

# Release Notes for LISTSERV® Version 15.5

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LISTSERV 15.5 is a semi-major release of LISTSERV that includes all known fixes and patches and all new and enhanced features up to November 27, 2007.

**IMPORTANT: LISTSERV 15.5 requires a version 15.5 LAK!  
Valid Maintenance expiring on November 27, 2007 or later is also required!**

You must obtain and install a LISTSERV version 15.5 product LAK and (for sites with perpetual licensing) an appropriate maintenance LAK, or LISTSERV will not start after the upgrade.

[More information](#)

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## Special note for users of LISTSERV Maestro 3.0 and following

LISTSERV Maestro 3.0 requires LISTSERV with a build date on or after January 12, 2007, due to changes made to LISTSERV since the original 15.0 release to support new Maestro features.

## Before upgrading an existing installation

Because of non-backward-compatible changes made by LISTSERV 15.5 to the format of LISTSERV's SIGNUP files which allow UTF-8 characters to be used in passwords, and the addition of non-reversible subscriber password encryption, L-Soft **STRONGLY RECOMMENDS** that, prior to upgrading, a full backup be made of your LISTSERV installation.

## Changes for LISTSERV

### SECURITY, EXTENSIBILITY: LDAP support has been implemented

LISTSERV Classic and Classic HPO, version 15.5, is able to interface to LDAP servers to authenticate user logins and to insert LDAP attributes in mail-merge distributions. For full information on LISTSERV/LDAP integration, please see the PDF *LISTSERV-LDAP Documentation*, which is available separately.

### SECURITY, EXTENSIBILITY: Dynamic Query Lists (DQL)

LISTSERV Classic and Classic HPO version 15.5 is able to execute on-demand *Dynamic Queries* against either LDAP or traditional DBMS servers, and use the results for access control or mail delivery. For instance, an LDAP query against an Active Directory server could be used to grant list owner privileges to all members of a particular Windows Security Group. A DBMS query could be used to combine employee rosters for two departments and send a single copy of an announcement to each unique employee e-mail address. For more information on DQL, please see the PDF *Dynamic Query Documentation*, which is available separately.

### SECURITY: Password encryption in SIGNUP files

LISTSERV 15.5 now supports (and has enabled by default) password encryption for its SIGNUP files. This means that installing LISTSERV 15.5 will encrypt the passwords in your SIGNUP files, which is not backwardly-compatible with earlier versions of LISTSERV. As noted above, if you are upgrading to 15.5 from an earlier version, it is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** that you make a full backup of your LISTSERV installation before upgrading it.

Password encryption can be disabled by setting the new site configuration variable SIGNUP\_ENCRYPT\_PASSWORDS (Boolean) to 0. This can be done prior to upgrading if desired.

Examples:

VM:	SIGNUP_ENCRYPT_PASSWORDS = 0
VMS:	SIGNUP_ENCRYPT_PASSWORDS "0"
unix:	SIGNUP_ENCRYPT_PASSWORDS=0 export SIGNUP_ENCRYPT_PASSWORDS
Win:	SIGNUP_ENCRYPT_PASSWORDS=0

When SIGNUP\_ENCRYPT\_PASSWORDS is set to 0, everything works as before - passwords are kept in plain text, can be queried with PWC QUERY, and so forth.

When SIGNUP\_ENCRYPT\_PASSWORDS is set to 1, all SIGNUP entries with a password will be irreversibly encrypted. Newly created passwords will be encrypted, and PWC QUERY will still work, but it will not tell you what the password is. The initial encryption process happens as part of the regular SIGNUP file compression. If you have a lot of passwords, the initial compression will take a bit longer to complete.

If you then return to SIGNUP\_ENCRYPT\_PASSWORDS=0, encrypted passwords will continue to work and PWC QUERY will continue not to show them, while passwords created after disabling encryption will be in plain text, and PWC QUERY will show them to you. *There is no way to recover the one-way encrypted passwords.* Either the user must use PW REP or the LISTSERV administrator must use PWC REP and change the password if it is lost.

