Helpline - Dilwyn Jones

QL Users Mailing List

For several years now Bruce Nicholls has run the main mailing list for the QL. It's email based, and discussions take place by email. The QL-users 'list' is like a bulletin board in some ways, but the messages are sent to the mailing list via an email sent to a given address. As the list receives and processes the message, it then sends out a copy of the message by email to every subscriber who has joined the list. Best of all, subscription to this mailing list is completely free - you won't pay anything other than what little you'd normally pay to send emails (e.g. telephone dial-up costs to your ISP).

From time to time I get contacted by members who have seen references to the "ql-users mailing list" in this magazine and who want to know more about it - information like how to join, what's it all about, what sort of things get discussed and so on. I'll also go into some lesser issues such as a bit about Smileys and the use of TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms), both of which crop up quite frequently in discussions on the list.

What Gets Discussed?

Basically anything related to the QL, its operating systems, QL emulators and compatibles, and QL derivative machines. This means anything from QL to Q60, QPC and other emulators, software problems - just about anything (legal, decent and honest!) to do with the QL. Bruce Nicholls's website says: "This list is for any discussion related to QL/SMS be it news, help, queries, for sale etc."

Which sums it up quite well really. Every now and then software authors and developers announce the release of new or updated software too, making the list a good source of news as well. Any messages sent to the list get sent out by email to list members usually the same day, meaning that list members often get news about the QL scene more quickly than waiting for printed magazines to appear.

Bruce also mentions that: "Off topic discussions (not related to QL/SMS) are not appreciated." It used to be the case that Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems weren't welcome subjects for discussion on the list, but nowadays they are tolerated subjects as long as they relate to the QL in some way, such as seeking help with a Windows problem which prevents you from being able to use a QL emulator, for example.

Lurkers

Some list members contribute widely to many topics of discussion. Others tend to stay in the background, reading the emails but not actively sending replies or their own emails to the group. These members are often referred to as "lurkers". Nothing too wrong with being a lurker, of course, but the more people participate in discussions, the more effective and interesting the list is likely to become.

Etiquette

There is an unwritten etiquette on this list.

You send messages as "Plain text" (HTML or Rich Text is frowned upon). Attachments are also frowned upon - it is mainly just for messages. It sometimes happens that someone asks, for example, for help obtaining a copy of a corrupt file, in this case the proper response would

be to send a short message to the list, say "I can help with that, I'll contact you privately," then send an email with the attachment "off-list" direct to that person. The idea is to keep messages fairly short for the convenience of those on costly dial-up internet access.

Using plain text usually means you can't have bold or italics for example. Over the years, conventions have built up about a way off implying bold or italics, for example surrounding a word with '*' such as *Important* usually means that the word is to be regarded as being **bold.** Similarly, _Important_ (word preceded by and followed by an underscore) implies that the word is to be regarded as being in italics.

Please try to ensure that the SUBJECT line of your emails agrees with what you are writing about! Topics do go off at a tangent sometimes, and although one or two minor diversions don't matter too much, if you take the discussion down a different path completely, it may be wise to check if you need to amend the SUBJECT line in your reply. Some members follow some threads (as these subjects of discussion are known) in great detail and ignore others which are of no interest to them by looking at the email's Subject line, and finding an email which has a particular subject line, but the email itself talks about something completely different can be a little irritating at times. You won't get thrown off the list for not remembering to do this of course, but it is simple politeness to think of others.

Another matter of etiquette is NO SHOUTING, that is, don't type emails in ALL UPPER CASE. Some people find that annoying. And make sensible use of TLAs (three letter acronyms - these can be and usually are in upper case), use fairly common ones, those which members are likely to understand, e.g.

- LOL for "Laugh Out Loud" if something made you laugh
- RTM for "Read The Manual"
- RTFM for "Read The Flipping Manual"
- AFAIK for "As Far As I Know"
- IIRC for "If I Remember Correctly"
- BTW for By The Way

and so on.

Smileys are permitted and can be very useful in some cases, such as conveying humour:

- :-) Grin or Smile
- :-)) Bigger grin or smile
- ;-) Winking smile (something said tongue in cheek)
- :o) or :o(Ouch (nose punch, or I consider myself told off)
- :-(Frown...sad or unhappy face
- :-((Severe frown!
- 8-) Smile, wearing glasses
- :-P Tongue stuck out at someone
- :-# Censored or "my lips are sealed"
- :-| Neither particularly a smile nor frown

You can find a lot more smileys and TLAs just by searching for them on the web. Try not to overdo their use - basically, common sense usually prevails!

