GNU MAILMAN – LIST MEMBER'S MANUAL

A quick-start guide on how to use the Mailman mailing list system in use @ IIT

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Last modified: *11/02/2011*

Version: *1.0*

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Introduction

This is a quick-start guide on how to use the Mailman mailing lists system in use @ IIT.

For help, assistance or questions, you can refer to the list administrator of the list you are subscribed to. You can find them in the service description on the Intranet.

What is a mailing list?

A mailing list is simply a list of addresses to which the same information is being sent. If you were a magazine publisher, you would have a list of the mailing addresses of all the subscribers to the magazine. In the case of an electronic mailing list, we use a list of email addresses from people interested in hearing about or discussing a given topic.

Two common types of email mailing lists are announcement lists and discussion lists.

Announcement lists are used so that one person or group can send announcements to a group of people, much like a magazine publisher's mailing list is used to send out magazines. For example, a band may use a mailing list to let their fan base know about their upcoming concerts.

A discussion list is used to allow a group of people to discuss topics amongst themselves, with everyone able to send mail to the list and have it distributed to everyone in the group. This discussion may also be moderated, so only selected posts are sent on to the group as a whole, or only certain people are allowed to send to the group. For

example, a group of model plane enthusiasts might use a mailing list to share tips about model construction and flying.

Some common terms:

- A "post" typically denotes a message sent to a mailing list. (Think of posting a message on a bulletin board.)
- People who are part of an electronic mailing list are usually called the list's "members" or "subscribers."
- "List administrators" are the people in charge of maintaining that one list. Lists may have one or more administrators.
- A list may also have people in charge of reading posts and deciding if they should be sent on to all subscribers. These people are called list moderators.
- Often more than one electronic mailing list will be run using the same piece of software. The person who maintains the software which runs the lists is called the "site administrator." Often the site administrator also administrates individual lists.

Mailman's web interface

Every mailing list is also accessible by a number of web pages.

List information (listinfo) page

- http://lists.DOMAIN.iit.it/mailman/listinfo/LISTNAME.
- The listinfo page is the starting point for the subscriber interface. As one would assume from the name it's given, it contains information about the LISTNAME list. Usually all the other subscriber pages can be accessed from this point, so you really only need to know this one address.

Member options page

- http://lists. DOMAIN.iit.it/mailman/listinfo/LISTNAME/USERNAME@iit.it.
- This page can also be accessed by going to the listinfo page and entering your email address into the box beside the button marked "Unsubscribe or Edit Options" (this is near the bottom of the page).
- The member options page allows you to log in/out and change your list settings, as well as unsubscribe or get a copy of your password mailed to you.
- **To log in to your member options page**: If you are not already logged in, there will be a box near the top for you to enter your password. Enter your password in the box and press the button.
- Once you are logged in, you will be able to view and change all your list settings.

List Archives

- http://lists.DOMAIN.iit.it/pipermail/LISTNAME if the list is publicly archived, and http://lists.DOMAIN.iit.it/mailman/private/LISTNAME if the list is privately archives.
- The list archive pages have copies of the posts sent to the mailing list, usually grouped by month. In each monthly group, the posts are usually indexed by author, date, thread, and subject.
- **Note:** Pipermail is the name of the default archiver that comes with Mailman. Other archive programs are available.
- If the archive is private, you will need to supply your subscribed email address and your password to log in.

How do I join a list? (subscribe)

There are two common ways you can subscribe to a Mailman mailing list.

Using the web interface:

1. Go to the list information page for the list you want to join.
2. Look for the section marked "Subscribing to LISTNAME" and fill in the boxes. You can fill in the following:
   o You *must* enter your email address.
   o You may choose to supply your real name.
   o You may choose a password. If you do not choose one, Mailman will generate one for you.

      Warning: Do NOT use a valuable password, since this password may be mailed to you in plain text.

   o If the list supports more than one language, you may be able to choose your preferred language.
      Note: This setting does not affect posts to the list, only pre-prepared Mailman texts such as your member options page.
3. Press the subscribe button. A new page should appear telling you that your request has been sent.

Using the email interface:

1. Open a mail program which sends mail from the address you want to subscribe.
2. Send a mail to the list subscription address, which will be in the form LISTNAME-join@DOMAIN. The subject and body of the message will be ignored, so it doesn't matter what you put there.

After following one of these sets of instructions (you don't need to do both!), there are a few possible outcomes depending upon the settings for that list.

- You may receive an email message asking for confirmation that you really want to be subscribed to the list. This is to prevent anyone from subscribing you to lists without your permission. Follow the instructions given in the message to confirm your wish to be subscribed.
- A moderator may also need to confirm your subscription if you are subscribing to a limited list.
- Or you may have to wait for a moderator *and* follow the instructions in the confirmation mail.

Once this is done, you will likely receive another message welcoming you to the list. This message contains some useful information including your list password and some quick links for changing your options, so you may want to save it for later reference.

How do I leave a list? (unsubscribe)

Don't want to be on a list any more? If you're just going on vacation or are too busy to read mails and want to temporarily turn them off, you may want to stop mail delivery rather than unsubscribing. This means you keep your password and other settings so you can, for example, still have access to private list archives.

If you actually want to leave the list, there are two common ways you can unsubscribe from a Mailman mailing list.

Using the web interface:

1. Go to the list information page for the list you want to leave.
2. Look for the section marked "LISTNAME subscribers" (usually found near the bottom of the page).

