
debmans Documentation

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Note: This project is now **DEPRECATED**. It has been superseded by the [debiman](#) project which was written after debmans was published, but without the author being aware of its existence. The result is a go program that is actually quite similar in design to debmans but faster and more complete. It is now the tool behind [manpages.debian.org](#).

No further changes will be done on the source code here, which will probably live here as a reference indefinitely. More details about this story are available in this [blog post](#).

debmans is a tool to extract documentation (currently manpages) from Debian packages and transform them into HTML for viewing with a normal web browser.

This suite of tools is designed to run on [manpages.debian.org](#), [manpages.ubuntu.com](#), [linux.die.net](#) or similar services.

Contents:

You can do a test run of this software against your local APT cache, like this:

```
$ ( cd /var/cache/apt/archives/ && dpkg-scanpackages . | sudo tee Packages > /dev/
↳null )
dpkg-scanpackages: warning: package tar (filename ./tar_1.27.1-2+b1_amd64.deb) is_
↳repeat;
dpkg-scanpackages: warning: ignored that one and using data from ./tar_1.27.1-
↳2+deb8u1_amd64.deb!
$ debmans -m /var/cache/apt/archives -o html -v --progress extract render site serve
extracting files matching patterns: (u'man/(?:\w+)?man[1-9]/.+\\. [1-9]\\w*(?:\\.gz)?
↳$',) in mirror /var/cache/apt/archives
extracting packages [#####] 100%
completed inspection of 564 packages, extracted 559 files
received 559 paths from extractor
rendering manpages [#####---] 92% 0d_
↳00:00:02man2html: unable to open or read file man1/dmenu.1
rendering manpages [#####] 100%
looking for static files to render in *.mdwn
Serving HTTP on 0.0.0.0 port 8000...
```

Your rendered manpages will be available at <http://localhost:8000/>.

Note that you will need `dpkg-scanpackages` from the `dpkg-dev` package to run the above test. The warnings can be safely ignored. `debmans` doesn't normally require `dpkg-dev` in operation if you use a properly configured mirror.

Examples

A more normal run would be to run on a regular mirror. This will extract all manpages from the given mirror and convert to HTML:

```
debmans --mirror /srv/mirror --output html/ extract render
```

This can be ran repeatedly and only extracted manpages will be rendered.

Extraction only

You can also run the process step by step, for example, this will only extract the manpages:

```
debmans -m /srv/mirror -o html extract
```

Note that `extract` creates a cache in the output directory to avoid re-extracting already found archives. Render also uses a caching mechanism by not converting to HTML if the HTML version is newer than the manpage. Those mechanisms can be disabled with `--no-cache`.

```
debmans -m /srv/mirror -o html --no-cache extract
```

You can make a trial run with the `-n` flag and enable more verbose logging:

```
debmans -v -n -m /srv/mirror -o manpages extract
```

Rendering only

Rendering the pages can be done separately with:

```
debmans -o html render --srcdir manpages
```

This is especially important if the extraction process was interrupted, as only part of the manpages will be rendered on subsequent runs.

Manpages are rendered using the plugin defined by the `--plugin` argument. Arbitrary plugin can be loaded provided that they comply with the `debmans.renderer.ManpageRenderer` and `debmans.renderer.CommandRenderer` public APIs.

Static pages rendering

The templating engine is fairly simple, based on Jinja2, which uses standard `{{foo}}` placeholders. The template is in `debmans/templates/template.html` and should be following debian.org's graphic design conventions.

This should generate the markdown files:

```
debmans -o html site
```

Use `--prefix` if the directory is not at the root of the host.

CHAPTER 2

Installation

debmans can be installed through pip with:

```
pip install debmans
```

It requires the [python-apt](#) module to be installed, which can't be done through PIP, unfortunately, see [issue #845330](#).

Source code can also be found on [Gitlab](#) with Git or as a tarball, or on Debian's collab-maint repository.

The source code is should be installed with:

```
./setup.py install
```

It can also be ran from the source tree directly with:

```
python -m debmans render
```

The dependencies are listed in the `setup.py` file.

This page explains the design principles and decisions in the project.

The *Minimum Viable Product* (MVP) for this project is a service that creates an HTML version of all the manpages of all the packages available in Debian, for all supported suites. Basic `what is (1)` functionality is also expected.

`apropos (1)` functionality is considered extra that can be implemented later with already existing tools.

Components

The design is split those components which map to `debman`s subcommands:

1. `extract`: extracts manpages from Debian packages
2. `render`: renders manpages into HTML
3. `site`: render a static site into HTML
4. `index`: indexes HTML pages for searching (not implemented yet)
5. `search`: the search interface (not implemented, but there is a simple “jump” Javascript tool)

There is also a `serve` command which starts a local webserver to help with development.