You are also expected to behave responsibly, which means you do not libel anyone on the list, or say things which might bring an individual, organisation or the QL community in general into disrepute. Basically, saying or behaving in such a way that it leads to a serious complaint may cause you to be thrown off the list by the owner. Again, as Bruce says: "Being a member

of this list is a privilege and you may lose that privilege if you abuse your subscription." But we in the QL community are a pretty responsible lot on the whole and Bruce does not need to enforce that rule very much, fortunately - usually someone points out that something unintentionally caused offence, the sender apologises and that's that. Feelings do sometimes run high and good debates sometimes arise from what may have been a fairly trivial matter at first. In other words, good clean QL fun!

Where Can I Get More Information?

My website has a page about this mailing list (and a few others):

http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/gen/emaillst/maillist.html

The official page about QL-users email mailing list is that of the list owner, Bruce Nicholls:

http://www.q-v-d.demon.co.uk/smsqe.htm

When your browser arrives on that page, click on the link to "QL-Users Web Site" which will bring up a page with information about the list in general and how to join (or stop your subscription for that matter).

Brief Instructions

The easiest way to join the list is to fill out a little form on Bruce's website. Basically, you need to tell it which email address you'd like it to use for your messages - you have to send messages from this email address to appear on the list (everyone sees your message) and the list will send all the emails everyone has sent to the list to this email address, including copies of the ones you send.

You can specify a password, to prevent anyone else messing with your subscription to the list, and if you don't specify a password, the system will generate one for you, then email the password to you once you've confirmed the subscription. Make a note of the password - it may be needed should you decide to unsubscribe in the future, for example, while going away on holiday.

The final option is to specify whether you would like to receive list mail batched into a daily digest or not.

Please see the screen dump in Figure 1 to see the screen on which these details are entered.

Fig. 1 - The QL-users list subscription form

You can go direct to the subscription form for QL-Users list at:
http://lists.q-v-d.com/listinfo.cgi/ql-users-q-v-d.com

The same page also contains a form to let you unsubscribe from the mailing list, get a
password reminder, or change your subscription options. This form is at the bottom of the
page. Just enter the email address where your list mails are currently sent and click on the
[Unsubscribe Or Edit Options] button.

If you prefer good old command lines (e.g. you are subscribing from a terminal which has
email, but not a browser), it's also possible to join the mailing list by sending an email
containing a command to ask to subscribe to the list, like this.

To join the group you simply send an email to:
Ql-Users-q-v-d.com-request@lists.q-v-d.com

with the EXACT word of

subscribe

in the body of the email (*NOT* in the subject line). Remember to put 'subscribe' in the body of
the message (NOT in the subject line, it won't work). If you want the emails to go to the
address you are using to send this email, you do not need to specify an email address. If they
are to go to a different address, add that email address like this:

subscribe address=email.address
where "email.address" is the email address to which you want the emails sent.

A password will be generated and sent to you by email.

After a while, the list manager will start to send you emails, including a short list of
instructions. Should you wish to remove yourself from the list (e.g. if you decide you don't
want to be part of the list, or wish to unsubscribe temporarily while away on holiday) you can
similarly send an email to unsubscribe yourself from the list by including this command in the
body of the email:

unsubscribe [password]

where [password] is the password you were supplied with when you subscribed (or current
password if changed since then).

Once you have subscribed, you need to know how to send messages to the list. Simply send
emails to ql-users@q-v-d.com

If you'd like to send an email to Bruce Nicholls (owner of the QL Mailing List) to know more
about this mailing list, or any other matter connected to the list, send the email to
ql-users-q-v-d.com-owner@lists.q-v-d.com

IMPORTANT: Where it says above that a command should be in the **BODY** of the email, it
means just that. **DO NOT** put the command in the subject line, it may not be processed
properly and may be sent as an email to the list, for example, rather than being intercepted as
a command to unsubscribe or whatever!

QL-Developers List

Bruce also operates a second mailing list, called QL-Developers. As the name implies, this one is more geared up for QL hardware and software developers and Q40/Q60 Linux. It is usually quieter than the ql-users mailing list and of more interest to developers than ordinary users. From that, you may think that it is of less interest than ql-users perhaps and as a typical QL user rather than a developer you'd probably be right. That said, it has bursts of activity and can be an interesting list in its own right. The beauty of both lists is that you can join them and you are never flooded with emails. Sometimes one list has several emails a day, while the other is quiet for a day or two. The number of emails depends on the topics being discussed.

You can join the QL-developers list in much the same way as QL-users, but using the name "ql-developers" instead of "ql-users" in email addresses. You can join it simply by going to Bruce's website at

http://www.q-v-d.demon.co.uk/smsqe.htm

and clicking on the link to QL Developers Web Access, or just go direct to the page below to use the subscribe or unsubscribe forms, as described above for the ql-users list.

