Simple Mailing List

Version 1.5.1
January 10, 2008

Welcome to the Simple Mailing List. The Simple Mailing List is a mailing list manager written in PHP. It was designed to be easy to use, but powerful at the same time. The Simple Mailing List is a FREE application created by NotOneBit.com and is provided as-is with no warranty.

Features:

- Clean, clear tabbed interface.
- Easy subscribe/unsubscribe integration with any web page.
- Optional email confirmation to the subscriber upon subscribe/unsubscribe.
- Optional email updates to the list owner upon subscribe/unsubscribe including current member count.
- The ability to schedule mailings for a future date.
- The ability to throttle/limit/queue messages so as not to overload your host's mail server.
- The ability to send messages as plain text or HTML (with a MIME compliant plain text version automatically created).
- SMTP support.
- Relaying. Send a message from anywhere, even your cell phone and SML will deliver it.
- Preview the actual email you are going to send by sending the message to the list owner only before sending it to your entire list.
- Easy to use member management which shows you members that have signed up but not confirmed their subscription, as well as the ability to remove members in bulk.
- Bulk import and export email addresses.
- Archives of all sent messages are automatically created.
- Blacklisting.
- Bounce management.
- (Near) live update of the number of members a message you compose will go out to.
- Templates.
- Drafts. Save messages for later use.

Requirements:

- PHP 4.3 or later.
- MySQL 3.23 or later.
- In order to use the queuing/scheduling features, you will need cron access or the ability to schedule the execution of a script at defined times.
- In order to use the bounce processing feature, you will need the ability to modify/create a php.ini file.

Installation:

1. **Unzip the archive and upload the files and folders to your web server.** The folder structure as packaged is as follows:

   - 📁 simple
     - 📁 admin
       - 📁 css
       - 📁 templates
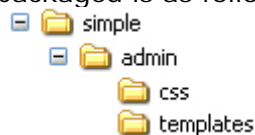
   You should secure the admin folder to prevent unauthorized access (typically with .htaccess if running Apache).

2. **Create the MySQL tables** (assumes you have access to phpmyadmin). The SQL commands for creating the necessary tables are in the tables.sql file. You can either copy and paste the contents of this file into phpmyadmin or upload the tables.sql file into phpmyadmin.

3. **Edit the configuration file.** Open config.inc.php located under the admin folder in a text editor. In it, you'll see Simple Mailing List's configuration variables, not all of which are required. While the config file is documented, the following is a list of the variables in that file.

- $config['db_server'] - Your database server (REQUIRED)
- $config['db_user'] - The user that has access to your database (REQUIRED)
- $config['db_password'] - The password for the user that has access to your database (REQUIRED)
- $config['db_name'] - The name of the database (REQUIRED)
- $config['list_name'] - The name of your list. This will appear in the confirmation email body and subject line. (REQUIRED)
- $config['owner_email'] - The email address of the list owner. Messages will be sent from this address. (REQUIRED)
- $config['notify_on_confirm'] - 0 or 1. Make this a 1 if you would like to receive an email every time someone confirms their subscription.
- $config['notify_on_unsub'] - 0 or 1. Make this a 1 if you would like to receive an email every time someone unsubscribes.
- $config['notify_user_on_confirm'] - 0 or 1. Make this a 1 if you would like the user to receive an email when they successfully confirm their subscription.
- $config['notify_user_on_unsub'] - 0 or 1. Make this a 1 if you would like the user to receive an email when they unsubscribe.
- $config['unsub_url'] - URL to the page that contains your subscribe/unsubscribe form. (REQUIRED)
- $config['default_format'] - 0 or 1. 0 is used for text format, 1 for HTML. You can change the format from the Send tab at any time.
- $config['use_queue'] - true or false. This tells SML whether you will be using the queue or not.
- $config['queue_size'] - This should be the number of messages to send each time you run the consume.php script via cron.
- $config['check_bounces'] - 0 or 1. Set to zero to disable bounce checking or 1 to enable.
- $config['bounce_mailbox'] - Email address (account) of mailbox to check for bounces.
- $config['bounce_password'] - Password for above mailbox (account)
- $config['allow_relay'] - 0 or 1. Set to zero to disable relaying or 1 to enable.
- $config['allow_relay_from'] – An array of email addresses to accept relays from. If you enable relaying and leave this array empty then any address will be able to send messages to be processed.
- $config['relay_mailbox'] - Email address (account) of mailbox to send relays to. It's recommended that you choose a hard to guess mailbox name and not something like relay@example.com.
- $config['relay_password'] - Password for above mailbox (account)
- $config['use_SMTP'] - 0 or 1. Set to 0 to use sendmail or 1 for SMTP
- $config['smtp_server'] – The fully qualifies domain name of your SMTP server, e.g. mail.optonline.net
- $config['smtp_domain'] – Typically just 'localhost'. Some SMTP hosts need a specific domain when logging in
- $config['smtp_from_address'] – The email address associated with the SMTP email account
- $config['smtp_username'] – The username for the SMTP account. Sometimes this is the same as the above email address
- $config['smtp_password'] – The password for the SMTP account
- $config['smtp_port'] – The SMTP port.

