

Paths into Debian

Moray Allan
DebConf13 Switzerland
16 August 2013

how did you come to
Debian?

NM ... but should be ready first
DM ... but should be ready first

so “just start working”

traditional approach:

packaging path

adopt?

(but often orphaned for a reason...)

create?

(but e.g. webapps hard starting point)

newer approach:

packaging path

join a packaging team
(but hard to know how each works)

alternative approach, e.g.:

translation path

bubulle pushed/helped d-i
(otherwise difficult to get started)

alternative approach, e.g.:

art path

no easy path in
(unsolicited work often wasted)

other possibilities

fundraising path
press path

very hard to find a way in
(even though we need help more)

what do we advertise?

<http://www.debian.org/intro/help>

How can you help Debian?

If you are considering helping in the development of Debian there are many areas in which both experienced and inexperienced users can assist:

1. You can simply test the operating system and the programs provided in it and report any not yet known errata or bugs you find using the [Bug Tracking System](#). Try to browse also the bugs associated with packages you use and provide further information, if you can reproduce the issues described in them.
2. If you are an experienced user you can help other users through the [user mailing lists](#) or by using the IRC channel `#debian`. For more information on support options and available sources read the [support pages](#).
3. You can help translating applications or Debian-related information (web pages, documentation) to your own language by getting involved in a translation project (discussion is generally handled through the [i18n mailing list](#)). You can even start up a new internationalisation group if there is none for your language. For more information read the [Internationalisation pages](#).
4. You can help maintain applications that are already available in the Debian operating system, specially those you use much and know about, by contributing fixes (patches) or additional information in the [Bug Tracking System](#) for those packages. You can also get involved directly in package maintenance by becoming a member of a group maintenance team or get involved with software that is being developed for Debian by joining a software project at [Alioth](#).
5. You can help writing documentation either by working with the official documentation provided by the [Debian Documentation Project](#) or by contributing at the [Debian Wiki](#).
6. You can help with the development of the *public* face of Debian and contribute to the [website](#) or by helping with the organisation of [events](#) worldwide.
7. You can help porting Debian to some architecture you are experienced with either by starting a new port or contributing to existing ports. For more information see the [list of available ports](#).
8. You can package applications you have much experience with and consider valuable for Debian and become the maintainer for those packages. For more information read the [Debian Developer's Corner](#).
9. You can help [track](#), [find](#) and [fix security issues](#) within the packages in Debian.
10. You can [donate equipment and services](#) to the Debian project so that either its users or developers can benefit from them. We are in constant search for [mirrors worldwide](#) our users can rely on and [auto-builder systems](#) for our porters.
11. Help Debian promoting itself by talking about it and demonstrating it to others.

As you can see, there are many ways you can get involved with the project and only few of them require you to be a Debian Developer. Many of the different projects have mechanisms to allow direct access to source code trees to contributors that have shown they are trustworthy and valuable. Typically, people which find that they can get much more involved in Debian will [join the project](#), but this is not always required.

Back to the [Debian Project homepage](#).

what do we advertise?

<http://www.debian.org/devel/join/>

How You Can Join

The Debian Project consists of volunteers, and our products are developed entirely by volunteers. We are generally looking for new developers who have some technical knowledge, an interest in free software, and some free time.

If you haven't already, you should read through most of the web pages to get a better understanding of what we are trying to do. Pay particular attention to the [Debian Free Software Guidelines](#) and our [Social Contract](#).

A lot of communication in the project happens on our [mailing lists](#). If you want to get a feeling for the inner workings of the Debian project, you should at least subscribe to the debian-devel-announce and debian-news lists. Both are very low-volume and document what's going on in the community. The Debian Project News (published on debian-news) summarizes recent discussions from Debian related maillists and blogs and provides links to them. As a prospective developer, you should also subscribe to debian-mentors, an open forum trying to help new maintainers (and also, though less often, people who are new to the Project and want to help with something else than package maintenance). Other interesting lists are debian-devel, debian-project, debian-release, debian-qa and, depending on your interests, a lot of others. See the [Mailing List Subscription](#) page for a complete listing. (For those who wish to reduce the number of mails, there are "-digest" lists as read-only, digested versions for some high-traffic lists. It's also worth knowing that you can use the [Mailing List Archives](#) page to read the mails on various lists with your web browsers.)