QL-Developers list subscription form:

http://lists.q-v-d.com/listinfo.cgi/ql-developers-q-v-d.com

Fig. 2 - The QL-developers list subscription form

Archive

To see the collection of prior postings to the list, visit the http://lists.q-v-d.com/private.cgi/ql-users-q-v-d.com/. The current archive is only available to the list members - you will need to enter email address and password.

Marcel Kilgus kindly passed on this information about another way to find archived copies of past messages ql-users mailing lists.

Usually everything is archived here
http://www.mail-archive.com/ql-users@lists.q-v-d.com/

Messages from before 2004 are here

http://www.mail-archive.com/ql-users@quanta.org.uk/

And finally even older messages are here
http://www.mail-archive.com/ql-users@nvg.ntnu.no/

No password required.for these.

Hint For Outlook Express Users

If you use an email program which can handle 'rules', you can make it drop emails from ql-users or ql-developers into their own folders on your hard disk, to prevent them getting mixed up with other emails. This can be very handy if you receive the emails on a computer normally used for work.

First you need to create a new folder. In Outlook Express (I use version 6, other versions may vary). Click on the File menu, then New then Folder. Give the folder a name (I chose ql-users, very original!) and select where it's to be created. You have now created a folder which with luck will receive all your ql-users mailing list emails.

Next, we need to create a "message rule" which will ensure that any emails from the mailing list will automatically get placed in this folder to keep them all together. For this, we'll use the handy rule of thumb that all messages from the ql-users mailing list contain the phrase "ql-users@" in the TO or CC lines of the email.

To set up the rule, click on the Tools menu in Outlook Express, then Message Rules, then Mail...

When the Message Rules window appears, make sure the Mail Rules tab is shown. Click on the tab if not. Then, click on the [New] button to create a new rule. This brings up the window shown in Figure 3 below.
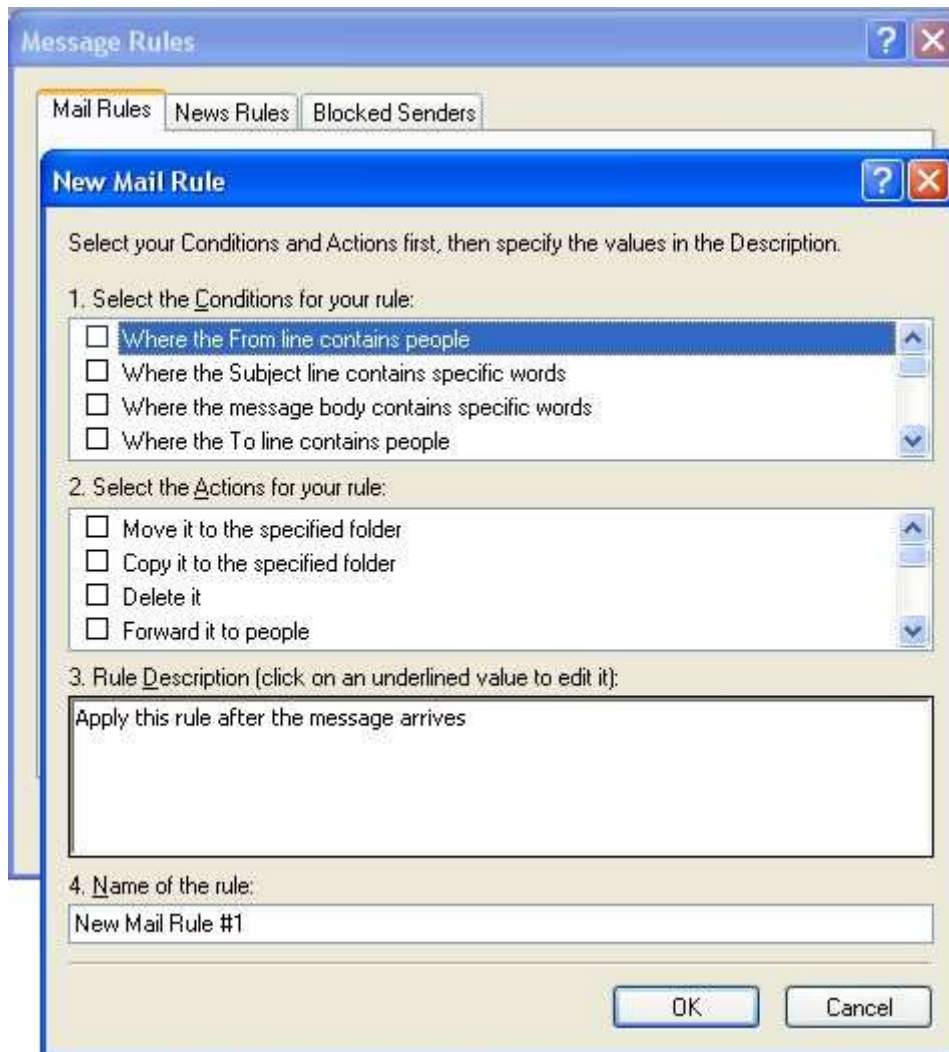
Figure 3 - Creating a new mail message rule

We are going to create a new rule which specifies that if the To or CC lines of an email contain the exact phrase "ql-users@" the email program will drop it into the ql-users folder we created.

