Package Acceptance in Debian

Challenges and Opportunities

Andreas Tille

Debian

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Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

Thank you.

Sorry.

This is a BoF

Please interrupt me at all time

Please also see the pad
https://pad.dc25.debconf.org/p/3-package-acceptance-in-debian-challenges-

and feel free to add your ideas **at bottom**

Agenda

- Tearing down hurdles
- Making people talk to each other
- Asking questions to learn
- Finally: DPL is responsible for delegations

BoF in Busan

- *Great intro given by Luke Faraone*
  transcript
- Direct outcome: *Accept + Bug report*
- ➜ Works if we talk to each other

Example: Changes of binary names

Limitation of DAK → manual processing

- Good chance to do repeated copyright review
- *Technical review*
- *Bug: Please consider auto-accepting some classes of new binary pack*
- *Requesting MR for automatic NEW processing*

Brainstorming

- Meeting held during DebCamp
- Hybrid format: onsite + remote participants
- Ftpmaster and developer community in one room

Tasks of ftpmaster team members

- Running suites
  Fix issues as they come by
- Doing releases
  In sync with several other teams
- Coding tooling
  Python, PostgreSQL, Shell
- NEW processing (+ overrides, removals)
  Main day-to-day work

New Package Processing Delays

- "Packages wait long in queue – frustrating for contributors"
- Comments
  - Huge amount of work is actually done really fast → thanks a lot
  - More concerned about non-predictability rather than speed
- Causes:
  - **Manual review** of every file
  - **Legal uncertainty** about export laws
  - **Technical bottleneck**: all processing on one host

Communication Gaps

- FTP team seen as a “black box”
- Limited visibility into package status
- IRC contact is possible, but underutilized
  → How many pings are OK and in what frequence?

Onboarding

- DFSG and Archive Teams versus internal split (code + processing roles)
- *Last onboarding call*
- Recently new trainee onboarded
- Team could use more people for any task
- Time based membership?

DAK Tooling & Contributions

- One main contributor
- Test suite could be enhanced
- Virtual machine preferred
- Proposal: second DAK “play” instance
- MRs welcome

Release Process

- Point releases are well-documented and quick
- Full releases are knowledge-heavy
- Documentation exists, but not easy to follow
  Should there be a delegated a documentation writer to write down information cruxial for the project?
- Suggestion: training release in virtual machine
- Major release required several teams
- Any volunteers "observing" next release?

NEW Queue Workflow

- Seen as a bottleneck and opaque
- Currently handled mostly by one person
- Tooling demonstrated in *BoF by Luke*
- Ideas:
  - Tag packages
  - *Gateway to NEW*
  - Better visibility on status and locks

Law issues concerning our NEW Queue

- New packages end up on a single host in US and do not leave this before being accepted by ftpmaster.
- Historically, U.S. export laws required Debian to *notify authorities* (BXA) about cryptographic software.
- Regulations have changed (since 2021), thus Debian likely no longer needs to report cryptographic packages–if we can ensure source and binary are published at the same time..
- Non-free packages may still require careful handling if they contain proprietary code or undisclosed crypto.
- **Open questions:**
  - Should reporting continue for non-free packages?
  - How do we check if source is already public?
  - Can we let more developers access the NEW queue?
- **Next steps:**
  Debian is re-evaluating policies to match updated legal advice and ensure compliance while easing internal workflows.

Major blocker spotted

- Legal consultations ongoing
- Consequences from the discussion need to be implemented
- Will host containing NEW queue outside US solve the problem?
- Pending questions holding up process reform
- Once solved this will open wide range of options
  - Downloading + using own tooling
  - Second host might enable parallel work
  - More friendly for newcomers

Communication channels

- Public IRC for contact between ftpmaster & developers
- Private IRC used for internal coordination
- MRs on Salsa
- Public call: Tell us what help is needed!

Vision & Culture

- Vision needs to be specified
- New members might bring in new ideas
- Enhancing documentation and communication
- Stronger connection between ftpmaster and developer community

Proposed Solutions

- Move new package processing to a **separate host**
- Make the *Documentation for the review process in Salsa more public*
- Allow more participation in processing

Existing Problems

- Review process has room for improvement
- Poor communication about review queue status
- Reliance on a single host restricts scalability
- Legal issues stall technical redesign
- More developer help is needed for archive tools

Volunteers please raise your hand

- We need volunteers to join the team
- Once blockers are solved the team
  - Finds consenus for a new policy
  - Develops tools to implement this policy

Action Items

1. **Finalize legal questions** with lawyers
2. **Improve documentation** of review workflow
3. **Start technical work** to split processing host
4. **Recruit contributors** for archive tool development

Links

- *https://ftp-master.debian.org/*
- *https://wiki.debian.org/Teams/FTPMaster#Get_involved*
- *https://wiki.debian.org/Teams/FTPMaster/CommunityGuidelines*
- *DAK*
- *Grow your ideas: Rethink or clarify the objectives of NEW queue*

Applause.

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