

# STRATEGY DOCUMENT

# OUTLINE

*Group 3 - GOATs*



**Steam**

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INFO 331

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## Client Overview

Developed by video game developer team Valve, Steam launched in 2003 as a software client mainly to be utilized as a way to automatically update their in-house developed games. However, starting in 2005, Steam grew into an online gaming marketplace where third party game publishers could sell their titles. By 2008, several of the largest gaming publishers, such as Ubisoft, Electronic Arts, and Activision, were partnering with Steam to sell their games on the Steam marketplace.

Since then, Steam has not only grown in user base, but also in features and functionality. With over 62.6 million daily active users, Steam has built an infrastructure that not only serves as a storefront for selling and purchasing games, but also as a social networking service, an online streaming application, and a digital rights management application.

In turn, the central mission for Steam is to be “*the ultimate destination for playing, discussing, and creating games.*”

Steam has had incredible success in achieving this mission. Despite the efforts of other competitors such as Epic Games, Origin, and Discord, Steam’s dominance in the PC gaming marketing space is undeniable. As of 2011, Steam sales made up at least 50% of the market for PC gaming, and many have even gone to call Steam’s hold on the industry as a monopoly. As a result, Steam is very commonly understood as the central application for all things PC gaming related.

As Steam has an immense number of different functions and user interfaces, our team has decided to narrow our scope to user flows relating to buying and purchasing games on Steam. This workflow is one that many users, new and returning, go through and is typically the first place users land upon finding Steam for the first time.

## Overview of the Steam Store

Steam’s store is where users can browse and search for PC games that they can purchase. The bread and butter of Steam’s store is its user-defined tagging system. When a game is first placed in Steam’s store, the creator has to tag the game with at least 5 different tags. Additionally, logged-in users can apply tags to any game from the list of roughly 440 tags. The most popular tags of each game are what determine where in the store the game will be displayed.

## Current Approach to Information Architecture

There are 4 main ways users can navigate Steam's architecture to find games to purchase . The first way is by using the Steam store's homepage (see Fig. 1).

