

LIFE OF AN OSS DEVELOPER

GWU OSCon 2026
Brandon Mitchell
2026-03-23



WHOAMI

```
$ whoami
```

- Brandon Mitchell
- OSS Developer
- OCI Maintainer, regclient, Docker Captain
- Mastodon, Slack, Hacker News, Matrix, StackOverflow



WALK IN THEIR SHOES



SOFTWARE IS UNIQUE

- Nearly free to copy
- One developer can scale to lots of users
- Open source software increases potential users
- ... but it also adds a poll of contributors

I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE

- I would like to contribute to your project, would someone guide me through the process?
- Please assign this issue to me
- I'm running a survey for my class
- Here's the fix to my problem that an LLM generated
- Please merge this pull request
- Why isn't there a response to all these requests?

EVERYONE IS TIRED



Lesley Carhart

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***Begging *** universities to stop forcing your cybersecurity students beg for strangers' free time on the internet to do pointless interviews instead of even practical mentorship or projects.

We're exhausted, understaffed and the market is hell. None of us have time.



r/SecurityCareerAdvice



u/Cheap_Interest6588 · 3h

Hide

Help! We need Interview Participation, looking for Cybersecurity Engineers

Good day.

We are senior high school students from University of Nueva Caceres, currently enrolled in the STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics strand. As part of our Practical Research course, we are conducting a Career Research Study focusing on the field of Security Engineering.

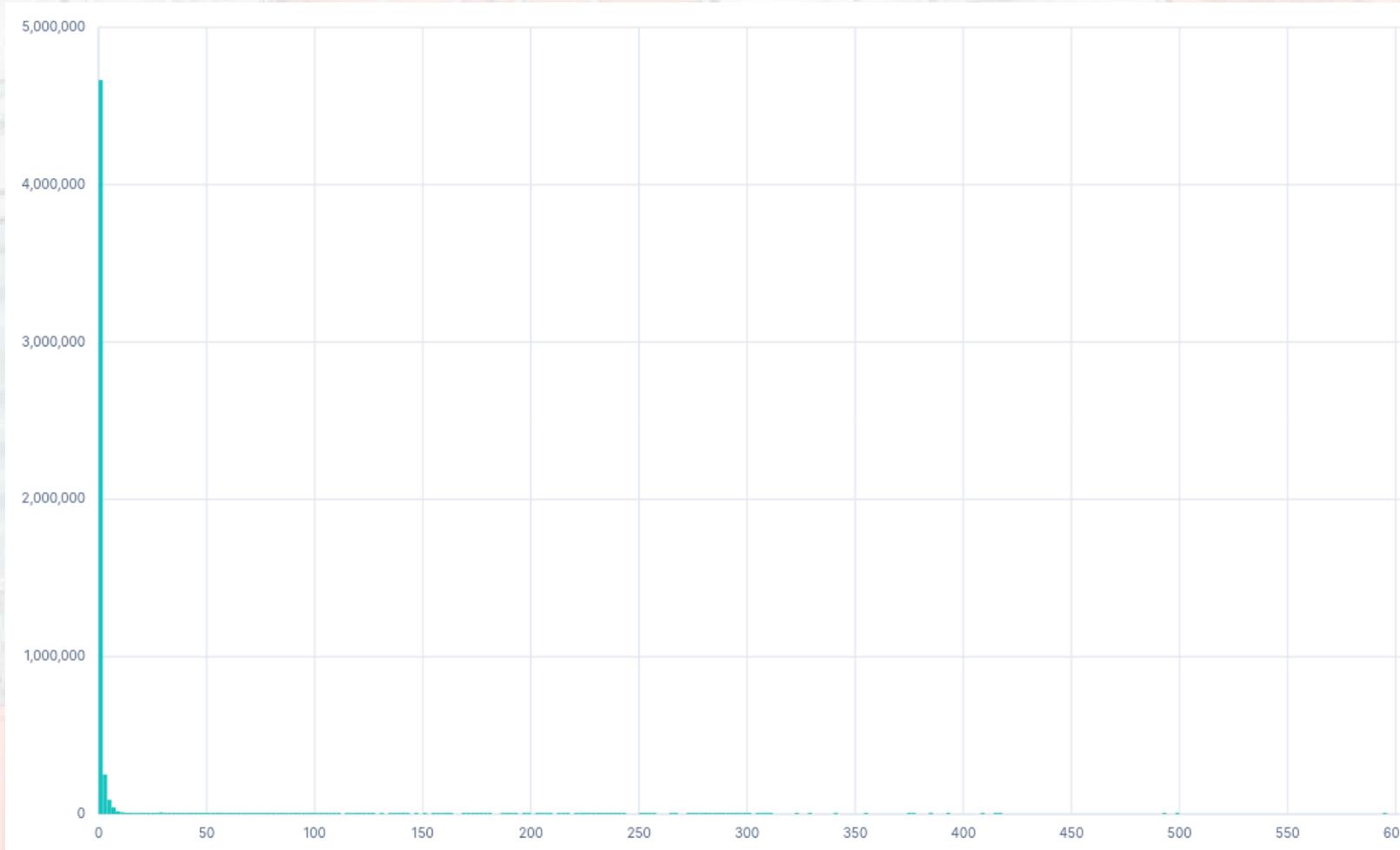
ALT

Mar 02, 2026, 06:21 AM · 🌐 · Croissant

TYPES OF OSS MAINTAINER

- Company supported project
- Peripheral tool
- Personal side project
- Retired
- ~~Business model~~

