What are the most popular JavaScript libraries, and how are they used?

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There are lots of popular JavaScript libraries that are out there. You've probably heard of jQuery. jQuery is very much a utility library. Actually, there's a whole series of jQuery types of libraries that are out there. There's things like jQuery Mobile, jQuery UI, and flat-out jQuery. Depending on what it is that you're trying to do, you can pick one of these types of things.

jQuery UI, and jQuery Mobile in particular, are not as used as much these days, mostly because jQuery UI used to do things like, "I want an accordion panel. I want some tabs on my webpage." Very simple things that have kind of been displaced by responsive design frameworks like Bootstrap or Foundation or UIkit. So, jQuery: very useful if you just want to stick a couple of little elements on your webpage, so forth.

These days, more and more people are working with things like React and Angular and View. And there are definitely differences between these frameworks, but fundamentally, they address the same kinds of issues, which is that the web is typically a stateless environment. In other words, when we start on one webpage and we go to another one, whatever settings and so forth we had on the first page are not remembered when we go to the second page. React and View and Angular start to address that issue of talking to the server behind the scenes and addressing what's happening on the webpage and making things "more interactive."

So, Facebook is a great example of this. If you think about all of the alerts that come up in Facebook, typing in a box while other stuff is going on in the webpage, that's all stuff that is just not possible with conventional JavaScript. You would actually need a library like React. And, of course, Facebook wrote React specifically for that level of interactivity.