# Final Report

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## Table of Contents

# Starting with a 10,000 foot perspective

## WHAT IS NOR?

**NOR** is a **living and open commons** for design in Canada.

It is a **not-for-profit**, **co-operative** and **collective** effort to **document**, **preserve**, and **question** Canadian material culture.

Nor evolved from a **20 year old** crowdsourced cultural history platform and design resource, and now aims to be a living design museum.

Nor's users include design practitioners, academics, students, librarians, archivists, design theorists, and more.
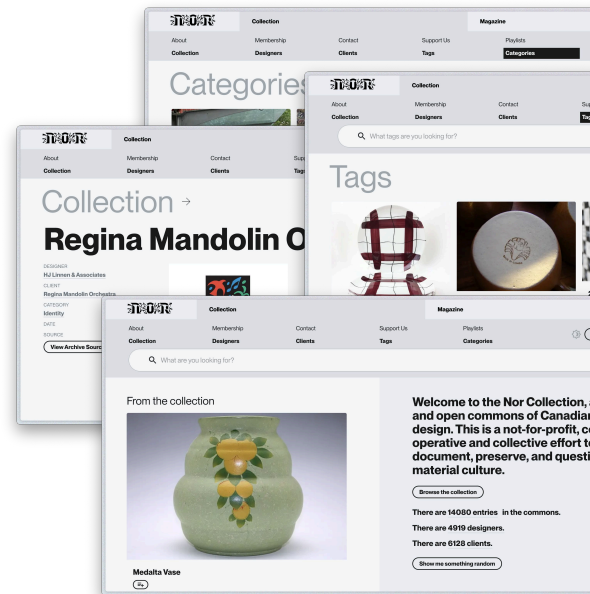


## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Digital archives are a critical component in preserving a nation's history and culture.** Currently, Canada does not have an archive that comprehensively documents and represents it's vast history of design. Our client, Nor, is *challenging the conventional notions* of archives—from its structure and interactions to the type of content featured.

Tasked with enhancing the user experience for Nor, our team aimed to modernize how users engage with digital archives. Through extensive research, we identified key opportunities to enrich user interaction and broaden content accessibility. Our research underscored the importance of facilitating expansive and contextual explorations within the archive. We discovered that users find joy in uncovering related works and navigating through various creative perspectives, which not only deepens their engagement but also enriches their understanding. Moreover, embracing inclusivity across diverse creative mediums and viewpoints emerged as crucial to increasing the archive's relevance and value.

In response, our final design solution introduced several key features:

- **Serendipity Mode**: A dynamic discovery tool that encourages spontaneous exploration of the archive, allowing users to stumble upon unexpected connections and insights.
- **Map and Timeline Views:** These storytelling mechanisms offer users novel ways to visualize the collection, enhancing understanding of the material's historical and geographical context.
- **Revitalized Homepage**: Designed to inspire and engage, the new homepage facilitates richer interactions and provides a gateway to the depth and breadth of the archive.

These enhancements aim to not only modernize the experience of interacting with Nor but also to transform it into a more inclusive, engaging, and educational resource that continues to evolve with its community.

# PROJECT GOALS

When we first met with Patrick and Joel (our main points of contact at Nor), they came to us with a very broad goal: **Improve the experience of Nor by challenging the idea of what a design archive should be**. They understood the scope of our project was likely to be determined by our research insights due to the vagueness of the problem statement. Through a deeper conversation, we broke down the goal into three components, selecting those we felt would have the largest impact:

**01.** Modernize the experience of engaging with a digital archive through interaction design.

**02.** Optimize content organization in Nor for easier navigation and accessibility.

**03.** Enhance Nor's utility as a practical research tool for diverse users.

After conducting research, our goals evolved to **focus on building features for two key types of Nor users: *hunters* and *gatherers***.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Hunters* are users who have a general sense of what they want, but also want to take a look around at what the collection has to offer | *Gatherers* as users who seek inspiration and randomness, and want to find surprising and unexpected gems within the collection. |

After this pivot, our overarching goal broke down into three new components:

**01.** Introduce **dynamic content discovery tools** to Nor.

**02.** Present the archive's collection through **different storytelling mechanisms**.

**03.** Inspire and enrich users through **new interactions and additional social context**.

# Defining our problem space

# RESEARCH FOCUS

To address the goals of our project it was essential for us to explore the problem space we'd navigate over the upcoming months. Our initial research direction was to understand the challenges users faced with Nor and address them directly. However our advisor, Jason Spector, **pushed us to think about our problem within the larger context of design archives and resources**. This new perspective enabled us to arrive at these main research foci:

**01.** Understand the needs, expectations, and motivations of users exploring digital archives.

**02.** Discover barriers and challenges that users face when exploring digital archives.

**03.** Uncover functional attributes of digital archives that enhance usability and foster site retention.

# RESEARCH METHODS

When determining how to tackle our three primary research foci, we adopted a two pronged approach– conducting both primary and secondary research:

**PRIMARY RESEARCH METHODS**

- **User Interviews**
  → 5 interviews with members of the Nor network

  Our goal was to better understand how people currently use Nor and existing pain points they face. We wanted to focus on how and why members initially got involved, their vision for the future of Nor, and their current ways of incorporating the tool into their design/work processes. We also explored how they use other archive tools in their work, and what features they find most useful.

- **Contextual Inquiry**
  → 3 studies with design students new to Nor

  We wanted to observe first hand interactions with the archive. Targeting unfamiliar users allowed us to gather initial reactions, uncover possible unmet needs, as well as insights on how Nor might fit into users' workflows.

- **Questionnaire**
  → Distributed to design and HCI communities

  We felt it was important to validate our qualitative insights through a quantitative approach. Collected data on frequency of design archive usage, mental models of discovering content on similar platforms, and rankings of features in terms of importance.

- **Competitor Analysis**
  → Examined and evaluated 15 other digital archives and design collections

  We wanted to observe first hand interactions with the archive. Targeting unfamiliar users allowed us to gather initial reactions, uncover possible unmet needs, as well as insights on how Nor might fit into users' workflows.

- **Literature Review**
  → Investigated existing research on Nor's user engagement and design history in Canada

  There exists a reservoir of past research conducted by our clients such as: workshops with Canadian design communities on indigenous art, specifically what inclusion meant to them and interviews with Nor stakeholders, which focused on what's missing for Canadian design and its future. By synthesizing this research with our current insights, we were able to better contextualize the problem space and approach pain points with the big picture of national identity in mind.

# RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

After collecting all of our data from our research methods, our team synthesized the findings using **affinity diagramming**. This process involved organizing and clustering the data into related groups to identify patterns and themes. By breaking down our notes, it allowed our group to condense the vast amount of information and identify the most frequently emerged observations.

We also analyzed our secondary research by determining patterns in our competitor analysis and literature review. Through this process, we learned what emerging trends exist among other digital archives, and the strengths and weaknesses of alternative archives compared to Nor. By synthesizing this secondary research we were able to understand user expectations in the broader context of design archives, identify gaps in existing solutions, and pinpoint areas where Nor could offer unique value propositions.

When combining our observations, themes, and trends from both our primary and secondary research, we were able to synthesize our 5 main insights. These **insights not only encapsulate the sentiments expressed** by users, but also provide valuable **direction for our design ideation phase**.
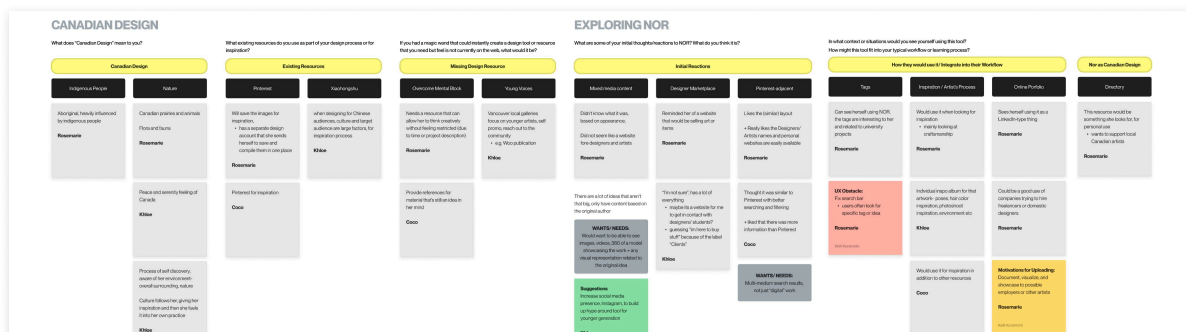
# RESEARCH INSIGHTS

First impressions of any tool heavily affect users' judgement on its value and whether to adopt the tool. Therefore, it is crucial provide a smooth onboarding experience so that users can quickly contextualize and easily recognize the purpose of the archive.

**INSIGHT 01**

**Users need to easily recognize a digital archive's purpose, in order to understand it be a valuable resource for them.**

During our contextual inquiries with non-Nor users, we observed a recurring issue where participants experienced initial confusion about the platform's purpose, and remained confused as they continued to browse. One of the most common misunderstandings with thinking that Nor was a marketplace for buying physical designs or hiring freelancers. Moreover, 100% of non-Nor users did not understand what Nor was until we explicitly explained that it was a Canadian digital archive.

