alot Documentation

Release 0.7

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Contents

Alot is a terminal-based mail user agent for the notmuch mail system. It features a modular and command prompt driven interface to provide a full MUA experience as an alternative to the Emacs mode shipped with notmuch.

CHAPTER 1

Installation

dependencies

Alot depends on recent versions of notmuch and urwid. Note that due to restrictions on argparse and subprocess, you need to run *'python '3.5'* (see *faq*). A full list of dependencies is below:

- libmagic and python bindings, *5.04*
- configobj, *4.7.0*
- libnotmuch and it's python bindings, *0.13*
- urwid toolkit, *1.3.0*
- urwidtrees, *1.0*
- gpg and it's python bindings, *1.9.0*

Note: urwidtrees was only recently detached from alot and is not widely available as a separate package. You can install it e.g., via pip directly from github:

```
pip install --user https://github.com/pazz/urwidtrees/archive/master.zip
```

On debian/ubuntu the rest are packaged as:

```
python-setuptools python-magic python-configobj python-notmuch python-urwid python-gpg
```

On fedora/redhat these are packaged as:

```
python-setuptools python-magic python-configobj python-notmuch python-urwid python-gpg
```

Alot uses mailcap to look up mime-handler for inline rendering and opening of attachments. For a full description of the maicap protocol consider the manpage *mailcap(5)* or **RFC 1524**. To avoid surprises you should at least have an inline renderer (copiousoutput) set up for *text/html*, i.e. have something like this in your `~/.mailcap`:

```
text/html;  w3m -dump -o document_charset=%{charset} '%s'; nametemplate=%s.html;␣
↪copiousoutput
```

get and install alot

You can use *pip* to install directly from GitHub:

```
$ pip install --user https://github.com/pazz/alot/archive/master.zip
```

Don't have pip installed? Just download and extract, then run:

```
python setup.py install --user
```

Make sure `~/.local/bin` is in your `PATH`. For system-wide installation omit the *–user* flag and call with the respective permissions.

generate manual and manpage

To generate the documentation you need sphinx, *1.07* installed. Go to `docs/` and do a:

```
make html
make man
```

to generate the user manual and a man page. Both will end up in their respective subfolders in `docs/build`.

CHAPTER 2

Usage

2.1 Command-Line Invocation

Synopsis

alot [options . . .] [subcommand]

Options

-r, --read-only open notmuch database in read-only mode

-c FILENAME, --config=FILENAME configuration file (default: ~/.config/alot/config)

-n FILENAME, --notmuch-config=FILENAME notmuch configuration file (default: $NOTMUCH_CONFIG or ~/.notmuch-config)

-C COLOURS, --colour-mode=COLOURS number of colours to use on the terminal; must be 1, 16 or 256 (default: configuration option *colourmode* or 256)

-p PATH, --mailindex-path=PATH path to notmuch index

-d LEVEL, --debug-level=LEVEL debug level; must be one of debug, info, warning or error (default: info)

-l FILENAME, --logfile=FILENAME log file (default: /dev/null)

-h, --help display help and exit

-v, --version output version information and exit

Commands

alot can be invoked with an optional subcommand from the command line. Those have their own parameters (see e.g. *alot search –help*). The following commands are available.

search start in a search buffer using the query string provided as parameter (see `notmuch-search-terms(7)`)

compose compose a new message

bufferlist start with only a bufferlist buffer open

taglist start with only a taglist buffer open

namedqueries start with list of named queries

pyshell start the interactive python shell inside alot

2.2 UNIX Signals

SIGUSR1 Refreshes the current buffer.

SIGINT Shuts down the user interface.

2.3 First Steps in the UI

The arrow keys, *page-up/down*, *j*, *k* and *Space* can be used to move the focus. *Escape* cancels prompts and *Enter* selects. Hit *:* at any time and type in commands to the prompt.

The interface shows one buffer at a time, you can use *Tab* and *Shift-Tab* to switch between them, close the current buffer with *d* and list them all with *;*.

The buffer type or *mode* (displayed at the bottom left) determines which prompt commands are available. Usage information on any command can be listed by typing *help YOURCOMMAND* to the prompt. The keybindings for the current mode are listed upon pressing *?*.

2.4 Commands

Alot interprets user input as command line strings given via its prompt or *bound to keys* in the config. Command lines are semi-colon separated command strings, each of which starts with a command name and possibly followed by arguments.

See the sections below for which commands are available in which (UI) mode. *global* commands are available independently of the mode.

Global commands globally available commands

Commands in bufferlist mode commands while listing active buffers

Commands in envelope mode commands during message composition

Commands in namedqueries mode commands while listing all named queries from the notmuch database

Commands in search mode commands available when showing thread search results

Commands in taglist mode commands while listing all tagstrings present in the notmuch database

Commands in thread mode commands available while displaying a thread

2.4.1 Global commands

The following commands are available globally:

bclose
close a buffer

optional arguments

—redraw redraw current buffer after command has finished

—force never ask for confirmation

bnext
focus next buffer

bprevious
focus previous buffer

buffer
focus buffer with given index

argument buffer index to focus

bufferlist
open a list of active buffers

call
execute python code

argument python command string to call

compose
compose a new email

argument None

optional arguments

—sender sender

—template path to a template message file

—tags comma-separated list of tags to apply to message

—subject subject line

—to recipients

—cc copy to

—bcc blind copy to

—attach attach files

—omit_signature do not add signature

—spawn spawn editor in new terminal

exit
shut down cleanly

flush
flush write operations or retry until committed

help
display help for a command (use 'bindings' to display all keybindings interpreted in current mode)

argument command or 'bindings'

move
move focus in current buffer

argument up, down, [half]page up, [half]page down, first, last

namedqueries
opens named queries buffer

prompt
prompts for commandline and interprets it upon select

argument initial content

pyshell
open an interactive python shell for introspection

refresh
refresh the current buffer

reload
reload all configuration files

removequery
removes a "named query" from the database

argument alias to remove

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

repeat
repeat the command executed last time

savequery
store query string as a "named query" in the database

positional arguments 0: alias to use for query string 1: query string to store

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

search
open a new search buffer. Search obeys the notmuch *search.exclude_tags* setting.

argument search string

optional arguments

—sort sort order; valid choices are: 'oldest_first','newest_first','message_id','unsorted'

shellescape
run external command

argument command line to execute

optional arguments

—spawn run in terminal window

—thread run in separate thread

—refocus refocus current buffer after command has finished

taglist
opens taglist buffer

optional arguments

—tags tags to display

2.4.2 Commands in *bufferlist* mode

The following commands are available in bufferlist mode:

close
close focussed buffer

open
focus selected buffer

2.4.3 Commands in *envelope* mode

The following commands are available in envelope mode:

attach
attach files to the mail

argument file(s) to attach (accepts wildcads)

edit
edit mail

optional arguments

—spawn spawn editor in new terminal

—refocus refocus envelope after editing (defaults to: 'True')

encrypt
request encryption of message before sendout

argument keyid of the key to encrypt with

optional arguments

—trusted only add trusted keys

refine
prompt to change the value of a header

argument header to refine

retag
set message tags

argument comma separated list of tags

rmencrypt
do not encrypt to given recipient key

argument keyid of the key to encrypt with

save
save draft

send
send mail

set
set header value

positional arguments 0: header to refine 1: value

optional arguments

—append keep previous values

sign
mark mail to be signed before sending

argument which key id to use

tag
add tags to message

argument comma separated list of tags

toggleencrypt
toggle if message should be encrypted before sendout

argument keyid of the key to encrypt with

optional arguments

—trusted only add trusted keys

toggleheaders
toggle display of all headers

togglesign
toggle sign status

argument which key id to use

toggletags
flip presence of tags on message

argument comma separated list of tags

unattach
remove attachments from current envelope

argument which attached file to remove

unencrypt
remove request to encrypt message before sending

unset
remove header field

argument header to refine

unsign
mark mail not to be signed before sending

untag
remove tags from message

argument comma separated list of tags

2.4.4 Commands in *namedqueries* mode

The following commands are available in namedqueries mode:

