

The Debian Women Project

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Women in Computing

- CS undergraduates: 10-20% (40% at CMU).
- IT/computing professionals: 20-35%.
- FLOSS development: \sim 1.5%.
 - Maastricht, 2002: 1.1% (2800 participants).
 - FLOSS US, 2003: 1.6% (1493 participants).
 - FLOSS Asia, 2004: 1.5% (138 participants).

Debian: A Universal Operating System?



- ~ 950 developers, 4 (to 8) women: < 1%.

Why?

- Many theories:
 - High level: genetics or society?
 - Lower level: formal process for becoming a developer?
- Do the reasons matter?
 - Yes and no.

The Birth of Debian Women Project

- Founded in 2004.
- First distribution to have such a project.



Aims

- Balance and diversify the Debian project.
- Encourage more women to participate in Debian (developers).
- More visible women within Debian (role models, mentoring).
- Provide a forum for discussion of related issues.
- Try out alternative ways of working towards a common goal.

Debian Women is Not...

- Not a dating agency.
- Not just about support: action-based.
- Not segregated: open to anyone interested.
- Not trying to “fix” Debian.
- Not an “affirmative action” project.
- Not striving for Disney-like atmosphere.

Who Are We?

- Packagers.
- Bug squashers.
- Chair of the DPL debate.
- Documenters.
- Translators.

So Far...

- Infrastructure:
 - IRC (including monthly meetings).
 - Mailing list.
 - Wiki.
- RC bugsquashing effort.
- Mentoring project.
- Tutorials.
- 8 women in NM.

No One Expects The Spanish Inquisition

- Never expected so many established Debian developers (or men!) would get involved.
- Reasons for participating:
 - Feminism and interest in "women in computing".
 - Welcoming and collaborative atmosphere within Debian.
- Surprise that such a community could exist within Debian.

Collaboration vs. Competition

- “Excellence through competition”?
- Why not excellence through collaboration?
- Concentrate on the positive as well as the negative.
- Strive for transparency and better communication:
 - Better documentation.
 - Debunk the “NM is only for hardcore programmers” myth.
- Goals for everyone in Debian.

What Next?

- T-shirts!
- Workshops for schools and universities.
- Articles to raise awareness.
- Collaboration with existing groups within and outside of Debian.
- Ideas from *you*.
- Oh, and beer...