19.1.3. email.generator: Generating MIME documents

Source code: Lib/email/generator.py

One of the most common tasks is to generate the flat (serialized) version of the email message represented by a message object structure. You will need to do this if you want to send your message via smtplib.SMTP.sendmail() or the nntplib module, or print the message on the console. Taking a message object structure and producing a serialized representation is the job of the generator classes.

As with the email.parser module, you aren't limited to the functionality of the bundled generator; you could write one from scratch yourself. However the bundled generator knows how to generate most email in a standards-compliant way, should handle MIME and non-MIME email messages just fine, and is designed so that the bytes-oriented parsing and generation operations are inverses, assuming the same non-transforming policy is used for both. That is, parsing the serialized byte stream via the BytesParser class and then regenerating the serialized byte stream using BytesGenerator should produce output identical to the input [1]. (On the other hand, using the generator on an EmailMessage constructed by program may result in changes to the EmailMessage object as defaults are filled in.)

The Generator class can be used to flatten a message into a text (as opposed to binary) serialized representation, but since Unicode cannot represent binary data directly, the message is of necessity transformed into something that contains only ASCII characters, using the standard email RFC Content Transfer Encoding techniques for encoding email messages for transport over channels that are not "8 bit clean".

class email.generator.**BytesGenerator**(*outfp*, *mangle_from_=None*, *maxheaderlen=None*, *, *policy=None*)

Return a BytesGenerator object that will write any message provided to the flatten() method, or any surrogateescape encoded text provided to the write() method, to the file-like object *outfp*. *outfp* must support a write method that accepts binary data.

If optional *mangle_from_* is True, put a > character in front of any line in the body that starts with the exact string "From ", that is From followed by a space at the beginning of a line. *mangle_from_* defaults to the value of the mangle_from_ setting of the *policy* (which is True for the compat32 policy and False for all others). *mangle_from_* is intended for use when messages are stored in unix mbox format (see `mailbox` and WHY THE CONTENT-LENGTH FORMAT IS BAD).

If *maxheaderlen* is not `None`, refold any header lines that are longer than *maxheaderlen*, or if `0`, do not rewrap any headers. If *manheaderlen* is `None` (the default), wrap headers and other message lines according to the *policy* settings.

If *policy* is specified, use that policy to control message generation. If *policy* is `None` (the default), use the policy associated with the `Message` or `EmailMessage` object passed to `flatten` to control the message generation. See `email.policy` for details on what *policy* controls.

New in version 3.2.

Changed in version 3.3: Added the *policy* keyword.

Changed in version 3.6: The default behavior of the *mangle_from_* and *maxheaderlen* parameters is to follow the policy.

`flatten`(*msg*, *unixfrom=False*, *linesep=None*)

Print the textual representation of the message object structure rooted at *msg* to the output file specified when the `BytesGenerator` instance was created.

If the `policy` option `cte_type` is `8bit` (the default), copy any headers in the original parsed message that have not been modified to the output with any bytes with the high bit set reproduced as in the original, and preserve the non-ASCII *Content-Transfer-Encoding* of any body parts that have them. If `cte_type` is `7bit`, convert the bytes with the high bit set as needed using an ASCII-compatible *Content-Transfer-Encoding*. That is, transform parts with non-ASCII *Content-Transfer-Encoding* (*Content-Transfer-Encoding: 8bit*) to an ASCII compatible *Content-Transfer-Encoding*, and encode RFC-invalid non-ASCII bytes in headers using the MIME `unknown-8bit` character set, thus rendering them RFC-compliant.

If *unixfrom* is `True`, print the envelope header delimiter used by the Unix mailbox format (see `mailbox`) before the first of the **RFC 5322** headers of the root message object. If the root object has no envelope header, craft a standard one. The default is `False`. Note that for subparts, no envelope header is ever printed.

If *linesep* is not `None`, use it as the separator character between all the lines of the flattened message. If *linesep* is `None` (the default), use the value specified in the *policy*.

`clone`(*fp*)

Return an independent clone of this `BytesGenerator` instance with the exact same option settings, and *fp* as the new *outfp*.

`write`(*s*)

Encode *s* using the `ASCII` codec and the `surrogateescape` error handler, and pass it to the *write* method of the *outfp* passed to the `BytesGenerator`'s constructor.

As a convenience, `EmailMessage` provides the methods `as_bytes()` and `bytes(aMessage)` (a.k.a. `__bytes__()`), which simplify the generation of a serialized binary representation of a message object. For more detail, see `email.message`.

Because strings cannot represent binary data, the `Generator` class must convert any binary data in any message it flattens to an ASCII compatible format, by converting them to an ASCII compatible *Content-Transfer_Encoding*. Using the terminology of the email RFCs, you can think of this as `Generator` serializing to an I/O stream that is not "8 bit clean". In other words, most applications will want to be using `BytesGenerator`, and not `Generator`.

class `email.generator.`**`Generator`**(*outfp*, *mangle_from_=None*, *maxheaderlen=None*, ***, *policy=None*)

Return a `Generator` object that will write any message provided to the `flatten()` method, or any text provided to the `write()` method, to the file-like object *outfp*. *outfp* must support a `write` method that accepts string data.

