Specifying Additional Files With A Manifest

By default, Distutils will include the following files in your release package:

- `README.txt`

- `setup.py`

- The `.py` files needed by the multi-file modules listed in the `packages` parameter

- The individual `.py` files listed in the `py_modules` parameter

That will cover [all the files in the httplib2 project](). But for the `chardet` project, we also want to include the `COPYING.txt` license file and the entire `docs/` directory that contains images and HTML files. To tell Distutils to include these additional files and directories when it builds the `chardet` release package, you need a *manifest file*.

A manifest file is a text file called `MANIFEST.in`. Place it in the project's root directory, next to `README.txt` and `setup.py`. Manifest files are *not* Python scripts; they are text files that contain a series of "commands" in a Distutils-defined format. Manifest commands allow you to include or exclude specific files and directories.

This is the entire manifest file for the `chardet` project:

```
include COPYING.txt                          ①
recursive-include docs *.html *.css *.png *.gif    ②
```

① The first line is self-explanatory: include the `COPYING.txt` file from the project's root directory.

② The second line is a bit more complicated. The `recursive-include` command takes a directory name and one or more filenames. The filenames aren't limited to specific files; they can include wildcards. This line means "See that

`docs/` directory in the project's root directory? Look in there (recursively) for `.html`, `.css`, `.png`, and `.gif` files. I want all of them in my release package."

All manifest commands preserve the directory structure that you set up in your project directory. That `recursive-include` command is not going to put a bunch of `.html` and `.png` files in the root directory of the release package. It's going to maintain the existing `docs/` directory structure, but only include those files inside that directory that match the given wildcards. (I didn't mention it earlier, but the `chardet` documentation is actually written in XML and converted to HTML by a separate script. I don't want to include the XML files in the release package, just the HTML and the images.)

> *Manifest files have their own unique format. See Specifying the files to distribute and the manifest template commands for details.*

To reiterate: you only need to create a manifest file if you want to include files that Distutils doesn't include by default. If you do need a manifest file, it should only include the files and directories that Distutils wouldn't otherwise find on its own.