## **USABILITY: AOL feedback loop auto-processing**

LISTSERV version 15.5 is able to automatically process AOL Feedback Loop reports (these special reports are sent automatically by AOL to organizations that are on AOL's whitelist). Once configured, LISTSERV automatically parses the reports and implements the actions required by AOL's whitelist agreement. This helps preserve whitelist status and reduce the number of spam complaints from AOL users.

Use of this feature assumes you already have a feedback loop in place as part of your AOL whitelist agreement and are able to redirect the feedback loop reports to a new address.

For more information on this feature, including configuration instructions, please see the PDF *AOL Feedback Loop Auto-Processing*, which is available separately.

## **USABILITY: Two new Misc-Options= values: KEEP\_EXCHANGE\_DATA, DISCARD\_HTML**

These two "Misc-Options=" values have been introduced to replace "Language= EXCHANGE" and "Language= NOHTML", respectively. This makes it possible to set site defaults (in the site configuration variable DEFAULT\_MISC\_OPTIONS) that can be overridden by the list owner.

The legacy "Language=" settings are still supported, but deprecated. When used, they display a warning when the list header is stored:

```
* Language= ...,NOHTML,...
```

Warning: The NOHTML option is deprecated and may be removed in a future version. Please use "Misc-Options= DISCARD\_HTML" instead.

The keyword parser also checks that any language you specify is actually available:

```
* Language= BAD,...
```

Warning: There is no message template file by that name. This option will have no effect until a message template file is installed by the LISTSERV administrator.

Because LISTSERV Lite does not support the "Misc-Options=" keyword, for the time being LISTSERV Lite sites will have to continue using the deprecated Language= syntax for these two functions.

*Please note carefully:* "Language= HTML" was not changed, as it controls whether or not administrative messages are generated in HTML format, as opposed to determining what content is acceptable for messages sent to the list.

## **USABILITY: New REINDEX command for archives**

This new maintenance command will rebuild the WWW indexes (default), database indexes or both for one or more lists. Requires list owner privileges.

```
REINDEX [options] list1 [list2 [...]]
```

(supports \*|ALL for all lists)

Options: DATABASE WWW BOTH IMMEDIATE

By default, web indexes will be rebuilt in the background on LISTSERV Classic HPO unless you specify the IMMEDIATE option.

There is no background reindexing support for LISTSERV Classic non-HPO.

**Documented Restriction: Indexing blocks all other LISTSERV commands/functions until the current list is done. Because it is resource-intensive, the REINDEX command is considered a "maintenance" command as opposed to an "everyday" command, and should not be issued in production environments outside of regularly-scheduled maintenance windows.**

The main reason to use REINDEX is to retroactively add RSS abstracts (see below) to an existing list. It may also be useful if an archive file is edited by accident or if there is a corrupt file or the like. LISTSERV Classic non-HPO sites with one or more very large and active list(s) may also wish to run this command when upgrading to HPO.

On non-VM systems where there are no web indexes, normally there is no reason at all to rebuild your database indexes, other than in cases of disk corruption or in an upgrade to HPO coupled with the presence of a list with very large archives.

When rebuilding web indexes, BOTH the HTML files AND the INDxxxx files are reindexed. While there may be legitimate reasons for wanting to rebuild your HTML files (template changes, etc), it is NOT recommended to use the REINDEX command to accomplish that, as the overhead involved in rebuilding the INDxxxx files is prohibitive if they do not actually need rebuilding.

With LISTSERV Classic there is no background support, so REINDEX \* should be scheduled for "quiet" periods if you have many lists and/or large archives.

While a particular list has its indexes rebuilt, WA browsing accesses will generally fail and/or you will get "listname.html" not found errors. There is no good way to avoid that since the goal is to recreate the entire index structure from scratch, and during that process files will be deleted and not be available until they are rebuilt.

