

Steam Library — Redesign Case Study

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Overview

This is an unofficial redesign concept for the Steam desktop library, the screen where PC players launch, install and manage the games they own. It replaces Steam's rows of shelves and long game list with a single cover carousel, built around one question: *what do I want to play right now?*

The project has three reference points:

- **Old Steam (before 2019).** A long alphabetical list on the left and a dense game page with small text, an activity feed and workshop content.
- **My 2019 remake.** It added large hero art, a prominent Play button, and DLC and news on the game page. Valve's own library update that year moved in a very similar direction.
- **Steam today.** The current library keeps that structure but has grown crowded: a What's New row, Recent Games, Play Next, a 103-game sidebar split into Favorites and Uncategorized, and a bottom bar for downloads and friends.

The goal of this concept was to go past where Steam is now rather than repaint it. It aims for fewer things on screen at once, the player's own cover art as the main visual, and everything else one step away.

Library home

Problem. Steam's library home asks players to scan several things at once: a row of news tiles, two shelves of games with month labels, a long sidebar list, and a bottom bar. Every element competes for attention, and the cover art, which is what players actually recognize, is shown small and cropped.

Solution. The home screen is now one cover carousel. Tall covers sit in a single row in the middle of the screen. The selected game is large and in full color, and the covers to either side shrink and fade as they move away, so focus is always obvious.

- **The background follows the game.** The whole screen becomes a soft blur of the selected cover, so moving through the library changes the mood of the room.

- **Only what's needed to decide.** Under the selected cover sit its name, one line of context (for Final Fantasy XIV: 1,513.8 hours played, last played Jul 11, 2024, 52.35 MB to install), and one primary button that says Play or Install depending on its state.
- **News without a news row.** When a game has news, a single headline appears under its buttons, such as "Fall Guys Collaboration Event Returns October 7!" The full What's New row is no longer needed.

Finding a game

Problem. Steam's sidebar is a permanent wall of text: 18 Favorites and 85 Uncategorized games, each a small icon and name. It takes up a quarter of the screen whether or not the player is looking for something, and it's the least visual part of a very visual product.

Solution. The sidebar is gone. Finding a game now works in two ways:

- **Collections as four quiet tabs.** All, Recent, Favorites and Play next sit above the carousel in spaced capitals, each with its count. A small red dot marks the active one, and switching tabs swaps the games in the carousel.
- **A full-screen search.** The search icon opens a dedicated screen with one large, minimal search line and the same collection filters below it. Underneath, the whole library appears as an A-Z grid of covers, and the grid narrows with every letter typed. Searching "monster" leaves only the three Monster Hunter games. When nothing matches, the screen says so plainly and offers to search the Store instead.

Game details

Problem. Steam's game page stacks a hero banner, an install bar with three stats, a strip of six links, an activity box, a news feed, Friends Who Play, Notes and DLC. Players who just want to check one thing, such as whether a friend is online or what the latest patch did, have to scan all of it.

Solution. Details now come in two depths:

1. **A Details panel.** From the carousel, *Details* slides up a frosted panel over the bottom of the screen. It holds three columns (news and events, friends who play, and DLC) plus links to the store page, community, guides and support. Closing it returns straight to the carousel without losing your place.

2. **A full game page**, for players who want everything. The cover stands beside the title, with play time, last played and space required underneath, and then Install. A single row of section names (Overview, News, DLC, Achievements, Community, Guides) replaces the gray link strip. The overview pairs the news posts with friends, DLC and notes. Lines separate items instead of boxes.

Downloads and friends

Problem. In Steam today, downloads and friends live in the bottom bar as "Manage Downloads" and "Friends & Chat". Both open screens that feel separate from the library, and friends opens in its own window.

Downloads solution. Downloads is its own screen in the main menu. The game downloading now gets the hero spot: its cover, a large percentage, a thin progress line, size and time left, a simple speed graph, and a "Play when ready" option. Below sit the queue (*Up next*), recently finished games with a Play button, storage space, and two plain scheduling switches: download updates overnight, and pause downloads while playing.

Friends solution. Friends opens as a frosted panel over the carousel, so the library stays in view behind it. The left side groups friends as In game, Online and Offline; a friend in game shows the cover of what they're playing. The right side is the chat. A game invite arrives as a card with the cover and one button, *Install & Join*, which folds the install step into accepting the invite.

The download sizes, speeds, storage figures, friend names other than Sammie, and chat messages in these screens are placeholder data.

Visual direction

The look borrows from the cover of *Stela*: pale fog, a valley fading into distance, and thin letters spaced down the page with a single touch of red. That mood suits a library, which should feel calm and let the games' own art be the color.

- **Fog and depth.** Soft bands of mist sit behind the carousel, and the screen darkens toward the top and bottom. Covers lose color and dim the farther they are from the center, as if drifting into fog.
- **Type.** Josefin Sans, a thin geometric font, is set in widely spaced capitals for the wordmark ("LIBRARY"), game titles, collections and buttons. Figtree handles everything that needs to be read quickly.

- **Color, used sparingly.** Slate and fog tones carry the interface. A muted red appears only on small markers: the active collection dot, the NEW tag, the favorite heart and section labels. The main button is plain pale fog rather than a bright brand color, so the cover art stays the most colorful thing on screen.
- **Shape.** Corners are tight, frames and boxes are dropped, and thin lines separate items.

Directions tried and dropped. Earlier passes explored a dark graphite layout, a cinematic serif look over painted scenery, and frosted navy-and-gold glass. Each changed the surface but kept Steam's skeleton of a sidebar, banner and rows of cards, so they read as Steam with a new coat of paint. Changing the structure to a carousel is what made the redesign feel new, and the Stela influence then gave it a mood of its own.

Before and after

The concept keeps every job the library does but moves each one to where it's needed, instead of keeping them all on screen.

Area	Old Steam	2019 remake	Steam today	2026 concept
Home	Game page only	Game page with large hero art	What's New row, Recent Games, Play Next shelves	One cover carousel
Finding games	Long sidebar list	Sidebar list with a filter dropdown	Sidebar: 18 Favorites, 85 Uncategorized	Four collection tabs + full-screen search with live filtering
Main visual	Small banner art	Large hero art	Hero art and small capsules	The player's own covers, with a blurred cover as the background
Game details	Dense page with workshop and activity	Hero, Play, DLC table, news, links column	Hero, install bar, link strip, activity, news, friends, notes, DLC	Details panel over the carousel, or a full page with section tabs

Area	Old Steam	2019 remake	Steam today	2026 concept
News	On the game page	Recent news list	What's New row + news feed per game	One headline under the selected game; the rest in Details
Downloads	Bottom bar	Bottom bar	Bottom bar, separate screen	Its own screen: current download, queue, storage, scheduling
Friends	Separate window	Separate window	Bottom bar, separate window	Panel over the library, with invites that install and join in one step
Style	Flat dark gray	Dark blue panels	Dark blue-gray	Misty slate, thin spaced capitals, red used only as an accent