See the *Remaining work* file for details about the missing bits.

Extract

This part fetches all manpages from the archive and stores them on disk. This makes them usable for tools like `dman` that browses remote webpages.

The layout options for where to store files were:

- **Ubuntu**: `$(DISTRIB_CODENAME)/$(LOCALE)/man$(i)/$(PAGE).$(i).gz` (see `dman`)
- **original codebase**: `"${OUTPUTDIR}/${pooldir}/${packagename}_${version}"` (from `manpage-extractor.pl`)

Ubuntu's approach was chosen to avoid bitrot and follow more closely the existing filesystem layout. It also happens to be easier to implement.

The extractor uses a cache to avoid re-extracting known manpages. We use the Ubuntu layout there as well (`$outputdir/$suite/.cache/$packagename_version`), which leads to bitrot, but at least it's constrained to a suite. This will be a problem for unstable, so maybe some garbage-collection may be necessary.

Render

This converts manpages to HTML so they are readable in a web browser. This is mostly about calling one of the *Manpage converters* and then embedding the output in one of the *Templating systems*.

A simple timestamp change on the template, source and target files makes sure the files that do not need to be refreshed are skipped.

Index

This indexes HTML pages in a search engine of some sort.

In the backend, something will need to index the manpages if only to implement `apropos(1)` functionality, but eventually also full-text search. This should be modular so that new backends can be implemented as needed.

For now, we are considering reusing the existing Xapian infrastructure the Debian project already has.

The indexer would:

1. run `omindex` on the HTML tree and create a database
2. process each locale separately so they are isolated (may be tricky for `LANG=C`) and that the right stemmer is called
3. need a CGI script (provided by the `xapian-omega` package) to query the database - the HTML output is generated based on templates, so presumably we could reuse the existing templates.

It is assumed that Xapian can deal with large datasets (10-50GB) considering how it is used in Notmuch (my own mailbox is around ~6GB) and `lists.debian.org`.

We put the command name in the page `<title>` tag, the short description in `<meta description="...">` and use the *magic markers* (`<!--htdig_noindex-->``ignored``<!--/htdig_noindex-->`) to make the indexer ignore redundant bits.

See the `:ref`search-engines`` for more information about the various search software evaluated and the web interface.

Search

The search interface itself would be a CGI or WSGI tool (if written in Python) interface that would hook into the webserver to perform searches.

Originally, only a browser-based Javascript search tool implemented basic `whatis(1)` functionality. It looked up the manpage using a `XMLHttpRequest` to see if the requested page exists and redirects appropriately. It didn't look at different locales yet.

A prototype of a CGI-based approach was then written in `Flask`. The search engine will look at the filesystem for a given pattern and, optionnally, section, suite and locale parameters. It doesn't show all suites by default and prefers to show all matching manpages, behaving like a *names-only* `apropos(1)`.

See the *Web frameworks* section for more information about the decision to use `Flask`.

This should be extended to a full search interface, using `omega`'s web interface or another pluggable interfaces.

Software evaluation

This section tries to (sometimes after the fact) justify choices made in certain dependencies and software technologies used in the project.

Manpage converters

Those are the known manpage converters:

- just the plaintext output of man wrapped in `<PRE>` tags (current design)
- man2html is an old C program that ships with a bunch of CGI scripts
- there's another man2html that is a [perl script](#), but I couldn't figure out how to use it correctly.
- w3m has [another Perl script](#) that is used by the Ubuntu site
- roffit is another perl script. the version in Debian is ancient (2012) and doesn't display the `man(1)` synopsis correctly (newer versions from github also fail)
- pandoc can't, unfortunately, read manpages (only write)
- man itself can generate an HTML version with `man -Hcat man` and the output is fairly decent, although there is no cross-referencing
- [mandoc](#) also has HTML output and is [packaged in Debian](#)

The Makefile here tests possible manpage HTML renderers. Each is timed with `time(1)` to show its performance.

Package	Timing
roffit	0.06user 0.00system 0:00.07elapsed 96%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 4852maxresident)k
w3m	0.26user 0.01system 0:00.19elapsed 137%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 5456maxresident)k
man	1.63user 0.17system 0:01.81elapsed 99%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 27268maxresident)k
man2html	0.00user 0.00system 0:00.01elapsed 61%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 1568maxresident)k
mandoc	0.00user 0.00system 0:00.01elapsed 57%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 2352maxresident)k

Note: Those statistics were created with `debman's/test/converters/Makefile` in the source tree.

Here is how the actual output compares:

Package	Correctness
roffit	SYNOPSIS fails to display correctly
w3m	includes HTTP headers, links to CGI script, all pre-formatted, no TOC
man	TOC, no cross-referencing
man2html	includes HTTP headers, links to CGI script, index at the end
mandoc	customizable links and stylesheets, no index, can avoid <code><body></code> tags

man2html was originally chosen because it is the fastest, includes an index and is not too opinionated about how the output is formatted. Unfortunately, it would fail to parse a lot of manpages, like the ones from the `gnutls` project.

