

Machine-Parsable Copyright Format

Ricardo Mones

`mones@debian.org`

Debian

Currently

We want Debian to be legal:

- ALL packages are required a debian/copyright file

Very nice, but:

- Oh no! ALL copyright files are different!

The problem

- Number of packages tends to ∞ (right now 22879)
- Checking copyright files is tiresome
- Even worse: it has to be done by hand
- Incompatibilities between packages (GPLv3)
- Licenses change/upgrade as time passes
- Code from other authors is added as time passes

A solution (or not)

- Give ALL copyright files a *uniform* format
- Which allows humans to check legal status of package
- Which allows a piece of software do the same!

Doesn't solve al the problems: NEW queue requires human supervision, but automatic checking can discard packages.

The proposal

Good old friend RFC 822 to the rescue:

- A series of header fields: `X-Debianized-By`, etc.
- A series of simple fields: `Files`, `Copyright`, `License`
- Encoding of existing DFSG-compatible licenses
- Allowing free text: human readable

The header

An example from the wiki:

```
X-Format-Specification: http://wiki.debian.org/Proposals/CopyrightFormat
X-Debianized-By: Morten Kjeldgaard <mok@bioxray.au.dk>
X-Debianized-Date: Sun, 10 Jun 2007 16:13:07 +0000.
X-Source-Downloaded-From: http://sourceforge.net/projects/btk/
X-Upstream-Author: Tim Robertson <kid50@users.sourceforge.net>,
    Chris Saunders <ctsa@users.sourceforge.net>
```

The fields

- Files somewhat like a find search regexp:

```
Files: ./Makefile.am, *.pl  
Files: debian/*
```

- License like Depends in debian/control:

```
License: GPL-3+  
License: GPL-1+ | Artistic, BSD-3
```

- Copyright more or less standard:

```
Copyright: © 2007-2008 Sam Hocevar <sam@zoy.org>  
Copyright: © 2008 Steve McIntyre <steve@einval.com>
```

A simple example (before)

This package was debianized by Takuo KITAME <kitame@northeye.org> on Sat, 30 Sep 2000 16:31:27 +0900.

It was downloaded from <http://sylvheed.good-day.net/>

Upstream Author: Hiroyuki Yamamoto <hiro-y@kcn.ne.jp>

Copyright:

You are free to distribute this software under the terms of the GNU General Public License.

On Debian systems, the complete text of the GNU General Public License can be found in `/usr/share/common-licenses/GPL` file.

Specific permission is granted for the GPLed code in this distribution to be linked to OpenSSL without invoking GPL clause 2(b).

A simple example (after)

```
X-Format-Specification: http://wiki.debian.org/Proposals/CopyrightFormat
X-Debianized-By: Takuo KITAME <kitame@northeye.org>
X-Debianized-Date: Sat, 30 Sep 2000 16:31:27 +0900
X-Source-Downloaded-From: http://sylvheed.good-day.net/
X-Upstream-Author: Hiroyuki Yamamoto <hiro-y@kcn.ne.jp>
X-Comment: On Debian systems, the complete text of the GNU General Public
  License can be found in file "/usr/share/common-licenses/GPL".
```

```
Files: *
```

```
Copyright: © Hiroyuki Yamamoto <hiro-y@kcn.ne.jp>
```

```
License: GPL-2+ | other
```

```
Specific permission is granted for the GPLed code in this distribution to
be linked to OpenSSL without invoking GPL clause 2(b).
```

```
Files: debian/*
```

```
Copyright: 2000-2001 © Takuo KITAME <kitame@northeye.org>
```

```
           2001-2004 © Gustavo Noronha Silva <kov@debian.org>
```

```
           2004-2008 © Ricardo Mones <mones@debian.org>
```

```
License: GPL-2+
```

References

<http://wiki.debian.org/CopyrightFormat>

<http://people.debian.org/~mones/talks/MPCF>

Thanks for your attention and...
Happy debian/copyright hacking!

License

Copyright © 2008 Ricardo Mones Lastra.

Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with no Invariant Sections, no Front-Cover Texts, and no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license is included in the section entitled "GNU Free Documentation License".