

# POSTAL NEWS

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## **1. Post office works hard to keep up**

By STEVEN WARD

Advocate staff writer

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The U.S. Postal Service has undergone quite a few changes since Benjamin Franklin was named the first postmaster general in 1775.

Postage stamps were created in 1847, according to The History of the United States Postal Service 1775-1993. Stamped envelopes became available in 1852.

Domestic money orders came about in 1864, and certified mail first surfaced in 1955.

Air mail started in 1918.

These days, change continues to be an important component of the U.S. Postal Service.

Like any other entity that conducts business with the public, the U.S. Postal Service is trying to survive in an age of instant communication. Cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, fax machines and direct competition from mail delivery services such as United Parcel Service and Federal Express have forced the U.S. mail service to keep pace.

One of the more convenient services provided by the U.S. Postal Service is the Contract Postal Unit, a minipost office in a small business. They were first opened in drugstores in the 1830s, but were not labeled Contract Postal Units until the late 1960s, said Judith Brining, Baton Rouge U.S. Postal Service customer relations coordinator.

Although there were CPUs in Baton Rouge decades ago, the more recent batch to spring up in Baton Rouge started with the one inside the EZ Stop Express store at the corner of Highland and LSU Avenue.

That was in 2004, Brining said.

The Postal Service has opened seven Contract Postal Units in Baton Rouge and plans to open an eighth by the end of the summer.

The Contract Postal Units can provide any service a post office does except post office boxes and U.S. Postal Service money orders.

In Baton Rouge, the Contract Postal Units have been placed in video stores, climate control storage businesses and convenience stores.

The employees of the businesses are trained by the U.S. Postal Service and should be able to work at the Contract Postal Unit counters after four days of training. The U.S. Postal Service provides equipment and most of the supplies to the businesses.

Customers who use the Contract Postal Units have said they love going into the businesses and getting service without having to go to an official post office where, in many cases, lines are much longer.

Another change Postal Service patrons have seen recently is the removal of stamp vending machines from post office lobbies.

Postal Service officials said they removed the vending machines due to mechanical breakdowns of the aging machines, complicated by the fact that parts for the machines are no longer manufactured.

Also, the vending machines accept only cash and coins while customers prefer the convenience of paying with credit or debit cards. Retrofitting the vending machines to accept credit cards is not feasible, officials said.

But now, post offices in Baton Rouge are equipped with Automated Postal Centers.

The APCs are self-service, computerized kiosks that allow customers to buy stamps, money orders and other retail services with credit and debit cards.

Customers can also weigh and mail letters and packages using the APCs.

APCs have been around since April 2004, Brining said.

Customers can also buy stamps by mail, by phone by calling (800) 782-6724 or by logging onto the U.S. Postal Service's Web site, <http://www.usps.com>. That's a huge change from the 1770s, when Franklin led the then-named U.S. Post Office Department.

Steven Ward is a general-assignment reporter for The Advocate. He can be reached at [sward@theadvocate.com](mailto:sward@theadvocate.com).

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## **2. NCR awarded new contract with postal service**

By Chelsey Levingston

Staff Writer

Tuesday, July 08, 2008

In a three year, multimillion dollar contract, NCR Corp. (NYSE: NCR) has been selected by the U. S. Postal Service to be the exclusive provider of retail point-of-service hardware for thousands of post offices around the country.

According to the July 7 press release, the postal service is already using NCR point-of-service software and the hardware will be used to increase efficiency and improve customer service.

NCR RealPOS80XRT (TM) uses next generation architecture, the newest technology developments.

In late June, NCR announced a partnership with Integrated Technology Group to put self-service checkout kiosks in libraries across North America.

Contact this reporter at [clevingston@DaytonDailyNews.com](mailto:clevingston@DaytonDailyNews.com).

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## **3. Virtual Systems Simplifies Complex Postal Statement Data and Management with Integration and Auto Import from BCC Software**

Seattle -

Bellevue, Wash. — Virtual Systems Corp., creator of Mail-Shop® and Digi-Shop™ software solutions for direct mail and printing, announced the release of a postal-data-integration solution that will facilitate the automated importing of postal paperwork.

The new automation — made possible through coordination of technology with BCC Software, Inc., of Rochester, N.Y. — leverages the expertise and knowledge base of both BCC and Virtual Systems in their respective core areas of postal technology and

job-shop management. The system will be available to all common customers of the two companies.

“This time-saving feature is another way for Virtual Systems to fulfill a longstanding goal of seeking new ways to integrate and simplify complex customer systems with easy-to-use tools for managing elements related to mail business management,” said Ted Seward, Virtual Systems’ vice president of marketing and product development. “Used in conjunction with Virtual Systems’ already intuitive postage accounting process, this new solution will provide BCC and Virtual Systems customers with an added advantage in dealing with a previously awkward process that has proven to be a weak spot in productivity for some companies.”

This integrated solution simplifies the postal auditing functions that are necessary for any professional mailing operation by eliminating human error often seen during redundant data-entry activities. By linking postage calculations to jobs that are stored in Virtual Systems’ Mail-Shop and Digi-Shop programs, customers can now enjoy the following advantages:

- More accurate and timely postage requests;
- Elimination of double data entry for postal requests and billing;
- Faster postage reconciliation; and
- Higher accuracy of postal details — from postage requests through postal reconciliation — at any and all points within a given job.

“The new postal import can streamline a company’s postage accounting and postal paperwork efforts,” Seward added. “In this complex industry, eliminating unnecessary steps at any stage of an operator’s workflow will improve overall productivity by maximizing efficiency and accuracy.”