By default, database indexes are reset and will be rebuilt the next time they are needed; this is a fast operation. Under HPO, you can use the IMMEDIATE option to cause an immediate rebuild of all database indexes if absolutely necessary, but remember that the immediate rebuild will block the server from doing anything else until it completes. However, this can be a useful command if you migrate an entire server or perhaps just a single list during off hours and want to pre-index everything so that the server is snappy when traffic increases in the morning.

## **USABILITY: Add wildcard support and date ranges to SERVE**

The SERVE command has been enhanced to support wildcard and date range LIST, and optionally reset all entries returned by a LIST search. The updated syntax is:

```
SERVE wildcard [LIST] [old_options | new_options]
```

The "old options" are unchanged from before. The new options are:

- `SINCE(date)`: show only entries from and including a specific date. Use parentheses if you want to supply the date in a multi-word format like `SINCE(3 Jun 2006)`, otherwise something like `SINCE 2006-01-01` (without the parentheses) is acceptable.
- `UNTIL(date)`: same as above for the other end of the range.
- `AFTER/BEFORE`: silent aliases for the above.
- `RESET`: resets all the matching entries. Use with care. `QUIET` is implied (no notifications are sent).

The old syntax ('SERVE LIST [*options*']') is still accepted for everything but the RESET option, which requires you to provide a wildcard specification (and thus requires the new syntax).

Most larger LISTSERV installations probably have thousands of SERVE entries that have accumulated over the years as administrators have battled spam. Only a fraction of the addresses so served off are likely to be in use today, but they continue to make SERVE LIST unmanageable, and continuing to maintain them comes at a resource cost. In addition, many spammer addresses were likely served out prior to the availability of the DROP option, which just causes more spam for the LISTSERV administrator to deal with.

While there is no absolute necessity to purge your list of served-off addresses, the new functionality at least provides you with the ability to "SERVE LIST SINCE" recent history, and avoid having thousands of addresses thrown at you when all you really wanted to know was who was served out in the last week.

### **USABILITY: Improved RSS support; abstracts now available**

The existing RSS support in LISTSERV's web archive interface has been improved by the addition of RSS abstracting. Abstracts are available in your RSS feed by default starting with LISTSERV 15.5. However, it should be noted that the web indexes must be recreated to add the abstracts. This is a one-time operation that could take a while on a large site and is better left to be scheduled by the administrator. (See the documentation of the new REINDEX command, above.) An abstract is either generated implicitly from the existing text of the message, or may be specified explicitly.

In order to properly specify the explicit abstract, a mail client that supplies a plain-text part that matches the message is REQUIRED. Most if not all modern mail clients fit this specification.

***In plain text messages***, an explicit abstract is specified by using <abstract> and </abstract> tags in the body of the message - typically at the very end, but the explicit abstract may in theory appear anywhere in the message. The closing tag is optional but recommended.

***For those using HTML-capable mail clients***: If the mail client is unable to provide a user-specified plain-text alternative and instead sends a "canned" message to the effect that mail clients that do not support HTML will not be able to read the message, the "canned" message will be the abstract. If the mail client is not capable of providing a plain-text alternative message part at all, and provides HTML only, no abstract will be available.

***For those posting messages using the web interface***: A dedicated text box for entering explicit abstracts can also be enabled in the message posting interface. List owners can set the RSSINPUT variable to 1 in the list-specific SKIN template. To enable the dedicated text box for all lists, the server administrator should set the RSSINPUT variable to 1 in the site-wide SKIN template.

There is no word limit when an explicit abstract is specified.

There is a new site configuration variable, RSS\_ABSTRACT\_WORDS, which controls the size and/or the presence of the abstract in the feed.

