

The West Virginia Governor's Mansion uses the Lexmark C772 to print thousands of invitations on special media in-house every year. The Mansion's new approach speeds up the process and reduces its costs by 43 percent over invitations previously handled by a commercial print shop.

West Virginia Governor's Mansion staff votes for Lexmark solution to produce thousands of invitations for major events

The Organization

Overlooking the Kanawha River, West Virginia's stately Executive Mansion is home to the Governor and First Family, and is also used for state-related special events, receptions and holiday galas. The 30-room Georgian Revival structure, completed in 1925, features a grand dual staircase, the State Dining Room whose 14-foot banquet table seats 22, and a grand ballroom. The West Virginia Governor's Mansion has a staff of eight, including Shereé Kesler, its Director.

The Challenge

Like any other professional firm, the West Virginia Governor's Mansion prints business documents throughout each day. But unlike other businesses, the Mansion sends out thousands of invitations for major receptions held there each year.

For each event, the Mansion contacts an outside firm to design and print invitations. Invitation quantities would range from about 200 to nearly 3,000 for each event. The invitations contain several pieces: the invitation itself, an RSVP card and an entrance ticket for each guest.

"It took at least two weeks for the whole process from design to printing," said Mansion Director Shereé Kesler. "If we ran short, we had to wait several days for more to be printed and pay a rush charge. If we printed too many, there was waste."

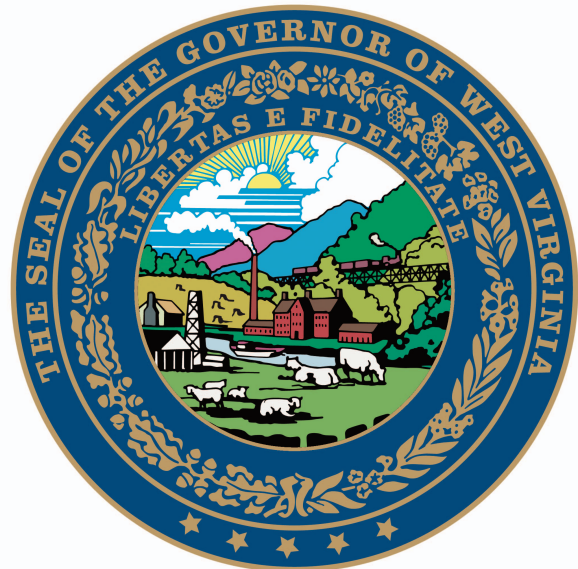
In a noble effort to trim expenses and cut turnaround time, Kesler decided to create and print invitations herself. This seemingly simple undertaking was anything but simple. She ordered the paper stock with the state seal pre-printed on each piece and had the lot delivered to the Mansion. Then, she designed the pieces and began printing them on her existing printer. The laser printer that was installed at the Mansion at that time continually jammed on the heavy textured

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West Virginia Governor's Mansion
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cardstock Kesler had selected for the invitations. The West Virginia state seal, preprinted on the invitation stock in thermal gold-colored raised ink, actually melted when exposed to the heat of the printer's fuser.



Rather than saving time, bringing the printing in-house proved counterproductive and expensive. With each jam, the paper stock and printer toner were wasted. And so was Kesler's time. Though Kesler remained in favor of keeping production in-house to speed turnaround times and reduce costs, the printer being used was not up to the task. A new solution was needed and quickly, as the Governor's holiday events were fast approaching.

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The Solution

A Lexmark C772dn color laser printer, capable of printing up to 25 pages per minute in color, was installed on the Mansion's small network, replacing the prior unit.

Though Lexmark's involvement could have ended there, engineers from Lexmark's Emerging Color Applications Laboratory worked with Kesler and several local commercial printing firms to test a wide variety of cardstock and commercial inks, providing Kesler with recommendations for several combinations. By taking this step, Kesler knew the invitations would print effectively on the C772dn before the first piece of paper was even fed through the device.

In addition, Lexmark hardware engineers modified the printer's internal firmware, allowing it to recognize and handle the custom paper size used for the individual pieces of the Mansion's invitations.

"The cardstock we are now using is even thicker than the stock our previous printer couldn't handle," said Kesler. "Lexmark was under no obligation to find papers and special inks for us and to work with local companies, but took on this extra work at no charge to make sure we were completely satisfied."

Kesler installed the new color laser printer in just a few minutes, about three days before she needed to mail 3,000 invitations for the Governor's holiday events. She came into the office on Saturday and had planned to work the entire day and come back on Monday morning to finish the job and mail the invitations.

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The Results

By producing invitations in-house using the right printer, Kesler cut the average cost of each job almost in half, a savings of 43 percent. Kesler's experience was jam-free, even with the heavier cardstock. Delays have been eliminated and short runs can be done at any time.

With Lexmark's assistance, the state seal, preprinted by a local West Virginia printing firm, uses textured inks designed to withstand the printer's high internal temperatures while maintaining bright colors and sharpness. "We've received many compliments on the quality and appearance of the Mansion's invitations since installing the new Lexmark printer," Kesler said.

Based on the performance of the C772dn, the Mansion has eliminated two of its other laser printers that couldn't handle the job.

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The West Virginia Governor's Mansion is a unique example, but not an unusual one. Lexmark's industry specialists, engineers and worldwide support organization stand ready to tailor a custom solution to unique document management needs.