> When we asked non-Nor users what they think Nor is after browsing for 3 minutes, they responded:
>
> "Is it introducing different types of design?" [P5]
>
> "What is this, what's a playlist?" [P2]
>
> "I guess I'm here to buy stuff?" [P2]
>
> "I can't tell what kinda content lives here … there's just so much." [P7]

We identified a possible reason for this confusion during our literature review. Without a common vocabulary or identify of Canadian design, new users are not unable to recognize Canadian design works easily.

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Once we had identified a key barrier to Nor's adoption, we shifted our focus to understanding the challenges inherent to Nor's content.

Curating content that reflects the multifaceted nature of Canadian design is one of the large opportunities that stands before Nor currently. Not only does it foster a sense of belonging among the archive's audience. But embracing inclusivity across different mediums and viewpoints, can enrich the archive's value proposition and deepen its connection with users.

**INSIGHT 02**

**Inclusivity across different creative mediums and viewpoints can enhance the archive's value and relevance to its audience.**

Through our interviews and contextual inquiries, we found that participants expressed a keen interest in viewing design work across various mediums, from traditional print to digital interfaces, to understand the full spectrum of creativity that exists within Canadian design.

When we asked participants the value of an archive in forming Canadian design identity, they said:

"There is no singular narrative of Canadian design so being able to capture the multifaceted culture of design is key, especially for our national identity." [P8]

"Canadian creative work has been historically neglected due to being seen as "commercialism" which is more American, and lacks national awareness." [P5]

Further, there was a resounding call for inclusivity, and a desire to explore diverse viewpoints such as those from Indigenous communities, the LGBTQ+ community, and other underrepresented groups.

From our competitive analysis, we observed:

Presenting archive works in different forms such as trivia, graphs, and random selections can help showcase the diverse facets of Canadian design identity and culture.

After reading over a workshop that Nor conducted with indigenous designers, we recognize our opportunity:

Actively include diverse voices, perspectives, and cultural sensibilities from the outset, rather than considering it a future goal for the archive

———————

Whether seeking specific design mediums, historical periods, or thematic categories, users emphasized the importance of finding what they want, they way they want. This uncovers the need for intuitive tools that allow for efficient retrieval of desired content.

**INSIGHT 03**

**Users prioritize efficient and customizable content discovery when deciding which digital archive to revisit.**

Our users communicated a strong desire for enhanced search and filtering capabilities within Nor currently. Although filtering remains the current UI pattern to address this need, as found in our competitive analysis. We aim to innovate new ways to explore digitally, so that our users can interact the way they want.

On a similar note, customization also emerged as a key feature. Users sought out flexibility, to tailor their browsing experience to align with their unique interests and preferences. This observation in conjunction with their need for filtering further solidifies the critical role that streamlined content discovery plays in user satisfaction and retention.

When exploring the site, users highlighted the existing gaps that failed to meet their searching needs:

"I want to filter through all this content and find what I'm looking for, fast." [P5]

"Advanced search features would make Nor much more useful for my research." [P1]

A common theme that emerged from our competitive analysis was:

Customizable content discovery with diverse filter options are essential to an engaging user experience

Building upon our user's need for content discovery,  they also expressed a desire for richer contextual information about the works they encountered within the design archive.

They viewed Nor not only as a repository of inspiration but as a practical research tool. They sought detailed metadata, descriptions, and historical background accompanying each piece; allowing them to better understand its significance, influences, and cultural context.

**INSIGHT 04**

**Facilitating broader contextual exploration is key for improving the experience of browsing an online archive.**

> After finding a work they were interested in, users sought more detailed information about it:
>
> "I'd like to know where the piece is now." [P2]
>
> "I'm curious to read more background info about the work." [P7]
>
> "I need accurate bibliographic details about these works to use Nor in my research practice." [P5]

Users wanted integration with external sources, such as academic papers, articles, or related websites, to supplement their research and gain deeper insights into the subject matter. Providing comprehensive contextual information and facilitating easy access to external resources can empower users to engage in more informed and meaningful exploration of design in Canada, and enrich their browsing experience within Nor.

> During our competitive analysis, this observation surfaced often:
>
> Many competing archives had a comprehensive work details page to support users with contextualizing the art.
>
> After reviewing current Nor user's feedback through an anonymous form, the Canadian design community agreed on:
>
> Need for a comprehensive platform that goes beyond a traditional museum or archive
> - actively engages in advocacy and education
> - serves as a practical tool and resource

Lastly, we wanted to uncover any aspects of current digital archives that are not meeting needs of users, whether they know it or not.

The most surprising insight was the element of serendipity and the importance is plays in the browsing experience. Users like having the opportunity to stumble upon new works that align with their interests or spark their curiosity.

**INSIGHT 05**

**Exploring related works and falling down rabbit holes is a source of delight for users when using digital archives.**

In our research, users expressed a desire for seamless pathways that enable them to easily find works related to those they're currently viewing. One caveat is that users had different interruptions of what "related" meant, but most agreed that they did not always want to see visually similar works.

> After finding a work they were interested in, users sought more detailed information about it:
>
> "I like falling down a rabbit hole and seeing what I'll find next." [P3]
>
> "I wish it had more recommendations of similar works within the archive." [P8]
>
> "After clicking a work, I'd hope for similar styles to appear on the page...similar works, similar designers." [P6]

One user even mentioned the possibility of Nor to become a tool to overcome creative mental blocks simply by browsing and uncovering hidden gems through their journey. By catering to these preferences and designing for both structured exploration and serendipitous discovery, Nor can create engaging and rewarding experiences that resonate deeply with users.

## RESEARCH OUTCOMES

After synthesizing all of our insights, we identified patterns in the motivations and habits of all the users we interviewed, which translated into three unique discovery modes for Nor users:

**Locating**

"I know exactly what I'm looking for"

→ Prioritizes efficient content discovery { Insight 03 }

**Hunting**

"I have a general sense of what I want, but I want to take a look around"

→ Wants inclusivity across different creative mediums and viewpoints { Insight 02 }
→ Seeks broader contextual exploration { Insight 04 }

**Foraging**

"I want to see something random and inspiring"

→ Enjoys exploring related works through "falling down rabbit holes" { Insight 05 }

We then transitioned into actionable design concepts to kick off our ideation process:

- **Display selected works that shape the archive's identity and purpose**
  → Provide users with a clear introduction to Nor { Insight 01 }
  → Define Canadian design history to be comprehensive { Insight 02 }

- **Highlighting different creative works through interactive mediums**
  → Increase inclusivity across medium and viewpoints { Insight 02 }

- **Personalized recommendations and advanced filtering options**
  → Address user's need to prioritize efficient content discovery { Insight 03 }

- **Implementing interactive features to access to additional information**
  → Facilitate broader contextual exploration { Insight 04 }
  → Explore related works through "falling down rabbit holes" { Insight 05 }

- **Incorporating sections that would enable users to dive into thematic or contextual connections**
  → Facilitate broader contextual exploration { Insight 04 }
  → Explore related works through "falling down rabbit holes" { Insight 05 }

# Playing around in possibilities

# IDEATION FOCUS

Our ideation was driven by the insights gathered during our research phase, leading us to question how we could enhance Nor's functionality and user experience, solving the pain points we uncovered in research. During this effort, we found ourselves asking these main questions:

> → How could we make Nor's purpose more clear?
>
> → How could we include a variety creative mediums and viewpoints?
>
> → How could we enable broader contextual exploration?
>
> → How could we nudge users into inspirational rabbit holes?

# JOBS TO BE DONE

Although we originally planned to create personas to guide our solutions, we ultimately decided to utilize the Jobs to be Done framework—focusing more on motivations and outcomes instead of relying on demographic assumptions and user stereotypes. This anchored our ideation in the unmet needs, goals, and preferences of Nor users.

Based on our research insights, we defined several critical jobs:

- **Find what I want, the way I want**

  When I'm diving into a specific design topic, I easily find works that match my criteria so I can efficiently conduct my research– without needing to scroll or browse for long periods of time.

- **Explore Canada's design history**

  When I'm exploring Canadian design works, I want to visualize works with historical context so I can see how works convey different meaning over time.

- **Help users create their own meaning**

  When I'm seeking inspiration, I want to collect and create meaning from multiple works so I can come to new ideas– without needing to export specific works to a third party platform.

- **Understand the historical significance**

  When I'm researching a specific design topic, I want to easily understand the historical context so I can design consciously– without possibly erasing other designer's history.

- **Visualize other users' (related) thought patterns**

  When I'm browsing design works, I want to have other sense-making patterns available so I can see how others connect works together– without getting stuck by my own biases.

# SCAMPER

To creatively explore the "jobs" we defined, we implemented the SCAMPER technique—a method that encourages viewing problems through various lenses, including substituting, combining, adapting, modifying, putting to other uses, eliminating, and rearranging components of existing solutions. Our team, along with our clients, engaged in collaborative brainstorming sessions where we generated a diverse range of ideas and concepts. Overall, we generated over 50 ideas.
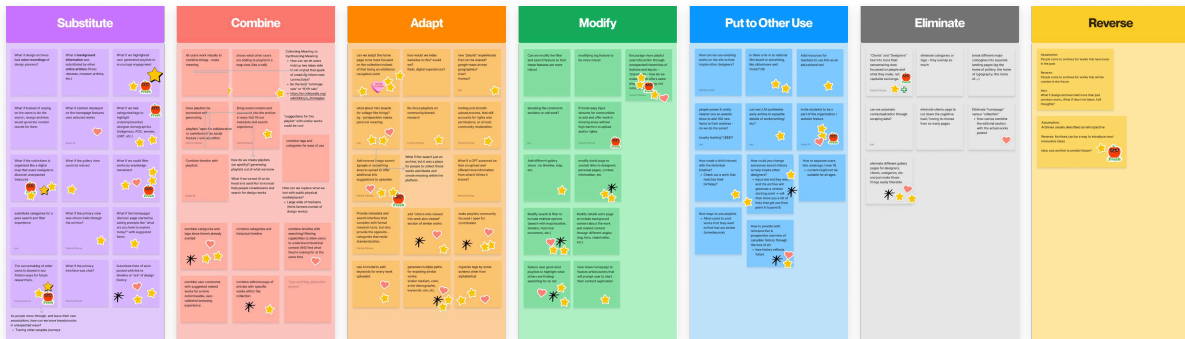


After generating these ideas, we participated in a voting session with our clients to identify the most compelling concepts. The top 15 ideas were then visualized through detailed storyboards to capture potential user interactions and the envisioned user journey.

