

Mantis: Quick Overview

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Introduction

Mantis is a Web-based bug-tracking system. It is designed as a tool for IT projects with multiple users and roles. It not only allows you to track the progress of issue resolution for multiple projects, but it also saves information about all issues in a database, allowing you to mine data from past issues and projects to—

- gain a wider perspective on the time it takes to resolve certain issues,
- hasten the resolution of similar issues, and
- notice patterns or repetition of issues among multiple projects.

Our implementation of Mantis can be found at <http://%%someurl/mantis>. The developer homepage for the Mantis project can be found at <http://www.mantisbt.org>. Mantis has been released under the GNU General Public License (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html>). Our current version of Mantis is %%current version.

User Roles

Following is a list of user roles and partial lists of the actions that they can perform within Mantis. This serves as an overview of the most important functionality of Mantis, and should not be taken as an exhaustive list. These user-action associations are the Mantis defaults and can be customized.

Privileges:	User Roles					
	Viewer	Reporter	Updater	Developer	Manager	Administrator
View issues	X	X	X	X	X	X
View summary	X	X	X	X	X	X
View attachments	X	X	X	X	X	X
Report issues		X	X	X	X	X
Monitor issues		X	X	X	X	X
Send reminder to another user		X	X	X	X	X
Upload bug file		X	X	X	X	X
Add bug note		X	X	X	X	X
Add profile		X	X	X	X	X
Update bugs			X	X	X	X
View private news				X	X	X
Reopen bug				X	X	X
Close bug				X	X	X
Handle Bug				X	X	X
Leave private note				X	X	X
Update bug note				X	X	X
Delete bug				X	X	X
Move bug				X	X	X
Show monitor list				X	X	X
Upload project files					X	X
Manage project threshold					X	X
Manage news threshold					X	X
Add users to project					X	X
Create project					X	X
Delete project						X
Manage users						X
Manage custom fields						X

Views

In general, the views have either an “all projects” or a specific project context. You might stick with the “all projects” context to get an overview of all of your projects, but you would have to choose a specific project to report issues and perform other project-specific tasks.

Main

High-level summary of open issues of interest to the particular user, plus news.

My View

Issues pertinent to the particular user grouped by “Assigned to Me,” “Reported by Me,” “Recently Modified,” “Unassigned,” “Resolved,” and “Monitored by Me.”

View Issues

Issues viewed through custom filters. Nice screen that allows you to quickly work with multiple issues; for example, select all issues and assign them to a developer, or select a bunch of issues and set the priority to high.

From this view you can also choose to print reports for any of the issues. Reports can be generated in Excel or Word formats, and they include the history of a given issue. See “Real-time Report Creation” on page 7 for more details.

Also, you can use Search, a traditional search-engine function, or Jump, which allows you to jump to a particular issue number.

Report Issue

Form to report an issue.

Change Log

Changes in versions, i.e. from version x to version y, here’s what changed...

Summary

A roundup of overall stats such as number of open issues, resolved issues, oldest issue, etc.

Docs

Project documentation that Managers or Administrators can upload. Could be any type of file. The customizable limit is set to two megabytes.

Manage

Viewable only for Administrators and Managers. This view allows you to manage users (admin), projects (admin and managers), and custom fields (admin).

Edit News

Available only to Managers and Administrators. You can add and edit news items here. These items can be posted to all projects, or individual projects.

My Account

Set account preferences like your password, real name, email notification preferences, and Profiles.

Logout

Logs you out!

Creating a Project

Mantis Administrators can create projects. Log in as an Administrator, then click “Manage Projects.” Click “Create New Project.” Fill in a project name. Choose a status. For “View Status,” select “Public” if you want every user to see the project, or “Private” if you’d like to assign specific users only to the project. For upload path, just type “.\doc.” We could also specify a documentation directory on a network drive; this would involve ensuring that the web server has write access to the given network path. Type a description in the Description field.

Click “Manage Projects” again, and click the project that you just created. Here you will be able to set up bug categories, user access, and version information.

Set up bug categories for the project by typing a category name, then clicking “Add Category.” You may want to simply copy Categories from an existing project; this will be handy for similar projects. Setting up categories is key to organizing the types of issues that will be entered. For example, generic categories might be “feature request,” “bug,” or “nice to have.” You can then click the “edit” link next to the category name to automatically assign issues associated with it to a particular user.

If the project is private, scroll to the bottom of the page and choose users to give access to. Private projects are viewable only by Administrators and anyone who has been given access to the project. You can also grant a specific access level for each user; so if someone is normally a developer, but you’d like that person to be able to do more than just work on bugs (such as post documentation), you would grant him/her “Manager” rights.

Reporting, Tracking, Assigning, & Resolving Issues

The thrust of Mantis functionality lies in organizing the process of issue resolution. These concepts complement the day-to-day workflow of ongoing projects.

Reporting

A user who is a Reporter and above can report issues to any project that is public, or that is private and to which s/he has access. Report an issue by clicking “Report Issue.” The fields are relatively self-explanatory. If you are browsing Mantis in an “All Projects” context, you’ll be forced to pick a project to report an issue for.

One excellent feature is the ability to upload files related to an issue. So a user can upload a screenshot if there is an error alert, or if there is a layout issue.

