Debian Pure Blends
Making Debian the distribution of choice for specific work fields

Andreas Tille

DudesConf

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Overview

1. Introduction
   - History
   - Goals

2. Used techniques
   - Blends features
   - Web tools

3. Future
   - Planned features
   - TODO
Introduction

- History
- Goals

Used techniques

- Blends features
- Web tools

Future

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- TODO
Term Custom Debian Distributions was always misunderstood

Main misunderstanding: CDD was regarded as “something else than Debian” even if people were told that it is a concept inside Debian explicitly

Dropped the misleading name in favour of a name where you just have to read the docs

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Debian Pure Blend (in short Blend): a subset of Debian that is configured to support a particular target group out-of-the-box.
Examples of Blends

- Debian Jr
- Debian Med
- Debian Edu
- Debian Science
- Debian EzGo, BrDesktop
- Debian Accessibility, DebiChem
- Debian Lex, Debian GIS
- Debian Multimedia?
- ...
Examples of Blends

- Debian Jr
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Web tools
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- Debian > 22,000 packages
- Users interested in *subset*
- Groups of specialised users
- Easy installation and configuration
- While Debian stays general support specialists as well
- **No derivative** from Debian

*Basic idea: Do not make a separate distribution but make Debian fit for special purpose instead*
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Tie a solid network of Debian developers, upstream developers ("developing experts") and users

- Rationale: Experts in this field need help in build system / packaging
- Upstream anticipates enhancements of build system and security audit
- Finally support upstream developers to become Debian maintainers
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Doctor and friend of mine:
“Debian developers == ‘secret society’” 😊

- We know we are everything but secret
- At least one feature of secrecy: concealment
  - Concealment inside advertising noise of proprietary products
  - Concealment by disunity
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Developers
- Acceptance of new methods higher if the techniques provided are convincing enough
- Simple way to categorise packages ("tasks files")
- Key documentation feature
- QA pages (Bugs of relevant packages)

Users
- Promote web pages displaying relevant packages
- Promote software that builds a complete working environment
- Rise user interest by providing ready to install software in the context of their work field
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- Define set of dependency relations
- Verify availability of Depends / Recommends
- Packages unavailable in main will be turned into Suggests
- Create proper debian/control file to build valid metapackages
- Create tasksel control file <BLEND>-tasks.desc
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Similar to `debian/control`

Task: *taskname*

Description: *Shortdescription*

   *Longdescription*

Depends: *some dependant packages*

Recommends: *some recommended packages*

Suggests: *some suggested packages*
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Tasks and bugs pages

- Providing information about packages of interest
  - Reading tasks files from Blends SVN containing
    - Dependency relations of packages inside Debian
    - Preliminary package information / WNPP
  - Gathering all available information about the package dependencies defined in the tasks file
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- Quick overview about what’s inside Debian regarding their specific work field
- Turned out to be QA tool for developers as well
- Meta information like
  - Homepage
  - Maintainer and VCS of Debian packaging
  - Screenshot (http://screenshots.debian.net)
  - DEHS, versions and architectures
  - DebTags
  - Popcon
  - even scientific quotation if available
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→ **Demo** [http://blends.alioth.debian.org](http://blends.alioth.debian.org)
Weighting bugs

- Try to find a measure for bugs of dependant packages
- Currently not normalised to the number of dependencies but rather regarding absolute number of bugs
- Weighting numbers for the different severities ranging from 10 for the RC bugs until 0 for wishlist bugs

Example calculation

1 serious bug in dependent pkg: $1 \times 10 \times 3 = 30$
2 important bugs in dependent pkg: $2 \times 5 \times 3 = 30$
1 important bug in suggested pkg: $1 \times 5 \times 1 = 5$
1 normal bug in dependent pkg: $1 \times 3 \times 3 = 9$
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Weighted sum = 77
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<th>Calculation</th>
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Not "very good" if there is a RC bug in a suggested package

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- Lintian report overview
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- Include tasks file information into UDD
- I18n information of applications
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Make `blends-dev` use UDD

- Build metapackages based on UDD information
- Thus enabling `architecture=any` metapackages
- Include tasks file information into UDD
- I18n information of applications
1. Introduction
   - History
   - Goals

2. Used techniques
   - Blends features
   - Web tools

3. Future
   - Planned features
   - TODO
Further enhancements

- Rewrite `blends-dev` to use UDD
- Make even more projects like DebiChem and Debian-GIS actively using the framework
- Try to bring back external projects to Debian by providing attractive tools
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This talk can be found at

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

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