# STORYBOARDS

We employed storyboards to **visualize and validate the top 15 concepts** we voted on, drawing from the wealth of ideas generated during our rapid ideation sessions. After creating storyboards for these concepts we tested them with five participants to refine our direction and ensure the ideas resonated with potential users.
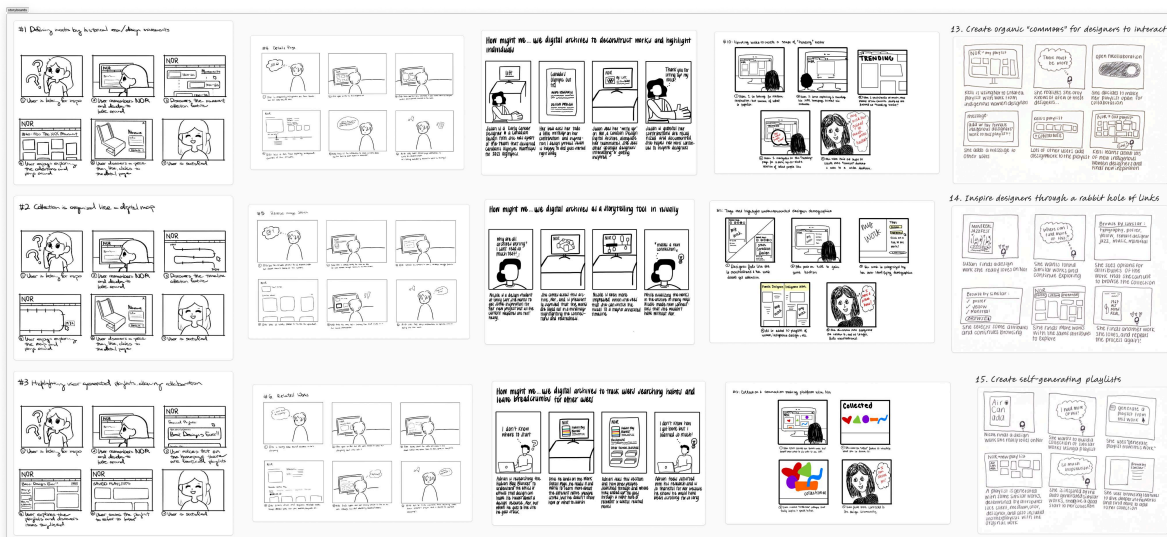
# SPEED DATING

The speed dating sessions with our storyboards provided crucial insights into user preferences and functionality expectations, detailed below.

- **People are *initially* drawn to pretty, shiny things**

  In response to the storyboard about 'Commons for designers to interact'
  → Social ideas seem more exciting than our early, purely informational ideas [P2]

  In response to the storyboard about 'Organized like a digital map'
  → Most people can move their cursor over a part of the timeline, it's fun to interact with [P4]

- **Leveraging existing mental models of other archival sites can be beneficial**

  In response to the storyboard about 'Leaving breadcrumbs'
  → "Feels like Amazon's 'more products'" [P2]

  In response to the storyboard about 'Collection and connection making platform'
  → "This seems like a Pinterest style situation" [P4]

- **Users had positive reactions to historical or social context for specific works**

  In response to the storyboard about 'Defining works by historical era/ movement'
  → "Design movements are very important, it situates Canadian Design in history" [P1]
  → "Nor is a great collection, but craves a bit more historical context about how works fit together and where they come from" [P5]

- **The archive should have multiple ways for users to create their own meaning**

  In response to the storyboard about 'Different storytelling mechanisms'
  → "Not sure how we'd be able to create a universal mind map" [P1]

  In response to the storyboard about 'Collaboration of user-made playlists'
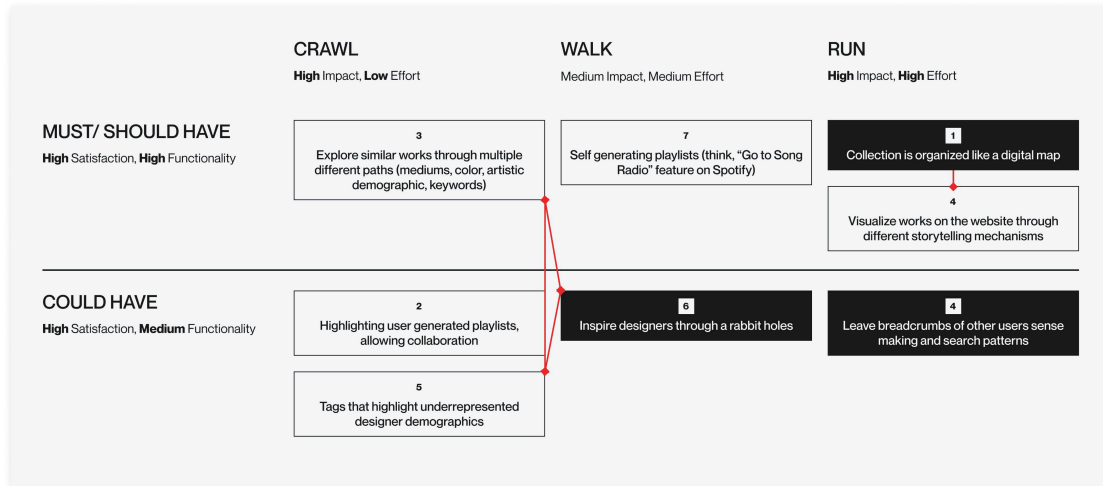  → Don't trust or care about what other people are saving unless it's trending [P3]

After synthesizing our Speed Dating Insights, we evaluated the results by plotting each concept on Impact x Effort and Satisfaction x Functionality matrix. This allowed us to easily identify and prioritize valuable features:
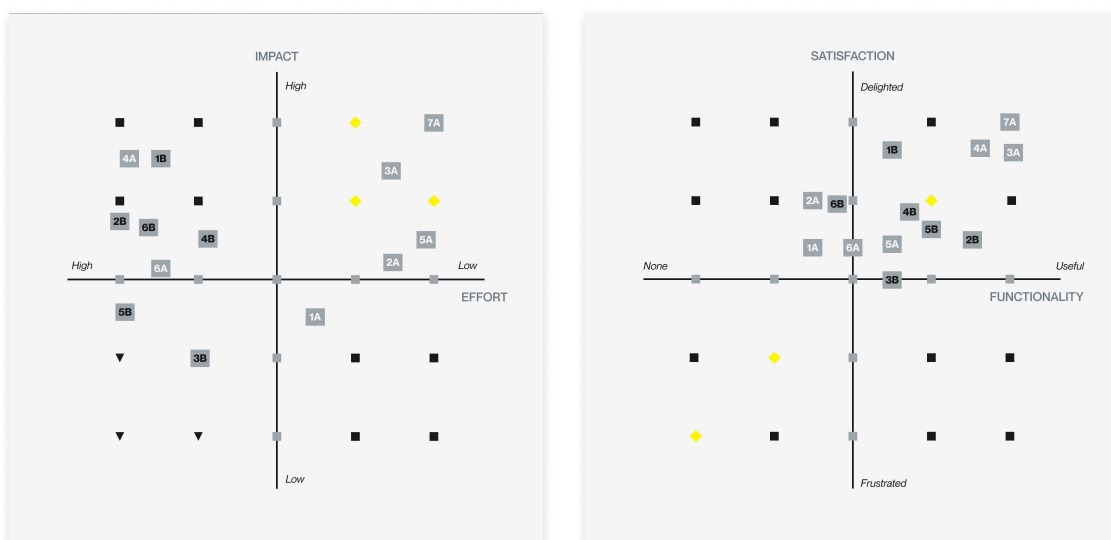
# PRODUCT ROADMAP

We aligned our concept ideas on a product roadmap based on their impact to effort ratio. After identifying connections in some of the concepts we generated—as shown by the red lines on the roadmap—we condensed some of our more specific ideas into less prescriptive concepts with a variety of potential solutions. Through discussion with our clients, we found that they were interested in scoping down to 5 concepts with varying impact and effort levels to further explore in prototyping.



| | CRAWL<br>**High** Impact, **Low** Effort | WALK<br>Medium Impact, Medium Effort | RUN<br>**High** Impact, **High** Effort |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MUST/ SHOULD HAVE**<br>**High** Satisfaction, **High** Functionality | 3<br>Explore similar works through multiple different paths (mediums, color, artistic demographic, keywords) | 7<br>Self generating playlists (think, "Go to Song Radio" feature on Spotify) | 1<br>Collection is organized like a digital map<br><br>4<br>Visualize works on the website through different storytelling mechanisms |
| **COULD HAVE**<br>**High** Satisfaction, **Medium** Functionality | 2<br>Highlighting user generated playlists, allowing collaboration<br><br>5<br>Tags that highlight underrepresented designer demographics | 6<br>Inspire designers through a rabbit holes | 4<br>Leave breadcrumbs of other users sense making and search patterns |

