



SOFTWARE CONTROL SERVICES (PTY) LTD

475 King's Highway, Lynnwood  
P.O.Box 36675, Menlo Park  
Pretoria, South Africa  
0102

(t) +27 12 348 7301  
(f) +27 12 348 1129  
(e) [techsupport@softconserv.com](mailto:techsupport@softconserv.com)  
[www.softconserv.com](http://www.softconserv.com)

# Visitor Management.

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Prepared by: Michael Davis- Hannibal

Softcon Software Control Services (Pty) Ltd.

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# Revision History

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## 1. General

Visitor management refers to tracking the usage of a public building or site. By gathering increasing amounts of information, a visitor management system can record the usage of the facilities by specific visitors and provide documentation of visitor's whereabouts.

Because a visitor management system provides a record of building use, these systems are frequently used to complement building security systems and access control systems. As electronic visitor management systems become more common and more powerful, these systems are taking over many of the functions of building security and access control.

Many different vendors provide visitor management software and systems.

## 2. Visitor management technologies

### a. Pen and Paper Visitor Management System

A pen and paper visitor management system records basic information about visitors to a public building or site in a log book. Typical information found in an entry includes the visitor's name, reason for the visit, date and check in and check out times.

A pen and paper visitor management system's main positive feature is low up-front cost. Training to use the system is minimal, and the equipment required to implement this visitor management system is cheap and readily available.

From the security and usage standpoint, a pen and paper visitor management system has many negative points. Visitors must write entries by hand, creating a logjam effect in public entryways. Security personnel must check each visitor's credentials and manually initiate any further security checks (for example, a call for a background check or other action). Visitors badges rarely have photo identification and can easily be swapped from person to person. Documentation requires either manually re-entering logbook information in a computer or keeping the logbook itself in storage.

### b. Computer Visitor Management Systems

Basic computer or electronic visitor management systems use a computer network to monitor and record visitor information. As computer processing power, digital video and information gathering technology have improved, electronic visitor management systems have added photo ID capability, database searching, automatic door access and other functions.

An electronic visitor management system improves upon most of the negative points of a pen and paper system. Visitor ID can be checked against national and local databases, as well as in-house databases for potential security problems. Many visitor management systems feature searchable visitor information databases. Photo ID cards can be custom printed for one-time only or continuing use. Swipe cards speed the security screening process.

Electronics visitor management systems are more expensive to implement than a pen and paper system. They also require a longer familiarization period for both the security personnel, building staff and visitors than a pen and paper system. The amount of information gathered by an electronic visitor management system—as well as the uses the information is put to—can also be a source of controversy.

Computer visitor management systems have seen a rise since their inception in the late 1990s, with the software growing more advanced over the years. Although these systems have seen a considerable boost after many companies and government agencies increased security measures

following the events of September 11, 2001, some believe interest in them might have begun to diminish.

### **c. Visitor Management Software**

Several desktop-based visitor management software applications are currently available. These applications typically consist of three fundamental components: a) visitor registration, b) visitor badge printing, and c) reporting functionality. Some of the applications are capable of automatically capturing visitor information directly from a visitor's driver license, passport or other government issued identification document.

## **3. Controversy**

The amount of data recorded by a modern visitor management system is formidable, and issues of information privacy have created controversy regarding the use of these visitor management systems. However, terrorist activities, school violence and child protection issues have acted as rallying points for support of comprehensive visitor management systems in sensitive locations.

Database security, both at the national level and at the level of the end-user of an electronic security system is a critical concern for privacy advocates. They argue that as the level of information accessed, gathered and retained increases, additional security measures to protect the information itself should be put in place.

Also at issue is the level of security given to the access cards themselves. Some privacy advocates point to experiments done by researchers that crack the security of RFID cards, sometimes used as part of a visitor management system. If the security of these types of cards can be compromised, this would allow identity thieves to pilfer personal information.

Proponents of an information rich visitor management system point to increased school security as one substantial benefit. As more parents demand action from the schools that will protect children from sexual predators, some school districts are turning to modern visitor management systems that not only track a visitor's stay, but also check the visitor's information against national and local criminal databases.

According to the supporters of enhanced visitor management systems, the same database search capabilities could be used to protect sensitive areas potential threats such as terrorists of criminal activity.

## **4. References**

- [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)