

# Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

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*Matthew Temple, Director of Research Computing Data, Dana-Farber*



**Company:** Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

**Industry:** Healthcare

**Headquarters:** Boston, MA

**Website:** [www.dana-farber.org](http://www.dana-farber.org)

## Challenges:

- » Mailbox size limits interfered with sharing/sending of research data
- » Intradepartment collaboration with a combination of various email systems
- » Secure collaboration with other hospitals, research institutions and government agencies
- » Large and globally dispersed set of users

## Solution:

- » Biscom Secure File Transfer

## Results:

- » Able to quickly and easily send and receive large files
- » Efficient and timely collaboration with outside institutions across the globe
- » Easy tracking and audit trail of file activity
- » Reduced number of technical support calls

## World-Renown Cancer Research Institute Faced Impediments to Worldwide Collaboration

In its mission to provide expert, compassionate care to children and adults with cancer while advancing the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure and prevention of cancer and related diseases, the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute employs nearly 4,000 people supporting more than 300,000 patient visits a year, is involved in some 700 clinical trials, and collaborates with a variety of hospitals and research institutions. Internationally renowned for its blending of research and clinical excellence, Dana-Farber also trains new generations of physicians and scientists, designs public health programs and disseminates patient therapies and scientific discoveries across the United States and throughout the world.

Traditionally, hospital information systems are designed to support users within the confines of the campus. As a result it is difficult to transfer data outside the organization. This presents a problem for research departments, which work almost exclusively with collaborators at universities, institutes and hospitals around the world.

Overseeing the growing Research Computing department for such a large and collaborative institution is no small feat and has presented numerous challenges to the group managed by Matthew Temple, Director of Research Computing at Dana-Farber. One of the first communications problems to be solved involved email quotas. Each individual has quotas of 100MB, which proved to be inadequate at an institution where 50% of the staff conducts research and applies for and manages grants.

“A user would receive a grant, which hogged the user’s mailbox, then couldn’t tell anyone about winning the grant because operations shut off any inbound or outbound traffic to the filled mailbox,” Temple said. “In

addition, because FDA, NIH and some collaborators are located outside Dana-Farber; the inability to communicate impeded progress.” Grant recipients lost valuable time because they couldn’t send or receive large attachments.

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*Matthew Temple  
Director of Research Computing  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute*

Because of the nature of the data, confidentiality was also an issue. “Typically, we have between 20-30 users [simultaneously] sending documents of all sizes, ranging from 1.3MB to 160MB. Sometimes, people send movie files made from research slides. They don’t want to send PowerPoint presentations or spreadsheets in an unsecured format,” according to Temple.

A final challenge the Research Computing group faced was that different groups at Dana-Farber use various email platforms, including Thunderbird, Outlook, Mac Mail, Entourage and others. The users are a diverse and globally dispersed group, including clinicians, researchers and support staff. Increasing email quotas didn’t necessarily solve the issues of support and ease-of-use for all users. When Temple learned of Biscom Secure File Transfer, he decided to investigate its capabilities.

### **SFT Improves Efficiency and Security of Global Research Collaboration**

Immediately after installation in 2008, it became apparent to Temple that SFT worked effortlessly around mailbox limits. Temple noted, “if scientists want to send 400 files containing BRCA1 papers with TIFF and PDF files totaling about 13GB for review, the on-premises SFT server, which has terabytes of storage space, handles the load easily.”

Temple also realized that SFT resolved the problem of Dana-Farber communications being forwarded to an unknown third party. “We solved this problem by using the rules-based management to configure SFT in a sort of closed loop, so that Dana-Farber could transmit to someone outside Dana-Farber and vice-versa, but no forwarding was allowed by either party.”

The SFT tracking capability helped Dana-Farber clinical trials groups track documents associated with study participants, a much more important metric for them than the absolute size of the document. Many Dana-Farber clinical groups use SFT for its audit trail capability when they want to make sure that a large document shipped securely and that someone received it.

### **A Beautiful and Elegant Tool**

SFT caught on right away at Dana-Farber. “It is a beautiful and elegant tool anyone can use,” says Temple. “We’re at the point now where we host SFT, but don’t keep it to ourselves. We use the Dana-Farber Desktop Services Group to promote SFT to other groups at DFCI.”

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