

# User Guide



**For Adobe InDesign CS  
and Adobe InDesign CS2**



## User Agreement

By unpackaging this software and installing it on your computer, you are agreeing to the following terms and conditions:

This script, HeadStraddler.js (for Adobe InDesign CS users) or HeadStraddler.jsx (for Adobe InDesign CS2 users), is provided as-is for your personal use. It has been widely tested and appears to function without error, but like all software, there may be gremlins lurking that have yet to surface.

You use this script entirely at your own risk. Any failure to perform as expected or any loss of data or any consequential damages are entirely your responsibility.

You'll also experience the productivity enhancement this script provides and benefit from being able to work more effectively with multi-column text frames. It's entirely up to you to weigh the benefits against the perceived risk.

You are advised to back-up your work frequently.

Included as a registration bonus is the UnstraddleHead script which reverts a straddled head to its former state. This script also is subject to these terms.

## How to Contact Us

We're on the web at: <http://www.pdsassoc.com/>

E-mail us at [support@pdsassoc.com](mailto:support@pdsassoc.com)

PDS Associates  
PO Box 127  
Allenhurst, NJ 07711-0127  
USA

---

Adobe and InDesign are trademarks or registered trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Copyright © 2004 PDS Associates. All rights reserved.

Publication Number: PDS2005-003-002P

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Installing this Product                | 1  |
| Agreeing to Terms & Conditions         | 2  |
| Registration                           | 2  |
| Headlines in Multi-column Frames       | 3  |
| Using the <i>HeadStraddler</i> Script  | 5  |
| Operational Error Messages and Issues  | 10 |
| Using the <i>UnstraddleHead</i> Script | 11 |
| Troubleshooting                        | 11 |
| Support                                | 12 |
| Appendix A                             |    |
| Working with Multi-column Headlines    | 13 |



# HeadStraddler

## User Guide

Thank you for selecting *HeadStraddler* to enhance the value of multi-column text frames in your InDesign documents. The perceived inability of InDesign to provide this capability made many question the value of multi-column text frames. I, for one, avoided them like the plague. Suddenly, thanks to this script, it is seen to be possible after all. It has already resulted in my reworking a newsletter design.

### Installing this Product

In the folder you downloaded, you will have found this PDF file, the *readMe* text file (please be sure to read it for late-breaking news) and two folders, one each for the InDesign CS version and the InDesign CS2 version. In both folders you'll find a library file named: *HeadStraddler.indl*, and a script file named *HeadStraddler.js* in the *HeadStraddler for CS* folder and *HeadStraddler.jsx* in the *HeadStraddler for CS2* folder.

Store this PDF file wherever you like. Copy or move the folder of your choice to the appropriate Scripts folder. This is located in the Presets folder in your InDesign CS or InDesign CS2 application folder:

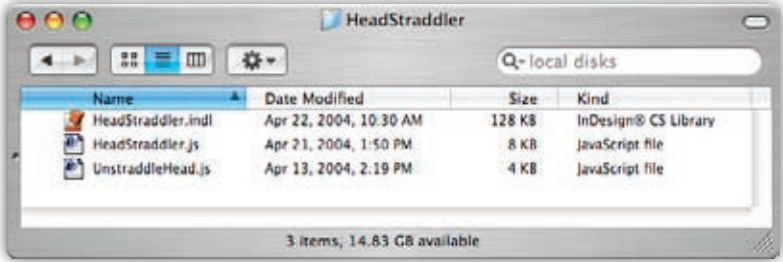


Figure 1a: *HeadStraddler* folder in Scripts folder (Macintosh)