select
search for messages with selected query

argument additional filter to apply to query

2.4.5 Commands in *search* mode

The following commands are available in search mode:

move
move focus in search buffer

argument last

refine
refine query

argument search string

optional arguments

—sort sort order; valid choices are: ‘oldest_first‘,‘newest_first‘,‘message_id‘,‘unsorted‘

refineprompt
prompt to change this buffers querystring

retag
set tags of all messages in the thread that match the current query

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

—all retag all messages in search result

retagprompt
prompt to retag selected thread’s or message’s tags

savequery
store query string as a “named query” in the database. This falls back to the current search query in search buffers.

positional arguments 0: alias to use for query string 1: query string to store

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: ‘True’)

select
open thread in a new buffer

sort
set sort order

argument sort order; valid choices are: ‘oldest_first‘,‘newest_first‘,‘message_id‘,‘unsorted‘

tag
add tags to all messages in the thread that match the current query

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

—all retag all messages in search result

toggletags
flip presence of tags on this thread: a tag is considered present and will be removed if at least one message in this thread is tagged with it

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

untag
remove tags from all messages in the thread that match the query

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

—all retag all messages in search result

2.4.6 Commands in *taglist* mode

The following commands are available in taglist mode:

select
search for messages with selected tag

2.4.7 Commands in *thread* mode

The following commands are available in thread mode:

bounce
directly re-send selected message

editnew
edit message in as new

optional arguments

—spawn open editor in new window

fold
fold message(s)

argument query used to filter messages to affect

forward
forward message

optional arguments

—attach attach original mail

—spawn open editor in new window

indent
change message/reply indentation

argument None

move
move focus in current buffer

argument up, down, [half]page up, [half]page down, first, last, parent, first reply, last reply, next sibling, previous sibling, next, previous, next unfolded, previous unfolded, next NOTMUCH_QUERY, previous NOTMUCH_QUERY

pipeto
pipe message(s) to stdin of a shellcommand

argument shellcommand to pipe to

optional arguments

—all pass all messages

—format output format; valid choices are: 'raw','decoded','id','filepath' (defaults to: 'raw')

—separately call command once for each message

—background don't stop the interface

—add_tags add 'Tags' header to the message

—shell let the shell interpret the command

—notify_stdout display cmd's stdout as notification

—field_key mailcap field key for decoding (defaults to: 'copiousoutput')

print
print message(s)

optional arguments

—all print all messages

—raw pass raw mail string

—separately call print command once for each message

—add_tags add 'Tags' header to the message

remove
remove message(s) from the index

optional arguments

—all remove whole thread

reply
reply to message

optional arguments

—all reply to all

—list reply to list

—spawn open editor in new window

retag
set message(s) tags.

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—all tag all messages in thread

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

retagprompt
prompt to retag selected thread's or message's tags

save
save attachment(s)

argument path to save to

optional arguments

—all save all attachments

select

select focussed element:

- if it is a message summary, toggle visibility of the message;
- if it is an attachment line, open the attachment

tag
add tags to message(s)

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—all tag all messages in thread

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

toggleheaders
display all headers

argument query used to filter messages to affect

togglesource
display message source

argument query used to filter messages to affect

toggletags
flip presence of tags on message(s)

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—all tag all messages in thread

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

unfold
unfold message(s)

argument query used to filter messages to affect

untag
remove tags from message(s)

argument comma separated list of tags

optional arguments

—all tag all messages in thread

—no-flush postpone a writeout to the index (defaults to: 'True')

2.5 Cryptography

Alot has built in support for constructing signed and/or encrypted mails according to PGP/MIME (**RFC 3156**, **RFC 3156**) via gnupg. It does however rely on a running *gpg-agent* to handle password entries.

Note: You need to have *gpg-agent* running to use GPG with alot!

gpg-agent will handle passphrase entry in a secure and configurable way, and it will cache your passphrase for some time so you don't have to enter it over and over again. For details on how to set this up we refer to gnupg's manual.

Signing outgoing emails

You can use the commands *sign*, *unsign* and *togglesign* in envelope mode to determine if you want this mail signed and if so, which key to use. To specify the key to use you may pass a hint string as argument to the *sign* or *togglesign* command. This hint would typically be a fingerprint or an email address associated (by gnupg) with a key.

Signing (and hence passwd entry) will be done at most once shortly before a mail is sent.

In case no key is specified, alot will leave the selection of a suitable key to gnupg so you can influence that by setting the *default-key* option in `~/.gnupg/gpg.conf` accordingly.

You can set the default to-sign bit and the key to use for each *account* individually using the options *sign_by_default* and *gpg_key*.

Encrypt outgoing emails

You can use the commands *encrypt*, *unencrypt* and and *toggleencrypt* and in envelope mode to ask alot to encrypt the mail before sending. The *encrypt* command accepts an optional hint string as argument to determine the key of the recipient.

You can set the default to-encrypt bit for each *account* individually using the option *encrypt_by_default*.

Note: If you want to access encrypt mail later it is useful to add yourself to the list of recipients when encrypting with gpg (not the recipients whom mail is actually send to). The simplest way to do this is to use the *encrypt-to* option in the `~/.gnupg/gpg.conf`. But you might have to specify the correct encryption subkey otherwise gpg seems to throw an error.

The arrow keys, *page-up/down*, *j*, *k* and *Space* can be used to move the focus. *Escape* cancels prompts and *Enter* selects. Hit *:* at any time and type in commands to the prompt.

The interface shows one buffer at a time, you can use *Tab* and *Shift-Tab* to switch between them, close the current buffer with *d* and list them all with *;*.

The buffer type or *mode* (displayed at the bottom left) determines which prompt commands are available. Usage information on any command can be listed by typing *help YOURCOMMAND* to the prompt. The keybindings for the current mode are listed upon pressing *?*.

alot [options . . .] [subcommand]

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CHAPTER 3

Configuration

Alot reads a config file in "INI" syntax: It consists of key-value pairs that use "=" as separator and '#' is comment-prefixes. Sections and subsections are defined using square brackets.

The default location for the config file is `~/.config/alot/config`.

All configs are optional, but if you want to send mails you need to specify at least one *account* in your config.

3.1 Configuration Options

The following lists all available config options with their type and default values. The type of an option is used to validate a given value. For instance, if the type says "boolean" you may only provide "True" or "False" as values in your config file, otherwise alot will complain on startup. Strings *may* be quoted but do not need to be.

`ask_subject`

Type boolean

Default True

`attachment_prefix`

directory prefix for downloading attachments

Type string

Default "~"

`auto_remove_unread`

automatically remove 'unread' tag when focussing messages in thread mode

Type boolean

Default True

auto_replyto_mailinglist

Automatically switch to list reply mode if appropriate

Type boolean

Default False

bounce_force_address

Always use the accounts main address when constructing "Resent-From" headers for bounces. Set this to False to use the address string as received in the original message.

Type boolean

Default False

bounce_force_realname

Always use the proper realname when constructing "Resent-From" headers for bounces. Set this to False to use the realname string as received in the original message.

