

Footnotes in a multi-column layout*

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1 Preface to version 1.1

The new release is a basically unchanged version of the original. I upgraded the macros so that they work with L^AT_EX 2_ε and used some of the additional flexibility introduced therein. For example, the command `\preparefootins` is now automatically called at `\begin{document}`, thus allowing the user to adjust the `\textheight` in the preamble.

It is not surprisingly that I was forced to change some of the macros because they dig deep into L^AT_EX's output routines. Fortunately this is something normally not necessary when upgrading other L^AT_EX 2.09 styles to L^AT_EX 2_ε packages.

I also upgraded the documentation to conform to the L^AT_EX 2_ε terminology, e.g., this is a package since document classes will not know about it. However it is very likely that I have missed some necessary corrections.

2 Introduction

The placement of footnotes in a multicolumn layout always bothered me. The approach taken by L^AT_EX (i.e., placing the footnotes separately under each column) might be all right if nearly no footnotes are present. But it looks clumsy when both columns contain footnotes, especially when they occupy different amounts of space.

In the multicolumn package [5], I used page-wide footnotes at the bottom of the page, but again the result doesn't look very pleasant since short footnotes produce undesired gaps of white space. Of course, the main goal of this package was a balancing

algorithm for columns which would allow switching between different numbers of columns on the same page. With this feature, the natural place for footnotes seems to be the bottom of the page¹ but looking at some of the results it seems best to avoid footnotes in such a layout entirely.

Another possibility is to turn footnotes into endnotes, i.e., printing them at the end of every chapter or the end of the entire document. But I assume everyone who has ever read a book using such a layout will agree with me, that it is a pain to search back and forth, so that the reader is tempted to ignore the endnotes entirely.

When I wrote the article about “Future extensions of T_EX” [6] I was again dissatisfied with the outcome of the footnotes, and since this article should show certain aspects of high quality typesetting, I decided to give the footnote problem a try and modified the L^AT_EX output routine for this purpose. The layout I used was inspired by the yearbook of the Gutenberg Gesellschaft Mainz [2]. Later on, I found that it is also recommended by Jan White [9]. On the layout of footnotes I also consulted books by Jan Tschichold [8] and Manfred Simoneit [7], books I would recommend to everyone being able to read German texts.

2.1 Description of the new layout

The result of this effort is presented in this paper and the reader can judge for himself whether it was

*The L^AT_EX package `ftnright.sty` which is described in this article has the version number v1.1f dated 2014/10/28.

1. You cannot use column footnotes at the bottom, since the number of columns can differ on one page.

successful or not.² The main idea for this layout is to assemble the footnotes of all columns on a page and place them all together at the bottom of the right column. Allowing for enough space between footnotes and text, and in addition, setting the footnotes in smaller type³ I decided that one could omit the footnote separator rule which is used in most publications prepared with T_EX.⁴ Furthermore, I decided to place the footnote markers⁵ at the baseline instead of raising them as superscripts.⁶

All in all, I think this generates a neat layout, and surprisingly enough, the necessary changes to the L^AT_EX output routine are nevertheless astonishingly simple.

2.2 The use of the package

This package might be used together with any other package for L^AT_EX which does not change the three internals changed by `ftnright.sty`.⁷ In most cases, it is best to use this package as the very last package in the preamble to make sure that its settings are not overwritten by other packages.

It is unfortunate that the current L^AT_EX has nearly no provisions to make such changes without overwriting the internal routines. In the L^AT_EX3 implementation, we will certainly add some hooks that will make such changes more easy.

2.3 Limitations

If in the first column there is more than a full column worth of footnote material the material will be split resulting in footnotes out of order. This issue is now detected and generates an error but the package is unable to gracefully handle it. This gives you two options: either rearrange your input so that it will use less footnotes in the first column (or add some pagebreaks at suitable places) or allow explicitly for more material to be gathered. The latter can be achieved by adding

```
\makeatletter
\def\preparefootins{%
\global\rcol@footinsskip\skip\footins
\global\skip\footins\z@
```

```
\global\count\footins\z@
\global\dimen\footins2\textheight}
\makeatother
```

to the preamble of your document. However, with this you allow two columns worth of footnote material and that means that some of your footnotes are likely to be detached from their reference and show up on a later page!

