

Case Study:

University of Chicago

The global leader in
door opening solutions



A stand-alone locking solution that stands above alternatives

When the University of Chicago was searching for an alternative to the traditional lock and key system, it turned to PERSONA. Barry Johnson, the university's Manager of Information Services for Residence Halls, said the school wanted a secure solution that was cost effective, simple to install and easy to maintain.

"Keying is always a problem in a residence hall because of all the master keys for each of the various doors," Johnson explained. "Within a portion of a building you may have three levels of master keys. Often, those keys are lost and have to be replaced. Then you worry about the lost key falling into the wrong hands and creating a security problem."

Centralized Security Without Expensive Wiring

With their ability to track and limit access, Persona's electronic card-reader locks were the logical choice for the University of Chicago. The Persona locks are stand-alone devices that require no hardwiring. As a result the stand-alone card readers are affordable and able to adapt to any environment. "We looked at standalone and hardwired systems," Johnson noted.

"We found the cost of a hardwired system to be prohibitive because of all the infrastructure work. Like everything else, there are also maintenance costs associated with a hardwired system, so I don't think there is a balance in their favor."

Electronic stand-alone locks provide centralized security at a fraction the cost of an online, hardwired system, typically one-fifth to one-seventh the price. The cost difference represents an enormous sum when hundreds or thousands of doors are being equipped.





“The ability to issue a replacement card without reprogramming the lock was the number one reason why we chose stand-alone devices.”

“The model we chose has the ability to track every event, even the mechanical override. The system also has the ability to track when the door was left ajar.”

Lost Keys No Longer a Problem

“We were able to use our existing ID cards as key cards, using track three for the locks and leaving tracks one and two for other functions,” he said, referring to the card’s capabilities. “So far, three dorm have been installed entirely with the electronic stand-alone locks and two other buildings have the stand-alone units installed on the main entry points.”

“Having a stand-alone electronic lock simplifies key replacement and simplifies the manner in which you allow access to different areas,” Johnson noted. “When you give a key to someone, they have access to that area as long as they have the key. With a card reader, you can program what time an individual is granted access to a particular area.”

The system software is designed to run on any single PC or network, using Windows operating system. Because the access information is stored on the keycard, locks don’t need to be reprogrammed when room assignments change.

“The campus population seems very pleased with the new locks,” Johnson reported. “They like not having to carry keys and possibly lose them. We are very pleased with it.”

Simple to Install, Easy to Manage

For these reasons, many college campuses are increasingly turning to electronic stand-alone locks. PERSONA’s three-tiered operating mode of passage, card only or card-plus-PIN code offers the flexibility to tailor security from building-to-building, room-to-room, even door-to-door. The lockset’s on-board memory can control access privileges for cardholders down to exact location and time of day. PERSONA also offers a feature that records if the door was propped open and how long it remained that way.

In addition, PERSONA locks simplify the process of assigning security clearance by offering user group designations. User groups are segments of personnel that share the same access privileges, such as departments or work assignments. Johnson said a stand-alone electronic lock provides many of the benefits of a hard-wired system, but at a fraction of the cost.

PERSONA’s battery-operated devices are fully upgradeable, simple to install, easy to manage and integrate with existing employee/student ID cards. The units require no hardwiring from the locks to a centralized computer system. All electronics and batteries are mounted inside the durable, metal casing. “Retrofitting the locks were fairly simple,” he noted, “especially where a mortise lock was existing.”