



THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

The Royal College of Art (RCA) is the world's only postgraduate art and design university. Located next to the Albert Hall in Kensington, London, the college has around 900 post-graduate students and 300 staff. With alumni including Tracey Emin, James Dyson and Ridley Scott, it has a well-deserved international reputation.

Too much spam with open source

Before switching to MessageLabs services, the college used a free open-source spam filter. While the price (free) was good, the protection was not. Because the source code is available for anyone to read, spammers find it easy to bypass. "As a result we were getting a lot of spam AND a lot of false positives," says Jonathan Warner, Computing Services Manager.

Users were reporting 10-50 spam messages a day. In addition, it tied up server resources and bandwidth. The college had to download all the unwanted messages and process them on site. Important messages were routinely mistaken for spam, and each 'false positive' made extra work for the computing services team and caused frustration for end-users.

Things came to a head before the annual Research Assessment Exercise. This process helps the government decide how much to invest in the RCA's research activity. It involves a huge number of emails and attachments and the college simply couldn't afford to have delays or hiccups during the process. It needed a new, better system in place for final submissions.

The MessageLabs alternative

The college evaluated MessageLabs services against other hosted products over a two-month period. The MessageLabs services came out on top for several reasons: primarily good value for money, purchased through the partnership agreement with London Metropolitan Network, the service's world-class performance and because it was easy to use, thanks to advanced web-based management tools. When the service went live "we watched the spam levels go to almost nothing overnight," says Warner.

"MessageLabs have an impressive track record in protecting systems from these hazards and we are pleased to partner with them to offer an email filtering service to our members" says Maria Ilia, London Metropolitan Network's Business Development Manager.

Previously, a number of users had received a lot of unwanted email and complained about it. After the change to MessageLabs, they received almost no spam at all. "They were pleased and surprised. It made a quiet but profound impact on specific users," says Warner, who is very happy with the support given by MessageLabs. "The service was very quick to set up," he explains. "The engineers and sales people were experts and helpful."

Better protection, less hassle

Warner's team is relieved that they don't have to deal with false positives any more and "spam has gone from hundreds of messages a day to none. We just don't get any now." As result, there is less stress on the border infrastructure – firewalls, email servers and so on – and internet bandwidth. It saves the team several hours a week which can be spent on higher-priority tasks. Furthermore, the college hasn't had any virus or security problems since the MessageLabs service went live. This means that the team doesn't have to deal with the risk of infection or sudden panics when users raise false alarms. Warner says, "Quite simply, we don't need to worry about email viruses and spam anymore. With MessageLabs Anti-Spam and Anti-Virus, it just works."

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SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Solution:

- MessageLabs Email Anti-Spam and Email Anti-Virus

Technology Challenge:

- Volume of spam was unmanageable

Business Requirement:

- Low-maintenance solution

Business Value and Benefits:

- Quick and easy deployment as a hosted service
- Predictable cost structure
- No capital expenditure for hardware or software
- Service complements existing infrastructure