3 The documentation driver

The first bit of code contains the documentation driver file for T_EX, i.e., the file that will produce the documentation you are currently reading. It will be extracted from this file by the `docstrip` program. If you don't want to make any changes to the presentation you can alternatively process the `.dtx` file directly with L^AT_EX 2_ε to obtain the documentation.

```
1 <*driver>
2 \documentclass[twocolumn]{article}
3
4 \usepackage{ftnright}
```

2. Please note, that this option only changed the placement of footnotes. Since this article also makes use of the `doc` package [1], that assigns tiny numbers to code lines sprinkled throughout the text, the resulting design is not perfect. This package is now a standard part of L^AT_EX 2_ε.

3. The standard layout in *TUGboat* uses the same size for footnotes and text, giving the footnotes, in my opinion, much too much prominence.

4. People who prefer the rule can add it by redefining the command `\footnoterule` [3, p. 156]. Please, note, that this command should occupy no space, so that a negative space should be used to compensate for the width of the rule used.

5. The tiny numbers or symbols, e.g., the '5' in front of this footnote.

6. Of course, this is done only for the mark preceding the footnote text and not the one used within the main text where a raised number or symbol set in smaller type will help to keep the flow of thoughts, uninterrupted.

7. These are the macros `\@startcolumn`, `\@makecol`, and `\@outputdblcol`, as we will see below. Of course, the package will take only effect with a document class using a two-column layout (like *ltugboat*) or when the user additionally specifies `twocolumn` as a document class option in the `\documentclass` command.

value will be used later for the second column. In this way, it is possible for the user or a designer of a document class to adjust this parameter without fiddling with the code of this package file.

```
38 (*package)
39 \def\preparefootins{%
40   \global\rcol@footinsskip\skip\footins
41   \global\skip\footins\z@
42   \global\count\footins\z@
```

We will also assign `\textheight` to `\dimen\footins` to allow the user to change this parameter in the preamble.

```
43   \global\dimen\footins\textheight}
```

It is necessary to make the assignments above `\global` because we are going to use this macro in the output routine which has an implicit grouping level to keep the changes made by it local.

Of course, we have to allocate the `skip` register that we used above:

```
44 \newskip\rcol@footinsskip
```

Now we have all the necessary tools available to tackle `\@outputdblcol`. We have to remember that when `\if@firstcolumn` equals `\iftrue`, we are currently starting to build the second column, i.e., that the first column is already assembled. Therefore, the macro will start with the following code:

```
45 \def\@outputdblcol{\if@firstcolumn
46   \global\@firstcolumnfalse
```

After changing the switch, we save the first column (which was placed by preceding macros in `\@outputbox`) in the box register `\@leftcolumn`. Since we are inside the output routine, all those assignments have to be `\global` to take any effect.

```
47   \global\setbox\@leftcolumn\box\@outputbox
```

Then, we make the footnotes visible to the page generation algorithm by setting `\count\footins` to 1000 (`\@m` is an abbreviation for this number) and `\skip\footins` to its saved value (i.e., `\rcol@footinsskip`).

```
48   \global\count\footins\@m
49   \global\skip\footins\rcol@footinsskip
```

We also have to reinsert all footnotes left over from the first column to make sure that they are reconsidered by the page generation algorithm of \LaTeX using the new values for `\count` and `\skip\footins`. But this will be done later in the macro `\@startcolumn`.

If we have just finished the right column, i.e., when `\if@firstcolumn` equals `\iffalse`, we will reset the `\footins` parameters as explained above using the utility macro `\preparefootins`.

```
50 \else \preparefootins
```

Then, we compose both columns in `\@outputbox`, combine them with all page-wide floats for this page (`\@combinedblfloats`), attach header and footer, and ship out the result (`\@outputpage`). Finally we look to see whether it is possible to generate following pages consisting only of page-wide floats.¹¹

```
51   \global\@firstcolumntrue
52   \setbox\@outputbox\vbox{\hbox to\textwidth
53     {\hbox to\columnwidth
54       {\box\@leftcolumn\hss}}%
55     \hfil\vrule\@width\columnseprule\hfil
56     \hbox to\columnwidth
57       {\box\@outputbox\hss}}}%
58   \@combinedblfloats\@outputpage
59   \begingroup
60     \@dblfloatplacement\@startdblcolumn
61     \@whiles\if@fcolmade\fi
62       {\@outputpage\@startdblcolumn}%
63   \endgroup
64   \fi}
```