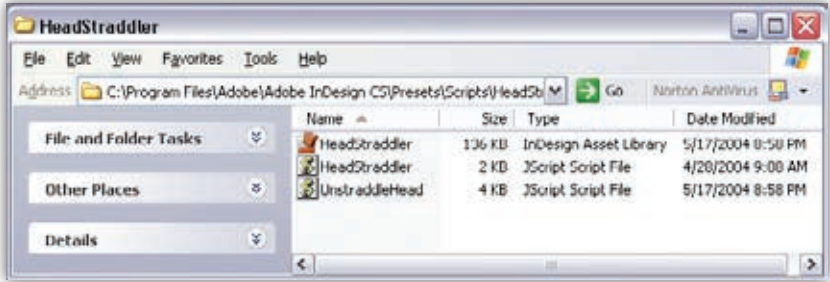


Figure 1b: *HeadStraddler* folder in Scripts folder (Windows)

As you can see, having copied the folder to my Scripts folder, I renamed the folder, deleting the “for CS” part of the name. In this *HeadStraddler* folder, there is also the *UnstraddleHead* script which reverses the effects of *HeadStraddler*; the *UnstraddleHead* script is a registration bonus. [Note that the modification dates in these illustrations reflect the state of affairs when the captures were made. The dates you’ll see will be different.]

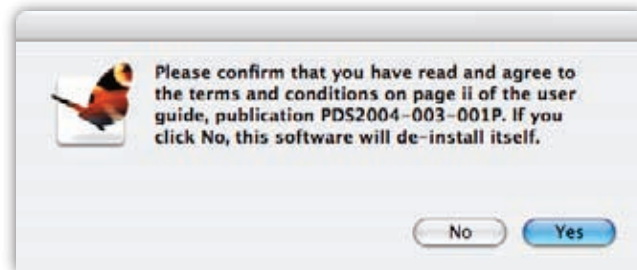
Notice that the library file, visible in the directory view of the files, does not appear in the Scripts palette (figure 2).



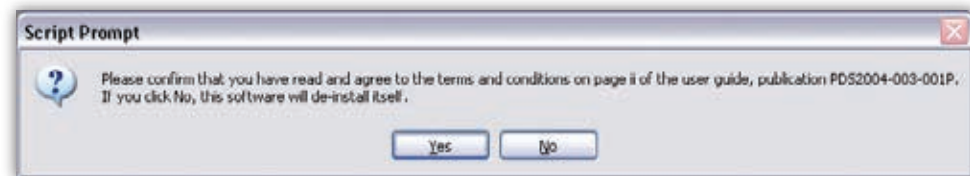
**Figure 2:** Tables scripts in Scripts palette — (l.) Windows, (r.) Macintosh

## Agreeing to Terms & Conditions

Before you can make use of this script, it will ask that you agree to the terms and conditions listed on page ii of this User Guide.



**Figure 3a:** Terms and conditions alert (Macintosh) (from an earlier version)



**Figure 3b:** Terms and conditions alert (Windows) (from an earlier version)

As the alert warns, should you decline to accept the terms, the script will immediately de-install itself.

## Registration

This product is ShareWare. Until you register, it will behave as a demonstration, gently reminding you every now and then to obtain a registration code (the first time you use the script each day and every twentieth time after that). Aside from these minor interruptions, the script is fully operational in Demonstration mode.

As a thank-you for registering your product, you will find the *UnstraddleHead* script installed in the same folder as *HeadStraddler*. This script can be used to restore a text frame to the state it was in prior to running *HeadStraddler*. It's not an "undo" script in that it can be used at any time to restore a frame to its previous state with the text in the straddling head restored to the first column of the frame.

Also, as a registered user, you will receive priority support, and your input will have higher value as we make plans for future developments.

## Delaying Registration

If you wish to delay registering, you can simply click Cancel in the registration prompt dialog. When you later decide you are ready to register, you can do so simply by running the *HeadStraddler* script with no document open.

## Headlines in Multi-column Frames

A picture is worth a thousand words. Look at this page:



**Figure 4:** A three-column page with a headline

Figure 4 is a screen capture, so don't ruin your eyesight trying to read it. To create this image, Hide Guides was activated as was Show Frame Edges. The "Brick Red" strokes you can see are the edges of the text frame and the column guides.

