LEAGUE OF LEGENDS - SUMMONER ICON PAGE

### *Case Study for the League of Legends Game Client*

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Overview:

[League of Legends](#) is a multiplayer online battle arena game, created by [Riot Games](#), with over [100 million players monthly](#). The League of Legends game client has a Summoner Icon Collection that features illustrated profile pictures that players can use on their profile. The current Summoner Icon window makes finding specific icons difficult: there is no clear method of sorting and players are forced to scroll through hundreds of icons.

Original Summoner Icon Page:
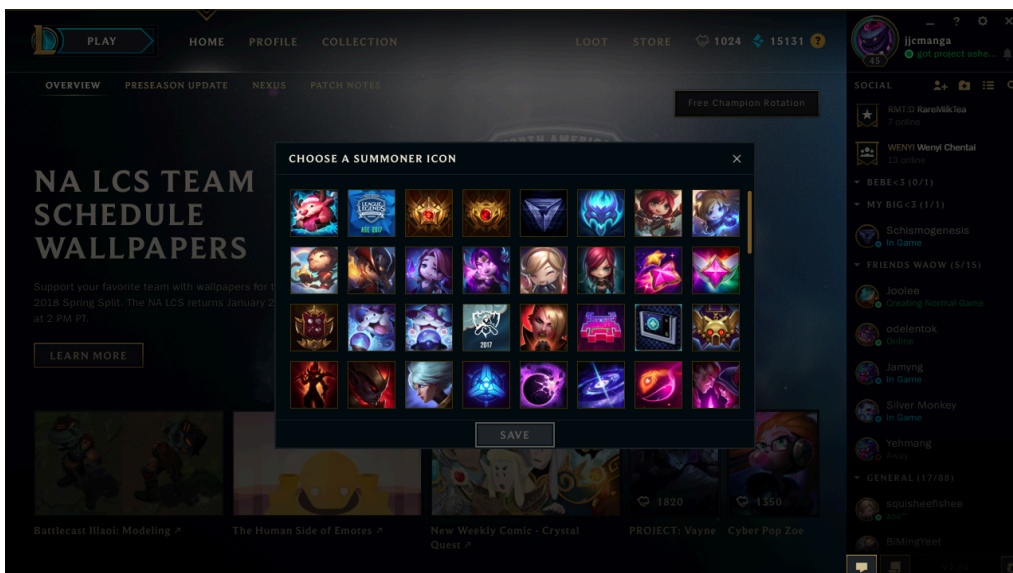
Challenge:
Since the new League of Legends client update, the Summoner Icon UI is a pop-up window which showcases the icons in 8 columns. The UI goes against the 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design created by the Nielsen Norman Group. Some of the heuristics mention the importance of recognition over recall and flexibility and efficiency of use.

- **Recognition vs. Recall:** Giving the user more context to help recognition improves usability. In the current Summoner Icon window, players are forced to recall the origin of the icons instead of using recognition based on the information provided.
- **Flexibility and Efficiency:** Flexible processes can be carried out in different ways so users can choose whatever method fits them best, leading to efficiency. The current window goes against this heuristic because the player is forced to scroll through all of the icons instead of being able to sort them.

Players also voiced their concerns about the Summoner Icon window on the League of Legends subreddit, a forum website for the community where players can give feedback, show off artwork, and even more. There have been numerous posts asking for a more informative and intuitive Summoner Icon UI. The most popular post with the title, "Me every I time I switch summoner icons: "I have no idea where I got all these icons, but this one looks good,"" **reached over 2,200 upvotes/likes.**

