Class Kit Vending Machine  
Conceptual Design

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# Introduction

Around fifty devices a day are needed by students each year for their ECE (Electrical and Computer Engineering) courses. The main emphasis of this capstone project is the design and implementation of a vending machine that can loan out devices to students while keeping track of which students have taken the devices. A student can enter their information into the machine, and it will keep track of who has borrowed each device(s). Students will be able to view and choose which gadget to remove with the help of an LED (Light Emitting Diode) equipped drawer system. Designing the entire system gives the machine the ability to meet all requirements of the customer. The machine shall comply with the following specifications of the customer.

The machine will be no taller than the average window height, which is around 2 to 3 feet, and no smaller than 2 feet in height. This allows for easy portability from the office to the student lounge at Brown Hall and vice versa. It should impact the customers and allow the office associates to be able to transport the machine where it is needed. Due to our ethical considerations, the machine will use ethernet to send data to our customers to avoid others from accessing the students’ information. We have also considered including either a hash or encryption on the data sent.

To allow proper function of the machine, an MCU (microcomputer unit) to manage the data acquisition system is needed. An SQL (structured query language) database will be programmed into the MCU to hold the student ID (identification) number, name, email, course, and which board has been rented, as required by the customer. The boxes the devices are held inside must be uniquely identifiable according to the department, so each box must be scanned into the database before a device is taken. This is to prevent the theft of a device by any student and allows the customer to know which is taken. For the same reason, the machine shall have a card reader to ID every student. This way no student can fake the number, even if other information was incorrect.

For the entire machine to function after a reset and to remember information for the customer, the machine is required to have a form of nonvolatile memory such as MicroSD or an actual separate drive. The machine must have a series of LED (light emitting diode) indicators so the student knows which drawer and compartment to access when retrieving the board. Solenoid Locks shall be installed into the drawers and compartments so no single person can easily break through to the devices when the machine is unsupervised. The current plan is for a drawer and compartment to hold for several minutes to allow enough time for a worker to notice the attempt.

The following subsections provide detail on each of the previous requirements and how each shall be completed according to the customer.

# Background

One of the most important subsections that will be mentioned is control for the vending machine. For controlling the physical aspects, a programmable logic controller (or PLC) will be used. A PLC is most commonly used in industry for controlling mechanical systems and applications. Some examples of systems typically controlled by PLCs are road traffic signals, automatic car washes, and automatic doors [1]. These applications tie into some of the applications in the vending machine such as the LED indication system, the process of selecting boards, and the locking of the doors and drawers. Because these systems need to have some sort of control software, a PLC is a likely candidate. In addition, because there are not a lot of systems that need to be controlled, a smaller, less power-intensive PLC will most likely be used.

Another subsection that needs to have clarification is the database. The database is where student information, such as T-Number, will be stored and sent to the ECE office. As stated in the introduction, an SQL database will be used. SQL is a query language that can facilitate communication to and from a database, as it can retrieve, insert, update, and delete information in a database. SQL can also create new databases and tables within a database [2]. The SQL language will be crucial to implementing the vending machine because of the need for a database.

Finally, as stated in the introduction, an MCU will be used in order to program the SQL database. An MCU is simply “an electronic device with a [microprocessor](https://www.britannica.com/technology/microprocessor) as its [central processing unit](https://www.britannica.com/technology/central-processing-unit) (CPU),” [3]. The microprocessor is what will perform the digital functioning of the MCU, as the microprocessor is what contains the circuitry of the MCU. In tandem with a PLC controlling the hardware, the MCU will control the software side of the vending machine. Both are needed in order for the vending machine to properly work.

# Ethical Considerations

During the process of designing this vending machine, every scenario that can occur must be taken into consideration. The vending machine will be plugged into the wall for its power supply. The supply voltage will be 120VAC before it’s sent through the AC/DC converter. It must be certain that the voltage is properly stepped down and converted to DC. The desired voltage is roughly 5V DC; given that “30 volts is generally considered to be a conservative threshold value for dangerous voltage,” a person could be severely injured in the event of incorrect conversion [4]. In order to counteract this, there will be a system in place to detect if there’s a spike in voltage or current in the AC/DC converter and trip the power supply. This system will most likely be a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). Having this within the power cord for the vending machine will comply with the National Electric Code (NEC) standard NEC 422.51, which requires vending machines that are powered by cord-and-plug to have a GFCI located near the wall plug [5].

