

April 9, 2006

Turning to Electronics to Open Doors, Take Packages

TERI KARUSH ROGERS

SOME smaller buildings that cannot afford doormen, or do not want them, are turning to a new breed of partly automated services that go by names like Cyberdoorman and Virtual Doorman.

These are not your 1980's intercom systems. At a minimum, they involve interactive video monitoring of the door by someone at a different location who can admit guests and deliveries to the building. Packages can be deposited into a locked and camera-monitored room for retrieval by residents. Properly configured, these systems can even remotely unlock an extra set of keys if you lose yours.

Depending on the bells and whistles, installation can range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 for a prewar 30-unit building, with annual charges at \$4,000 and \$30,000 per building. (A single town house can be wired and serviced for far less.) No holiday tipping is required, and residents who crave privacy can find the illusion of it, at least.

"We're not standing there smiling at them when they walk in with the fifth girl or guy of the week," said Seth Barcus, a system designer at Best Monitoring, a [Bronx](#)-based alarm company whose Cyberdoorman service is used by seven buildings in [Manhattan](#), and is being installed by 16 more in the New York area. "It's not like we're actually paying attention to the soap opera of your life," Mr. Barcus said. "You're not looking the guy in the eye the next morning. And there's no gossip between the doormen and the neighbors."

In its five years of operation, however, Cyberdoorman has observed its share of sexual shenanigans in the lobbies and elevators monitored by its cameras. While the images won't be turned over to your co-op board, the company will notify the board upon your second offense caught on video or if the building is somehow desecrated in the process, Mr. Barcus said.

Other indiscretions picked up by Cyberdoorman include the occasional domestic dispute and an apparently endless stream of hygienic transgressions inside elevators.

TERI KARUSH ROGERS

Copyright 2006 [The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [XML](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)