We moved forward by having each member of the team create low fidelity paper prototypes of solutions for the following concepts:

- **Visualizing works through multiple storytelling mechanisms**
  Including: organizing the collection as a digital map

- **Leaving breadcrumbs of other users sense making and searching patterns**

- **Self-generating playlists of works**

- **Exploring similar works through multiple paths**
  Including: inspiring designers through rabbit holes, highlighting underrepresented designer demographics

- **Promoting collaboration of user curated playlists of works**
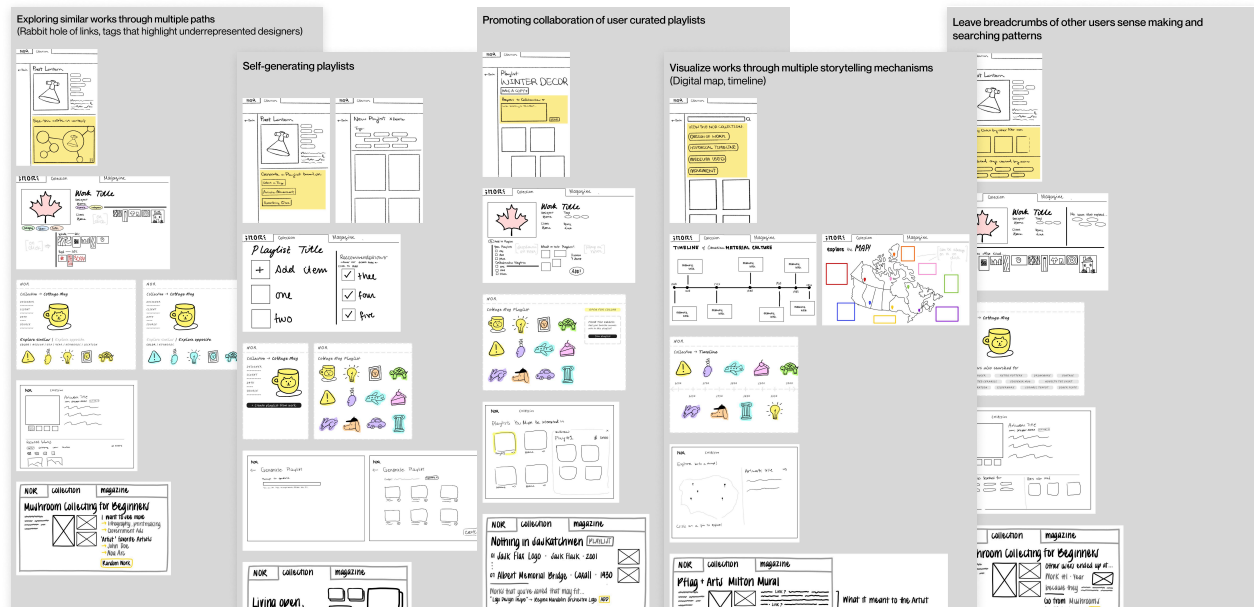
# Moving from paper to pixels

# PROTOTYPING FOCUS

After identifying the 5 key concepts that best serve our project goals, we started the process of how these ideas could be visually realized through prototyping. At this point, we had another discussions surrounding the scope of our project. We agreed that a **narrower approach** would serve our client's interests most effectively and allow us to **prototype a coherent and seamless end-to-end high fidelity experience**.

After sitting on our ideas and sketches, our client directed us towards these two main concepts:

| | |
|---|---|
| Visualizing works through different storytelling mechanisms | Exploring similar works through dynamic discovery tools |

# MID FI PROTOTYPE

Eager to begin and armed with a high-fidelity wireframe provided by our client, we immediately dove into hi-fidelity wireframes. However, we were quickly met with caution from both our advisor and client, as they urged us to take a step back and create mid-fi wireframes.

Our advisor Jason, pushed us to think about interaction design basics such as: Layout, Content, Flow, and Intended Outcomes. While our client Joel encouraging us to "break paradigm of serving more content through a card sort" and aim for a "cohesive, innovative punk idea".

We went back to the drawing board and **generated the craziest ideas we could think up for storytelling mechanisms and discovery tools**:
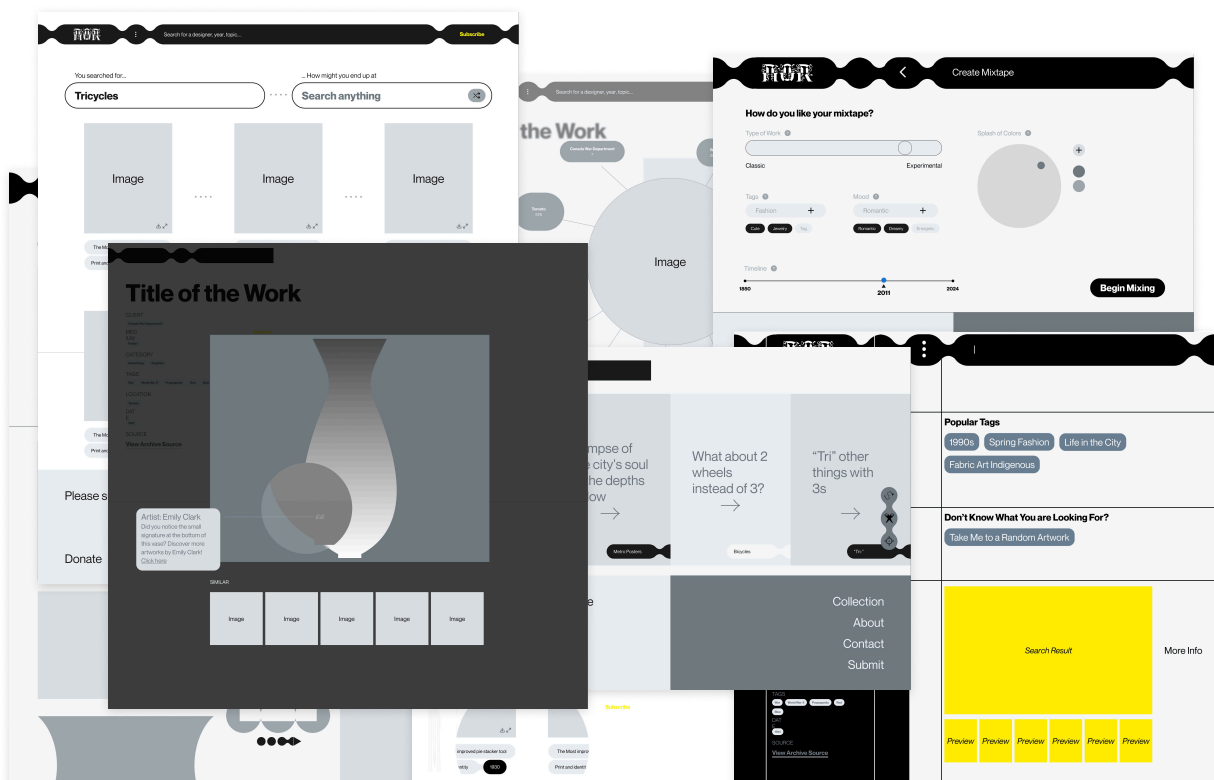
# MID FI TESTING

In order to not overwhelm our user testers, we chose five ideas to validate and test, with the aim of identifying which best meet our users' needs. During our Mid Fi testing, we focused on value and usefulness. For each concept, we asked our target users:

> → In your own words, can you describe what value might you gain from using this feature on Nor?
>
> → On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being not likely at all and 5 being highly likely) how likely are you to use this feature if you were browsing on Nor's website?

# PROTOTYPING RECOMMENDATIONS

After synthesizing all of the user feedback from our sessions, we utilized the insights to refine our project scope. We leveraged the different discovery modes uncovered during our research phase to determine which ideas to incorporate into our final high-fidelity prototype:

- Map and Timeline as alternative view of the Collection page
- Serendipity Mode highlighted on the home page
- Work Detail Page has tag-based related works

We visualized these new features within the existing site map of Nor, highlighting the different paths for our diverse set of target users and the corresponding features:
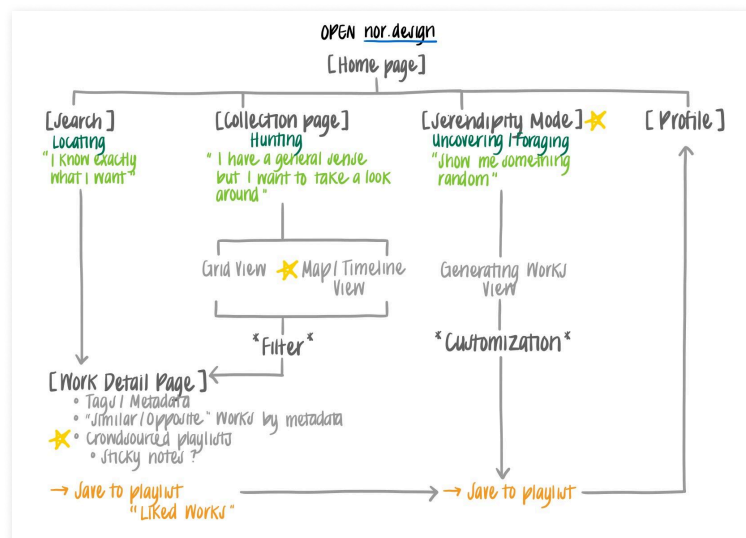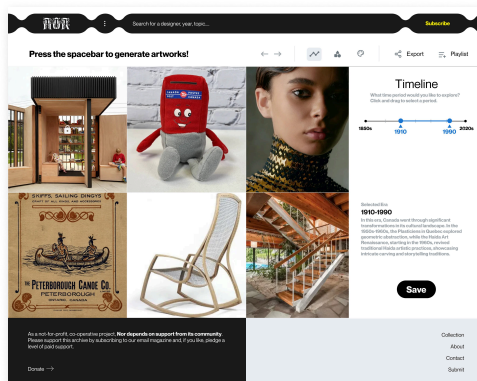


After receiving the green light from our client, both for our final design direction and project scope, we started prototyping in hi fidelity.

