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Access Badges vs. (Just) Keys

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This is ONE guy's perspective that must be weighed against law, insurance, culture, etc.

	Electronic Access Control	(Just) Keys
Pros	<p>Complete audit trail — you know who entered, where, and when.</p> <p>Badges can be instantly deactivated when someone leaves or a badge is lost — no re-keying.</p> <p>Access can be scheduled: restrict who can enter certain areas, and when.</p> <p>Integrates with cameras, alarms, and visitor management systems.</p> <p>Scales cleanly as your organization grows.</p> <p>Multi-campus access management significantly easier.</p>	<p>Significantly lower upfront cost.</p> <p>Simple — no software, no power required, universally understood.</p> <p>Works during a power outage.</p> <p>No vendor dependency or subscription fees.</p> <p>Can have some tier'ing aka Master Key Control</p> <p>Comfort feeling as people can SEE the door is locked.</p> <p>Allows for a good second layer of defense in addition to electronic access control.</p>
Cons	<p>Higher upfront cost (\$1,500–\$15,000+ depending on number of doors and system).</p> <p>Requires power and often network connectivity.</p> <p>Needs ongoing maintenance, software updates, and a designated administrator.</p> <p>Can become complex if not initially setup correctly.</p> <p>Reader failure without a manual override plan can lock people out — or leave doors unsecured.</p>	<p>No audit trail — you cannot prove who had access after the fact.</p> <p>Keys can be duplicated without your knowledge.</p> <p>Every lost key may require re-keying the entire lock — costly and disruptive.</p> <p>Cannot restrict access by time of day or day of week</p> <p>If an emergency, a locked door could be a life safety issue if a key is not near by.</p> <p>Doors can be locked maliciously</p> <p>Inventory Management and hard changes can be complex and expensive</p>

Also Consider	<p>Does your insurance carrier require or discount for electronic access control?</p> <p>What is your override plan when the system goes offline?</p> <p>Who manages the system when your IT administrator leaves?</p> <p>Will we charge if someone loses their badge?</p>	<p>How many copies of each key currently exist — do you actually know?</p> <p>When did you last re-key after a staff or volunteer departure?</p> <p>A single master key in the wrong hands is a significant and often uninsured liability.</p>
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