There is a fundamental flaw in \LaTeX 's output routine for float columns and float pages: split footnotes, i.e., footnotes which are only partly typeset on the preceding page are not resolved. They are held over until \LaTeX starts a page (or column) containing text besides floats again. For our current layout, this would mean, that if \LaTeX decided to make the right column of a page a float column, footnotes from the left column would appear on a later page. A real cure for this problem would be to rewrite two-thirds of \LaTeX 's output routine, so I am leaving this open for the interested reader.

11. This part is copied directly from the original \LaTeX macro. Details about the used macros, their interfaces and meanings can be found in the $\text{\LaTeX} 2_{\epsilon}$ source code [4].

But the problem shows up even if only one float is contributed to the right column since L^AT_EX assumes that the whole column is usable, whereas some of it might actually be already devoted to footnotes from the left column. So we have to change the output routine at least in the part that contributes floats to the next column. The macro involved is called `\startcolumn`. The first thing we do is to check and see whether any deferred floats exists.

```
65 \def\startcolumn{%
66   \ifx\deferlist\empty
```

If not, we set the switch `\ifcolmade` to `false` which says that we did not succeed in making a float column. Then, we set `\colroom` to `\colht`. The register `\colht` holds the amount of space that is available for floats, text, and footnotes in one column, i.e., it equals `\textheight` minus the space devoted to page-wide floats. `\colroom` is a similar register which holds the value `\colht` minus space for column floats that are already contributed to the current column. Of course, both values should be equal when we start a new column.

```
67   \global\ifcolmadefalse
68   \global\colroom\colht
69 \else
```

If there are floats waiting for a change to be

processed, the situation is more difficult. In this case, we have to reduce both `\colht` and `\colroom` by the amount of space that will be needed for the footnotes from the left column. So we must check whether such footnotes are present. As we have not reinserted them in `\outputdblcol`, we can check the `\footins` box.

```
70   \ifvoid\footins\else
```

If there are some, we measure the space that will be occupied by them. This measurement is not really exact. If we have a full column of footnotes, it will be too high, but this does matter since we need it only for an upper bound on the free space available for floats.

```
71     \ftnamount\ht\footins
72     \advance\ftnamount\dp\footins
73     \advance\ftnamount\skip\footins
74   \fi
```

We then reduce the `\colht` by this amount and again assign `\colroom` the value of `\colht`. If no footnotes are present, we subtract zero, so there is no harm in doing this operation all the time.

```
75   \global\advance\colht-\ftnamount
76   \global\colroom\colht
```

Now, we call another internal L^AT_EX macro that will try to contribute floats to the next column. It will use the register `\colht` when trying to build up a float column, which is the reason for reducing this register. If it succeeds, it will set the switch `\ifcolmade` to `true`, otherwise, to `false`. If no float column is possible, it will try to place some or all of the deferred floats to the top or the bottom of the next column, thereby, using and reducing the value of the register `\colroom`.

```
77   \@xstartcol
```

Afterwards, we have to restore the correct values for `\colht` and `\colroom` again, but this time, they may differ, so that we have to `\advance` both registers separately by `\ftnamount`.

```
78   \global\advance\colht\ftnamount
79   \global\advance\colroom\ftnamount
80 \fi
```

Puzzle:

Given a simple T_EX document containing only straight text, is it possible for the editor, after deleting one sentence, to end up with a document producing an extra page?

We assume that the deleted text contains no T_EX macros and that the document was prepared with a standard macro package like the one used for *TUGboat* production.

The answer will be given in the next issue.

