

## Configuring Mailing Lists in Mailman

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In the Fall of 2006, the STC invited the IDL SIG to participate in a pilot project which converted our Discussion and Announcement mailing lists from Lyris to Mailman. It is our hope that others can benefit from our experience. To that end this article explains the general steps involved and the more important choices we made, both before and during the conversion process.

Since each organization is unique, there is no single “right way” to set up a mailing list. Each conversion team should carefully consider Mailman’s many functional options so they can tailor the software’s performance to best meet their group’s requirements. Some amount of trial-and-error is probably inevitable, but taking a careful, informed approach from the beginning will make for a smoother conversion overall.

### What is a Mailing List?

Officially, the term **mailing list** refers to a list of e-mail addresses to which the same information is sent. In practical usage it indicates not just the list of addresses but also the software that manages it; often this system of software and addresses is referred to simply as “the list.”

The management software (Mailman, Lyris, etc.) allows administrators to make the system work in ways that best benefit the organization it serves.

For more information, see Terri Oda’s “GNU Mailman List Member Manual” at <http://www.list.org/mailman-member/node5.html>.

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### In the Beginning

Document your process! This could be a simple listing of the default settings you wish to change, or a complex chart of every available setting with notes indicating test results, etc. At minimum, make a checklist to help in tracking your decisions and update it as you go along. Putting this information down on paper gives your team the points of reference you’ll need as you move through the process, and in the end will provide a record of how your system is set up. This will eventually prove to be an invaluable tool when it saves a new community manager or list manager from having to figure out how the list is set up.

Initially, add only your conversion team members and your STC advisor(s) to the new list. As you set various options, you’ll be able to send list messages within your team to test and observe the effects of each setting you choose. To test as many end-user scenarios as possible your team members should employ a variety of e-mail programs (AOL, Outlook, Apple Mail, Pegasus, Thunderbird, Yahoo..) and user-level list settings (digest, non-digest, and so on).

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