The concerns that all the posts had in common included:
- **Not knowing where Summoner Icons came from**
- **Difficult to find the exact icon the player wants**
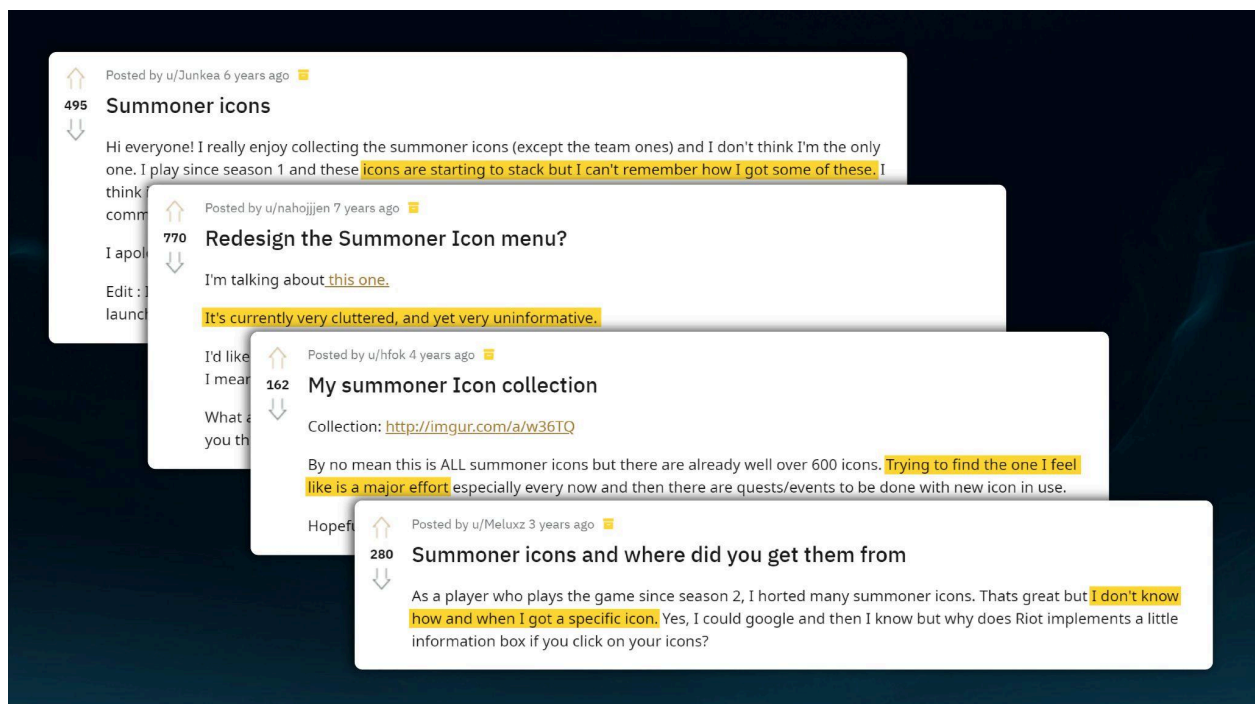
Research:

I conducted a search for academic research on the psychology behind choosing a profile picture or avatar in a video game because it would help me design an intuitive solution.

Secondary Research:

Nick Yee, a Stanford University researcher, noted the **Proteus Effect: ingame avatars change the way players act.** Taller avatars would act more confident and more aggressively than shorter avatars while more attractive avatars acted more intimate and friendly.

Professor Christoph Klimmit of University of Mainz, Germany stated that **players strongly identify with their avatars; they are seen as extensions of themselves.**
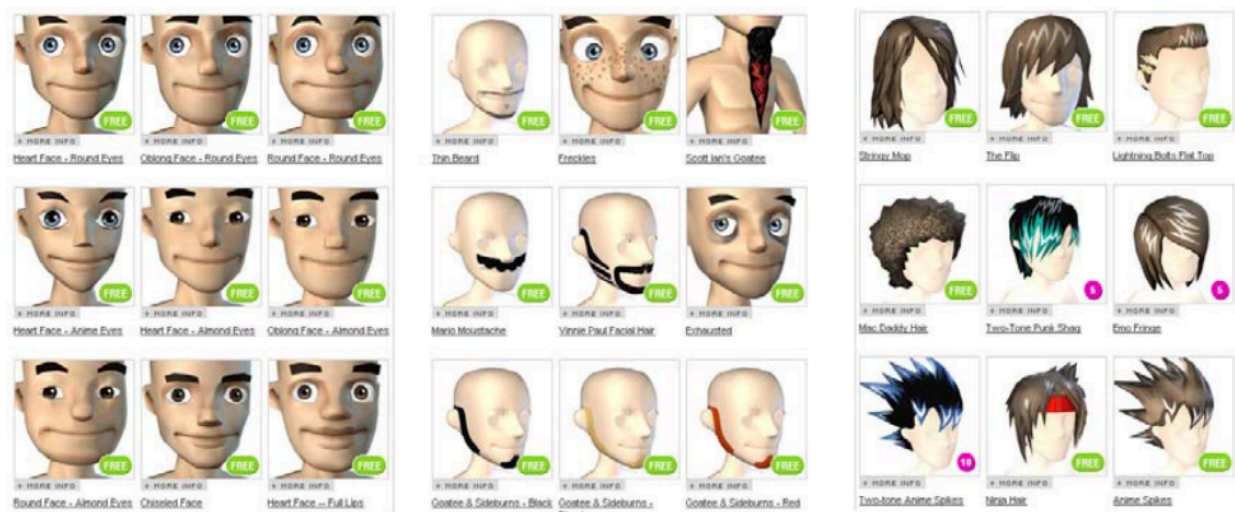
Examples of Avatar Icons, customization from Nick Yee's "THE PROTEUS EFFECT: BEHAVIORAL MODIFICATION VIA TRANSFORMATIONS OF DIGITAL SELF-REPRESENTATION"