Tracking

There are several ways of tracking an issue. As indicated in the “Views” section above, you can view several issues in several different ways. You can also click on an issue number and choose “Monitor Issue.” This will put the issue into the “Monitored by Me” section of “My View.” You’ll also receive an email any time a change is logged for that issue (somebody updates the status, adds a note, etc).

Any time a user clicks on an issue number to view the issue details, s/he can view and add notes to an issue, and change the status. This is a handy way for project managers to do a quick-check on an issue if they need an answer for a client.

There is also a project-level news tracking mechanism called “RSS.” This feature is supported in Firefox- and Netscape-type browsers and is also known as a “live bookmark.” In effect, you can “subscribe” to the news of a project, which creates a bookmark-type folder within your browser’s sidebar, containing dynamically generated shortcuts to recent project news items. Each time an item is added to that project’s news, it is also added to your browser’s sidebar.

Assigning

Issues can be assigned to particular users who are Developers or above. When you assign an issue to a user, s/he receives an email notification. Managers and administrators can then send reminders for any given issue to the person to whom the issue was assigned.

Also, as mentioned above in “Creating a Project,” you can automatically associate an issue category to a specific user.

Resolving

A Developer can change the status of an issue to “Resolved.” A manager or administrator can mark it as “Closed.” By default, Resolved issues show up in most views. Closed issues do not.

Real-time Report Creation

Within the “View Issues” screen, you can filter data to create custom reports. You can then choose to present that data in either MS Excel or MS Word.

Creating a Filter

In the “View Issues” view, the colored six-column strip at the top lists your current view filters. By clicking any of the linked filter titles, you arrive at a screen that lists the filter titles with dropdown menus to allow you to specify values. You can filter a view based on:

- Reporter
- Monitored by
- Assigned to
- Category
- Severity
- Resolution
- Status
- Hide status (don't show)
- Product build
- Product version
- Fixed in version
- Priority
- View status (public/private)
- Changed (last modified time)
- Date

An example of a common report, let's create a report of all open projects that have been started and are still open within the past week. Choose Resolution = open, Hide status = closed, check “use date filters,” and set the dates to within the past week.

Choose “Apply Filter.” You can save the filter if you like the results by clicking “Save Filter.” Choose “Make Public” if you think it will be useful to other users, and choose “All Projects” if you want it available in all projects. Now on the “View Issues” screen you'll have the option to choose a filter from a dropdown, or manage filters (to delete or edit them).

Another common filter might be one to view “Assigned to myself (or unassigned)” and hide “resolved”; if you're looking for something to do, just View Issues with that filter!

Creating Printable Reports

Now that you have filtered your view of Issues, you can create a printable report in either Excel or Word format. Choose “Print reports.” On the resulting screen, you'll see your list of issues. Above that list, you'll see four icons: An excel icon, an IE icon, a Word icon, and another IE icon.

Click the Excel icon and save the file to your hard drive. This report is a columnar view of the issues. This report is customizable through the “Print Options” screen, on which you can check or uncheck the data fields you want displayed on this report.

Click the Word icon and save the file to your hard drive. This report is a nicely formatted, table-type view. However, it is not customizable, so you may be stuck with empty data fields, or ones that you are not interested in.

The IE icons simply open reports in the browser window in html format with presumably MS-specific HTML encoding. This is appropriate for quick printing.

Personalization

A user clicks “My Account” to personalize his/her settings.

Edit Account

On this screen, you can change your password, email, and real name.

Account Preferences

This detailed screen allows you to set the amount of detail you will work with by default, and your preferences for email notifications.

Option	What it does/is	Possible values
Default Project	lets you set which project view you will have when you log on	Dropdown list of project names
Advanced Report	will allow you to enter more detailed reports of issues. You'll have the chance to put in custom platform/OS information, and enter the steps it takes to reproduce a bug	Checked=yes Unchecked=no
Advanced View		
Advanced Update		
Refresh Delay	number of minutes before a page refreshes and loads new data. Ten minutes is the shortest amount of time for this feature.	User-defined number, 10 or above.
Redirect Delay	number of seconds until you are directed back to a given page after making a change. For instance, if you add a news item, you will get a confirmation page that will redirect you in 2 seconds back to the news page.	User-defined number
Email on new	when a new issue is entered for a project. If an issue is added and meets your severity criteria (i.e. “major” or worse), you'll get notified.	Checked=yes Unchecked=no plus: Severity dropdown (to set severity threshold)
Email on assigned	when an issue is assigned to you	“
Email on feedback	when an issue assigned to you has received new feedback	“
Email on resolved	when an issue assigned to you has been resolved	“
Email on closed	when an issue assigned to you have been closed	“
Email on reopened	when an issue assigned to you that was previously closed has been reopened	“

Option	What it does/is	Possible values
Email on note added	when a new note has been added to an issue assigned to you	"
Email on status change	when the status of an issue assigned to you has been changed	"
Email on priority change	when the priority of an issue assigned to you have been changed	"
Email notes limit	User-defined number	
Language	will change the language of Mantis. This will not, however, translate anything that has been typed in as English...	Chinese, Czech, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian

Profiles

Here you can add information about your computer to aid in troubleshooting. Add your platform, OS, version, and additional information (such as user agent, media player version, etc.) and click "Add Profile." You can then go to the dropdown menu and choose that profile, then select "Make default" and click "Submit." Any issue you report will now have that info attached to it. You can add multiple profiles to accommodate testing on different computers.