

Rivers in the text

River is a term in typography that designates several spaces in adjacent lines arranged in a vertical or inclined row. Rivers are a layout defect because they distract attention from the horizontal direction and thus worsen the readability of the text. To speed up the detection of rivers in the text, the printed text can be turned upside down, and the text on the monitor can simply be blurred.

What is considered a river

So, the river is a typing defect. The person sees it. Is it possible to formulate criteria by which, for example, a program could search for these rivers in the text?

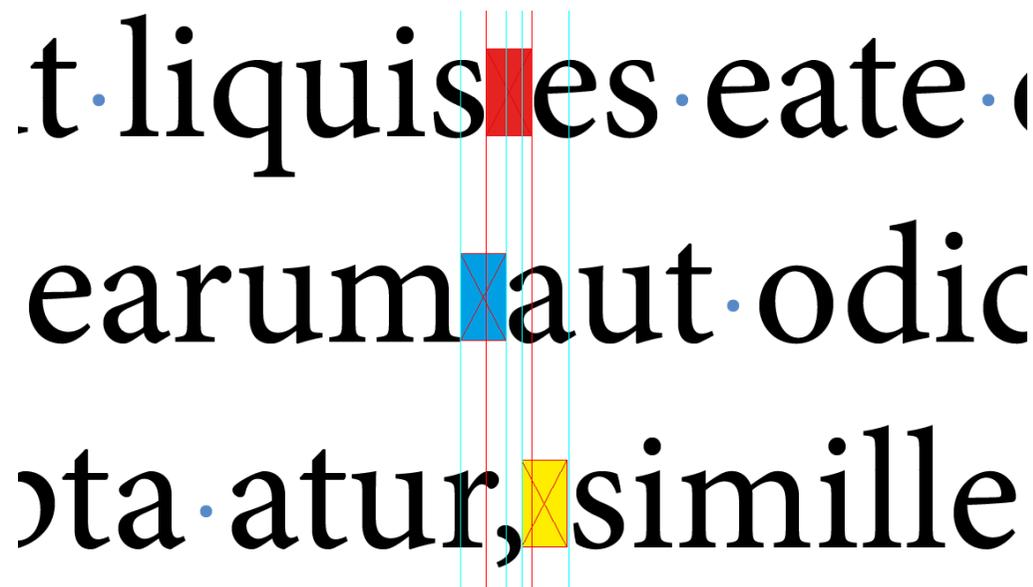
Apparently, we can say that the spaces of adjacent lines form a river if the imaginary border of the space of the upper line falls into the space of the space in the lower line. In the picture on the right, the spaces of blue and yellow spaces do not intersect. But the spaces of red and blue intersect, and these gaps may be part of the river.

Therefore, it is necessary to have a condition, what should be the degree of overlap of the spaces of adjacent lines in order to consider them part of the river. Let the user have the opportunity to choose one of three options for the minimum amount of space overlap: 12.5%, 25% or 50% of the standard width of the space.

Editing text with rivers

When making up texts, in hot typing or in computer, these rivers always appear. It was always marked with a pencil when checking the edges of a manual typeset, but in a computer layout they almost do not look at this.

But there are editors who pay attention to this, and therefore it would be good to have a tool that shows the layout designer such design



flaws. It's one thing when you see for yourself and somehow solve this situation, and quite another when you are shown these flaws. After all, this «show» can sometimes be presented as incompetence, and this will spoil your reputation as a careful layout designer.

The problem is that there is no way to check the layout for the presence of the rivers. The above recommendation «printed text can be turned upside down» can hardly be considered useful advice.

But now the task of «showing rivers in the text» can be solved with a script. What to do with them next, what layout parameters to change, is another question. But you can visualize the rivers.

The window of the **ShowMeRivers.jsx** script is shown on the right.

Show the rivers in the text — in the selected part of the text (**Paragraph / Page / Spread**) the rivers will be marked with color. This is done using the service character style **#ColoredSpace**, it is created at the moment the program is launched.