Competitive Analysis:
I compiled League of Legends and gaming client interfaces that I wanted to critique and take inspiration from.

:
Created by Valve, Steam is a video game distributor which sells popular games including DOTA 2, Counter-Strike, and more. Many games use the Steam profile picture which can be changed in the application. **Steam categorizes profile pictures by most recently used and by game.** This allows users to easily find a profile picture they want to use, however, Steam does not make effective use of space. A game category takes up an entire row and if a game only has one picture, there is negative space that could have been used for other categories.

:
StarCraft II is a strategy game created by Blizzard. Its profile picture selection features the portraits' name and background information related to it. Unfortunately, StarCraft also lacks an image sorting system.

League of Legends Branding:
League of Legends' branding is heavily influenced by gold and blue with small accents of other colors. I pulled weapon/ability icons, role icons, loot boxes, as well as ingame UI to draw inspiration from.
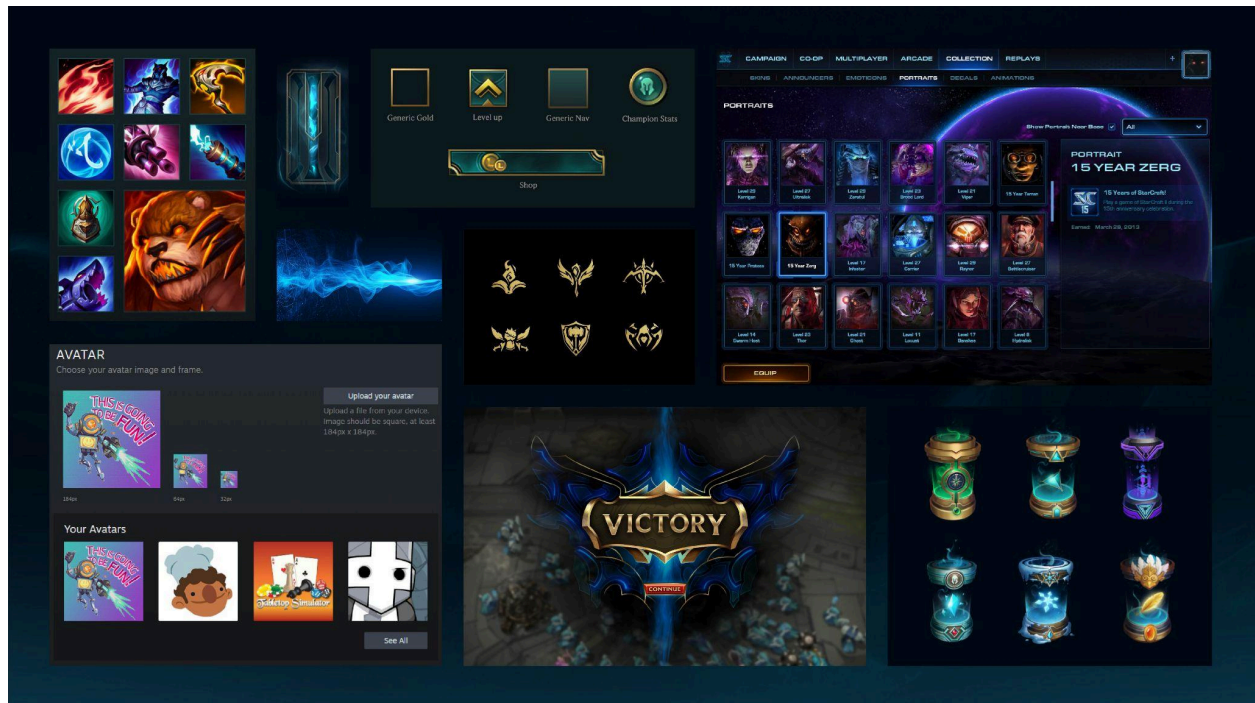
User Interviews:

I wanted to conduct user interviews so I could find out why Summoner Icons are so important to people. I chose to interview League of Legends players that had a mix of experience with the game.

