

Dealing with Dormant Packages

Ensuring Debian's High Standards

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Debian

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Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

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This is a BoF

Please interrupt me at any time

... I'll need your help with two topics in parallel.

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Intention and outcome of BotD

Intention Attracting newcomers

- Practical demonstration
- Limited time frame

Outcome Fixed lots of QA issues

- Reported potentially MIA maintainers
- Fixed lots of packages not touched by maintainer for >5 years
- Removal of lowpopcon / orphaned / unneeded packages
- Packages we touched were migrated to Salsa

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Selection criteria for BotD

- 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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Problem

- Quite some packages with
 - 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 - Outdated packaging standards
 - Outdated copyright (format)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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Reasons

- Ownership-Based Maintenance
- Made perfectly sense historically since experts were responsible
- No technical means enforcing this - just a social rule
- Debian has evolved over >30 years
- Enhancements since team maintenance using Open Maintenance Model
- Volunteers have never subscribed to signal leaving

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Not so solid stats about BotD

- 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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We have a problem

- There are no efficient procedures to modernise packages
- Only few volunteers to work on this due to
 - lack of non-frustrating procedures
 - disagreement of vocal DDs

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Non-Maintainer Upload (NMU)

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

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Package Salvaging (ITS)

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

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Collaborative maintenance

- 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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Missing In Action (MIA)

- Tracking down inactive maintainers is also a security issue
- More than 30 potential MIA maintainers reported
- The MIA team is actively working on improving the process.

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What about: Any DD can upload + opt-out

- 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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Opt-out via defined file

- 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:
 - Agreed upon timeframe for refreshing the statement?
 - Require package being maintained on Salsa to track changes?
 - Informing Maintainer in advance (and if so how long)?

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Replace LowNMU wiki by Maintainer debian-devel@l.d.o

- 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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Implementation suggestions from the Sprint

- Using `README.source` and agree to some machine-readable template
- New update-policy field in `d/control` featuring
`DONT_TOUCH`, `FEEL_FREE_TO_UPDATE`, `NMU_WELCOME`,
`ASK_ME_FIRST`, `FREE_FOR_ADOPTION`, ...
- Documenting reasons for discouraging others from uploading
 - Build process for this package requires a lot of experience and handholding
 - Changes to this package must be coordinated with X other packages
 - No reasons at all feels a bit like putting a single person's interest over all of the distribution's users

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GR

- Changes with such heavy consequences certainly require GR
- First finding some consensus
- For the moment collecting feedback + more suggestions
- Volunteers to work on promising suggestions please contact me

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Announcing intentions to the maintainer

- Send an email to the maintainer and wait a defined period (e.g. 21 days)
- Upload to delayed=10 (15?)
- Send email to maintainer + open bugs while tagging them pending

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Intention to NMU

- Positive summary about intention to NMU
- Improve the state of long-neglected packages
- ITN name is a bit redundant
- Slightly expanding the NMU process
- Handle more intrusive changes
- Just offering a bigger one-off help to the maintainer

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Intention to Orphan

- Confusion about "Intend to NMU" has led to "Intend to Orphan"
- Investigation whether maintainer remains active + welcomes one-off help
- Otherwise to a "QA Upload" by QA team (after waiting period) to delayed=15

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More ideas, volunteers?

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