If optional *mangle_from_* is `True`, put a `>` character in front of any line in the body that starts with the exact string `"From "`, that is `From` followed by a space at the beginning of a line. *mangle_from_* defaults to the value of the `mangle_from_` setting of the *policy* (which is `True` for the `compat32` policy and `False` for all others). *mangle_from_* is intended for use when messages are stored in unix mbox format (see `mailbox` and WHY THE CONTENT-LENGTH FORMAT IS BAD).

If *maxheaderlen* is not `None`, refold any header lines that are longer than *maxheaderlen*, or if `0`, do not rewrap any headers. If *manheaderlen* is `None` (the default), wrap headers and other message lines according to the *policy* settings.

If *policy* is specified, use that policy to control message generation. If *policy* is `None` (the default), use the policy associated with the `Message` or `EmailMessage` object passed to `flatten` to control the message generation. See `email.policy` for details on what *policy* controls.

Changed in version 3.3: Added the *policy* keyword.

Changed in version 3.6: The default behavior of the *mangle_from_* and *maxheaderlen* parameters is to follow the policy.

`flatten`(*msg*, *unixfrom=False*, *linesep=None*)

Print the textual representation of the message object structure rooted at *msg* to the output file specified when the `Generator` instance was created.

If the `policy` option `cte_type` is `8bit`, generate the message as if the option were set to `7bit`. (This is required because strings cannot represent non-ASCII bytes.) Convert any bytes with the high bit set as needed using an ASCII-compatible *Content-Transfer-Encoding*. That is, transform parts with non-ASCII *Cotnent-Transfer-Encoding* (*Content-Transfer-Encoding: 8bit*) to an ASCII compatible *Content-Transfer-Encoding*, and encode RFC-invalid non-ASCII bytes in headers using the MIME `unknown-8bit` character set, thus rendering them RFC-compliant.

If *unixfrom* is `True`, print the envelope header delimiter used by the Unix mailbox format (see `mailbox`) before the first of the **RFC 5322** headers of the root message object. If the root object has no envelope header, craft a standard one. The default is `False`. Note that for subparts, no envelope header is ever printed.

If *linesep* is not `None`, use it as the separator character between all the lines of the flattened message. If *linesep* is `None` (the default), use the value specified in the *policy*.

Changed in version 3.2: Added support for re-encoding `8bit` message bodies, and the *linesep* argument.

`clone`(*fp*)

Return an independent clone of this `Generator` instance with the exact same options, and *fp* as the new *outfp*.

`write`(*s*)

Write *s* to the *write* method of the *outfp* passed to the `Generator`’s constructor. This provides just enough file-like API for `Generator` instances to be used in the `print()` function.

As a convenience, `EmailMessage` provides the methods `as_string()` and `str(aMessage)` (a.k.a. `__str__()`), which simplify the generation of a formatted string representation of a message object. For more detail, see `email.message`.

The `email.generator` module also provides a derived class, `DecodedGenerator`, which is like the `Generator` base class, except that non-*text* parts are not serialized, but are instead represented in the output stream by a string derived from a template filled in with information about the part.

class `email.generator.`**`DecodedGenerator`**(*outfp*, *mangle_from_=None*, *maxheaderlen=None*, *fmt=None*, ***, *policy=None*)

Act like `Generator`, except that for any subpart of the message passed to `Generator.flatten()`, if the subpart is of main type *text*, print the decoded payload of the subpart, and if the main type is not *text*, instead of printing it fill in the string *fmt* using information from the part and print the resulting filled-in string.

To fill in *fmt*, execute `fmt % part_info`, where `part_info` is a dictionary composed of the following keys and values:

- `type` – Full MIME type of the non-*text* part
- `maintype` – Main MIME type of the non-*text* part
- `subtype` – Sub-MIME type of the non-*text* part
- `filename` – Filename of the non-*text* part
- `description` – Description associated with the non-*text* part
- `encoding` – Content transfer encoding of the non-*text* part

If *fmt* is `None`, use the following default *fmt*:

> "[Non-text (%(type)s) part of message omitted, filename %(filename)s]"

Optional *_mangle_from_* and *maxheaderlen* are as with the `Generator` base class.

Footnotes

[1] This statement assumes that you use the appropriate setting for `unixfrom`, and that there are no `policy` settings calling for automatic adjustments (for example, `refold_source` must be `none`, which is *not* the default). It is also not 100% true, since if the message does not conform to the RFC standards occasionally information about the exact original text is lost during parsing error recovery. It is a goal to fix these latter edge cases when possible.