Type boolean

Default True

bufferclose_focus_offset

offset of next focused buffer if the current one gets closed

Type integer

Default -1

bufferlist_statusbar

Format of the status-bar in bufferlist mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar that may contain variables:

- *{buffer_no}*: index of this buffer in the global buffer list
- *{total_messages}*: total numer of messages indexed by notmuch
- *{pending_writes}*: number of pending write operations to the index

Type mixed_list

Default [{buffer_no}: bufferlist], {input_queue} total messages: {total_messages}

bug_on_exit

confirm exit

Type boolean

Default False

colourmode

number of colours to use on the terminal

Type option, one of ['1', '16', '256']

Default 256

complete_matching_abook_only

in case more than one account has an address book: Set this to True to make tab completion for recipients during compose only look in the abook of the account matching the sender address

Type boolean

Default False

compose_ask_tags

prompt for initial tags when compose

Type boolean

Default False

displayed_headers

headers that get displayed by default

Type string list

Default From, To, Cc, Bcc, Subject

edit_headers_blacklist

see *edit_headers_whitelist*

Type string list

Default Content-Type, MIME-Version, References, In-Reply-To

edit_headers_whitelist

Which header fields should be editable in your editor used are those that match the whitelist and don't match the blacklist. in both cases '*' may be used to indicate all fields.

Type string list

Default *,

editor_cmd

editor command if unset, alot will first try the `EDITOR` env variable, then `/usr/bin/editor`

Type string

Default None

editor_in_thread

call editor in separate thread. In case your editor doesn't run in the same window as alot, setting true here will make alot non-blocking during edits

Type boolean

Default False

editor_spawn

use *terminal_cmd* to spawn a new terminal for the editor? equivalent to always providing the *–spawn=yes* parameter to compose/edit commands

Type boolean

Default False

editor_writes_encoding

file encoding used by your editor

Type string

Default "UTF-8"

envelope_headers_blacklist

headers that are hidden in envelope buffers by default

Type string list

Default In-Reply-To, References

envelope_statusbar

Format of the status-bar in envelope mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. Apart from the global variables listed at *bufferlist_statusbar* these strings may contain variables:

- *{to}*: To-header of the envelope

Type mixed_list

Default [{buffer_no}: envelope], {input_queue} total messages: {total_messages}

exclude_tags

A list of tags that will be excluded from search results by default. Using an excluded tag in a query will override that exclusion. .. note:: this config setting is equivalent to, but independent of, the 'search.exclude_tags' in the notmuch config.

Type string list

Default ,

flush_retry_timeout

timeout in seconds after a failed attempt to writeout the database is repeated. Set to 0 for no retry.

Type integer

Default 5

followup_to

When one of the recipients of an email is a subscribed mailing list, set the "Mail-Followup-To" header to the list of recipients without yourself

Type boolean

Default False

forward_force_address

Always use the accounts main address when constructing "From" headers for forwards. Set this to False to use the address string as received in the original message.

Type boolean

Default False

forward_force_realname

Always use the proper realname when constructing "From" headers for forwards. Set this to False to use the realname string as received in the original message.

Type boolean

Default True

forward_subject_prefix

String prepended to subject header on forward only if original subject doesn't start with 'Fwd:' or this prefix

Type string

Default "Fwd: "

handle_mouse

enable mouse support - mouse tracking will be handled by urwid

---

Note: If this is set to True mouse events are passed from the terminal to urwid/alot. This means that normal text selection in alot will not be possible. Most terminal emulators will still allow you to select text when shift is pressed.

Type boolean

Default False

history_size

The number of command line history entries to save

Note: You can set this to -1 to save *all* entries to disk but the history file might get *very* long.

Type integer

Default 50

honor_followup_to

When group-reply-ing to an email that has the "Mail-Followup-To" header set, use the content of this header as the new "To" header and leave the "Cc" header empty

Type boolean

Default False

hooksfile

where to look up hooks

Type string

Default "~/.config/alot/hooks.py"

initial_command

initial command when none is given as argument:

Type string

Default "search tag:inbox AND NOT tag:killed"

input_timeout

timeout in (floating point) seconds until partial input is cleared

Type float

Default 1.0

mailinglists

The list of addresses associated to the mailinglists you are subscribed to

Type string list

Default ,

msg_summary_hides_threadwide_tags

In a thread buffer, hide from messages summaries tags that are commom to all messages in that thread.

Type boolean

Default True

namedqueries_statusbar

Format of the status-bar in named query list mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. These strings may contain variables listed at *bufferlist_statusbar* that will be substituted accordingly.

Type mixed_list

Default [{buffer_no}: namedqueries], {query_count} named queries

notify_timeout

time in secs to display status messages

Type integer

Default 2

periodic_hook_frequency

The number of seconds to wait between calls to the loop_hook

Type integer

Default 300

prefer_plaintext

prefer plaintext alternatives over html content in multipart/alternative

Type boolean

Default False

print_cmd

how to print messages: this specifies a shell command used for printing. threads/messages are piped to this command as plain text. muttprint/a2ps works nicely

Type string

Default None

prompt_suffix

Suffix of the prompt used when waiting for user input

Type string

Default ":"

quit_on_last_bclose

shut down when the last buffer gets closed

Type boolean

Default False

quote_prefix

String prepended to line when quoting

Type string

Default "> "

reply_account_header_priority

The list of headers to match to determine sending account for a reply. Headers are searched in the order in which they are specified here, and the first header containing a match is used. If multiple accounts match in that header, the one defined first in the account block is used.

Type string list

Default From, To, Cc, Envelope-To, X-Envelope-To, Delivered-To

reply_force_address

Always use the accounts main address when constructing "From" headers for replies. Set this to False to use the address string as received in the original message.

Type boolean

Default False

reply_force_realname

Always use the proper realname when constructing "From" headers for replies. Set this to False to use the realname string as received in the original message.

Type boolean

Default True

reply_subject_prefix

String prepended to subject header on reply only if original subject doesn't start with 'Re:' or this prefix

Type string

Default "Re: "

search_statusbar

Format of the status-bar in search mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. Apart from the global variables listed at *bufferlist_statusbar* these strings may contain variables:

- *{querystring}*: search string
- *{result_count}*: number of matching messages
- *{result_count_positive}*: 's' if result count is greater than 0.

Type mixed_list

Default [{buffer_no}: search] for "{querystring}", {input_queue} {result_count} of {total_messages} messages

search_threads_sort_order

default sort order of results in a search

Type option, one of ['oldest_first', 'newest_first', 'message_id', 'unsorted']

Default newest_first

show_statusbar

display status-bar at the bottom of the screen?

Type boolean

Default True

tabwidth

number of spaces used to replace tab characters

Type integer

Default 8

taglist_statusbar

Format of the status-bar in taglist mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. These strings may contain variables listed at *bufferlist_statusbar* that will be substituted accordingly.

Type mixed_list

Default [{buffer_no}: taglist], {input_queue} total messages: {total_messages}

template_dir

templates directory that contains your message templates. It will be used if you give *compose –template* a filename without a path prefix.

Type string

Default "$XDG_CONFIG_HOME/alot/templates"

terminal_cmd

set terminal command used for spawning shell commands

Type string

Default "x-terminal-emulator -e"

theme

name of the theme to use

Type string

Default None

themes_dir

directory containing theme files.

