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Towards a Linux Kernel Maintainer Handbook

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The first rule of kernel maintenance is that there are no hard and fast rules. While there are several documents and guidelines on patch contribution, advice on how to serve in a maintainer role has historically been tribal knowledge. This organically grown state of affairs is both a source strength and a source of friction. It has served the community well to be adaptable to the different personalities and technical problem spaces that inhabit the kernel community. However, that variability also leads to inconsistent experiences for contributors across subsystems, insufficient guidance for new maintainers, and excess stress on current maintainers. As the Linux kernel project expects to continue its rate of growth it needs to be able both scale the maintainers it has and ramp new ones without necessarily requiring them to make a decade's worth of mistakes to become proficient.

The presentation makes the case for why a maintainer handbook is needed, including frequently committed mistakes and commonly encountered pain points. It broaches the “whys” and “hows” of contributors having significantly different experiences with the Linux Kernel project depending on what subsystem they are contributing. The talk is an opportunity to solicit maintainers in the audience on the guidelines they would reference on an ongoing basis, and it is an opportunity for contributors to voice wish list items when working with upstream. Finally, it will be a call to action to expand the document with subsystem-local rules of the road where those local rules differ, or go beyond the common recommendations.

I agree to abide by the anti-harassment policy

Yes

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