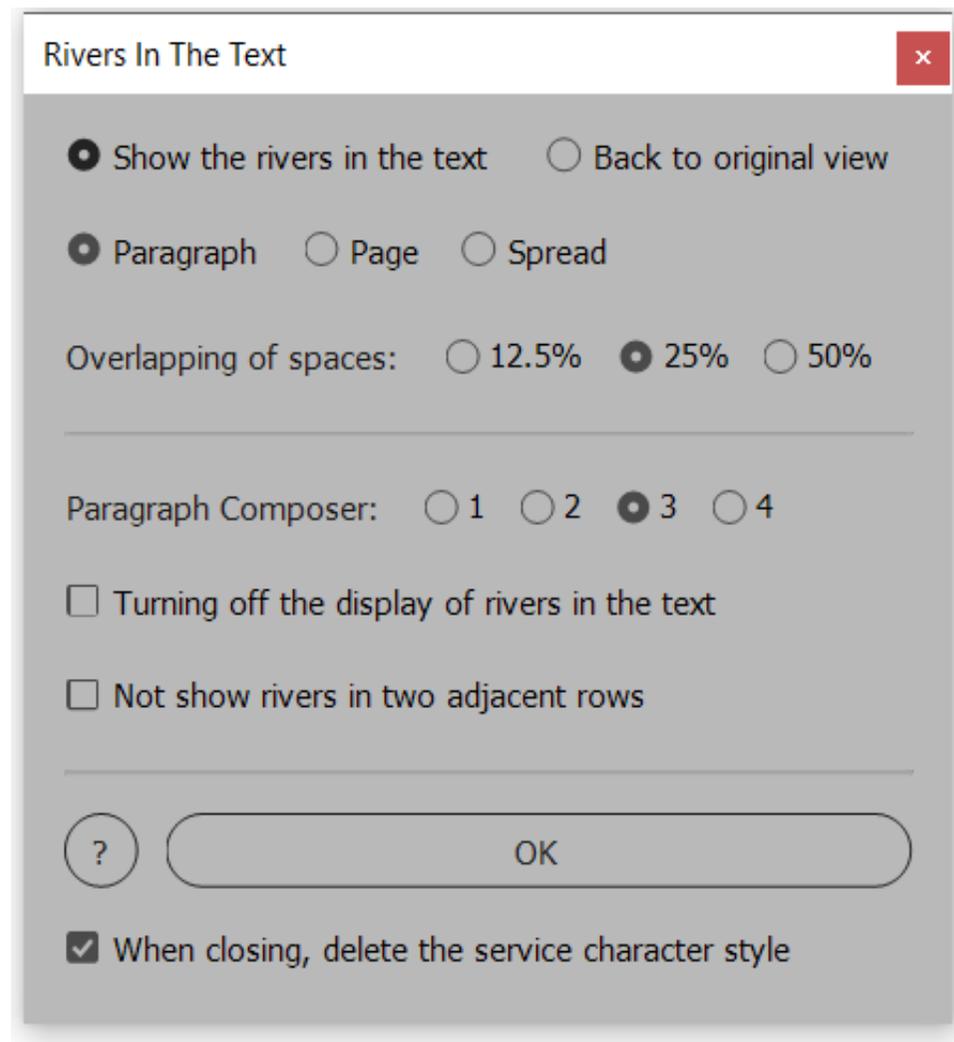
Back to original view — in story the spaces with character style **#ColoredSpace**, will be applied by character style **[None]**.

Overlapping of spaces — this is the choice mentioned in the chapter **What is considered a river** of the minimum amount of overlap of spaces, starting from which these spaces will be considered part of the river. It is believed that in a computer set, the average width of a space is equal to a quarter of a point size, therefore, this value is taken from the properties of the paragraph style for calculations. By default, the program works with an overlap of 25%.

The actual average width of the spaces varies greatly depending on various factors, so you need to visually find the appropriate overlap value for a particular file.

Paragraph Composer. These radio buttons are only available when working with a paragraph.

1, 2, 3, 4 — select one of the four composers in paragraph style settings. Each radio button has a tooltip indicating which composer it includes. The radio button related to the composer used in paragraph style settings becomes active.



You can check the appearance of rivers with different layout options in the process. You need to select the desired radio button, put the text in the cursor and click **OK**.

Turning off the display of rivers in the text. This check box is needed to turn off the display of the found rivers and turn it on again. To assess what can be left as it is, and what makes sense to work with.

Not show rivers in two adjacent rows. A river is usually three or more gaps forming a noticeable free area. But sometimes the areas of two gaps are very noticeable.

These checkboxes are for the layout designer to look at the layout with the editor's eyes that are not tired of this text. Imagine what they might find fault with and be ready to talk.

When closing, delete the service character style — deleting or saving a service style.

#ColoredSpace — character style of marking spaces forming a river. **R=255 G=0 B=255** — the lilac color used in the mentioned character style. These colors and styles are created when the script is run. It is assumed that at the end of the work (click on the red button in the program window header) they will be deleted and the information about the rivers will disappear.

This will be done if the **When closing, delete the service character style** check box is selected when closing. But if it is reset, then the visual information about the rivers will remain, and the service style and color are preserved in the work.

The peculiarity of specifying the processing area

Usually the cursor should be in the text. And the processing area will be defined by the radio button **Paragraph**, **Page** or **Spread**. If there are footnotes in the text of a paragraph, then the spaces in them will not be processed. To get information about the rivers in the footnote, put the cursor in it. And when the cursor is in a footnote, only the **Paragraph** radio button can be active.

The script saves information only about the last processed area. You have processed two pages of the spread separately, and after that the **Not show rivers in two adjacent rows** checkbox will work only with the text of the last processed page.

