

My collected rationales for placing these libraries in the public domain:

1. Public domain vs. viral licenses

Why is this library public domain? Because more people will use it. Because it's not viral, people are not obligated to give back, so you could argue that it hurts the development of it, and then because it doesn't develop as well it's not as good, and then because it's not as good, in the long run maybe fewer people will use it. I have total respect for that opinion, but I just don't believe it myself for most software.

2. Public domain vs. attribution-required licenses

The primary difference between public domain and, say, a Creative Commons commercial / non-share-alike / attribution license is solely the requirement for attribution. (Similarly the BSD license and such.) While I would *appreciate* acknowledgement and attribution, I believe that it is foolish to place a legal encumbrance (i.e. a license) on the software *solely* to get attribution.

In other words, I'm arguing that PD is superior to the BSD license and the Creative Commons 'Attribution' license. If the license offers anything besides attribution -- as does, e.g., CC NonCommercial-ShareAlike, or the GPL -- that's a separate discussion.

3. Other aspects of BSD-style licenses besides attribution

Permissive licenses like zlib and BSD license are perfectly reasonable in their requirements, but they are very wordy and have only two benefits over public domain: legally-mandated attribution and liability-control. I do not believe these are worth the excessive verbosity and user-unfriendliness these licenses induce, especially in the single-file case where those licenses tend to be at the top of the file, the first thing you see.

To the specific points, I have had no trouble receiving attribution for my libraries; liability in the face of no explicit disclaimer of liability is an open question, but one I have a lot of difficulty imagining there being any actual doubt about in court. Sometimes I explicitly note in my libraries that I make no guarantees about them being fit for purpose, but it's pretty absurd to do this; as a whole, it comes across as "here is a library to decode vorbis audio files, but it may not actually work and if you have problems it's not my fault, but also please report bugs so I can fix them"--so dumb!

4. full discussion from stb_howto.txt on what YOU should do for YOUR libs

EASY-TO-COMPLY LICENSE

I make my libraries public domain. You don't have to.
But my goal in releasing stb-style libraries is to reduce friction for potential users as much as possible. That means:

- a. easy to build (what this file is mostly about)
- b. easy to invoke (which requires good API design)
- c. easy to deploy (which is about licensing)

I choose to place all my libraries in the public domain, abjuring copyright, rather than license the libraries. This has some benefits and some drawbacks.

Any license which is "viral" to modifications causes worries for lawyers, even if their programmers aren't modifying it.

Any license which requires crediting in documentation adds friction which can add up. Valve used to have a page with a list of all of these on their web site, and it was insane, and obviously nobody ever looked at it so why would you care whether your credit appeared there?

Permissive licenses like zlib and BSD license are perfectly reasonable, but they are very wordy and have only two benefits over public domain: legally-mandated attribution and liability-control. I do not believe these are worth the excessive verbosity and user-unfriendliness these licenses induce, especially in the single-file case where those licenses tend to be at the top of the file, the first thing you see. (To the specific points, I have had no trouble receiving attribution for my libraries; liability in the face of no explicit disclaimer of liability is an open question.)

However, public domain has frictions of its own, because public domain declarations aren't necessary recognized in the USA and some other locations. For that reason, I recommend a declaration along these lines:

```
// This software is dual-licensed to the public domain and under the following
// license: you are granted a perpetual, irrevocable license to copy, modify,
// publish, and distribute this file as you see fit.
```

I typically place this declaration at the end of the initial comment block of the file and just say 'public domain' at the top.

I have had people say they couldn't use one of my libraries because it was only "public domain" and didn't have the additional fallback clause, who asked if I could dual-license it under a traditional license.

My answer: they can create a derivative work by modifying one character, and then license that however they like. (Indeed, *adding* the zlib or BSD license would be such a modification!) Unfortunately, their lawyers reportedly didn't like that answer. :(