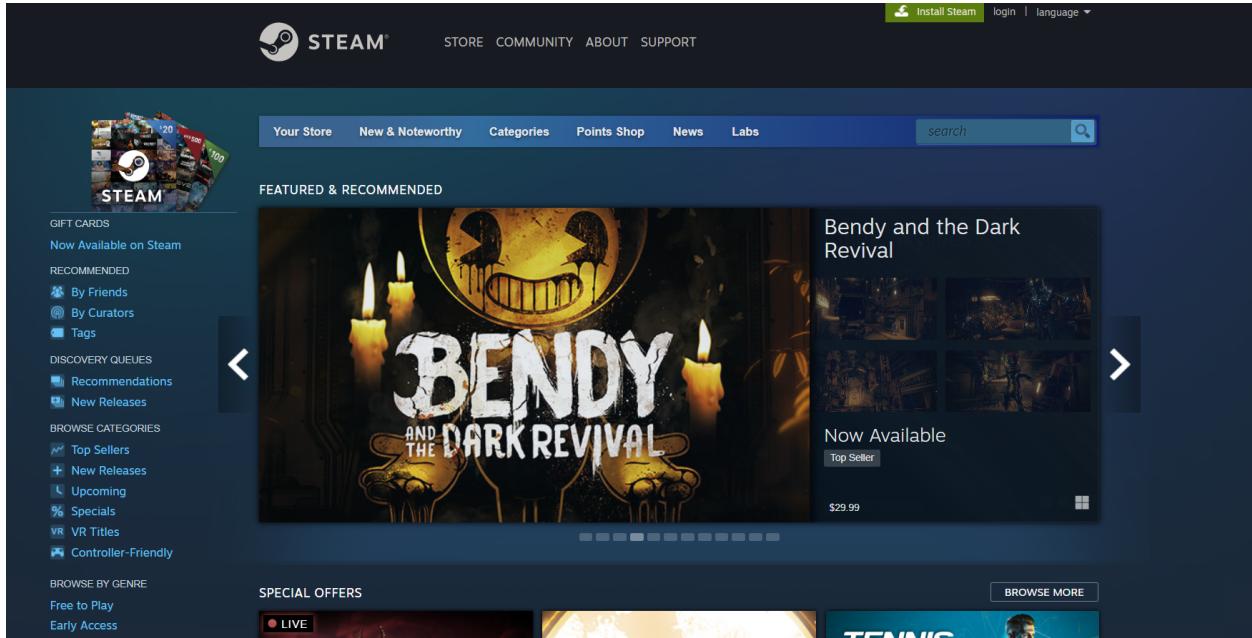


Figure 1

On the Steam store's homepage (Fig. 1), there is a featured and recommended carousel of various games that are trending. These recommendations change depending on what is popular at the time and the specified user's own Steam library. Steam allows users to save games on their library by purchasing them, where a hidden algorithm changes the recommended games and categories slightly.

The second way a user can find games to purchase is by using “Categories” which is located on Steam's global navigation bar at the top of the page. The navigation bar affords users to click on “Categories” and the search bar. Hovering over the “Categories” yields to a pop-up list of various categories (see Fig. 2). If a user clicks on any of the categories they will be taken to a page that displays games under that category (see Fig. 3).

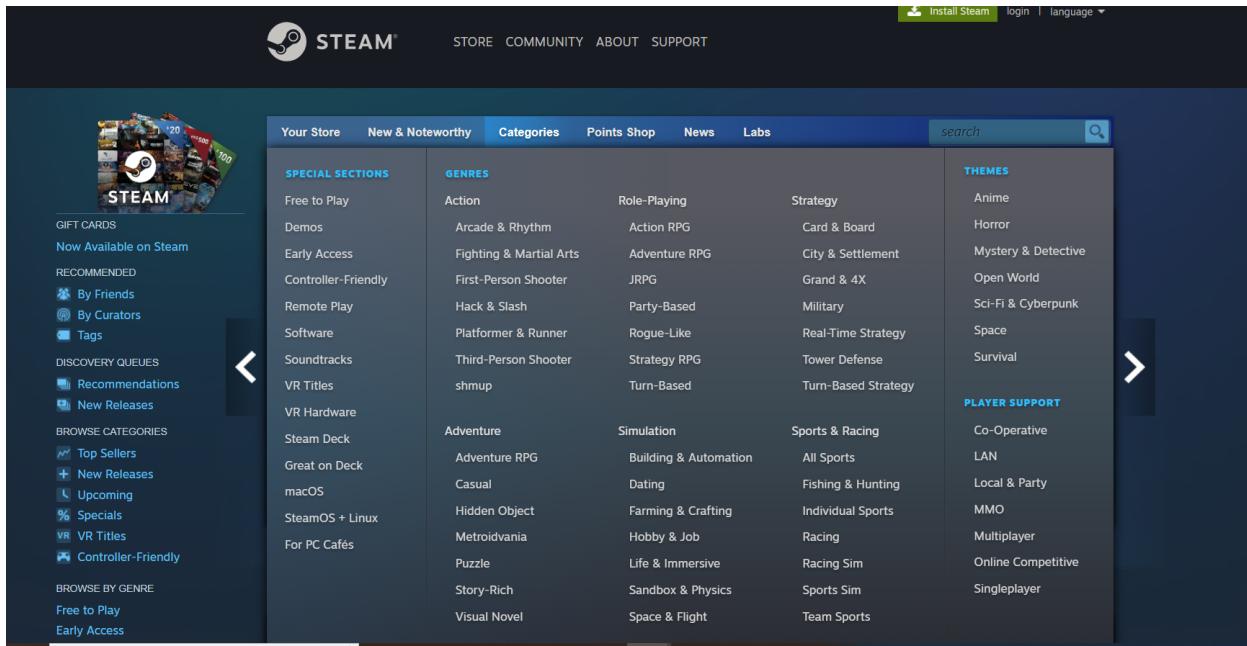


Figure 2



Figure 3

The third way a user can find games is by using the “Tags” page. The link to the “Tags” page is located on the far left of the homepage (see Fig. 4, underlined in red). On Steam, “categories” and “tags” are actually the same thing. The “categories” in the pop-up from the navigation bar are some of the most relevant tags. The “Tags” page lists all tags sorted by popularity descending (see Fig. 5). Users can click on a tag and will be shown games that contain the tag they selected.

