

The future of digital goods

Speculations on scenarios for the future of content and creation

Shea Molloy | Futures Studies and Speculative Design | Parsons, Spring 2022

1. Stories

Bizarre bazaars

Shan is starting a new design project for the coffee shop she works at. She needs to make a simple, specialized drink menu for June and she's excited to make something fun to promote their pride-themed iced coffees. She jumps on the computer in the office when it's slow early one morning since it has Creative Cloud. She logs into Adobe Express online and is greeted with several screens showing her how to make animated social media posts, slideshow presentations, website banners, and even a short film. She can pick a project theme to start off and she's excited to see there's hundreds of templates that are coffee shop themed! She can search for "coffee shop" and sees a bunch of templates that are grouped together by style. There's south american coffee, indian coffee, irish coffee styles. She sees instagram posts, stickers, workshop flyers, and ads. There's a lot of cute coffee animations and great pictures of people in the starter templates, and most of them are free, but none seem to capture the inside joke of "queer people loving iced coffees". After scrolling through a few dozen different styles of coffee shop themed templates, she figures she should just find a menu template and add cute stickers to show what she means. She grabs a free "boba tea menu template" and starts searching for pride, coffee, and protest signs. When she prints the menu, the sizes are a little off (apparently A4 is a little different from letter sizes?) but it's close enough and has the right number of spaces for their drinks and prices. She prints it out in a rush, getting back to the front of house just in time to catch a smile from her neighbor walking in, probably looking for their regular iced oatmilk americano with a dash of cardamom.

1. Stories

Exclusive access

Ray is looking for a birthday present for their partner, Sam, who loves everything about cosplay. They love dressing up, trying out new special effects makeup, watching costume and makeup shows, and talking to people online about their methods. Sam's hoping to use their cosplay in their work as a visual merchandising artist and spends a lot of their free time practicing methods they learn online. It's a tight-knit community Ray knows makes their partner happy, and they want to support something so creative and fun. Sam loves some of the small creators who have recently made big come-ups in their careers - getting partnerships with SyFy to make full-length episodes on their new projects. This is great for them and Sam's voiced being happy that they get to watch the new episodes, but their Youtube and Tiktok streams have been a little empty lately. Ray's found out that Adobe and SyFy have partnered to create a sponsorship channel called "Worldbuilders", where some of these creators host Adobe live tutorials, in-app video editing tips, and customizable printed sewing patterns for members on the platform. Ray signs Sam up for a year-long membership for their birthday - the bonus level for one-on-one feedback a little steep but it will mean the world to Sam to be able to talk to these creators in real time and have their feedback on their new projects.

1. Stories

Crafter's market

Devin is a video artist who loves editing and glitching found footage from old cameras they find in thrift stores. They make a lot of their work for small screens, but end up showing a lot of it in local community galleries. They used to edit the footage on Tiktok, but they couldn't get enough followers to get access to the cooler filters - so they started programmatically editing the software in a terminal and really liked the effect. Since the new footage is impossible to select ahead of time, they have to spend a lot of time finding new sources for the video footage and have had some good luck with libraries and public archives. Their work is pretty niche, but they recently received a public art grant for the city that will showcase their work on the wifi terminals outside of the NYPL. Part of the grant also gives them an Adobe Video Artist account and trains them on making multi-media assets for Twitch, Youtube and Facebook. If the works Devin shares through the Library's channels are a hit, they'll also get access to apply as Library Resident, which would give them the ability to sell their work as custom NFTs for the Library's Innovator Exchange Opensea. This could be a great chance for Devin to help the Library raise some funds and practice commission packages they're hoping to offer for events - as long as they have the right materials to start with. They snap back to the box of reels in front of them and start sifting through the 200 reels of film from the cameras at the Grand Army Plaza Library stairs from 1pm-5pm on March 9, 2020.

1. Stories

Collective compensation

Nichol works as a full-stack media engineer for a new event space in Queens. His media engineering job mostly involves him editing the footage for the events, but he has some projects where he gets to work on the video animations that come with the deluxe digital artist promotion packages. He has a lot of great footage from the shows and can license their music, video, and photos directly from the shared Creative Cloud libraries of each event. The performers can then access his edits and use them in their social media posts through the Express templates provided by the event space and through their shared Apple music account. The assets are also shared on the Adobe community platforms and each share, like, and follower, any of their posts receive gives each artist and the event space a discount on their yearly storage and subscription fees. He's never had an artist turn down the chance to share any of his edits, and he's collaborated with some of them to make pieces of the animations into new, wearable merch. It's been an incredible sight to go to work and see dozens of his animations on band shirts in the audience - and even cooler to know that each time they change the animation from the Creative Couture app, he, the performer, and the event space get a 25% of the royalty fee for the 'fit update.

