

Using Thunderbird Email Client as a Proxy between Alma and Your Default Printer

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Introduction

On their developer network site, ExLibris provides an overview of how to use the Thunderbird email client for Alma printing. The overview is accessible here: <https://developers.exlibrisgroup.com/blog/Using-Thunderbird-as-a-print-proxy/>. The following documentation elaborates on the information in that overview.¹

¹ Also see [the Galileo Alma site](#) which includes a section on using Thunderbird

Installing Thunderbird

For those of us without administrative privileges on our computers, a portable version of Thunderbird may be preferable to having an administrator install the software.

We'll consider the portable edition of Thunderbird in this document, along with using an Outlook.com email address, to avoid any further technical requirements.

You can download Thunderbird Portable from https://portableapps.com/apps/internet/thunderbird_portable.²

Click the ThunderbirdPortable_60.4.0_English.paf.exe installer after downloading it from portableapps.com. It will ask for a destination to place the Thunderbird files. I use c:-Users-username-ThunderbirdPortable. This is where the Thunderbird.exe executable can be launched from.

² If you have the ability to install software on your computer, you can use the native Thunderbird installer available here: <https://www.thunderbird.net/en-US/>.

Adding an Email Address to Thunderbird

When first launching ThunderbirdPortable.exe, the application setup-dialog-box will ask for an email address to use. I went to outlook.com, registered the address bsc-library-printer@outlook.com, and put this address into the Thunderbird setup-dialog-box with my name and password.

Thunderbird then prompts you to choose an email protocol; choose IMAP. If for some reason IMAP does not work, try POP instead as the protocol matters little. POP does not sync email between the

client and server like IMAP does, it just downloads email, a one-way street, which is acceptable.

Note: To use POP in Thunderbird with Outlook.com, go to >Outlook.com Settings -> View All -> Sync Email -> and check “Let devices and apps use POP”.³

³ Maybe other email providers, like Gmail, have the same type of setting requirement(?).

Having added the outlook.com email address and protocol, Thunderbird will complete the setup and launch the application.

Enabling Thunderbird Add-ons

If you could run Thunderbird in the background, you would be less likely to accidentally x-out or close the application window. A Thunderbird add-on called ‘MinimizeToTray’ approximates this run-in-background function by minimizing Thunderbird to the Windows’ system tray (lower right corner of the screen), instead of minimizing to the more visible taskbar.

You can download the MinimizeToTray add-on from here: <https://addons.thunderbird.net/en-US/thunderbird/addon/minimizetotray-reanimated/>.

Then go into Thunderbird, click the 3 bar menu (top right) and select Add-ons. Then click the gear icon and choose “Install Add-on from file”, browsing to the download location of the “minimizetotray_reanimated-1.4.9-sm+tb.xpi” file and selecting it. Restart Thunderbird. Now, when you minimize Thunderbird, the application minimizes to the system tray where it is hopefully safe and sound... aka out of sight, out of mind.

Using Thunderbird as a print proxy requires that two additional add-ons be installed: FiltaQuilla and PrintingTools. Both of these are available from within Thunderbird, so, after clicking the three-bar menu (top right) and clicking Add-ons, search for each, install them, and restart Thunderbird. Then configure the PrintingTools add-on (3-bar menu -> Add-ons -> PrintingTools -> Miscellaneous) to hide headers when printing.

Configuration

Let’s add Thunderbird to the Windows Start-up folder so that the application is launched automatically every time you sign in on your PC. To add Thunderbird to Windows Start-up folder:

- Press-hold the Windows key and then press the “R” key

- Type shell:startup
- Right-click in the window that pops up and choose New -> Shortcut.⁴
- Enter in the file location of the Thunderbird executable.
- Restart your PC and verify that Thunderbird launches upon login.

⁴ You may also want to also add a Thunderbird shortcut to your desktop for convenience.

Thunderbird's "Message Filters" menu option can now be configured to automatically print received email directly to the computer's default printer.

Per the ExLibris article linked at the beginning of this document, you'll see (in their screenshots) that the filters are configured based on the subject line of the email. Creating individual rules per email-subject-lines assumes that the Thunderbird application needs to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant emails, between those that should get printed and those that should not. This level of granularity may be useful in time, but for our initial setup here, let's take a more general approach and configure a single message-filter to print all email from Alma.

First, let's restrict what email Thunderbird receives from outlook.com by setting the email server's junk settings:

- Go to outlook.com and click on the cog wheel icon to get to 'View all Outlook Settings'
- Select the option for junk mail and type the domain exlibris-group.com in the safe senders section. Hit enter. Also add Alma's default address Your.Department@organization.com and your work-email-domain for testing purposes, pressing enter after you type each entry.⁵
- At the bottom of the settings pop-up, under Filters, check the two options for safe senders.