For me, this frame sums up the problem with working with multi-column frames. How do I set that headline across the three columns of the story?

Until recently, most people were under the impression that the only solution was to shorten the frame and move the head to a separate, threaded, single column frame positioned above the three-column frame, as shown on the next page in figure 5.

It was this "solution" that turned me off multi-column frames. Rather than use them, I did what I'd always done in PageMaker, setting three frames side-by-side, using the page margins and columns to manage their positioning.

Even now, that approach does have one advantage: you can cheat more easily with multiple frames than with a single, multi-column frame. In the multi-column frame, the columns are constrained to always be the same width as each other, but with separate frames, you can nudge them narrower or wider should the need arise.

The purists among us are turning in their graves or holding their noses, as the case may be, but my experience says that no matter how well you plan your pages nor how brilliant and appealing your design might be, you're going to need wiggle room one way or another.



Figure 5: The two-frame “solution”

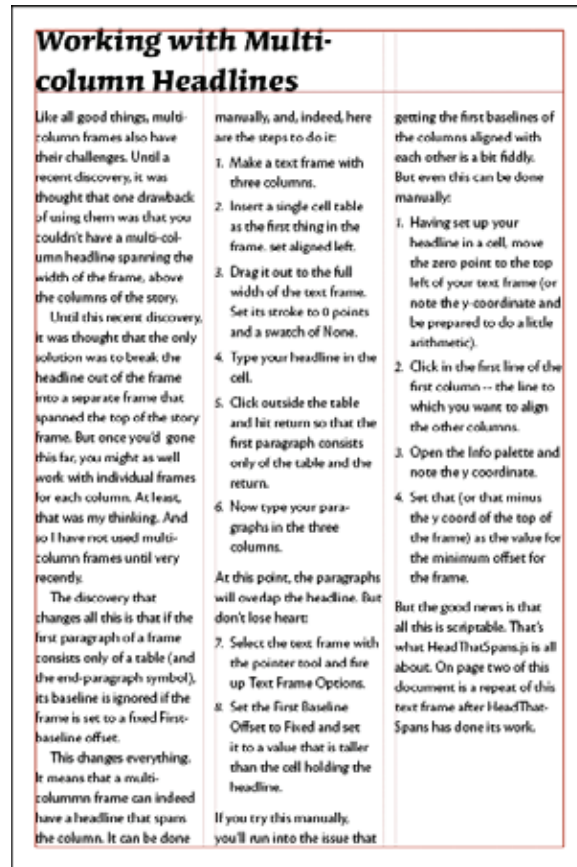
Figure 5 illustrates the traditional approach to “solving” the problem. The main frame has been shortened and a new frame drawn to hold the headline. Immediately, one is faced with a mix of column preferences making annoying trips to Text Frame Options a frequent necessity. InDesign also does precious little to help you get the size of the headline frame right or to position the text frame. Indeed, in the above example, I just eye-balled everything.

In the past, I’ve even written scripts to address these kinds of things. The script would interrogate the last paragraph in the top frame and the first in the lower frame to determine how far apart the two paragraphs were supposed to be (based on the sum of the Space After of the headline and the Space Before of the first text paragraph). Then the two frames could be sized and positioned exactly to get that relationship right.

It has me longing for the days when PageMaker’s text blocks would size themselves and show what I used to call a dangly, the dotted line below the bottom handle of the text block that showed where the next block should be positioned to align the text properly. (There

aren't many things about PageMaker that I still pine for, but this is one of them—mind you, this was somewhat broken in later versions of PageMaker. It used to work very well until they introduced baseline leading as an option.)

In early April 2004, this subject came up yet again in the Adobe User-to-User forum and for some reason a lightbulb clicked in my mind and I started wondering about the possibility of using a single-cell table to hold the headline. It wasn't long before I came up with a manual procedure for solving the problem. See figure 6:



**Figure 6:** The *HeadStraddler* solution

Here we have it. The headline straddles the three columns and everything is in a single text frame and the first lines of text under the head are aligned with each other. See Appendix A to read the contents of the three preceding figures (they all say the same). It's a description of the manual procedure that is automated by *HeadStraddler*.