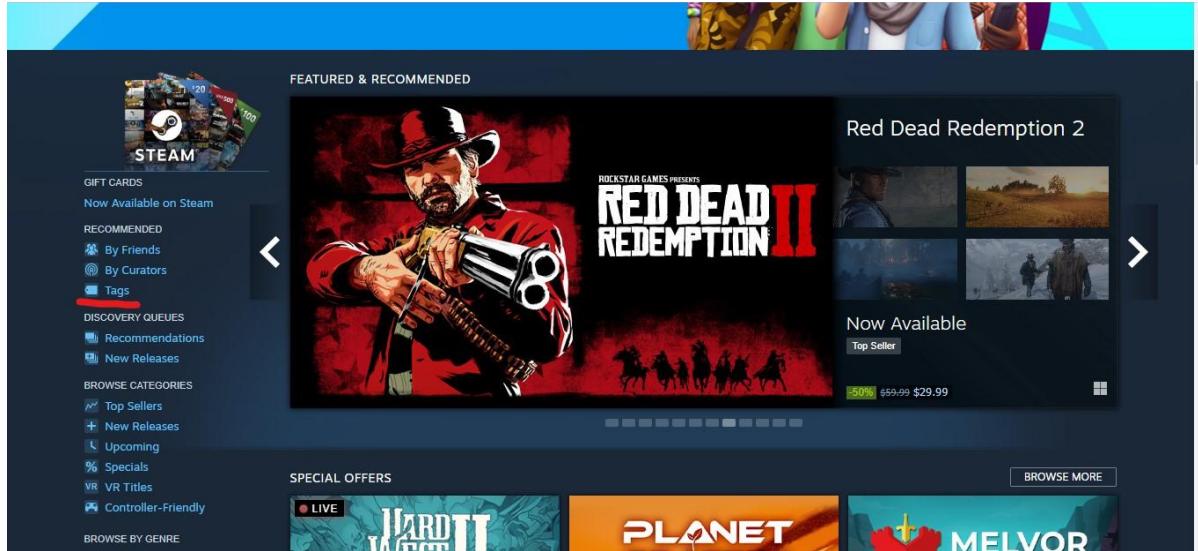


Figure 4

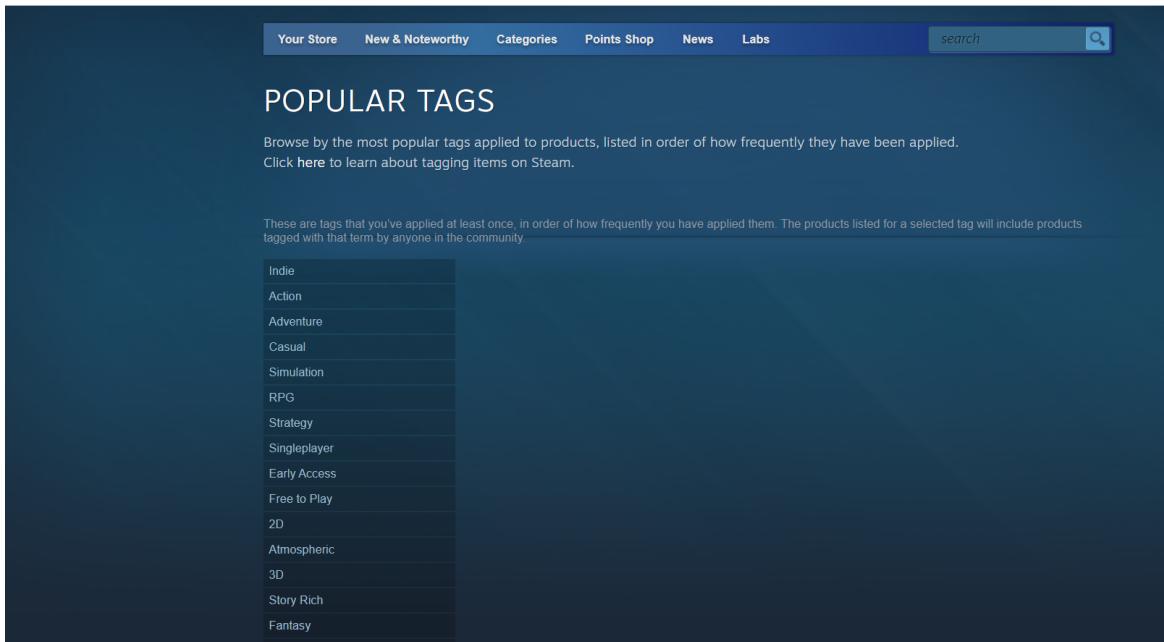


Figure 5

The fourth way users can find games is by using the search bar. The search results will yield games that's title exactly whatever the user has typed in the search bar. Users can also search nothing in which case the search results will be all the games in the Steam store. It is important to note that the search feature is unable to directly filter by tag, and it instead prefers exact match (see Figure 6). Another notable feature within the search query is that the search filters are displayed on the right, which may contrast to users depending on their reading direction or UI expectations.

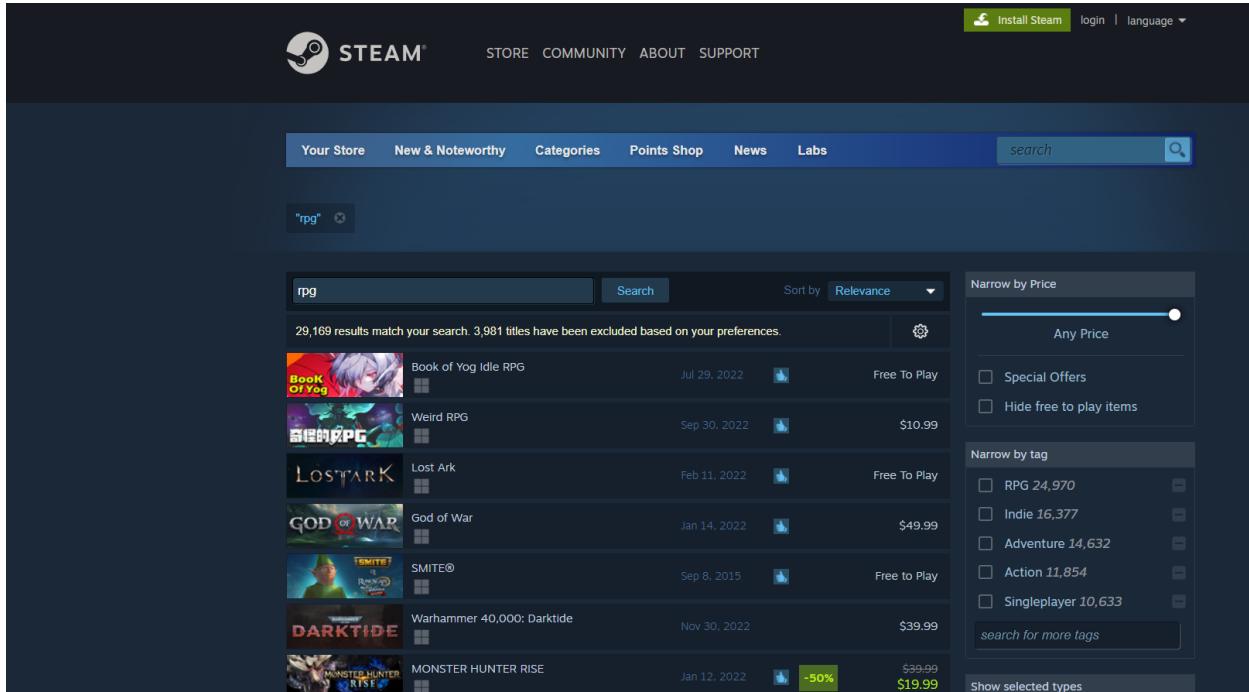


Figure 6

## Typical Users

### Included Users

Typical users are individuals who play personal computer (PC) games. Due to Steam's user-defined tagging system being the primary way games are organized, individuals who are knowledgeable about common gaming jargon and know exactly what game/ type of game they are looking for are going to benefit the most from this website. Additionally, Steam's homepage contains new game recommendations for users based on the games that they purchased on Steam. As a result, the more one uses Steam the easier it will become to find games that one will enjoy.

## Excluded Users

Typical users who are excluded include individuals who are new to PC games and/or video games in general. There are many user-defined tags that are not self-explanatory making it difficult for users who do not know certain terminology to understand and use them. This not only puts these individuals at a technical disadvantage but could potentially make them feel unwelcomed and that the platform “isn’t for them”.