Turning off the display of rivers in the text checkbox works with the entire text of the story, including footnotes.

When you select the radio button **Back to original view** all the story is processed, this causes some delay. The progress bar is not displayed here, but for the duration of this task, the name of the **OK** button is changed to **Text processing....**

Removing text rivers markings

Color-coded rivers can be left on purpose if you uncheck the **When closing, delete the service character style** check box before closing the work window. And they may remain accidentally if the user goes to another file and closes the program window there. The color of the river markings will change to black. To remove the marking of rivers, the script **ForgetRivers.jsx** is provided.

How to get rid of these rivers

Well, we see rivers in the text, and the editor demands that they not be there. Or we know that there will be claims if they remain. What to do?

There is no magic button to press, and they are all gone. It will be necessary to decide what can be left and which ones must be removed. And there are three options for how to slightly change the layout of the paragraph so that the spaces are not so close that noticeable rivers are obtained.

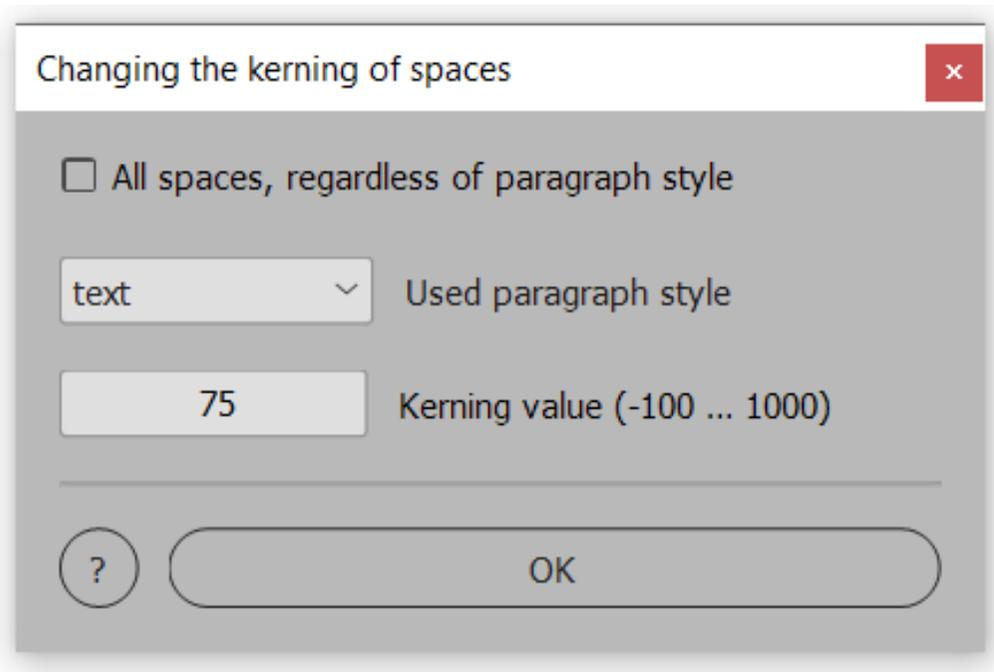
1. **Change the Paragraph Composer.** Sometimes this is enough to clean the rivers.

2. **Change tracking.** We can increase and decrease the tracking of the symbols of the selected area. The tracking change step is defined in the **Preferences panel**, on the **Units & Increments tab**, the **Key-**

board Increments area, the **Kerning/Tracking** field. The default value is 20. I prefer to have the number 3 there.

And then using the **Alt** and **left arrow** | **right arrow** hotkeys, you can change the tracking of the selected text. This change will cause the position of the spaces to change. When tracking changes, you do not need to go beyond 20 units.

3. Change the kerning of spaces. This feature is not provided in InDesign, it is implemented using a script **SetSpaceKerning.jsx**.



The idea is to leave the tracking of the text unchanged, and increase or decrease the width of the usual spaces by changing their kerning. The kerning change point is the position of the insertion point between the space and the word. Spaces with a width of 100% are processed, so that the spaces before and after the dash, their scale is

usually less than one hundred percent, the kerning will not change. InDesign allows you to change the kerning in the range -100–1000 percent of the width of the space, this is a large range of possibilities to vary the width of the spaces that fall into the selection. And when this script is running, the tracking of spaces will always be zero.

I don't think it's worth always trying to get rid of two-line rivers. Being able to see them is one thing, but whether to clean them up or not is up to the situation. If there are spaces in the width of a point size, and it's just a hole in the text, then it's good if you see it and remove it before the editor circles this place with a red pencil. In the case these are ordinary spaces one above the other, then this is how the text was composed.

But rivers of three or more text lines can be removed using these methods. Last two allow you to very effectively and quickly affect the layout of the selected characters. Of course, it takes some time to start feeling these tools.

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