



Automate Link Exchange™ Software

Ver 2.1.0

User Guide

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1. Introduction

Automate Link Exchange™ Software is developed and owned by Bigcatcat Network Ltd.

The software help users to automate their reciprocal link building management and drive steady traffic. Why only rely on search engine when you can build one more traffic generation system with ease?

This user guide describes how to use this software properly.

2. System Requirements:

- Unix/Linux/Windows Server
- 1 MYSQL database (Version 3.23 or above)
- Support PHP 4.X or above
- 3Mb Web space (after installation, it requires around 2.5Mb only)

(Notes: 99% web hosting companies support the above requirements)

3. Tips

If you downloaded a trial version only, you are encouraged to subscribe our newsletter Tips. It gives you hints and tips of using the software and how to promote your site effectively.

Trial version allows you to use the software for 30 days. After that, you should purchase the software at <http://www.linkautomate.com/order.html>

4. Quick Startup Guide

This section helps users to setup and uses the software as soon as possible.

Basic Concept

1. Actually, the software is easy to use and is self-explanatory when you login to the administration panel.
2. If you cannot setup your site properly, you can visit <http://www.linkautomate.com> and request for technical support.
3. Each link may have the following status:
 - “Review” – The link is a new submission and is subject to review.
 - “Approved” – The link is reviewed and approved.
 - “Generated” – The link can be seen in the link page.
 - “Self Add” – User takes the initiative to add a link and then request a link exchange with other webmasters.
 - “Old” – A link is imported from existing/old link pages and is subject to approval. If user does not approve the link manually, it will never be seen in link pages.
 - “Old Accepted” – A link from existing/old link pages are approved by users.
 - “Offsite” – A link is temporarily taken off the link page because the link partner does not link to your site currently.
4. The software can manage reciprocal link exchange in 2 ways: 1. Passive, 2. Active.
Passive - means it depends on whether your visitors request link exchange with you or not. If yes, they will click “Add Link” in the link pages and access the link exchange request form.
Active (Self-Add Link) - means you can firstly add a link to your link directory, and then request link exchange with the webmaster by sending them an email.

Operate the Software

Step1: Installation

Follow the installation guide to install the software. In your homepage, make a link to the link directory’s homepage. It helps you to grow your website traffic.

