Configuring Yahoo Groups & Mailman for Ham Radio Organizations

Email is a good substitute or aid for newsletters for Ham Radio organizations. Yahoo or Mailman (note 1) reflectors have advantages over manual email groups (note 2). There are three ways reflectors can be used. A Group Owner, Administrator, or other Moderator must recognize that each of the three are used by different members, or the same members at different times.

- Send and receive reflected email.
- Send regular email but receive a daily digest by email.
- Read and compose the messages on the web without email. (Like a message board, popular at work!)

A Moderator of an email reflector has many configuration choices. The following recommendations for Yahoo and Mailman Ham groups may make it easier. Details are in the notes, but different situations may require different answers.

SETUP

Yahoo – If the Group is already created, the second box down in the left sidebar shows Info or Settings. Select "Settings" and you will see something like:

- Membership requires approval
- Messages do not require approval
- All members can post messages
- Email attachments are not permitted
- Members cannot hide email address
- Not listed in directory

The wording will change depending on how configuration questions are answered. Most can be changed by a Moderator by selecting "Management" in the top left sidebar. You will find four categories under "Group Settings" that can be edited to change many features. Do NOT change your addresses. If you change, it will be something like 60 days before you or anyone can be assigned that one again! Although you may strongly disagree with some of the choices above, when confronted with the actual questions, you may be forced to those answers (note 3).

Mailman – The Moderator must use a special password to go to the group's administrative interface page. Choices similar to Yahoo are found (note 4). Be careful what you change.

SUBJECT TAG AND FOOTER

You can customize your group email by changing the subject tag or by adding your web page URL or other notes to the message footer (note 5). The subject tag is the name in brackets inserted in the subject of all group email. Yahoo and Mailman use your group name, but you can edit it to be anything. You can add lines to the footer, and in some cases, delete canned messages. Subject tags and footers are not seen on messages read on the group's web page.

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(note 1) - Mailman software provides email reflectors on suitable servers. The best known implementation for Ham Radio is on donation-supported QTH.NET and QSL.NET. Mailman is popular but doesn't offer some Yahoo extra features that are not always needed. This author Moderates two Ham Radio groups on QTH.NET with Mailman, and five on Yahoo Groups.

(note 2) – Manual email groups make addresses available to viruses when NOT sent BCC, or prevent member replies and interaction when they ARE sent BCC. Old address errors creep in. Senders wanting control are pleased with this method.

(note 3) – Yahoo Group configuration pros and cons: Alternative answers are shown and argued.

- Membership requires approval – Open membership allows spammers. Obvious if you browse such groups.
- Messages do not require approval – Not required with a closed membership. Problem members can be moderated.
- All members can post messages – A primary purpose of the reflector.
- Email attachments are not permitted – When permitted, attachments are not sent to both email and web. Use other arrangements, such as the "Files" section, and not impose large attachments on members who don't want them.
- Members cannot hide email address - Members with hidden addresses are not allowed to post by email.
- Not listed in directory – Yahoo Directory attracts spammers. Hams are directed to their page by the Ham organization.
- Allow Members access to the Archives and Members List – Never go below Members to Public for ANY feature.
- Leave these features Off until first needed - Files, Photos, Links, Database, Polls, Calendar, Chat

(note 4) – Mailman v.2.1.9 configuration pros and cons: Use defaults except for the following.

- General Options>reply_goes_to_list – Use: This list, not Poster.
- send_welcome_msg – Yes, recommended to send Welcome Message to new members.
- welcome_msg – Enter text about your group to precede Mailman Welcome Message to new members.
- send_goodbye_msg – Yes, recommended to send Goodbye Message to unsubscribing members.
- goodbye_msg – Enter: "If you did not intend to unsubscribe, please contact" (insert Moderator email address)
- Privacy options>Subscription rules>subscribe_policy – Set to Confirm and approve to require email confirmation.

(note 5) – Subject tag and footer on Yahoo, subject_prefix and msg_footer on Mailman: If your club is the Moo Amateur Radio Club, also called MARC, but MARC is already taken, so you are MooARC. The address must stay MooARC, but you can edit the subject tag to say [MARC].

<u>Yahoo</u> – Go to Management>Group Settings>Messages>Subject Tag and Footer (Edit). Fill out and save. Send a test message then go back and edit if required.

<u>Mailman</u> – Go to administrative>General Options>subject_prefix or administrative>Non-digest option>msg_footer. Fill out and save. Send a test message then go back and edit if required. Repeat footer changes under Digest options once you have it right, but don't test the results.

Les Cobb, W6TEE, v.1.0, January 5, 2011