Now, after doing the things depending on the status of the `\@deferlist`, we have to incorporate the left over footnotes in the new column. First we check whether a float column was produced by `\@xstartcol` or not.

```
81 \if@fcolmade
```

If so, we do something awful. To make use of the `\@makecol` macro, which attaches footnotes to `\box 255` and places the result in the box register `\@outputbox`, we have to assign `\@outputbox` (i.e., the result of `\@xstartcol`) to `\box 255`.¹²

```
82 \setbox\@cclv\box\@outputbox
83 \@makecol
84 \else
```

If no float column was produced, we reinsert the held over footnotes so that they can be reconsidered by the page generation algorithm of \TeX . But it is necessary to ensure that this operation is done only when footnotes are actually present.¹³

```
85 \ifvoid\footins\else
86 \insert\footins{\unvbox\footins}\fi
87 \fi}
```

Of course, we also have to allocate the `dimen` register. It will be automatically initialized to zero.

```
88 \newdimen\ftn@amount
```

The macro `\@xstartcol` was removed in \LaTeX 2_ϵ but we introduce it here again for the moment.

```
89 \def\@xstartcol{%
90 \@tryfcolumn \@deferlist
91 \if@fcolmade
92 \else
93 \begingroup
94 \let \@tempb \@deferlist
95 \global \let \@deferlist \@empty
96 \let \@elt \@scolelt
97 \@tempb
98 \endgroup
99 \fi
100 }
```

The other internal macro that we have to change is `\@makecol`, a macro that is called whenever one column of material is assembled and column floats

and footnotes have to be added. Again, we have to distinguish between actions for the first and the second column.

```
101 \def\@makecol{\if@firstcolumn
```

For the first column, we leave the footnotes in their box and simply save the contents of box 255 in the `\box` register `\@outputbox`.

```
102 \setbox\@outputbox\box\@cclv
```

But if the user erroneously forgot to specify a twocolumn layout, we will always typeset the first column, so that the footnotes are never printed. Therefore we better check for this special case and output the footnotes on a separate page in an emergency.¹⁴

```
103 \if@twocolumn \else
104 \ifvoid\footins \else
105 \latexerr{ftnright package
106 \used in one-column mode}%
107 {The ftnright package was designed to
108 work with LaTeX's standard^^Jtwocolumn
109 option. It does *not* work with the
110 multicol package.^^JSo please specify
111 'twocolumn' in the
112 \noexpand\documentclass command.}%
113 \shipout\box\footins \fi\fi
```

What we also need to check is if there is so much footnote material that it resulted in a footnote being split. If that happens the whole algorithm falls apart and the footnotes get out of sync. For the moment we simply detect it here, perhaps some better scheme can be implemented. One way to avoid this is to allow more than `\textheight` of footnotes in `\preparefootins`. However, that isn't such a good

12. In German, we call this “from the back through the chest into the eyes”.

13. Otherwise, we might get an undesired extra vertical space coming from `\skip\footins`, even if there are no footnotes on the page.

14. Otherwise, the footnotes are held over for ever, preventing \TeX from finishing the document successfully. Instead, \TeX will produce infinity many empty pages at the end of the document, trying in vain to output the held over footnotes. This problem was found by Rainer Schöpf when we prepared the paper for the Cork conference.

idea either as that means that a footnote from column one, might end up completely on a later page.

```

114 \ifnum\insertpenalties>\z@
115   \latexerr{ftnright package
116             scrambled footnotes}%
117   {There is too much footnote material in
118    the first column and ftnright^^Jis
119    unable to cope with this.^^JYou need
120    to reduce the amount to get a properly
121    formatted page.}%
122 \fi
123 \else

```

When we construct the second column, we must first check whether footnotes are actually present. If not, we perform the same actions as before.

```

124 \ifvoid\footins
125   \setbox\@outputbox\box\@cclv
126 \else

```

But, if footnotes are present, it may be possible that the whole column consists of footnotes, i.e., `\box 255` is empty. In this case, there is no use in placing any glue (`\skip\footins`) in front,¹⁵ so we have to check for this possibility.

```

127   \setbox\@outputbox\vbox
128   {\ifvoid\@cclv \else
129     \unvbox\@cclv
130     \vskip\skip\footins\fi

```

But in any case, we place the `\footnoterule` in front of the footnotes even if this macro is not used by this package.¹⁶ This ends the if-statement testing whether footnotes are present or not. It also ends the code which differs depending on the column number.

```

131   \color@begingroup
132   \normalcolor
133   \footnoterule\unvbox\footins
134   \color@endgroup}\fi
135 \fi