# HI FI PROTOTYPE

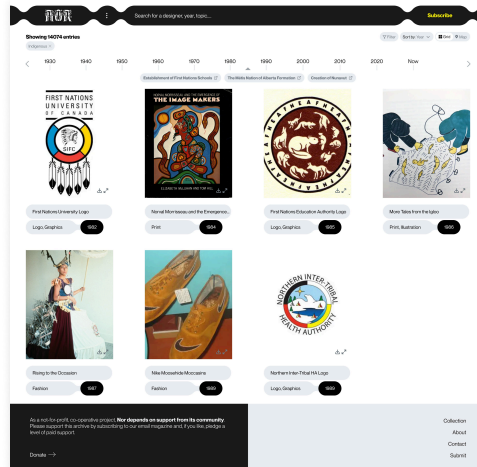We brought our ideas to life with images from real works featured on Nor and adherence to the brand identity:
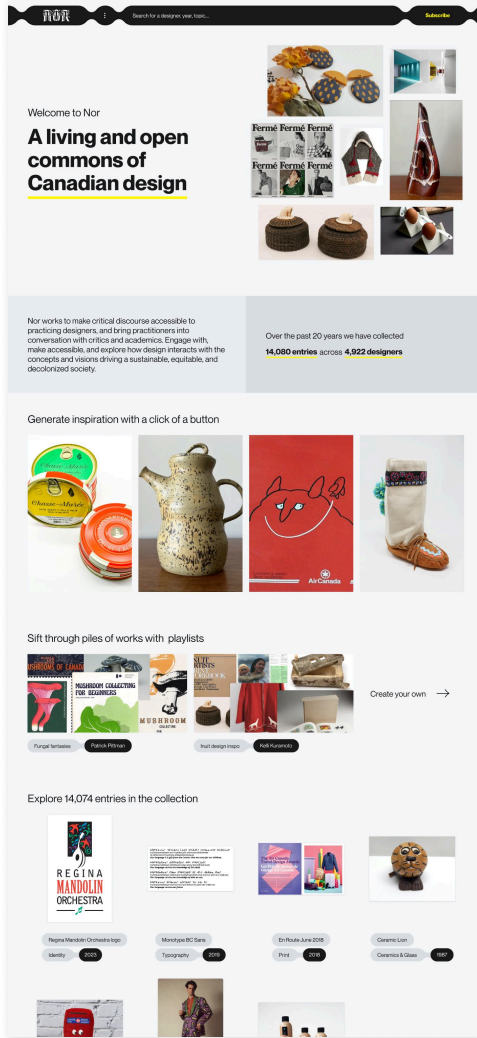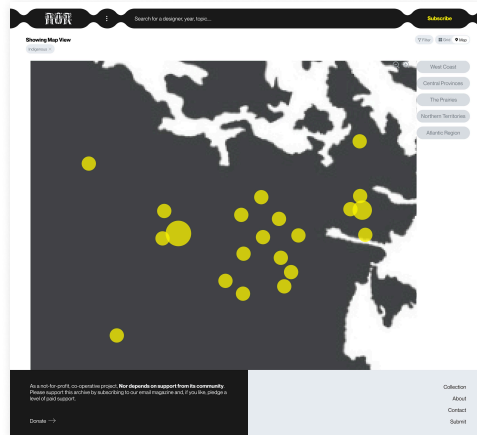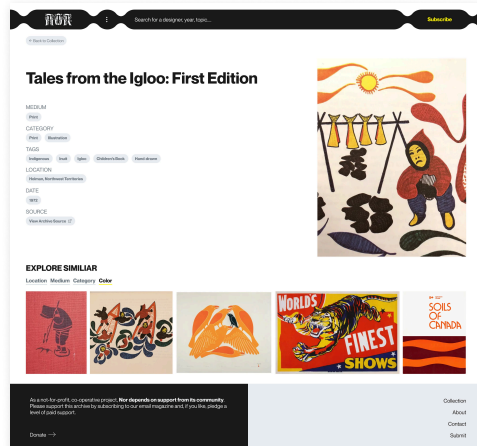


*Home page*



*Timeline view of Collection page*



*Map view of Collection page*



*Serendipity Mode*



*Expanded Work Detail page*

# HI FI REFINEMENT

After showing our client our first iteration, we received valuable feedback regarding the contents and visual design of the Home page. All changes implemented were to ensure users could easily recognize Nor's purpose and key features.

Reimagined the animation for Serendipity Mode to better showcase the "randomness" element

Highlighted the Editorial section with some added content to increase new users awareness of critical discourse surrounding Canadian design

Removed Collection grid view to reduce repetition

After placing the finishing touches, we finally finished our final prototype!

# Crafting the ultimate user experience

# SOLUTION SUMMARY

Returning to our project goals, we believe we've improved the experience of Nor by challenging the idea of what a design archive should be through our final solution:

- Redesigned NOR's homepage to clarify the digital archive's purpose and highlight the breadth of features from playlists to editorial articles
- Integrated new collection views via Timeline and Map, making it easier for "hunters" to find and engage with works in a variety of ways
- Introduced Serendipity mode, a dynamic discovery tool for "gathers" to spontaneously explore and gather inspiration
- Newly revamped Work Detail page with an added related works section to encourage a wider breadth of exploration

# NOR'S HOME PAGE

At first glance, **users are met with a playful animation that embodies the purpose of Nor** with rotating themes and associated images to represent the breadth of the collection. When users scroll a little further they encounter a short description of the "About page" and an **animation that represents our new feature Serendipity Mode**. Towards the bottom, we placed **interactive content for editorial articles and playlists modules** to engage a wide range of users.
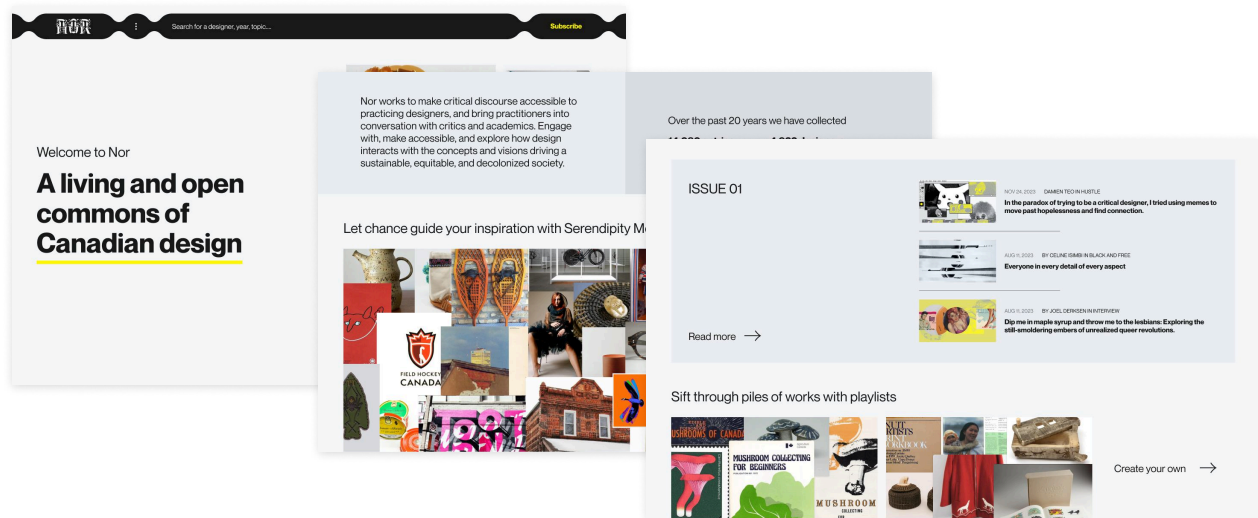


**USER FEEDBACK**

Our user research participants responded positively to the redesigned NOR homepage, highlighting its clarity and the ease with which they can now understand and navigate the digital archive. They appreciate the inclusion of diverse creative mediums and new collection views, which significantly broaden their scope for discovery and inspiration. The interactive sections featuring articles were also well received, as they provided valuable insights and the featured playlists were reported as to have fostered a sense of community among users.

Overall, designers commend the aesthetic and functional upgrades, noting that these changes have not only enhanced their user experience but also sparked greater creativity and engagement within the platform.

"Before, I thought Nor was a vintage second-hand store but now I clearly know why I am here and what I want to do just from the homepage."

