Floating Panels

A panel should be allowed to float above standard windows only if it passes all of the following tests:

·   It's oriented to the mouse rather than the keyboard.   Thus a panel that can become the key window should not be made a floating panel, unless it only becomes key when the user is ready to type.

·   It's important that the panel remain visible while the user works in the application's standard windows. This test is passed if the user must frequently move the cursor from a standard window to the panel and back again (e.g., a tool palette) or the panel gives information relevant to the user's actions in the standard window (e.g., some inspector panels).

·   It's small enough not to obscure much of what's behind it.

·   It doesn't persist (remain on-screen) when the application is deactivated.

Thus, panels float for some of the same reasons that menus do.