Notes on Mailman List Configuration Options

This document covers several key options required to define a Mailman list and can be used in conjunction with the **MailmanRequest.xls** to help select suitable configuration choices. Many of the list options are configured with LLS defaults which are suitable for a broad range of standard mailing lists and only those options highlighted in the MailmanRequest.xls need to be populated by an individual requesting a new list. Requests for modification of any LLS default settings can be handled on a case by case basis.

General Options

1. **List Name** This is the name by which the list will be referred to in all automatically generated messages as well as on the listing of lists available on the server. Note that this name must match the name of the list as it was created -- you may only change the case of the name in this field.

2. **List Administrator** This field should contain the e-mail address of the list administrator. The list administrator will receive all administrative messages generated by the server as well as any requests that require approval (postings to moderated lists or requests to subscribe to non-open lists). Note: the persons listed as administrators do not automatically receive copies of list traffic. If they want to participate in the list they must also add their address as a subscriber.

3. **List Moderator** This field should contain the e-mail address of the list moderator. List moderators have more limited permissions than a List Administrator; they are not able to change any list configuration variable, but they are allowed to tend to pending administration requests, including approving or rejecting held subscription/unsubscribe requests and held postings. Multiple list moderators are allowed.

4. **A terse phrase identifying this list.** This phrase will appear in two places: on the general listinfo page showing all of the lists hosted on the server, and in the header of all messages sent through the list itself. This value is best kept short.

5. **An introductory description - a few paragraphs - about the list.** This information will be included at the top of the listinfo page for this list. If providing access to the listinfo page you would want to use this setting to provide a detailed description of the purpose and nature of the list.

6. **Send monthly password reminders?** When set to yes, list members will receive an automatically generated monthly posting reminding them of their list password as well as the URLs to access their list configuration options. This setting is generally set to no, unless user self-service via the lists' listinfo page is being provided.

7. **Send welcome message to newly subscribed members?** When set to yes people who join the list or who are added by the list administrator will receive an automatically generated Welcome message with information including the list

address, their password, and the URLs needed to access their list preferences. This setting is generally set to no, unless user self-service via the lists' listinfo page is being provided.

8. **Maximum length in KB of message body?** This setting will allow you to specify the maximum size of messages allowed to be passed through the list to the subscribers. This is an important security measure as it allows you to block a malicious poster from bombing everyone's list with a large file and it prevents your server from being tied up delivering inappropriately large messages. If you do not wish to have a limit on the size of message, set this value to 0. LLS Default: 10000KB (10MB).

9. **Send goodbye to members when they are unsubscribed?** When set to yes people who leave the list or who are unsubscribed by the list administrator will receive an automatically generated Goodbye message with information. This setting is generally set to no, unless list members are allowed to unsubscribe from a moderated list via the LISTNAME-leave@mailman.lls.edu link or user self-service via the lists' listinfo page is being provided.

10. **Should administrator get notices of subscribes and unsubscribes?** If set to Yes, the list administrator receives all subscribe and unsubscribe notifications. This becomes unmanageable when lists are populated or synchronized from files containing hundreds of new members. Each new member subscription or unsubscribe request generates an e-mail notification for the administrator. LLS Default: no

Non-Digest Options

11. **Footer added to mail sent to regular list members.** Allows addition of a uniform footer to all messages passing through the list. The default footer shows the list name, the list address, and the URL that persons can go to in order to access the list information and change their settings. The default footer is generally removed unless user self-service via the lists' listinfo page is being provided. A custom footer may be added upon request to provide information that should be reproduced on every message posted to the list, e.g. how to unsubscribe from the list.

Digest Options

12. **Can list members choose to receive list traffic bunched in digests?** This setting allows you to specify whether or not users can opt to receive mail traffic to the list in the form of a digest. Note: There are some instances, such as a list for emergency announcements, where you want mail to be delivered immediately in all cases and where you would want to disable the digest feature. The default footer is generally removed unless user self-service via the lists' listinfo page is being provided. A custom footer may be added upon request to provide information that should be reproduced on every message posted to the list, e.g. how to unsubscribe from the list.

Privacy Options

13. **Advertise this list when people ask what lists are on this machine?** In general, persons in the outside world can see a list of available Mailman lists by visiting http://mailman.lls.edu/mailman/listinfo. By setting this value to no, this list will not be included in the directory of available lists. LLS Default: no

14. **What steps are required for subscription?**

> <u>Confirm:</u> when a subscription request is made, a message will be sent back to the address being added. The new member will have to reply to the message (without having to modify anything) for their subscription to become active. This prevents someone from maliciously adding people against their will. This should NOT be selected for closed membership lists.
> <u>Require Approval:</u> when a subscription request is made a message will be sent to the list administrator letting them know that a person is petitioning to join. The list administrator will be given a URL to follow that will then show them the request and allow them to approve or deny it via the web.
> <u>Confirm+Approval:</u> includes both of the above.