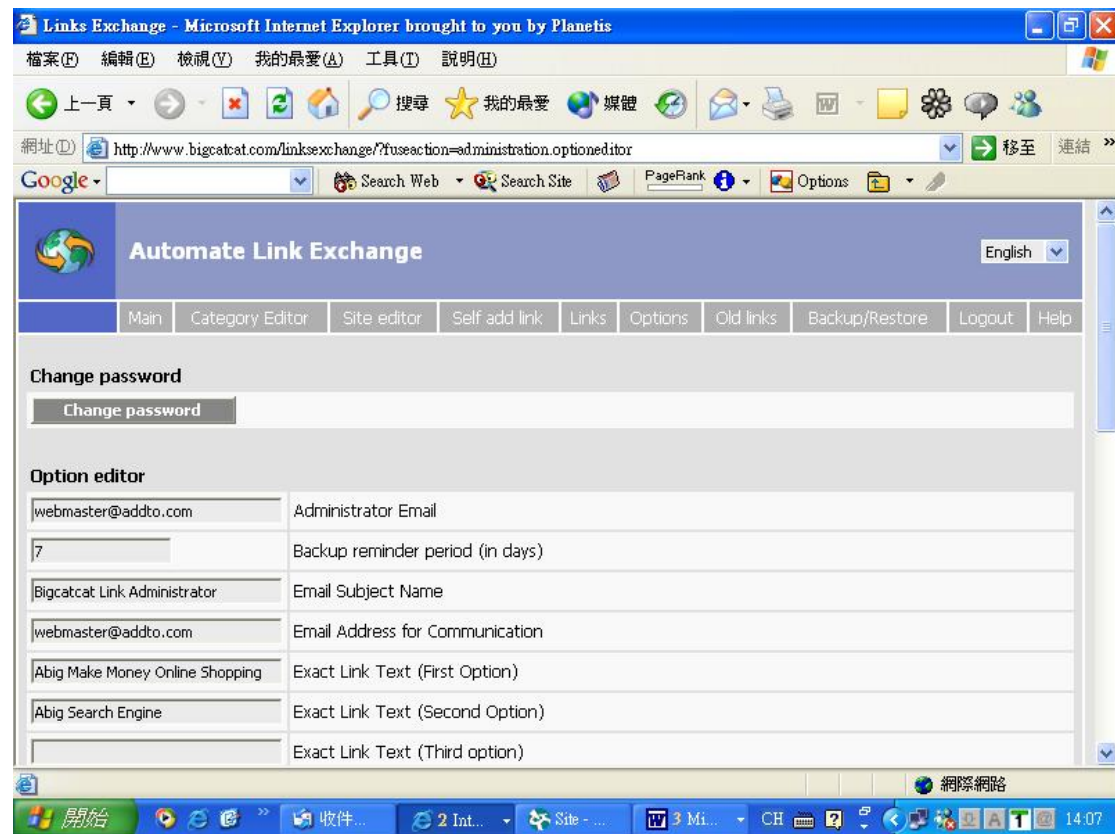
Step 2: Login

Login to the software by accessing the software administration panel. E.g. If you installed the software in a directory called linksexchange, you can access the administration panel at <http://www.yourdomainname.com/linksexchange/>

Step 3: Option Setting

Click the Option Link and setup the option (The software provide many default values to speed up your setup process, you may simply use the default value provided):

Automate Link Exchange Menu:
<http://www.linkautomate.com>



All the option fields are described below:

Administrator Email – email address of the system administrator. You must use a frequently use email address and you must remember this email address because it is required to retrieve password if you forget password. Free email such as hotmail.com, etc. is NOT recommended as they are not reliable enough.

Backup reminder period (in days) – sets how often the backup reminder message to be displayed.

Email Subject Name – The sender name when an email is sent out.

Email Address for Communication – You will use this email address to communicate with link exchange partners. To simplify things, set it the same as Administrator email.

Exact Link Text – If you enable exact link feature, you can restrict what anchor text people must use to link to your site. If they do not follow it, the software will reject their site or take their site off the link page.

You can set a maximum of 3 exact link text. E.g. the first link text is “Search

Engine”, the second link text is “Motor car”. If people does not use the wordings “Search Engine” or “Motor car” in their reciprocal anchor text link, the software will reject the site.

If you don’t want to restrict how people links to your site, disable Exact Link Text. Just uncheck the option **Enable Exact link checking**.

Enable Logo Display Along Link – If you allow users to submit their logo and display it along the text link, check this option.

You can limit the width and height of the submitted graphics by setting up the **Graphical Width Limit** and **Graphical Height Limit** in pixels.

Home page URL – a URL to be searched on pages referred to by the reciprocal link, usually, your website’s URL. E.g. www.linkautomate.com

Number of links per page – sets how many links are to be displayed on one page (being the Preview page, i.e. the function Main).

Number of groups per line – sets how many links to other pages are to be displayed in one line (on the preview page).

Number of Categories columns – on the Categories List page (preview)

Time between automatic page generation (in hours) – The software can generate the most up-to-date link page automatically. This field defines the update schedule. We recommend you set it from 2 – 48 hours.

Link Directory’s Home page Name – The file name of the link directory’s homepage. Must end with .php. Usually, it is index.php. If you setup the link page folder called Link, you can access your link directory by typing <http://www.yourdomainname.com/Link/index.php>

Directory Name for Generated Link Page – The physical path of where the link page should be stored. If you are using a shared web hosting environment, the absolute path is usually something like this
 /home/your_web_hosting_username/public_html/link
 You may use a FTP software to browse and find out the absolute path or contact your web hosting company. Usually, you set it already during installation