Then w3m was used as a fallback, even though it actually calls man itself to do part of the rendering. It required a bunch of hacks to fix the markup.

So then the `mandoc` package was used, and it was significantly faster. In the test corpus (452 manpages), `mandoc` would render all pages in 23 seconds, while `w3m` was 5 times slower.

Time for `w3m`:

```
77.29user 13.02system 1:26.04elapsed 104%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 63800maxresident)k
```

Time for `mandoc`:

```
15.70user 4.75system 0:26.40elapsed 77%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 55992maxresident)k
```

Templating systems

Templating is necessary to turn things into HTML consistently. We chose `Jinja` because it seemed lightweight and simple enough. It is used by Pelican, MoinMoin 2.0, Ansible and Salt. It also seemed to be a good middleground between arbitrary code execution and static templates in [this comparison](#). `Jinja` is also used by the `Flask` framework which is close to the `Click` commandline framework we are already using.

Interesting alternatives include `Mako`, used by Reddit and `Pyramid`, which is itself part of the larger `Pylons` project. This all seems like too much to pull in.

`Genshi` was also evaluated summarily later on but discarded as I found the basic tutorial to be too complicated.

It used to be possible to change the location of the templates and static files, but that was removed during some refactoring, partly because of the lack of interest from Ubuntu to reuse the software for now. If we decide to support themes, it may be simpler to use `flask-themes` instead of implementing our own theming system, although that seems to be a bit heavy...

Web frameworks

`Flask` was chosen to build a quick CGI prototype because I wanted to experiment with it, but also because it was integrating with the templating system already chosen (`Jinja`) and the commandline framework tool (`Click`). It also competes reasonably with other Python frameworks in the [techempower benchmarks](#). I have found the decorators in `flask` to be really intuitive and easy to use and while I had to bounce around for a while to merge the search engine with the regular static file server, in the end it turned out to be a simple implementation.

Other alternatives that were considered were:

- builtin `HTTPServer` in Python: used at first, but did only static files
- builtin `cgi` module: wanted to try a framework instead of parsing CGI arguments and dealing with content-types by hand
- `Pyramid`: too complicated
- `Bottle`: interesting, looks simpler than `Flask`, if less popular?
- `Django`, `Plone`, etc: too much overhead

Search engines

Various search were evaluated:

- `Xapian`:
 - used by Notmuch, craigslist, search.debian.org, lists.debian.org, wiki.debian.org, old gmane.org
 - no web API, would need to index directly through the Python API

- harder to use
- no extra server necessary
- internal knowledge already present in debian.org
- bound to use their CGI interface (Omega)
- written in C++
- Lucene / Solr:
 - requires another server and API communications
 - per-index user/password access control
 - mature solution that has been around for a long time
 - may support indexing HTML?
 - JSON or XML data entry
 - large contributor community
 - usually faster than ES
 - based on Apache Lucene
 - written in Java
 - used by Netflix, Cnet
- Elasticsearch:
 - requires a server
 - packaged in Debian
 - REST/JSON API
 - documentation may be lacking when compared so Solr, e.g. had to ask on IRC to see if `_id` can be a string (yes, it can)
 - Python API, but could also be operated with a Javascript library
 - may be easier to scale than Solr
 - performance comparable with Solr
 - was designed to replace Solr
 - supports indexing HTML directly by stripping tags and entities
 - based on Apache Lucene as well
 - written in Java as well
 - requires a CLA for contributing
 - used by Github, Foursquare, presumably new gmane.org
 - created in 2010, ~18 months support lifetime?
- whoosh: used by moinmoin 2.0
- sphinx: not well known, ignored
- mngosearch: considered dead, ignored
- homegrown:

- Ubuntu's tool uses a simple Python CGI to search page names, and Google Search for full-text search
- codesearch uses Postgresql
- David's uses sqlite
- Readthedocs has a custom-built Javascript-based search engine
- we could use a simple Flask REST API for searches, but then the extractor (or renderer?) would need to write stuff to some database - sqlite reads fails when writing, so maybe not a good candidate?

Sources:

- <http://stackoverflow.com/questions/10213009/solr-vs-elasticsearch>
- <http://solr-vs-elasticsearch.com/>

Xapian examples

Index all documents in html/:

```
$ ominxed --url / --db search --mime-type=gz:ignore html/
11.03user 0.36system 0:12.27elapsed 92%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 29952maxresident)k
18056inputs+15688outputs (0major+7884minor)pagefaults 0swaps
```

--url is the equivalent of the renderer's --prefix, --db is a directory where the database will end up and --mime-type is to ignore raw manpages.

