

MAKING HISTORY

The steady growth in e-commerce and increasing parcel volumes have seen modern parcel lockers become indispensable in first- and last-mile delivery processes

Postal and logistics companies benefit hugely from the increased delivery efficiency enabled through modern parcel lockers – ultimately resulting in a reduction in costs and a reduced carbon footprint. Recipients too have expressed their genuine satisfaction with the improved convenience, thanks to 24/7 accessibility. Limited post office opening hours and standing in line in front of the counter are now a thing of the past.

But when were the benefits of parcel lockers first realized? A look back through history illustrates how today’s parcel lockers will be the next key enabler in automating first- and last-mile delivery.

It all began with automating safe deposit boxes. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, Keba was successful in automating safe deposit boxes at major bank locations worldwide. German company DHL became aware of this and got in touch with Keba. As a result, in 2000, a joint development project was formed to automate DHL’s parcel delivery based on a similar principle and this was when parcel lockers were born. In 2001, the first so-called PAK lockers were installed in Germany.

BELOW: The introduction of modularity to Keba’s systems, with the KePol FS-08, was one of the biggest breakthroughs in parcel locker tech



Maturity of the parcel locker

After gaining useful market experience, in 2004 Keba released two new exciting systems at the same time – the KeBox RS and the KeBox FS. The KeBox RS had an innovative rotating parcel storage system inside but there were drawbacks due to the many moving parts that caused higher costs for purchase, operating and service. As a result, the more economic compartment locker design of the KeBox FS prevailed – it was rugged and reliable and Keba’s first mature parcel locker.

In 2009, a huge step forward was taken with the KeBox system, which was developed into the KePol solution as it is known today – a comprehensive, premium-quality package of well-matched hardware, software and service.

In 2010, Keba released the first fully modular locker system – the KePol FS-08. It enabled perfect utilization of the available space at each location. For the first time, it was possible to build lockers with L-shaped layouts or in two rows face-to-face, or in one straight row in a conventional setup. In addition, several box modules with different mixes of box sizes were available. This made it easy to meet the individual parcel capacity demands of each single site location. Furthermore, the rugged KePol FS-08 was perfectly suitable for outside installations – no matter the climate. The conceptualization of the system was one of the biggest milestones in the history of parcel lockers.

More box for your buck

In 2013, a cost-saving, fully featured indoor addition to the KePol FS series was introduced, the still-available, modular KePol LS-01. Then, three years later Keba brought the compact KePol CL series to market. These economic lockers enable a reduction in the last mile to just a few meters, and are an ideal addition to an existing locker network.

Then in 2018, the KePol FS-09 replaced the KePol FS-08. Thanks to an optimized



ABOVE: Over time, a rotating storage system was developed and launched in the KeBox RS

KEY FACTS

- The development of the parcel locker first began with the automation of safe deposit boxes
- Modularity is a key feature of Keba’s solutions – enabling units to be installed in any desired configuration

compartment system, customers could then get even more boxes for a reduced cost and within the same space requirements.

In 2019, the new KePol eco series hit the market. These especially economic lockers omit the costly touchscreen user interface and instead can be operated contactlessly by an app via the user’s smart device.

Looking into the future for 2021 and beyond, new KePol models with even greater flexibility and further cost centered-optimizations will be available. So stay tuned – the future of automating the first and last mile is exciting.

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