

## SUPPORT: Castoff and Estimate/Managing Book Length

**Why:** *Accurate estimating of page count is essential to maintaining budget and to competitive position in the market.*

**Who:** *Acquisitions Editor; FSV/Compositor; In-house PM/Liaison*

**Skills Needed:** *Understanding of book specifications, such as margins, fonts, type size, type page, etc.*

**Knowledge Base Needed:**

### TASK: Estimating Book Length

Final book length should be a primary consideration when planning a text design. The length of a textbook matters to students and instructors and is a significant factor in whether a text is adopted for a specific course. Length also is important to the publisher because it affects the cost of producing a textbook.

**Plan ahead.** The best time to control length is during the writing and reviewing stage, not after a manuscript has already been submitted to production.

### TASK: Inhouse Castoff

If you suspect that your author is writing a manuscript that will be too long for the intended market, you can do a preproduction “castoff” to get a rough estimate of how many book pages the manuscript will make. The castoff worksheet and chart of character counts (provided here) can help you with preliminary length planning. If you need help with this estimating process, you can contact your in-house PM/Liaison or the managing editor for assistance.

*NOTE:* that the number of pages alone does not determine the number of characters in a manuscript. When you count the number of characters on a line of manuscript (remember to include blanks spaces and punctuation as characters), you will see that a manuscript typed in Courier font will contain fewer characters than a manuscript typed in Times Roman

Castoff results need to be sent to **Operations Specialist (OS)**.

### TASK: Compositor Castoff

If you want a more precise chapter-by-chapter castoff, production can send the draft manuscript to a compositor for a professional castoff. Your in-house PM/Liaison can help you with this process but will need the following basic information from you before the draft manuscript can be sent to the compositor:

- Trim size
- Number of columns
- Suggested design (choose a book that is already in print which has a similar design— such as font type and size, text width—to the one you want)

The in-house PM/Liaison will write a memo to the compositor with further instructions about the castoff and will send the memo and manuscript to the compositor for estimating.

A preproduction castoff can usually be done in 2 weeks if manuscript is complete. During the busy season (October through May), a compositor castoff may take longer to complete.

*NOTE:* For technology books with a lot of displayed math, it is best to get a professional castoff. Books that have more than 2 or 3 special features (with varying typefaces, sizes, column widths, etc.) would also benefit from a professional castoff for accuracy.

Castoff results need to be sent to In-House PM/Liaison and **OS**.

### **Basic Text Design Considerations**

If you decide to do your own rough castoff using the castoff worksheet provided, you'll need some basic guidelines to get started.

#### **Font**

Most of our texts are set in a 10/12 font for best readability. Items such as references, glossary, tables, end-of-chapter features, appendixes, and indexes are often set somewhat smaller (9/11 or 8/10, for example).

#### **Text Line Width/Column**

The text line width depends on the number of columns on the page and the book's trim size. General guidelines for column text widths according to trim size appear on page 3 of the castoff worksheet.

If your text has marginal notes, you'll have to adjust the main text column accordingly to allow enough room in the margin for the notes. The *minimum* width for a marginal note is 6 or 7 picas (depending on the length of the marginal note and how large the type needs to be).

#### **Art Space**

You'll need to estimate art space if your text has a large art program. Art can occupy a significant amount of space in a book, so it cannot be overlooked.

Look at similar books in the field to see how large (or small) illustrations and photos should be in the finished book to estimate art space. You cannot always judge the final size of an illustration simply by looking at an author's sketch or input.

#### **Front and End Matter**

You'll have to estimate the number of front matter (title, copyright, preface, table of contents, etc.) pages you'll have, as well as the number of index pages you expect. Look at other similar books, or the last edition, to estimate how many pages to allow for front and end matter.

**TASK Tips for Controlling Length Through Design**

*Length cannot always be managed through text design.* For example, if a castoff indicates your manuscript is going to be 80 pages over your target length, we cannot tweak the design in enough ways to save that many pages. Sometimes there is no other alternative but to have the author cut content.

Also, keep in mind that a compositor's castoff has a leeway of 10%; that is, the castoff may over- or underestimate length by 10%. So, if you want a 512-page book and the castoff comes in at 496, the margin of error is about 50 pages. That is, the final book length could be as much as 546 (496 + 50). It doesn't hurt to take some steps—either cutting content or tweaking the design, or both—to make sure you aren't unpleasantly surprised later.

If you are faced with a manuscript that is too long, consider the following tips to manage length through design. Not all will be appropriate for your manuscript or market, but many are subtle and can be easily accomplished:

1. Can you consider a larger trim size?
2. Will the market accept a 2-column book? We can fit more characters on a page with 2 columns. However, if your text has marginal notes, going to 2 columns is not a good idea.
3. Is a longer text width acceptable? Studies have shown that a 30-pica line length and 10/12 font are ideal for readability, but increasing the line length to 31 or 32 picas wide may be OK if you are using a readable font.
4. If your text is primarily 1-column, boxed features can be set in 2 columns and in a somewhat smaller font to save space. End-of-chapter material is often set in multiple columns and in a smaller font.
5. Look for a typeface with a better character count (more characters per pica). Palatino at 2.57 characters per pica is less efficient than Garamond at 2.7 characters per pica.
6. Will you consider text wrapping around art, photos, or marginal notes? This has the potential to save some space.
7. Consider starting your chapters on a new right or left page rather than always on a right-hand page.
8. Are part openers really necessary? If they are just "dividers," list the parts in the table of contents only and save yourself the pages.
9. Look at art sizes and placement. Are there smaller or narrower illustrations that can be placed in the margin of the text or can be placed side by side?
10. Can any end-of-chapter material or appendixes (extra questions, activities, resources) be moved to ancillary materials such as a study guide, lab manual, instructor's manual, or Companion Website?
11. The larger trim sizes (8 ¼ x 10 7/8 or 8 x 10) may allow a marginal runninghead/folio arrangement, which would allow a few more text lines on a page. Ask your in-house PM/Liaison to see an example of such a treatment.