

MongoDB Becomes Less Affero GPL-Like

By *Roy Schestowitz*

Created *17/10/2018 - 3:18am*

Submitted by Roy Schestowitz on Wednesday 17th of October 2018 03:18:36 AM Filed under [Server](#) [1] [OSS](#) [2] [Legal](#) [3]

- [Fed up with cloud giants ripping off its database, MongoDB forks new open-source license](#)[4]

After Redis Labs relicensed the modules it developed to complement its open-source database, from AGPL to Apache v2.0 with a Commons Clause, the free-software community expressed dismay.

And, inevitably, some responded by forking the affected code.

Today, the maker of another open source database, MongoDB, plans to introduce a license of its own to deal with the issue cited by Redis: cloud service providers that sell hosted versions of open-source programs ? such as Redis and MongoDB database servers ? without offering anything in return.

"Once an open source project becomes interesting or popular, it becomes too easy for the cloud vendors to capture all the value and give nothing back to the community," said Dev Ittycheria, CEO of MongoDB, in a phone interview with The Register.

Ittycheria pointed to cloud service providers such as Alibaba, Tencent, and Yandex. Those companies, he claims, are testing the boundaries of the AGPL by benefiting from the work of others while failing to share their code.

- [MongoDB switches up its open-source license](#) [5]

MongoDB is a bit miffed that some cloud providers ? especially in Asia ? are taking its open-source code and offering a hosted commercial version of its database to their users without playing by the open-source rules. To combat this, MongoDB today announced it has issued a new software license, the Server Side Public License (SSPL), that will apply to all new releases of its MongoDB Community Server, as well as all patch fixes for prior versions.

Previously, MongoDB used the GNU AGPLv3 license, but it has now submitted the SSPL for approval from the Open Source Initiative.

- [MongoDB license could push open source deeper into cloud: Is this what industry needs?](#) [6]

Things just got serious in open source land. Despite the occasional Commons Clause or Fair Source licensing attempt to change the meaning of the words "open source" to include "the right for a private company to make money from its open source efforts," we've stuck to the Open Source Definition, and it has served us well. Open source communities have become the center of the innovation universe, giving us exceptional code like Linux, Kubernetes, Apache Kafka, and more.

- [It's MongoDB's turn to change its open source license](#) [7]

The old maxim that the nice thing about standards is that there are so many to choose from could well apply to open source licensing. While now nearing a couple years old, the last WhiteSource Software survey of the top 10 open source licenses found close competition between the GPL, MIT, and Apache licenses. While the commercial-friendly Apache license has dominated the world of big data platforms and AI frameworks, MIT and GPL (which has "copyleft" provisions requiring developers to contribute back all modifications and enhancements) continues to be popular. GPL and variants such as the AGPL have been popular amongst vendors that seek to control their own open source projects, like MongoDB.

- [Matthew Garrett: Initial thoughts on MongoDB's new Server Side Public License](#) [8]

MongoDB just announced that they were relicensing under their new Server Side Public License. This is basically the Affero GPL except with section 13 largely replaced with new text, as follows:

"If you make the functionality of the Program or a modified version available to third parties as a service, you must make the Service Source Code available via network download to

everyone at no charge, under the terms of this License. Making the functionality of the Program or modified version available to third parties as a service includes, without limitation, enabling third parties to interact with the functionality of the Program or modified version remotely through a computer network, offering a service the value of which entirely or primarily derives from the value of the Program or modified version, or offering a service that accomplishes for users the primary purpose of the Software or modified version.

?Service Source Code? means the Corresponding Source for the Program or the modified version, and the Corresponding Source for all programs that you use to make the Program or modified version available as a service, including, without limitation, management software, user interfaces, application program interfaces, automation software, monitoring software, backup software, storage software and hosting software, all such that a user could run an instance of the service using the Service Source Code you make available."

MongoDB admit that this license is not currently open source in the sense of being approved by the Open Source Initiative, but say:"We believe that the SSPL meets the standards for an open source license and are working to have it approved by the OSI."

At the broadest level, AGPL requires you to distribute the source code to the AGPLed work[1] while the SSPL requires you to distribute the source code to everything involved in providing the service. Having a license place requirements around things that aren't derived works of the covered code is unusual but not entirely unheard of - the GPL requires you to provide build scripts even if they're not strictly derived works, and you could probably make an argument that the anti-Tivoisation provisions of GPL3 fall into this category.

[Server OSS Legal](#)

Source URL: <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/116533>

Links:

[1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/147>

[2] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/72>

[3] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/106>

[4] https://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/10/16/mongodb_licensing_change/

[5] <https://techcrunch.com/2018/10/16/mongodb-switches-up-its-open-source-license/>

[6] <https://www.techrepublic.com/article/mongodb-license-could-push-open-source-deeper-into-cloud-is-this-what-industry-needs/>

[7] <https://www.zdnet.com/article/its-mongodb-turn-to-change-its-open-source-license/>

[8] <https://mjpg59.dreamwidth.org/51230.html>