

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A delivery and chain of custody system, comprising:

a robotic unit configured to follow a determined or predetermined route throughout a facility to deliver items, the robotic unit comprising a processor and a housing having an interior bottom, an interior top, an interior rear, an interior first side, and an interior second side conjoined together to form a cavity that defines a storage space, the storage space configured to receive a plurality of modular containers of different sizes;

a housing door comprising a door lock, the housing door configured to selectively grant access to the storage space;

a guide formed in the interior first side and the interior second side, the guide configured to slidably receive the modular containers and allow for slidable motion of the modular containers to and from the interior rear but to prevent motion of the modular containers to and from the interior bottom and the interior top; and

a container lock configured to selectively permit and prevent the slidable motion of at least one of the modular containers to and from the interior rear;

wherein the processor is operatively associated with the door lock and the container lock;

wherein the processor is configured to operate the door lock and the container lock based on:

the robotic unit being within a designated site in accordance with a delivery schedule; and

the robotic unit receiving validation information in the form of an access code or a token that an individual is an authorized individual.

2. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to open the door lock when within the designated site.

3. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to open the door lock and/or container lock when it receives the validation information.

4. The system recited in claim 3, wherein the access code or token used to access the door lock is different from the access code or token used to access the container lock.

5. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the processor is configured to open the door lock when within the designated site but not open the container lock until it receives the validation information.

6. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the container lock comprises a lever arrangement and/or a magnet arrangement.

7. The system recited in claim 6, wherein:
the lever arrangement comprises a electromechanically actuated plunger style lever having a catch, wherein the plunger is actuated by a motor that causes the catch to engage and disengage with a notch formed in the guide and a notch formed in the container; and
the magnet arrangement comprises first magnetic element disposed on the housing and a second magnetic element disposed on the container, wherein the first magnetic element is a magnet or a material attractable by magnetic force, and the second magnetic element is a

magnet or a material attractable by magnetic force, wherein when the first magnet element co-registers with the second magnetic element, the system identifies the type and placement of the container.

8. The system recited in claim 1, further comprising the container, the container having a container rail about a periphery of the container and configured to slidingly engage with the guide.

9. The system recited in claim 1, wherein:

the storage space is configured to allow:

the container to slide along the guide towards the interior rear to a stowed position; and

the container to slide along the guide away from the interior rear to an unstowed position; and

the container lock is configured to selectively lock the container in the stowed position.

10. The system recited in claim 8, further comprising a locker-door hingedly attached to the container, the locker-door having a guide tab configured to slidingly engage the guide.

11. The system recited in claim 10, wherein the guide tab is configured to prevent rotation of the locker-door about the hinge when the guide tab is slidingly engaged with the guide.

12. The system recited in claim 11, wherein:

the storage space is configured to allow:

the container to slide along the guide towards the interior rear to a stowed position, the stowed position being defined as the guide tab being slidably engaged with the guide so as to prevent rotation of the locker-door; and

the container to slide along the guide away from the interior rear to an unstowed position, the unstowed position being defined as the guide tab being slidably dis-engaged with the guide so as to allow rotation of the locker-door; and

the container lock is configured to selectively lock the container in the stowed position.

13. The system recited in claim 8, wherein the container is configured to hold the items.

14. The system recited in claim 13, further comprising a plurality of containers, wherein:

the processor is configured to designate at least one container as a free container to be freely accessed by any individual having access to the robotic unit; and

the processor is configured to designate at least one container as a restricted container to be accessed by the authorized individual for whom the items being delivered are designated.

15. The system recited in claim 1, wherein the robotic unit is configured to deviate from the determined or pre-determined route to achieve any one or combination of avoiding collisions, following a detour, and pursuing a more or less optimal path.

16. A method for delivery and chain of custody for items, the method comprising:
placing a first item in a first container, and placing a second item in a second container and placing a third item in a third container;

designating the first item for delivery to a first individual and designating the second item for delivery to a second individual;

placing the first container, the second container, and a third container in a storage space of a robotic unit;

locking the first container within the storage space and registering the first container as a restricted container only to be accessed by the first individual, locking the second container within the storage space and registering the second container as a restricted container only to be accessed by the second individual, and registering the third container as a free container to be accessed by any individual;

causing the robotic unit to follow a predetermined path to deliver the first item to the first individual and the second item to the second individual in accordance with a delivery schedule, wherein while following the delivery schedule, the robotic unit allows access to the third container by any individual while only unlocking the first container upon receiving validation information in the form of an access code or a token about the first individual and only unlocking the second container upon receiving validation information in the form of an access code or a token about the second individual.