## Using the *HeadStraddler* Script

The *HeadStraddler* script supports your workflow by operating differently according to the state of the text frame you ask it to operate upon. If the frame does not already have a straddling head, it converts the frame's first paragraph into one. On the other hand, if the frame already has a straddling head, the frame is adjusted to support the current state of the headline.

## Creating a Straddling Head

To create a straddling head in a text frame, “select” the frame and run the script. You can select the frame by literally selecting it with either pointer tool or by having an active insertion point anywhere within the frame. That’s it, it’s that easy.

## Refining a Straddling Head

What if you don’t like how close the first paragraph is to the head? Or perhaps you want to add one or more paragraphs to the straddling head—I sometimes need a subhead and a byline to go along with the headline. If you go ahead and make these kinds of changes, you’ll be faced with various undesirable layout problems:

- The table containing the header might grow taller and as result overlap all the columns except the first
- The space you added above the first paragraph has misaligned the first column in relation to the other columns

In either of these cases, you can simply run *HeadStraddler* again and it will fix the problem. The following figures illustrate this:

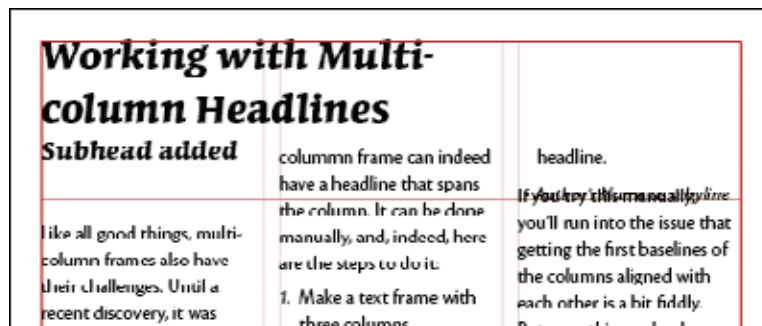


Figure 7: Extended head overlaps 2nd and 3rd columns

Figure 7 illustrates what happens when you extend the headline. Whether you do that by adding text to a head, perhaps changing it from one line to two, or by adding paragraphs, as I did here, a subhead and a byline, the result is a mess. To fix this, all you have to do is rerun the *HeadStraddler* script with the text frame selected (or, as is the more likely scenario, with an active insertion point in the text frame). Here’s the result:



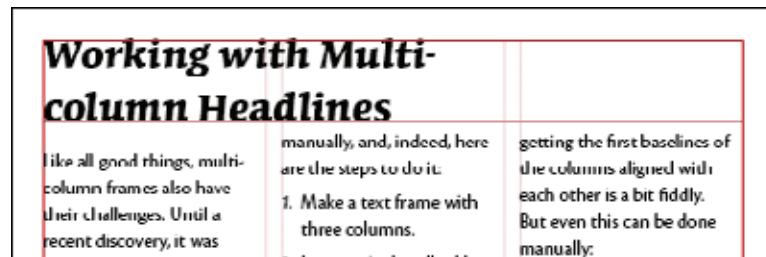
Figure 8: After rerunning the script

By the way, it is not my normal practice to work in InDesign with Show Frame Edges active, but I activated them here so you could better see what was going on. The guide that runs across the bottom of the headline is the edge of the single-cell table that *HeadStraddler* creates to hold the headline.

In case it is not obvious, that cell in the table is set to autoexpand when text is added, so as the subhead and byline were added to the original headline, the table grew taller. This pushed column one down to make room (because the table actually is in column one and extrudes into columns two and three). The text in columns two and three did not move (although it did change because of the reflow caused by column one being shorter), and so the larger table overlaps it. When you reran *HeadStraddler*, it noticed that the table was already there, so it attended only to the issue of aligning the top of the three text columns.

