

What is the incentive for curl to release the library for free? [closed]

Asked 5 years, 7 months ago Modified 5 years, 7 months ago

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Closed. This question is [opinion-based](#). It is not currently accepting answers.

Closed 5 years ago.



Locked. This question and its answers are [locked](#) because the question is off-topic but has historical significance. It is not currently accepting new answers or interactions.

I recently started using libCurl for my VC++ project. I've been wondering: what is the incentive for the curl creators to release the entire library for free?

Is it purely to help their fellow developers? This is one of the best open source libraries I've used in recent times. (Other than Python and R programming languages).

Project cURL is entirely free and open. No person gets paid for developing curl full time. We do this voluntarily, mostly in our spare time. Occasionally

companies pay individual developers to work on curl, but that's up to each company and developer. This is not controlled by nor supervised in any way by the project.

curl

libcurl

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edited Apr 28, 2019 at 19:30



Makyen ♦

33.2k ● 12 ● 92 ● 125

asked Apr 27, 2019 at 20:14



nsivakr

1,595 ● 2 ● 27 ● 48

14 Why do you think Curl is unusual? There are a LOT of free & open source libraries & projects out there: Linux, gcc, MPI, X, OpenGL... – [jamesqf](#) Apr 28, 2019 at 17:38

True true @jamesqf, but .. OpenGL?? That's not open-source, that's basically a header file and a bunch of docs.

– [mackychese21](#) Apr 28, 2019 at 17:39

2 I'm a linux user. So i'm aware of open source. Recently, had to complete a very complex project in a short time frame. Libcurl was the solution. So surprised, that the author released the gem of the program for the entire public's benefit. – [nsivakr](#) Apr 28, 2019 at 17:44

@mackychese21: I was thinking of Mesa, the open source software implementation of OpenGL . Of course these days it's mostly implemented in hardware, – [jamesqf](#) Apr 29, 2019 at 2:18

- 1 I undeleted the question for [the reasons I gave on meta](#).
– Jon Ericson Apr 30, 2019 at 12:00
-

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1 Answer

Sorted by:

Highest score (default)



512 I'm Daniel Stenberg.

votes



I made curl

I founded the curl project back in 1998, I wrote the initial curl version and I created libcurl. I've written more than half of all the 24,000 commits done in the source code repository up to this point in time. I'm still the lead developer of the project. To a large extent, curl is my baby.

I shipped the first version of curl as open source since I wanted to "give back" to the open source world that had given me so much code already. I had used so much open source and I wanted to be as cool as the other open source authors.

Thanks to it being open source, literally *thousands* of people have been able to help us out over the years and have improved the products, the documentation. the web site and just about every other detail around the project. curl and libcurl would never have become the products that they are today were they not open source. The list of contributors now surpass 1900 names and currently the list grows with a few hundred names *per year*.

Thanks to curl and libcurl being open source and liberally licensed, they were immediately adopted in numerous products and soon shipped by operating systems and Linux distributions everywhere thus getting a reach beyond imagination.

Thanks to them being "everywhere", available and liberally licensed they got adopted and used everywhere and by everyone. It created a defacto transfer library standard.

At an estimated **six billion** installations world wide, we can safely say that curl is the most widely used internet transfer library in the world. It simply would not have gone there had it not been open source. curl runs in billions of mobile phones, a billion Windows 10 installations, in a half a billion games and several hundred million TVs - and more.

Should I have released it with proprietary license instead and charged users for it? It never occurred to me, and it wouldn't have worked because I would never have managed to create this kind of stellar project on my own. And projects and companies wouldn't have used it.

Why do I still work on curl?

Now, why do I and my fellow curl developers *still* continue to develop curl and give it away for free to the world?

1. I can't speak for my fellow project team members. We all participate in this for our own reasons.

2. I think it's still the right thing to do. I'm proud of what we've accomplished and I truly want to make the world a better place and I think curl does its little part in this.
3. There are still bugs to fix and features to add!
4. curl is free but my time is not. I still have a job and someone still has to pay someone for me to get paid every month so that I can put food on the table for my family. I charge customers and companies to help them with curl. **You** too can get my help for a fee, which then indirectly helps making sure that curl continues to evolve, remain free and the kick-ass product it is.
5. curl was my spare time project for twenty years before I started working with it full time. I've had great jobs and worked on awesome projects. I've been in a position of luxury where I could continue to work on curl on my spare time and keep shipping a quality product for free. My work on curl has given me friends, boosted my career and taken me to places I would not have been at otherwise.
6. I would not do it differently if I could back and do it again.

Am I proud of what we've done?

Yes. So insanely much.

But I'm not satisfied with this and I'm not just leaning back, happy with what we've done. I keep working on curl every single day, to improve, to fix bugs, to add features and to make sure curl keeps being the number one file transfer solution for the world even going forward.

We do mistakes along the way. We make the wrong decisions and sometimes we implement things in crazy ways. But to win in the end and to conquer the world is about patience and endurance and constantly going back and reconsidering previous decisions and correcting previous mistakes. To continuously iterate, polish off rough edges and gradually improve over time.

Never give in. Never stop. Fix bugs. Add features. Iterate. To the end of time.

For real?

Yeah. For real.

Do I ever get tired? Is it ever done?

Sure I get tired at times. Working on something every day for over twenty years isn't a paved downhill road.

Sometimes there are obstacles. During times things are rough. Occasionally people are just as ugly and annoying as people can be.

But curl is my life's project and I have patience. I have thick skin and I don't give up easily. The tough times pass

and most days are awesome. I get to hang out with awesome people and the reward is knowing that my code helps driving the Internet revolution everywhere is an ego boost above normal.

curl will never be "done" and so far I think work on curl is pretty much the most fun I can imagine. Yes, I still think so even after twenty years in the driver's seat. And as long as I think it's fun I intend to keep at it.

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edited Apr 28, 2019 at 21:38



halfer

20.4k ● 19 ● 108 ● 200

answered Apr 27, 2019 at 23:27



Daniel Stenberg

57.8k ● 19 ● 158 ● 232
