Using Majordomo Mailing List Services at Stanford

Mailing lists are a way of maintaining communication among groups of electronic mail addresses while simplifying the management process. This document describes how you can use the Majordomo Mailing List Services at Stanford to create mailing lists for both classes and other groups, for example, the bayarea-alumni group. It was written for the Class Mailing Lists with Majordomo workshop, which is offered both to faculty and TAs. For more information about this workshop, please see the Web at http://acomp.stanford.edu/studio/sched.html.

It is important to note that Stanford is now simplifying access to its course services, so the process for requesting a mailing list for your class is a little different from requesting a list for your group.

A list of useful URLs:

- http://www.stanford.edu/group/idg/lists/ - Stanford Mailing list services home page
- http://www.stanford.edu/courses/email.html - information on requesting lists for a course

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Requesting a Course Mailing List

Requesting a mailing list for a specific course actually requires going through the channels for general electronic course services to be found at http://courses.stanford.edu. The reason behind this is that it gives you options to select other services such as web space, disk storage space, increased print quotas, and newsgroups. When you are at the courses web site, simply follow the link titled “Register for Leland Course Services” to fill in the request form. The following information should be prepared in order to request course services:
- Basic course information – quarter, department, number, and title
- A basic list of instructors and TAs. (This information can be appended later, however, it is easiest to set up when you have as much of this list together as possible.)
- An awareness of any other services (web space, disc space, etc.) that you are expecting to use for this class.

It is important to keep in mind, that course email lists are set up restricting posting access only to instructors and TAs. Although student email addresses are auto-populated into the recipient lists, they are not allowed to send messages to the list. If the purpose of your list is to increase communication among students and instructors, you may want to consider setting up a newsgroup or a Panfora forum instead.

A more thorough explanation of course email lists can be found at http://www.stanford.edu/courses/email.html.

**Requesting a Group Mailing List**

If you need to create a mailing list for your group, visit http://www.stanford.edu/group/idg/lists/request/.
Information that you need to complete the request includes:

- List purpose – a description of why you are creating the list
- List name – provide a hypothetical name for your list
- Access options:
  - A list can be **open** to allow any person with an email address to subscribe.
  - It can be **open** but limited only to “Stanford.edu” email addresses.
  - It can be **closed**, meaning that people need to request and receive approval for access to the list from the list manager.
  - It can be **closed** and limited only to “Stanford.edu” email addresses.
- Posting options:
  - **Unrestricted** posting allows anyone (even non-list members) to send email to the list members.
  - **Restricted** posting limits sending to the list to only a specific list of addresses (often just the group members).
  - **Owner only** restricts sending only to the owner of the list.
  - **List only** allows only list members to send to the list.
  - **Stanford.edu** limits postings only to senders from Stanford.edu addresses.
  - **Restrict to another list** allows you to maintain a separate list of addresses that are allowed to post.
Mailing List Commands

For a new manager of a mailing list, the process of managing and running commands may seem a little unusual. Sending email messages addressed to majordomo@lists.stanford.edu runs these commands. The commands are written within the body of the message, which the mail server “reads” and responds to automatically. It may seem a little archaic, especially in this point-and-click age, but it is a system that tends to work fairly well.

A good first example is to request a list of the available lists to subscribe to. Create an email message that looks something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To: <a href="mailto:majordomo@lists.stanford.edu">majordomo@lists.stanford.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From: <a href="mailto:user@leland.stanford.edu">user@leland.stanford.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By sending this email to the mail server, you will shortly receive a huge list of all the Stanford email lists being managed through this server.

All commands are issued in the body of the message. Anything entered on the subject line of your message will be ignored. A thorough description of commands is covered at http://www.stanford.edu/group/idg/lists/commands/. The remainder of this section describes the General commands that are detailed at the site.