In addition, security must be put in place to prevent student data from being compromised. One security measure is connecting the vending machine’s database to the ECE office’s computer by ethernet. This is because “An Ethernet connection is much more secure than a Wi-Fi connection. Data on an Ethernet network can only be accessed by physically attaching a device to the network, while data on a Wi-Fi network travel[s] through the air and can be more easily intercepted,” [6]. An Ethernet connection will make it more difficult to steal student information compared to a Wi-Fi connection since data can only be stolen by attaching a device to either the vending machine or the ECE office’s computers. In using Ethernet as a form of communication, the connection must follow the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) standard IEEE 802.3-2018, which gives a selection of speeds at which an Ethernet connection must work [7].

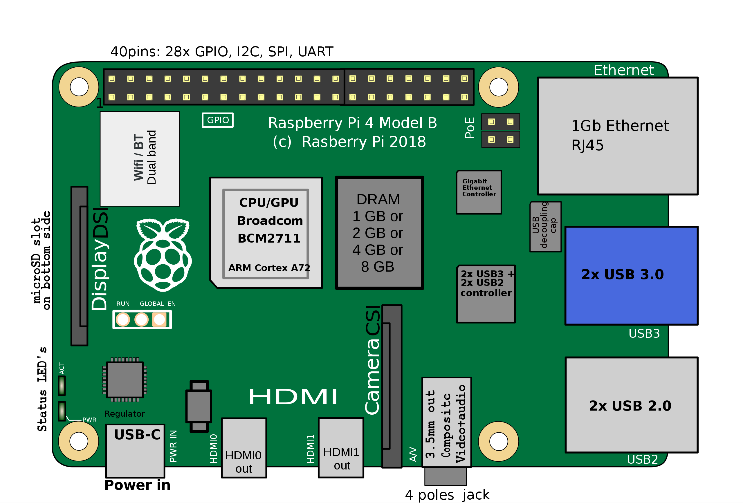
To work with the Ethernet connection, a form of encryption will be used on the student information before it’s sent out. One option for this is using a cipher of some sort. A cipher is a phrase or string of words that information is shifted by in the alphabet. This will make the received information look jumbled, though it will be deciphered upon retrieval.

Finally, a scenario that must be considered is the stealing of a device from the vending machine. Given the chance that the faculty in the ECE office may step out of the office for a few minutes, there is a chance that someone could attempt to break into the vending machine to steal the devices within. To help prevent this, the vending machine will have locks on both the drawers and the lids of each device. There will also be a sensor system in place to detect if a box is in its compartment. While this will be mainly used for the SQL database, it can be given the purpose of detecting if a device is removed without approval.

# Block Diagram

## Raspberry Pi

To meet the requirement of an MCU to hold the data of the system, a Raspberry Pi will be included to support a database for student information and allow the transmission to the customer. A Raspberry Pi is a small computer that can communicate with any input and output gear, such as a monitor, a computer, a mouse, or a keyboard, turning the setup into a packed PC at a reasonable price.



*Figure 1: Layout of Raspberry Pi 4 Model B*

The main characteristics of this product include a powerful 64-bit quad-core processor, dual-display support at resolutions up to 4K via two micro-HDMI ports, hardware video decoding at up to 4Kp60, a maximum of 8GB of RAM, dual-band 2.4/5.0 GHz wireless LAN, Bluetooth 5.0, Gigabit Ethernet, USB 3.0, and PoE capability (via a separate PoE HAT add-on) [8].

The Raspberry Pi will be mainly used for the following functions:

### 1) SQL Database

### a. Inventory

The database will be used to keep a record of the inventory inside the machine and will be able to tell the customer whether a device is loaded or unloaded from a sensor in the PLC system. If loaded, the system will check whether the box is scanned in by the barcode scanner. If unloaded, the system will check whether the box is not scanned. All information will then be recorded and saved in the inventory section of the database.

b. Student Information

The database will also be used to keep a record of the students who have rented devices for classes and will also be able to send the data to the customer through Ethernet. Under the student portion of the database, the T number will be recorded from the card reader connected to the MCU. The name and email of the student will be taken in by a user interface. A course section will then be chosen from a list of courses held by the database. Once a board is chosen, the barcode will be read by the scanner and logged for use by the customer.