## Persona Diagrams

**TO - DO: \* Convert below information of 2 personas into diagrams\***

### Persona 1: The Experienced User

Goals:

- Find and purchase a new game
- Save money by buying a game that is on sale
- Wants to find a game similar to what they have played in the past

Frustrations:

- Despite having used Steam for many years, they still find Steam a bit frustrating to navigate
- Because they are currently using a public computer they do not want to log into Steam and find it hard to search for games without personalized recommendations

Motivations:

- Saving money
- Curing boredom

Preferred way of Navigating Steam(most to least):

- Search bar
- Through other games
- Homepage
- Tags page

Bio:

Person is a college student who plays a lot of PC games. They have used Steam since middle school and have been playing video games since they were a child. PC games are their main source of entertainment. They enjoy RPG games, especially JRPGs. They are

often stressed and use video games as way of escapism. They are currently swimming in student loans so they are always looking for ways to save money.

### Persona 2: The First Time User

Goals:

- Browse for a new game to possibly purchase
- Wants to buy a game where they feel represented
- Wants to be a popular/relevant game that they can talk about with others and have them know what they are talking about

Frustrations:

- Feels overwhelmed by Steam and does not know how to go about navigating Steam
- They feel unrepresented in video games and feel excluded from the gaming community

Motivations:

- Many people in their major play PC games and they want to be able to be a part of the conversation
- Curing boredom

Preferred way of Navigating Steam (most to least):

- Homepage
- Search bar
- Through other games
- Tags page (user didn't even notice it existed)

Bio:

Person is college student who majors in Informatics. They have played Wii Sports and a child but does not have any experience with video games outside of that. They recently noticed that a lot of people in their major play PC games and wants to try playing a PC game to see what all the hype is about. Person's current main sources of entertainment are TV shows and movies.

## **Supported Tasks**

The supported tasks of the website include being able to search & browse through different personal computer (PC) games, the ability to purchase and store pc games, and the ability to create & log in into a personal account to access ones pc games that were purchased through the website. Other tasks of the website include connecting the user with more personal information outside of steam, such as their information about the website's company, job opportunities, the company's distributions, and facebook & twitter handles.

## **Strengths of Current Approach**

The current Steam store definitely benefits experienced users. Going back to the categories pop-up page, the terminology provides more affordances to experienced gamers as compared to novice gamers. This can be seen in the lack of explanation for the various categories, and unclear differences between “themes” and “categories”, unless the user happens to know the difference between a theme and a category. Another example of the Steam Store page benefiting experienced gamers is the tags list. Many of the tags’ names by themselves only make sense in the defined vocabulary of experienced video game players, such as JRPG (Japanese role playing game), Massively Multiplayer, or Roguelike. Another way that experienced gamers benefit from the current architectural approach is with the exact term matching of the search feature. Since searching by tag is not possible, this affords experienced gamers to look up exactly the game they want to look at. Moreover, this information architecture with a restrictive defined vocabulary and an exact-matching search feature overall benefits experienced gamers and gamers who know what exact game they want.

Something that is out of scope but worth mentioning is that the tags are actually user-defined, meaning that many of the tags are subsequently unorganized in the tags page. But therein exists another strength of the current information architecture, because user-defined tags favors experienced gamers, and allows the Steam store page to remain flexible to changing terminology as the gaming community evolves and expands.

## **Weaknesses of Current Approach**

Like mentioned above, the current Steam layout provides disaffordances to gamers with less experience in navigating Steam or video games in general. Because of the restrictive defined vocabulary of the store page, novices who are new to Steam or video games in general will be unfamiliar with many terms. Similarly, the current Categories pop-up

window on the navigation bar will be confusing to novices to Steam because many of the terms, themes, and special sections listed in the categories page would overlap with one another. This is exemplified in the below screenshot, where many novices to Steam would likely be unfamiliar with the subtle differences or similarities that bind “Role-Playing Games” together, and what makes “Open-World” distinct from “Adventure” in the “Genres” sub-window.