**Note:** *HeadStraddler* works only with single-row tables. If you add extra rows to the table that *HeadStraddler* created for you, or if you attempt to have *HeadStraddler* adopt a table you created yourself, it will alert you and exit.

Here's a similar example:



**Figure 9:** Space before adjustment causes columns to misalign

In this case, having created your straddling headline, you didn't like the resulting crowded look. The first paragraph in all three columns was simply too close to the headline, so you adjusted the space before of the first paragraph (perhaps even by changing the paragraph style specification). The result is shown in figure 9: the first line of the first column no longer aligns with the first lines of the other two columns—by the way, this would also be true if you had instead added space after to the paragraph holding the table that holds the headline.



**Figure 10:** *HeadStraddler* solves the problem

Like the previous example, simply running *HeadStraddler* again solves the problem. You indicate which text frame is the target by either selecting it or having an insertion point active within it and the script handles the rest.

## Automatic Adjustment for Width

So far, we've focused on creating the head and making vertical adjustments, but what if you need to change the width of your text frame? Say you are working on a page for a magazine. The page is supposed to be three-column, but the outside column is reserved for a tall advertisement. Your story has to fit the other two columns, like the page on the left:



Figure 11: Ad shape change requested

Suddenly, you discover that the ad is a different shape and you have to adjust your story, like the page on the right in figure 11. It's easy enough to visit Text Frame Options and change the number of columns from two to three and to change the location of the text frame, but what about the head? It's only straddling the first two columns.

The answer is, run *HeadStraddler* again on this text frame and it will automatically deal with the need to span the three columns while also fixing the vertical position of the tops of the three columns:

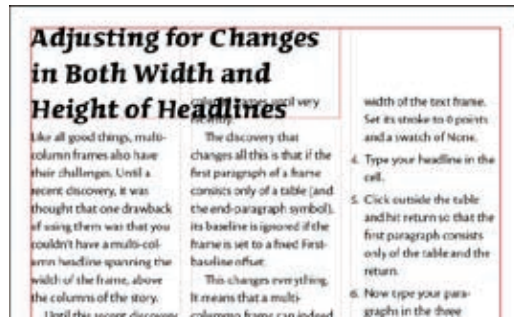


Figure 12: Adjusted Height and Width of Head

## Overriding Width Adjustment

What if the new ad for the page in figures 11 and 12 is not as large as was expected. Let's assume that we need to waste some space on this page (deadline is looming and a rewrite is out of the question). One way to do this would be to revert that head so that it only straddles the first two columns, but how to do this without losing the ability to use *HeadStraddler*?

First, we resize the table holding the headline, by dragging its right edge back to the column marker for the second column. This is the result:



**Figure 13:** Readjusted width of headline

The question is, how to run *HeadStraddler* to fix the column starts without it putting the width back to the full width of the frame? Even I will grant that my solution to this falls into the domain of kooky interface decisions, but unless you want a dialog thrown in your face every time you run *HeadStraddler*, and given that a cross-platform JavaScript can't interrogate the state of the keyboard (so you can't use a modifier key to instruct the script), there was only one alternative left:

To override the width adjustment that *HeadStraddler* normally does to a straddling head, move your text cursor into the "paragraph" that holds the table containing the head and change the paragraph alignment from Left Justified to Left Align. Note that any alignment other than Left Justified would have the desired effect of causing *HeadStraddler* to leave the width alone, but none of the other alignments are likely to make any sense because they're all relative to the left column and so they would result in the headline extruding to the left of the text frame by some amount.

The easiest way to get your cursor where you need it is to click in the first paragraph after the head and then use the arrow keys to move it into that first paragraph (which has just two insertion points, one before and one after the table—if you try to click directly at the second insertion point at the right of the table you will be disappointed because the insertion point will instead appear in the first paragraph of the column in which you clicked).