Sort methods for link pages – sets how links are to be sorted (by Rate, by Date of

submission, or by Alphabetical order of Link Title)
Sorting directions – ascending or descending.
Checking period for periodical tasks (in seconds) – determines how often those tasks are executed. We recommend the range of 60 – 200 secs.
Enable Automatic approval Mode – If you are busy to review each site manually, the software can help. Just check the option and the software can approve each submission if the submission can pass the basic validation and the submitter is already linked to you. If you want to manually review each submission, you can uncheck this option.
Automatic approval period (in seconds) – determines a time period between submission and automatic approval. We recommend it to be 260 sec to 500 sec.
Enable Automatic Link Checker – determines whether or not the link checker will automatically check whether your link partner is still linking to your site. If they do not link to you, the link’s status will be changed to “Offsite” status. A site with “offsite” status will be taken out from your link page, and an email will be sent to the corresponding link partner. If you turn on the exact link feature, and partners do not link to you using the exact link text, the link status will be changed to “Offsite”.
Link verification period (in hours) – sets how often the link checker will be triggered. We recommend that you don’t need to check too often. Select a range from 96 – 168 hours or even longer. If you can set CRON job in your web host, you may use it to trigger the script <code>execute_periodical.php</code> stored in your software directory. E.g. <code>wget http://bigcatcat.com/linksexchange/execute_periodical.php</code>
Max time for one offsite checking attempt (in Secs) – The time the software should spend on every link checking cycle. If you set it longer, you may wait longer to access web pages when the software is performing link checking. So, you should strive a balance. We suggest the range from 180-300 secs are better depending on how many links you have.

Step 4: Link Directory Category Management

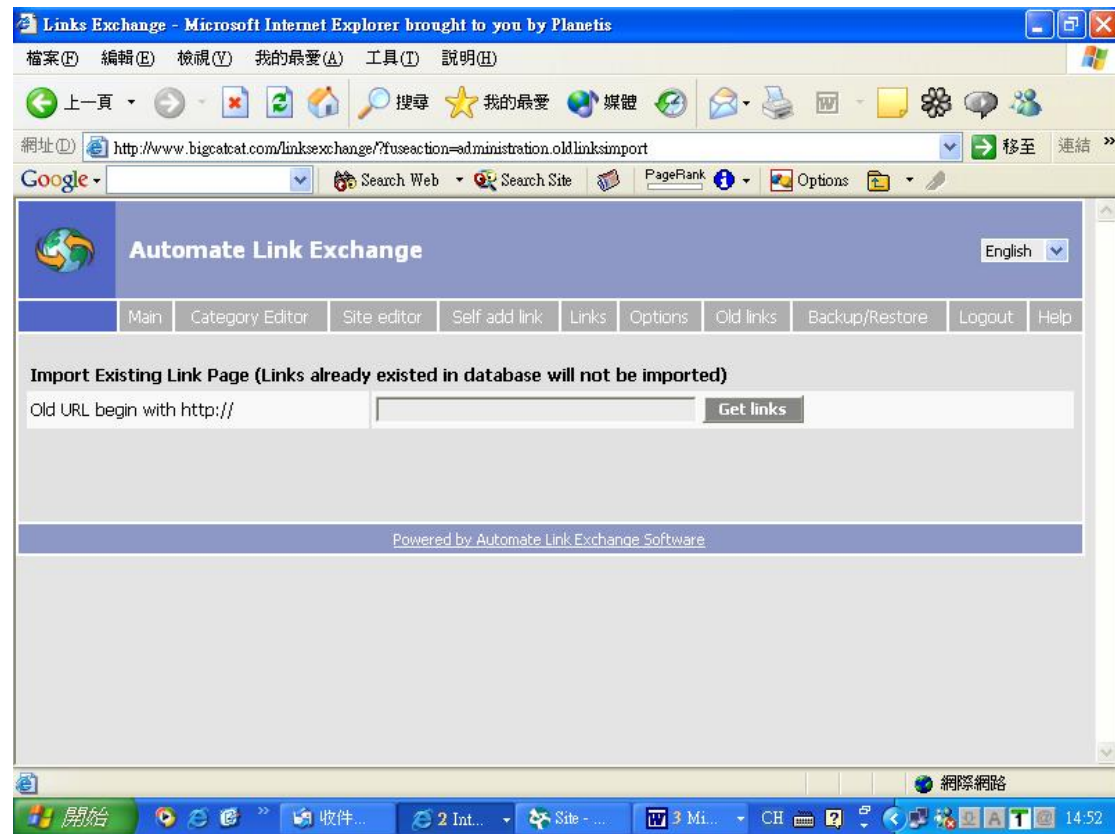
Go to Category Editor and define the categories of your link directory. If you just want one category, that’s fine. Simply setup one category and all links will be assigned there.