There are two parameters: a maximum abstract size, and a minimum abstract size. The second parameter is optional, and if left unset, defaults to 50% of the maximum size. The basic syntax is:

```
RSS_ABSTRACT_WORDS=max [min]
```

Examples:

VM:	RSS_ABSTRACT_WORDS= '500 250'
VMS:	DEFAULT_DIST_BACKGROUND "500 250"
unix:	RSS_ABSTRACT_WORDS="500 250" export RSS_ABSTRACT_WORDS
Win:	RSS_ABSTRACT_WORDS=500 250

The site-level value may be overridden at the list level with the new list header keyword RSS-Abstract-Words, whose basic syntax is:

```
RSS-Abstract-Words= max[,min]
```

For example,

```
RSS-Abstract-Words= 100  
RSS-Abstract-Words= 100,25
```

LISTSERV stops at the first paragraph boundary after which it has collected at least 'min' words, adding an ellipsis if there is more text (compliant signatures are ignored). If there is an explicit abstract, the min and max parameters are ignored and the abstract is whatever the user entered. If the stop-on-paragraph-end feature is not desired, simply set "min" to the same value as "max".

If RSS abstracts are not desired, setting the maximum to 0 disables the abstract altogether.

In all cases, RSS\_ABSTRACT\_WORDS and/or RSS-Abstract-Words may be changed at will, with the change taking effect "from now on." In order to make the new value take effect retroactively, the indexes must be rebuilt manually. Because of the resource-intensive nature of the REINDEX command, this will NOT happen automatically.

## **OTHER: Miscellaneous changes and enhancements**

- LISTSERV 15.5 now intercepts Microsoft Exchange "recall" messages and discards them silently (although there is a notification in the log for debugging purposes).
- For sites that continue to use the obsolete static web archive index page (index.html), starting with LISTSERV 15.5, the HTML description of the list as configured in the list header (if present) is saved to index.html immediately following the number of subscribers (on the same line). There is a '<br>' preceding the text. HTML formatting MUST follow the rules as documented for the list's HTML description, which is normally used only for CataList purposes. There is a single exception which applies only to this function (not to CataList): The HTML description has a hard-coded limit of 4K in order to help prevent DoS attacks. If the HTML description of the list is longer than 4K, the HTML description for the list will not appear in index.html.

For sites that use the dynamic archive index page, the HTML descriptions of all lists (if present) will be shown in javascript-powered floating boxes when you move the mouse over the list name. This provides list owners an opportunity to display more information about their lists on the main archive index page than merely the list title. Site administrators who want to disable this functionality can set the SHOWHTMLDESC variable to 0 in the site-wide SKIN template.

- A new site configuration variable, WWW\_SHOW\_SUBSCRIBER\_COUNT (Boolean) has been added to allow site maintainers to suppress the subscriber count shown per list on the LISTSERV Archives page in the web interface. The default is 1, or enabled (show the counts) as before. To disable showing the subscriber counts, set the variable to 0.

- When an address has been administratively (manually) SERVEed OFF, LISTSERV 15.5 will prevent that address from being ADDED to a list. This applies only to non-bulk ADDs; it remains incumbent on the list owner or site administrator to filter such addresses out of the address lists they use for bulk ADD. (As a reminder, under LISTSERV 14.3 and later it is possible to list all addresses that are currently served off by issuing a SERVE LIST command.)
- A Topics pull-down menu is now available when posting messages using the web interface to lists with Topics defined in the list configuration.
- LISTSERV now writes a null return-path (MAIL FROM:<>) in the RFC821 headers of mail forwarded to list owners via the LISTSERV-request and listname-request pseudo-mailboxes. Previously the original return path was unaltered, which could cause SPF-enabled MTAs to reject -request mail on its way out to the postmaster(s) or list owner(s).

## ***Bug fixes***

All of the following issues have been addressed in LISTSERV 15.5:

- During background DISTRIBUTE, LISTSERV ignored MAXBSMTP if MAXBSMTP was less than DIST\_BACKGROUND\_CHUNKSIZE.
- For files with restrictive GET FACs (that is, other than ALL), the GIVE command worked via TCGUI or the web interface but did not work via mail.
- After a list creation failure, a subsequent attempt to create the same list would throw a spurious error even though the list was actually created successfully.
- The behavior of "Send= ...,Semi-Moderated" now works as documented.
- If the DBMS= specification for a list was invalid, GET failed even with the (HDR option.
- GET of a list with a List-ID containing a period would fail.
- The RUNMODE configuration variable is now populated correctly when set to Tableless Mode using the web interface.
- Following an RFC 1342 escape sequence in an Internet header, LISTSERV now skips all non-uuencoded spaces in folded headers. This prevents the appearance of extraneous spaces when a non-ASCII character set is used, particularly in long subject lines which may be folded in transit.
- In DBMS list postings, some recipients added to the DBMS by an external process (that is, not via LISTSERV itself) would not show up in the final output.