Type string

Default "$XDG_CONFIG_HOME/alot/themes"

thread_authors_me

Word to replace own addresses with. Works in combination with *thread_authors_replace_me*

Type string

Default "Me"

thread_authors_order_by

When constructing the unique list of thread authors, order by date of author's first or latest message in thread

Type option, one of ['first_message', 'latest_message']

Default first_message

thread_authors_replace_me

Replace own email addresses with "me" in author lists Uses own addresses and aliases in all configured accounts.

Type boolean

Default True

thread_focus_linewise

Split message body linewise and allows to (move) the focus to each individual line. Setting this to False will result in one potentially big text widget for the whole message body.

Type boolean

Default True

thread_indent_replies

number of characters used to indent replies relative to original messages in thread mode

Type integer

Default 2

thread_statusbar

Format of the status-bar in thread mode. This is a pair of strings to be left and right aligned in the status-bar. Apart from the global variables listed at *bufferlist_statusbar* these strings may contain variables:

- *{tid}*: thread id
- *{subject}*: subject line of the thread
- *{authors}*: abbreviated authors string for this thread
- *{message_count}*: number of contained messages

Type mixed_list

Default [{buffer_no}: thread] {subject}, {input_queue} total messages: {total_messages}

thread_subject

What should be considered to be "the thread subject". Valid values are:

- 'notmuch' (the default), will use the thread subject from notmuch, which depends on the selected sorting method
- 'oldest' will always use the subject of the oldest message in the thread as the thread subject

Type option, one of ['oldest', 'notmuch']

Default notmuch

timestamp_format

timestamp format in strftime format syntax

Type string

Default None

user_agent

value of the User-Agent header used for outgoing mails. setting this to the empty string will cause alot to omit the header all together. The string '{version}' will be replaced by the version string of the running instance.

Type string

Default "alot/{version}"

3.1.1 Notmuch options

The following lists the notmuch options that alot reads.

search.exclude_tags

A list of tags that will be excluded from search results by default. Using an excluded tag in a query will override that exclusion.

Type semicolon separated list

Default empty list

3.2 Accounts

In order to be able to send mails, you have to define at least one account subsection in your config: There needs to be a section "accounts", and each subsection, indicated by double square brackets defines an account.

Here is an example configuration

```
[accounts]
    [[work]]
        realname = Bruce Wayne
        address = b.wayne@wayneenterprises.com
        alias_regexp = b.wayne\+.+@wayneenterprises.com
        gpg_key = D7D6C5AA
        sendmail_command = msmtp --account=wayne -t
        sent_box = maildir:///home/bruce/mail/work/Sent
        draft_box = maildir:///home/bruce/mail/work/Drafts

    [[secret]]
        realname = Batman
        address = batman@batcave.org
        aliases = batman@batmobile.org,
        sendmail_command = msmtp --account=batman -t
        signature = ~/.batman.vcf
        signature_as_attachment = True
```

Warning: Sending mails is only supported via a sendmail shell command for now. If you want to use a sendmail command different from *sendmail -t*, specify it as *sendmail_command*.

The following entries are interpreted at the moment:

address

your main email address

Type string

alias_regexp

a regex for catching further aliases (like + extensions).

Type string

Default None

aliases

used to clear your addresses/ match account when formatting replies

Type string list

Default ,

case_sensitive_username

Whether the server treats the address as case-senstive or case-insensitve (True for the former, False for the latter)

Note: The vast majority (if not all) SMTP servers in modern use treat usernames as case insenstive, you should only set this if you know that you need it.

Type boolean

Default False

draft_box

where to store draft mails, e.g. *maildir:///home/you/mail/Drafts*. You can use mbox, maildir, mh, babyl and mmdf in the protocol part of the URL.

Note: You will most likely want drafts indexed by notmuch to be able to later access them within alot. This currently only works for maildir containers in a path below your notmuch database path.

Type mail_container

Default None

draft_tags

list of tags to automatically add to draft messages

Type string list

Default draft

encrypt_by_default

Alot will try to GPG encrypt outgoing messages by default when this is set to *all* or *trusted*. If set to *all* the message will be encrypted for all recipients for who a key is available in the key ring. If set to *trusted* it will be encrypted to all recipients if a trusted key is available for all recipients (one where the user id for the key is signed with a trusted signature).

Note: If the message will not be encrypted by default you can still use the *toggleencrypt*, *encrypt* and *unencrypt* commands to encrypt it.

Deprecated since version 0.4: The values *True* and *False* are interpreted as *all* and *none* respectively. *0*, *1*, *true*, *True*, *false*, *False*, *yes*, *Yes*, *no*, *No*, will be removed before 1.0, please move to *all*, *none*, or *trusted*.

Type option, one of ['all', 'none', 'trusted', 'True', 'False', 'true', 'false', 'Yes', 'No', 'yes', 'no', '1', '0']

Default none

encrypt_to_self

If this is true when encrypting a message it will also be encrypted with the key defined for this account.

Warning: Before 0.6 this was controlled via gpg.conf.

Type boolean

Default True

gpg_key

The GPG key ID you want to use with this account.

Type string

Default None

passed_tags

list of tags to automatically add to passed messages

Type string list

Default passed

realname

used to format the (proposed) From-header in outgoing mails

Type string

replied_tags

list of tags to automatically add to replied messages

Type string list

Default replied

sendmail_command

sendmail command. This is the shell command used to send out mails via the sendmail protocol

Type string

Default "sendmail -t"

sent_box

where to store outgoing mails, e.g. *maildir:///home/you/mail/Sent*. You can use mbox, maildir, mh, babyl and mmdf in the protocol part of the URL.

Note: If you want to add outgoing mails automatically to the notmuch index you must use maildir in a path within your notmuch database path.

Type mail_container

Default None

sent_tags

list of tags to automatically add to outgoing messages

Type string list

Default sent

sign_by_default

Outgoing messages will be GPG signed by default if this is set to True.

Type boolean

Default False

signature

path to signature file that gets attached to all outgoing mails from this account, optionally renamed to *signature_filename*.

Type string

Default None

signature_as_attachment

attach signature file if set to True, append its content (mimetype text) to the body text if set to False.

Type boolean

Default False

signature_filename

signature file's name as it appears in outgoing mails if *signature_as_attachment* is set to True

Type string

Default None

3.3 Contacts Completion

For each *account* you can define an address book by providing a subsection named *abook*. Crucially, this section needs an option *type* that specifies the type of the address book. The only types supported at the moment are "shellcommand" and "abook". Both respect the *ignorecase* option which defaults to *True* and results in case insensitive lookups.

shellcommand

Address books of this type use a shell command in combination with a regular expression to look up contacts.

