

The CRAN Cookbook: Improving the Skills of R Package Maintainers

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Abstract

The CRAN Team often sees the same issues cropping up in package (re-)submissions to CRAN. The solution may be documented in the Writing R Extensions manual or the CRAN Repository Policy, however, it may take package maintainers some time to work out how to fix their package.

For new submissions, this can mean a long delay in getting a nearly finished package onto the official repository. For re-submissions, maintainers may miss the deadline set by the CRAN Team to fix the package, meaning a package can be temporarily or permanently archived, affecting users and other package developers.

The current ecosystem of R package development is filled with diverse practices and the standards enforced on CRAN have changed over time. With user-friendly documentation, R package maintainers can expand their technical skillset by discovering the “solution” to their “problem” on their own, resulting in a quicker submission and publication process. This may also increase their confidence and commitment to contributing and sharing their open source code on CRAN.

With this in mind, we have created the CRAN cookbook: A problem and solution documentation that directly documents how to fix common issues, making it easier for maintainers to respond to feedback from the CRAN Team.

The main audience of the cookbook are new maintainers with little CRAN experience. Most issues documented are from the manual inspection of CRAN packages, not their automatic testing environments. The project is still in progress but there will be a first version of the cookbook by the time of the LatinR conference.

This project is expected to benefit to the R community by expediting the time it takes for package maintainers to solve common problems, clearing the pathway for CRAN acceptance and reducing repeat problems.