

# Software in the Public Interest

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Fernando Ellis - Brendan Whitfield

## Rationale

There are so many subjects you could choose to profile, so why did you choose this one? What drew you into wanting to know more about the organization? How did you/your group decide on and agree?

I didn't know much about different fiscal sponsorship organizations, but the name caught my eye. If one doesn't do things for the public interest, then what worth is there in doing them?

## Organizational Details

**1. Is the subject of your profile a corporate entity?**

Yes

**2. What type?**

Non-profit Organization

**3. When was it founded?**

June 16, 1997 in the State of New York

**4. By whom?**

The Debian Project

Initial Board of Directors

- i. Timothy P. Sailer
- ii. Bruce Perens
- iii. Ian Murdock

**5. Original founder(s) still active?**

Bdale Garbee is currently the president of Software in the Public Interest, as well as the second name in a list of contributors in the brief history of the Debian Project.

**6. Publicly Traded? Since when? Initial Stock Price? Current stock price?**

Not publically traded

**7. Has the company made any acquisitions? If yes, which companies, and what were their core products?**

No, because Software in the Public interest itself doesn't have any products, but rather helps other organizations develop and distribute open hardware and software.

**8. Has the company made any investments in other companies? If yes, which ones.**

Yes, organized donations and investments is in part the organization's role. Associated projects include, but are not limited to:

- i. [0 AD](#)
- ii. [ankur.org.in](#)
- iii. [aptosid](#)
- iv. [Arch Linux](#)
- v. [Chakra](#)
- vi. [Debian](#)
- vii. [Drizzle](#)
- viii. [FFmpeg](#)
- ix. [Fluxbox](#)
- x. [freedesktop.org](#)
- xi. [FreedomBox](#)
- xii. [Fresco](#)
- xiii. [Gallery](#)
- xiv. [GNUstep](#)
- xv. [GNU](#)
- xvi. [TeXmacs](#)
- xvii. [haskell.org](#)
- xviii. [The HeliOS Project](#)
- xix. [Jenkins](#)
- xx. [LibreOffice](#)
- xxi. [madwifi-project.org](#)
- xxii. [MinGW](#)
- xxiii. [OFTC](#)
- xxiv. [Open Bioinformatics Foundation](#)
- xxv. [Open Voting Foundation](#)
- xxvi. [OpenEmbedded](#)
- xxvii. [OpenVAS](#)
- xxviii. [OpenWRT](#)
- xxix. [Open64](#)
- xxx. [OSUNIX](#)
- xxxi. [Path64](#)
- xxxii. [Postgresql](#)
- xxxiii. [Privoxy](#)
- xxxiv. [Sproutcore](#)
- xxxv. [Swathanthra Malayalam Computing](#)
- xxxvi. [The Mana World](#)

- xxxvii. [TideSDK](#)
- xxxviii. [Tux4Kids](#)
- xxxix. [Yafaray](#)

**9. Number of Employees?**

Their Officers + Board of Directors contains 9 people. There are many more contributing and noncontributing members

**10. Where is HQ?**

The organization holds its meetings in IRC, but mail should be sent to Indianapolis:

Software in the Public Interest, Inc.  
P.O. Box 501248  
Indianapolis, IN 46250-6248  
United States

**11. Does it have any other offices or locations?**

Not really; its officers and members hail from all over the world. It is an umbrella organization that works predominantly online.

**12. Website?**

<http://spi-inc.org/>

**13. Wikipedia?**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software\\_in\\_the\\_Public\\_Interest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_in_the_Public_Interest)

**14. Does your organization file any annual reports? Please include links to any relevant documents (i.e. 990, Annual Report, Year in Review, etc...)**

Yes, though only 4 were accessible from their website:

- i. <http://spi-inc.org/corporate/annual-reports/2004.pdf>
- ii. <http://spi-inc.org/corporate/annual-reports/2005.pdf>
- iii. <http://spi-inc.org/corporate/annual-reports/2011.pdf>
- iv. <http://spi-inc.org/corporate/annual-reports/2012.pdf>

## Communications

**1. Does your subject participate in social media? If yes, please list a URL for each account, and reach within that community. (i.e. [Twitter: @RedHatNews](#) - 61.9K Followers.)**

No Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn

**2. What communication channels does your subject use to reach their public? Briefly describe and include a URL for each.**

I don't see any attempt to actively get their name out into the world, but each of the contributing members and officers represent the organization at any meetings, workplaces, or conferences they attend.