The value of *command* will be called with the search prefix as only argument for lookups. Its output is searched for email-name pairs using the regular expression given as *regexp*, which must include named groups "email" and "name" to match the email address and realname parts respectively. See below for an example that uses abook

```
[accounts]
  [[youraccount]]
      # ...
      [[[abook]]]
          type = shellcommand
          command = abook --mutt-query
          regexp = '^(?P<email>[^@]+@[^\t]+)\t+(?P<name>[^\t]+)'
          ignorecase = True
```

See here for alternative lookup commands. The few others I have tested so far are:

goobook for cached google contacts lookups. Works with the above default regexp

```
command = goobook query
regexp = '^(?P<email>[^@]+@[^\t]+)\t+(?P<name>[^\t]+)'
```

nottoomuch-addresses completes contacts found in the notmuch index:

```
command = nottoomuch-addresses.sh
regexp = \"(?P<name>.+)\"\s*<(?P<email>.*.+?@.+?)>
```

notmuch-abook completes contacts found in database of notmuch-abook:

```
command = notmuch_abook.py lookup
regexp = ^((?P<name>[^(\\s+\<)]*)\s+<)?(?P<email>[^@]+?@[^>]+)>?$
```

notmuch address Since version *0.19*, notmuch itself offers a subcommand *address*, that returns email addresses found in the notmuch index. Combined with the *date:* syntax to query for mails within a certain timeframe, this allows to search contacts that you've sent emails to (output all addresses from the *To*, *Cc* and *Bcc* headers):

```
command = 'notmuch address --format=json --output=recipients date:1Y.. AND␣
↪from:my@address.org'
regexp = '\[?{"name": "(?P<name>.*)", "address": "(?P<email>.+)", "name-addr
↪": ".*"}[,\]]?'
shellcommand_external_filtering = False
```

If you want to search for senders in the *From* header (which should be must faster according to notmuch address docs), then use the following command:

```
command = 'notmuch address --format=json date:1Y..'
```

Don't hesitate to send me your custom *regexp* values to list them here.

abook

Address books of this type directly parse abooks contact files. You may specify a path using the "abook_contacts_file" option, which defaults to `~/.abook/addressbook`. To use the default path, simply do this:

```
[accounts]
[[youraccount]]
    # ...
    [[[abook]]]
        type = abook
```

3.4 Key Bindings

If you want to bind a command to a key you can do so by adding the pair to the *[bindings]* section. This will introduce a *global* binding, that works in all modes. To make a binding specific to a mode you have to add the pair under the subsection named like the mode. For instance, if you want to bind *T* to open a new search for threads tagged with 'todo', and be able to toggle this tag in search mode, you'd add this to your config

```
[bindings]
  T = search tag:todo

  [[search]]
  t = toggletags todo
```

Known modes are:

- bufferlist
- envelope
- namedqueries
- search
- taglist
- thread

Have a look at the urwid User Input documentation on how key strings are formatted.

3.4.1 Default bindings

User-defined bindings are combined with the default bindings listed below.

```
up = move up
down = move down
page up = move page up
page down = move page down
mouse press 4 = move up
mouse press 5 = move down
j = move down
k = move up
'g g' = move first
G = move last
' ' = move page down
'ctrl d' = move halfpage down
'ctrl u' = move halfpage up
@ = refresh
? = help bindings
I = search tag:inbox AND NOT tag:killed
'#' = taglist
shift tab = bprevious
U = search tag:unread
tab = bnext
\ = prompt 'search '
d = bclose
$ = flush
m = compose
o = prompt 'search '
q = exit
';' = bufferlist
':' = prompt
. = repeat

[bufferlist]
    x = close
    enter = open

[search]
    enter = select
    a = toggletags inbox
    & = toggletags killed
    ! = toggletags flagged
    s = toggletags unread
    l = retagprompt
    O = refineprompt
    | = refineprompt

[envelope]
    a = prompt 'attach ~/'
    y = send
    P = save
    s = 'refine Subject'
    f = prompt 'set From '
    t = 'refine To'
    b = 'refine Bcc'
    c = 'refine Cc'
    S = togglesign
    enter = edit
    'g f' = togglesource
```

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```
[taglist]
    enter = select

[namedqueries]
    enter = select

[thread]
    enter = select
    C = fold *
    E = unfold *
    c = fold
    e = unfold
    < = fold
    > = unfold
    [ = indent -
    ] = indent +
    'g f' = togglesource
    H = toggleheaders
    P = print --all --separately --add_tags
    S = save --all
    g = reply --all
    f = forward
    p = print --add_tags
    n = editnew
    b= bounce
    s = save
    r = reply
    | = prompt 'pipeto '

    'g j' = move next sibling
    'g k' = move previous sibling
    'g h' = move parent
    'g l' = move first reply
    ' ' = move next
```

In prompts the following hardcoded bindings are available.

Key	Function
Ctrl-f/b	Moves the curser one character to the right/left
Alt-f/b Shift-right/left	Moves the cursor one word to the right/left
Ctrl-a/e	Moves the curser to the beginning/end of the line
Ctrl-d	Deletes the character under the cursor
Alt-d	Deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the current or next word
Alt-Delete/Backspace Ctrl-w	Deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the current or previous word
Ctrl-k	Deletes everything from the cursor to the end of the line
Ctrl-u	Deletes everything from the cursor to the beginning of the line

3.4.2 Overwriting defaults

To disable a global binding you can redefine it in your config to point to an empty command string. For example, to add a new global binding for key *a*, which is bound to *toggletags inbox* in search mode by default, you can remap it as follows.

```
[bindings]
  a = NEW GLOBAL COMMAND

  [[search]]
    a =
```

If you omit the last two lines, *a* will still be bound to the default binding in search mode.

3.5 Hooks

Hooks are python callables that live in a module specified by *hooksfile* in the config. Per default this points to `~/.config/alot/hooks.py`.

3.5.1 Pre/Post Command Hooks

For every *COMMAND* in mode *MODE*, the callables `pre_MODE_COMMAND()` and `post_MODE_COMMAND()` – if defined – will be called before and after the command is applied respectively. In addition callables `pre_global_COMMAND()` and `post_global_COMMAND()` can be used. They will be called if no specific hook function for a mode is defined. The signature for the pre-*send* hook in envelope mode for example looks like this:

pre_envelope_send(*ui=None*, *dbm=None*, *cmd=None*)

Parameters

- **ui** (`alot.ui.UI`) – the main user interface
- **dbm** (`alot.db.manager.DBManager`) – a database manager
- **cmd** (`alot.commands.Command`) – the Command instance that is being called

Consider this pre-hook for the exit command, that logs a personalized goodbye message:

