

HP customer case study: The HP Integrated Archive Platform (IAP) helps Brunel University to optimise its email infrastructure to create a powerful search engine within a climate of ethical compliance.

Industry: Public sector - education

Brunel University meets Freedom of Information demands with HP archive platform



“We have partnered with HP to create the best find button on the internet” Iain Liddell, policy development manager, Brunel University.

Objective:

To comply with Freedom of Information requirements and give rapid access to vital research data, Brunel University needed a quicker and more reliable archiving system for the thousands of personal folders in its email system.

Approach:

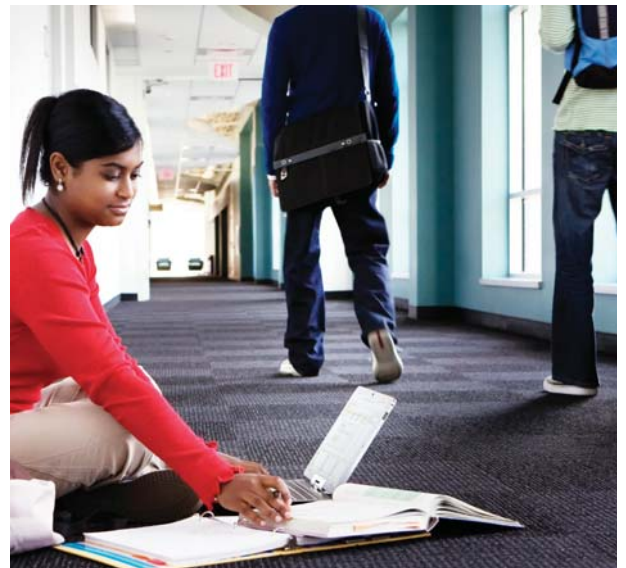
- Brunel implemented HP's Integrated Archive Platform (IAP).
- The HP IAP combines server and grid storage technology with native content indexing, search, and policy management software into a single, factory-assembled rack archiving system.

IT improvements:

- The IAP has provided reliability, availability and flexibility along with an upgrade path that will allow the university to grow and develop the solution in the future.
- The IAP solution can search millions of emails and many of the attachments within seconds and is capable of scaling to hundreds of terabytes of storage. Searches that could previously have taken days or weeks are now taking minutes and seconds.
- The project provided the opportunity to optimise the storage requirements for email, which also helped to reduce the backup burden. As different areas of the university are being brought into the IAP solution, they are seeing between 40 per cent and 50 per cent recovery of storage.

Business benefits:

- Having just one highly integrated search engine eases the work of collating responses to Freedom of Information requests. Response times and transparency in dealing with users' mail have been improved.
- The university now knows what business has been done in its name. Users can see their current email and access their history immediately so audit trails can be kept to assist in the resolution of disputes and issues.
- Brunel can demonstrate integrity in all aspects of its email archiving and retention and the fact that all student to staff and staff to student correspondence is preserved provides an excellent record of student progression.



Based in Uxbridge, West London, Brunel University aims to combine academic rigour with the practical, entrepreneurial and imaginative approach pioneered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Brunel University provides a wide range of courses for approximately 14,000 full and part-time students in subjects ranging from cancer genetics to journalism, physiotherapy, law and industrial design. 12 per cent of the university's students come from overseas representing 105 different nationalities. The university has excellent teaching and research links with industry and has been approved as a training camp for the 2012 Olympics.

The university's computer centre deploys and supports a sophisticated IT infrastructure. Services include comprehensive email, web facilities, an e-learning capability and critical business and administration systems.

Information management and e-discovery

Twenty years ago Brunel University was backing up all of its information on to tape and the backup process took two hours. By 2006 it was taking a full 24 hours to do the daily backup and the backups themselves were no longer reliable. The university started to look at a broader archiving strategy, but decided that email was the right place to start. The university chose HP's Integrated Archive Platform (IAP) because it provided reliability, availability and flexibility benefits, alongside an upgrade path that

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

- Integrated Archive Platform (IAP)

would allow the university to grow and develop the solution in the future.

"We were dealing with thousands of sets of personal folders within our email, and as Freedom of Information requests have been becoming more penetrative, we needed better definition to target our searches more accurately," says Iain Liddell, policy development manager, Brunel University.

This has given the university one highly integrated search engine that eases the burden of collating responses to Freedom of Information requests, providing an improved quality of response, and transparency in dealing with user's mail.

"We now have the ability to focus on the needle and not the needle plus the haystack!" continues Liddell.

One of the critical factors that has underpinned the success of this project is the climate of partnership working between the computer centre and the rest of the institution. The university has used this partnership to clarify the thinking that drives the right search outcomes and archiving approaches. A good example of this is the university's research into asbestos where information has to be retained for 30 years. The IAP solution is meeting this onerous requirement.

As a result of the IAP implementation, the university is able to:

- Know what business has been done in the university's name.
- Enable users to see their current email and access their history immediately.
- Turn around official requests within the required timescales.
- Keep an audit trail to assist in the resolution of disputes and issues.
- Demonstrate integrity in all aspects of their email archiving and retention.

The project has benefited from the strong triangular relationship between HP, Brunel University and the HP partner. As well as working closely with the university to ensure timely delivery of the project, the HP partner played a key role in facilitating important dialogue between HP and the university to ensure issues were resolved.

A climate of ethical compliance

"The solution exists to allow people to find their information within a climate of ethical compliance," says Liddell.

To date, the project has only addressed staff email accounts, but the duty of care to students is a key driver for the project. All student to staff and staff to student correspondence is preserved. This provides an excellent record of student progression and helps with efficient and effective resolution of any disputes and issues.

The university has taken a very ethical approach to the project, which meant extensive consultation with trade unions and the students union. A clear policy framework was put in place and the relevant policies were made public. The solution is also being linked to existing countermeasures against unwanted email helping to protect all users equally and appropriately.

The benefits fall into place

The university has found that the IAP solution can search millions of emails and many of the attachments within seconds and is capable of scaling to hundreds of terabytes of storage. Searches that could previously have taken days or weeks are now taking minutes and seconds.

The computer centre was also seeing the demand for storage growing significantly. The project provided the opportunity to optimise the storage requirements for email, which also helped to reduce the backup burden. As different areas of the university are being brought into the IAP solution, they are seeing between 40 per cent and 50 per cent recovery of storage.

The potential exists to extend the current solution to include stored files and apply the powerful search functionality to them. In this way, the solution has the potential to be a key component of an enterprise information and records management approach.

The university is also starting to see other related benefits, such as more effective use of Microsoft® Outlook Web Access through improved management of inbox content. These benefits are even more pronounced with mobile access to email.

In summary, the university is very confident that the project will provide the return on investment originally envisaged. They are seeing improvements in dealing with compliance issues, outstanding search facilities, optimisation of storage requirements, a less time hungry backup regime and increased user control.

"This system really is very easy to use, giving us the best find button on the internet, whilst also delivering a real return on investment," concludes Norman Bonney, director of computer centre, Brunel University.

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