> LLS Default: Require Approval is recommended for all internal and closed membership lists to avoid unregulated member additions.

15. **Is the list moderators' approval required for unsubscription requests?** When members want to leave a list, they will make an unsubscription request, either via the web, via the lists' listinfo page if provided or via email (LISTNAME-leave@mailman.lls.edu). Allowing open unsubscriptions so that users can easily remove themselves from mailing lists may be acceptable for some lists, however for a majority of lists you may want to impose moderator approval before an unsubscribe request is processed, particularly for staff, faculty, officialnotice or Departmental lists which have mandated memberships.

16. **Who can view the subscription list? (Anyone, List Members, List Admin Only)** This setting dictates access to the subscription list via the lists' listinfo web page.
> <u>Anyone:</u> this allows anyone in the world to browse by and take a look at who the members of your list are. Never ever use this setting!
> <u>List members:</u> this is the traditional setting for most lists, allowing participants to see who the other people on the list are but blocking view to the general public.
> <u>List admin only:</u> only the administrator can see the list members.

<u>Sender Filters</u>

17. **By default, should new member postings be moderated?** This setting defines the list as "moderated" or "unmoderated" in most people's minds. If set to yes, postings are held and the administrator is notified of their existence. They may then approve or reject postings via the web interface. If set to "no," postings to the list are immediately delivered to list membership.

18. **Action to take for postings from non-members for which no explicit action is defined? (Accept, Hold, Reject or Discard)** When a post from a non-member is received, the message's sender is matched against the list of explicitly accepted, held, rejected (bounced), and discarded addresses. If no match is found, then this action is taken. For moderated lists, the preferred setting would be Hold for a list moderator's approval or rejection. For Departmental lists which are not moderated and allow non-members to post to the list, this parameter should be set to Accept.

Recipient Filters

19. **Ceiling on acceptable number of recipients for a posting?** If a posting has this number, or more, of recipients, it is held for admin approval. Use 0 for no ceiling.

Bounce Processing (Notification)

20. **Should Mailman perform automatic bounce processing?** Tells Mailman whether or not to bother you with bounce messages. Mailman does a pretty good job of figuring out error messages generated with RFC-compliant mail agents. On large lists with a large number of subscribers coming and going, this feature will save you a lot of reading from MAILER-DAEMON.

21. **Should mailman send you, the list owner, any bounce messages that failed to be detected by the bounce processor?** While Mailman's bounce detector is fairly robust, it's impossible to detect every bounce format in the world. You should keep this variable set to yes. If this really is a permanent bounce from one of your members, you should probably manually remove them from your list.

22. **Should mailman notify you, the list owner, when bounces cause a members' subscription to be disabled?** By setting this value to No, you turn off notification messages that are normally sent to the list owners when a member's delivery is disabled due to excessive bounces. An attempt to notify the member will always be made.

23. **Should mailman notify you, the list owner, when bounces cause a member to be unsubscribed?** By setting this value to No, you turn off notification messages that are normally sent to the list owners when a member is unsubscribed due to excessive bounces. An attempt to notify the member will always be made.

Archiving Options

24. **Archive messages** Setting this to "yes" will cause Mailman to store a record of all traffic sent through the list. If set to yes, the lists' listinfo web page must be available to the user to allow access to the archives and self-management of mailman passwords.

25. **Is archive file source for public or private archival?** If set to "private," then only list members are able to access the contents of the list archive. They will be prompted for their list password when they try to access the contents. Setting this

to "public" will allow anyone to access the list archives through the listinfo page. Note: think carefully about whether your list membership wants their identities and postings made available to the world at large by making the archive public. Public access means that web spiders will be able to store and make available member's writings outside of the context of the list to which they were posted to the list.

Content Filtering

26. **Should mailman filter content of the list traffic according to the settings below?** Policies concerning the content of list traffic:

> Content filtering works like this: when a message is received by the list and you have enabled content filtering, the individual attachments are first compared to the filter types. If the attachment type matches an entry in the filter types, it is discarded.

> Then, if there are pass types defined, any attachment type that does not match a pass type is also discarded. If there are no pass types defined, this check is skipped.

> After this initial filtering, any multipart attachments that are empty are removed. If the outer message is left empty after this filtering, then the whole message is discarded.

> Then, each multipart/alternative section will be replaced by just the first alternative that is non-empty after filtering if collapse_alternatives is enabled.

> Finally, any text/html parts that are left in the message may be converted to text/plain if convert_html_to_plaintext is enabled and the site is configured to allow these conversions.

27. **Remove message attachments that don't have a matching content type.** Leave this field blank to skip this filter test.

28. **Action to take when a message matches the content filtering rule? (Discard, Reject, Forward to List Owner, Preserve)**

29. **List membership.** Provide a listing of e-mail addresses that should be added to a requested list, either a text file containing one (1) e-mail address per line or an Excel spreadsheet which includes a worksheet column with one (1) e-mail address per row.