The screenshot shows a dark-themed Steam interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: Your Store, New & Noteworthy, Categories, Points Shop, News, and Labs. To the right of the navigation bar is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon. Below the navigation bar is a grid of categories:

SPECIAL SECTIONS	GENRES		THEMES
Free to Play	Action	Role-Playing	Strategy
Demos	Arcade & Rhythm	Action RPG	Card & Board
Early Access	Fighting & Martial Arts	Adventure RPG	City & Settlement
Controller-Friendly	First-Person Shooter	JRPG	Grand & 4X
Remote Play	Hack & Slash	Party-Based	Military
Software	Platformer & Runner	Rogue-Like	Real-Time Strategy
Soundtracks	Third-Person Shooter	Strategy RPG	Tower Defense
VR Titles	shmup	Turn-Based	Turn-Based Strategy
VR Hardware	Adventure	Simulation	Sports & Racing
Steam Deck	Adventure RPG	Building & Automation	All Sports
Great on Deck	Casual	Dating	Fishing & Hunting
macOS	Hidden Object	Farming & Crafting	Individual Sports
SteamOS + Linux	Metroidvania	Hobby & Job	Racing
For PC Cafés	Puzzle	Life & Immersive	Racing Sim
	Story-Rich	Sandbox & Physics	Sports Sim
	Visual Novel	Space & Flight	Team Sports
			PLAYER SUPPORT
			Co-Operative
			LAN
			Local & Party
			MMO
			Multiplayer
			Online Competitive
			Singleplayer

Also, the tags page would be unnavigable for new gamers. Since the defined vocabulary is restrictive with no tooltips or explanations for many of the tags, new users would get lost scrolling through the 400+ tags on the window without a clear explanation of what any of the tags are defined as. In summary, the weaknesses of the current approach is exemplified through the disorganized layout of the categories page, the lack of definitions for many tags, and the restrictive defined vocabulary raises an inclusivity issue with gamers who are new to using Steam, or novice video game players in general due to the lack of discoverability or definitions in layout and in controlled vocabulary. Gamers who are unfamiliar with this layout or terminology may feel less included within the Steam community and thus less interested in using the platform in the first place.

## Recommendations for Improvement

**TO-DO: Write summary of recommendations and some reasoning of recommendations once all other recommendation sections are written**

To summarize our recommendations to the strategy document

## **Organization System Recommendations**

Steam currently uses a topical organization scheme and organizes games by the game's content via tags. Steam is primarily organized using free tagging or collaborative categorization and currently does not have any sort of hierarchical organization. We recommend putting Steam's tags into categories to make it easier for users to find and use the tags they are looking for. The implementation of this recommendation would be visible in Steam's tag pages. We propose the following design:

### **TO-DO: \*Insert screenshot of Tags Page Redesign\***

Each row in our proposed tags page will represent a overarching category while each square will represent a subcategory. When users click one of the subcategories they will be shown a list of the tags that fall into the subcategory they clicked on. The categories and subcategories that we propose to use are ones Steam states that most/all of their tags fall under: Genre (subcategories: Super-Genre, Genre, Sub-Genre), Visual Properties (subcategories: Dimensions, Camera Perspective, Visual Style), Themes and Moods (subcategories: Theme, Mood), and Features (subcategories: Gameplay Mechanics Design Ingredients, Player Activities) (Steamwork Documentation). We also propose to add an additional subcategory called "Diversity" which can fall under the overarching category of "Themes and Moods". The "Diversity" subcategory would include tags such as "Female Protagonist" and "LGBTQ+" and will help promote diversity by making games with minority representation easier to find.

## **Labeling system**

Steam has a wide variety of categories labeled on their global navigation system. When a user hovers over the "Categories", a dropdown menu renders at the top of the page. Specifically, the term "categories" is very broad on Steam. The headings in "categories" are not relevant and are inconsistent with the contextual labels below it. For example, under the "Genres" heading, certain labels such as "Turn-base" and "Turn-based strategy" are practically the same thing but are shown under the subcategory "Role-Playing" and "Strategy". This makes it confusing for users. We recommend removing one of them so that it would not be annoying for users.

