versonotes: Notes on verso pages

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This package allows you to place notes on the verso pages of an otherwise single-sided document. If, in the run of text, you include a call to the macro `\versonote{This is a remark}`, then that text will be placed on the opposite (ie, 'verso') page, lined up with the macro call. The notes may contain more than one paragraph.

All the pages in the document appear as recto pages (ie, right-hand pages), and are numbered as such; the document should be formatted with that in mind.

Since there is no page opposite the first page, any notes which are positioned to appear opposite page 1 are silently discarded.

To invoke the package, use the command `\usepackage{versonotes}`.

It is possible to start the document other than on page one. To do this, you can call `\setcounter{page}{`n`}` as usual, but it must be done *before* the line `\usepackage{versonotes}`. The package may get confused if the page number is changed at other times.

If two notes come too close after one another, the second would overprint the first if we did not take steps to avoid this. By default, they are separated from each other by a short horizontal line, but if the mergecollisions option is provided when loading the package, then such notes are instead merged into a single block of text. If a sequence of notes needs to be merged, then they will be added to the merged block one at a time in successive LaTeX runs, since merging one note may make it unnecessary to merge the next. If a large block of such notes need to be merged, it will therefore take several runs before the package finds a stable state. If you find yourself inconvenienced by this, it sounds as if you are preparing a critical edition, and you might want to venture into a closer relationship with the {reledmac} package.[1].

Note: If we have a long versonote at the bottom of a page, then we don't try to spill over onto the next (that would be possible to implement, but would be a significant jump in complication). We regard this situation as one for the user to work out for themself, perhaps with some strategic page-breaks.

The dimensions `\versoleftmargin` and `\versotextwidth` specify the position of the text block on the verso page. The defaults for these are based on the `\textwidth` and `\evensidemargin` of the document *at the time the package is loaded*. By default, verso paragraphs are set ragged-left; with the declarations in `\versolayout` setting the paragraph parameters. You may reset the first two dimensions with for example `\versoleftmargin=4cm`, and use

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[1] `https://www.ctan.org/pkg/reledmac` – this is the current incarnation, as of 2023, of the eledmac, ledmac and edmac packages for scholarly editions.

`\renewcommand\versolayout{...}` to override the paragraph formatting (this will typically require changing `\rightskip`, `\leftskip` and `\parfillskip`). For more elaborate effects (for example changing the note font size and spacing), you will need to redefine `\versolayout`.

Recto notes

If the package is invoked with the rectonotes option, then it runs in a complementary mode in which the notes are placed on the recto page (the right-hand one) instead of the verso. The default `\versolayout` in this case (which of course is really a recto layout) is slightly different, and is based on the preexisting document `\oddsidemargin`. All the pages in the document (apart from the front page) are then formatted as verso pages, though still only the non-note pages are numbered.

In this mode, the 'add a note' command is still called `\versonote`. You may find it convenient to rename that with `\let\rectonote = \versonote` or `\let\sidenote = \versonote`.

Notes

- The package uses the `\pdfsavepos` primitive (or the LuaTeX equivalent), and so requires `pdflatex`, `xelatex`, or `lualatex`. In practice, this should mean that it will work with any reasonably current LaTeX engine.

- The notes are handled using the `.aux` file, and so (i) they will only appear on the second and subsequent runs; and (ii) they will be located opposite the position where the `\versonote` macro was called on the *previous* run.

- If notes collide, you may well have to re-run LaTeX several times. There is quite a lot of state in the `.aux` file.

- The package is available on CTAN at `macros/latex/contrib/versonotes/`. The source is hosted at https://heptapod.host/nxg/versonotes/.

Acknowledgements, and release notes

Thanks to Thomas H. Luxon for permission to include the Dartmouth Milton text[2] of 'Paradise Lost' notes in the sample text.

Version 0.5, 2023 December 31

- Now compatible with LuaTeX.
- Now uses L3-style hooks, but retains compatibility with pre-2020 engines.
- Updated the links to the repository, and to the Dartmouth Milton text.

Version 0.4, 2019 July 6 Support changing the initial page number (thanks to P J Couch for the suggestion).

Version 0.3, 2015 December 8

- Minor documentation adjustments.

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[2] https://milton.host.dartmouth.edu/

- Added the [rectonotes] option (thanks to Axel Berger for this suggestion).

Version 0.2, 2015 February 16 Initial public release.