Mentoring in the Debian Med team

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Debian

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Example for user contact

On Wed, Jan 18, 2012, Luis Ibanez wrote:

Subject: Looking for a Debian packager for FIS-GT.M: Change the History of Healthcare!!

Dear Debian packagers:

> We are looking for one of you to help us change the history of Healthcare

We are working at OSEHRA (http://www.osehra.org/) on building an Open Source environment for VistA, the Electronic Health Records system of the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

VistA is the best proven EHR, and it has been used for the last 30 years at the VA. It currently runs about 170 VA hospitals and about 1,000 ambulatory facilities. ...

Answer to user request: MoM

On Wed, Thu, 19 Jan 2012, Andreas Tille wrote:
Subject: Happy birthday Debian Med and announcement of MOM
...To ensure that this development of a strong team will continue I would like to propose a new effort I would like to call
      "Mentoring Of the Month" (MOM)
In this program I would like to dedicate a part of my spare time to a newcomer (the "student") providing any packaging knowledge I have to enable him working more or less independently on packaging after passing this MOM period. I like to guide the student kindly into all secrets of Debian packaging at the example of a specific program which is in the focus of the Debian Med team. The student is free to pick the package however, ...

Debian Med has attracted one developer per year

According to a *questionnaire* in Wiki

- Debian Med has 28 DDs+DMs
- 11 DDs *because* Debian Med exists;
  4 DDs before Debian Med started
- 7 out of the 11 above extended their activity to other fields in Debian
- 9 out of the 11 above remained active in Debian Med

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- mentor dedicates a part of his spare time to a newcomer
- guide the student kindly into all secrets of Debian packaging
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- The package in question is finished and uploaded.
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Rules (1/5): Responsiveness

If the mentor is posting something on the mailing list containing `[MoM]` in the subject, the student tries hard to respond with a comment (if not better possible), something like: I have no idea but I will do some research like asking upstream or whatever - just leaving a hint that he feels responsible somehow.

Rules (2/5): Confirm understanding

- The student tries to follow any of the commits of the mentor to the package which is in focus of the MoM plan, and favourably sends a comment like
  Its OK for me
  What does this mean, please explain
  I would prefer . . . instead of your change
- follow changes (subscribe commits) or do frequently
  `SVN up | git pull; {SVN|git} log`
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Rules (3/5): Confirm ability to built

The student confirms that he succeeded in building the package according to the state in VCS in case it builds, or that he is able to reproduce the error message of the build process.

Rules (4/5): Communication

- In case of problems the student will ask on Debian Med mailing list ([MoM] : Subject)
- show others:
    - we are working on a problem
    - sort things out via open discussion
    - how also others could learn things about packaging
- alternative: #debian-med IRC channel.

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Rules (5/5): Report

The student posts a status report about the packaging every day, reporting about done changes, issues raised, discussions with upstream etc.

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- MoM is *work*
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Question to myself about MoM for women

After learning that GSoC has 0% woman applicants (out of 181) but Google Outreach Program for Woman had 100 applicants I'm wondering:
Should I explicitly dedicate every second month for women only?

Results

Month	Student	Package	Uploaded?
02.2012	Luis Ibanez	fis-gtm	yes
03.2012	Scott Christley	libswarm	no
06.2012	Eric Maeker	libquazip	yes
11.2012	Tomás Di Domenico	python-csb	yes
02.2013	Sukhbir Singh	hunspell-en-med	yes
12.2013	Lennart C. Karssen	probabel	yes
01.2014	Jorge Sebastião Soares	snp-sites	yes
03.2014	Stephen Smith	phyutility	yes
06.2014	Ian Wallace	openemr	–

Some people put their names in the waiting queue but did not answered a ping.

MoM Conclusions

- Time spent into mentoring is worth the effort
- No student for each month so the workload is bearable
- Students have just read recent documents which I did 15 years ago $\rightarrow$ I can learn new stuff from them
- Major advantage: training upstream to pool their knowledge about the code with ours about packaging is **very efficient** for the hard packages
- About 50% of students had strong connection to upstream and requests for upstream changes went very smoothly

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Sponsoring of Blends (SoB)

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- Newcomers might desperately seek for sponsors and simply do not know how to find one
- Kill two birds with one stone: Get the package sponsored after proving that you understood the Blends techniques

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1. You confirm to have understood the Blends principle (have read the Blends documentation, are member of some team on alioth, reading the relevant mailing list)
2. Your package is maintained in a VCS used by the Blends team
3. Your package is listed on the Blends tasks pages (which is either because the package is inside Debian or in any Blends VCS)
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SoB results

- SoB is heavily used by Debian GIS team, partly used by Debian Science
- I get mail when Wiki page is changed and take mostly immediate action
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Face to face meetings with users and upstream developers

Have a quick look at what happened since 2011 when we started doing yearly sprints by also inviting users and upstream developers.