Step 5 : Import Existing Link Pages (Optional)

Automate Link Exchange Menu:
<http://www.linkautomate.com>

This step only requires if you have existing link pages in your site and you want to import them into Automate Link Exchange.

Link page can be imported one by one. E.g. your current link page is located in <http://www.yourdomainname.com/linkpartner.html>, enter the full URL in the import box.



Notes:

1. Links already existed in database will not be imported.
2. The old link page's HTML syntax should be corrected. Otherwise, the link may not properly imported.
3. After you import the old links, they will have a status called "Old".
4. You can use the Link Function, and then use the filter to view links with status "Old". Then, you can edit the old links, approve or reject them. Details of how to use the Link Function can refer to Section xxxxxx

Step 6 Template Editing (Optional)

You can customize the look and content of your link pages and email. Pre-defined templates are provided. However, you feel free to modify yourself. **Within the templates, instructions are also included.**

There are two types of templates: A) Mail Templates B) Link Page Templates

A) Mail Templates

Automate Link Exchange Menu:
<http://www.linkautomate.com>

To modify the templates, download the templates using FTP software. The templates are stored in a folder called “mailtemplates”. You can edit the content using any text editor or HTML editors like Dreamweaver. After you make changes, you MUST UPLOAD the modified templates to directory “mailtemplates”. DON’T CHANGE THE ORIGINAL FILENAME, however.

Email will be sent to you and your link partners when 1) someone submits a link to your link directory, 2) a link is approved, rejected, or 3) taken out from link page due to no reciprocal link.

The following templates define the email content (If you think the pre-defined content is fine, you can no need to modify it):

1. link_approved.mtl – email sent to submitters should their links are approved.
2. link_rejected.mtl – email sent to submitters should their links are rejected.
3. link_exchange_request.mtl – email sent to other webmasters when you initiate link exchange request with them. You can also see “Self-Add” function.
4. link_offsite.mtl – If the software’s automatic link checker finds that your link partners are no longer link to you, the software will send this email out.
5. new_link_added.mtl – The software will send this email to you should a submission is received.

B) Link Page Templates

There are 4 templates to define the layout of your link directory. To modify the templates, download the templates using FTP software. The templates are stored in a folder called “linkpagetemplates”. You can edit the content using any text editor or HTML editors like Dreamweaver or Text Pad. After you make changes, you MUST UPLOAD the modified templates to “linkpagetemplates”, and use the ORIGINAL FILENAME and same FILE EXTENSION (i.e. .tmpl), do not save them as another file names.

A set of Command Tags are also provided for making your site work properly. You can see the details in the following, and the pre-defined templates provided also has instruction to help you.

The following describe them:

1. The first template (‘**categories_list_page.tmpl**’) is used for recreating the ‘list of categories’ page and contains special marks. The list of categories is displayed in one or several columns with each category having its own rows and columns. **The number of columns is set by the ‘ColumnsCount’ mark. Must present at the top. Above the <html> and <body> tag.**

The other special marks include:

‘%%BeginRowTemplate%%’ defines the start of each row.

‘%%BeginColumnTemplate%%’ – the start of each column within a row.

Automate Link Exchange Menu:

<http://www.linkautomate.com>

'%%EndColumnTemplate%%' – the end of each column.

'%%EndRowTemplate%%' – the end of each row.

'%%PathToApplicationIncludeHere%%' – the system will include a path to the LinksExchange application

'%%PeriodicalFileIncludeHere%%' – Codes to trigger automatic tasks will be added.

This code will execute periodical tasks in order to avoid using 'Cron' or 'At' programs inside the system. But if your web host allows you to use Cron job, you can do it.

2. The second template ('links_list_page.tmpl') is used for recreating the 'list of links' page. The list of links is displayed in one column. Contains the following special marks:

'%%LinksPerPageCount%%' defines the number of links per page. Must present at the top. Above the <html> and <body> tag.

'%%BeginDynamicPart%%' – the start of the page's dynamic part.