Contributing. If you are interested in maintaining packages, then you should look at our [Work-Needing and Prospective Packages](#) list to see which packages need maintainers. Taking over an abandoned package is the best way to start out as a maintainer – not only does it aid Debian in keeping its packages well maintained, but it gives you the opportunity to learn from the previous maintainer.

You can also aid by contributing to the [writing of documentation](#), doing [web site maintenance](#), [translation](#) (i18n & l10n), publicity, legal support or other roles in the Debian community. Our [Quality Assurance](#) site lists several other possibilities.

You don't need to be an official Debian Developer to carry out just about all of these tasks. Existing Debian Developers acting as [sponsors](#) can integrate your work into the project. It is generally best to try and find a developer who is working in the same area as you and has an interest in what you have done.

Finally, Debian provides many [teams](#) of developers working together on common tasks. Anybody can participate on a team, whether an official Debian Developer or not. Working together with a team is an excellent way to gain experience before starting the [New Member process](#) and is one of the best places to find package sponsors. So find a team that suits your interests and jump right in.

Joining. After you have contributed for some time and are sure about your involvement in the Debian project, you can join Debian in a more official role. There are two different roles in which you might join Debian:

- Debian Maintainer (DM): The first step in which you can upload your own packages to the Debian archive yourself.
- Debian Developer (DD): The traditional full membership role in Debian. A DD can upload any package and can participate in Debian elections. Before applying as DD, you should have been a DM for about six months.

what do we advertise?

<http://www.debian.org/devel/join/newmaint>

Debian New Members Corner

The Debian New Member process is the process of becoming an official Debian Developer (DD). These webpages are the place where prospective Debian Developers can find all the details on applying to become a DD, the different steps of the process, and how to track the process of their ongoing application.

The first important point to make is that you do *not* need to be an official Debian Developer in order to help improving Debian. In fact, you should already have a track record of earlier contributions to Debian before you apply for the New Member process. It is highly recommended that you become familiar with the role of [Debian Maintainer](#) and apply for this role before applying to become a Debian Developer.

Debian is an open community and welcomes everyone who wants to use or help improve our distribution. As a non-developer you can:

- maintain packages through a [sponsor](#)
- create and/or review translations
- create or improve documentation
- [help maintain the website](#)
- help with handling bugs (by providing patches, filing good bugs, confirming the existence of the bug, finding ways to reproduce the problem, ...)
- be an active member of a packaging team (e.g. debian-qt-kde or debian-gnome)
- be an active member of a subproject (e.g. debian-installer or debian-desktop)
- etc

The [Debian Developer's Reference](#) contains several concrete suggestions on how to do several of these tasks (in particular, how to find willing sponsors).

It is important to understand that the New Member process is part of Debian's Quality Assurance efforts. It is hard to find developers who can spend enough time on their Debian tasks, so we find it important to checking that applicants are able to sustain their work, and do it well. Therefore we require that prospective developers have been actively involved in Debian for some time already.

Every Debian Developer:

- is member of the Debian project;
- is allowed to vote about issues regarding the whole project;
- can log in on most systems that keep Debian running;
- has upload permissions for *all* packages;
- has access to the debian-private mailing list.

In other words, becoming a Debian Developer grants you several important privileges regarding the project's infrastructure. Obviously this requires a great deal of trust in and commitment by the applicant.

what do we advertise?

