Complete Instructions

Creating Newsletters in Department Tools pages

Department Tools’ newsletter feature is a simple and valuable tool for keeping large groups of people informed about your activities and connected to your organization. The tool allows you to:
1. Create multiple online newsletters.
2. Publicize a completed newsletter by publishing an e-mail summary of the edition to an existing mailing list (ListServ) or a mailing list that you create.
3. Share content between newsletters within an account.

1. CREATING A NEWSLETTER

To create a newsletter in Department Tools, login to your DT account and click the blue “Newsletter” link at the top of the home page. This takes you to the Newsletters main page with the title “(Your Account Name)’s Newsletters” at the top of the page. This page is where your newsletter or newsletters will be archived and administered. If you are taking over the account from someone else, you may already have newsletters listed. For existing newsletters, you’ll see the number of editions and links to the Properties Screen and the subscriber lists (ListServ and Edit List).

To create a new newsletter, click the yellow button that says “New Newsletter.”

The Newsletter Properties Screen

The Newsletter Properties Screen is the first screen that appears when you create a new newsletter. The screen consists of five text fields for information about the general nature of the newsletter -- the stuff that will be true of all issues that follow. You’ll want to give thought to what you want to say in these fields, as some of the information on this screen appears in every e-mail edition that goes out. This information can be changed at any time using the “properties” link on the initial Newsletter screen.

- Newsletter Name -- Content is applied to the e-mail for every edition. This field must be filled to create a newsletter.
- Newsletter Description -- This is optional descriptive text that is for your eyes only -- or for the eyes of someone taking over your role.
- Default Newsletter Header -- This is optional text content that will appear at the top of the e-mail for every edition.
- Default Newsletter Footer -- This is optional text content that will appear at the bottom of the e-mail for every edition.

Structure of the tool ...

Before moving on, you should understand the structure of a Department Tools newsletter.

The first few times you use DT Newsletter, the hierarchy can be confusing as you move through the screens. Here are some definitions:

- Newsletter: This refers to the overarching publication. Think of Newsweek as an institution as opposed to a single edition of Newsweek magazine. Each newsletter contains ...
- Editions: This refers to individual editions of the publication. DT newsletters can be date-based (quarterly, monthly, weekly) or event-based depending on your needs. Each edition contains ...
- Articles: These are the individual stories that make up individual editions. Every article has its own page on your Web site. There is no limit to the number of articles you can have in each edition.

If you get confused, look to the gray header bar to tell where you are.
• HTML Newsletter Template -- If you choose to create HTML editions, it is possible to apply a graphic or banner or other html operation to the e-mail that announces each publication. That is done through the HTML Newsletter Template Window. As the parenthetical admonition indicates, this is only for advanced users who are comfortable in HTML. Remember that the content entered here will appear in the e-mail for every HTML edition unless you change it.

When the fields are filled out to your liking, click the “Submit” button to create the newsletter. The newsletter will appear in a list below the gray bar.

2. CREATING AN EDITION

Now that you’ve established a newsletter, it is time to create the first edition. Click on the name of your new newsletter below the gray bar to get to the Editions Properties screen, then click the “New Edition” button. You should see a Name/Subject field, a Description field and a pulldown menu asking if this is an HTML edition.

Edition Name/Subject

As with the Newsletter Properties screen, the each edition requires name. Some naming conventions are:

• Volume and Number. Typically, the Volume begins with “1” for the launch issue, and changes for the first issue after the anniversary date. Number refers to each edition.
• By Time Period. Your newsletter could be monthly, bimonthly (In publishing, the term “bimonthly” always means “once every two months.”), by semester, quarterly, seasonally or annually.

HTML or text format?

When you create an new edition, you must decide whether the edition will be text format or HTML format. Both edition formats provide e-mail mailing list notification with article headlines and summaries and links to the full article. But there are differences in display and usability. You should consider this question carefully, as there is no way to change formats once an edition is set. (Note: You can have a mix of text and HTML editions within the same newsletter, however.)

1. Text format. This is the preferred method for DT Newsletters. Text refers to the e-mail in that the notification e-mail doesn’t carry any photos or graphics or text styling. You are also limited to one fixed-width photo or graphic per article on the Web page.

The advantages of the text format are that it works great -- it’s very simple and accessible for the user and has a very low failure rate because it is rarely objectionable to e-mail filters.

2. HTML format. HTML formatted newsletters may contain images or graphics or links in the e-mail. Also allows text styling and multiple images with each article on the Web site. Don’t use this format unless you or someone in your office has the experience and expertise to support it.

The downside of HTML format is that the inclusion of HTML code and images in an e-mail often triggers spam filters, regardless of the nature of the content. This is especially true if you have recipient e-mail addresses from outside companies and corporations in your mailing list.
Further, a large percentage of e-mail browsers are set by default to load image only on command. The reality is that you don’t have any control over how your e-mail will look to your users, nor can you be sure the e-mail will reach its intended destination.

This leads us to an important sidenote. The DT Newsletter tool is intended for use as an informational platform only. If your intent is for the newsletter to be a significant marketing/fundraising piece -- that is, if your bottom line depends on the returns from the e-mail -- don’t use Department Tools. There are third-party applications and services that are better suited to that end, with full-featured analytics and tracking statistics.

When you’ve settled on a format for your edition, select it in the pulldown menu on the right-hand side (text format is the default state) and click the “submit” button.