*2) Ethernet*

*a. File Drop*

The ethernet cord shall be used to send and receive data to and from the customer. If the customer wants to see the database and who has taken items, they can request the file and it will be transmitted. The file will likely be a CSV from Excel that will feed from and to the database. The ethernet cable can be directly connected to Pi and user PC using ethernet connector which uses RJ45 connector, and with the right steps of static IP configuration one can start transferring data from the Pi.

Input: Encoded message to the database

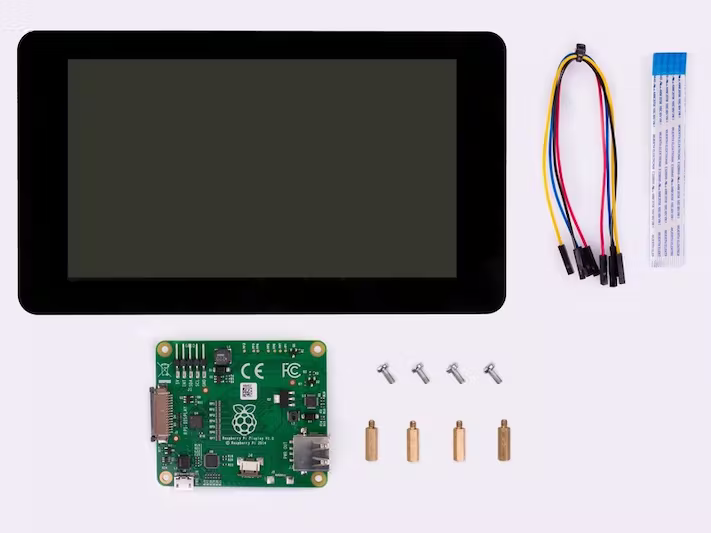
Output: Message signal to the connected device

*3) UI (User Interface)*

The user interface will be connected to the MCU and will allow the user to input their name, email, and which class(s) he or she needs a device for. The information is also relayed through the PLC system.

1. *LCD (Liquid Crystal Display)*

In order for the student to select the needed board a LCD display would be used through which student would input their name, email address and after verifying the information they will choose the needed board with the help of touch screen LCD. The needed LCD would most likely be from the same company of our MCU i.e. Raspberry Pi as it would be most compatible with our MCU. An adapter board that converts power and signal is used to connect the 800 by 480 monitor. There are just two connections needed to the Pi: a ribbon cable connecting to the DSI connector included on every Raspberry Pi, and power coming from the GPIO port. The most recent Raspbian OS will have touchscreen drivers so that users can operate their devices completely without a hardware keyboard or mouse and with 10-finger touch capability and an on-screen keyboard [9].



*Figure 2: LCD Screen with Connector and MCU*

Input: Message Signal to Raspberry Pi

Output: Raspberry Pi signaling to PLC

*4) Card Reader*

The card reader shall receive a signal from an ID card issued to the student by the college. When the signal is received, the device will send the data to the database through the MCU. The Reader will have an indicator light for a correctly scanned card to notify the student that he/she is good to proceed.

Input: Information from Eagle Card

Output: Create Data and signal to Raspberry Pi

## PLC

In order to give the vending machine’s hardware reactive functionality, a PLC will be implemented along with its necessary sensors.

### Control System

#### User Interface (UI)

The PLC will control the hardware behind the UI used for students to check out their boards. The UI will allow students to enter their name and email. The UI will also interact with our microcomputer in order to send the student’s information to the database. Functionality will be tested by entering a generic name along with team member’s email. Once this is done, the database will be checked for the entered information.

Input: Powered by the MCU, controlled by the PLC. Student’s name and email will be entered.

Output: Student information to the MCU to send to the database.

*i) Display*

**Discuss the display**

*b) Locks*

The locking system will be solenoid coils energized by the PLC. The PLC will run the student’s course number and board needed through comparison functions to find where it is equal to a board number that isn’t checked out. Once it finds an equality, the corresponding locks will become un-energized so the student can grab the board. The functionality will be tested by running a test line in the PLC to see if a lock’s tag correctly updates.