```
import logging
from alot.settings.const import settings
def pre_global_exit(**kwargs):
    accounts = settings.get_accounts()
    if accounts:
        logging.info('goodbye, %s!' % accounts[0].realname)
    else:
        logging.info('goodbye!')
```

3.5.2 Other Hooks

Apart from command pre- and posthooks, the following hooks will be interpreted:

reply_prefix(*realname*, *address*, *timestamp*[, *ui= None*, *dbm=None*])

Is used to reformat the first indented line in a reply message. This defaults to 'Quoting %s (%s)n' % (realname, timestamp)' unless this hook is defined

Parameters

- **realname** (*str*) – name or the original sender
- **address** (*str*) – address of the sender

- **timestamp** (datetime.datetime) – value of the Date header of the replied message

Return type string

forward_prefix(*realname*, *address*, *timestamp*[, *ui= None*, *dbm=None*])
Is used to reformat the first indented line in a inline forwarded message. This defaults to 'Forwarded message from %s (%s)n' % (realname, timestamp)' if this hook is undefined

Parameters

- **realname** (*str*) – name or the original sender
- **address** (*str*) – address of the sender
- **timestamp** (datetime.datetime) – value of the Date header of the replied message

Return type string

pre_edit_translate(*text*[, *ui= None*, *dbm=None*])
Used to manipulate a message's text *before* the editor is called. The text might also contain some header lines, depending on the settings *edit_headers_whitelist* and *edit_header_blacklist*.

Parameters **text** (*str*) – text representation of mail as displayed in the interface and as sent to the editor

Return type str

post_edit_translate(*text*[, *ui= None*, *dbm=None*])
used to manipulate a message's text *after* the editor is called, also see *pre_edit_translate*

Parameters **text** (*str*) – text representation of mail as displayed in the interface and as sent to the editor

Return type str

text_quote(*message*)
used to transform a message into a quoted one

Parameters **message** (*str*) – message to be quoted

Return type str

timestamp_format(*timestamp*)
represents given timestamp as string

Parameters **timestamp** (*datetime*) – timestamp to represent

Return type str

touch_external_cmdlist(*cmd*, *shell=shell*, *spawn=spawn*, *thread=thread*)
used to change external commands according to given flags shortly before they are called.

Parameters

- **cmd** (*list of str*) – command to be called
- **shell** (*bool*) – is this to be interpreted by the shell?
- **spawn** (*bool*) – should be spawned in new terminal/environment
- **threads** – should be called in new thread

Returns triple of amended command list, shell and thread flags

Return type list of str, bool, bool

reply_subject(*subject*)
used to reformat the subject header on reply

Parameters **subject** (*str*) – subject to reformat

Return type str

forward_subject(*subject*)
used to reformat the subject header on forward

Parameters **subject** (*str*) – subject to reformat

Return type str

pre_buffer_open(*ui= None*, *dbm=None*, *buf=buf*)
run before a new buffer is opened

Parameters **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

post_buffer_open(*ui=None*, *dbm=None*, *buf=buf*)
run after a new buffer is opened

Parameters **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

pre_buffer_close(*ui=None*, *dbm=None*, *buf=buf*)
run before a buffer is closed

Parameters **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

post_buffer_close(*ui=None*, *dbm=None*, *buf=buf*, *success=success*)
run after a buffer is closed

Parameters

- **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open
- **success** (*boolean*) – true if successfully closed buffer

pre_buffer_focus(*ui=None*, *dbm=None*, *buf=buf*)
run before a buffer is focused

Parameters **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open

post_buffer_focus(*ui=None*, *dbm=None*, *buf=buf*, *success=success*)
run after a buffer is focused

Parameters

- **buf** (*alot.buffer.Buffer*) – buffer to open
- **success** (*boolean*) – true if successfully focused buffer

exit()
run just before the program exits

sanitize_attachment_filename(*filename=None*, *prefix=''*, *suffix=''*)
returns *prefix* and *suffix* for a sanitized filename to use while opening an attachment. The *prefix* and *suffix* are used to open a file named *prefix* + *XXXXXX* + *suffix* in a temporary directory.

Parameters

- **filename** (*str or None*) – filename provided in the email (can be None)
- **prefix** (*str*) – prefix string as found on mailcap
- **suffix** (*str*) – suffix string as found on mailcap

Returns tuple of *prefix* and *suffix*

Return type (str, str)

loop_hook (*ui=None*)
Run on a period controlled by *_periodic_hook_frequency*

Parameters **ui** (alot.ui.UI) – the main user interface

3.6 Theming

Alot can be run in 1, 16 or 256 colour mode. The requested mode is determined by the command-line parameter *-C* or read from option *colourmode* config value. The default is 256, which scales down depending on how many colours your terminal supports.

Most parts of the user interface can be individually coloured to your liking. To make it easier to switch between or share different such themes, they are defined in separate files (see below for the exact format). To specify the theme to use, set the *theme* config option to the name of a theme-file. A file by that name will be looked up in the path given by the *themes_dir* config setting which defaults to $XDG_CONFIG_HOME/alot/themes, and `~/.config/alot/themes/`, if XDG_CONFIG_HOME is empty or not set. If the themes_dir is not present then the contents of $XDG_DATA_DIRS/alot/themes will be tried in order. This defaults to `/usr/local/share/alot/themes` and `/usr/share/alot/themes`, in that order. These locations are meant to be used by distro packages to put themes in.

3.6.1 Theme Files

contain a section for each *MODE* plus "help" for the bindings-help overlay and "global" for globally used themables like footer, prompt etc. Each such section defines colour *attributes* for the parts that can be themed. The names of the themables should be self-explanatory. Have a look at the default theme file at `alot/defaults/default.theme` and the config spec `alot/defaults/default.theme` for the exact format.

3.6.2 Colour Attributes

Attributes are *sextuples* of urwid Attribute strings that specify foreground and background for mono, 16 and 256-colour modes respectively. For mono-mode only the flags *blink*, *standup*, *underline* and *bold* are available, 16c mode supports these in combination with the colour names:

```
brown     dark red      dark magenta     dark blue     dark cyan     dark green
yellow    light red     light magenta    light blue    light cyan    light green
black     dark gray     light gray       white
```

In high-colour mode, you may use the above plus grayscales *g0* to *g100* and colour codes given as *#* followed by three hex values. See here and here for more details on the interpreted values. A colour picker that makes choosing colours easy can be found in `alot/extra/colour_picker.py`.

As an example, check the setting below that makes the footer line appear as underlined bold red text on a bright green background:

```
[[global]]
  #name     mono fg      mono bg    16c fg                          16c bg          256c fg␣
↪                  256c bg
  #         |                  |    |                               |               |       ␣
↪                       |
  #         v                  v    v                               v               v       ␣
↪                       v
  footer = 'bold,underline', '', 'light red, bold, underline', 'light green', 'light␣
↪red, bold, underline', '#8f6'
```

3.6.3 Search mode thread ines

The subsection '[[threadline]]' of the '[search]' section in *Theme Files* determines how to present a thread: here, *attributes* 'normal' and 'focus' provide fallback/spacer themes and 'parts' is a (string) list of displayed subwidgets. Possible part strings are:

- authors
- content
- date
- mailcount
- subject
- tags

For every listed part there must be a subsection with the same name, defining

normal *attribute* used for this part if unfocussed

focus *attribute* used for this part if focussed

width tuple indicating the width of the part. This is either *('fit', min, max)* to force the widget to be at least *min* and at most *max* characters wide, or *('weight', n)* which makes it share remaining space with other 'weight' parts.

alignment how to place the content string if the widget space is larger. This must be one of 'right', 'left' or 'center'.

Dynamic theming of thread lines based on query matching

To highlight some thread lines (use different attributes than the defaults found in the '[[threadline]]' section), one can define sections with prefix 'threadline'. Each one of those can redefine any part of the structure outlined above, the rest defaults to values defined in '[[threadline]]'.

The section used to theme a particular thread is the first one (in file-order) that matches the criteria defined by its 'query' and 'tagged_with' values:

- If 'query' is defined, the thread must match that querystring.
- If 'tagged_with' is defined, is value (string list) must be a subset of the accumulated tags of all messages in the thread.

Note: that 'tagged_with = A,B' is different from 'query = "is:A AND is:B"': the latter will match only if the thread contains a single message that is both tagged with A and B.

Moreover, note that if both query and tagged_with is undefined, this section will always match and thus overwrite the defaults.

The example below shows how to highlight unread threads: The date-part will be bold red if the thread has unread messages and flagged messages and just bold if the thread has unread but no flagged messages:

```
[search]
    # default threadline
    [[threadline]]
        normal = 'default','default','default','default','#6d6','default'
        focus = 'standout','default','light gray','dark gray','white','#68a'
        parts = date,mailcount,tags,authors,subject
```

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```
        [[[date]]]
            normal = 'default','default','light gray','default','g58','default'
            focus = 'standout','default','light gray','dark gray','g89','#68a'
            width = 'fit',10,10
        # ...

    # highlight threads containing unread and flagged messages
    [[threadline-flagged-unread]]
        tagged_with = 'unread','flagged'
        [[[date]]]
            normal = 'default','default','light red,bold','default','light red,bold',
↪'default'

    # highlight threads containing unread messages
    [[threadline-unread]]
        query = 'is:unread'
        [[[date]]]
            normal = 'default','default','light gray,bold','default','g58,bold',
↪'default'
```

3.6.4 Tagstring Formatting

One can specify how a particular tagstring is displayed throughout the interface. To use this feature, add a section *[tags]* to you alot config (not the theme file) and for each tag you want to customize, add a subsection named after the tag. Such a subsection may define

normal *attribute* used if unfocussed

focus *attribute* used if focussed

translated fixed string representation for this tag. The tag can be hidden from view, if the key *translated* is set to ‘’, the empty string.

translation a pair of strings that define a regular substitution to compute the string representation on the fly using *re.sub*. This only really makes sense if one uses a regular expression to match more than one tagstring (see below).