Thanks to Debian for supporting sprints which we have proven to be successful
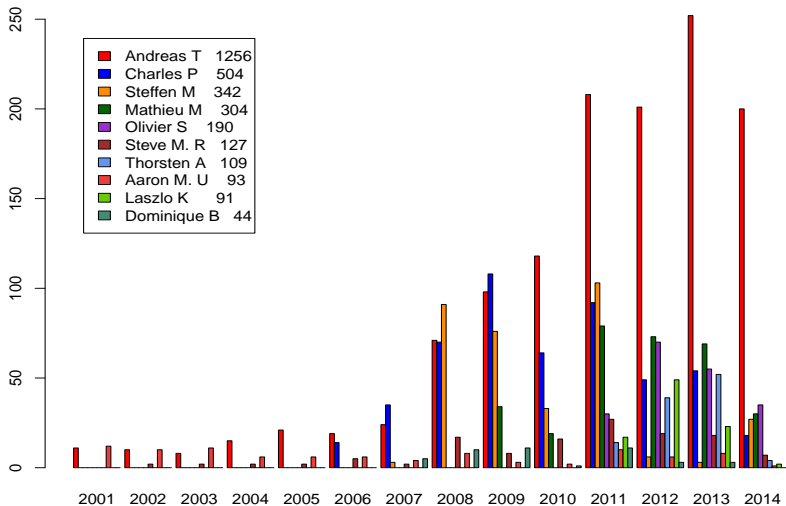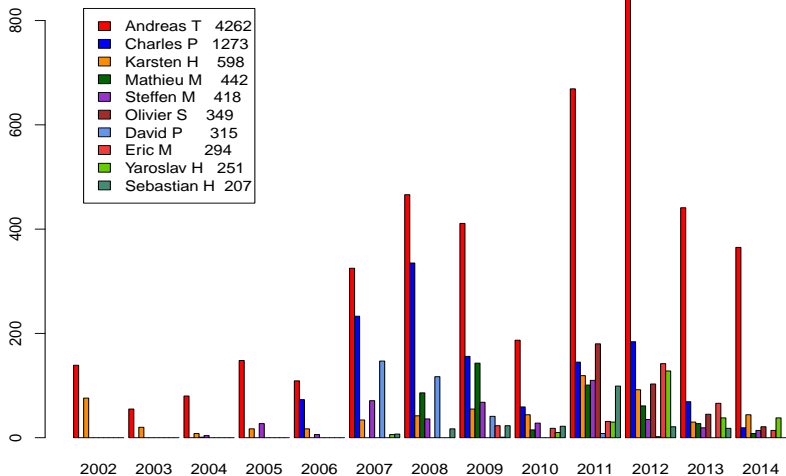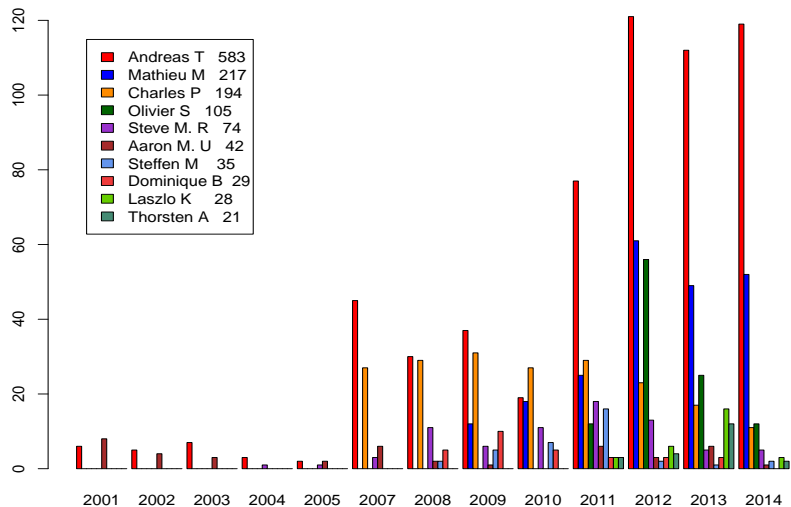
Top 10 discussion Debian Med developer mailing list
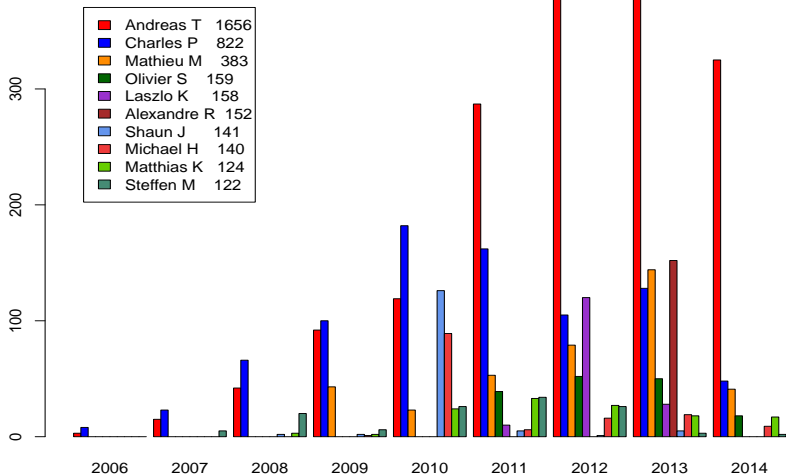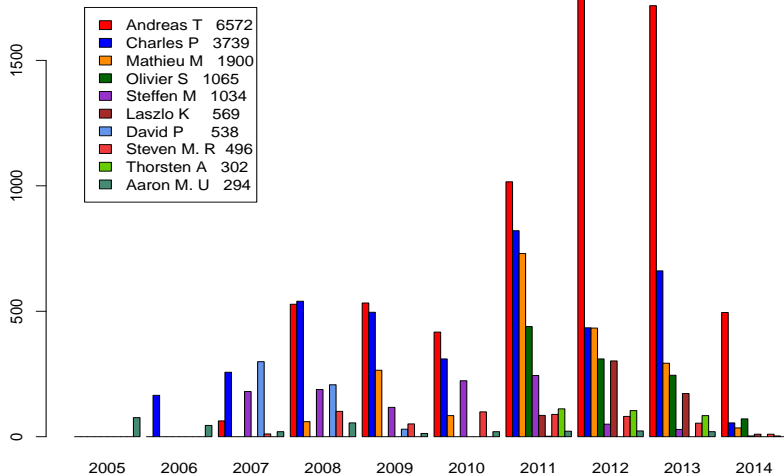
Number of Packages in selected tasks
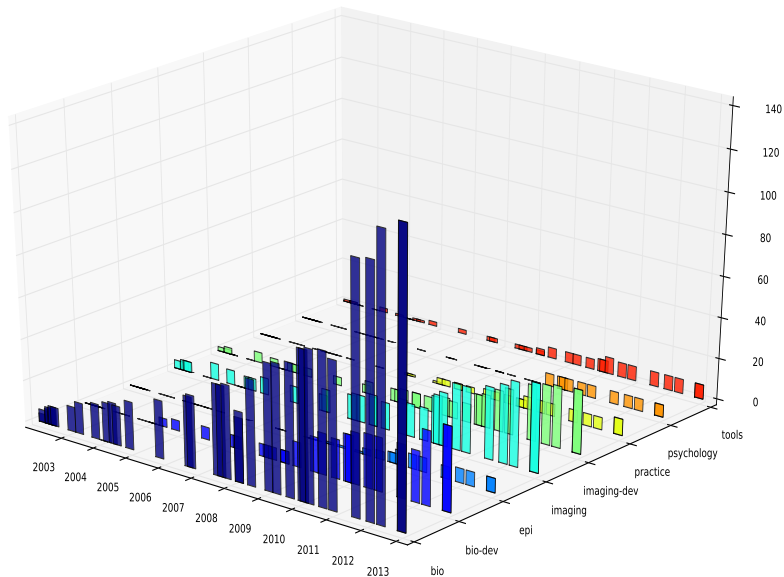
Inviting environment

In several talks at DebConf and in discussions before I have heard the argument that it is hard to find friends. But it is not. The answer is to create inviting teams.

*Waking up in the morning and realising
that somebody else has solved your
problem from yesterday*

Links

- *Debian Med policy*
- *Mentoring of the Month*
- *Sponsoring of Blends*

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This talk is available at

http://people.debian.org/˜tille/talks/

Andreas Tille <tille@debian.org>