chuck Zerby, *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* (Touchstone 2002)

Along Comes the eBook

Can authors be creative with the interactive note in the eBook? What can the popup note and the scrolling *excursus* add to an author's work?

Contents of the Paper and Presentation

The paper will be divided into 4 parts:

1. Footnotes and other deviations in print, past and present

A review of footnotes in history and how publishers have implemented in the printed work. We look at the conventions from the past and what standards are adopted in publishing today.

2. Out of the flow in Digital products

In the screen based medium, we can adopt other methods for linking references in the text to footnote content. Of course we can't call them footnotes anymore and they may be *hyperlinks* or *popups*.

3. Beyond the narrative flow: interactivity as a way to supplement the content on the page

On the pages of some print books (particularly text books), information is structured in panels in a very busy arrangement. Interactive popups can help bring this chaos to order and provide more space for the *root* information. Glossaries, definitions and asides can all be hidden until needed.

4. Supplementing a Shakespeare Play in Digital form

Footnotes, glossaries and added media are used in project work by students on the MA Publishing Media course at Oxford Brookes University. What can we learn from these examples?

Author Biography

Chris Jennings is an eBook Consultant and University lecturer who teaches in the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies at Oxford Brookes University. He is currently leader for modules on 'Design and Production', 'Multi-Platform Publishing' and 'Digital Product', where the focus is more and more on eBook development.

In his early career Chris was a practicing artist and designer and has exhibited his photographs and sculptures nationally and internationally. He became involved in computer-generated art works in the mid 1980s and has subsequently worked in the field of computers for art education. Chris was one of the pioneers to adopt CD-ROM and multimedia technologies for

clients such as the BBC, the British Museum, Harper Collins and Heinemann, winning several awards for these projects.

His web site: https://publisha.github.io is his main web presence although he can be often found on Twitter: @pageboy

Chris is the author of the 'eBook Typography for Flowable eBooks' and 'From Print Book to eBook' both published as an eBook for iPad.

He is currently writing 'eBook Production'.

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