Second runs are much faster:

```
$ time omindex --url / --db search --mime-type=gz:ignore html/
0.01user 0.00system 0:00.02elapsed 88%CPU (0avgtext+0avgdata 4656maxresident)k
0inputs+0outputs (0major+300minor)pagefaults 0swaps
```

Display information about the search database:

```
$ delve search.db
UUID = 6fd4d4ab-2529-4d67-bbff-32b88fd888fa
number of documents = 452
average document length = 3976.96
document length lower bound = 78
document length upper bound = 243183
highest document id ever used = 452
has positional information = true
```

Example searches:

```
$ quest -d search.db man2html | grep ^url
url=/cache/man/fr/man1/man2html.1.html
url=/cache/man/man1/man2html.1.html
url=/cache/man/ro/man1/man2html.1.html
url=/cache/man/it/man1/man2html.1.html
url=/cache/man/el/man1/man2html.1.html
$ quest -d search.db setreg | grep ^url
url=/cache/man/man1/setreg.1.html
url=/cache/man/man1/mozroots.1.html
url=/cache/man/man1/chktrust.1.html
url=/cache/man/man1/certmgr.1.html
```

This would search only <title> fields: --prefix=title:S 'title:foo'.

Infrastructure

Debian.org

Note: This may be out of date. The purpose of this section is to explained how this is should be deployed on Debian's infrastructure.

At least the extractor and renderer would run on `manziarly`. The output would be stored on the `static.d.o` CDN (see below). parts 3 could be a separate (pair or?) server(s?) to run the search cluster.

In the above setup, `manziarly` would be a master server for static file servers in the Debian.org infrastructure. Files saved there would be `rsync`'d to multiple frontend servers. How this is configured is detailed in the [static-mirroring](#) DSA documentation, but basically, we would need to ask the DSA team for an extra entry for `manpages.d.o` there to server static files.

Gitlab vs Alioth

The project was originally hosted in the [Collaborative Maintenance](#) repositories, but those quickly showed their limitations, which included lack of continuous integration, issue tracking and automatic rendering of markdown files.

A project was created on Gitlab for this purpose, in `anarcat`'s personal repositories (for now). On Gitlab, the project "mirrors" the public git URL of the `collab-maint` repo. On `collab-maint`, there is a cronjob in my personal account which runs this command to synchronize the changes from Gitlab at the 17th minute of the hour:

```
git -C /git/collab-maint/debmans.git fetch --quiet gitlab master:master
```

This was found to be the best compromise in adding the extra gitlab features while still keeping access threshold for Debian members low. Do note that there is no conflict resolution whatsoever on `collab-maint`'s side, and the behavior of Gitlab in case of conflicts isn't determined yet. This may require manual fixing of merge conflicts.

Other implementations

There were already three known implementations of "man to web" archive generators when this project was started.

After careful consideration of existing alternatives, it was determined it was easier and simpler to write a clean-room implementation, based in part on the lessons learned from the existing implementations and the more mature `debsources` project.

Original manpages.d.o codebase

The [original codebase](#) is a set of Perl and bash CGI scripts that dynamically generate (and search through) manpages.

The original codebase extracts manpages with `dpkg --fsys-tarfile` and the `tar tar` commands. It also creates indexes using `man -k` for future searches. Manpages are stored in a directory for each `package-version` pair, so it doesn't garbage-collect disappeared manpages. It also appears that packages are always extracted, even if they had been parsed before.

The CGI script just calls `man` and outputs plain text wrapped in `<PRE>` tags without any cross-referencing or further formatting.

There is also a copy of the Ubuntu scripts in the source code.

Ubuntu

Ubuntu has their own manpage repository at <https://manpages.ubuntu.com/>. Their codebase is partly Python, Perl and Bash.

It looks like there's a `bash` "and" `python` implementation of the same thing. They process the whole archive on the local filesystem and create a timestamp file for every package found, which avoids processing packages repeatedly (but all packages from the `Packages` listing are `stat`'d at every run). In the `bash` version, the manpages are extracted with `dpkg -x`, in the `Python` version as well, although it uses the `apt python` package to list files. It uses a simple regex (`^usr/share/man/.*\gz`) to find manpages.

It keeps a cache of the md5sum of the package in `"$PUBLIC_HTML_DIR/manpages/$dist/.cache/$name` to avoid looking at known packages. The `bash` version only looks at the timestamp of the file versus the package, and only checks at the modification *year*.

To generate the HTML version of the manpage, both programs use the `/usr/lib/w3m/cgi-bin/w3mman2html.cgi` shipped with the `w3m` package.

