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28 SEPTEMBER 2017

Facebook just changed the license on React. Here's a 2-minute explanation why.



by Quincy Larson

Facebook just switched several of its open source projects — including React — over to the popular MIT license.

Before that, Facebook was using their own custom “BSD+Patents” license. This was similar to the widely-used BSD license, but also included a clause that basically said: “you can’t sue Facebook for infringing on your patents.”

This license came under fire this summer. Here’s what happened.

July 15: The Apache Foundation Bans React

The Apache Foundation sent out a notice banning the use of any BSD+Patents licensed tools in their open source projects. (Apache has a history of banning licenses that they consider too restrictive, such as the GNU GPL.)

August 18: Facebook says the BSD+Patents license is to protect them from “meritless patent litigation”

Facebook blogged that they needed the BSD+Patents license so they could develop React faster, without needing lawyers to sign off on their changes.

This spurred communities like Reddit, Hacker News, and freeCodeCamp to discuss React alternatives.

September 14: WordPress says it isn't comfortable with Facebook's BSD+Patents license

WordPress — which powers about 25% of all websites — said they wouldn't use React in future projects unless the license changed.

September 22: Facebook announces it's ditching the BSD+Patents license and switching to the MIT license

September 24: WordPress says it's OK with React now

The founder of WordPress says he's happy with the change, and WordPress may use React in future projects.

September 25: Facebook officially switches to the MIT license

Sophie Alpert made the commit that changed the license over to MIT.

master (#10804) v16.0.0

sophiebits committed 4 days ago

1 parent d63249d

commit b765fb25ebc6e53bb8de2496d2828d9d01c2774b

Showing 13 changed files with 27 additions and 78 deletions.

Unified Split

42 LICENSE

View

... @@ -1,31 +1,21 @@

1 -BSD License

2 -

3 -For React software

4

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7 -

8 -Redistribution and use in source and binary forms, with or without
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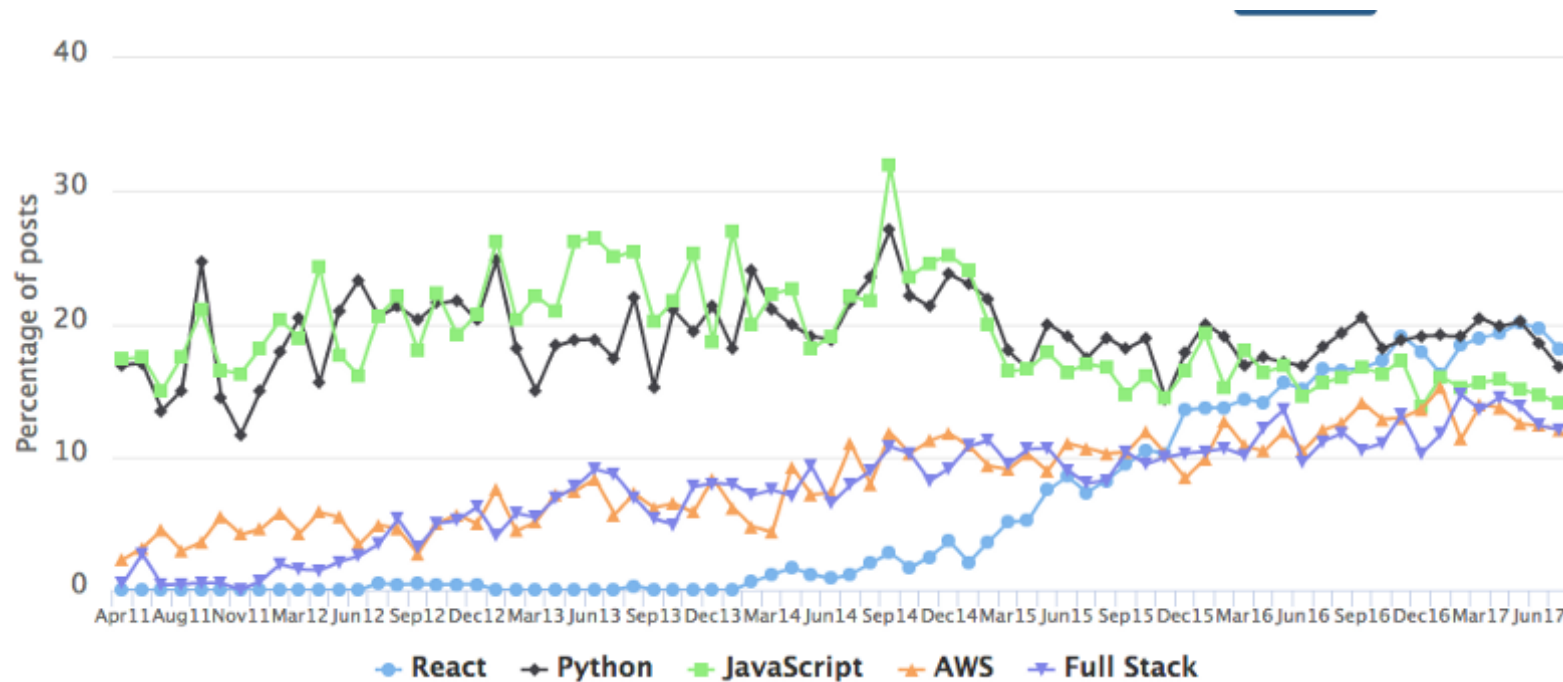
10 +furnished to do so, subject to the following conditions:

September 26: Facebook releases React 16

Most Loved, Dreaded, and Wanted Frameworks, Libraries and Other Technologies



React is the “most loved” developer tool, according to 64,000 developers surveyed in April 2017 by Stack Overflow.



React is now the most commonly requested skill in Hacker News “Who’s Hiring?” posts.

Now that the uncertainty around React’s license is settled, React will most likely remain one of the most popular tools for web development.

Facebook is also switching to more permissive licenses for its other open source projects, too.

I hope you found this explanation helpful. If you want to explore open source licenses, GitHub created [this tool](#) to help you choose the right one for you.

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