

# Division of Structural Biology, University of Oxford Meeting the Needs of Higher Education

“PERFORMANCE, RELIABILITY, AND STORAGE WERE OUR WATCHWORDS. THE MIRAPOINT SOLUTION HAS PROVEN ITSELF MORE THAN UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF SUCH A TOUGH ENVIRONMENT.”

*Dr. Robert Esnouf, Head of Bioinformatics & IT, Division of Structural Biology, University of Oxford*

CASE STUDY | EDUCATION



## BUSINESS NEED

Reliable, easy-to-manage, high capacity email solution with enhanced webmail and calendaring to support a highly mobile user base

## SOLUTION

Mirapoint Message Server

## BOTTOM LINE

Mirapoint delivers effortless manageability and reliable messaging services on a single, integrated hardware and software appliance

## Background

The Division of Structural Biology (STRUBI) forms part of the multidisciplinary Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine within the University of Oxford. The research interests of the Division include the structural study of viral proteins and intercellular recognition. More than 50 researchers plus students and support staff within the Division rely heavily on email to keep in touch and collaborate. Many spend time at research facilities across Europe and further afield, so the need for efficient email communications is critical even when using other labs' hardware and a variety of operating systems. The technical nature of their work also requires these researchers to frequently exchange very large file attachments - up to 30 megabytes - as well as needing long-term storage of large volumes of email.

## The Business Need

To support its email needs, STRUBI had been running a pair of UNIX servers with the freeware Exim message transfer agent (MTA) and Univ. of Washington IMAP daemons. This mix of hardware and software was no longer able to provide adequate response to each user, particularly for the large number of emails in each folder and the size of message attachments. While the Exim MTA was reliable, the IMAP daemons were sluggish and would often die unexpectedly, frustrating the users by causing deleted emails to reappear. A Windows-based webmail server had also become unusably slow. This environment furthermore limited STRUBI's flexibility to add additional message-based services, such as calendaring.

After a five-year trial, the researchers decided the experiment was over. What they needed was a self-contained email solution with improved remote connectivity and intrinsic webmail functionality, while retaining multi-gigabyte message storage capacity. With STRUBI IT staff focused on supporting research, they needed a 'plug & play' solution that was always available with low management overhead.



## Division of Structural Biology, University of Oxford

### The Mirapoint Solution

The team evaluated several options. A homebrew Linux/Exim/IMAP/SquirrelMail solution would only provide a temporary fix and drain IT support. Lotus' Domino/Notes did not appear to have the performance required at the user client end, and Microsoft Exchange/Outlook, while having a good client interface, appeared too difficult and time-consuming to manage. A fourth option seemed to contain the right formula. "The Mirapoint appliance was brought to our attention by Oxford University Computing Services," says Dr. Robert Esnouf, Head of Bioinformatics & IT within STRUBI. "The key selling points for us were the effortless manageability, high availability, and reliable fully featured webmail on a single email appliance."

The Mirapoint solution, deployed in January 2004, includes one Mirapoint Message Server plus five disks serving 234 GB of usable storage in a highly redundant configuration. The setup allows fast, secure access direct to the mail store via the user's preferred web browser or standards-based IMAP clients. The Mirapoint appliance has been configured to provide a feature-rich solution with a full range of functionality including webmail, IMAP, and group calendaring.

Mirapoint also delivers important security features such as virus and spam filtering. Using technology from Sophos, the Mirapoint Message Server delivers virus filtering for all incoming and outgoing messages. The anti-virus software protects STRUBI's users from infections, eliminating disruptions, lost data, and lost productivity. New virus definition files are automatically updated hourly, reducing management and concern. Mirapoint's powerful spam filtering software also updates automatically and allows STRUBI's users to individually set parameters for spam control, manage their personal junk mail quarantine, and view their junk mail folders.

Acceptance of the new system has been dramatic. "Within the first six weeks of operation, half the researchers had migrated to webmail even when in the lab because of its performance and usability," says Dr. Esnouf. "With the enriched feature set of the Corporate edition webmail we now have very few users relying on IMAP, giving users the benefit of the same environment in the lab, at home, or on the road. The integration of calendaring with webmail is also popular as it allows scheduling of meetings wherever people are and automatic reminders."

### The Bottom Line

STRUBI's dedicated researchers now have an email solution that keeps pace with their demanding performance and storage requirements, enabling them to communicate and collaborate effectively wherever they are around the world. "Performance, reliability, and storage were our watchwords, coupled with a system that required a minimum of maintenance," says Dr. Esnouf. "Despite a relatively small user base, good research is all about pushing equipment to the limit. I am pleased to say that the Mirapoint solution has proven itself more than up to the challenge of such a tough environment."

In the last two years, STRUBI has had no unscheduled downtime (aside from power outages) and software upgrades have been largely painless. Dr. Esnouf says "The Mirapoint system sends me (and Mirapoint) emails to say it's happy, and I'm happy to leave it alone - aside from adding new users and starting backups there has been no significant ongoing administrative burden."

### About Mirapoint

Mirapoint® is the market leader in appliance-based solutions for secure message networks in enterprise, service provider, and education organizations, with more than 115 million mailboxes served and secured worldwide. Customers use Mirapoint appliances including the Message Server mail appliance and RazorGate mail security appliance to build the messaging infrastructure that intelligently serves, secures and manages email. Mirapoint is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, with offices throughout North America, Europe and Asia. For more information on Mirapoint, visit its Website at [www.mirapoint.com](http://www.mirapoint.com).

### Configuration

- One M450 Mirapoint Message Server