Input: Powered by the vending machine, energized by the PLC.

Output: Locking and unlocking the drawers and compartments containing the devices.

*i) Drawer Locks*

**Explain how drawer solenoid locks must be stronger than the compartment locks because of the greater risk of losing more devices**

*ii) Compartment Locks*

**Explain how these still have to be strong, just not as strong as the drawer locks.**

*c) Indicator*

The vending machine will have an indication system to guide the student to the correct drawer and compartment. When the PLC finds the correct board needed by the student, it will run the board’s tag through compare commands until it finds the corresponding indicator tags. Once the tags are found, they will be energized and un-energized on a timed system.

Input: Voltage from machine, energized from PLC, set to flash at certain interval with timer system.

Output: Drawer and compartment indicators will flash to show where the device is located.

*i) LEDs*

**Discuss LEDs and how there are two different sections (drawer and compartment)**

*d) Timer System*

The PLC will run the timer system used in tandem with the lock and indication systems. This system will be used to hold the solenoid coils as unlocked for a reasonable duration in order for the student to grab their device (roughly 15-20 seconds). Once the time has elapsed, the coils will become energized and will lock once the drawer and compartment are closed. The timer system will also set the period of flashing for the indication system. Once the time for the coils has elapsed, the indicators will also stop flashing.

Input: Total duration from PLC, tag update from PLC.

Output: Solenoid coils will be unlocked for a given duration. During this duration, the indicators will flash to show where the device is located.

*e) Sensors*

**If someone can talk about the sensors we might use. (Probably Sigg). Discuss why we might use the sensors in comparison to other alternatives**.

## Power Supply

**Discuss how the power supply will feed from the wall outlet to (1) the PLC and (2) to the AC/DC converter in order to be used by the MCU. Be sure to include inputs/outputs for every subsystem.**

*a) AC/DC Converter*

**Discuss how the outlet voltage needs to be converted to DC and then stepped down in order to be used by the MCU and the solenoid locks.**

## Barcode Scanner

**Not much to explain here, no need for a subsystem. But discuss what it will do and give its inputs and outputs**.

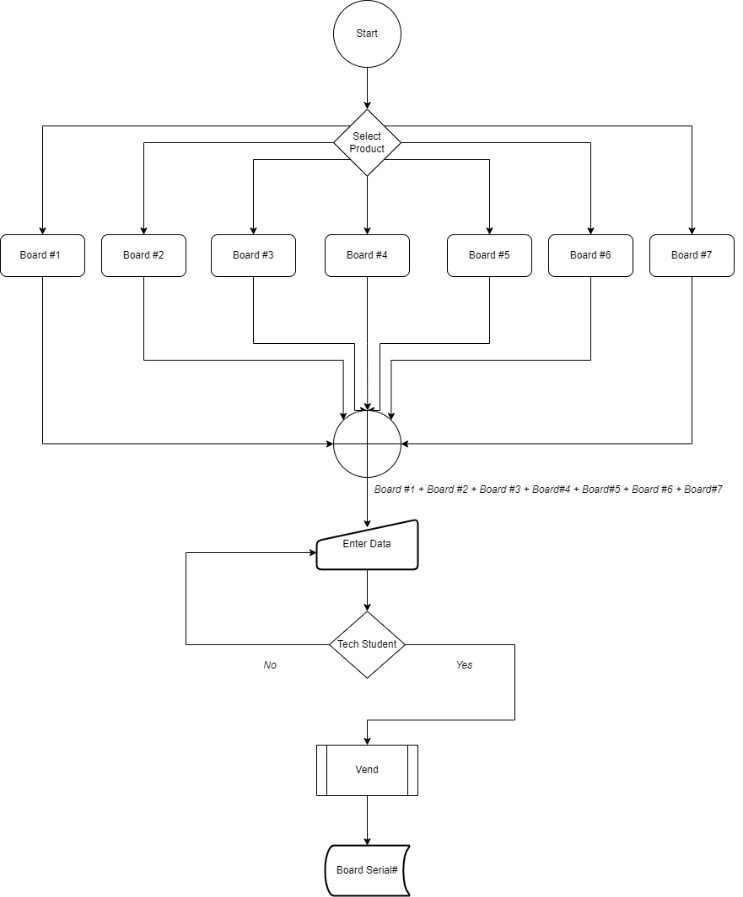
# Design And Implementation

The following design for a class kit vending machine is suggested in order to address the drawbacks of the current approach and to offer a solution that is both affordable and user-friendly. The project's primary components—the power supply, the card reader, the motor driver, and the LCD—are shown in Fig. 1 as being composed of five elements.