MAINTAINERS COUNT



Source: <https://opensourcesecurity.io/2025/08-oss-one-person/>

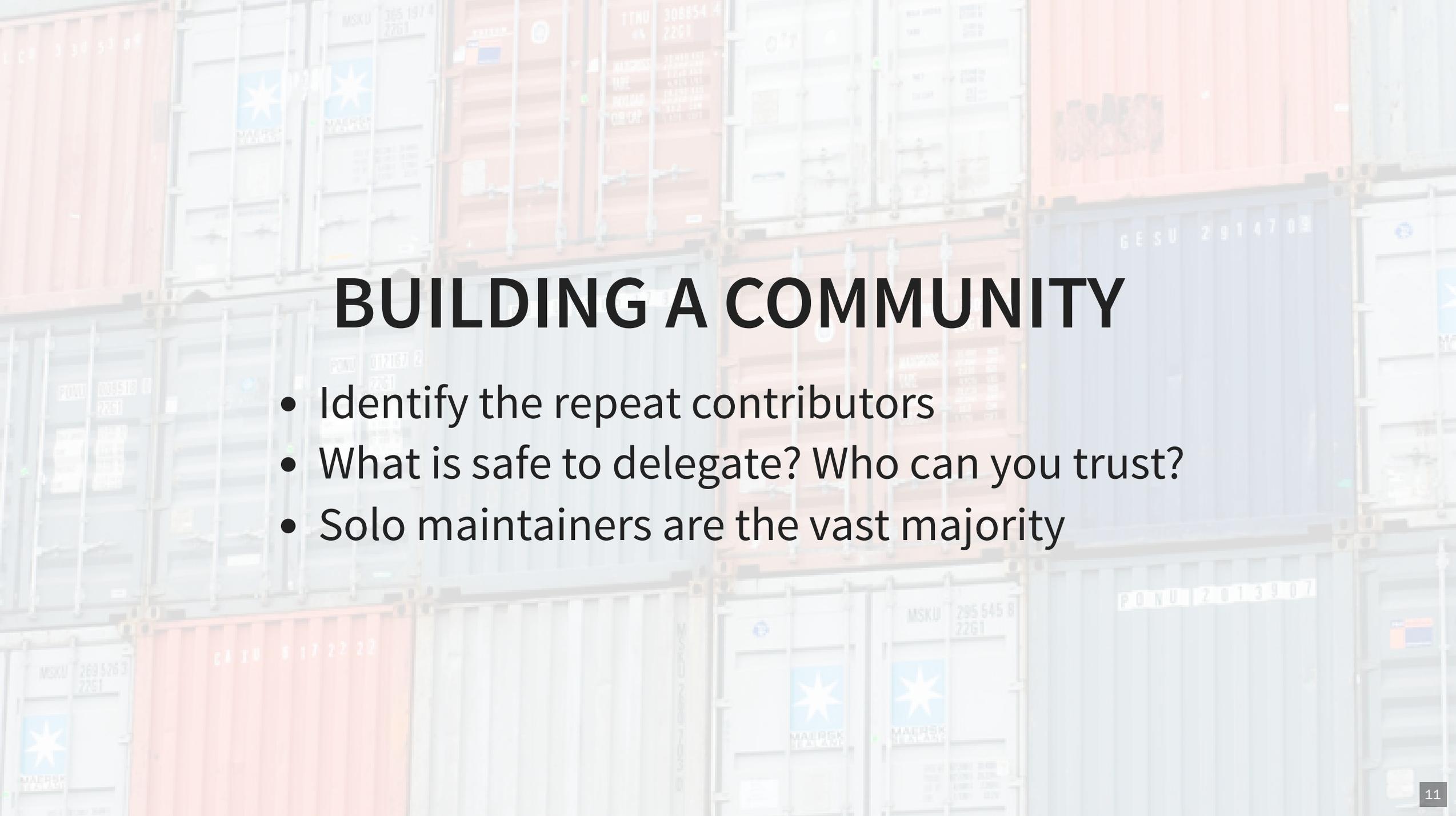
WHAT DO MAINTAINERS DO?

- Code
- Build process
- Tests
- CI and Artifacts
- Tagging and Releases
- Dependency Updates
- Security Fixes



MANAGING CONTRIBUTIONS

- Contributor Policy
- "Do I want to maintain this?"
- "Yes" is forever, "No" is temporary



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

- Identify the repeat contributors
- What is safe to delegate? Who can you trust?
- Solo maintainers are the vast majority

WHY MAINTAIN OSS?

- Public recognition
- Resume
- Scratch an itch
- Create alternative
- Giving back

THANK YOU



- Brandon Mitchell
- GitHub: sudo-bmitch
- Mastodon:
fosstodon.org/@bmitch

github.com/sudo-bmitch/presentations