

LIS566

Lecture 1

An introduction to email Lists

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Structure

1. An introduction to lists

2. Finding lists

Reading

nothing

What is a list

An email list is a list of email addresses managed by a computer program.

A list has an email address.

When a person writes to the email address of the list, the message may be distributed to all addresses on the list.

Why email lists "lists"

- one of the oldest Internet resources
- pool of people who are interested in a certain topic
- members have to join, filters out complete idiots
- wealth of information that is quite current
- something to direct patrons to

list concepts: owner

The list owner is a person or group of person who has the power to add and remove addresses from the list. The owner may also have the following duties/powers

- define charter and policy

- answer technical questions

list concepts: closed list

A list is closed if a potential subscriber has to ask the list owner to be subscribed.  
A list is open if anyone can subscribe to a list. Spam is a problem on open lists.  
To avoid spammers to add to lists, list management software often requests a confirmation mail.

list concepts: moderated

A list is moderated if the moderator(s) are the only people allowed to send messages to the list. Messages sent to the list are forwarded to the moderator(s) by the list processing software.  
The owner of the list is not necessarily the moderator. Usually, the owner has moderator powers too.  
Otherwise a list is unmoderated.

list concepts: archived

A list is archived if an archive of past messages is available on a public access computer system.  
Usually a log is kept that contains all messages for a certain period, usually a month.  
Sometimes, these logs are searchable.

list concepts: thread

A thread is a group of messages on the same topic.

Usually a thread is identified by the computer as a bunch of messages that have the same subject line (optionally prefixed by "Re:", "Ant:" etc)

list concepts: digest and index subscriptions

One some mailing lists, a option allows to switch to delivery of digests.

That option is off by default.

Digests concatenate all the message of a period of time (usually a day) in one message.

Index subscriptions send the subject headings of the past day's mails only. This feature is not available on all list software discussed here.

using lists: netiquette

- No unsolicited commercial email
- Respect copyright when forwarding messages
- Respect people's privacy
- Think before cross-posting
- Don't flame
- Watch where that reply is going
- Send your commands to the right address
- Take action when your address changes
- Complain to the list owner, not the list

- using lists: netiquette
- Suspend mail when going away
  - Use a meaningful subject line
  - Write relevant messages
  - Don't quote an entire message when replying
  - Keep your lines short
  - Don't send large messages
  - Don't overdo signatures
  - Don't send attachments to mailing lists
  - Only use ASCII (plain)

#### finding lists

- formerly a good source: Directory of Scholarly and Professional E-conferences <http://www.kovacs.com/directory.html> printed guide published by ARL, then the online guide disappeared.
- Topica <http://www.liszt.com>
- Catalist <http://www.isoft.com/lists/listref.com> for LISTSERV lists only (i.e. those that run a special list software).
- Library Listservs (1998) <http://lac.ncl.edu.tw/virlib/listserv/>