'%%EndDynamicPart%%' – the end of the dynamic part.

'%%BeginRowTemplate%%' – the start of recreation code for each link.

'%%EndRowTemplate%%' – the end of recreation code for each link.

This code will be duplicated a required number of times. Depending on the number of links in a category and the number of links per page, the application will generate one or more link files for each category.

'%%BeginPageLink%%' defines the start of the 'next page' link code.

'%%EndPageLink%%' – the end of the 'next page' link code.

'%%BeginCurrentPageLink%%' – the start of the current 'page' link.

'%%BeginNotCurrentPageLink%%' defines start of not current 'next page' link.

'%%BeginPrevPageLink%%' – the start of 'previous page' link

'%%EndPrevPageLink%%' – the end of 'previous page' link

'%%BeginNextPageLink%%' – the start of 'next page' link

'%%EndNextPageLink%%' – the end of 'next page' link

'%%LinkNumber%%' – a running number of a link

'%%LinkURL%%' – Link URL

'%%LinkTitle%%' – URL title

'%%LinkDescription%%' – URL description

'%%GraphicalImgURL%%' – Graphical image URL

'%%GraphicalImgWidth%%' – width of graphical image

'%%GraphicalImgHeight%%' – height of graphical image

'%%GraphicalImgStart%%' – start of a portion of code to include a graphical URL

'%%GraphicalImgEnd%%' – end of a portion of code to include a graphical URL

'%%PathToApplicationIncludeHere%%' – same as for the previous template

Automate Link Exchange Menu:

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‘%%CurrentCategoryID%%’ – ID of a current category

‘%%PeriodicalFileIncludeHere%%’ – the place to which special code will be added.

3. The third template (‘**links_search_list_page.tmpl**’) is similar to ‘links_list_page.tmpl’ and is used to recreate the ‘list of links’ page after search.

4. The ‘**links_search_empty_page.tmpl**’ template file provides a template for displaying the search results page if no matches have been found.

The ‘linkpagetemplates’ folder contains a number of ‘.bak’ extension files that can be used as a backup.

Step 7: Link Management

After Step 6, your software can run smoothly.

If you want to manage the links, e.g. approve links, reject links, edit the link title, description, category, you should use the Link function.

Notes:

Normally, you don’t need to make changes to status of a site. The status will change automatically according to certain kind of conditions.

Only sites with “Review” status can be approved or rejected.

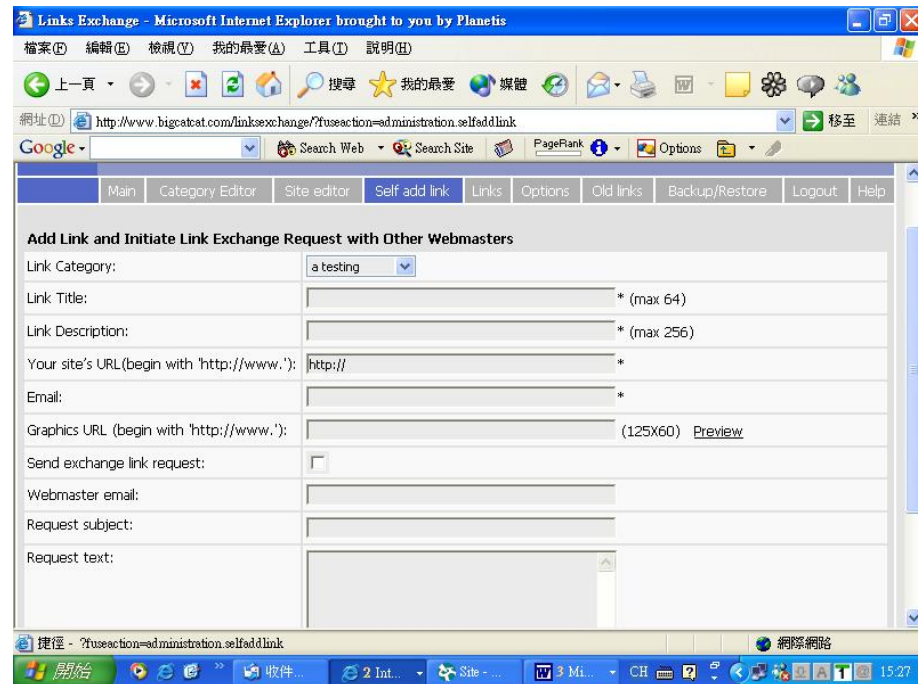
Step 8: Request Link Exchange Proactively?

