



A Future for EPICS Linux Packaging?

I am Worried

- For the last ~12 years, BNL (NSLS-II) has provided
 - Packaging of EPICS related modules for Debian (and derivatives)
 - Extensive testing of those system packages
 - A public Debian repository offering these packages for use by anyone
- Other labs (FRIB, HZB/BESSY II, ...) have joined the packaging effort
 - Packages are often built locally and go into a local Debian repository
 - The packaging effort is shared and kept on GitHub
(<https://github.com/epicsdeb> has 66 repositories = modules)
- NSLS-II is switching to Red Hat and dropping the Debian related effort
- Martin Konrad, one of the main drivers, left FRIB
- I am worried that man-years of valuable effort are going to waste

What to do?

- Are Linux distribution-quality packages still worth the effort?
 - In a world of bundled packaging (Docker, Appliance, Conda, PIP, ...)
 - is consistency of a system (and across an installation) still important?
 - Creating good packages is not easy and a lot of effort (80/20 rule)
 - Sharing that effort seems to be the only way to keep it up
- Red Hat packaging could/should use the same shared repositories
 - Many designs, patches and changes apply to all distributions
 - Having packages work the same across distributions would widen the user base
 - A shared approach would combine resources and avoid competition
 - Existing RH packaging efforts (Sesame, ITER, BNL) are not compatible and not shared

What next?

- The EPICS web site host (thanks, Heinz!) could provide a place for public repositories
 - Providing builder infrastructure seems too much maintenance effort
- Where would discussions continue?
 - We need a way to correlate developments and testing
 - Will activate one of the GitHub forum features unless there's a better idea