3. CREATING ARTICLES

With the edition established, you’re ready to add articles. Happily, the article tool in DT Newsletters -- whether Text of HTML format -- is very straightforward.

The basics

For both formats, click the yellow “Add article” button (“Add HTML article” in HTML format) to get to the article properties screen. You are required to include a headline and a summary of the article that will appear in the notification e-mail. There is also a story field where a long-form article can be entered. Story field information will appear on the article Web page only and will be accessed by a “Read More” link on the notification e-mail.

On each article Web page, a full menu of that edition’s stories appears on the right-hand side of the page, allowing the user to navigate the edition from that page instead of returning to the e-mail.

TIP: If the story text is extremely short -- the announcement of a time change for an upcoming event, for instance -- you may want to use the summary field only, leaving the story field empty. In this case, there will be no “Read More” link in the e-mail, but the article will appear in the menu for that edition on each article Web page. You may also use this strategy to place introductory text or boilerplate in the e-mail.

Images

The main difference between the HTML and Text newsletters is in the options for image placement. For a Text newsletter, the only option is to place one fixed
width image with each article. This is done through the same DT File Browser used for your regular DT pages. Click the “INSERT FILE” link to get to the file browser and select the image and use the pulldown menu to set its width. The widest possible image is 300 pixels, which is roughly half the width of the top line of copy. The image will be anchored at the top right below the headline.

That same option is available to the HTML newsletter. However, you also may insert images in the summary and story fields. To do this, click on the blue triangle below the field title. That will give you a suite of text and image tools similar to the HTML Editor for a DT Web page, allowing you to format text, add and position images, and create tables, anchors and links.

One difference between a Newsletter page and a regular DT Web page is the width of the story column. For the story field, you have a maximum image width of 610 pixels due to the anchored menu of articles on each page. On a normal DT Web page (meaning one with a navigation) the width of the page is 560 pixels. A full-width DT page (without a navigation) is 756 pixels wide, so if you’re using existing art from your DT account, you may have to resize the file when using it in a newsletter. That’s important, because if you exceed 610 pixels in width, you may push the article menu off the page, severely curtailing users’ ability to navigate through your newsletter.

While it’s relatively safe to be creative in the story field, keep in mind that the more bells and whistles you add to the summary field, the greater your chance of activating a spam filter. If adding images to the summary field you should consider cropping the images to a uniform size for a clean, consistent presentation.

**Adding external material**

Say your department is featured in an external publication and you’d like to include it in your newsletter. To do this, fill in the headline and summary fields and leave the story field empty. Then paste the URL of the story from the external publication into the “Alternate URL” field. The result is a headline and summary in the notification e-mail with a “Read More” link that goes directly to the external publication.

**Adding material from other newsletters**

You can also choose to include articles from existing newsletters within your account. This could be useful for inserting articles that you want to appear in every edition; for assembling a “best of” publication; or for tailoring newsletter content for different audiences.

To import an article or articles, click on the yellow “Add from Archive” button. Select the type of newsletter you wish to import a story from in the pulldown menu (Text format newsletters are the default) and then select the correct story or stories from the list by clicking the checkbox(es). Finally, click “Add to Newsletter” to import a copy of the story to your new newsletter.

4. PUBLICATION

After you’ve added the articles to your first edition, you are now ready to move toward publication.

**Ordering your stories**

Before publication you may want to change the order of articles as they will appear in the e-mail and article menus. To do this, click the blue link “Click Here to Arrange Articles.” Then click on the article you wish to move and use the arrow buttons on the right hand side of the page to move the article up or down in the order.

**Previewing**

At any time, you can preview how the articles for an edition will look on the Web by clicking the yellow “View Web” button. You can also preview the notification e-mail and get a printable version for proofing by clicking the yellow “Print” button.

To get a better idea of how the final Web site and the notification e-mail will look click the blue link that says “Are you done? Send or Publish.” This will give you four options:

- **Preview and Send e-mail.** It’s always a good idea to send a preview of your edition to at least one other person for proofreading before before publication. This window allows you to do just that. Also, a working Web preview appears in a frame below the e-mail interface.
• **Send e-mail and Publish to Web.** This is the main link for publishing your final version. It gives you the same options to either send a preview to a fixed address but also includes a editable mini-mailing list window for sending out the final version. Unless you have a ListServ mailing list set up, this is the way you’ll be sending out your e-mail. (You can also edit your mini-mailing list using the yellow “Manage List” button on the Editions page)
  
  • **Send e-mail only.** This allows you to send an e-mail without publishing a story to the Web.
  
  • **Publish to Web only.** This allows you to publish a newsletter without sending notification.

**Other previewing options**

You can also preview from the Editions page using the Print link for the e-mail preview and the View link for the Web site preview.

5. OTHER FEATURES

**Report**

The analytics are sparse in the DT Newsletter tool, but you can get an idea of page views with the yellow “Report” button on the Articles page. You’ll see total page views for the edition and for each article in the edition.

**ListServ**

ListServ is a service for creating and managing mailing lists of more than 100 e-mail addresses. Go to the University Computing and Telecommunications Services Web site <http://webs.wichita.edu/?u=UCATS&p=/mailrequest/> to find information on ordering a ListServ mailing list.

5. CONCLUSION

This concludes the manual for the Department Tools Newsletter tool. For additional instruction, attend a Newsletter training session or one of our Hands-on Clinics or contact Tim Hart at 978-6192 or tim.hart@wichita.edu.