Assumptions:

Prior to interviews, I had assumptions about why providing more clarity to the Summoner Icon tab was necessary, based on the forum posts.

- **To reminisce:** Some League of Legends veterans have been playing since its creation (over 10 years!) There are Summoner Icons that can be used to remember teams that have won the World Championships, in-game events, new champion releases, and more. Creating a tab for icons will allow players to easily walk down memory lane by organizing them by date.
- **Collector/Completionist:** Certain Summoner Icons are limited edition while some can only be purchased or earned at certain points of the year. Having a Summoner Icon tab will help a Collector organize his icons and find which ones they're missing.
- **Show off personality:** Players sometimes use a Summoner Icon to show their favorite champion or how good at the game they are.

Questions:

I reviewed the League of Legends subreddit posts and developed more questions to find out users' thoughts regarding Summoner Icons.

1. How long have you played League of Legends?
2. How often do you play League of Legends?
3. How many Summoner Icons do you own?
4. How often do you change your Summoner Icon?
5. What is your process when picking a Summoner Icon?

Synthesis:

I conducted five interviews in which three of the participants played League of Legends more than three times a week. The other participants played every other week.

Needs:

- **Icon Descriptions:** All of the participants wanted to know how they obtained each icon
    - *"I've been playing League for over 6 years and I can't remember if I got my icon from a mission or an event."*
- **Find a specific icon:** There are over 1,000 Summoner Icons and veteran players have trouble sorting through all of the icons they have collected.
    - *"I really like the Akali icons but it always takes so long to find them."*
- **Categorization:** All participants wanted a way to categorize the icons

- **Ability to easily find new icons:** Four out of five participants changed their Summoner Icon immediately after obtaining a new one.
- **Bigger icon images:** All of the participants enjoy seeing the icon artwork and wanted to appreciate the small details that could only be seen with bigger artwork.

Proto-Persona:

Using findings from my interview, I developed a primary and secondary proto-persona. Creating the proto-personas will help determine the key needs of the League of Legends player base.

Primary Persona: Ashe

Ashe has been playing League of Legends since 2011 and enjoys the competitive aspect of the game. She is a college student who spends her free time playing video games. She loves buying and collecting all of the cute cosmetics including the Star Guardian skin line as well as the chibi Summoner Icons. She has over 600 Summoner Icons and will complete any mission to obtain more.

Needs:
- Easy way to find her icon without looking through hundreds of icons
- Way to remember where she obtain the icon from
- Wants to display multiple icons on her profile

ASHE

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NEEDS
- Easy way to find her favorite icon
- Way to remember where she obtained the icon from
- Wants to display multiple icons on her profile

Secondary Persona: Sett

Sett recently started playing League of Legends and loves playing with his friends. He is a software engineer who doesn't have a lot of free time to play video games. He buys cosmetics when it features his favorite character and occasionally participates in missions. He has around 100 Summoner Icons and doesn't often change his icon because he doesn't own many that he likes.

Needs:
- Easy way to find his favorite icon
- Way to remember where he obtain the icon from
- Find new icons that he would like
- Bigger icon images

From these proto-personas, I determined the key needs of the player base: **a way to find a specific icon** and **a way to recall where the icon came from.**

Designing Solutions:

