



Case Study



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An automated package delivery system at East Tennessee State University is the first one in the nation installed at a public four-year school. The system, a bank of 86 lockers and two computer terminals used to access those lockers, was recently installed in the campus post office at a cost of \$70,000, said Don McCarty, manager of postal services at ETSU. "This is the first one at any public university in the whole United States," he said. These new lockers are larger so that packages can be loaded into them for students to pick up at their convenience, rather than having to stand in line at the post office window during business hours.

One of the computer terminals in the bank of lockers is used to enter a unique PIN that will open the corresponding locker. Students are notified a package is available in one of the 86 lockers via email. Security features are in place to prevent unauthorized access. Everything is recorded from the moment

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a package is placed in one of the lockers until a student removes it. "With this system, the building's open 20 hours a day, so now students can come in here from 6am to 2am to pick up all of the parcels they want to get to," McCarty said. "They've really loved the flexibility. They love the hours. It's on their hours and not our hours."

Seventy-one packages were delivered during the first weekend the system was operational. "That's 71 packages that never would have got delivered because they would have been sitting in the office waiting for the students to come," McCarty said. "And so that's before the word's even got out." Sarah Beth Sherrill, a junior, used the system for the first time earlier this past week. "It's different," she said after retrieving a book for class from one of the lockers. "It's better because I can get the books whenever I get the email and I don't have to worry about them being open between classes."



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One hundred and forty packages were processed through this new system one day this past week, and McCarty said the real rush has not even started yet. Normal package processing at the campus post office is about 150 per day. “We expect (this) week and the following week that we’ll be getting to maybe 400 and 500 packages a day,” he said. “And we’re expecting to put at least 200 through these every day.”

This package-delivery system and a new kiosk that allows customers to buy stamps and mail a letter or small package means more customers will not have to go to the window and stand in line, McCarty said. That was part of the reason the automated lockers were installed. “We want to make sure our window people, our clerks there, are helping people mail packages and do what they have to do,” he said. “It’s far more economical this way. Far less manpower required to run it. This is a superior system.”