The following will make alot display the “todo” tag as “TODO” in white on red.

```
[tags]
  [[todo]]
    normal = '','', 'white','light red', 'white','#d66'
    translated = TODO
```

Utf-8 symbols are welcome here, see e.g. http://panmental.de/symbols/info.htm for some fancy symbols. I personally display my maildir flags like this:

```
[tags]

  [[flagged]]
    translated =
    normal = '','','light red','','light red',''
    focus = '','','light red','','light red',''

  [[unread]]
    translated =
```

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```
  [[replied]]
    translated =

  [[encrypted]]
    translated =
```

You may use regular expressions in the tagstring subsections to theme multiple tagstrings at once (first match wins). If you do so, you can use the *translation* option to specify a string substitution that will rename a matching tagstring. *translation* takes a comma separated *pair* of strings that will be fed to `re.sub()`. For instance, to theme all your nmbug tagstrings and especially colour tag *notmuch::bug* red, do the following:

```
[[notmuch::bug]]
  translated = 'nm:bug'
  normal = "", "", "light red, bold", "light blue", "light red, bold", "#88d"

[[notmuch::.*]]
  translation = 'notmuch::(.*)','nm:\1'
  normal = "", "", "white", "light blue", "#fff", "#88d"
```

CHAPTER 4

API and Development

4.1 Overview

The main component is `alot.ui.UI`, which provides methods for user input and notifications, sets up the widget tree and maintains the list of active buffers. When you start up alot, `init.py` initializes logging, parses settings and commandline args and instantiates the `UI` instance of that gets passes around later. From its constructor this instance starts the `urwid mainloop` that takes over.

Apart from the central `UI`, there are two other "managers" responsible for core functionalities, also set up in `init.py`:

- `ui.dbman`: a `DBManager` to access the email database and
- `alot.settings.settings`: a `SettingsManager` oo access user settings

Every user action, triggered either by key bindings or via the command prompt, is given as commandline string that gets `translated` to a `Command` object which is then `applied`. Different actions are defined as a subclasses of `Command`, which live in `alot/commands/MODE.py`, where MODE is the name of the mode (`Buffer` type) they are used in.

4.2 Email Database

The python bindings to libnotmuch define `notmuch.Thread` and `notmuch.Message`, which unfortunately are very fragile. Alot defines the wrapper classes `alot.db.Thread` and `alot.db.Message` that use an `manager.DBManager` instance to transparently provide persistent objects.

`alot.db.Message` moreover contains convenience methods to extract information about the message like reformated header values, a summary, decoded and interpreted body text and a list of `Attachments`.

The central `UI` instance carries around a `DBManager` object that is used for any lookups or modifications of the email base. `DBManager` can directly look up `Thread` and `Message` objects and is able to postpone/cache/retry writing operations in case the Xapian index is locked by another process.

4.2.1 Database Manager

4.2.2 Errors

4.2.3 Wrapper

4.2.4 Other Structures

4.2.5 Utilities

4.3 User Interface

Alot sets up a widget tree and a `mainloop` in the constructor of `alot.ui.UI`. The visible area is a `urwid.Frame`, where the footer is used as a status line and the body part displays the currently active `alot.buffers.Buffer`.

To be able to bind keystrokes and translate them to `Commands`, keypresses are *not* propagated down the widget tree as is customary in urwid. Instead, the root widget given to urwids mainloop is a custom wrapper (`alot.ui.Inputwrap`) that interprets key presses. A dedicated `SendKeypressCommand` can be used to trigger key presses to the wrapped root widget and thereby accessing standard urwid behaviour.

In order to keep the interface non-blocking and react to events like terminal size changes, alot makes use of asyncio - which allows asynchronous calls without the use of callbacks. Alot makes use of the python 3.5 async/await syntax

```
async def greet(ui):  # ui is instance of alot.ui.UI
    name = await ui.prompt('pls enter your name')
    ui.notify('your name is: ' + name)
```

4.3.1 `UI` - the main component

4.3.2 Buffers

A buffer defines a view to your data. It knows how to render itself, to interpret keypresses and is visible in the "body" part of the widget frame. Different modes are defined by subclasses of the following base class.

Available modes are:

Mode	Buffer Subclass
search	`SearchBuffer`
thread	`ThreadBuffer`
bufferlist	`BufferlistBuffer`
taglist	`TagListBuffer`
namedqueries	`NamedQueriesBuffer`
envelope	`EnvelopeBuffer`

4.3.3 Widgets

What follows is a list of the non-standard urwid widgets used in alot. Some of them respect *user settings*, themes in particular.

utils

Utility Widgets not specific to alot

class alot.widgets.utils.**AttrFlipWidget**(*w*, *maps*, *init_map='normal'*)
An AttrMap that can remember attributes to set

globals

bufferlist

Widgets specific to Bufferlist mode

class alot.widgets.bufferlist.**BufferlineWidget**(*buffer*)
selectable text widget that represents a `Buffer` in the `BufferlistBuffer`.

search

thread

4.3.4 Completion

`alot.ui.UI.prompt()` allows tab completion using a `Completer` object handed as 'completer' parameter. `alot.completion` defines several subclasses for different occasions like completing email addresses from an `AddressBook`, notmuch tagstrings. Some of these actually build on top of each other; the `QueryCompleter` for example uses a `TagsCompleter` internally to allow tagstring completion after "is:" or "tag:" keywords when typing a notmuch querystring.

All these classes overide the method `complete()`, which for a given string and cursor position in that string returns a list of tuples *(completed_string, new_cursor_position)* that are taken to be the completed values. Note that *completed_string* does not need to have the original string as prefix. `complete()` may rise `alot.errors.CompletionError` exceptions.

4.4 User Settings

Alot sets up a `SettingsManager` to access user settings defined in different places uniformly. There are four types of user settings:

what?	location	accessible via
alot config	`~/.config/alot/config` or given by command option *-c*.	`SettingsManager.get()`
hooks – user provided python code	`~/.config/alot/hooks.py` or as given by the *hooksfile* config value	`SettingsManager.get_hook()`
notmuch config	`~/.notmuch-config` or given by *$NOTMUCH_CONFIG* or given by command option *-n*	`SettingsManager.get_notmuch_setting()`
mailcap – defines shellcommands to handle mime types	`~/.mailcap` (`/etc/mailcap`)	`SettingsManager.mailcap_find_match()`

4.4.1 Settings Manager

4.4.2 Errors

exception alot.settings.errors.**ConfigError**
could not parse user config

exception alot.settings.errors.**NoMatchingAccount**
No account matching requirements found.

4.4.3 Utils

alot.settings.utils.**read_config**(*configpath=None*, *specpath=None*, *checks=None*, *report_extra=False*)
get a (validated) config object for given config file path.

Parameters

- **configpath** (*str or list(str)*) – path to config-file or a list of lines as its content
- **specpath** (*str*) – path to spec-file
- **checks** (*dict str->callable,*) – custom checks to use for validator. see validate docs
- **report_extra** (*boolean*) – log if a setting is not present in the spec file

Raises *ConfigError*

Return type *configobj.ConfigObj*

alot.settings.utils.**resolve_att**(*a*, *fallback*)
replace '' and 'default' by fallback values

4.4.4 Themes

4.4.5 Accounts

4.4.6 Addressbooks

class alot.addressbook.**AddressBook**(*ignorecase=True*)
can look up email addresses and realnames for contacts.

Note: This is an abstract class that leaves *get_contacts()* unspecified. See AbookAddressBook and ExternalAddressbook for implementations.

---

get_contacts()
list all contacts tuples in this abook as (name, email) tuples

lookup(*query=''*)
looks up all contacts where name or address match query

class alot.addressbook.abook.**AbookAddressBook**(*path='~/.abook/addressbook'*, ***kwargs*)
AddressBook that parses abook's config/database files

Parameters **path** (*str*) – path to abook addressbook file

get_contacts()
list all contacts tuples in this abook as (name, email) tuples

4.5 Utils

4.6 Commands

User actions are represented by `Command` objects that can then be triggered by `alot.ui.UI.apply_command()`. Command-line strings given by the user via the prompt or key bindings can be translated to `Command` objects using `alot.commands.commandfactory()`. Specific actions are defined as subclasses of `Command` and can be registered to a global command pool using the `registerCommand` decorator.

Note: that the return value of `commandfactory()` depends on the current *mode* the user interface is in. The mode identifier is a string that is uniquely defined by the currently focuses `Buffer`.

Note: The names of the commands available to the user in any given mode do not correspond one-to-one to these subclasses. You can register a Command multiple times under different names, with different forced constructor parameters and so on. See for instance the definition of BufferFocusCommand in 'commands/globals.py':

