

Bits from the DPL

Debian, how are you?

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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 GNU/Linux **competitive** with commercial OS
- inspired by SLS, but better (**quality**)
- **easy** to install
- built **collaboratively** by experts, in the **open**
- free as in **freedom**

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 forthcoming (2)
- ...

Well done everybody !

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, ≈ 17 years later?

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

How so?

Outline

- 1 Debian is better
- 2 Debian shall “live long and prosper”
- 3 Where to?

Debian is better: quality

Quality

- package maintainers are **experts**
- **no 2nd class packages**, all packages are equal
- “we release when it’s ready”

recent *feedback*:

- “we chose Debian because your packages don’t FTBFS”
- “we chose X [Debian-based], because we trust Debian packages”

Loads of other **technical reasons**

n. of ports, stability, packaging system, documentation, old hw support, smooth upgrades, i18n/l10n, the testing suite, runs anywhere, technical policy, *a lot* of packages, ...

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Debian is better: freedom

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

- promoting “the culture of free software” since 1993
community awareness: users know
- **free the bottom up**
 - ▶ in its software
firmware included!
 - ▶ in its infrastructure
no non-free web services (for users)
no non-free services (for developers)

Debian is better: independence

Debian is an **independent** distro (i.e. non-corporate)

- no (single) company babysitting us
- living up on donations (money & hw) and gift-economy

people trust Debian choices not to be “money-driven”

Debian is better: decision making

1 do-ocracy

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

2 democracy

Each decision in the Project is made by one or more of the following:
1. *The Developers, by way of General Resolution [...]*
[Constitution, §2]

that means:

- reputation follows work
- no benevolent dictator, no oligarchy, ~~no cabal~~
no imposed decisions (by who has money / infra. / people / ...)

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“We lack manpower”

most commonly reported Debian issue (team reviews & folklore)

*that's why others do better !
they have more manpower !!*

is it *really* the case?

- 1 undeniable: we do need **more manpower**
- 2 we need to put into **better use** what we have

either we scale, or we die (i.e. don't release)

- releasing is a **shared responsibility**, not only release team's
 - ▶ Rule 1: no RC bugs in your packages
 - ▶ Rule 2: no RC bugs elsewhereyour responsibility
your responsibility too
- **do NMUs, welcome NMUs**
 - ▶ follow the rules, devref §5.11.1
 - ▶ spread the “NMU culture”
 - ▶ my experience: <http://deb.li/rcbw>
≈ 180 NMUs, no complains, lots of “thank you”

great news from the RC BoF: we're getting better!

“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]

- consensus \neq unanimity
- consensus is OK, but ultimately
talk is cheap, show me the NMUs
- while we have both, **do-ocracy comes before democracy**
do you want something to happen? just start *doing* it!

Be bold. Honestly, what can't you undo?

Sam Hocevar, DebConf7

more manpower: 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]

every
time you

- are grumpy
- fail to ack the good...
- ... to only pinpoint the bad
- fail to give credit
- fail to thank people
- insult someone
- ...

you "kill" a potential contributor
please, think of the contributors

It's not about being a **happy family**, it's just **being pragmatic**:

thick skin ↗ strong hacking skills
thick skin → less contributors

more manpower: Get more users

We don't need more users.

We don't need more bug reports.

We "just" want full grown expert DDs from day 1

Free software is participation

... and **involvement** grows bit by bit, from the 1st bug report

bonus point:

the universal operating system has users everywhere, of every kind

more manpower: Work with derivatives

- we have lots of derivatives (≈ 120)
- some are way more popular than Debian (10x)

in an ideal FOSS world

- 1 every **derivative contributor** is a Debian contributor
- 2 (and every Debian patch gets forwarded **upstream**)

let's get closer to the goal: reach out to our derivatives

derivatives front-desk

- <http://wiki.debian.org/DerivativesFrontDesk>
- mailing list: debian-derivatives@lists.debian.org
- contact point: derivatives@debian.org

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Quality doesn't wait for us

Debian means quality

... but won't for long, if we just sit down

others are getting better too!
(and Lucas doesn't only rebuild for us ...)

possible future direction #1

(automated) testing, testing, testing!

more RC bugs!

\o/

Becoming more dependable

Fact: lots of our users love our release cycle

Fact: some users don't

Fact: quite some use the testing suite

Question: do we need/want to bless that suite?

possible future direction #2

Constantly Usable Testing (CUT)

<http://kitenet.net/~joey/code/debian/cut/>

Join the **CUT BoF** and voice your opinion!

August 6th, 17:00 EDT, Interschool lab

Welcoming non-DD project members

The “*best operating system*” is mainly, not only, made of software; it is also made of translations, graphics, musics, etc.

We already benefit from the work of non-packagers.
We could use more and we should **reward** them more.

possible future direction #3

Non-packagers project members, do-ocratically.

(ain't easy, but that is no excuse either)

Thanks!

for DebConf10, I hope you'll enjoy it!

Your thoughts?

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