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# THE \$25,400 INVITATION SET

Just how elaborately can you beckon guests to your party? Grapevine Paperie's Karen Bartolomei details the meticulous craft behind one of her client's bank-busting invites. BY RACHEL LEVITT

To create the save-the-dates, three Grapevine staffers spent three days attaching 125 paper scrolls to dowels, nestling them among moss and seashells, and wrapping each inside a handcrafted box. The cost? \$53.25 each.

A calligrapher spent 23 hours writing the 12-page invitation (\$1,500), while a local illustrator drew maps and two dozen nautical images (\$1,850)—all of which were then scanned and turned into plates for letterpress printing.

An elaborate invite demands equally distinctive packaging. Each die-cut, hand-assembled envelope came with gold letterpress detailing and a custom-designed whale stamp. (Total postage: \$55.)

The invitation booklets' keepsake-quality covers (\$20 each) required sending steel-blue book cloth to India, where it was wrapped over boards—as most real hardcover books are—before returning to Cambridge for gold-leaf screen printing. The Grapevine team handled the final assembly (\$775), including hand-sewing each binding with gold thread.

The invitation's plates were sent to a Brooklyn studio, where an artist inked the cotton pages using a 300-year-old hand-cranked letterpress. The printing cost topped out at \$60 per book.