```

Now the column floats are added at the top and the bottom, and the `\@outputbox` is adjusted to the full column height so that the glue inside will stretch in certain situations.¹⁷ Again, this code is copied verbatim from the original source, so I won't dwell on details.¹⁸¹⁹

```

136 \xdef\@freelist{\@freelist\@midlist}%
137 \global \let \@midlist \empty
138 \@combinefloats
139 \ifvbox\@kludgeins
140   \@makespecialcolbox
141 \else
142   \setbox\@outputbox\vbox to\@colht
143   {\boxmaxdepth\maxdepth
144    \@texttop
145    \@tempdima\dp\@outputbox
146    \unvbox\@outputbox
147    \vskip-\@tempdima
148    \@textbottom}%
149 \fi
150 \global\maxdepth\@maxdepth}

```

Now we can tackle the remaining small changes to the standard layout. I decided to use a smaller size for footnotes but with a slightly larger leading than usual. This means that we have to redefine the `\footnotesize` macro which depends on options like `11pt` etc. Fortunately, there is a simple way to

15. In fact, it would be a mistake since this glue was not taken into account when the footnotes were assembled, so it would produce an overfull box.

16. This decision is certainly open to criticism, since there is nothing to separate. On the other hand, a rule or some other ornament in front of the footnotes is part of the design which should be used consistently throughout a document. As a last argument in favor of the rule, consider the situation where L^AT_EX decided to place only floats and footnotes into the right hand column. In this case a separator again seems adequate. In this situation one can even argue that it is necessary to put in the `\skip\footins`.

17. It is an interesting question as to whether the current layout works well with bottom floats or not. Actually, I would prefer to place the footnotes below the bottom floats instead of above, as it is done here. At least when the floats are part of the document and not puzzles thrown in. But I was too lazy to implement it because I seldom use floats. If somebody implements this layout (some parts of this macro have to be changed) I would be interested in seeing the code and some sample results.

18. I only changed `\dimen128` into `\@tempdima` which is, besides being faster and shorter, only a cosmetic change. The use of this hardwired `dimen` register seems to indicate that this part of L^AT_EX was written very early and left unchanged since then: an interesting fact for software archaeologists.

19. For the L^AT_EX 2_ε upgrade I had to add the support for the `\enlargethispage` command—let's hope I did it in the correct way.

find out the main size of the document: the macro `\@ptsizes` contains 0, 1, or 2 standing for 10, 11, or 12 points document text size.²⁰

```

151 \ifcase \@ptsizes
152 \renewcommand\footnotesize{%
153   \@setfontsize\footnotesize\@viipt{9.9}%
154   \abovedisplayskip 6\p@\@plus2\p@\@minus4\p@
155   \abovedisplayshortskip \z@ \@plus\p@
156   \belowdisplayshortskip
157     3\p@\@plus\p@\@minus2\p@
158   \def\@listif\leftmargin\leftmargini
159     \topsep 3\p@ \@plus\p@ \@minus\p@
160     \parsep 2\p@ \@plus\p@ \@minus\p@
161     \itemsep \parsep}%
162   \belowdisplayskip \abovedisplayskip
163 }
164 \or
165 \renewcommand\footnotesize{%
166   \@setfontsize\footnotesize\@ixpt{11.1}%
167   \abovedisplayskip 8\p@\@plus2\p@\@minus4\p@
168   \abovedisplayshortskip \z@ \@plus\p@
169   \belowdisplayshortskip
170     4\p@ \@plus2\p@ \@minus2\p@
171   \def\@listif\leftmargin\leftmargini
172     \topsep 4\p@ \@plus2\p@\@minus2\p@
173     \parsep 2\p@ \@plus\p@ \@minus\p@
174     \itemsep \parsep}%
175   \belowdisplayskip \abovedisplayskip
176 }
177 \or
178 \renewcommand\footnotesize{%
179   \@setfontsize\footnotesize\@xpt{12.3}%
180   \abovedisplayskip10\p@\@plus2\p@\@minus5\p@
181   \abovedisplayshortskip \z@ \@plus3\p@
182   \belowdisplayshortskip
183     6\p@ \@plus3\p@ \@minus3\p@
184   \def\@listif\leftmargin\leftmargini
185     \topsep 6\p@ \@plus2\p@ \@minus2\p@
186     \parsep 3\p@ \@plus2\p@ \@minus\p@
187     \itemsep \parsep}%
188   \belowdisplayskip \abovedisplayskip
189 }
190 \fi

