Large Open Source Projects

Reasons to Join

Give Back

The open source community has given us a ton of great software and tools, but can only continue on if people contribute back. Most OS developers are writing projects in their free time, simply because they want to. Without new people coming in, projects will end up dying out, or being left to just a few contributors, stuggling to deal with supporting the current iteration, while also adding new features as they can. Giving back, in whatever form you can, is a great thing to do, and helps improve the software that people are relying on.

Improve Skills

- You have to learn to:
  - Work with a legacy code base, and understand what others write
  - Get familiar in a large code environment
  - Value documentation!
  - Interact with the community, and improve communication skills
  - Pick up new tools, even if they are not your preferred ones
  - Receive and give code reviews and critiques
  - Abide by style guides and linting
- Gain experience in a professional work-like development environment, where you don't get to make all the decisions or establish the vision.
- In addition to code, you may do
  - Documentation
  - Translation into other languages
  - Bug triaging
  - Create supplementary tools

And you can definitely put it on your resume!

Good places to find them

- Trending on Github
- Most Stars on Github
- Digital Ocean Featured Projects

Ones that specifically are trying to be friendly to first-timers

- http://up-for-grabs.net/
- http://contributor-covenant.org/adopters/
- https://fedoraproject.org/easyfix/
- https://twitter.com/yourfirstpr

A selection of interesting ones

- Atom [CoffeeScript] and Electron [C++] by Github
  - Text editor, and a suite of tools made for it, including the Electron shell that spun off into a new project.
  - Many of the bigger packages may also be a good place to look
- Squirrel [C#]
  - Windows App install and update framework
- Learn X in Y minutes [English]
  - Code documentation written as code
    - Online tutorials
- Reddit [Python and Javascipt]
  - Code that powers reddit
- Lightbeam [Javascript]
  - Firefox add-on and web app for visualizing HTTP requests between websites in real time
- OpenMRS [Java]
  - Patient-based medical record system

An important thing to remember

You will probably not be hand-held through solving problems. It is important to do problem solving on your own, but to also reach out for help from those who worked in the space before - they should be enthusiastic about helping out, or find a different person! You may also be asked to hold off on something, or add additional functionality to a pull request before merging - this isn't bad, and you should try to help if you can. But if you cannot get a request in before the semester is over, that is fine. Just make sure to document what you learned and tried, and what you think needed to be done to get it merged.