Search is operated by a `custom Python script` that looks through manpages filenames or uses Google to do a full text search.

dgilman codebase

A new codebase written by dgilman is available in [github](#). It is a simple Python script with a sqlite backend. It extracts the tarfile with `dpkg --fsys-tarfile` then parses it with the Python `tarfile` library. It uses rather complicated regexes to find manpages and stores various apropos and metadata about manpages in the sqlite database. All manpages are unconditionally extracted.

OpenBSD

The OpenBSD project has a `man.cgi(8)` program that powers the whole application behind man.openbsd.org. It uses `mandoc(1)` to format manpages, as the manual system in OpenBSD has native support for `HTML output`. This is linked directly in the CGI, which is written in C.

FreeBSD

Wolfram Schneider

The man.freebsd.org site is powered by a `perl script` written by Wolfram Schneider which parses the output of the `man(1)` command directly. See [the help page](#) for more information.

The `debmans` project welcomes contributions of all sort.

A broader discussion about the service is in the [manpages.debian.org](https://manpages.debian.org/wiki) wiki page.

Source code

The source code should be available in this [Gitlab repository](#). Gitlab was chosen because this project hopes to be reused by other Debian derivatives and we prefer to have a neutral space to develop the software. Gitlab also provides an [issue queue](#) to [report a new issue](#).

Debian developers not desiring to use a semi-proprietary platform like Gitlab may still use the [collab-maint repository](#), see [CollaborativeMaintenance](#) for more information on how to collaborate on those repositories. The two repositories are synchronized every hour.

Issues, feature requests and security

Patches can be sent by email (see below) or with Gitlab [Merge Requests](#).

Security issues can be privately reported on Gitlab or directly to the author, at anarcat@debian.org. You can use this OpenPGP public key to encrypt messages for confidential security issues:

```
8DC9 01CE 6414 6C04 8AD5 0FBB 7921 5252 7B75 921E
```

Test suite

Make sure you run tests before you send a patch. Also add tests for new functionalities you add or for bugs you find. Tests are done with [pytest](#):

```
py.test
```

Test coverage can be verified with:

```
py.test --cov debmans
```

Exact lines lacking test coverage are available in the HTML report that can be generated with:

```
py.test --cov debmans --cov-report html
```

The test suite requires the `dget` and `dpkg-scansources` commands from the [devscripts](#) package to build a test mirror. Network access is required if packages are not locally cached in `/var/cache/apt/archives` or where `dget` can find them (see `DGET_PATH` in the `dget(1)` manpage).

Release process

1. make sure tests pass (see above for details):

```
py.test
```

2. create a signed and annotated tag:

```
git tag -s x.y.z
```

3. build and test Python “wheel”:

```
python setup.py bdist_wheel
sudo pip install dist/*.whl
debmans --version
debmans -m /var/cache/apt/archives -o html -v --progress extract render site serve
sudo pip uninstall debmans
```

4. push commits and tags to the git repository:

```
git push
git push --tags
```

5. publish Python “wheel” on PyPI:

```
twine upload dist/*
```

6. announce on debian-doc@lists.debian.org

This is the API documentation of Debman. It should be stable across major releases. See the *Design* document for more details about the design.

Extractor

The extractor processes Debian packages and extracts specific patterns into a target directory. It uses a cache file that is named according to the package name and version to avoid the costly operation of opening the same package file multiple times.

`debman.extractor.SOURCES_COMP_FMTS = ['gz', 'bz2', 'xz']`
supported compression formats for Sources files. Order does matter: formats appearing early in the list will be preferred to those appearing later

class `debman.extractor.PackageExtractor` (*regex=[]*, *root='.'*, *destdir=None*, *dryrun=False*)
extract certain files from debian packages

apt_cache = None

this takes one second to load, swallow the cost now instead of for every package

files = None

the files written during extraction

root = None

the root of the mirror to look files in

destdir = None

the directory where to write extracted files

dryrun = None

do not write anything if True

patterns = None

regex patterns of files to extract

regexes

compiled static cache of regex patterns

to regenerate this when patterns is changed, set `_regexes` to `None`.

write_file (*item, data*)

callback to actually write files in archive

this will check for the internal regex list and write the given file in *destdir*, creating missing directories as needed.

only the part that is matching the pattern is extracted, unless the pattern features a `path` group, in which case only *that* part is then extracted.

extract (*pkg, destdir=None, cache=True*)

extract matching patterns into destdir

Parameters

- **pkg** (*debian.deb822.Deb822*) – a package dictionary with fields like `Filename`, `Package` and `Version` at least.
- **destdir** (*str or None to default to the path given in constructor*) – where to store the extracted files
- **cache** (*bool*) – if we should check and create the cache file (a `PackageCacheFile`)

Returns extracted files paths

Return type `list`

Raises `PackageCorruptedError` – if apt fails to extract the file

class `debman's.extractor.PackageCacheFile` (*destdir, pkg*)

a cache file to see if we have inspected a package before

this creates an empty named `pkgname-version` in the given *destdir* on create. there are also facilities to check existence.