With the help of my proto-personas, I decided that **categorization and description** would help solve the key needs. I created many different sketches and wireframes that put both key needs at the forefront. After looking through the wireframes, I narrowed them down to the Top 2.
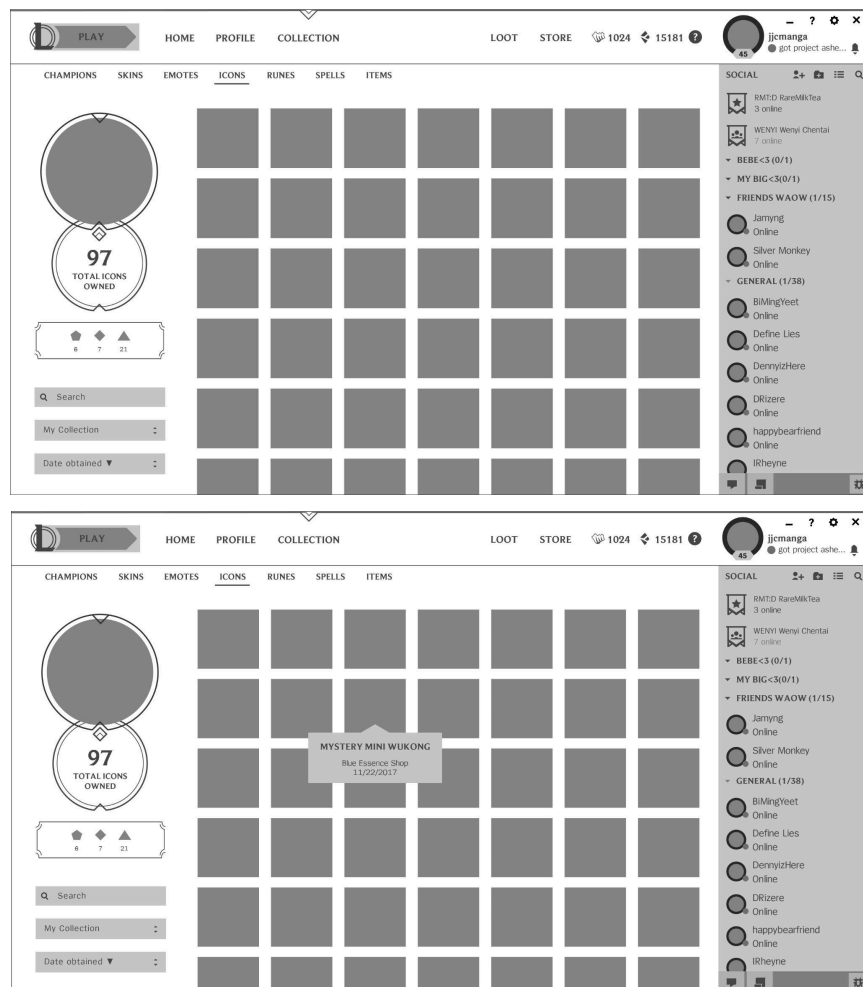
Wireframe A

- Instead of a pop-up window, the Summoner Icon is now integrated into the players' collection which follows Neilsen's consistency heuristic. This **complies with the internal consistency of the League of Legends client,** where the players' collection consists of all earned or bought cosmetics including icons, skins, and emotes.
- The Summoner Icon Collection page now **includes a search bar and sorting drop down menus that are also consistent with other parts of the client.**
- Icons are also categorized by rarity in gems which is consistent with other parts of the client.
- Increased the icon images sizes to show off the artwork.
- After clicking an icon, a drop down content area full of information involving name of icon, date acquired, cost, and origin **helps the user recognize instead of recall.**
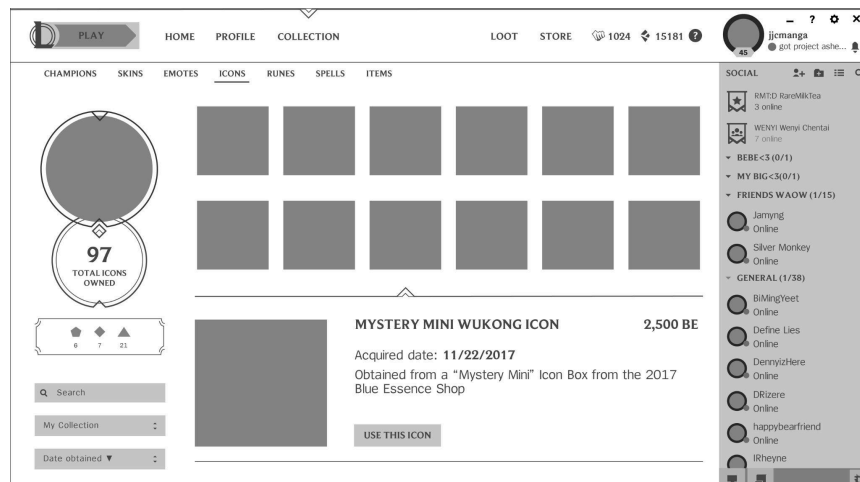
Wireframe B