If you like a site and want to exchange link with the site, you can use the Self-Add Link function. You can add their link, and then send them a link exchange request through the Self-Add function easily.

Copy Details button means copy the Title, description, category, and URL you entered into the email. So, your potential link partners know how you link to them.

For Details, Please see Section 11: Self-Add Link

Automate Link Exchange Menu:
<http://www.linkautomate.com>



Step 9: Your Email Client Setup (Optional only)

If you receive many link exchange email daily, you can simply set a rule in your email client like Eudora, Outlook Express. If someone is sending you link exchange request, send them an automatic email and direct them to the home page of your link directory.

Now, you can save many time and still grow your no. of reciprocal links easily.

Starting from [here](#), detail description of each function are provided:

5. Administrator Login

To access the administration area, you need to *log on to the system*. At the login page you should *enter a user name and password* into respective fields and *press the 'Login' button*. If the authentication procedure is successful, the user will get to the main administration page. If either a user name or password has been entered incorrectly or in case it is invalid, the 'Invalid User Name or Password' warning message will be displayed.

If the administrator forgot his password, he can restore it by clicking the "Forgot password?" link to display the 'Restore Password' form is displayed. The administrator should provide correct login name and e-mail. If information provided is correct, new password will be generated and sent to the administrator's e-mail.

6. Administration Menu

The Administration menu is a *key section of the application*, from where all the *LinksExchange management* is carried out. It consists of the following elements:

1. 'Main' – to access the Main page.
2. 'Categories' – to access the Categories Editor page.
3. 'Site editor' – to access the site editor and language editor pages.
4. 'Self add link' – to access the add link form.
5. 'Links' – to access the link editor.
6. 'Options' – to access the Options Editor page and Change Login page.
7. 'Old links' – to access the Old Links Import page.
8. 'Backup/Restore' - to back up and to restore the database.
9. 'Logout' - to log off from the system and to get to the login page as a result.
10. 'Help' – to get Help.

7. Main

Links Directory is displayed on the main page accessed by the LinksExchange administrator. It *allows the administrator to do a preview* of Links Directory before its generation into static pages.

Links Directory consists of the *Categories List and Links List*. If you select a category, the application will display all the links contained in it.

8. Categories Editor

Categories Editor is designed to enable the administrator *to create or delete categories of link directory*.

You won't be able to delete a category unless it contains no links at all.

9. Site Editor

Site Editor lets users *change titles, captions, messages and other texts* displayed on the software. The changes are applied to the content of a currently selected language only.

To change an item value, you'll need to select an appropriate item, edit its value and then click the Add/Update button to confirm.

The interface items used in the system are divided into several groups. Each group represents items belonging to the same pages or interface parts.

An item's prefix ('add_link_', 'admin_link_editor_', etc.) shows which interface part the item relates to. Here is a list of prefixes along with the corresponding interface parts.

add_link_ - Add Link Form and Result Form

admin_link_editor_ - Links Editor

backup_restore_ - Backup/Restore Form

backup_reminder_ - Backup Reminder Notice

categories_editor_ - Categories Editor

Automate Link Exchange Menu:
<http://www.linkautomate.com>

language_editor_ - Language Editor
login_form_ - items relating to Login Form, Changing Password
add_new_link, back_to_categories, first_group – Main Page
menu_ - Menu Items
new_item_ - Site Editor Forms
oldlink_import_ - Old Links Import Form
option_ - Option Editor Form
restore_password_ - Restore Password Form
self_add_link_ - Self Add Link Form (here most of the items are the same as the ones on the Add Link Form)
site_editor_ - Site Editor Form

Please note that some items are used in two or more forms. For example:
'add_link_cancel' is used on all forms where the 'Cancel' button is present.

10. Language Editor

Language Editor allows *adding new languages* to the system. Any of the existing languages can be deleted except for the one *by default* which is **English**.