Mail-Shop and Digi-Shop products scale easily and affordably within most print/mail environments and budgets. Advanced product training is available, and provides a turnkey solution that can be put to use quickly.

For more information about the comprehensive family of Virtual Systems solutions, visit [www.virtualsystems.com](http://www.virtualsystems.com) or call 1-888-581-3100.

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Virtual Systems provides business management software for print, mail and fulfillment. Our Digi-Shop™, Mail-Shop® and 3PF Manager™ suites are scalable solutions for estimating, work orders, postage accounting, inventory, shop-floor tracking and online customer management. We help companies monitor production, improve efficiency and realize maximum profits. To learn more, call 1-888-581-3100 or visit [www.virtualsystems.com](http://www.virtualsystems.com).

Contact:

Ted Seward

Virtual Systems

425-828-9495 x115

[pressrelease@virtualsystems.com](mailto:pressrelease@virtualsystems.com)

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#### **4. Green Planet Postal delivers, eco-consciously**

by Patricia Bathurst - Jul. 7, 2008 04:56 PM

She's an anthropologist, he's a social worker, and when they moved to Arizona to change their lives, running an eco-conscious postal service was the last thing they were dreaming of.

But Pascha and Gregory Chess became enrolled in the APS Academy for the Advancement of Small, Minority- and Women-owned Enterprises.

A classmate referred them to a couple who were selling a mailing business, just at the time the class had them assessing life goals and aspirations.

"I had been working with a longtime client that has a national mail-related business," Pascha Chess said. "So I knew the mail-stream well." (Her consulting business, in which she dubs herself a 'workololgist,' focused on helping large and mid-size businesses understand how people work.)

"You know, I've always been in a 'helping profession,'" Greg Chess said. "When my career as a social worker no longer worked for me, I still wanted to give back in a meaningful way."

They bought the business, one with a base solidly established after more than a decade in a Tempe strip mall. Then they began learning about greening the mail.

To begin, there is a National Task Force on Greening the Mail, coordinated through the U.S. Postal Service. That's how the Chesses learned about green mailing materials.

Packing peanuts, for instance, are made of cornstarch, which is eminently biodegradable. Boxes can be recycled both as boxes and as cardboard, and then there's biodegradable bubble wrap, too.

The bubble wrap, it turns out, requires a distributor here in Arizona before the Chesses can add it to their inventory. But that's just the kind of challenge the couple welcomes.

"One of the things we wanted to do was to not only offer a service to local businesses," Pascha said, "but also to work with them to solve problems. In this case, what I'm hoping to do is find a distributor who can work with the company in Texas that produces this bubble wrap - so we (and probably other businesses, too) can become a retailer for them."

There's also an online system for verifying addresses, since one huge conservation issue with mail is about reducing the amount of undeliverable mail. There's even "intelligent mail" that has the address encoded electronically on the label to speed processing and deliveries.

The couple has been pleasantly surprised by the positive response from both nearby businesses and the community. "The business was losing money when we bought it," Pascha Chess said, "so there were some obvious opportunities for development.

Their customers have been responsive and positive about green mail and have begun asking about other locations.

Not yet, but soon, the Chesses said. They'd like to be in business a full year before embarking on possible franchise possibilities.

"Mail," Pascha Chess said, "is ultimately a give-and-take system, both sending and receiving. In this business, we're making it our mission to help grow a thriving community with a thriving business with sustainability at the core for ourselves and our customers."

"I've been surprised," Greg Chess said, "at the relationship building, and how many people know us already by our first names. This is a community we can be a part of."

Reach the writer at [www.writinginaz.com](http://www.writinginaz.com).

## **5. Postal Bank owns most outlets in China**

By Xu Shenglan (chinadaily.com.cn)

Updated: 2008-07-11 16:51

Comments(0) PrintMail

Having more than 36,000 outlets nationwide, China Postal Savings Bank (CPSB) has now become the financial institution with most outlets in China, according to statistics from the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC).

CPSB was officially established on March 20, 2007. By the end of April this year, it has 36 first-tier branches, 307 second-tier branches and 5,043 sub-branches across the nation.

"As CPSB's outlets will cover all the cities, counties and major towns of the country, the bank will form the largest financial network connecting urban and rural areas and contribute to the reform of rural financial system," said a CBRC official.

The bank will commit itself to serving farmers and agricultural production, and take full advantage of the postal network, according to the official.

CPSB is now China's fifth largest savings institute with 1.865 trillion yuan (\$271 billion) of outstanding deposits as of April. It has also issued 200 million debit cards, the third most in the country.

Starting from RMB savings and agiotage at early stage, the bank has now involved in a variety of businesses including RMB and foreign currency liability service, intermediary business, bond investment and other operations allowed by commercial bank regulations.

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## **6. Earth Tech wins Postal Service job**

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LONG BEACH - Earth Tech Inc. is one of four companies awarded a five-year contract to provide environmental support services to the U.S. Postal Service's Western Facilities Service Office, although projects could be conducted at any location in the United States.

The five-year contract has an overall ceiling of \$5 million.

The new contract allows Earth Tech to provide environmental services to the postal service throughout 20 states in such areas as site assessments, industrial hygiene support and emergency-response actions like those Earth Tech provided to the postal service nationwide after the detection of anthrax in postal facilities in 2003.

Earth Tech has provided environmental support services to the postal service since 1987, managing more than 340 projects with a project team of more than 350 staff members.

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Collected by Chairul Anwar, Bandung, Indonesia.

E-mail address : [chairulanwar49@operamail.com](mailto:chairulanwar49@operamail.com), [uyungchairul@plasa.com](mailto:uyungchairul@plasa.com).