Debian Med sprints and mentoring

Andreas Tille

Debian

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 will prove to be successful.
Top 10 Uploaders of Debian Med team

- Andreas T 1057
- Charles P 486
- Steffen M 314
- Mathieu M 274
- Olivier S 155
- Steve M. R 121
- Thorsten A 105
- Aaron M. U 92
- Laszlo K 89
- Dominique B 44
Top 10 discussion on Debian Med user mailing list

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<td>600</td>
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Andreas T 3979
Charles P 1258
Karsten H 570
Mathieu M 437
Steffen M 408
Olivier S 291
Yaroslav H 228
Sebastian H 207
Nelson A. de O 191

Debian Med sprints and mentoring
Top 10 discussion Debian Med developer mailing list

Andreas Tille (Debian)
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Top 10 bug hunters of Debian Med packages

- Andreas T 514
- Charles P 192
- Mathieu M 187
- Olivier S 97
- Steve M. R 73
- Aaron M. U 41
- Steffen M 35
- Dominique B 29
- Laszlo K 25
- Thorsten A 20
Top 10 committers to Debian Med VCS

Andreas Tille (Debian)
Debian Med sprints and mentoring
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
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. ...

Andreas Tille (Debian)
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, ...
Mentoring of the Month (MoM)

- mentor dedicates a part of his spare time to a newcomer
- guide the student kindly into all secrets of Debian packaging
- learning per example
- student is free to pick the package (mentor has a vetoing right)
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MoM Goals

- The package in question is finished and uploaded.
- The student is able to do advanced packaging tasks and is introduced into the communication channels of Debian Med team.
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teach open communication on mailing list

do not bother other readers too much and use [MoM] tag in subject
Communication

- teach open communication on mailing list
- do not bother other readers too much and use [MoM] tag in subject
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
  *It's 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`

- student should try to find a useful comment to confirm understanding
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  *SVN up | git pull; {SVN|git} log*

- student should try to find a useful comment to confirm understanding
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.
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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- we are working on a problem
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alternative: #debian-med IRC channel.
The student posts a status report about the packaging every day, reporting about done changes, issues raised, discussions with upstream etc.
Summary of MoM formalism

- MoM is *work*
  - hopefully it shows that this work is also *fun*
  - mentor trades his spare time for the work of the student
  - attempt to train "silent observers on the list"
  - focus not only on technical details but also on learning to know relevant communication channels
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<th>Month</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Package</th>
<th>Uploaded?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02.2012</td>
<td>Luis Ibanez</td>
<td>fis-gtm</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>03.2012</td>
<td>Scott Christley</td>
<td>libswarm</td>
<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>06.2012</td>
<td>Eric Maeker</td>
<td>libquazip</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.2012</td>
<td>Tomás Di Domenico</td>
<td>python-csb</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
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<td>02.2013</td>
<td>Sukhbir Singh</td>
<td>hunspell-en-med</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.2013</td>
<td>Lennart C. Karssen</td>
<td>probabel</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.2014</td>
<td>Jorge Sebastião Soares</td>
<td>snp-sites</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
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Some people put their names in the waiting queue but did not answered a ping.
Debian Med has attracted one developer per year

According to a *questionnaire* in Wiki

- Debian Med has 23 DDs+DMs
- 10 DDs *because* Debian Med exists;
  - 4 DDs before Debian Med started
- 7 out of the 10 above extended their activity to other fields in Debian
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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 ten years ago → 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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This talk is available at
http://people.debian.org/~tille/talks/

Andreas Tille <tille@debian.org>