- Instead of a pop-up window, the Summoner Icon is now integrated into the players' collection which **complies with the internal consistency of the League of Legends client,** where the players' collection consists of all earned or bought cosmetics including icons, skins, and emotes.
- The Summoner Icon Collection page now **includes a search bar and sorting drop down menus that are also consistent with other parts of the client.**
- Icons are also categorized by rarity in gems which is consistent with other parts of the client.
- After hovering over an icon, a content box full of information involving name of icon, date acquired, and origin **helps the user recognize instead of recall.**
- To increase efficiency, this design has an accelerator: double clicking icons to make it the profile picture.
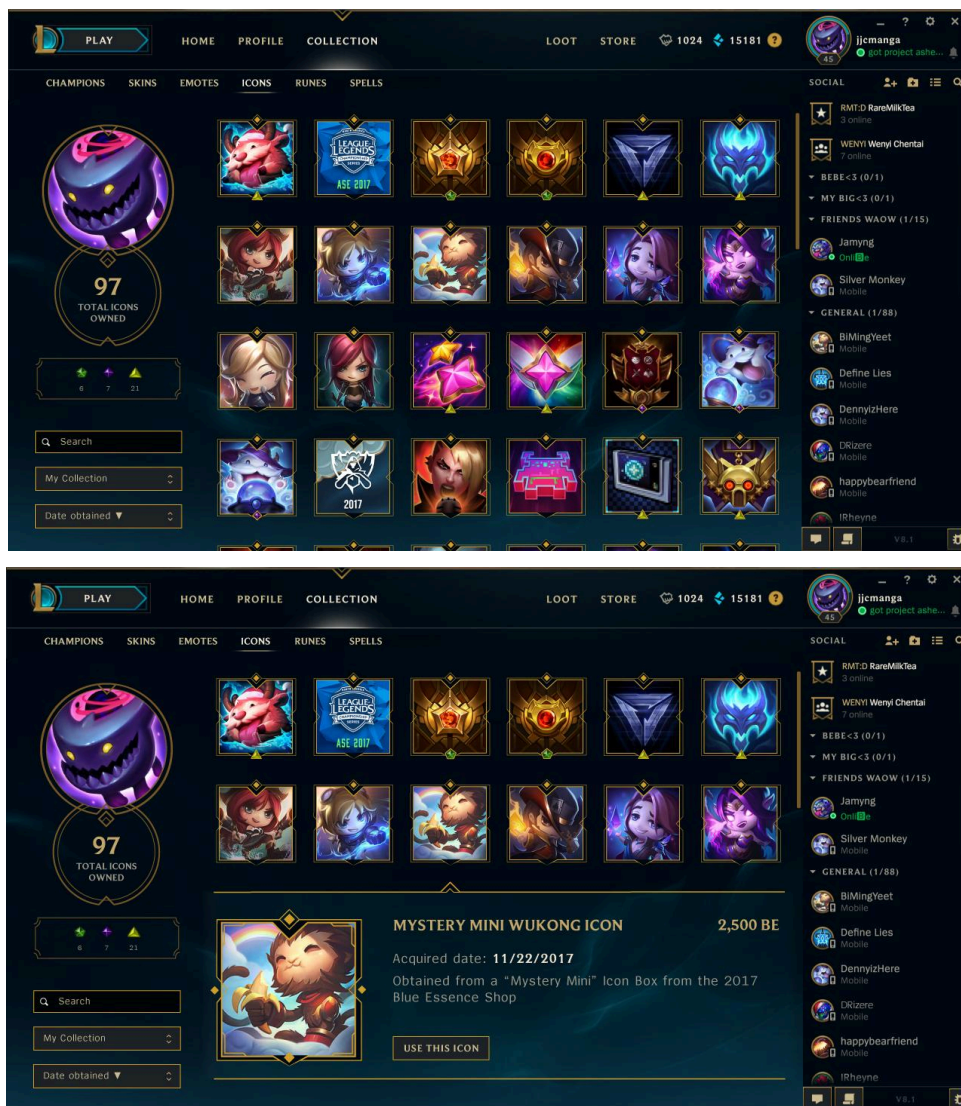
Final Design:

Although both final wireframes fulfilled the key needs, Wireframe A was more aligned with the broader needs as well.

- **Icon Descriptions**
- **Find a specific icon**
- **Categorization**
- **Ability to easily find new icons**
- **Bigger icon images**

Compared to the original Summoner Icon window, the redesigned page includes tools to help the player find their icon of choice which makes finding information and icons much easier.