<http://www.debian.org/doc/manuals/debian-faq/ch-contributing.en.html>

The Debian GNU/Linux FAQ

Chapter 13 - Contributing to the Debian Project

[Donations](#) of time (to develop new packages, maintain existing packages, or provide user support), resources (to mirror the FTP and WWW archives), and money (to pay for new testbeds as well as hardware for the archives) can help the project.

13.1 How can I become a Debian software developer?

The development of Debian is open to all, and new users with the right skills and/or the willingness to learn are needed to maintain existing packages which have been "orphaned" by their previous maintainers, to develop new packages, and to provide user support.

The description of becoming a Debian developer can be found at the [New Member's Corner](#) at the Debian web site.

13.2 How can I contribute resources to the Debian project?

Since the project aims to make a substantial body of software rapidly and easily accessible throughout the globe, mirrors are urgently needed. It is desirable but not absolutely necessary to mirror all of the archive. Please visit the [Debian mirror size](#) page for information on the disk space requirements.

Most of the mirroring is accomplished entirely automatically by scripts, without any interaction. However, the occasional glitch or system change occurs which requires human intervention.

If you have a high-speed connection to the Internet, the resources to mirror all or part of the distribution, and are willing to take the time (or find someone) who can provide regular maintenance of the system, then please contact <mailto:debian-admin@lists.debian.org>.

13.3 How can I contribute financially to the Debian project?

One can make individual donations to one of two organizations that are critical to the development of the Debian project.

13.3.1 Software in the Public Interest

Software in the Public Interest (SPI) is an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, formed when FSF withdrew their sponsorship of Debian. The purpose of the organization is to develop and distribute free software.

Our goals are very much like those of FSF, and we encourage programmers to use the GNU General Public License on their programs. However, we have a slightly different focus in that we are building and distributing a Linux system that diverges in many technical details from the GNU system as originally planned by FSF. We still communicate with FSF, and we cooperate in sending them changes to GNU software and in asking our users to donate to FSF and the GNU project.

SPI can be reached at: <http://www.spi-inc.org/>

what do other
distributions do?

Fedora

<http://fedoraproject.org/join-fedora>

Community

Fedora is built by people across the globe. Everyone can join!

Fedora on identica / Twitter



CHAT WITH US

Fedora has many IRC channels, including several for casual chatting.



JOIN OUR LISTS

We have mailing lists for all your needs... plenty of them.



VISIT FEDORA PLANET

Read blog posts by the community. You can add your own, too!



GET GOODIES

Spread the Fedora love with stickers, badges, banners, and more.



Join Fedora.

Click on a role below to learn more about how you can help the Fedora Project.



Content Writer

These thoughtful communicators write manuals, guides, blog posts, and articles.

[Learn more >](#)



Designer

Artistically-inclined, these folks create artwork, logos, website, and user interface designs.

[Learn more >](#)



People Person

Outgoing and persuasive, these folks thrive interacting with folks at events and online!

[Learn more >](#)



OS Developer

These technically-talented developers write new features, track down bugs, and help package software.

[Learn more >](#)



Translator

Multi-lingual and gifted writers, these folks help maintain & expand Fedora's supported languages.

[Learn more >](#)



Web Developer or Administrator

These system administrators and web-savvy developers build the infrastructure that runs Fedora.

[Learn more >](#)

Meet Fedora.

Upcoming Events

North American events

Events include FUDcon Tempe 2011 in Arizona, USA and SXSW Interactive 2011 in Austin, Texas.
[View more events >](#)

Central & South American events

Events include Latinware 2010, Fedora Activity Day Argentina 2010, and Encontro No destino de Software Livre.
[View more events >](#)

European, Middle Eastern, & African

Latest Announcements

- [Fedora 17 End of Life](#)
- [\[ACTION REQUIRED\] Retiring packages for Fedora 20 v2](#)