## ***HPO-specific changes and improvements***

- The performance of the PWC QUERY \* command when issued against a server with thousands of users was significantly improved.
- New or missing web indexes are now rebuilt in the background by default.

## Changes for WA

- Optimizations were made to speed up the loading of pages that include subscriber counts.
- Improvements were made in the way WA integrates with HTTPS/SSL.

## Applying LISTSERV 15.5

Because of non-backward-compatible changes made by LISTSERV 15.5 to the format of LISTSERV's SIGNUP files which allow UTF-8 characters to be used in passwords, and the addition of non-reversible subscriber password encryption, L-Soft **STRONGLY RECOMMENDS** that, prior to upgrading, a full backup be made of your LISTSERV installation.

**IMPORTANT: Install your LISTSERV 15.5 product LAK before upgrading!** A valid product LAK (License Activation Key) with "REL=15.5" must be installed before upgrading or LISTSERV will not start after the upgrade. Also, **a valid maintenance LAK expiring no earlier than November 27, 2007 is required** in order to apply this release.

If you have not received a LISTSERV 15.5 product LAK, please contact your sales representative or SALES@LSOFT.COM before upgrading!

To find out if you can upgrade to LISTSERV 15.5 with your current license key, please issue a SHOW LICENSE command to LISTSERV and examine the response. It will be similar to this:

```
License type:      Permanent
Expiration date:  None - perpetual license
Maintenance until: 12 November 2007, serial number MNT-XYZ-1
Capacity:         Unlimited
Version:          15.5
Serial number:    XYZ-1
Build date:       8 Feb 2007
```

Your license key will be valid for the 15.5 upgrade if your current product LAK is for version **15.5 or higher**, and your maintenance LAK is valid **until at least November 27, 2007**.

Sites running LISTSERV 14.4 or later may use the LAK input tool in the Web Administration interface to apply and check their new LAK before upgrading.

The installation kits found on L-Soft's web site can be used either to install a new copy of LISTSERV or to upgrade an existing installation. To download LISTSERV 15.5, simply go to L-Soft's Web site and download an evaluation copy of LISTSERV or LISTSERV Lite, then follow the installation instructions for your operating system. The kits can be found at:

<http://www.lsoft.com/download/listserv.asp>

<http://www.lsoft.com/download/listservlite.asp>

## **SPECIAL NOTES**

1. This document does not include upgrade instructions. Please see the installation guide specific to your OS platform for upgrade instructions.

VMS: <http://www.lsoft.com/manuals/lsv15/vmsinst.html>

unix: <http://www.lsoft.com/manuals/lsv15/unixinst.html>

Windows: <http://www.lsoft.com/manuals/lsv15/ntinst.html>

VM sites currently at the 1.8e or 14.x level should download <ftp://ftp.lsoft.com/listserv/vm/upd155.hex> and install it per the "Fixes and Upgrades" section of <ftp://ftp.lsoft.com/listserv/vm/00-read.me> . VM sites currently at the 1.8d or earlier level must first upgrade to 1.8e (LISTSERV 14) before applying this level set fix.

2. The unix kit now only requires a single download. You do not need to download a common.tar.Z file as in previous versions, as those files are now included in the single OS-specific installation file.

3. LISTSERV version 15.5 is available only for operating systems currently supported by L-Soft. When browsing <FTP.LSOFT.COM>, you may find installation kits for other operating systems, such as Ultrix or SunOS 4.x, but these kits will be based on older versions and/or code bases. L-Soft no longer has development systems for unsupported operating systems and is not in a position to compile LISTSERV 15.5 for these systems.

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