3. There should be a button marked "Unsubscribe or Edit Options." Enter your email address in the box beside this button and press the button.
4. You should be brought to a new page which has an "Unsubscribe" button. Press it to unsubscribe and follow the instructions given.

Using the email interface:

1. Open a mail program which sends mail from the address you want to unsubscribe.
2. Send a mail to the list unsubscribe address, which will be of the form LISTNAME-leave@DOMAIN. The subject and body of this message will be ignored, so it doesn't matter what you put there.

After following one of these sets of instructions (you don't need to do both!), you will be sent a confirmation mail and must follow the instructions given in that mail to complete the unsubscription. This is to stop people from unsubscribing you without your permission. In addition, a moderator may need to approve your unsubscription.

If you do not receive this confirmation mail with instructions, make sure that you typed your email address correctly (if you were using the web interface to unsubscribe) and that the address you tried to unsubscribe is, indeed, actually subscribed to that list. For security reasons, Mailman generates the same member options page regardless of whether the address entered is subscribed or not. This means that people cannot use this part of the web interface to find out if someone is subscribed to the list, but it also means that it's hard to tell if you just made a typo.

Once your unsubscription has been processed, you will will probably receive another message confirming your unsubscription from the list, and at that point you should stop receiving messages.

How do I get my password?

If you've forgotten your password and haven't saved the welcome message or any reminder messages, you can always get a reminder through the web interface:

1. Go to the list information page for the list from which you wish to get your password
2. Look for the section marked "LISTNAME subscribers" (this section is usually found near the bottom of the page).
3. There should be a button marked "Unsubscribe or Edit Options." Enter your email address in the box beside this button and press the button.
4. You should be brought to a new page which has a "Password Reminder" section. Press the "Remind" button to have your password emailed to you.

If you do not receive the password reminder email after doing this, make sure that you typed your email address correctly and that the address you used is, indeed, actually subscribed to that list. For security reasons, Mailman generates the same member options page regardless of whether the address entered is subscribed or not. This means that people cannot use this part of the web interface to find out if someone is subscribed to the list, but it also means that it's hard to tell if you just made a typo.

How do I change my password?

Warning: Do NOT use a valuable password, since this password may be mailed to you in plain text.

From the web interface:

1. Log in to your member options page. (See Section 3.1 for instructions on how to do this.)
2. Look for the password changing boxes on the right-hand side of the page and enter your new password in the appropriate boxes, then press the button marked "Change My Password."

This can also be changed for multiple lists at the same time if you are subscribed to more than one list on the same domain.

How do I turn mail delivery on or off? (delivery option)

You may wish to temporarily stop getting messages from the list without having to unsubscribe. If you disable mail delivery, you will no longer receive messages, but will still be a subscriber and will retain your password and other settings.

To disable/enable mail delivery using the web interface:

1. Log in to your options page.
2. Go down to the section marked "Mail delivery" and select "Disabled" to stop receiving mail, and "Enabled" to start receiving mail.

This can also be changed for multiple lists at the same time if you are subscribed to more than one list on the same domain.

How can I avoid getting duplicate messages? (duplicates option)

Mailman can't completely stop you from getting duplicate messages, but it can help. One common reason people get multiple copies of a mail is that the sender has used a "group reply" function to send mail to both the list and some number of individuals. If you want to avoid getting these messages, Mailman can be set to check and see if you are in the To: or CC: lines of the message. If your address appears there, then Mailman can be told not to deliver another copy to you.

To turn this on or off using the web interface:

1. Log in to your member options page.
2. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to the section marked "Avoid duplicate copies of messages?" and change the value accordingly.

This can also be changed for multiple lists at the same time if you are subscribed to more than one list on the same domain.

How do I change my subscription address?

To change your subscription address,

1. Log in to your member options page.
2. In the section marked "Changing your LISTNAME membership information," enter your new address.
3. If you wish to change your address for all subscriptions using the old address, select the "Change globally" box. If you have subscriptions under another address or for lists on a different domain, these will have to be done separately.

How can I get Mailman to tell me when my post has been received by the list? (ack option)

On most lists, you will simply receive a copy of your mail when it has gone through the list software, but if this is disabled, your list mail delivery is disabled, you are not subscribed to that topic or you simply want an extra acknowledgement from the system, this option may be useful to you.

Note: If you are not subscribed to the list, this option cannot be used. You must either check the archives yourself (if the list has public archives), ask someone who is subscribed to the list, or subscribe to use this option.

To set this using the web interface:

1. Log in to your member options page.
2. Look for the section marked "Receive acknowledgement mail when you send mail to the list?" Set it to "Yes" to receive a mail letting you know your post has been received, and "No" to avoid receiving such an acknowledgement.

How can I start or stop getting the list posts grouped into one big email? (digest option)

Groups of posts are called "digests" in Mailman. Rather than get messages one at a time, you can get messages grouped together. On a moderately busy list, this typically means you get one email per day, although it may be more or less frequent depending upon the list.

To turn digest mode on or off using the web interface,

1. Log in to your member options page.
2. Look for the section marked "Set Digest Mode."

   Set it to "On" to receive messages bundled together in digests. Set it to "Off" to receive posts separately.

How do I make sure that my post has the right topic?

When a list administrator defines a topic, he or she sets three things:

- a topic name
- a regular expression (regexp)
- a description

You can view this information by logging in to your member options page and clicking on the "details" link for any topic that interests you.

To post on a given topic, you need to make sure that the Keywords: or Subject: headers in a message match the *regular expression* for that topic. Regular expressions can actually be fairly complex, so you may want to just ask the list administrator if you don't know how to make heads or tails of the expression given.