Unblocking the Future

Finding Done in Open Source

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Coalition for Networked Information
Pre-Recorded Project Briefing Series
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Join my breakfast discussion table at the CNI Spring 2024 Membership Meeting
March 25–26, 2024
When will it be done?
Starting a conversation

01 The “done” problem

02 Why so much delay?

03 What can we do?
When will it be done?

2020...2021...2022...2023...2024
These delays are painful for everyone

**Trust**
Frustration with timelines breaks trust

**Morale**
Hurts volunteer leaders, reduces community engagement
These delays are painful for everyone

**Adoption**

Never seems like the right time to get started

**Development**

Rolling impacts on maintenance and feature development
Why so much delay?
Our collective development capacity is shrinking

- Competition with industry
- Developers disproportionately at innovation-focused institutions
- Local demands are high
- Service providers can fill the gap
Community technical leadership is **high pressure**

- High responsibility, low authority

- **Maintaining** code is a specific skill set

- Overreliance on a few individuals, Institutions leads to burnout
Factors inherent to open source

Community code is difficult

Estimates are difficult

Invisible labor of organizing, reviewing, testing, helping others

Time lost to context-switching
Factors inherent to **software**

Maintenance needs are an ongoing, often unpredictable, competing priority

“80% of the time is spent on the last 20% of the work”
Factors inherent to **customization**

Customizations mean migration planning and execution after the release of the code.

The more custom your local implementation, the more time it takes to upgrade.
Volunteers are people

Institutional, personal, global stresses greatly reduce our capacity
What can we do?
Is this software critical to your work?

You are part of the community
Make **decisions** early and often

- Clear governance structure for easier decision making
- Processes for **community input**
- Processes for decisions **that come up along the way**
- Flexible, common, standardized underlying technologies
Match **expectations** to activity

**Smaller milestones**: this is where “done” lives!

**Regular communication** of when work is happening, and when it isn’t

**Concise, frequent calls for help** to reach specific goals through funding work, development hours, etc. to keep the momentum going
Take care of people

Leadership terms

Recognition of invisible labor

Find sustainable staffing models - centralized staffing can do more

Continuous improvement to the contribution process
What software adopters can do

Contribute

What can you do this year to support your open infrastructure?

How can the community make it easier for you to contribute (staff time, money, volunteer leadership)?
What software adopters can do

Stay engaged

What is happening in the community?

What gets in the way of your engagement?
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Together we can get to “what’s next?”

Thanks!

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