2. Timelines

Bizarre bazaars

Shan owns a small coffee shop and has to wear a lot of hats. She develops new menu items, balances the inventory and payroll, and designs promotional materials for events and goods that matter in her community. She doesn't have a lot of time to create designs from scratch, so she's often reworking visuals from boba tea companies that sort of match her shop's vibe and updating them to align with what she's communicating. In turn, she shares her updated designs and often sees them used by food stands in Germany. For each food truck that uses one of her designs, she can afford 2 new sticker packs to update next month's menus. Some of the designs she starts with are even reworked designs she's submitted, but changed enough so that it's faster to just pick back up where the last creator jumped off. She's now sharing animated videos of her menus on smartwatches when her customers enter the door - a new feature provided by a template she uploaded 300 designs to earn access to.

Product futures timeline:

Spring 2025 - Global design market expands so content is enough to be "close enough" for customers to to customize

Summer 2026 - Content licensed provides transferable credits for new creation

Fall 2028 - Creators can see how their templates are being used in real time

Winter 2030 - Multimedia templates provide technical development features like analytics, location and targeting

2. Timelines

Exclusive access

Ray is in the market for one-on-one, customizable content for their partners' cosplay interests. They've booked virtual sessions with SyFy+Adobe sponsored classes that match your workspace settings to your favorite creators' and walk them through how to optimize their creations for best practices and promotion across platforms in a simulated virtual class. They pay \$100 a month for access to the guild-level tools and community, and in turn receive a deep discount on the software recommended by the creators and early access to new content. Creators can also opt to have their work and tools hosted on servers that use green energy, and customers can find these creators based on their preferences in different guilds.

Product futures timeline:

Fall 2025 - One-on-one creator sessions available on Adobe Live and partner streaming platforms

Fall 2026 - Partnerships between creators and content platforms build out the customized tool spaces

Fall 2028 - Virtual workspaces allow for microtransactions and customizable spaces within educational content

Fall 2030 - Social and environmental badges are awarded to creators whose work reflects different values, similar to a B-Corp

2. Timelines

Crafter's market

Devin provides a wide range of work as a contributor to the NYPL's creative community, based on a grant. The commissions they take allow them the time to find the content integral to their creative process, and they add new skills to their creative process along the way. They become entrenched in the community and spend a good deal of time making video content exclusively for the NYPL channels and NFT collectors, sharing their digital video work on huge platforms. They aren't considered full-time at NYPL, but rely on NYPL for access to the tools, funding, and materials needed to do their work. Adobe helps them connect their presence as a NYPL contributor to their other work and helps them book additional commissions based on their NYPL deliverables schedules, so when they join the Community Data Digital Craft Faires, fans of their work can request custom content.

Product futures timeline

Spring 2025 - Shared licenses across orgs and creators builds out larger resource libraries

Fall 2027 - Collaborator presences shown as "badges" in Behance profiles

Summer 2029 - Digital marketplaces communicate creator availability and interest

Winter 2030 - Scheduling and payment managed through collaborator marketplace tools

2. Timelines

Collective compensation

Nichol's role as a full stack media engineer job gives him access to lots of great footage from events and he can license artists' music, video, and photos directly from the shared Creative Cloud libraries of each event. Performers can access his edits and use them in their social media posts through the Express templates provided by the event space and through their shared Apple music account. The assets are also shared on the Adobe community platforms and each share, like, and follower, any of their posts receives gives each artist and the event space a discount on their yearly storage and subscription fees. His work is managed in a split royalties system alongside every collaborator who worked on the library and everyone gets paid or discounts on their tools relative to their participation in the platforms.

Product futures timeline

Fall 2026 - Shared royalties on collaborative libraries

Fall 2028 - Shared libraries incorporate new asset distribution and engagement locations

Summer 2029 - Social revenue and discount streams applied to creators' subscriptions

Winter 2030 - Wardrobe updates for wearables pay out royalties to creators

3. Brainstorming Immersive elements

Bizarre bazaars

- User and market research reports
- Sample templates and editing workflows
- Lifecycle of a customizable design template in the form of an engagement flow chart + map
- Images showcasing before and after design edits in different use cases

Exclusive access

- 1:1 Video session between a creator and a guid member
- Calendar of community content posts across platforms
- Membership tiers lists and sample member profiles
- Mockups of a vr display showing a creator's ability to walk through best practices

Crafter's market

- Sample content from large-scale, verified creator platforms showing the work of their contracted collaborators
- UX mockups of a commissions/deliverables workflow for a creator based on their assignments
- Creative briefs and feedback between collaborators archived along with recordings of directions and project goals
- Portfolio pages showcasing creator's personal projects alongside their commissioned to highlight the applications of their work

Collective compensation immersive elements

- Shared library and shared subscription transaction statements
- Software mockups displaying new assets added to shares libraries and edits to shared libraries
- Audience images showcasing collaborative work on wearables in real-life events
- Project webs showing contributions and engagement with collaborator's works
- App mockups for selecting new "Fit picks"