XEROX

Xerox DocuColor 242
40ppm color
55ppm black & white

Xerox DocuColor 252
50ppm color
65ppm black & white

Xerox DocuColor 260
60ppm color
75ppm black & white

EDITOR'S CHOICE 2008

Sum-up: Heavy-duty color copiers with impressive image quality.

These impressive light production copier-printers have a wealth of great features.

For the most part, the DocuColor 242, 252, and 260 models address the low end of the production color market. However, some units are likely to be placed with high-volume office color users as well. Output speeds are very fast. The 242 runs at 40ppm in color and 55ppm in black, the 252 operates at 50ppm in color and 65ppm in black, and the 260 delivers output at 60ppm in color and 75ppm in black. List price for the 242 is $29,900, the 252 goes for $34,700, and the 260 is listed at $39,200.

Image quality is excellent. The models print and copy at 2,400dpi, the highest resolution of any laser color copier on the market. The high resolution is made possible by the machines' 32-beam laser and use of Xerox's Emulsion Aggregation High Grade (EA HG) toner. The toner, which is organically grown rather than mechanically produced, offers attractive supply costs and image quality.

These machines are nearly identical except for speed and have the same accessories. (Note that the DocuColor 260 comes standard with what Xerox calls Hot Folders and Virtual Printers, both of which are options on the DocuColor 242 and 252.) The models' standard paper supply has dual 500-sheet paper trays, an 870-sheet paper tray, an 1,140-sheet paper tray, and a 250-sheet bypass. A 2,000-sheet high-capacity tray lists for $2,000 for letter-size paper and $5,995 for 13" x 19" sheets. The models also come standard with an impressive high-capacity DADF (duplexing automatic document feeder with dual scan heads) that holds up to 250 sheets. This feeder runs at 80ppm in black-and-white and 50ppm in color.

Another strong point is media support. The machines' main paper trays and 2,000-sheet large-capacity tray handle paper weights from 18lb. bond to 80lb. cover, in sizes up to 11" x 17". The bypass tray handles up to 110lb. cover, which is excellent. Maximum paper size for the bypass is 13" x 19".

The range of output options is respectable,

Xerox DocuColor 260 — This model has impressive image quality.

although not as versatile as with some competitors. First on the list is an inexpensive 500-sheet offset catch tray that goes for $300.

Next, there is an advanced finisher that has 500-sheet and 3,000-sheet trays, 50-sheet multiposition stapling, and 2/3/4-hole punch that lists for $2,995.

For more advanced applications, there are two finishers. One includes 500- and 1,500-sheet trays, 50-sheet multiposition stapling, 2/3/4-hole punch, and a 60-sheet booklet maker with saddlestitching that goes for $4,995. Another offers 500- and 2,000-sheet trays with 100-sheet multiposition stapling, 2/3/4-hole punch, a booklet maker with saddlestitching, and a postprocess inserter for $11,800. A C- and Z-fold unit is also available for $5,700.

As can be expected from Xerox, you can choose a standard embedded EFI controller or select an optional EFI Fiery Bustled Network, FreeFlow DocUSP, or Creo Color Server in its place.

The DocuColor 242, 252, and 260 models are high-speed color copiers that offer excellent image quality and productive features. If the past is a good indicator, Xerox will probably expand the list of optional print controllers as more of these new models are put into service. All three models get our Editor's Choice Award.

Xerox

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Vendor Profile

Xerox is a dominant force in the color copier market, though it's less powerful than it was during the glory days of the late 1990s. At one point, its product range stretched from low-cost ink jet models up to high-speed color laser machines at the top of the market, but the company's exit from the retail-channel copier market brought the ink jet portion of the line to an end.

Xerox sells its color models mostly through its direct-sales force and through its agents, independent representatives that market the machines but — unlike conventional dealers — do not hold inventory and act as resellers.

One thing that sets Xerox apart from other vendors in this market is the wide range of controller options it offers. Like its rivals, it supports Fiery controllers from EFI, but, unlike vendors such as Canon, Konica Minolta, and Ricoh, it also carries several others.

Emulsion Aggregation (EA) toner: EA Toner is now used in more than a dozen Xerox products, including some of the company's Nuvera, WorkCentre and DocuColor series of color printers. The company expects many future Xerox devices to be engineered to use EA Toner. EA Toner requires less toner per page and less fuser energy to create a final print, thus lowering the total cost of ownership.

EIP: Xerox is now releasing its Extensible Interface Platform (EIP), a programmable interface that will be seen on newer model lines. This interface allows third parties to embed software inside the copier's controller, which means it can appear on the copier's control panel. Early solutions include an accounting application from Equitrac and a document-routing solution from OmTool. Xerox believes that because of its easy-to-use Web-standard interface, many others will follow.

Note also that Xerox sells its strong DocuColor production printer line, covered in our *High Volume Printer & Digital Duplicator Guides*. Those models have copying capability, but they are primarily designed as printers.

FreeFlow: One good reason for buying a Xerox copier is the company's extensive FreeFlow Digital Workflow software suite. Designed to improve workflow, FreeFlow consists of a portfolio of tools that answer a number of customer requirements. These include tools for book makeready, for generating direct mail, for printing variable data, and for color management. FreeFlow products can work with a wide variety of Xerox copiers and printers. FreeFlow software has replaced Xerox's CentreWare administration software.