**JavaScript and jQuery – What is the difference? 5/29/14**

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Over the last two months we’ve learned that JavaScript is a web based programming language. It has come a long ways over the past few years and it’s a very popular language used to today. We’ve learned the basics on JavaScript such as how to create a variable, object, functions, etc. We’ve touch on some subjects like regular expressions and this week advanced objects or constructor functions. However what we haven’t learned yet is jQuery.

I’m sure you’ve heard the term (though if you haven’t, I can’t help you. Keep reading and find out). If you’ve been confused by what jQuery is and how it relates to JavaScript, here’s my definition. JQuery is a library of code for JavaScript. John Resig launched jQuery in 2006. jQuery is like a universal framework that developers can use to make coding easier. I do want to note that there are many other JavaScript libraries like MooTools, however I choose jQuery because it’s the most popular one by developers today.

How does it relate to JavaScript? So when I say library think of it being a place where a bunch of code is already written, and your just calling it using methods and passing parameters. What can take four lines in JavaScript could take one line in jQuery! This is where I find the confusion lies. Without JavaScript there would be no jQuery. jQuery is a extension of JavaScript, it’s built for it! The syntax is slightly different, and here is a common example:

***Using jQuery:***

*$ (‘body’).css(‘background’, ‘#ccc’);*

***Basic JavaScript:***

*Function changeBackground(color) {*

*Document.body.style.background = color;*

*}*

*Onload =”changeBackground(‘red’);*

*(Wilde, 2013)*

With this basic example, you can see how using jQuery makes it easier. We’ve accessed the DOM, created a function, and called it to run all in one line. The syntax looks slightly different, but the language is the same.

Now your question is probably, well when do I use jQuery. Once you have a good understanding of JavaScript basics, I think you can start using jQuery right away. Majority of the time you’ll want to use it. I think the learning curve comes with having to learn the syntax. However once you understand JavaScript basics like creating objects and functions and how to access the DOM, you can easily learn jQuery. One major benefit of using jQuery is cross-browser compatibility. jQuery is already optimized for all browsers, so any code used from the jQuery library you know will run within one of the three major browsers. Another great benefit of jQuery I noticed through my research is that jQuery utilizes CSS selectors, which the importance of that will come to you through your learning of CSS.

To start working with jQuery, you need to download it from <http://jquery.com/>. Again, jQuery is a library or a framework, and so when your calling methods and so on, those methods are located in the files you download from this website. To get started, you would add those files via the script tag in your HTML document. As we move through our program and into PWA-2 in a couple of months, I look forward to learning more about jQuery.

References:

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