4. **Enter the administration section.** Point your browser to the admin folder (e.g. http://www.example.com/simple/admin/) to access the Simple Mailing List administration section.

5. **Setup the subscribe/unsubscribe form.** In the 'simple' folder, there are two files, index.php and process.php. Index.php is a simple example page of how to integrate the Simple Mailing List into any PHP web page. To include the subscribe/unsubscribe from on any page in your site, you just need to use the following form:

```
<form method="POST" action="/path/to/process.php">
<input type="text" name="address" size="20">
<input type="submit" value="Submit" name="submit">
<br />
<font face="Tahoma" size="1">All subscribe/unsubscribe requests must be confirmed via email.</font>
</form>
```

where the path to process.php is correct for your installation.

The above HTML code is also available from within the Simple Mailing List under the Help tab. It will display the HTML and automatically generate the correct path to process.php. Process.php is the guts behind the subscribe/unsubscribe process. You can add HTML/PHP above and below the default code so the file fits into your site visually. Every time someone enters an email address to subscribe/unsubscribe, or follows a confirmation link in their email, they will end up at process.php. Process.php will only output a simple HTML form (similar to the example above) and a short message. By default, process.php points to the config.inc.php file in the admin folder and includes it like so: include('admin/config.inc.php'). If you change the folder structure, BE SURE TO UPDATE THE PATH TO CONFIG.INC.PHP.

6. **Queuing/Throttling/Limiting email.** To enable the ability to send messages at a future date and/or send mail in batches, you must enable the $config['queue_size'] variable in config.inc.php. This variable sets the number of email messages to send, every time the consume.php script is run. Consume.php is typically run as a cron job and its function is to process all messages waiting in the queue. For example, if you want to limit the Simple Mailing List to sending 500 email messages per hour, you could schedule the cron job to run consume.php every 15 minutes, and then set $config['queue_size'] to 125. It's up to you (and your host) to determine how many email messages you want to send out and how frequently you want to send them. When queuing is enabled, you'll see that when you go to send a message to your list, you have the option to schedule it for a later delivery. When you have enabled queuing, you'll see the option on the Send tab to select a date and time for your message to begin delivery.

Since not everyone has access to a scheduling mechanism, and some folks have difficulty, setting it up, Simple Mailing List will allow you to use the queue and process it manually. While this is <u>not</u> the recommended use of the queue, the archives page will display a button when there are messages in the queue, which will allow you to manually process waiting messages. Again, this is <u>not</u> the recommended way of using the queue.

7. **Plain text/HTML**. You can send messages as either plain text or HTML. If you select HTML, a plain text version is created automatically for those users without the ability to view HTML email messages. You can switch between the two modes and any text you've entered will not be lost. If you use HTML mode, you can type or paste your HTML directly in the message area. It is strongly recommended that you preview any messages you create before sending them, although the Simple Mailing List will allow you to send them without preview.

8. **Templates**. You can create templates to give your messages a consistent look. All templates must be uploaded in the admin/templates folder. Templates can be plain text or HTML. Click the 'Load A Template' link on the Send tab and a popup window will present you with a list of all available templates. When you select a template, it will load itself in the message area of the Send tab, overwriting any text that was already entered. If you select a HTML template, you can switch to

HTML editor mode on the Send tab, and see how your template looks. Two sample templates are included in the templates folder as example.

9. **Importing email addresses**. If you have email addresses you'd like to add without having to manually enter them into MySQL, you can use the Import Members feature on the Members page. You can type or paste your list of addresses into the import box. Addresses can be separated by spaces, commas, new lines, or your own customer delimiter that you would enter in the delimiter box below the address box. Upon submitting addresses, they are scanned to make sure they aren't already in the database, and fit the proper format for an email address. Addresses that are already in the database, or that don't fit the proper format of an email address as discarded. Addresses are also validated against any blacklist rules you have. If an address matches any of your rules, it will be discarded. You can bypass this part of the import process by checking the box to bypass black rules. Once the import process is complete, a list of addresses that passed and failed are displayed, and the members page is refreshed automatically.

