Debian, how are you?
Bits from the DPL

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Once upon a time

Fellow Linuxers,

*This is just to announce the imminent completion of a **brand-new Linux release**, which I'm calling the **Debian Linux Release**. [...]*

Ian A Murdock, 16/08/1993
comp.os.linux.development
http://deb.li/bigbang

- make "Linux" competitive with commercial OS
- inspired by SLS, but better (quality)
- easy to install
- built collaboratively by responsible experts and in the open
- free as in freedom (FSF-backed)

not many other distros back then

Debian today

- $\approx$ 29'000 binary packages (amd64/sid/main)
- 120 "derivatives" (source: distrowatch.com)
- 11 releases
- $\approx$ 900 DDs + 120 DMs + thousands contributors
- largest n. of ports among mainstream distros (12)
- non-Linux ports (2)
- ...

Well done everybody !

however ...

On the relevance of Debian   warning: FUD ahead

lots of other distros today

some other distros:

1. . . . release more frequently
2. . . . have more users
3. . . . innovate more
4. . . . get more credit/press/. . .

Is Debian better?

Is Debian still relevant in 2010?

hint: the answer is **YES!** to both

Why so?

Outline

1. Debian is better

2. Debian can be even better

Debian is better: freedom & independence

Firm principles: devs and users bound by the *Social Contract*

- promoting "the culture of free software" since 1993
  community awareness: users know
- Debian is free the bottom up
  - ▶ in its <u>software</u>
    firmware included!
  - ▶ in its <u>infrastructure</u>
    ~~non-free web services~~ for users
    ~~non-free services~~ for developers
- Debian is independent (i.e. non-corporate)
  - ▶ no (single) company babysitting us
  - ▶ living up on donations and gift-economy
  - ▶ . . . quite remarkable in today FOSS world
  - ▶ people *trust* Debian

Debian is better: do-ocracy & democracy

Decision making in Debian: order does matter

1. do-ocracy first

> *An individual Developer may make any technical or*
> *nontechnical decision with regard to their own work;*
>   [Constitution, §3.3.1.1]

2. democracy then

that means:

- reputation follows work
- no benevolent dictator, no oligarchy, no c. . .
  no imposed decisions
  > e.g. by who has the money / infrastructure / people / . . .

Debian is better: quality

recent *feedback* miscellanea

- "we chose X [Debian-based], because we trust Debian packages"
- "we chose Debian because your packages don't FTBFS"

- Debian package maintainers are experts
- no 2nd class packages, all packages are equal

"we release when it's ready" means "quality"

Outline

1 Debian is better

2 Debian can be even better

Let's get better: **be bold**, do NMUs

either we scale, or we die (i.e. don't release)
be in charge, don't own, don't block others

- releasing is a shared responsibility, not release team's
  - Rule 1: no RC bugs in your packages   your responsibility
  - Rule 2: no RC bugs elsewhere   <u>your responsibility too</u>

- do NMUs, welcome NMUs
  - follow the rules, devref §5.11.1
  - use DELAYED eagerly
  - spread the "NMU culture"
  - RCBW: ≈ 180 NMUs, no complains, lots of "thank you"
    http://deb.li/rcbw

Let's get better: **be bold**, take responsibility

"lack of manpower" is proverbial (in volunteering)

- don't cry for it
- . . . with computers, a motivated individual can do wonders
- step in to be that one for some (core) team

  (yes, it's harder than ranting on lists)
- you can, really

large changes are impossible in Debian, too much inertia

[folklore]

- don't always trust list consensus (hint: vocal minorities)
- « talk is cheap, show me the NMUs »

Let's get better: an attractive community

discussions on developer mailing lists and blogs can be *uncultured at times* [distrowatch.com]

to join Debian you need to grow a *thick skin* [folklore]

- counterproductive: we give up on valuable manpower
- we all should and can fight that
  - ‣ make evident that non welcoming people are a minority

reduce participation barriers, think of (future) developers
- talk with people, explain why we are better
- documentation is not only for packages
  - ‣ `http://wiki.d.o/Teams`
  - ‣ d-d-a ≠ documentation

Thanks!

for this mini-DebConf,
enjoy the event!

Questions?

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Let's get better: more integration

A distro is more than shipping software, is about integration.

- doc (doc-base!), examples (working!), README{,.Debian}, . . .
- customization to provide distro-specific info

Please, think of the ~~kittens~~ users.