How to do a Castoff

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Tor Books uses an Excel spreadsheet to calculate how many pages a book is going to be. When you submit your manuscript, you don't actually need to know this. You do, however, need to know your word count, and if we're going to step through a word count, we might as well step through what is called a "castoff."

We are going to go through this using my copy of *Warprize* by Elizabeth Vaughan, so grab your own copy and let's get to it!

1. Total front matter pages
Front matter is anything that comes before the first chapter/prologue. It's the very first page with quotes about how great the book is (known as "front sales"), the letter addressed to the reader, the title page with the imprint's logo, etc., the copyright page, the dedication (dedi) and acknowledgments (ack). In a printed and bound book, the pages are printed front and back (recto and verso). For the purposes of a castoff, the front and back are counted as separate pages.

Every book has a title page and a copyright page. Some books also have a "half-title" page—it's just the title of the book, set about halfway down on the page, and nothing else.

This also includes things like maps, pronunciation guides, family trees, etc.

So *Warprize* has 5 front matter pages.

2. Total back matter pages
Back matter is (can you guess?) the stuff in the back *after* the narrative. It includes any teaser pages from the next book, any advertisements for other books, the author bio... all of it.

Warprize has a "teaser header" page, and 12 teaser pages for *Warsworn*. Total: 13.

3. Part title x 2
A part title is the page where it says Part one, Part two, etc. It's multiplied by two because there is nothing on the verso. (We all know recto/verso, right? That's right—when looking at an open book, recto is the front of a page on the right hand side, and verso is the back of a page on left hand side!)

Warprize isn't split into parts, so that's 0.

4. Number of chapters
Warprize has 13.

5. Average characters per line (choose 6 different full lines)
Let's say the answer is **72** for the sake of expediency. That's a good average.

6. Average line count (choose 6 different pages of different lengths, excluding chapter openers)
Let's say **19**, because that's a general number. La la la!

7. Total manuscript pages, including unnumbered additions
If there is a page within the ms. that is *inserted artwork* and it is not included as a numbered page, make sure you count it here. (For example, if you are writing a book like *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and there is a map on your sixth page, but the numbers skip it, and you have it labeled page 5A, it still has to be counted.)

Warprize doesn't have any inserted pages; the ms. is 350 pages.

8. Multiply #5 by #6 to get the total characters per page
72 x 19 = 1368

9. Multiply #7 by #8 to get total characters per ms.
350 x 1368 = 478800

10. Divide #9 by...
Now this can get a little tricky. This is where we divide by how many characters can fit on a *typeset* page. It is different at every single publishing house. It depends on how many lines there are per page, what the margins around the text will be, the actual size of the page the book is being printed on—not to mention what size the typeface will be and what font! Like I said, tricky.

Let's say we are going to do *Warprize* as a hardcover. Let's say it will be 6-1/8 by 9-1/4. That's a big book. An average setting—not too tight and not too loose in type that is not too big and not too small—means we can fit about 2285 characters per page.

However, we published *Warprize* as a mass market paperback. It's the average mm size of 4-1/4 by 6-3/4. There are about 53 characters per line on each page, and there are 37 lines per page, so we can fit about 1961 characters to the page.

So 478800 divided by 1961 = 244.16—let's round that to 245, to be on the safe side.

11. Add #1, #2, and #3
So, add the front matter, the back matter, and the number of parts.

5 + 13 + 0 = 18

12. Allow 1/4 page for each chapter
Warprize, you'll recall, has 13 chapters. This does not divide evenly by 4. We end up with 3.25 pages. This is off the cuff, so let's just allow that it's an extra page. Either the text will flow to fill it in, or we can find something to do with the extra page—like use it for the millions of quotes from famous bestselling authors who love the book. (And I am not even joking! Yay *Warprize*!)

Total: 4

13. Add #10, #11, and #12 for total page count
245 + 18 + 4 = **267**

14. Round off to the nearest signature for the estimated page count
Signatures are each 16 pages. The nearest one to 245 is 256. That gives me another 11 pages to play with—for more front sales, more teaser pages, maybe back ads for other books. Whatever!

Remember that the way a book is designed actually makes a lot of difference. The true page count of the printed book is 336. This is because the way the book is designed makes the text flow differently than the estimated average.

For example, although the typeface is Times Roman 10, the headers are 14 or 16 point, in "display type" (the type used on the cover for the title). We also allowed one-half of a page for each chapter header, instead of 1/4. *And* there are three space breaks for a scene break, instead of only two. This is because I picked this particular design (if I recall correctly, I said, "Let's use this design, it's pretty, yay!").

If I'd picked a more utilitarian design, the book would be set differently and have a smaller spine. But this spine is around 3/4" and that's just fine.

Now here's the thing—if your ms. has really complicated stuff in it, don't worry about it at this juncture. When you put a word count on your ms. cover sheet, or include it in your cover letter, if you are really concerned about the weird stuff in your ms., just include a parenthetical note to the editor, like, "(not including the weird stuff like the glossary of terms and the heroic verse one of the characters is constantly quoting)"—really, that's okay. It doesn't matter right now. You're just submitting your ms.; it will not get you rejected.

Oh, and hey, an extra note on this kind of thing—if you are *not* submitting a book that is *supposed* to be *illustrated* (like for example, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)—leave off with the illustrations and chapter ornaments and stuff. The editor doesn't care.

This is not the case with maps. If we need a map, include *a photocopy of it*. Don't send original anything or the only existing copy of something *ever*.