When a new language is added, all interface items stay in English language but get placed in brackets so one could eventually replace them with the translations into a newly selected language. Virtually, you can translate all items or partial items to any language.

11. Self Add Link

The Self Add Link page is intended to provide an administrator with an ability *to add new links to the system even without reciprocal links*. So, you may even add affiliate links to your link directory if you like. If the user likes, he can also send an email to request for link exchange.

To self-add a link, the user will need to select an appropriate category and fill out the required fields (marked with an asterisk *). This means that the marked fields **MUST** be filled in order to be able to add a new link to the system!

PLEASE NOTE that both the 'URL' and 'Graphics URL' fields must start with 'http://' and emails should also be entered in a proper format. To preview the entered 'Graphics URL' in a new window, the User just needs to click the 'Preview' link.

It is also possible *to clear* all the information entered by clicking the 'Clear' button.

Using this form, the user can also send an exchange request to another webmaster. To enable this functionality, one needs to check the 'Send exchange link request:' checkbox and enter the webmaster's email into the 'Webmaster email' field.

After checking the 'Send exchange link request:' checkbox, the 'Request text' text area will get filled by the text of request contained in the link_exchange_request.mtl template file. The User can also change the request text and add the requested exchange link details, such as Title, Link Category, Link Description and Your URL, by pressing the 'Copy Details' button. This way the above details will be taken from the respective form fields and added to the text area.

PLEASE NOTE: when the user presses the 'Copy Details' button, the 'Request text' field will be filled with the default text (from the link_exchange_request.mtl template file) with the detailed information added after that. So we suggest you first fill out the detailed information fields and then change the request text. Having entered the appropriate information, *the user can create new links* by pressing the 'Submit' button. If the *field validation has been successful*, the *new links will be added to the database* and the 'Link has been added' message will be displayed. After that one can continue adding more links. Please note that the system does not allow adding duplicate links. So if some link is a duplicate of another link, a special notice will be displayed.

Supplementary Information:

Let me explain it further the logic of Self-Add link function here:

Normal Scenario (A):

- 1. Self-Add a Link, and send an email to seek link exchange automatically.**
- 2. When people exchanged link with you, they email you and inform you where you can find your link at his site. (Assume he is willing to exchange link).**
- 3. Then add back the reciprocal link in the field "Exact webpage you link to us" through Link Editor**
- 4. Let software to make subsequent checking afterwards.**

Special Scenario (B):

Assumption: If you don't want to perform Scenario A Step 3

- 1. Self-Add a Link, and send an email to seek link exchange**
- 2. Go to Link editor, and add an expected reciprocal link URL through Link Editor (usually, your link partner's site has hints)**
- 3. Set the auto-link checking time period to a longer hours, say 144 hours, so that your link partner has sufficient time to add your link.**
- 4. Let software to make subsequent checking afterwards.**
- 5. Usually, the software can still find whether your URL is present even though the "actual" reciprocal link URL is not equal to "expected" reciprocal link URL. If it cannot, it means several things:**
 - a. The "actual" reciprocal link URL is buried too deep at the site OR (Implication: your link partner cannot help you much)**
 - b. The expected reciprocal link URL has no linkage to the actual reciprocal link URL OR (Implication: may be your initial guess is too bad, or actual URL is a "standalone" page, etc... You can examine it manually)**
 - c. Your Link partner does not link to you.**
- 6. If the software takes the site "offsite", there is an email sending to your link partner. Your link partner will email you again the "actual" reciprocal link URL in case they believe they linked to you. You can judge manually whether the reciprocal link is valid. If you think it is valid, you can replace the "Expected" reciprocal link URL by the "actual" reciprocal link URL.**

12. Links Editor

Link Editor allows users to *manage* a selection of links made by specified categories or links statuses, or of all of them. *Sorting* links is also available – it can be either by title, date or by rating. In order to make *viewing* of links more comfortable, they are displayed by groups, so a user can access the first group, the last, the previous of the next one, or rather access a desired group by its number. You can set an *amount of links displayed* in a group by adjusting an appropriate parameter on the *Options* page.

At this page a user can also *modify a rate* for a given link by setting a desired value and pressing the ‘Update rate’ button to confirm. So, you may give your preferential link partners a higher rating, and their links will appear at top of your link pages.