it is assumed that if there is no version change, no change is required in the man pages as well.

it is not possible to atomically check existence just yet.

this will leave stray cache files behind.

filename

the full path to the cache file

exists ()

if the cache file exists

create ()

create the cache file with the given field as content

class `debman's.extractor.PackageMirror` (*path*)

inspect a Debian mirror for binary packages

this is a modified replica of `debsources's SourceMirror` class. Ideally, this would be merged back into the original class as a derivative.

packages

return the mirror packages as a set of `<package, version>` pairs

Note: This is just like calling `ls()`, except there is a cache to avoid calling it multiple times.

releases

list of releases in this repository

Returns (codename -> description) mappings. description is in the format X.Y codename (stable), unless no matching Release file was found, in which case it can be just codename, which is taken from the `packages()` list of suites.

Return type dict

ls()

iterate over packages found in the mirror

this will yield (suite, pkg) pairs. the suite is determined by looking at the name of the 4th directory up from where the Packages file is located, as is standard in complete apt repositories. this may yield weird codenames when working with ad-hoc repositories as the chosen name may be a bit random depending on your directory structure.

Returns (suite, pkg) tuples for each package found.

Return type pkg is a deb822 fragment, suite is a string.

exception `debman's.extractor.DebmirrorError`

runtime error when using a local Debian mirror

exception `debman's.extractor.PackageCorruptedError`

runtime error when using a local Debian mirror

Note: the documentation for `click` functions is incomplete. they should actually be turned into usage page and manpages, see [this issue](#) for details.

`debman's.extractor.extract()`

extract manpages from Debian binary packages in mirror

iterate over all binary packages found in the mirror, and extract each included manpage to the output directory.

Renderer

The Renderer module takes care of turning extracted documentation into HTML format. It uses Jinja templates and simple timestamp-based caching.

class `debman's.renderer.JinjaRenderer` (*template, cache=True, dryrun=False*)

render Jinja templates using given parameters, caching and simulation

this is basically an extension of the Template class, but extended so we can easily pass paths (instead of strings) in and out.

Todo

we should probably have derived Template directly here.

template = None

template to use to render the data

cache = None

if we should check timestamps before writing

dryrun = None

if True, do not write

source = None

source file currently processed

generated_time ()

handy function to add timestamp to footers

render (target, **data)

render template with given data

if `pageinfo` isn't provided in `data`, it is set to the output of `generated_time ()`.

Parameters

- **target** (*str*) – path to the target file
- **data** (*dict*) – set of parameters passed to `render ()`

uptodate (target)

check if the target file is newer than template

also checks the `source` attribute if it is set, which allows for subclasses to add a file to check.

class `debman's.renderer.MarkdownRenderer (template, cache=True, dryrun=False)`

render markdown source files with a jinja template

render (source, target, **data)

render the given source file

Parameters

- **source** (*str*) – path to the Markdown source file
- **target** (*str*) – passed to `JinjaRenderer.render ()`

class `debman's.renderer.CommandRenderer (template, command=None, cache=True, dryrun=False)`

a simple template-based rendering system

a file is passed as an argument to a command and the output is written into the given template, in the `{{content}}` Jinja2 element.

this is meant to be subclassed in command-specific renderers.

those can also not even be command-based, as long as they have the following parameters:

- **pattern**: regular expression pattern for this class
- **render (source, target, **data)**: render the given source file into the target file, with the attached Jinja data. at least `content` is expected in there, but `description` and `title` are also encouraged, those should match the template.

postprocess (data)

modify the data sent to the template after execution

this allows subclasses to intervene between the command call and the render call.

by default does nothing

render (source, target, **data)

render the given source file using external command defined in constructor

does not call command in `dryrun` mode.

Todo

support `%(target)s` instead of standard output, if necessary?

Parameters

- **source** (*str*) – path to the source file
- **target** (*str*) – path to the output file
- **data** (*dict*) – remaining arguments passed as is to `JinjaRenderer.render()`

:raises `CommandRendererError`: if command fails to convert given page

exception `debman's.renderer.CommandRendererError`
error raised when `man2html` fails to render the manpage

class `debman's.renderer.ManpageRenderer`
abstract class to store the manpage regex pattern

pattern = `'/(?:(?P<suite>\w+)/)?(?P<path>man/(?:(?P<locale>\w+)/)?man[1-9]/(?P<name>+))\.(?P<section>[1-9]\w*)'`
default pattern for manpages

class `debman's.renderer.W3mRenderer` (*template, command=None, cache=True, dryrun=False*)
render manpages with `w3m`

command = `'/usr/lib/w3m/cgi-bin/w3mman2html.cgi "quit=1&local=%(source)s"'`
path to `w3m` converter

postprocess (*data*)
process `w3m` parser output

class `debman's.renderer.MandocRenderer` (*template, command=None, cache=True, dryrun=False*)
render pages with `mandoc`

Todo

this assumes cross-references are done with the `.Xr` macro, which is unfortunately not often the case in my tests. so some manual cross-ref will be required here.

