

Notes from Break-out session on community processes -- RIOT Summit 2020

Synopsis: use of GitHub, mailing list, Stackoverflow to interact with wider community
Moderator: Koen. Location: in WebEx (via Auditorium in the virtual venue)

Goals: improve community (with tooling)!

Sync problems (always need maintainer available)
Async (longer feedback cycle but americas and asia can get feedback)

We use

- github, works well
- matrix, for chat
- Summit, for f2f
- twitter, for news

Michael Richardson likes stackoverflow.

How do people join?

github-> Not great for questions about usage, once closed hard to search

MW: You can keep all issues open

Matrix-> depends on maintainer activity

Mailing list-> Hard for new users, hard to search, many reasons
maintainers don't answer emails

People hate reddit and prefer stackoverflow

No way to show off projects and get feedback on priorities,

User stories: now only at Summit (too seldom) and in Twitter (too short/ephemeral)
=> need something else?

OH: regarding mailing list, infrastructure issues, hosted on OH server, looking for
people to help.
(assuming we do not abandon emails)

Discussion

Do we know what the users want in RIOT?

JH:

- new riot user
 - EE
 - Looking for OS for bluepill
 - Talks @ Summit are good, and GitHub works
 - But: won't subscribe to a mailing list (not focusing on RIOT, but on my project)
 - More promotion (what RIOT offers, bigger example projects) of RIOT would help
- => found the robotic project presented in previous Summit. That helped me jump the step
for my own robotic project (was using arduino sketches, but needed to go beyond that)
=> use of tags in github!
=> Add stackoverflow on the RIOT website (it is on Github)

EB: Users with the background "I use Arduino, but I need to go beyond sketches, I
stumbled upon RIOT, looks good but there's a big gap with RIOT"
=> seems like a recurring story.
=> is a concrete "use case" to focus our efforts on *what* gap to bridge precisely?

OH: Any proposals?

Do we agree that we need something better?

AA: Could a blog help with show'n'tell?

JH-> Hackaday? +2

~Replace~ -> Refocus the mailing list?
MW: -1, something that integrates mailing list
SK: Mailing list with bots?

JH: a kind of Hackaday blog would really help
And maybe some Youtube videos on common tasks / areas.

Francisco: users/devel, maybe users mailing list should move to a forum.
Mailing list still useful for announcements

MCR: An empty/inactive ML is worse than no ML, because it attracts questions that do not get answered.
An announcement list is assumed, it's about -devel

OH: Mailing lists are fine, maybe better interface would help?
Adding more communication channels fragments attention.
Koen: Lets try not to fragment

chrysn: Replies seem to work...
Others: not in all cases

MW: What is wrong with Github issues?

Others: Not that great. Things get buried

JH: Arduino blog works really well for our problems

Leo: Forums: really enjoy browsing the Axoloti Community for checking whats happening there
<http://community.axoloti.com/c/your-music-projects>

EB: Is there a solution that fits emails for "old-timers and has a new interface for all other users?
Koen: Discourse

OH: We could rather easily add this kind of interface to the mailing listst
<https://lists.fedoraproject.org/archives/>

MW:
<https://www.hackster.io/projects/tags/embedded10:50>
this could be an option to promote riot projects10:51
for software ... needed

GD: Had a customer that wanted to try OSES, with RIOT, who could not find the entry point. With a bit of help he found it very easy and was impressed.
Github can be scary for those that haven't used it.

JH: Also an appearance on the embedded.fm podcast might also help for interested people.

MW: <https://www.hackster.io/> is a venue we want to be on.

MW: Subscribe should be used to ask questions

JH: Only want to subscribe to one thread

AA: You can format c code directly, UI is important.

Koen: mailing list has problems with user configuration

AA: MOOC used a forum based on Discourse

chrysn: just from looking up the Discourse EMail user interface: You can get all its traffic per mail as with a mailing list, and replies should work. Creating new topics looks a bit harder (there's a link to create one, but that may change), but it looks like some other ways work too (<<https://discourse.mozilla.org/t/how-do-i-use-discourse-via-email/15279>>)

JH: might be relevant: Relying on plain-text email is a 'barrier to entry' for kernel development, says Linux Foundation board member - <https://www.theregister.com/2020/08/25/>

linux_kernel_email/

ML: Do a survey to study better user needs?

EB: (Without survey we know there is a gap)

EB: is there a strong opinion againts trying Discourse with email integration in devel@riot-os.org?

In chat: people OK to try, none voiced opposition

Koen: Just trying discourse would also provide the data a survey could provide.