The screenshot shows the Steam website's navigation bar at the top with links for STORE, COMMUNITY, ABOUT, and SUPPORT. Below the navigation is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon. The main content area features a grid of genre categories:

SPECIAL SECTIONS	GENRES	THEMES		
Free to Play	Action	Role-Playing	Strategy	Anime
Demos	Arcade & Rhythm	Action RPG	Card & Board	Horror
Early Access	Fighting & Martial Arts	Adventure RPG	City & Settlement	Mystery & Detective
Controller-Friendly	First-Person Shooter	JRPG	Grand & 4X	Open World
Remote Play	Hack & Slash	Party-Based	Military	Sci-Fi & Cyberpunk
Software	Platformer & Runner	Rogue-Like	Real-Time Strategy	Space
Soundtracks	Third-Person Shooter	Strategy RPG	Tower Defense	Survival
VR Titles	shmup	Turn-Based	Turn-Based Strategy	PLAYER SUPPORT
VR Hardware	Adventure	Simulation	Sports & Racing	Co-Operative
Steam Deck	Adventure RPG	Building & Automation	All Sports	LAN
Great on Deck	Casual	Dating	Fishing & Hunting	Local & Party
macOS				

Another improvement for the Steam labeling system would be describing the acronyms. For example, for new users, some may not know that “Action RPG” stands for “Action Role Playing Game”. We recommend specifying this terminology by providing a tooltip so they can hover over it and see what the acronym labels stand for. Also, once a user clicks on the contextual link, providing a description below the header would be helpful to new users who want to know more about the genre.

The screenshot shows a game page for "FINAL FANTASY XIV Online". The page includes the following details:

- ROLE-PLAYING** category header.
- FINAL FANTASY XIV Online** title.
- Release date: Feb 18, 2014.
- User rating: Very Positive | 56,053 User Reviews.
- Genre tags: MMORPG, RPG, Massively Multiplayer, Fantasy, JRPG, Character Customization, Great Soundtrack, Story Rich, Open World, Anime, Multiplayer, Adventure, Magic, Action.
- Why this game is relevant to you: ✓ Ranked 54 in top sellers.
- Price: \$19.99.

TO DO: Add wireframe screenshot of genre description

## Navigation System

Steam global navigation is a mega-bar, traditional drop down menu that renders at the top of the page. Under the mega-bar, there are contextual links that users can click on. However, on Steam global navigation, the “categories” are just “Tags”.

To improve the Steam navigation system, we recommend replacing “Tags” over “Categories” because it would make it more efficient for users to navigate to the “Tags”. The “Tags” bar would lead to the Tags page where there would be a list of tags genres to choose from.

### **TO-DO: Expand on navigation recommendations**

- Discuss backwards navigation

The screenshot shows the Steam homepage with a focus on the 'Popular Tags' section. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Your Store', 'New & Noteworthy', 'Categories', 'Points Shop', 'News', and 'Labs'. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation, the title 'POPULAR TAGS' is displayed. A sub-instruction 'Browse by the most popular tags applied to products, listed in order of how frequently they have been applied.' is followed by a link 'Click here to learn about tagging items on Steam.'. On the left, a sidebar lists tags: Indie (selected), Action, Adventure, Casual, Simulation, RPG, and Strategy. The main content area shows a grid of game cards for 'Indie' tagged games. Each card includes the game title, a small thumbnail, and its price. The cards shown are: 'Risk of Rain 2: Survivors of the Void' (\$14.99), 'RimWorld - Royalty' (\$19.99), and 'RimWorld - Biotech' (\$24.99).

### **TO DO: Add wireframe screenshot of Tags Page**

## Search System

Currently, Steam’s search system does not detect words relevant to the tags, genres, queries or categories. The search engine only provides users with games as the result. For example, if a user is searching a tag such as “Indie” in the search bar, the result for this would suggest game titles that have the word “Indie” in it.

indie

Search

Sort by Relevance

68,615 results match your search. 6,030 titles have been excluded based on your preferences.