Todo

croaks on the `kodi(1)` manpage, a weird redirect, which we should handle manually here. the fix, according to `mandoc(1)` is to `chdir` to the correct relative directory. looking at `zshall(1)`, `.so` looks like an “include” directive.

class `debman's.renderer.Man2htmlRenderer` (*template, command=None, cache=True, dryrun=False*)

render manpages with `man2html`

postprocess (*data*)
process `man2html` output

- it doesn't return proper exit codes, look for Status header instead. Anything 40X is bad.
- the title is in the NAME level two header (`<h2>`)
- keep only the inside of the `<body>` tag

- rewrite URLs to point to the right place
- remove attribution

`debman's.renderer.DefaultManpageRenderer`
quick switch to toggle default manpage rendering implementation

alias of `MandocRenderer`

`debman's.renderer.find_files` (*directory, patterns*)
look for file patterns in the given directory and return the right command to run

Todo

this may be slow in large directories and may be reimplemented with `os.scandir()` if we ever depend on Python 3.5 or later.

Returns module, path tuples

Return type list

`debman's.renderer.match_jobs` (*files, patterns*)
dispatch the right command for the matching pattern

Parameters

- **files** (*list*) – list of file paths to inspect
- **patterns** (*list*) – list of tuples (*cls, regex*). *regex* is a compiled regex patterns to match against the pathnames, *cls* is a `CommandRenderer` subclass to run

Returns module, path tuples

Return type list

`debman's.renderer.render` ()
render documentation to HTML

this looks for patterns matching a certain regex in the given SRCDIR directory

Note: this assumes files have an extension that should be stripped. for manpages, this should generally be `.gz`. if manpages are not compressed, this will break section support.

Todo

document that compressed manpages are mandatory

`debman's.renderer.site` ()
render the whole static site

Search

The search module takes care of indexing and searching manpages. It currently has very limited functionality.

Main entry point

The main entry point of `debman` is in the `debman.__main__` module. This is to make it possible to call `debman` directly from the source code through the Python interpreter with:

```
python -m debman
```

All this code is here rather than in `__init__.py` to avoid requiring too many dependencies in the base module, which contains useful metadata for `setup.py`.

This uses the `click` module to define the base command and options, which then get passed to subcommands through the `obj` parameter, see `pass_obj()` in the `click` documentation.

Logger

This is a simple helper module to configure the `logging` module consistently.

```
debman.logger.setup_logging(name='debman', level='info', syslog=False, stream=None)
    setup logging module according to the arguments provided
```

Utilities

Those are various utilities reused in multiple modules that did not fit anywhere else. various utilities for `debman`

```
debman.utils.find_parent_module()
    find the name of a the first module calling this module

    if we cannot find it, we return the current module's name (__name__) instead.
```

```
debman.utils.find_static_file(path)
    locate a file in the distribution

    this will look in the shipped files in the package

    this assumes the files are at the root of the package or the source tree (if not packaged)

    this does not check if the file actually exists.
```

Parameters `path` (*str*) – path for the file, relative to the source tree root

Returns the absolute path to the file

```
debman.utils.mkdirp(path)
    make directories without error

    this is a simple wrapper around os.makedirs() to avoid failing if the directory already exists.

    it also logs to the DEBUG logging facility when a directory is created.
```

Remaining work

Those are the known issues and limitations of the `debmans` software, serving as an internal, ad-hoc issue tracker.

Blocking

Those are the things that need to be done to complete the restoration of the manpages service.

- setup [virtual host configuration](#), include:
 - redirections for previous links: `/man/intro`, `/man/1/intro`, `/1/intro`, `/cgi-bin/man.cgi?query=intro&apropos=1&manpath=Debian+Sid&format=html&locale=en`
 - 404 handler to point to `404.html`
 - [edit cii badge](#) when done, future section
 - CSP and various other SSL flags?
 - CGI config: currently implemented with Flask, see the [self-hosted options](#) for a list of deployment possibilities. simplest is probably to provide WSGI and CGI shims. WSGI works well in apache (and also works in Nginx) according [digital ocean](#) CGI works everywhere. Also: need a way to pass configs (everything in `debmans.search.main()` actually) between apache and CGI
- test run on manziarly
 - requires access to manpages group? see RT#6485
 - missing dependencies to run properly (even as plain user): `setuptools`, `click`, `apt`, `debian`, `patch` to `mirror/debian.org.git`
- provide DSA team with Puppet ruleset (see [dsa-puppet manifests](#)) or config documentation
- ask DSA to deploy the new code, test
- if it works, fix the `manpages.debian.org` DNS to point to the `static.d.o` DNS. at this point, the MVP is in place

Important

Those are not part of the Minimum Viable Product, but would be important to implement to make this software complete.

