

Mutt — Terminal Email Client

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Mines Linux Users Group

Overview

What is Mutt?

“All mail clients suck. This one just sucks less.”

— Michael Elkins, circa 1995

Mutt is a text-based email client. It's basically the Vim of email clients.

It has revolutionary features such as...

- support for color terminals
- MIME and OpenPGP support
- threaded sorting mode

But seriously, it's actually a good email client.

Reasons I use Mutt

The features that I like about Mutt are

- Scriptability and customizability of everything
- Vim bindings
- PGP/GPG support
- Support for multiple accounts
- Modularity
- Makes you look really cool
- Better than using `telnet`

General Usage

The usage of Mutt is extremely easy (most of the work goes into setup which I will cover later). All you have to do is run `mutt` from a terminal.

Reading emails: Open Mutt, then use arrow keys or vim bindings to go between messages. Press enter to view a message.

Writing emails: Press `m` and you will be prompted to enter who the email is to and a subject. Then you write your message using the editor and press `y` to send.

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Setting up Mutt

What you Need

Because Mutt is modular, you need to install programs to download your mail¹, as well as send your mail.

The most common programs for this are

- `offlineimap` for downloading your mail.
- `msmtp` for sending your mail.

Refer to David's presentation² for details on how to set up both `offlineimap` and `msmtp`.

¹Mutt can do this by default, but it does not support offline mail

²<https://gitlab.com/edwargix/mu4e-talk>

An offline alternative to msmtplib

One of the main problems with `msmtplib` is that it does not work offline. That means that you cannot send an email while offline! Luckily I wrote a program which allows you to do this: `offlinemsmtplib`³ (GPLv3).

`offlinemsmtplib` runs as a daemon and listens for emails to appear in an outbox folder. It tries to send them if there is an internet connection, but if there isn't, it queues the message for later and will retry every minute.

All you have to do to use it is replace `msmtplib` with `offlinemsmtplib` in your configuration file.

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Mutt Configuration File (~/.mutt/muttrc)

The main configuration file for Mutt is located at ~/.mutt/muttrc. The following lines are required for Mutt to work.

```
set spoolfile          = "+Mines/INBOX"
```

```
set realname          = "Sumner Evans"
```

```
set from              = "Sumner Evans"
```

```
↪ <jonathanevans@mines.edu>
```

```
set sendmail          = "msmtp -a mines"
```

```
alternates '^jonathanevans@mymail.mines.edu$'
```

From here, the rest of the configurations are optional, quality-of-life configs.

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Multiple Accounts

You can configure Mutt to associate folders with different accounts.

```
# Switching between accounts
folder-hook Personal/*  source ~/.mutt/accounts/personal
folder-hook Mines/*     source ~/.mutt/accounts/mines

macro index M "<change-folder>=Mines/INBOX<enter>" \
  "go to Mines Inbox"
macro index P "<change-folder>=Personal/INBOX<enter>" \
  "go to Personal Inbox"
```

Improvements for Gmail and Less Prompts

```
unset move           # gmail does that
set delete           # don't ask, just do
unset confirmappend # don't ask, just do!
set quit             # don't ask, just do!!
unset mark_old       # read/new is good enough for me
```

```
macro index d \  
  "<save-message>+Mines/[Gmail].Trash<enter>" \  
  "move message to the trash"
```

```
macro index gd "<delete-message>" \  
  "delete the message permanently"
```

```
macro index y \  
  "<save-message>+Mines/[Gmail].All Mail<enter>" \  
  "Archive"
```

Sorting

```
set sort      = threads
set sort_aux = reverse-last-date-received
set sort_re
```

If you are already in mutt, press o (little o).

Aliases

You can set up aliases so that you do not have to type out the full email of everyone you send mail to.

```
alias david      David Florness <davidflorness@mines.edu>
alias jackson   Jack Garner <jgarner@mines.edu>
...
```

You can even use this to define groups (it's also recursive!)

```
alias lugoff    jackson, jo, jordan, frick
```

PGP/GPG

Mutt supports PGP/GPG out of the box. All you have to do is add these config options to your `~/.mutt/mutttrc`.

```
set crypt_use_gpgme           # Necessary to use GPG
set crypt_autosign            # Automatically sign
  → all messages
set crypt_opportunistic_encrypt # Automatically
  → encrypt if possible
set crypt_verify_sig=yes      # Always verify
  → signatures
set pgp_self_encrypt          = yes      # encrypt to self
set pgp_self_encrypt_as      = B50022FD # replace with your
  → key
set my_msmt_pass=`pass show Mail/Offlineimap-Mines`
```

Demo

References

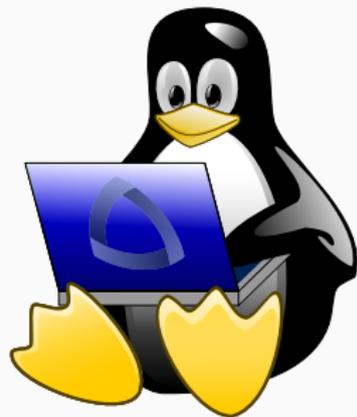
- My config: <https://gitlab.com/sumner/dotfiles/blob/master/.mutt/muttrc>
- The Mutt man pages: `man mutt` and `man muttrc`
- The Mutt website: <http://www.mutt.org/>
- The Mutt manual: <http://www.mutt.org/doc/manual/>

Questions?

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