```
@registerCommand(MODE, 'bprevious', forced={'offset': -1},
                 help='focus previous buffer')
@registerCommand(MODE, 'bnext', forced={'offset': +1},
                 help='focus next buffer')
class BufferFocusCommand(Command):
    def __init__(self, buffer=None, offset=0, **kwargs):
    ...
```

4.6.1 Globals

4.6.2 Envelope

4.6.3 Bufferlist

4.6.4 Search

4.6.5 Taglist

4.6.6 Namedqueries

4.6.7 Thread

4.7 Crypto

CHAPTER 5

FAQ

1. Why reinvent the wheel? Why not extend an existing MUA to work nicely with notmuch?

   alot makes use of existing solutions where possible: It does not fetch, send or edit mails; it lets notmuch handle your mailindex and uses a toolkit to render its display. You are responsible for automatic initial tagging.

   This said, there are few CLI MUAs that could be easily and naturally adapted to using notmuch. Rebuilding an interface from scratch using friendly and extensible tools seemed easier and more promising.

   Update: see mutt-kz for a fork of mutt..

2. What's with the snotty name?

   It's not meant to be presumptuous. I like the dichotomy; I like to picture the look on someone's face who reads the `User-Agent` header "notmuch/alot"; I like cookies; I like this comic strip.

3. I want feature X!

   Me too! Feel free to file a new or comment on existing issues if you don't want/have the time/know how to implement it yourself. Be verbose as to how it should look or work when it's finished and give it some thought how you think we should implement it. We'll discuss it from there.

4. Why are the default key bindings so counter-intuitive?

   Be aware that the bindings for all modes are *fully configurable*. That said, I choose the bindings to be natural for me. I use vim and pentadactyl a lot. However, I'd be interested in discussing the defaults. If you think your bindings are more intuitive or better suited as defaults for some reason, don't hesitate to send me your config. The same holds for the theme settings you use. Tell me. Let's improve the defaults.

5. Help! I don't see *text/html* content!

   better: How do I properly set up an inline renderer for *text/html*? Try w3m and put the following into your `~/.mailcap`:

   ```
   text/html;  w3m -dump -o document_charset=%{charset} '%s'; nametemplate=
   ↪%s.html; copiousoutput
   ```

Most text based browsers have a dump mode that can be used here.

6. Why are you doing $THIS not $THAT way?

   Lazyness and Ignorance: In most cases I simply did not or still don't know a better solution. I try to outsource as much as I can to well established libraries and be it only to avoid having to read rfc's. But there are lots of tasks I implemented myself, possibly overlooking a ready made and available solution. Twisted is such a feature-rich but gray area in my mind for example. If you think you know how to improve the current implementation let me know!

   The few exceptions to above stated rule are the following:

   - The modules cmd and cmd2, that handle all sorts of convenience around command objects hate urwid: They are painfully strongly coupled to user in/output via stdin and out.
   - *notmuch reply* is not used to format reply messages because 1. it is not offered by notmuch's library but is a feature of the CLI. This means we would have to call the notmuch binary, something that is avoided where possible. 2. As there is no *notmuch forward* equivalent, this (very similar) functionality would have to be re-implemented anyway.

7. I thought alot ran on Python 2?

   It used to. When we made the transition to Python 3 we didn't maintain Python 2 support. If you still need Python 2 support the 0.7 release is your best bet.

8. I thought alot used twisted?

   It used to. After we switched to python 3 we decided to switch to asyncio, which reduced the number of dependencies we have. Twisted is an especially heavy dependency, when we only used their async mechanisms, and not any of the other goodness that twisted has to offer.

CHAPTER 6

Manpage

6.1 Synopsis

alot [options . . .] [subcommand]

6.2 Description

Alot is a terminal-based mail user agent for the notmuch mail system. It features a modular and command prompt driven interface to provide a full MUA experience as an alternative to the Emacs mode shipped with notmuch.

6.3 Options

-r, --read-only open notmuch database in read-only mode

-c FILENAME, --config=FILENAME configuration file (default: ~/.config/alot/config)

-n FILENAME, --notmuch-config=FILENAME notmuch configuration file (default: $NOTMUCH_CONFIG or ~/.notmuch-config)

-C COLOURS, --colour-mode=COLOURS number of colours to use on the terminal; must be 1, 16 or 256 (default: configuration option *colourmode* or 256)

-p PATH, --mailindex-path=PATH path to notmuch index

-d LEVEL, --debug-level=LEVEL debug level; must be one of debug, info, warning or error (default: info)

-l FILENAME, --logfile=FILENAME log file (default: /dev/null)

-h, --help display help and exit

-v, --version output version information and exit

6.4 Commands

search start in a search buffer using the query string provided as parameter (see *notmuch-search-terms(7)*)

compose compose a new message

bufferlist start with only a bufferlist buffer open

taglist start with only a taglist buffer open

namedqueries start with list of named queries

pyshell start the interactive python shell inside alot

6.5 Usage

The arrow keys, *page-up/down*, *j*, *k* and *Space* can be used to move the focus. *Escape* cancels prompts and *Enter* selects. Hit *:* at any time and type in commands to the prompt.

The interface shows one buffer at a time, you can use *Tab* and *Shift-Tab* to switch between them, close the current buffer with *d* and list them all with *;*.

The buffer type or *mode* (displayed at the bottom left) determines which prompt commands are available. Usage information on any command can be listed by typing *help YOURCOMMAND* to the prompt. The keybindings for the current mode are listed upon pressing *?*.

6.6 UNIX Signals

SIGUSR1 Refreshes the current buffer.

SIGINT Shuts down the user interface.

6.7 See Also

notmuch(1)

Alot is a terminal-based mail user agent for the notmuch mail system. It features a modular and command prompt driven interface to provide a full MUA experience as an alternative to the Emacs mode shipped with notmuch.

Python Module Index

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