When you get the insertion point where you need it, the Control panel (in Paragraph Options display mode) will look like the left image in figure 14 (note this is a capture of InDesign CS; InDesign CS2 has more options). Click the Left Align button to change the alignment of the table (aside from the change in the palette, there will be no visible change on screen—the headline's alignment is set separately by clicking with it):



**Figure 14:** Changing the Alignment of the Table's Paragraph

Now you can run *HeadStraddler* on the text frame and this time it will ignore the width aspects of the table and only adjust the height aspects, aligning the text columns:



Figure 15: Head straddles two columns but all three columns align

## Operational Error Messages and Issues

1. If, after registering, you run the script with no document open, nothing happens.
2. If you attempt to run the script with no selection or an inappropriate selection, the script will beep once at you.
3. If you attempt to run the script on a text frame that starts in mid-paragraph, then you'll get an error alert and *HeadStraddler* declines to continue. Note that you can run *HeadStraddler* on a text frame that is part of a threaded story, but if you choose to do so on a text frame that is deep into such a thread, be very careful of text flow, should you edit the story ahead of the straddling head.

Part of what *HeadStraddler* does is change the first baseline offset of the text frame that holds the head. If you cause text flow to the extent that a straddling head is moved to a different text frame, the result is unlikely to be pretty.

As I've been developing this script, I've been working with it and have found it valuable for multi-column newsletters, but I have not used a straddle-head anywhere other than at the head of the first frame of a story, and I don't really recommend doing otherwise. But I have not prevented you from applying a straddle-head elsewhere, if you so wish.

4. If you attempt to run *HeadStraddler* on a text frame that starts with a table, yet that table has not been previously marked by *HeadStraddler* as one of its own, you'll get a

dialog alerting you to the situation and asking you to confirm that the script should continue.

I have occasionally gotten this message during my use of *HeadStraddler* when working with stories that have been exported to InCopy and then updated. But I have equally not gotten this message for other stories that have had the same treatment, so I'm not entirely sure what causes this to happen.

The primary reason for issuing this alert is to prevent you from accidentally applying *HeadStraddler* to the wrong text frame. If you are confident that you know what you're doing and that the text frame in question has a straddle head, it is safe to instruct *HeadStraddler* to continue.

5. If you attempt to run *HeadStraddler* on a text frame that has a table in its first character position but that table has more than one row, *HeadStraddler* will alert you and decline to continue.
6. If you attempt to run *HeadStraddler* on a text frame whose first paragraph is too long, so that the headline table would overflow the text frame, *HeadStraddler* issues an undo command to revert the text to its previous condition and then displays an appropriate alert to warn you of what happened.

## Using the UnstraddleHead Script

UnstraddleHead.js, a bonus script that automatically installs itself when you register, is a bit like an Undo script, except that you get to use it whenever you like on any text frame that has a straddle head. The script checks to be sure that there is a table in the first character position of the frame and that *HeadStraddler* created that table. It will check with you before proceeding if it thinks that *HeadStraddler* did not create the table.

## Troubleshooting

### *Can't locate the Scripts palette*

1. Look in the Window menu. When using InDesign CS2, there should be a menu item **Automation** immediately after **Attributes** and before **Color**, While InDesign CS has a menu item **Scripting** immediately after **Pathfinder** and before **Stroke**. The submenu lets you choose to display the Scripts palette and the Script Label palette. The first is essential for running scripts; the second is optional. Some scripts might require you to enter values using the Script Label palette. It's a good idea to group it with the Scripts palette if you're not sure just how much you need it.
2. If the **Automation** or **Scripting** item is not on the menu, use the **InDesign** menu to access the Configure Plug-ins dialog. There should be three items related to scripting: Script Label panel, Scripting, and Scripts panel. The first and third should be activated, the middle one should be locked. If they're there but in the wrong state, correct the state by clicking on the checkboxes. If they're missing, you probably need to reinstall InDesign.
3. If the plug-ins are there and in the right states, but still you don't see the palette or the menu item, try quitting InDesign and trashing your InDesign preferences. If, after relaunching InDesign, you still do not see the scripting features, then you probably need to reinstall InDesign.

