

Mods V2 UX regroup 2022-01



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Reviewing the state of the Mods V2 user experience.

Depth of mods engagement

“Engagement” here is defined as *how much effort it takes to play*, rather than measures of time or skill. Another way of putting it is *how passionate is a player?*

Engagement	Channel	Experience	Supporting features
Shallow	Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>They like the wild world of mods, but prefer videos or can't play the game</i>• Watches modded play on YouTube & Twitch• Might not even own the game!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing• Metadata• Community channels

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might own the game, but be disinterested in or intimidated by installing mods 	
	One-Click Adventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Great for light players, time-limited play, and total conversions</i> • Single, isolated, ready-to-go experiences (Roblox) • Can be summarized with play type and time • Extremely simple to load and play • Typically set in a single location (one dungeon/vault/neighborhood) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A, not a planned feature
	Curated Playlists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Easy way to experience modding without the time investment</i> • Single public set of modifications providing a specified experience • Very simple to load and play • Experiences can range from subtle game tweaks to heavy and pervasive changes to the game world • Typically set in the game's world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playlists • Featured page • Search & filter • Sharing • Metadata • Community channels
	Tweaked Playlists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A path for players to start customizing their experience in detail</i> • Privately modifying a Curated Playlist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playlists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Playlist duplication • Featured page

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A player privately adjusts an existing playlist to suit their desires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search & filter • Sharing • Metadata • Community channels
Deep	Full Custom Playlists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The traditional modding model: what players do now</i> • Personal set of individually-selected mods • Browse, test, and tweak mods for the desired experience • Where published playlists come from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playlists • Featured page • Search & filter • Sharing • Metadata • Community channels
	<i>Authoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creating individual mods</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creation Kit</i> • <i>Mod management</i> • <i>Mod stats</i> • <i>Mod presentation</i> • <i>Author profile page</i> • <i>Metadata</i> • <i>Sharing</i>

Status of supporting features

- **Featured page** NEW
 - A good improvement to UX

- Quality determined more by content than presentation
- Needs commitment from the mod community team to curate content
- Needs a recommendation engine to personalize content and update more frequently than CMs can
- **Search & filter** **UNCHANGED**
 - The UI is somewhat improved, but...
 - The underlying metadata is unchanged
 - Room for UI improvement
 - Canned searches
 - Suggestions
- **Metadata** **UNCHANGED**
 - Still an ugly pile of categories
 - Mod ratings are of poor quality
 - We're very limited on what we can measure just from the site & API side
 - Short description: it's good, but are we actually using it? Is BGS?
 - No commenting
- **Sharing** **WORSE**
 - V1 has one-click FB and Twitter sharing
 - V2 sharing module priority is unclear
 - V2 fallback is a "Copy URL" feature
 - Does not exist on V1, but a step down in UX for FB & Twitter sharing
- **Playlists** **TBD**
 - We need to be sure of what playlists can and should do

- What is the expected in-game behavior? Is it even defined yet?
- **Creation Kit** **IMPROVED**
 - Not under Bnet
 - BGS has improved the metadata & upload experience
 - Changes & requirements for 76 unclear (e.g. mod templates)
- **Mod management** **IMPROVED**
 - Several UX and UI improvements for mod authors
 - Draft system is a huge improvement
 - Markdown editor for descriptions
 - No commenting or bug reporting
 - Beta program status/priority?
- **Mod stats** **TBD**
 - Exists in V1, should in V2
 - Some stats design work has been done
 - What is a well-performing mod?
 - Priority?
- **Mod presentation** **IMPROVED**
 - Mod page UI and tech is modernized
 - Better mobile browser support
 - Images and videos look good
 - Still hampered by some V1 restrictions
- **Author profile page** **MISSING**

- A prominent site deficiency that has existed for way too long
- Authors need a home
 - A history, catalog, and portfolio
 - We're a UGC site without the U
 - No place to link to other than a search URL
- Really should be a launch feature for authors to start sharing ASAP
 - Including SKSE+FO4 mods may raise the interest of lapsed modders
 - A future home for playlist curators
- Avatars?!
- **Community channels** TBD
 - Not under Bnet
 - Community releases regular "featured mods of the month" articles
 - Articles are shared on social channels
 - Individual mods are not typically shared
 - Opportunity to leverage playlists: directly sharing playlists
 - Playlists can be internally-curated, like a playlist of the month's featured mods
 - Community-curated playlists can fill out more frequent mod posts
 - Extra value in linking directly to the mods website instead of an article

Emilio's totally subjective priorities

This is relative to the FO4/SKSE update:

- **Now**
 - Sharing module
 - Research improved mod ratings
 - Game-reported usage data
 - Ensure the latest UI updates are enacted
- **Soon** (pre-launch)
 - Author profile page
 - Author-visible stats
 - Improved ratings
 - New categories + transition
- **Later** (post-launch)
 - Playlists
 - Basic personalized recommendations
- **Even later**
 - Bug reporting
 - Betas
 - Leaderboards & achievements
- **Way later**
 - One-click adventures

Delay playlists?!