Latest Fedora Planet posts

- [Nicu Buculei: Editing for photowalks](#)
Nicu Buculei: Editing for photowalks
- [Christopher Meng: MLDonkey 3.1.3 will hit Rawhide and testing repo tomorrow](#)
Christopher Meng: MLDonkey 3.1.3 will hit Rawhide and testing repo tomorrow
- [Kevin Fenzi: Flock day 4: hackfests](#)
Kevin Fenzi: Flock day 4: hackfests
- [Nitesh Narayan Lal: Flock 2013](#)

Linux Mint

<http://www.linuxmint.com/getinvolved.php>

If you have some spare time and you're willing to help other users with technical problems, you should seriously consider reading the forums and/or joining the IRC channel and helping other Linux Mint users solve the problems you know how to fix.



[Join the Linux Mint forums](#)

Project contributions

Bug reports

If you've noticed something that doesn't work properly while using Linux Mint, let us know. The problem you have discovered is likely to affect others as well; The sooner we know about it, the sooner we're able to fix it.



[Report a bug](#)

New ideas

The vast majority of improvements included in each release come from the community. If there's something that you think is missing or that could be done better, please tell us. Whether it's the inclusion of a missing hardware driver, or a software application that should be part of a stock installation, or if you have any other ideas on how to make Linux Mint better, we're always interested in hearing them.



[Register a new idea](#)

Translations

If you can read English and if you speak another language, you can help us translate Linux Mint. Your efforts will allow Linux Mint to fully support display in your language.



[Translate Linux Mint in your language](#)

Artwork

If you are talented in graphic design and willing to contribute to the project, please send us your creations and artwork. Whether it's a simple wallpaper, an icon set, a splash screen, or even a new logo, we're always interested to hear from you about new artwork.



[Register new artwork](#)

Code

Most of our development is done in Python and Glade. We also use Git for version control and APT/DEB for packaging. If you're comfortable with these technologies, don't hesitate to have a look at the code. If you think you can improve our applications or write new ones don't hesitate to suggest patches or to fork our git repositories.



[Fork/patch our source code](#)

Ubuntu

<http://community.ubuntu.com/>



Community

Whether you're an experienced technology user or you're just getting started, there are lots of ways to get involved with the Ubuntu community. Ubuntu is more than an operating system for your computer, server, cloud, phone, tablet, or TV. It's also a massively collaborative project. Ubuntu is always open and looking for ways to create the best possible experience for anyone who tries it and community participation is a great way to help make that happen.

Whether you participate in Ubuntu locally with people in your city or town, or you collaborate online with other people that enjoy making Ubuntu, you will be amazed by the people you meet and their passion for doing something startling.

"Together we have the opportunity to bring real technological freedom to every part of the world, across multiple devices and the cloud, and clothed in an elegant, beautiful, experience. It is a bold vision, but our greatest strength in Ubuntu is our community and together we can do this. Come and join us and be a part of bringing Ubuntu to the masses."

Jono Bacon, Ubuntu Community Manager

Contribute

Developers

Write and package new software or fix bugs in existing software. Your technical skills can make a real difference.

Documentation

Help produce official documentation, share the solution to a problem, or check, proof and test other documents for accuracy.

Design

Put your creativity to work by improving the look and feel of Ubuntu. Help design graphics, backgrounds or themes for the next release.

Translations

Millions of people use Ubuntu around the globe. They speak hundreds of different languages and it's our mission to make Ubuntu as easily accessible to everyone as possible.

Quality

Help make Ubuntu even better by working with bug reports to ensure they're clear, complete and if possible, easy to reproduce. Anyone can help!

friendlier website?

(not just more wiki pages)

more task ideas?

list needs curation

(also helps existing contributors)

**more mentoring/
internships**

including for existing contributors

more communication from teams

also helps within project

enable better lurking

personal interactions key, so

local groups?

many existing LUGs,
but few focus on Debian/free
software

discussion topics

your ideas?

local groups?

volunteers for website?

curators for task ideas list?

ways to find more contributors for
“non-technical” tasks?