

Case in Point

Security is in the Cards for Skidmore College

By converting the access control of its residence halls and academic buildings from keys to cards, Skidmore College is increasing the safety of its campus, simplifying access control management and reducing staff workload for lockouts and rekeying. In addition, the latest door hardware can be changed easily between many different configurations and functions to meet changing requirements without replacement.

Skidmore College, founded in 1903, is located on an 800-acre campus in Saratoga Springs, New York, a cosmopolitan city of 30,000 in the state's Capital District region. It is a highly selective private non-denominational coeducational liberal arts college with a relatively small size, a student-faculty ratio of 8 to 1, and a reputation for creative approaches. The College is a close-knit academic community of approximately 2,400 talented men and women from some 47 states and 46 countries.

Moving from Keys to Cards

Like many educational institutions, Skidmore used mechanical keys for many years to control access to residence hall exterior and room doors, as well as academic buildings. Over time, the need for greater security, better access management and greater flexibility led to the expansion of card access from simple student identification and purchasing to a fully integrated system that manages a broad range of functions.

When first introduced, magnetic swipe cards were used on campus primarily for identification, vending machines and dining. Today the college is involved in a program to convert key locks to card access on all new buildings, as well as retrofitting existing residence halls. Most exterior doors are already converted, and interior door upgrades are well under way. Skidmore is incorporating card access control into residential units now under construction in



Residence buildings at Skidmore College are being equipped with Schlage AD-250 electronic locks that can be changed easily to another configuration if needed.

its Northwoods Village area and has upgraded most of its existing units as well. The only residential area still to be upgraded is Scribner Village.

Director of Security Dennis Conway says the college uses access control locks controlled by swipe cards to increase safety in its buildings, especially in residence halls. He explains, "This technology is more efficient in eliminating the need for students to carry additional keys and removes the need to re-key doors throughout the entire college year as residence needs change. According to Conway, the use of card access also cuts down on the need for security personnel to respond to lockouts and enables his staff to focus on its primary security function.

A big advantage has been realized by integrating all card functions into a single system, including student identification and food and book purchases, as well as access control. Skidmore uses the CBORD CS Gold modular campus ID card system to integrate access control and a range of seemingly disparate auxiliary services. This one-card system incorporates CS Access, which has the flexibility to manage the interaction of door locks, door contacts, perimeter sensors, motion detectors and notification devices. It allows access privileges to be granted or denied based on a wide range of criteria.

Locks Provide Flexibility

Card System Administrator, Mike Davis, who maintains the campus card system, says Skidmore uses both online and offline locks. "We use offline locks mainly in the dorms because they aren't affected by power outages. They run on batteries and aren't dependent on a server, and our facilities crew changes the batteries regularly. In most of the residence buildings, doors to individual dorms are controlled by Schlage CL Campus Locks, which are offline locks with user access rights stored in the user's magnetic strip credentials. Davis points out that this gives the flexibility needed to accommodate changing users, especially when outside groups conduct summer programs

and the campus may be used by 3000 to 5000 people. They wanted something that works like a hotel card, where the next card bumps out the last one. That's how the CL works, because the access credentials are written on the card, not programmed into the lock. He estimates that more than 1500 of the CL locks are installed on campus.

New residence buildings under construction in the Northwoods Village, as well as some buildings in the existing Scribner Village, will be equipped with the recently introduced Schlage AD Series locks. They are designed so their configurations can be changed easily as requirements may change in the future. Davis says, "Should they choose offline locks now and decide they need wireless online two years from now, they can just change the modules instead of the entire lock." He says one option Skidmore is considering is using wireless technology for data transmission but hard wiring for power, with a battery backup to protect against power failures.

In new construction and renovations, doors in the residence buildings now will be equipped with Schlage AD-250 locks, which perform the same function as the CL locks. Both have the user access rights stored on the card, but the AD Series can be changed easily to another configuration if needed.

Academic buildings also have been converted from key to card access. In many cases, the Schlage WA series of wireless online locksets have been used to eliminate the need for hard wiring in existing buildings. They combine a card reader, electric lock, door position switch, battery pack, and communications module into a single package. Where hard wiring is feasible, Schlage VIP locks are used. They are available with trim options that include Von Duprin 88 exit devices as well as Schlage mortise and cylindrical locks. Their open architecture platform provides real time monitoring of door openings.

According to Davis, the move from keys to cards has made it easier to control who actually has access to specific areas. Previously, staff members would sometimes let others use their keys, but they are less likely to do so with the one-card system.

Data from all types of locks, whether online or offline, is managed by the CBORD system, which eliminates the problems of operating with two separate databases. Audit trails and other data from the offline locks are downloaded to a PDA and then uploaded into the system, while data from the online locks flows into the system automatically.

While mechanical keys still are used on campus, they are primarily for overrides in case of power or battery failure. Assistant of Construction Services Paul Lundberg says, "Our goal is for only a select few individuals to have keys, so we don't have a whole dispensary of keys out there that could get lost. This also minimizes the time and expense of replacing lost keys and rekeying locks."

Because the cards are used intensively for a wide range of purposes, they do wear out. Magnetic stripes eventually wear thin or the cards become damaged and must be replaced. However, the cost of replacing a card is less than that of replacing a key. Campus Card Office Coordinator Barbara Kerr says, "We are looking at replacing cards after their second year, when more of them tend to wear out from constant use. We're also giving them lanyards to carry the cards so they don't punch holes in them."

As Skidmore moves ahead with its plans to implement the AD Series locks in its residence buildings, greater synergy is expected. The seamless integration of the existing card system with the access control function in all buildings has simplified the move to upgraded hardware and improved security.

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SKIDMORE
C O L L E G E

Skidmore is a liberal arts college located in Sarasota Springs, NY with a reputation for its creative approaches to just about everything. With its relatively small size and student-faculty ratio, the College is a close-knit academic community. Skidmore is known for its faculty of teacher-scholars devoted to the instruction and mentoring of undergraduates—approximately 2,400 talented men and women from some 47 states and 46 countries.

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1120 Clay St.
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