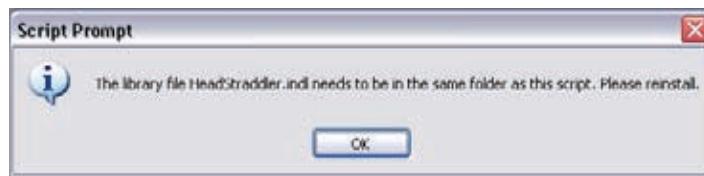
**Script fails to appear in the Scripts palette**

1. Make sure that you installed it in the Scripts folder inside the Presets folder in the Adobe InDesign CS application folder. Newcomers to scripting sometimes put scripts in Plugins/Script instead. This is the wrong place. They belong in Presets/Scripts.
2. Make sure the script file is a plain text file saved with the “.jsx” extension or “.js” extension, as appropriate. That’s how it was when you unpackaged it. If necessary, unpackage the original download and reinstall the script.

***I attempted to run the script and got this error message:***



**Figure 16a:** Error message indicating an essential library file is missing (Macintosh)



**Figure 16b:** Error message indicating an essential library file is missing (Windows)

1. If you get this message, it means that you have separated the script file from its library file in which it stores vital information. The installation instructions tell you to put the two into the same folder. To resolve this error, follow the installation instructions and move the two files (the script and its library) into the same folder in your Scripts folder.
2. There is a remote possibility that someone else running InDesign on a networked machine who has access to your computer has opened the library file across the network, thereby making it inaccessible to the script. This unlikely circumstance would also trigger this particular error message.

## Support

If this document fails to provide the answer to your problem, please visit the support page of the PDS Associates web page, located at: <http://www.pdsassoc.com/>. Click the Support link in the navigation bar, if necessary.

## Appendix A

### Working with Multi-column Headlines

Like all good things, multi-column frames also have their challenges. Until a recent discovery, it was thought that one drawback of using them was that you couldn't have a multi-column headline straddling the width of the frame, above the columns of the story.

Until this recent discovery, it was thought that the only solution was to break the headline out of the frame into a separate frame that sat across the top of the story frame. But once you'd gone this far, you might as well work with individual frames for each column. At least, that was my thinking. And so I have not used multi-column frames until very recently.

The discovery that changes all this is that if the first paragraph of a frame consists only of a table (and the end-paragraph symbol), its baseline is ignored if the frame is set to a fixed First-baseline offset.

This changes everything. It means that a multi-column frame can indeed have a headline that straddles the column. It can be done manually, and, indeed, here are the steps to do it:

1. Make a text frame with three columns.
2. Insert a single cell table as the first thing in the frame. Set aligned left.
3. Drag it out to the full width of the text frame. Set its stroke to 0 points and a swatch of None.
4. Type your headline in the cell.
5. Click outside the table and hit return so that the first paragraph consists only of the table and the return.
6. Now type your paragraphs in the three columns.

At this point, the paragraphs will overlap the headline. But don't lose heart:

7. Select the text frame with the pointer tool and fire up Text Frame Options.
8. Set the First Baseline Offset to Fixed and set it to a value that is taller than the cell holding the headline.

If you try this manually, you'll run into the issue that getting the first baselines of the columns aligned with each other is a bit fiddly. But even this can be done manually:

1. Having set up your headline in a cell, move the zero point to the top left of your text frame (or note the y coordinate and be prepared to do a little arithmetic).
2. Click in the first line of the first column -- the line to which you want to align the other columns.
3. Open the Info palette and note the y coordinate.
4. Set that (or that minus the y coordinate of the top of the frame) as the value for the minimum offset for the frame.

But the good news is that all this is scriptable. That's what *HeadStraddler* is all about.