- search functionality, in that order
 1. `whatis(1)`: find manpages by name (done by Flask app)
 2. `apropos(1)`: find manpages by description
 3. full text search
- `i18n`: we parse all languages, but should auto-detect the web browser's language with fallbacks and everything. Apache auto-negotiation? Could be like `debian.org` language menus... The trick is to guess the language list again, similar to the `suites` issue. The new search box can lookup different locales in the backend, but doesn't have the list of locales in the frontend.

Nice to have

Those are not really necessary but could improve the service.

- unify site and render? a `.mdwn` file is like a `.1.gz` file, basically, except it's not extracted from a `.deb`
- add `__str__()` to classes
- 100% test coverage (about 80% now), [edit cii badge](#) when done (quality section)
- move `apt_cache` optimizations upstream
- rotated `-logfile`
- add sections browser to the index page?
- debian packaging, [edit cii badge](#) when done (future and other sections)
- use `tox` to test against different py envs
- CII suggestions, [edit cii badge](#) when done:
 - continuous integration through Gitlab CI? (quality section)
 - hook `pyflakes` in test suite (quality section)
 - static code analysis with `pylint` (analysis section)
- embed test suite in main program
- consider a plugin system for extending to more than manpages, would provide the default for `--plugin`
 - `pluggy`: used by `py.test`, `tox` and `devpi`
 - `yapsy`
 - `PluginBase`
 - `plugnplay`
 - `click-plugins`: relevant only to add new commands
 - SO also [suggests](#) using the standard library `imp.load_module()` or just the builtin `__import__()`, see also the [PyPA documentation on how to discover plugins](#)

Possible optimizations

Optimization ideas:

- look at the archive's `Contents-*` files to choose which packages to extract
- extract only targeted files from the archive instead of iterating over it? not sure it's an improvement...
- use `os.scandir()` where relevant, instead of `os.walk()` and `stat`
- use `multiprocessor.Pool` for background job rendering? maybe by firing up rendering as soon as pages are created
- use `md5sums` to check if files were modified, [edit cii badge](#) when implemented (security section)
- pre-compile all regexes

Those will be implemented as needed, remember:

Premature optimization is the root of all evil. – Donald Knuth

Internal code tasks

Those are `todo` items extracted from the code. Priority of those is indeterminate unless otherwise noted.

Todo

we should probably have derived `Template` directly here.

(The original entry is located in `/home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user_builds/debman's/checkouts/latest/debman's/renderer.py:docs` of `debman's.renderer.JinjaRenderer`, line 7.)

Todo

support `%(target)s` instead of standard output, if necessary?

(The original entry is located in `/home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user_builds/debman's/checkouts/latest/debman's/renderer.py:docs` of `debman's.renderer.CommandRenderer.render`, line 6.)

Todo

this assumes cross-references are done with the `.Xr` macro, which is unfortunately not often the case in my tests. so some manual cross-ref will be required here.

(The original entry is located in `/home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user_builds/debman's/checkouts/latest/debman's/renderer.py:docs` of `debman's.renderer.MandocRenderer`, line 3.)

Todo

croaks on the `kodi(1)` manpage, a weird redirect, which we should handle manually here. the fix, according to `mandoc(1)` is to `chdir` to the correct relative directory. looking at `zshall(1)`, `.so` looks like an “include” directive.

(The original entry is located in `/home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user_builds/debman's/checkouts/latest/debman's/renderer.py:docs` of `debman's.renderer.MandocRenderer`, line 7.)

Todo

this may be slow in large directories and may be reimplemented with `os.scandir()` if we ever depend on Python 3.5 or later.

(The original entry is located in `/home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user_builds/debman's/checkouts/latest/debman's/renderer.py:docs` of `debman's.renderer.find_files`, line 4.)

Todo

document that compressed manpages are mandatory

(The original entry is located in `/home/docs/checkouts/readthedocs.org/user_builds/debman's/envs/latest/local/lib/python2.7/site-packages/click-6.7-py2.7.egg/click/core.py:docstring` of `debman's.renderer.render`, line 11.)

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Parts of this software were inspired by a review of existing tools, most notably the [Ubuntu manpages converter](#) and [dgilman's converter](#). The [sources.debian.net](#) service source code and design was also directly used in some parts, which is partly why `debmans` is licensed under the AGPL.

Also thanks to Paul Wise for nudging me along and all the help navigating the various tools and protocols to make all this work.

This project mostly follows the [Core Infrastructure best practices](#), see the [full report](#) for details.

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