⁵ See image in Figure 1 (appended)

We are now ready to configure Thunderbird's message filters. Click the 3 bar menu -> Message Filters -> New. Name the filter, choose 'match any of the following' and enter in the email addresses or domains that were added to outlook.com. Set actions to both print and mark as read.⁶

⁶ See image in Figure 2 (appended) image

Conclusion

That's it. Having set your computer's default printer to that which Thunderbird should use (control panel -> devices -> printers and

scanners -> select printer -> manage -> set as default), Thunderbird should directly print any email it receives from Alma to that printer.

Your Alma administrator, or your lucky self, if you have the proper role in Alma, will need to add your outlook.com email address to Alma in a few different places:

- 1) Configuration -> Fulfillment -> General -> Printing -> Library organizational unit (you will need to configure your department in Alma to use this email address for printing).
- 2) Configuration -> General -> Allowed Emails.
- 3) Location icon (drop pin, top right) to set physical location and choose the printer.

To test that Alma can print via Thunderbird, find a request (Search with Requests limiter to identify a resource. Create one if needed) and click “Print Slip”.

Hopefully the slip printed and you are good to go.

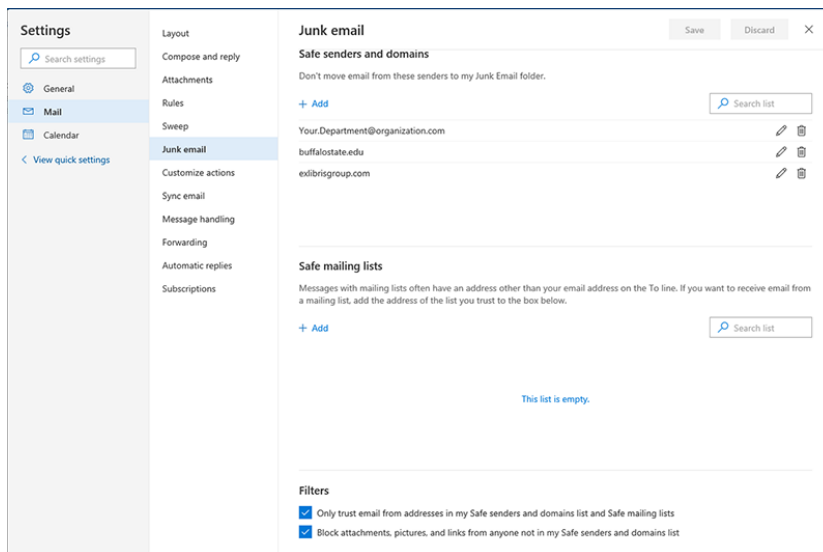


Figure 1: Image of Outlook.com Junk Settings

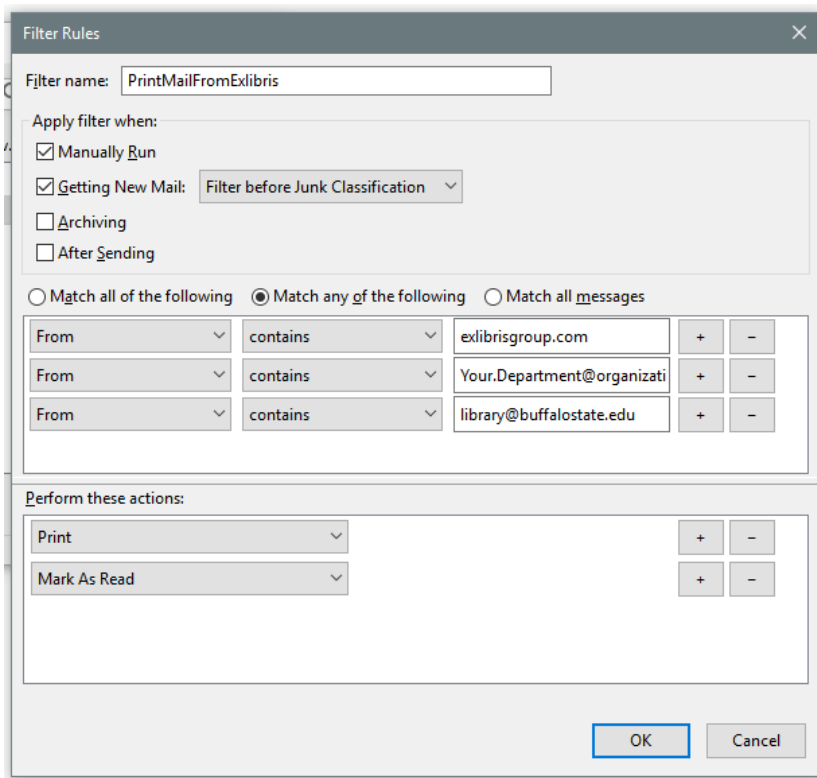


Figure 2: Image of Thunderbird's Filter Rules Dialog Box