

Small and Mighty

"The insert is tough enough to shoot through sorting machines without crushing the circuits. A high-gain antenna pulls info from a satellite every few minutes and records the letter's location to a memory card. Yet it's the same size and weight as a few sheets of folded paper," describes Gregory Mone of PopSci.com.

BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT

There are currently no plans for a commercial model; however the applications to industry and personal use are endless.

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GPS Letter Logger

A letter tracking device packed with GPS technology but small enough to fit in an envelope



TrackingTheWorld's Letter Logger Paves the Way for Smart Mail

The Letter Logger is the world's first ever letter tracking device. Built by TrackingTheWorld, a leading global positioning technology firm, this small bit of technology was designed to report the position of a piece of mail from anywhere around the globe. At one quarter of an inch thick and with the surface area of a tri-folded piece of paper, Letter Logger fits neatly and discreetly in a standard business-size envelope. It's also durable enough to fly through automated mail sorter systems, which process about twelve pieces per second, without crushing its circuits.

Users can customize how often they want their Logger to report - every 2, 5, or 10 minutes or only when the letter's motion detector is activated. The device can work up to 20 hours on scheduled reporting or up to two weeks on tilt mode. The battery is also rechargeable, so the unit is completely reusable. Although there are currently no plans to make a commercial model, the price for one of these unique devices will run you a few hundred dollars.

The G.P.S. Letter Logger is driven by a microprocessor designed by Texas Instruments and a low power consumption GPS module, which run on a slim rechargeable battery. It obtains a fix with a satellite and then records its position and the time of day on a micro-SD memory card, similar to the memory cards used in digital cameras. The Letter Logger then passes through the mail system, collecting data until it reaches its destination. Afterwards, the user can remove the memory card, insert it into a computer and open the status log with any program that reads text files. This file works with Google Earth to display a high resolution satellite map of the path that the letter followed.

Originally designed to pinpoint inefficiencies within the U.S. Postal Service, the Letter Logger can possibly revolutionize the delivery services industry, which represents about eight percent of the world's GDP. This trickle down effect will then impact every business that relies on mail for their day-to-day operations by increasing overall mailing efficiency.

With this device the possibilities are endless. Remle Crowe, an Information Technology student at American University's Kogod School of Business, believes there are a wide range of applications for the Letter Logger, "We have been looking into using this device for pinpointing slowdowns in a organization's supply chain in order to perfect just-in-time inventory, in addition to using it to track a product through all stages of production. The results look very promising."

Another reason for the success of the Letter Logger is because of its component technology, which allows the device to sync with user-friendly software such as Google Earth. In addition, the technology does not actively transmit signals; therefore it will not interfere with any other technology already established within the company's building or perimeter, unlike RFID transmissions.

Perhaps more importantly the Letter Logger opens the door for "smart mail", a whole new world of GPS letter-tracking. The CEO of TrackingtheWorld Gilbert Walz says, "The response to the development of the G.P.S. Letter Logger has been absolutely global. There are many options open for further development"¹. The high-tech GPS tracking options for mail could lead to huge changes in the delivery industry and help the USPS surpass FedEx and UPS's package tracking abilities.

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