

Staying connected through the Cloud

Managing Email on More Than One Computer

By Bill Slade

Maybe it's between your computer at work and a laptop at home or an email-enabled iPhone, or maybe even a public PC in a hotel lobby, but wherever you need to do it, juggling your email among different devices can be hard.

That is one reason why some people simply choose to use webmail like our convenient Roundcube online client to access their email messages, as it's accessible from any browser. However, there is an alternative that will allow you to use a modern email program like Thunderbird, Apple Mail, or Outlook, to manage your email messages between different platforms. The difference is simply changing your email clients to the IMAP email protocol instead of POP3.

POP3 (*Post Office Protocol version 3*) is the simplest of email protocols. It mimics how physical mail works. POP3 presumes that you have an email account on an email server and a personal computer where you want to get and read your email. Your client downloads your email messages one at a time and the server deletes them once your client is done gathering all the messages.

This works just great getting your email onto your personal computer. The problem arises when you then download email to a different computer also using POP3. It isn't on the server anymore, so it can't be accessed from your other computer.

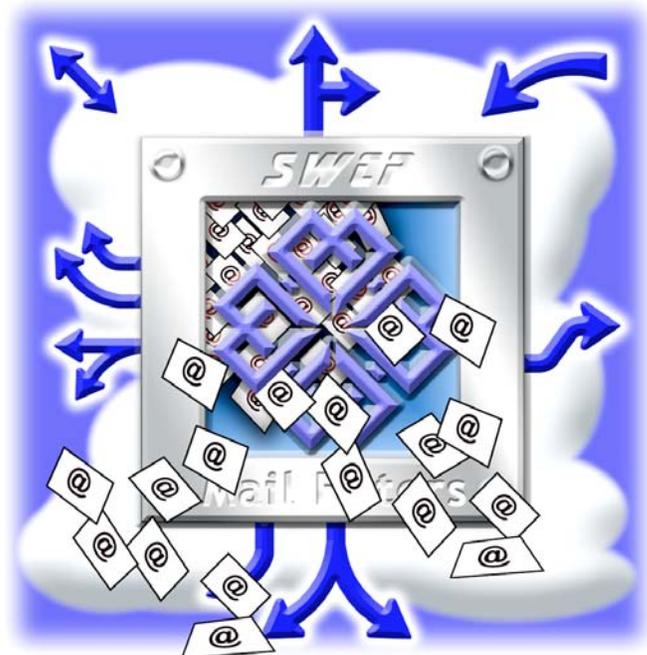
With **IMAP** (*Internet Message Access Protocol*), it's much easier. This protocol keeps your email messages safe on the server until you delete them. You can read a work-related email message on your home computer, and then later, you can access that same message from your office computer. All your email messages start out in your email Inbox folder on the server and each one will stay there until you move it to the Trash, an archive folder on the server, or copy it to a folder on your computer.

There are advantages and downsides to both protocols. POP3 is simple and fast, but if you lose emails on your computer, it can be hard or impossible to recover them. IMAP mail takes up more server space, and being more interactive, can be slower and therefore managing can be more difficult. The great advantage is that you can access email from anywhere, but that might not be a help unless you clean out the inevitable build-up occasionally.

IMAP makes managing your email more functional but it can require more work. Keeping email on the server and never deleting any may also mean that you may accumulate charges for storing it online. Another problem can arise if you use POP3 on one device – say, your PC at work – and use IMAP on your smartphone for when you're away. If you forget to turn off your PC client when you leave the office, you may have access to the messages only briefly from your phone before they're downloaded by your PC, which can be frustrating.

Both protocols require you to decide if you can discard or retain each email message. With IMAP, you also need to decide if you keep it on the server or download it to one of your devices.

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Managing IMAP and spam

An additional benefit for using IMAP with your email client is that it can also help you manage **Spam-probe**, a personal spam filter that can be trained to eliminate spam. When you enable Spamprobe in the **SWCP Mail Filter** located in our **Member Tools** at <https://members.swcp.com/mailfilter>, the system will create three folders for training in your system:

suspected_spam will receive all the messages that Spamprobe believes are spam.

learn_as_spam is where you manually move messages that are spam but were placed in your Inbox. Spamprobe will learn these as examples of spam and they will be deleted from this folder automatically.

learn_as_goodmail is used to correct Spamprobe if it thinks a "good" message is a spam. If you find a non-spam message in the **suspected_spam** folder, copy it to the **learn_as_goodmail** folder. Spamprobe will grab the message in a few minutes, learn from its mistake, then delete the message. You may also want to copy the message to your **Inbox**.

These folders are your way of training the Spamprobe filter. It's easy: you will simply move a new instance of spam that got into your Inbox into the **learn_as_spam** folder, and misidentified "good" mail to the **learn_as_goodmail** folder.

These simple activities can really help you reduce the pariah that spam can be, but regular effort is required to keep up with the changes in the spamstreams that you receive. Call our techs if you have any questions about using Spamprobe filtering with IMAP.

Switching to IMAP

If you've been using email for a while you're probably using POP3. Switching to IMAP is simple and easy.

There's a quick and effortless way to configure your iPhone or iPad for SWCP's email recently posted on our blog, <http://www.swcp.com/2011/southwest-cyberport-email-setup-for-iphone-and-ipad/>.

If you use Mozilla's popular **Thunderbird** for email, you will need to edit your email account configuration. Under the **Tools** menu, select **Account Settings**. Choose the **Server Settings** tab and enter the Server Name as **imap.swcp.com**, and enter port **993**. Select **SSL** under **Security Settings** to ensure your email travels securely to and from the server. Our techs can help you configure many other email clients to use IMAP safely and easily.

Once your Thunderbird Inbox is configured for IMAP, you can right click on the **Inbox** to add folders on the

server that can be used to categorize email that is being retained on the server. You can also go below the Inbox and add **Local Folders** that are actually on your computer. These folders can receive email that needs to be saved on this physical machine. This is also useful to ensure you can access certain messages even if you are offline in an airplane.

With your arrangement of folders, you can now manually and/or automatically filter your email messages to go where you need them to be. Fortunately you can also find lost messages starting from your root folder so as to search across all the server folders at once.

IMAP gives you the convenience of having your email wherever you need it, whenever you want it. With a good set up and a little regular discipline, you should be able to stay connected with your email just about anywhere while avoiding all the junk.

Note: The above article was originally written in 2008 by Bill Slade, our late General Manager, and has been updated with the most recent information.

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