- Canadian Design Student

"It's so much cleaner and more inviting compared to before!"

- Canadian Designer

# ROBUST SORT & FILTER

As a part of our design update, we introduced to the NOR Collection an advanced sorting and filtering feature that **significantly enhances the navigation and accessibility** of creative assets within the archive. This updated tool promotes intuitive controls that allow users to **effortlessly sift through extensive collections by categories** such as location, medium, designers, and more. Whether the user is searching for specific artistic works or exploring new styles, the enhanced sorting and filtering capabilities ensure that all NOR users can **quickly and easily locate exactly what they need**, making the discovery process both efficient and rewarding.

In all five usability testing sessions, participants thought that this feature enhanced the usability of Nor as it provided the user with a much more robust searching and sorting engine. Our participants believed that the categories were created featuring both historical, cultural, and material characteristics of the works of design.

"The filters and searching tools seem very intuitive, the different categories makes a lot of sense and makes the archive easier to sort through."

- Canadian Design Student

"I love the consistency of the location of the search bar and filter tool, makes it very easy to find it whenever I want."

- Canadian Designer

# TIMELINE VIEW

As a part of the collection feature update we also introduced the timeline viewing feature, a **dynamic way to explore the evolution of designs** through an interactive chronological interface. This feature not only allows users to quickly **grasp the breadth and depth of the collection** but also **integrates links to external resources**, providing richer context and further learning opportunities. With the ability to navigate seamlessly across different eras and styles, users can efficiently locate specific designs, enhancing their research and discovery process. Through this feature, we wish to **uplifts designs from underrepresented areas**, **highlights the influence of significant historical events** on design works, and offer users direct links for greater understanding of historical events.

## HOW IT WORKS

This feature allows the user to quickly navigate through the collection using the scrollable timeline, where entries are marked according to their date of creation. Users can click on any year included in the timeline to discover works from that era, access related external resources, and view associated designs.



## USER FEEDBACK

Our user testing participants expressed their appreciation for the seamless integration of historical context with current trends, which some pointed out will not only inspire their creations but also aid in educational endeavours. The ability to quickly locate specific designs within a chronological framework was favoured as a way to save time and enhance productivity. Moreover, the links to external resources have been recognized as helpful for providing depth and additional learning opportunities, enriching the overall user experience.

"The timeline puts me into the historical context which helps me appreciate the works so much more."

- Canadian Designer

"I find [the map] to be a key educational piece especially with indigenous works."

- Canadian Designer

# MAP VIEW

In addition to viewing works chronologically, users are able to explore the collection with a map. Connecting back to research insight 04 of facilitating broader contextual exploration, the map visualizes the archive geographically, which not only allows users to **understand regional patterns and differences**, but also **highlights designs from underrepresented areas** outside major cities. This is crucial to Nor's goal of emphasizing the uniqueness of each work as part of Canadian design and material culture.

Map view tool is built for both hunters and gatherers as it offers an interactive way to explore with high degree of freedom (gatherers) and gives users the ability to narrow down their search (hunters).

Once in Map View mode, users can zoom in or out to see the specific works. When they hover over a yellow circle, a preview of that work will show up, with the option to learn more.



Map view: default view



Map view: zoomed in view with work preview
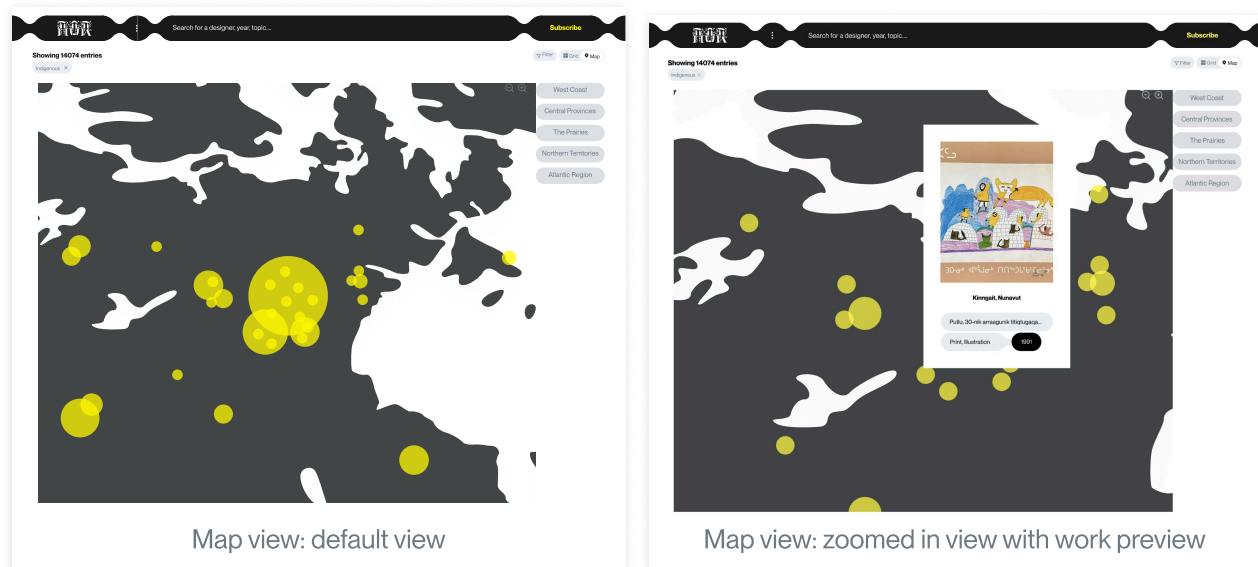
**USER FEEDBACK**

In all five usability testing sessions, participants thought that this feature matched their expectation and that compared to directly viewing the works in a grid structure, this format quickly drew them to the cultural and indigenous aspects. Overall, it not only facilitated the discovery process through context, but also served as an educational tool for users.

"I find [the map] to be a key educational piece especially with indigenous works."

- Canadian Designer

# WORK DETAIL PAGE

To enhance user engagement with the archive, we expanded the work detail page by streamlining the layout, incorporating attribute tags essential to the work, and presenting creative viewpoints of related works across unique categories such as location, medium, and color. This change aligns with both research insight 02, which emphasizes the importance of inclusivity across mediums and viewpoints, and research insight 05, which advocates for exploring related works through "falling down rabbit holes.

The inclusion of comprehensive attribute tags helps users quickly understand the context and get access to similar works with a single click. Moreover, instead of an endless scroll of just visually related works, the **integration of diverse categories for exploration encourages unexpected discoveries**. This feature caters to hunters who have a general idea of what they seek but remain open to stumbling upon delightful surprises.
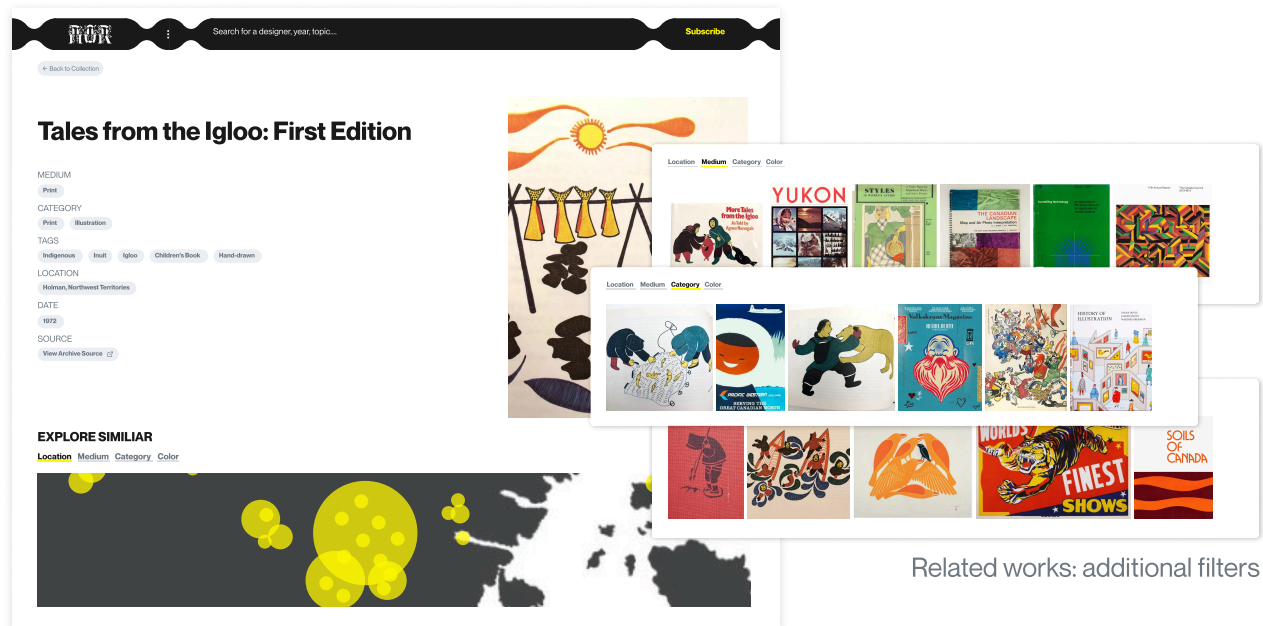


Related works: additional filters

Work detail page: core attributes

On the left of work detail page is a comprehensive list of attributes separated into medium, category, location, etc.. If the user is interested in seeing more of specific tags, they can simply click on that tag to view the corresponding collection. On the bottom of work detail page is a related works section, categorized by Location, Medium, Category, and Color.

