jQuery

by Lindsay Roberts

What is jQuery? We all know it's related to JavaScript, but *how*, exactly? jQuery is an extensive library for JavaScript that allows you to easily traverse and manipulate the DOM (Document Object Model). It comes with loads of plugins, designed for targeted uses, all to enhance the functionality of your website.

Currently, there are two versions of jQuery, version 1.x and version 2.x. Both are continuously supported by the developers, so how do we know which one to choose? You might guess to go with the most current version first, but actually, it all depends on your demographic. jQuery version 1.x supports older versions of IE (up to 6.0), however with version 2.x the developers at jQuery removed this support for a faster, more reliable service. If you're sure that none of your users are using an outdated version of IE, or if you're using jQuery for a web app, you may want to go with jQuery 2.x - otherwise, most people default to jQuery 1.x for its compatibility.

jQuery is identified in your code by a dollar sign (which is really just an alias for the jQuery function). The general syntax is followed by a selector, and then some kind of method.

```
$("#foo").action();
```

Inside the method, you might typically run an anonymous function. For example:

```
$("#myButton").click( function() {
    console.log("Hello, world.");
});
```

As you can see above, jQuery makes selecting DOM elements much easier, and becomes even more true when animations get involved.

"So, if jQuery is so amazing, should I always use it?"

Not necessarily. jQuery has its use cases. If you're working on a project that already includes jQuery, such as Wordpress, Drupal, Bootstrap, or others, then you might as well, since your project is already using it. But jQuery is an extensive library, containing a lot of functionality, and you probably won't use it all. You'll need to evaluate your project to see whether or not jQuery is something you'll need.

All in all, jQuery is a staple for front-end web development today. It leaves your project with a professional, polished functionality, and regardless of the circumstance, you'll be using it for one project or another.