



## On distribution policy and download link

ANGELO ARRIFANO | FEB 23, 2012 10:32PM GMT

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Hello,

I'm the maintainer of Mendeley Desktop at Gentoo Linux. Gentoo, like many other Linux distributions, provides its users a package manager to easily install and uninstall applications from their systems. Installing a package is a *\*transparent\** process to the user. This means that the user only selects which package he wants to install, then the package manager takes care of downloading, extracting, (compiling) and installing the package files.

Currently, the package manager forces users to go to the Mendeley website and download the package *\*manually\** prior to install. Gentoo's package manager also obliges its users to agree with your EULA prior to installing your software. After those two prerequisites are verified, the package manager transparently installs your software.

Since manually downloading your software from your website is a time consuming operation and breaks batch jobs (the installing of your software interrupts system wide updates, to force the user to manually download mendeleydesktop).

Give this, I would like to ask if Gentoo is allowed to:

- 1) Automatically and transparently download mendeleydesktop from your website.
- 2) Mirror mendeleydesktop archives (the unmodified compressed files like mendeleydesktop 1.3.2-linux-x86\_64.tar.bz2), for distribution purposes only.

I gathered from your EULA that to redistribute your software we must agree with your EULA. I am a Mendeley user thereby I am allowed to redistribute it, however not all other Gentoo developers use your software or agree or have knowledge about your EULA. So it is not clear to me if we (Gentoo) are allowed to redistribute your software.

If we are allowed to 1), then I would kindly request you to create direct links to your compressed files, so we can automate the download process.

Thank you,  
- Angelo



Robert Knight

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FEB 28, 2012 11:24AM GMT

Hello,

Acceptance of the EULA is part of the Terms of Service which users agree to when they sign up for a Mendeley account, so it isn't necessary to present this during the install.

Also, I would emphasize that the terms we are most concerned about are those to do with use of the service anyway, not the desktop software - such as not spamming other users.

You can re-distribute our software. However, I would consider carefully whether re-packaging the software is a good thing for users. In particular, some problems we have had in the past:

- \* Sites hosting out-dated versions of the software. This can create problems for support if they get bug reports for things that have already been fixed. This includes Linux distros where a volunteer developer packaged up a version of Mendeley, but did not have time to keep the package updated as newer releases became available.
- \* Re-packaging of Mendeley that breaks the built-in auto-update. The Linux Mendeley packages have a built-in update facility which provides a nicer experience than many distro update facilities (eg. faster download and install, automatic restart of the client after an update, web page advertising the update and pointing out any important changes). Producing a package where this auto-update facility doesn't work is a recipe for unhappy users.
- \* Unlike typical Linux packaging, we don't force users to update their whole system just to get the latest version of Mendeley. I don't know whether this would be an issue for Gentoo, but I would prefer that any re-spun packages were not tied to a specific version of a distro.

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Angelo Arrifano  
FEB 28, 2012 12:39PM GMT

Hi,

To prevent distributing outdated versions of your package, I'll then NOT distribute or mirror the package at Gentoo, instead I'll make the package manager direct users to your website like it has been done so far.

Regarding the auto-update feature, there is nothing I can do about it. Since the package is installed system-wide, mendeleydesktop would need to run with root privileges to auto-update itself, which is a bad thing.

I believe the best choice would be to have mendeley desktop to detect when is installed system-wide or allow package managers to disable its auto-update feature (as it is done in other software).

Gentoo users are all aware that they should update system-wide software using the package manager, it is a good and standard practice. Users not willing to do so are free to install mendeleydesktop in their user accounts and let the software handle updates, so I don't think this is an issue.

The last topic is a non-issue at Gentoo. Gentoo doesn't have "distro versions/releases" which means that a user installs the distribution ONCE and keeps updating it gradually over time without the need of a full re-install. After installing mendeley desktop from our package manager, a user can specifically request that mendeleydesktop is updated alone, or along the entire system. We don't force anything, it is up to the user. Although, I bet that after seeing the new version notification screen in mendeley desktop, he will update mendeley desktop right away using the package manager.

Hope this clears your concerns,  
-Angelo

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Robert Knight  
FEB 28, 2012 07:47PM GMT

- > I believe the best choice would be to have mendeley desktop to
- > detect when is installed system-wide or allow package managers to
- > disable its auto-update feature

There is a facility to tell Mendeley that it is running as a 'distro build', via the --unix-distro-build argument. Mendeley will still show the 'update available' screen but won't offer to install it, instead prompting the user to use their system software update tools.

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This question is closed to new answers.

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