**USER FEEDBACK**

Users found that they could effortlessly grasp the essence of the work simply by glancing at the attributes, thereby reducing the cognitive load associated with navigating through extensive information. Users also appreciated the flexibility provided by meaningful filters in the related works section, which allowed them to navigate with a sense of direction while still exploring various options.

"The new attribute tags are so much more helpful than before and I have the tendency to just keep clicking to explore!"

- Canadian Student

"Wow, with these filters, I will find works I didn't even realize were related before."

- Canadian Designer

# SERENDIPITY MODE

While our previous features focused on visualizing works through various storytelling mechanisms, we realized our second prototype concept of dynamic discovery with Serendipity Mode, where chance guides users through the uncovering experience.

The core of Serendipity Mode is its ability to generate random works while giving users control through filters, including timeline, tags, and color.  This feature supports the gatherers who seek inspiration and randomness, and want to find surprising and unexpected gems within the collection. Additionally, **Serendipity Mode embodies the essence of "falling down rabbit holes"** as identified in research insight 05. It ignites curiosity, encouraging users to embark on continuous journeys of exploration and discovery within the archive.
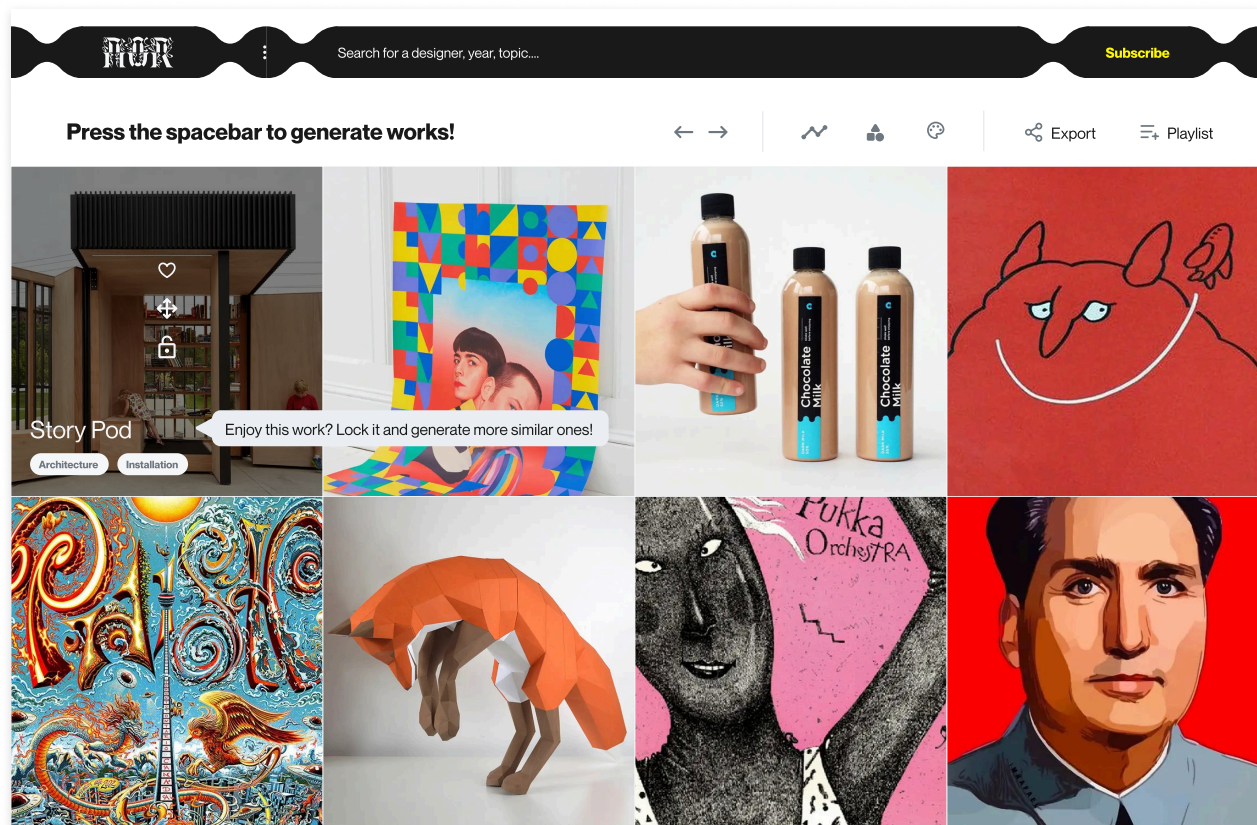
**HOW IT WORKS: RANDOM GENERATION**

Once in Serendipity Mode, users can press the spacebar to generate random works. Hovering over a piece allows users to lock, drag, and save to a playlist. Once a work is locked, it will stay when users generate again, and the results will be related to that locked work.

**USER FEEDBACK**

Throughout all user testing sessions, participants showed a strong preference for the functionalities offered by Serendipity Mode. Users found it to be an effective, enjoyable, and stress-free method of seeking inspiration. Some even indicated that they would specifically visit Nor solely for this feature. Moreover, the option to lock specific works and the iterative process of creating a collage instilled a sense of achievement and encouraged users to return to Nor for future explorations.

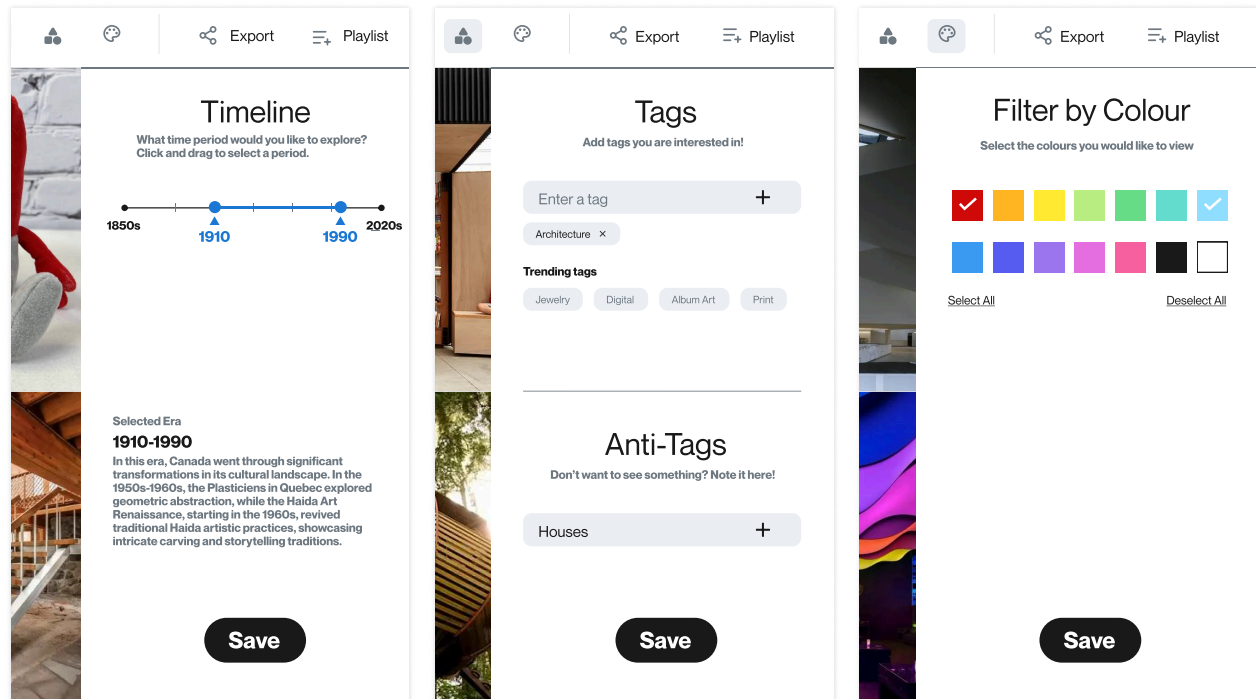"This is the perfect place for inspiration, or just getting unstuck!"

- Canadian Design Student

"This is where I really get the rabbit holes."

- Canadian Designer

**HOW IT WORKS: DYNAMIC FILTERS**

Users can also filter the works with time periods, tags, anti-tags, and color. This creates a sense of control and flexibility among the randomness.



Flexible filters

26

Users thought these filters captured what they would need to narrow down the results. The "anti-tag" option, in particular, was highly favored by users. They noted that websites often lack this feature and that they frequently have a clear idea of what they don't want rather than what they're actively seeking.

"The filter by colour is exciting, I can't wait to try it out!"

- Design Practitioner

"Anti-tags will be super helpful because I usually know what I don't want."