```

Setting footnotes in smaller type and separating them with sufficient space from the main text allow us to omit the `\footnoterule` normally used.

```
191 \let\footnoterule\@empty
```

Individual footnotes are separated from each other by a more or less baseline skip of the text size. This can be specified with the following code:

```

192 \AtBeginDocument
193   {\global\footnotesep\ht\strutbox}

```

The use of the L^AT_EX 2_ε hook `\AtBeginDocument` is a big help since it allows us to defer everything that might depend on user setting inside the preamble to the `\begin{document}` environment start.

And finally, a small but nice change, to the mark at the beginning of the footnote text. We will place it at the baseline instead of raising it as a superscript. Additionally, it will get a dot as punctuation.

```

194 \long\def\@makefnmark#1{\parindent 1em
195   \noindent\hbox to 2em{}}%
196   \llap{\@thefnmark.\,.\,}#1}

```

5 Initialisation

We defined the macro `\preparefootins` above, but we also have to use it to prepare typesetting the first column. As a default for the separation of footnotes and text on the second column, we use the following:

```

197 \setlength\skip\footins{
198   {10pt plus 5pt minus 3pt}}
199 \AtBeginDocument{\preparefootins}
200 \end{package}

```

Of course, this value can be changed by the user as described in the introduction.

References

- [1] M. GOOSSENS, F. MITTELBACH and A. SAMARIN. *The L^AT_EX Companion*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1994.
- [2] Hans-Joachim Koppitz, editor. *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*. Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, Mainz.

²⁰ In the new release I used the definitions from the class option files `size17.clo` and modified them slightly. In the previous release there was no correction for the list parameters etc., thus giving you incorrect spacing if somebody used display lists in footnotes.

- [3] Leslie Lamport. *LaTeX: A Document Preparation System*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1986.
- [4] LaTeX3 project. LaTeX 2_ε distribution, 1994. Sources for LaTeX 2_ε the successor to LaTeX 2.09.
- [5] Frank Mittelbach. An environment for multi-column output. *TUGboat*, 10(3):407–415, November 1989.
- [6] Frank Mittelbach. E-TeX: Guidelines to future TeX extensions. In Lincoln K. Durst, editor, *TUGboat*, 11(3): 1990 *TUG Annual Meeting Proceedings*, pages 337–345, September 1990.
- [7] Manfred Siemoneit. *Typographisches Gestalten*. Polygraph Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, second edition, 1989.
- [8] Jan Tschichold. *Ausgewählte Aufsätze über Fragen der Gestalt des Buches*. Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel, 1987. Second printing.
- [9] Jan White. *Graphic Design for the Electronic Age*. Watson Guptill, Xerox Press, New York, 1988.

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All numbers denote code lines where the corresponding entry is used, underlined entries point to the definition.

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Change History

v1.0b			<code>\footnotesep</code> : Upgrades for LaTeX2e	8		
	<code>\@startcolumn</code> : Macro added to correct float problems	4	<code>\footnotesize</code> : Upgrades for LaTeX2e	7		
v1.0c			General: Upgrades for LaTeX2e	1		
	<code>\@makecol</code> : Introduced crude recovery if twocolumn false.	6	v1.1b			
	<code>\@makefntext</code> : Added dot as recommended by Tschichold.	8		General: Driver moved in front	1	
v1.0d			v1.1c		General: Use article.cls for documentation	1
	<code>\@makecol</code> : Better help message	6	v1.1d		<code>\@makecol</code> : Added the color@group macros and <code>\normalcolor</code> to make this colorsafe	7
	General: Added driver file to source	2	v1.1e		<code>\@makefntext</code> : Don't use math mode for footnote symbol (pr/3172)	8
v1.0e						
	General: Added history generation	2	v1.1f		<code>\@makecol</code> : Check for split footnotes (pr/4099)	7
v1.1a						
	<code>\@makecol</code> : Upgrades for LaTeX2e	7				
	<code>\@xstartcol</code> : Macro reintroduced	6				