

Losing the paper trail with earth class mail

Jenna Wortham

The mail-scanning service Earth Class Mail is opening a new outpost in downtown Manhattan on Wednesday to cater to jet-setters, business travelers, expatriates, nomads and anyone else who is on the road too often to manage their snail mail.

Earth Class Mail, a Seattle-based start-up, offers services that take old-fashioned mail and make it digital. Customers route their mail to one of the company's offices, where employees scan the outside of envelopes. Then, customers log in to their Earth Class Mail accounts and select which pieces of mail are opened, scanned and e-mailed to them, and which ones are left unopened, shredded and recycled.

The company's Manhattan storefront will offer shipping services and will also take packages, which is useful for city-dwellers who lack doormen, said Ron Weiner, the company's chief executive. And the Park Avenue address (near Union Square) is ideal for anyone who "works in an industry where your address means something," he said.

A native New Yorker, Mr. Weiner started the company about five years ago after he found himself constantly shuttling among residences and offices to pick up his mail. "I never had the right stuff at the right time. It was a real hassle," he said. "So I came up with the idea to centralize mail so it could be sent to a single address."

The New York location comes after store openings in San Francisco and Los Angeles earlier this month. The company closed a \$5.1 million round of funding in late October, and is in the process of raising a Series B round of between \$15 million and \$30 million. It has already raised more than \$20 million total and is backed primarily by Ignition Partners and a group of more than 130 angel investors.

Earth Class Mail recently signed a deal with the Swiss Post, Switzerland's postal service, to begin offering its mail-digitizing services to Swiss customers for a fee. Mr. Wiener said the company was in negotiations for a partnership with a "major player" in the delivery business in the United States.

New York Times, New York, 17 dez. 2008, Technology, online. Disponível em <www.nytimes.com>. Acesso em: 18 dez. 2008.