Ideally, playlists would be present at launch to be a tentpole feature for the update. But, I don't consider it the most

important change we can make; given limited time, I consider metadata updates to be much more urgent.

Primarily, the reasoning is to prioritize metadata changes to be in place at launch so that authors and players can start learning and leveraging the differences. For example, if we add a player-defined tag system after launch then there's a strong risk that players don't incorporate tagging into their new behaviors. The longer we wait to update the rating system, the longer it will take to build up data for a future recommendation engine.

On the other hand, playlist creation is a totally new feature that users have no existing habits for. It will be a prominent feature that is easy to understand; it will largely have its own UI, rather than being merged into other pages. Because of this, it can stand on its own both as a PR beat and a new feature to learn.

Skyrim is not Roblox

There is a desire to model an open-world modding experience on Roblox: it is propelled by broad and engaging user-generated content, and is very popular and profitable. This has a fundamental UX obstacle.

BGS-style open-world games provide a *continuous* experience. Game creation platforms like Roblox and Dreams provide *discrete* experiences.

A quick way to summarize this difference is by comparing Forza Motorsport to Forza Horizon. Both are "racing games", but have very different routes to activities:

- Motorsport is *discrete*: you browse menus, load up the track and race format you want, and drop right on the starting grid. When the race ends, you browse menus to start another one.
- Horizon is *continuous*: you load the game, drive around the game's open world to find a race track and format, and start the race. When the race ends, you drive around to find another activity.

Continuous	Discrete
Open-world games (TES, Fallout 3+, Forza Horizon), hub-based games (Wolfenstein TNC, DOOM Eternal)	Isolated experiences (Roblox, Dreams), mission-based games (Hitman, Forza Motorsport)
Long play sessions	Short or serial play sessions
Spectrum of experiences: sessions can be casual (trading & crafting) or intense (challenging dungeon crawl)	Units of experience: sessions are focused on the content's defined activities (build, assassinate, race)
Organic: content and activities connect to the game world in consistent ways (no anachronisms)	Intentional: players connect to content and activities directly, such as via a menu
Single character is the focus of player agency and advancement	Character independence does not rely on properties (advancement) to be preserved
Walk to the content you want	Click on the content you want

Part of Roblox's engagement is that experiences are rapidly- and serially-consumable: you can try a dozen creations in five minutes. Experiences are plentiful, stream and launch quickly, and don't consume fixed storage space. Not grabbing your attention? The game mode isn't your vibe right now? It takes seconds to bail and try a new one. Experiences don't need to have any continuity with *anything* else on the platform, with the exception of the game engine and the player character's model (which is also not entirely fixed).

Open-world games like Skyrim and Fallout 4 instead rely on engagement built around the continuous experience: this is an alternate universe with an alternate you. A universe it has its own systems and rules; even if you do something absurd

like add Thomas the Tank Engine, he still must appear *somewhere* congruent with the rules of the world. Play sessions tend to revolve around the player character in a single stretch of in-world time, rather than jumping around to different times and places. In the case of Creation Engine games, mods are downloaded and launched with the world data, forcing a complete reload of everything whenever changes are made. (76 mods allow for some content streaming, but it is mostly cosmetic assets rather than large archives like quests and dialogue.)

Skyrim *could* be Roblox!

This doesn't mean discrete and continuous experiences are incompatible. There must be UI and content distribution to consume discrete experiences, and it can be of varying grades of integration.

These are **One-Click Adventures**, discrete experiences presented in an open-world engine.

- **Menu UI:** low game integration
 - Just using a standard in-game or website UI to find and load content
 - Like Roblox, Dreams, DOOM Classic
 - Inelegant, but simple and direct
 - Adventures need to be really compelling, as detachment from the continuous experience (e.g. your character) may be dissatisfying
- **Diegetic UI:** high game integration
 - Content is accessed in-world through means that follow the universe's rules
 - TES: a book lies in front of a portal or Oblivion gate, and each adventure is a destination spell in the book
 - Fallout: a computer controls a simulator pod or teleporter, and each adventure is listed on the computer
 - Integrated & fun way to load content: the API endpoint is in the game world
 - Players can still browse and queue content on a website