In the top box, labelled "1. Select the Conditions for your rule", scroll down until you see the line "Where the To or CC line contains people" click in the box to the left, so that a tick appears in the box. This helps catch emails which people sent mainly to someone else, but added a copy to the mailing list (CC stands for 'Carbon Copy', as we used to do such copies with typewriters before the times of email!). I sometimes do this when sending news items to the mailing list as well as to magazine editors, it saves me sending separate emails for the same thing.

You should now see that the bottom box contains:

Apply this rule after the message arrives
Where the To or CC line contains people

We now need to specify what exactly "contains people" means. So click on the underlined "contains people". This brings up a "Select People" window. In the top box, to the left of the [Add] button enter the phrase **ql-users@** then click on the [Add] button to add this to the list.

You can also add names from your Address Book if you wish to apply such rules for specific individuals. The box below will now change to:

Where the To or CC line contains people
'ql-users@'

Next, click on the [OK] button to return to the New Mail Rule window, which now shows what we have entered so far. The next thing we need to do is select an action in the middle box. So, under "2. Select the Actions for your rule" place a tick in the box to the left of "Move it to the specified folder". Finally, give the rule a name in box 4, I gave mine the name "QL-users" as it is a rule to handle ql-users list mails, and press [OK] to finish entering it.
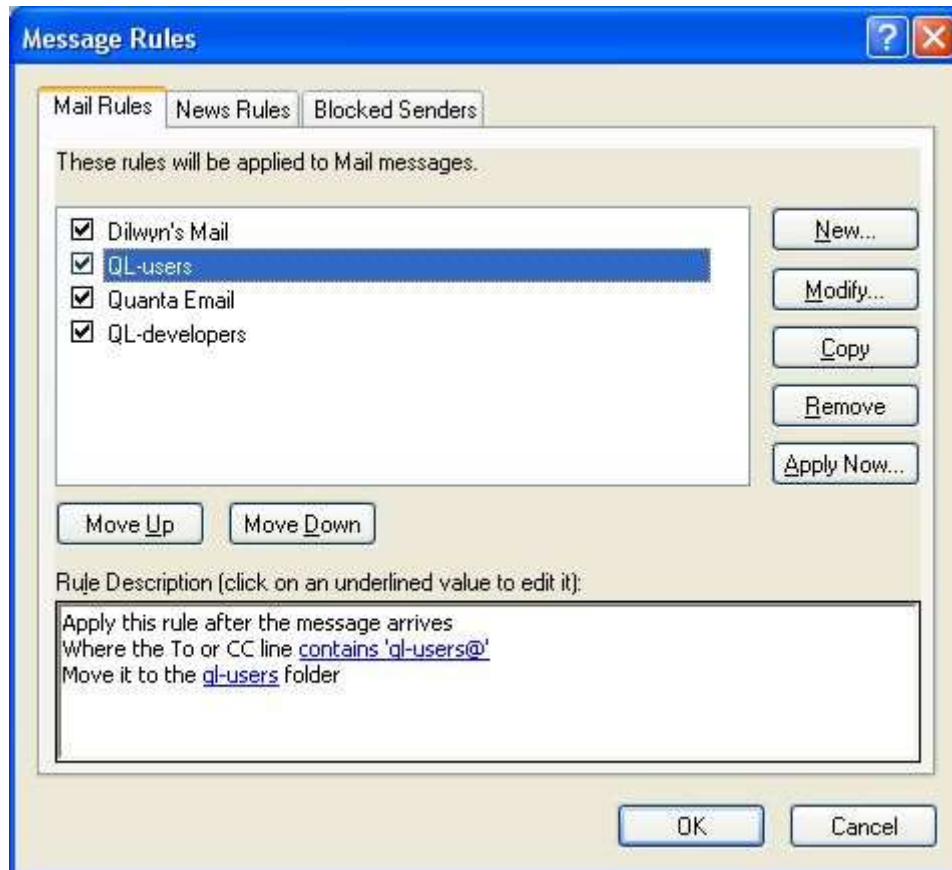

Figure 4 - The completed email message rule

This is obviously not a hard and fast way of doing things, it may be ideal for some, others may prefer to have all their emails arrive in one place (inbox) then manually file them after reading, it's completely up to you!

I hope this article helps more members to join this free list which is a very handy source of information and a great way to keep in touch with other QL users worldwide!