

# 1.0 WASTE REDUCTION IN HARVARD'S MCB MAILROOM

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Credit: Philip Kreycik *Jack Conlin in the mail room*

Jack Conlin, Group Leader at [FAS's Molecular & Cellular Biology](#) department mailroom, began working to reduce paper waste from mailings years ago, but it was only recently that he realized

that he could team up with the [Office for Sustainability](#) and with Intra-Mail Network (IMN) to help vendors to stop sending bulky catalogues to people who had long ago left the university. Jack has found that without ample feedback, vendors would send catalogs and mailings to individuals who had long since left Harvard, or had even been deceased for decades.

Spring 2009 was when Jack started really getting into this project, when he teamed with IMN to reduce paper waste from catalogue mailings by 2,700 lbs in one semester! Realizing that there was still a long way to go, Jack trained two student volunteers who work with the Office for Sustainability to document all the incorrect addresses, and contact vendors to have the addresses removed from their lists. As a team, they worked an hour each week over the course of several months, starting in the fall of 2009. One of the end results of the campaign is that Jack has been able to compile information for 14 additional major bulk mailers to further reduce the amount of paper received in the Spring of 2010. IMN is able to compile these corrections with corrections from other universities and rely on existing vendor relationships to help the vendors reduce their unwanted printing.

Vendors are happy to work with Jack and the IMN team because they know that an incorrectly addressed mailing or an unwanted mailing has a nearly 0% chance of generating a sale, and yet incurs the same printing costs, postage costs, and environmental impact of every other mailing.

[New England Biolabs](#) has been an enthusiastic partner in this endeavor, eager to both reduce waste and ensure that its newsletters and catalogs were reaching the intended recipients. With the help of Jack and IMN, they found that **thirty-nine percent** of their mailings were either duplicates or addressed to people no longer at the university, in addition to another 50% which needed address corrections. Because USPS address correction tools are very limited when it comes to college and university mail, between **39 percent** and **89 percent** of the mail pieces likely ended up in the recycle bin instead of reaching the intended recipient. Since mid-2008, NEB has fixed this problem, and IMN estimates that they have reduced their paper waste sent to Harvard by **774 pounds per year!**

Sometimes it seems junk mail is an unstoppable tide, but in the past year, we have seen more improvement in bulk mail reduction than ever before thanks to Jack's efforts, and the efforts of departmental [Green Teams!](#) Jack is hoping to leverage his success to engage his peers in other departmental mailrooms, so we are confident that this grassroots initiative will rapidly expand across all of Harvard's schools and units!

by PHILIP KREYCIK

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**New England Biolabs has reduced their paper waste sent to Harvard by 774 pounds per year!**

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