Users can also *delete* selected links or *reject* them in getting the ‘review’ status by pressing the ‘Delete selected’ or ‘Reject selected’ button with the target links selected. PLEASE NOTE: in case there are no ‘review’ status links displayed at all, the ‘Reject selected’ button will not show.

Also one can use this page to *manually generate* links pages by clicking the ‘Generate links pages’ link. However, you may not even need to do it manually. The software will generate the link pages automatically according to the schedule set in the Option editor.

Besides, the application is equipped with a set of actions that can be applied to links. They are:

- *‘Approve’;*
- *‘Reject’*
- *‘Accept Old’*
- *‘Check Link’.*

The way each of the above actions is applied depends on a current link status

To be able to *edit links properties*, one should click 'Edit' links to get to the Link Properties Editor. Here one can change the following *link properties*:

- **Change link status** (by selecting an appropriate status from the 'Status' list).
- **Change link category** (by selecting an appropriate category from the 'Link category' list).
- **Change link title** (by editing the 'Link Title' field).
- **Change link description** (by editing the 'Link Description' field).
- **Change link URL** (by editing the 'URL' field).
- **Change email** (by editing the 'Email' field).
- **Change link rating** (by editing the 'Rating' field).
- **Change graphics URL** (by editing the 'Graphics URL' field).
- **Change reciprocal URL** (by editing the 'Reciprocal URL' field).

At the Link Properties Editor page the user can make sure the *reciprocal link is valid* by opening it in a new window.

Also the user can check Graphics URL by clicking the 'Preview' link.

To *submit changes*, press 'Save changes'.

To *reset values* previously entered, or to *discard changes*, press 'Reset' or 'Cancel' respectively.

13. Options Editor

After installation of the software, many option fields have pre-defined values. However, you can still make changes if you like. You may also read the Quick Start Guide for details.

After making changes, please remember to click the **Update button**.

You can also **change password** by clicking the **Change Password button**.

14. Old Links Import

At the 'Old links import' page one can *import links from another site*. To do this, one first needs *to enter an 'old links' URL* in the 'Old links URL' field and press the *'Get links' button*. The *search* will *result* in *displaying links found* (Title and URL). **The system automatically filter out links already exists in the database.**

To delete any links you don't want to import, select them and press *'Delete selected'*.

Before *adding new links* to the system, the user can first *change* their *category* by either choosing one from the Categories select box next to each of them, or by using a similar *Category select box* at the *header* to set one category for ALL of the 'Old Links' retrieved. Then he needs to select one, several or all links to be added and *press the 'Add Selected Links' button*.

PLEASE NOTE: In order to have ALL displayed links selected automatically, the user just needs to do check the Select All box, which is the top most one on the gray background.

The links successfully added will then be *removed* from the Imported Links list.

The 'Old Links' added to the system will have the 'Old' status (and will not have a reciprocal URL, Email or Description). If the user wishes to add those parameters to a link, he should use the Link Editor, which also serves for *approving* old links.

Automate Link Exchange Menu:
<http://www.linkautomate.com>

To approve ‘Old Links’, the user should either pick them one by one (using the ‘Accept old’ link), or apply approval to several links by checking the boxes next to each link and then pressing the ‘Approve selected’ button.

PLEASE NOTE: In order to have ALL displayed links selected for approval automatically, the user just needs to do a one time check of the Select All box, which is the topmost one on the gray background.

After a link status has changed to ‘OldAccepted’, this link becomes eligible for generation into static links pages. The system will automatically generate link pages for links with status “Old Accepted”.

15. Backup/Restore

This functionality allows administrators *to back up* their database and to eventually *restore* it if needed.

The Database gets backed up and can be restored. Clicking *the “Generate Backup file” link* will *create a database data script* and then the browser will prompt the user *to save it*. **The saved file’s extension must be ‘.lesql’.** You can store the backup at your local computer.

To restore the database, one needs to select the *file containing the latest backup* using the **Browse** button and then click **“Restore Using the Selected File”**. This will *execute the selected script* and *restore* the database. The Restore procedure will only accept files having the ‘lesql’ extension.