Results and Testing:

After finalizing the design, I wanted to see how the League of Legends community would react to it. I posted it on [Reddit](#) and **it received over 1,700 upvotes**. It received positive feedback with a couple Riot Games employees reaching out as well!

Many commenters stated that the design was awesome and looked exactly like something Riot Games would design however, some stated that the **icons were too big.**

[Riot SapMagic](#) took the time to give in-depth feedback, commenting about the inline expansion with details about the icons. He suggested to think about the downsides of that design element and how it would affect the rest of the client.
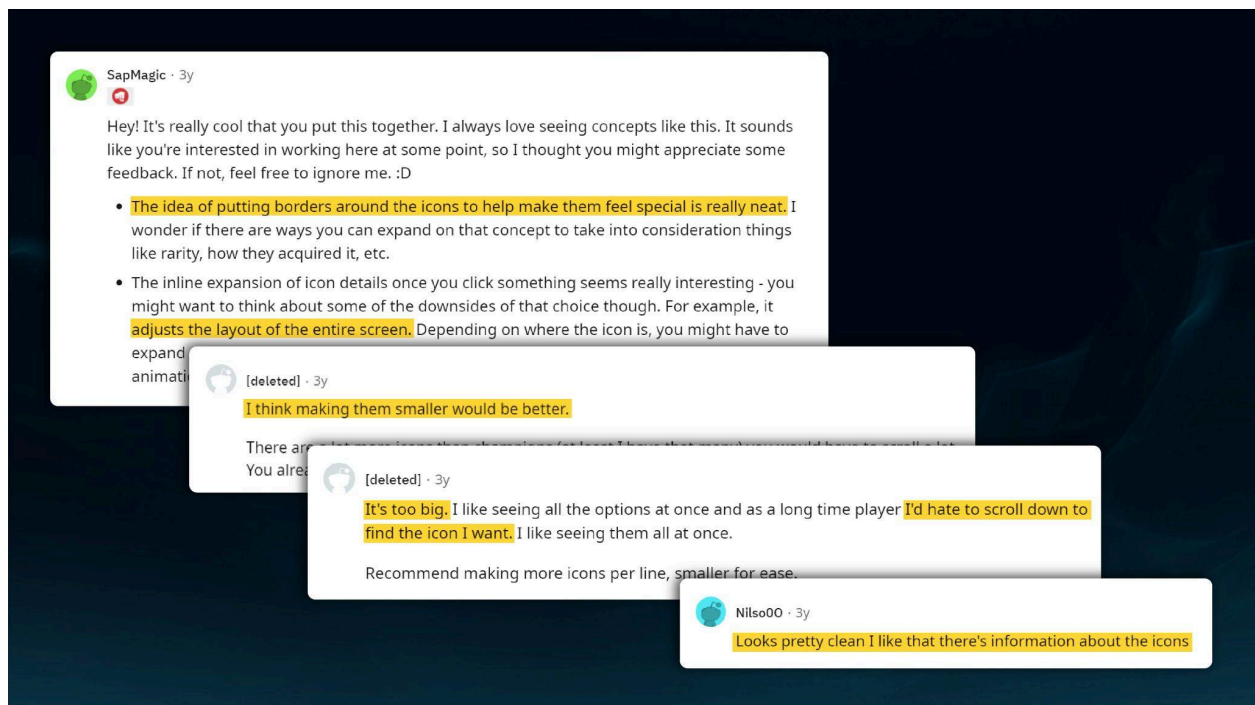
Revisiting the Design:
After hearing the Reddit feedback, I started looking back at the wireframes. I had originally chosen to move forward with Wireframe A because it fulfilled all of the needs however, according to feedback, having bigger icons were not a necessity. I also became concerned with how the inline expansion could cause problems by expanding up or down, pushing elements aside.