Subscribing to a List

Command:

    subscribe <list-name> [<user@host.domain>]

Sending this command to the mail server will automatically sign you up. In general, adding your email address to the command is optional (since the email message already has your address in the To: field). Your request is also forwarded to the list manager. If “user” wants to sign up for the “shopping-group” list, here is how the email looks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To: <a href="mailto:majordomo@lists.stanford.edu">majordomo@lists.stanford.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From: <a href="mailto:user@leland.stanford.edu">user@leland.stanford.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subscribe shopping-group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within a few minutes “User” should get a reply either confirming the subscription or some other status message.

As a list manager, you could use this command yourself to individually add new members to your list. However, if you are “populating” a new list and want to add several users, this would be a tedious process. Instead, you can use the buildlist command. (See “Building a List of Usernames” on page 4.)
Unsubscribing from a List

Command:

\texttt{unsubscribe \textless list-name\textgreater \ [\textless user@host.domain\textgreater ]}

This command removes your email address from the subscription list and is issued just like the subscription command. Again, adding your email address is optional and generally not recommended on open lists. When “user” wants to be removed from the shopping-group list the message would look like this:

To: majordomo@lists.stanford.edu
From: user@leland.stanford.edu
Subject: __________________________________________
unsubscribe shopping-group

Again, within a few minutes the server will send a message confirming the change.

Building a List of Usernames

Command:

\texttt{buildlist \textless list-name\textgreater \textless password\textgreater \\
\textless user@host.domain\textgreater \\
\textless user2@host2.domain\textgreater \\
... \\
\textless usern@hostn.domain\textgreater \\
\textless EOF\textgreater|end of file

As owner, when you are first setting up your list, you can use the \texttt{buildlist} command to populate it with email addresses of those using the email list. Example:

To: majordomo@lists.stanford.edu
From: user@leland.stanford.edu
Subject: __________________________________________
buildlist shopping-group password
joeuser@email.edu
bobuser@stanford.edu
maryuser@stanford.edu
suzieuser@othermailhost.com
EOF
Approving a Subscription

Command:
approve <password> <subscribe|unsubscribe> <list-name> user@host.domain

If a list has a closed subscription policy, the list owner must approve all subscription requests. In general, when someone who wants to get on a closed list sends a request to the mail server, the request is forwarded to the list owner who must use the approve command to approve that user’s request. If “maryuser” requests to join user’s “shopping-group” list, the list owner’s message to Majordomo would look like this:

To: majordomo@lists.stanford.edu
From: user@leland.stanford.edu
Subject: 

approve password subscribe shopping-group maryuser@stanford.edu

Requesting Information about a List

Command:
info <list-name>

This command will return a short description about the list that is usually generated by the list manager when setting up the list, and may contain information such as list usage policy, a welcome note, etc.

Determining Which Lists You Are Subscribed to

Command:
which [user@host.domain]

Submitting the which command will yield a return email with the names of all the lists that you are subscribed to in the body. The username is optional unless you are trying to check the status of a different user from yourself.

Determining Who Is Subscribed to a Specific List

Command:
who <list-name>

The who command tells you the email addresses of all the users who are subscribed to a specific list.
Advanced Commands

Though it is a little beyond the scope of this workshop to provide details about the more advanced commands that can be used to control a mailing list, we will describe some of the options and point you to resources for more information.

Configurations

There are a lot of configuration commands – way too many to go through in this workshop – but basically, using the config commands allows the list manager to control features such as setting a maximum message length, customizing headers and footers, archiving, privacy, and so on.

A full list of config commands and how they are used is on the Web at: http://www.stanford.edu/group/idg/lists/commands/config_opts.shtml

List Digesting

At times, mailing list users may generate more individual email messages than some users want to receive. List owners can provide an optional “digest form” to help control email clutter. The digest form compiles all individual messages into a single email that is sent out once a pre-determined length is reached (e.g., digest_maxlines =1000). A digest form for the list is not automatic and must be requested by the list owner and managed by using config commands.

For More Information and Assistance

Send email to courses-support@lists.stanford.edu or to majordomo-owners@lists.stanford.edu.
You can also ask a consultant for assistance at the Technology Services Desk on the second floor of Meyer Library or send email to consult@acomp.stanford.edu.