- Canadian Designer

**HOW IT WORKS: FLEXIBLE SAVING**

Lastly, Serendipity Mode offers flexible export so that whether it's for creating mood boards or process books, users can always save the collages in their desired way. Additionally, users can merge collage to existing playlists or create new playlists.
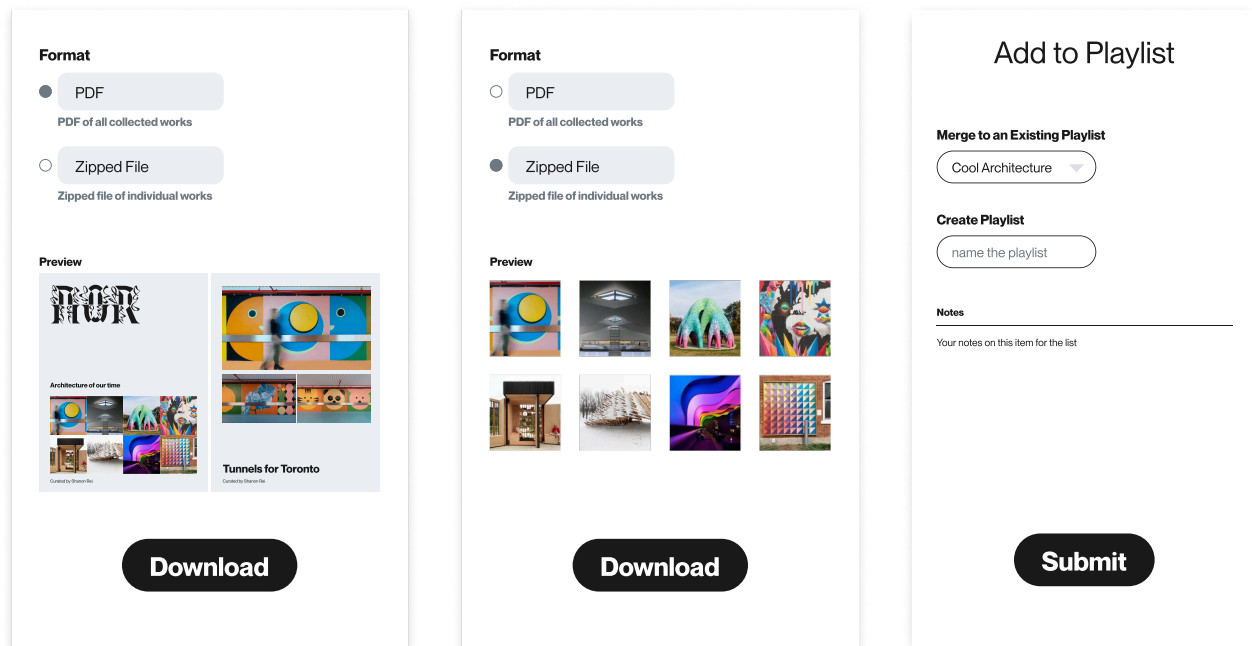


Export formats



Save to playlist

**USER FEEDBACK**

Users found the zip file format to be especially useful for aggregating design works, streamlining the process of organizing and accessing their collages. Thanks to the integration of online playlists, users also won't ever worry about losing these collages.

"I appreciate the different file format options, the zipped file will save me a lot of space."

- Canadian Design Student

"This is super helpful for creating mood boards!"

- Canadian Design Student

# ADDRESSING PROJECT GOALS & CLIENT NEEDS

Throughout this semester, our primary goal has been to elevate the user experience of NOR by reimagining the possibilities of what a design archive can offer. We **pushed the boundaries of conventional archiving by integrating innovative features that transform how users interact with and explore creative content.**
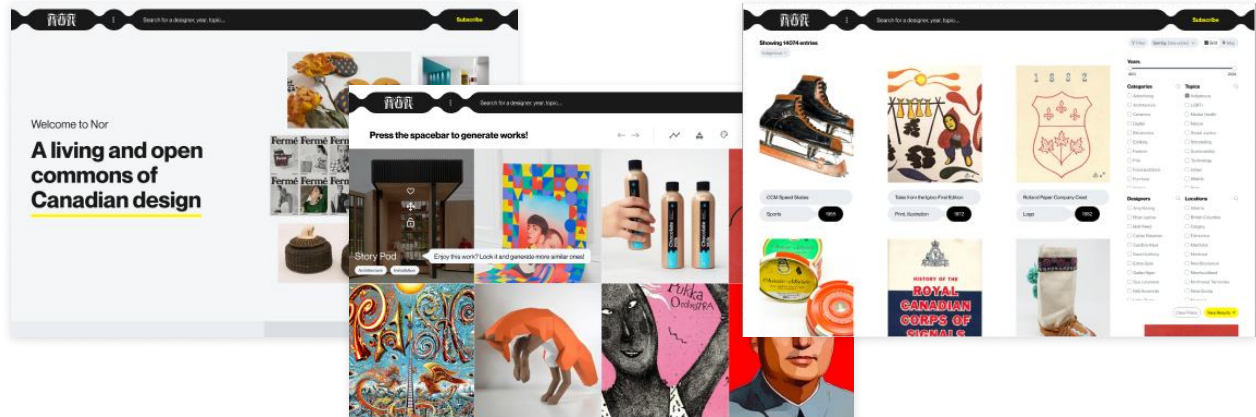


**WE'VE ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT ENHANCEMENTS TO THE NOR PLATFORM BY:**

- Introducing dynamic discovery tools such as "Serendipity Mode," which presents users with unexpected yet inspirational design finds. This feature encourages exploration beyond typical search parameters, fostering moments of creative surprise and delight.
- Presenting the collection through novel storytelling mechanisms like the "Map" and "Timeline" views. These tools offer visual and chronological narratives of the designs, allowing users to understand the evolution of styles and trends within a broader cultural and historical context.
- Inspiring and enriching user interactions on the Homepage with a suite of new features. These include curated sections for articles, user-generated playlists, and featured artworks, which not only highlight key pieces and creators but also provide a platform for community engagement and knowledge sharing.

These innovations have been carefully crafted to ensure that every interaction with NOR is both inspiring and enriching, making it a **unique and invaluable resource for not only Canadian designers but also creatives worldwide.**

# Thinking ahead to the future

# MOVING FORWARD

As our project wraps up, we have outlined some important steps for Nor. These are aligned with our client's initial goal of **challenging what a design archive should be,** and allow for a seamless transition between our Capstone work and Nor's development.

At a high level, these next steps are to:

**01.** Sync our Final Prototype with clients' in-progress work and implement new redesign into code

**02.** Continue to visually explore other concepts that are laid out in our Recommendations document

**03.** Standardize tagging process and metadata to support more robust Work Detail pages

# FUTURE PRODUCT ROADMAP

Due to time constraints and prioritization, we were unable to fully realize all of the ideas we generated. However, we have created roadmap outlining our ideas, which our client can use for future planning for Nor.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The first step after handover is to integrate our Final Prototype with the ongoing work at Nor. This involves translating our design concepts into actionable development tasks. Our documentation will be provided to ensure that the visions are accurately translated to code.

- **Client Tasks**
  → Align our recommended design assets with current development standards
  → Conduct code reviews and iterations to ensure fidelity to design specifications
  → Test functionalities across different devices for optimal user experience

**CONCEPT DIRECTIONS**

As fully outlined in the Recommendations document, our client is equipped to delve deeper into exploring additional concept directions that were identified during our research and ideation phases. These recommendations can be broken into 3 "goal periods" for accurate roadmapping.

- Short Term Goals (Next 6 Months)
- Medium Term Goals (6-12 Months)
- Long Term Goals (12+ Months)

Our short term goals are the concept ideas that we think most feasible in the next 6 months. These are generally lower effort, higher impact ideas that will have a lasting impact on Nor.

- **Implement Node-Based Map of Related Works**
  → Develop a visual node-based map feature that allows users to explore relationships and connections between designs
  → Enable users to navigate intuitively and discover unexpected insights and trends

- **Highlight User Curated Playlists**
  → Enhance the visibility of user-curated playlists throughout Nor's interface
  → Promote content discovery and community engagement through new connections

- **Self-Generating Playlists and Open Collaboration:**
  → Introduce concept of self-generating playlists, which builds on the paradigm of playlists
  → Allow users to easily explore a wide range of related content with a click of a button

MEDIUM TERM GOALS

The following "medium-term" goals are slightly higher effort, but can be implemented within the next year.

- **Historical Playlists and Era Filters**
  → Develop curated historical playlists that contextualize design movements, events, and trends, enriching Nor's content with historical narratives
  → Implement era filters to allow users to explore designs based on historical periods, enhancing contextual understanding and exploration.

- **Breadcrumbs of User Sense-Making and Search Patterns**
  → Expand on the concept of leaving breadcrumbs of user interactions to provide insights into sense-making processes and search patterns
  → Develop interactive visualizations or dashboards that display popular trends, user pathways, and community preferences within Nor

LONG TERM GOALS

These long term goals will require more time and effort from our clients, but we believe that their inclusion will be key in taking Nor to its fullest potential.

- **Advanced Recommendation Algorithms:**
  → Invest in AI-driven recommendation algorithms to personalize content discovery based on user preferences and behaviors
  → Add suggestions for playlists, related works, and inspiration using these algorithms

- **Interactive Node-Based Exploration**
  - → Expand on the node-based map feature, creating an interactive exploration tool which allows users to contribute annotations, comments, and insights directly on the map
  - → Foster collaborative sense-making and knowledge sharing within the Nor community through interactive visualizations and user-generated content

- **AI-Powered Content Tagging and Metadata Enhancement**
  - → Leverage AI technologies to automate content tagging and metadata generation, improving searchibility, accuracy, and relevance of content recommendations on the Work Detail page and others
  - → Explore techniques for semantic analysis and content categorization, enhancing content organization and discoverability

## FEEDBACK LOOP

To ensure that Nor remains at the **forefront of design exploration and discovery**, it is crucial to establish a robust feedback mechanism that actively engages users in providing insights, preferences, and suggestions for feature enhancements and optimizations. This feedback loop serves as a fundamental component of Nor's evolution, allowing our client to continuously improve the platform based on user feedback, data analytics, and industry best practices.