10. **Exporting email addresses**. You can also export all (confirmed and unconfirmed) email addresses in your database to a CSV (comma separated values) file. Next to the import link on the members page is an Export Addresses to CSV link. Clicking this will allow you to download the addresses for backup purposes, or for use in other applications.

11. **Bounce handling.** Many times users on your list have mailboxes that are full, accounts that get closed or suspended, or for whatever reason can't be reached. By enabling bounce handling you can see what addresses on your list have bounced your messages back to you. First, you should setup a separate mailbox to catch these bounces (e.g. bounce@yourdomain.com). Then you'll need to make sure the return-path header for the message you'll be sending point to this address. A php.ini file is included in the admin folder that allows you to set the return path variable, provided your host allows you to set your own php.ini file. The only line you should need to edit in the php.ini file is sendmail_path = "/usr/sbin/sendmail -t -i -F bounce@yourdomain.com -f bounce@yourdomain.com" where you would replace bounce@yourdomain.com with the bounce account you have setup. Make sure that you set $config['check_bounces'] to 1 in the config.ini.php file once you have this setup. Also be sure to update the $config['bounce_mailbox'] and $config['bounce_password'] variables in the config.ini.php file. If you'd rather not handle bounces, set $config['check_bounces'] to 0.

12. **Relaying.** Relaying allows you to send email to the Simple Mailing List to be delivered to your subscribers. This feature is handy when you don't have access to your SML installation but do have the ability to send email. For example, you might be riding the train into work and get hit with the sudden inspiration to send a message to your list. You could take out your cell phone, type up a message and send it to the relay mailbox you setup for use with SML. It's that simple. If you are using the queue, SML will check the message to see if you specified a delivery date and time, otherwise it would process it immediately. Note that for this feature to work, you <u>must</u> have the ability to schedule the execution of a script (i.e. cron). Relay.php must be scheduled to execute at some interval (every day, every hour, every minute, etc.) so that it can check the relay mailbox you set up and process any waiting messages. If you are using the queue feature of SML, you have the choice of setting the delivery date and time with relayed messages. To use the queue with relayed messages, simply add the following to the subject of your message after the subject itself: [q]YYYY-MM-DD-HH-MM[/q] where YYYY = the four digit year, MM = the two digit month, DD = the two digit day, HH = the two digit hour in 24 hour time format, and MM = the two digit minute. For example, if my message subject was "New Software Release Coming Wednesday" and I wanted to relay and queue it, I would alter the subject to be the following, "New Software Release Coming Wednesday [q]2007-09-22-08-30[/q]" which would queue the message to be delivered on or after September 22, 2007 at 8:30am. The queue information in the subject is removed before the message is delivered. Note that if you configure SML to use the queue, but do not specify a queue time for your relay message, SML will default to queuing the message at the time it was received and begin to send the relay message the next time the queue is processed. Once the relay

processes a message it is deleted from the relay mailbox. Relayed messages will display in your archives just like any message sent by SML.

13. **Drafts**. Drafts allow you to save messages you begin so they can be sent later. Any message you begin to create will automatically be saved after two minutes, or whenever you press the Safe Draft button. A few notes. If a draft is saved and nothing else is typed after it is saved, the autosave will not continue to repeatedly save the same, unaltered message. Drafts differ from templates in that when you send a message that was saved as a draft, it will not be available in the future. In other words, a draft is deleted from the drafts window once it is sent or once you delete it from the drafts window, otherwise it will stay there forever.

Revision History:

- 1.0 – Initial release.
- 1.0.1 – Maintenance update to fix issues with the built-in HTML editor.
- 1.1 – Removed built-in HTML editor. Added send to list owner feature. Added export addresses feature.
- 1.11 – Fixed bug with headers in consume.php.
- 1.12
  - o Added feature to members.php to delete addresses with bounces in bulk
  - o Changed All Members sort order on members.php to display unconfirmed address first (a-z) followed by confirmed addresses (a-z).
- 1.2
  - o Changed hard coded return and newline (\r\n) to use the PHP installation specific PHP_EOL constant to handle the differences between *nix and Windows in send.php, owner_test.php, and consume.php.
  - o Added the ability to view your configuration option from within the Help tab.
  - o Corrected a refresh issue after importing addresses on the Members tab.
  - o Added the ability to remove unconfirmed members in bulk on the Members tab.
- 1.21
  - o Fixed bug in consume.php that deleted unsubscribe link in HTML messages.
- 1.5
  - o Created a new mail delivery engine
  - o Added relaying
  - o Added SMTP support
  - o Added drafts
  - o New config file format
  - o Cleaned up the overall code
- 1.5.1
  - o Minor update to fix issue with apostrophes not being escaped in the subject line