I began looking back at Wireframe B's layout. I realized that the design elements in Wireframe B were more **internally consistent with the rest of the League of Legends client.** The **accelerator, double clicking to change the profile picture, also helped increase efficiency** for veteran players. Ultimately after hearing the community feedback, Wireframe B was the better option.
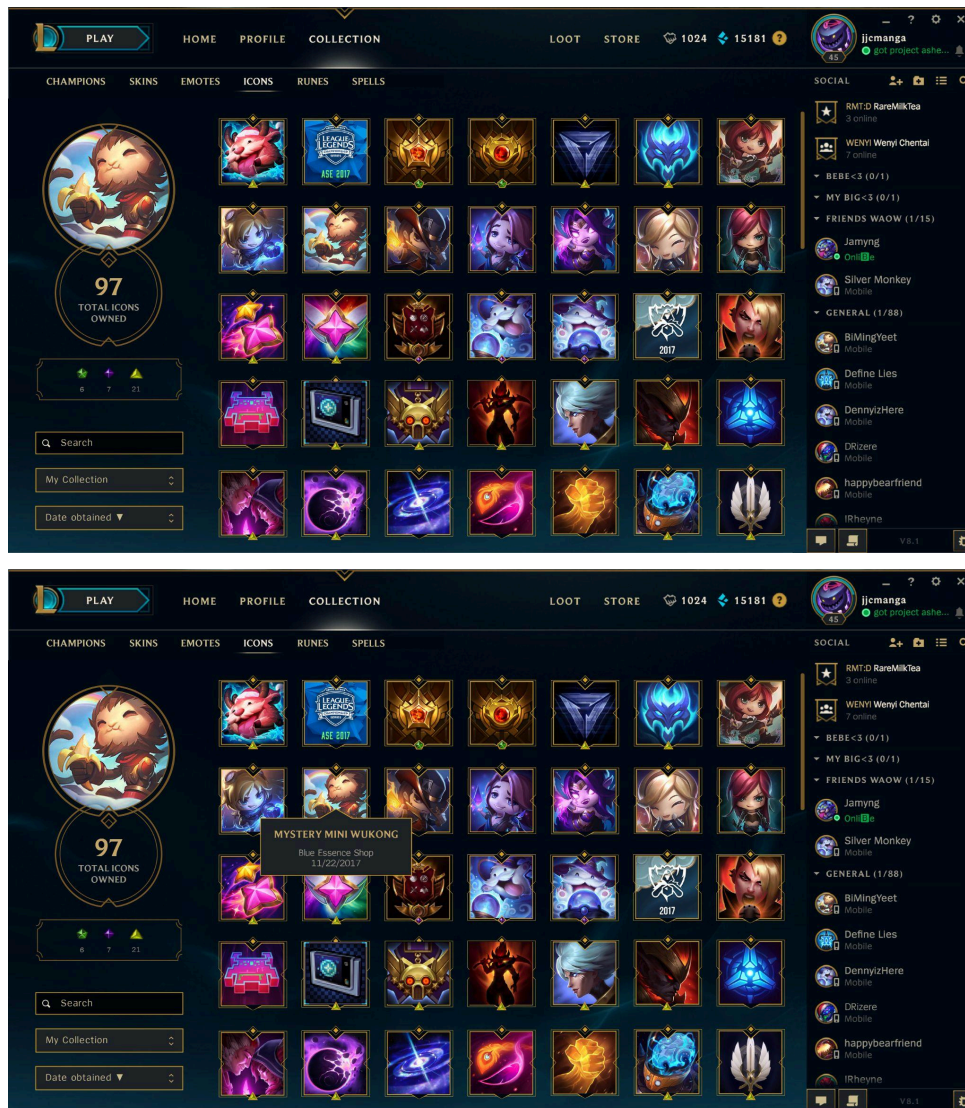
Challenges:
The biggest challenge I had in this design was creating and choosing the wireframe I would move forward with. I had originally thought that Wireframe A would be a better design because it would stand out due to the inline expansion showcasing a bigger version of the Summoner Icon.

Another challenge I had was with receiving usable feedback. When I would ask League of Legends players, they would say that it looks good or bad. There were very few Reddit comments that included design critiques and give reasons why they thought something looked good or bad. In the future, I plan to ask both designers and players.

Reflection:
This project was definitely a huge learning experience for me. I became more comfortable interviewing users and learned more about the UX/UI design process.

After spending 2 weeks on this redesign, I have 2 main takeaways:
- **Take feedback with a grain of salt:** Depending on where you take feedback from, not all of it may be useful. In this case, when I posted on Reddit, many players only looked at the visual aspect of the design. They state that the design looks great or looks terrible, but they don't explain why. Gathering feedback on Reddit can also be dangerous because you aren't speaking to the entire playerbase. Reddit is primarily used by Americans and Europeans whereas League of Legends' player base includes people from all over the world.
- **It's not always about standing out:** You don't need to create a new innovative design if the current system already works. If you have too many different design elements, the user can get confused. It's important to have internal consistency within a design system.

Riot Games' Update to the Summoner Icon Page

My Design   League of Legends Client Update, June 2018