

WORLD > EUROPE • 5 MIN READ

Digital age brings Denmark's postal service to a historic end

22 HR AGO

By Issy Ronald



Mailboxes have been removed from all around Denmark. (*EPA-EFE/Shutterstock*)



Beside the railroad tracks of **Copenhagen's** train station, right in the heart of the **Danish** capital, stands a red-brick building with an ornate façade and a copper-clad cupola still turning green over time.

When it opened in 1912 as the Central Post Building, its grandeur echoed the booming postal and telegraph services that crisscrossed **Denmark**, connecting Danes to one another. A little over a century later and that building, now a luxury hotel, presides over a city, and a country, where the postal service no longer delivers letters.

Denmark's state-run postal service, PostNord, will deliver its last ever letter on Tuesday, as the digital age brings its 400-year-run to an end. This makes Denmark the first country in the world to decide that physical mail is no longer either essential or economically viable.

Advertisement

≡ **CNN** World

Sign in

elsewhere in the Western world as we rely ever more heavily on digital means of communication.



The Central Post Building in Copenhagen is now a luxury hotel. (*Geoff Marshall/Alamy*)

Denmark's postal service delivered more than 90% fewer letters in 2024 than in 2000. The US Postal Service delivered 50% less mail in 2024 than in 2006.

And as our correspondence has moved largely online – transfiguring into WhatsApp messages, video calls, or just an exchange of memes – our communication and language have changed accordingly.

Advertisement

Letters themselves “will change status” too, often coming to represent more intimate messages than their digital counterparts, said Dirk van Miert, a professor at the Huygens Institute in the Netherlands who specializes in early modern knowledge networks.

The knowledge networks that letters facilitated for centuries are “only expanding” in their online form, expediting both access to that knowledge as well as the rise of disinformation, he told CNN.

No more mailboxes

PostNord has been removing the 1,500 mailboxes scattered across Denmark since June. When it sold them off to raise money for charity on December 10, hundreds of thousands of Danes tried to buy one. For each mailbox, they paid either 2,000 (\$315) or 1,500 (\$236) Danish krone, depending on how worn they were.

Instead of posting letters, Danes will now have to drop them off at kiosks in shops, from where they will be couriered by private company DAO to both domestic and international addresses. PostNord will continue delivering parcels, however, as online shopping remains ever popular.

Advertisement

Denmark is one of the world’s most digital nations; even its public sector utilizes several online portals, minimizing any physical government correspondence and making it much less reliant on postal services than many other countries.

"Almost every Dane is fully digital, meaning physical letters no longer serve the same purpose as previously," Andreas Brethvad, a spokesperson for PostNord, told CNN. "Most communication now arrives in our electronic mailboxes, and the reality today is that e-commerce and the parcel market far outweigh traditional mail."

That may explain why it is the first country to make these changes, though it seems likely others will eventually follow. Van Miert, who lives in the Netherlands, said he had to go to a shop to post letters because there are no longer any mailboxes in his town.

RELATED ARTICLE



Elon Musk wants to privatize the Postal Service and Amtrak

Still, the need for physical correspondence continues around the world, even if it is diminished. Almost 2.6 billion people remain offline, according to the UN-affiliated Universal Postal Union, and many more "lack meaningful connectivity," thanks to inadequate devices, poor coverage and limited digital skills. Rural communities, women and those living in poverty are among the worst affected, it added.

Advertisement

And even in countries like Denmark, some groups who are more reliant on postal services, like older people, may be adversely affected by the changes, advocacy

groups say.

"It's very easy for us to access our mail on the phone or a website... but we forgot to give the same possibilities to those who are not digital," said Marlene Rishoej Cordes, a spokesperson for the DaneAge Association, which advocates for older people.

She told CNN that DAO, the new postal courier, has a service where it will collect mail at a home address but "it still demands you are digital because you have to pay for this service and you can only pay digitally."

'Whatever channel we have'

The letter has undergone transformations before, in both medium and style. "It changed formats from papyrus or wax tablets... then paper later on, vellum in the Middle Ages, and now we have electronic devices," said Van Miert.

Advertisement

In the 17th century, following the traditions laid down by great philosopher-letter-writers, like Cicero and Erasmus, students were taught "how to write a proper letter, a letter of consolation, praise or congratulations," he added. "For a diplomatic letter, a wholly different style was required than for a personal, or what they called a familiar, letter."

Letters have come to represent an "element of nostalgia" and a permanence that technology cannot match, Nicole Ellison, a professor at the University of Michigan

specializing in computer-mediated communication, told CNN.

Still, like the students who altered their letter-writing styles according to different contexts, digital communication has evolved to compensate for some of the personal touches and emotional cues a handwritten letter can convey.

RELATED ARTICLE



Long, chatty letter from Jane Austen to sister Cassandra to be auctioned

“We have figured out ways to infuse those signals into the stark medium,” Ellison said, referencing the emojis, GIFs and different colors that pepper texts and emails.

Advertisement

And while different media can convey different messages, she cautioned against ascribing “agency on the part of the technology itself.”

“We’re humans,” she said. “And at the end of the day, we will do our best to use whatever channel we have to communicate the rich universe of emotions.”

Nonetheless, the demise of the letter is already sparking nostalgia in Denmark.

“Look closely at the picture here,” one Danish user on X said, alongside a photo of a mailbox. “Now in 5 years I will be able to explain to a 5-year-old what a mailbox was in the old days.”



Up next



The best printers of 2025, tested by editors

14 MIN READ



Email from 'A' at British royal family's residence asked Ghislaine Maxwell for 'inappropriate friends'

4 MIN READ



This monthly subscription automatically orders ink and delivers it to your door before you run low

3 MIN READ



The brands we lost in 2025

3 MIN READ



I tested the Amazon Kindle Scribe Colorsoft for a week to see if it's worth \$630

10 MIN READ



Anxiety grips Minneapolis's Somali community as immigration agents zero in on the Twin Cities

6 MIN READ

Most popular

- 1** Tatiana Schlossberg, environmental journalist and JFK's granddaughter, dies at 35 after terminal cancer diagnosis
- 2** Iran's ailing supreme leader resorts to his only playbook as crises mount and protests erupt
- 3** SNAP bans on soda, candy and other foods take effect in five states Jan. 1
- 4** Trump administration freezes child care payments to Minnesota amid federal investigation into alleged fraud
- 5** More artists pull out of Kennedy Center shows following name change

- 6** Who is Nick Shirley, the 23-year-old MAGA journalist whose Minnesota fraud story went viral?
-
- 7** New England Patriots wide receiver Stefon Diggs denies accusations of assault and strangulation
-
- 8** Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to introduce Zohran Mamdani at New Year's Day inauguration
-
- 9** Exclusive: CIA carried out drone strike on port facility on Venezuelan coast
-
- 10** Top DOJ officials may have been pressing to bring criminal charges against Kilmar Abrego Garcia, judge says
-

Search CNN...

[Sign in](#)

[Live TV](#)

[Listen](#)

[Watch](#)

World**US Politics****Business****Markets****Health****Entertainment****Tech****Style****Travel****Sports****Science****Climate****Weather****Ukraine-Russia War****Israel-Hamas War****Features****Watch****Listen****Games****About CNN****World****FOLLOW CNN****DOWNLOAD THE CNN APP**

[Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Manage Cookies](#) [Ad Choices](#) [Accessibility & CC](#) [About](#) [Newsletters](#)
[Transcripts](#)

© 2025 Cable News Network. A Warner Bros. Discovery Company. All Rights Reserved.
CNN Sans™ & © 2016 Cable News Network.