Game/Bundle	Platform	Release Date	Rating	Price
Houdini Indie	Windows, Mac	Oct 10, 2018		\$269.99
Indie Pogo	Windows	Jul 10, 2018		\$14.99
Indie Wargamers	Windows, Mac		-20%	\$75.96 \$60.82
Indie Bundle	Windows			\$3.22
Indie Pals	Windows			\$31.33
MODO indie	Windows, Mac	Sep 24, 2015		\$14.99

Narrow by Price

Any Price

Special Offers

Hide free to play items

Narrow by tag

- Indie 65,684
- Action 32,532
- Casual 30,895
- Adventure 29,492
- Singleplayer 28,517

search for more tags

### TO DO: Expand on search recommendations section

- Our recommendation to the search bar is by indexing the search bar.
- Possible Ideas from the textbook:
  - Develop a system that can result in searches other than exact keywords *(class example)*
  - Another approach is creating a filter drop down menu bar for the search bar
  - Specify what the search bar is for (index that its is for games)

Your Store

New & Noteworthy

Categories

Points Shop

News

Labs

search

### TO DO: Add wireframe screenshot of Navigation bar with search bar

## Controlled Vocabulary

With over 50,000 games currently being hosted on the platform, Steam has a massive amount of metadata to be made available to users for searching, filtering, and sorting purposes. In order to narrow our scope, we have decided to examine the vocabulary being

used in the tagging system within Steam. Both experienced users and users new to Steam will utilize the tagging system to browse and search for specific attributes for different games.

In its current state, the page for tagging is a non-hierarchical list of the over 400 most popular tags across the Steam tagging system. In the description for the page, it is noted that the tags are listed in the order of “how frequently you have applied them” despite not being logged in, so one can assume that they are sorted in descending order by how often the tag has been applied globally by all users across all Steam games.

#### **TO DO: Finalize recommendations and create synonym rings**

- Discuss terminology utilized throughout Steam
- Discuss how can the vocab be streamlined and more friendly to new users

## **Sitemaps**

**TO-DO: Create Sitemap(s) and discuss any changes from original sitemap ( will be done in class/lab on 11/22 and finished up outside of class)**

## **Wireframes**

#### **TO-DO: Continue to work on wireframes**

- Link to Figma:  
[https://www.figma.com/file/HGzor4vFfdNfKYbrcYPofp/info-331-steam-redesign?  
node-id=0%3A1](https://www.figma.com/file/HGzor4vFfdNfKYbrcYPofp/info-331-steam-redesign?node-id=0%3A1)
- We are redesigning 3 pages
  - The Home page
    - [Link to original](#)
  - The Tags page
    - [Link to original](#)
  - The Search Results page
    - [Link to original](#)

- Personas Scenarios we envisioned for our wireframes

- The 1st Time User: User is interested in pc games after seeing an ad for a game. User goes to visit the steam app to find the game they are looking for.
  - Account, credit card, saved on account to access in any computer,
  - How to pop ups (tutorial)
  - Hover feature for vocab
  - Different screens for best user experience.
  - Tool tips
  - They look at the home page. They scroll down and feel overwhelmed and not sure what to do or where to click.
  - Alternate scenario: friend recommends playing a game with them on Steam (idk like dota 2 or civ or something). They go to the home page, and are confused about where to navigate.
  - Alternate scenario: user switching from console to pc and uses Steam as primary app store
  - Important to keep in mind: what is important to understand when using steam.
- The Experienced User: Uses steam a lot and is looking for a new game
  - User plays a lot of PC games, and it's the Steam summer sale and is looking for new games to play.
  - The user goes to the home page, and finds a generic catalog of games that are on sale. They click on the search feature, and they don't find any specific title.
  - The user has many different kinds of games on their steam library already, so a lot of the popular games are known to them.
  - The user goes through the tags list, where they click on a specific tag they like.
  - This prompts a list of the tagged games, and they scroll through more tabs to find a game that is new, trending, and on a discount.
  - They eventually find the game and then buy it.

## Content Models

State what Steam does not provide & showcase through frames what can be changed for better accessibility.

Currently steam does not provide a simple experience for first time users who are interested in learning about personal computer (PC) gaming, such as the language & vocabulary of pc gaming, and the navigation of purchasing and storing pc games into one's account & computer.

**TO-DO: Expand more with visual model**

## Limitations

**TO-DO: This section will be answered & elaborated on towards the end of our project.**

Topics to be included :

- What was our group unable to accomplish or get to talk about, and why?
- Possible future solutions for our limitations.
- Areas our group was unable to address in our project due to scope or time constraints.

## References

**TO DO: Put sources into APA format**

<https://store.steampowered.com/>

<https://partner.steamgames.com/doc/store/tags>

## Other TO-DOS

- Do a comb through to make sure the draft sounds like it was written by one person
- Label remaining figures and possibly remove some to reduce redundancy