

Discussion of suggestions to change package maintenance

Andreas Tille

Debian

Brest, 11. July 2025

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- Intro BotD
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2 Existing procedures to touch other maintainers packages

3 Suggestions

- Anybody can upload + opt-out
- ITO / ITR / IT?

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Intention Attracting newcomers

- Practical demonstration
- Limited time frame

Outcome Fixed lots of QA issues

- Reported potential MIA maintainers
- Fixed bugs of old packages not touched by upstream
- QA releases
- Asked for removal of orphaned / orphaned packages
- New packages
- New packages migrated from migration to stable

Intention Attracting newcomers

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Outcome Fixed lots of QA issues

- Reported potentially MIA maintainers
- Fixed bugs in lots of packages not touched by maintainer for > 2 releases
- Asked for removal of lowpopcon / orphaned / unneeded packages
- Packages we touched were migrated to Salsa

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ITO / ITR / IT?

- Open bug (not tagged wontfix or pending)
 - Standards-Version < 4
 - not uploaded last 5 years by the maintainer of the package
 - Not on Salsa (No Vcs, Alioth, SVN, CVS, somewhere else)
- Five candidates, (at least) one will be manually picked
- <http://blends.debian.net/botd/botd.html>

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 - Lots of bugs (even very simple ones) unanswered
 - Homepage, watch file not up to date
 - Outdated packaging standards
 - Outdated copyright (format)
 - Not on Salsa for "no good reason"
- Issues not addressed for several years

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- Ownership-Based Maintenance

- Made perfectly sense historically since experts were responsible
- Debian has evolved over >30 years
- Lots of enhancements due to team maintenance mostly using Open Maintenance Model
- Volunteers have never subscribed to signal leaving

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- #1086474 - FTBFS on 32-bit with 64-bit time_t with gcc 14

→ Build-Depends: architecture-is-64-bit

- Additional changes

[liboobs \(3.0.0-4.3\) by Gianfranco Costamagna: Fix for 32-bit](#)

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- Last maintainer upload: 2018-05-16

- New upstream versions via NMUs

- #953879 libnl-genl-3-200-udeb: library wrongly shipped in the multiarch path

→ Applied available patch

- ...and

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- Two bugs with patch open: 2017-05-15 (#862594), 2017-05-14 (#862596)
- No new upstream version since 2011
- Contact maintainer + debian-devel

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- Last maintainer upload: 2016-04-23
- Offensive quotes reported on 2017-08-01 (#870347), 2018-12-12 (#916270)
- Bumped bugs to RC
- Debian is de facto upstream
- Suggest patch to original fortune database to maintainer

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- No response from about 80% of Maintainers
- Fix Homepage / watch file of 80% of packages
- DEP5 for 80% of packages
- Only 80% of packages worth keeping in Debian
- 80% of the bugs are really simple
- More than 80% have at least one smell (besides not on Salsa)

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- Debian is famous for its quality - but why?
- There are no efficient procedures to modernise packages
- Only few volunteers to work on this due to

• Lack of time to work on this
• Lack of motivation to work on this
• Lack of resources to work on this

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- Debian is famous for its quality - but why?
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- Only few volunteers to work on this due to
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 - lack of support of other DPs

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- Formerly only dedicated changes permitted
- Recently relaxed to fix package smells
- Does not solve the problem of inactive maintainer

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- Find a new team
- Working on all smells is fine
- New Uploader is required

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Anybody can upload
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ITO / ITR / IT?

- Most teams permit uploads from contributors not mentioned as Uploader
- Special team on Salsa: Debian
- Several packages migrated from collab-maint on Alioth

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ITO / ITR / IT?

- Tracking down inactive maintainers is also a security issue
- More than 30 potential MIA maintainers reported
- MIA team tries hard to contact maintainer
- Files bug against packages of maintainer + orphane
- MIA team needs help
- Process takes time

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- No barriers between packages and other people

Our current policy is effectively restricting the freedom of a DD who is not mentioned as Maintainer / Uploader.

- Seeking mechanism for shared, collective, diffused responsibility: "If this package is in bad shape, the whole Debian project should be held responsible. Either it gets fixed by someone or it gets RM'd by someone."
- Lets do some brain storming about possible options

(please take notes in the pad)

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- Introduce a file, such as *debian/dont_touch_my_package*
- Maintainers can document their reasons for discouraging others from uploading the package
- File should include timestamp
Problem: refreshing time stamp without upload
- No changes of workflow, should be discussed separately
- Refinements:

● How do we handle the introduction of the statement?

● The pull request to add the file to the repository should be locked down

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ITO / ITR / IT?

- *Replace LowNMU wiki by*

Maintainer: Debian developers <debian-devel@lists.debian.org>

- Same as "Debian QA team" but it signals active maintainance by at least one of the named uploaders
- *Rather use collab-maint-devel mailing list* as explained in *CollaborativeMaintenance Wiki*
- *Responsibility of Uploaders*

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- *Summary on debian-devel*

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<https://lists.debian.org/debian-devel/2025/05/msg00139.html>

Slides available at
<https://people.debian.org/~tille/talks/>
Andreas Tille <tille@debian.org>