SPI-Announce mailing list:

<http://lists.spi-inc.org/listinfo/spi-announce>

3. **Does your subject organize or participate in any conferences? If so, list them here, and provide links to any relevant sessions, keynotes, or content.**

Not regularly, but if the officers or members attend one, they'll relay what they've experienced in conferences in the organizations monthly meetings. Minutes can be found here: <http://spi-inc.org/meetings/minutes/>

## Community Architecture

**Your subject likely runs or contributes to one or more Open Source products or projects. Choose one (or more) of these and answer the following questions:**

Project of choice: Arch Linux

- a. If applicable, list and provide links to:**

- i. The project's IRC Channel  
#archlinux
- ii. Source Code repository  
<https://projects.archlinux.org/>
- iii. Mail list archive  
<https://lists.archlinux.org/listinfo/>
- iv. Documentation  
<https://wiki.archlinux.org/>
- v. Other communication channels  
<https://planet.archlinux.org/>
- vi. Project Website and/or Blog  
<https://www.archlinux.org/>

- b. Describe the software project, its purpose and goals.**

Arch is a distribution of linux that "focuses on elegance, code correctness, minimalism, and simplicity" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch\\_Linux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_Linux))

- c. Give brief history of the project. When was the Initial Commit? The latest commit?**

Began in 2002 at the hands of Judd Vinet, who wanted to create a minimalist linux distribution. The latest commit was ~1 day ago.

- d. Who approves patches? How many people?**

There are different sets of developers for different Arch repos:  
[core] and [extra] have 36 developers  
[community] has 40 developers (also called "Trusted Users")

- e. Who has commit access, or has had patches accepted? How many total?**

See above

- f. Has there been any turnover in the Core Team? (i.e. has the top 20% of contributors stayed the same over time? If not, how has it changed?)**

Judd Vinet stepped down in 2007 due to time constraints. Control was given to Aaron Griffin, who is the current leader today.

**g. Does the project have a BDFL, or Lead Developer? (BDFL == Benevolent Dictator for Life)**

Judd Vinet, although he has been inactive in Arch development since 2007

**h. Are the front and back end developers the same people? What is the proportion of each?**

Arch linux is primarily focussed on back end development, leaving the user to install their preferred front ends. The closest thing to a frontend would be the pacman CLI, which is developed by a small subset of the primary developers.

**i. What have been some of the major bugs/problems/issues that have arisen during development? Who is responsible for quality control and bug repair?**

Minor whining about switching to systemd

**j. How is the project's participation trending and why?**

Arch still remains popular, currently in position 9 on distrowatch.com

**k. In your opinion, does the project pass "The Raptor Test?" (i.e. Would the project survive if the BDFL, or most active contributor were eaten by a Velociraptor?) Why or why not?**

Absolutely. There are plenty of developers working on the core system, and plenty of documentation

**l. In your opinion, would the project survive if the core team, or most active 20% of contributors, were hit by a bus? Why or why not?**

Since Arch has a large base of documentation, while it would hinder its growth, others would likely be able to pick up where the core team left off. After all, Arch strives for simplicity and minimalism in its code.

**m. Does the project have an official "on-boarding" process in place? (new contributor guides, quickstarts, communication leads who focus specifically on newbies, etc...)**

Although Arch is not tailored for users new to linux, there is a detailed Beginners Guide to help new users install the OS.

[https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/Beginners%27\\_guide](https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/Beginners%27_guide)

**n. Does the project have Documentation available? Is it extensive? Does it include code examples?**

Arch has extensive documentation in the form of a Wiki.

<https://wiki.archlinux.org/>

**o. If you were going to contribute to this project, but ran into trouble or hit blockers, who would you contact, and how?**

IRC in #archlinux

Forums: <https://bbs.archlinux.org/>

**p. Based on these answers, how would you describe the decision making structure/process of this group? Is it hierarchical, consensus building, ruled by a small group, barely contained chaos, or ruled by a single or pair of individuals?**

It is a consensus between the developers, with Aaron Griffin at the helm.

**q. Is this the kind of structure you would enjoy working in? Why, or why not?**

Yes, collaborating with a small set of dedicated developers would be enjoyable.

## **Technology/Product**

**1. Who invented, created, or sponsored the technology?**

- a. The Debian Project
- b. Initial Board of Directors
  - i. Timothy P. Sailer
  - ii. Bruce Perens
  - iii. Ian Murdock

**2. What was the technology designed to do? How was it used?**

Provide management of donated assets or fiscal sponsorship to it's affiliated projects. SPI exists to organize the development and distribution of open hardware and software projects that benefit the public all over the world.

SPI provides a few basic functions:

- Accepting donations and holding funds
- Holding substantial assets
- Holding Intangible assets
- Signing Contracts for venus/insurance
- Legal counsel through the Software Freedom Law Center

**3. Who would benefit from using this technology?**

Any organization looking for the benefits of the previous answer.

**4. What kinds of companies or organizations (stakeholders) might have been concerned about the development of this technology? Why?**

Companies or organizations of open hardware and/or software that needed would otherwise fall apart due to mismanagement of funds or product.

**5. Did an aspect of copyright law play a role in controversies about the technology? How?**

No, the company was incorporated in 1997 as a Non-Profit Organization and has since had no financial troubles.

## **Sources**

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