*Figure 1: Overall Design of Machine*

In order to understand the overall design the process must be acknowledged first. The process would be very simple. A student would walk into the office of Electrical and Computer Engineering and using the Eagle Card he/she would tap on the reader and after verifying the information the student then will choose the required board from the given set of choices on LCD and after doing so one of the drawers would pop open and with the help of LEDs the student would grab the needed board and close the drawer as shown in figure 2.



*Figure 2: Design Flow of Machine*

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Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such as IEEE, SI, MKS, CGS, sc, dc, and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable.

## Units

* Use either SI (MKS) or CGS as primary units. (SI units are encouraged.) English units may be used as secondary units (in parentheses). An exception would be the use of English units as identifiers in trade, such as “3.5-inch disk drive”.
* Avoid combining SI and CGS units, such as current in amperes and magnetic field in oersteds. This often leads to confusion because equations do not balance dimensionally. If you must use mixed units, clearly state the units for each quantity that you use in an equation.
* Do not mix complete spellings and abbreviations of units: “Wb/m2” or “webers per square meter”, not “webers/m2”. Spell out units when they appear in text: “. . . a few henries”, not “. . . a few H”.

Identify applicable funding agency here. If none, delete this text box.

* Use a zero before decimal points: “0.25”, not “.25”. Use “cm3”, not “cc”. (*bullet list*)

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Number equations consecutively. Equation numbers, within parentheses, are to position flush right, as in (1), using a right tab stop. To make your equations more compact, you may use the solidus ( / ), the exp function, or appropriate exponents. Italicize Roman symbols for quantities and variables, but not Greek symbols. Use a long dash rather than a hyphen for a minus sign. Punctuate equations with commas or periods when they are part of a sentence, as in:

*a**b* 

Note that the equation is centered using a center tab stop. Be sure that the symbols in your equation have been defined before or immediately following the equation. Use “(1)”, not “Eq. (1)” or “equation (1)”, except at the beginning of a sentence: “Equation (1) is . . .”

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* The word “data” is plural, not singular.
* The subscript for the permeability of vacuum **0, and other common scientific constants, is zero with subscript formatting, not a lowercase letter “o”.
* In American English, commas, semicolons, periods, question and exclamation marks are located within quotation marks only when a complete thought or name is cited, such as a title or full quotation. When quotation marks are used, instead of a bold or italic typeface, to highlight a word or phrase, punctuation should appear outside of the quotation marks. A parenthetical phrase or statement at the end of a sentence is punctuated outside of the closing parenthesis (like this). (A parenthetical sentence is punctuated within the parentheses.)
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* Do not confuse “imply” and “infer”.
* The prefix “non” is not a word; it should be joined to the word it modifies, usually without a hyphen.
* There is no period after the “et” in the Latin abbreviation “et al.”.
* The abbreviation “i.e.” means “that is”, and the abbreviation “e.g.” means “for example”.

An excellent style manual for science writers is [7].

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1. Table Type Styles

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1. Sample of a Table footnote. (*Table footnote*)
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Figure Labels: Use 8 point Times New Roman for Figure labels. Use words rather than symbols or abbreviations when writing Figure axis labels to avoid confusing the reader. As an example, write the quantity “Magnetization”, or “Magnetization, M”, not just “M”. If including units in the label, present them within parentheses. Do not label axes only with units. In the example, write “Magnetization (A/m)” or “Magnetization {A[m(1)]}”, not just “A/m”. Do not label axes with a ratio of quantities and units. For example, write “Temperature (K)”, not “Temperature/K”.

##### Acknowledgment *(Heading 5)*

The preferred spelling of the word “acknowledgment” in America is without an “e” after the “g”. Avoid the stilted expression “one of us (R. B. G.) thanks ...”. Instead, try “R. B. G. thanks...”. Put sponsor acknowledgments in the unnumbered footnote on the first page.

##### References

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