



SoBloks.com

Empowering The Inspired On Cardano

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The current state of social media is a mess. What few platforms there are, they do their best to offer low quality and high click throughs. Legitimate and beneficial (and often critical) content is quickly censored and removed, leaving discourse along the lines of Idiocracy. Unfortunately, our world has become an algorithmically driven personal bubble where what we believe is presented to us consistently like an echo chamber of our own creation, limiting our exposure to new things and new ideas while also having to sort through a great deal of useless content.

Furthermore, the content we are exposed to can be easily manipulated - deleted, silenced or otherwise canceled - with little to no reason and without the public having a say. Some content creators have been shadowbanned or had entire accounts removed for unknown reasons which ended up destroying or significantly damaging their business. Spam bots run rampant and are a significant problem in our current social media streams as they not only artificially inflate metrics, but are also used to mislead and scam users by pretending to be officials, influencers and celebrities, abusing the trust of the unsuspecting.

SoBloks is about empowering the inspired, be it through content creation or community curation. Your Eternal Voice, based on popular vote, will rise to the top for new exposure while the rest vanish, leaving only the best content to remain forever on-chain.

Site Access

As of Q4 '22, we have opened the site to a limited number of beta users via invite only. Anyone can go to sobloks.com and request an invite. We are letting people in on a weekly basis to control the growth while we are still in our beta phase.

Once an invite request has been approved, the user will receive their activation email. This will contain instructions on what to do next and how to sign in to the site. Once signed in, users are encouraged to fill out their profile and can provide the typical range of information most social

networks do such as user name, profile picture, profile banner, name, bio, and initial privacy controls.

In order to create content, a user account will be required to connect either the Nami or Eternl browser light wallet and hold either a Murder of Crows or SoBloks Governance NFT. As we progress with the development of the platform, we envision removing email/otp sign in all together and use the wallet as the primary source of authentication.

Lastly, we provide more information below on how we will allow account holders to monetize their data - if they so choose - in a way that provides them complete anonymous control throughout various sections of the platform.

Primary Features

For Q1 '23 - Q3 '24 (next 12-18 months) we will be focusing primarily on two areas of the platform: posts and groups.

Posts

Posts on SoBloks are where creators craft messages to the world. Unless marked private, anyone can read a post with a web browser. Posts can have text of any length (unlike Twitter - although we recommend keeping it under 64 characters as Cardano does have a limit for metadata size), images, links to other sites, and a combination of these (we will expand to more post types in the future). During the beta to seed BLOK token, we will be granting each post creator.

Followers and other authenticated users can comment on and *boost* (tip) a post by donating BLOK to it. Once a post has crossed a threshold of boosted BLOK (we are still working on this number), then it will unlock and the owner can then choose to mint it on chain as an NFT. Content that cannot cross this threshold after 30 days will be marked as hidden, and after 90 days, deleted from our database. This allows us to create an automated system that naturally evaporates spam and other low interest content. (We will be working with our governance initiative to maintain and tweak these settings.)

For content that is deemed useful and has received enough boost, it will be up to the owner to mint it into an NFT or not. Even if they do not mint it, it has earned the vote to stay in our database. Once minted, however, the owner is free to collect and resell their NFT however they see fit. Each NFT minted will contain a 1% royalty for SoBloks and a 1% royalty for the owner. This will provide a means to reward the system and creator for any future sales of the NFT.

Why do we see value in this? 2021 was a big year for the NFT market. And, like most of crypto, we believe this was just another cycle. While the media coverage has died down for NFTs, Cardano has shown accelerated growth during 2022 placing in the top 3 chains (behind Ethereum and Solana)¹. We think that once the next bull cycle begins, NFT interest will again pick up and this will allow for creators to further monetize their content as NFTs. We see this trend continuing as more and more people look for more digital assets to hold - we are still at the beginning of 'tokenizing everything'.

The keys, we believe, for content creators to monetize their posts will be to build their audience and demonstrate high quality of their content. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and while some may have dismissed the NFT run of '21 as nonsensical, there were many more who jumped in head first. We think it's only a matter of time before this type of content as NFT is as pervasive as any other token one prefers to hold. And while we can't predict the future, our goal is to put the tools and platform in place to grab hold of these opportunities as they arise.

Groups

While posts can have comments tied to them, their content subject is considered more ephemeral and possibly relevant to a particular topic at a particular time. It is not expected that anyone will engage with a particular post over a long period of time (weeks, months, etc). Therefore, we decided that groups were needed to cover the longer tail of a topic. If posts are meant to be more of a broadcast, groups are meant to be more of a longer conversation.

We envision content creators building groups and communities around specific interests of the creators. And besides general topics of interest, groups can serve as a communication, discussion, and marketing channel for various products and services a creator may have - think the difference between a group for UFO enthusiasts vs a group for a shoe company.

Groups contain threaded discussion lists and each group can have its own set of members. Currently there is no limit to the number of groups someone can create/own, nor is there a limit to how many one can belong to. Group owners can decide if a group is public or private and if the latter, membership is subject to invite only. Each group will have a variety of tools the owner can use to monetize their audience if they so choose.

Membership

As we mentioned above, group owners can control the means of membership to their group(s). A public group means anyone can join and post to the group. We think this is what most creators will choose as it's the simplest way to build an audience.

¹ Cardano's NFT space is growing rapidly - <https://coingraph.org/cryptocurrency/cardano-s-nft-space-is-rapidly-growing/>

Private groups, on the other hand, are all about exclusivity. They are invite only and not viewable or searchable by the public at large. Owners will retain complete control over the member list and can curate it however they choose.

In addition to simple private membership, we will provide a mechanism that will allow owners to require members to hold a specific NFT to gain access - this can be in addition to public/private access. For instance, say you create an NFT series of 10,000 tokens. You will be able to specify the NFT policy id and the system will require the user's wallet to hold an nft in that collection in order to gain access. We think the trends are already there for this to augment or replace 'loyalty access' in the future.

Monetization

We envision monetization of groups for both sides; the creator and the audience. For this we will initially provide subscriptions and broadcasts, each benefitting either side.

Subscriptions are where members will pay a fee in BLOK (set by the group owner) on an interval set by the owner. We will provide 1 week, 2 week, and 1 month intervals to start. As the system grows and ideas form in governance discussion, we can end up changing or augmenting this in other unforeseen ways. We expect the set week(s) and month intervals will be what most people expect.

Broadcasts are all about the members and being able to take control of how they wish to take part in the marketing side of the group. In this scenario the owner will pay a fee in BLOK and it will be distributed among all the recipients once they've read or interacted with a specific post in the group. We envision later allowing more fine tune controls where members can decide how much BLOK they're willing to accept in order to receive a broadcast (this will probably surface in the second half of '23).

Additional Goals

We already have the initial foundation for Posts and Groups already developed and deployed. And while we expect to be spending the first half of 2023 building, refactoring, and fine tuning these parts of the platform, we still have a few other goals mapped out for implementation should we have the resources to do so.

Search

In Q4 of '21 we launched an experiment - the first NFT specific search engine for Cardano. The first NFTs minted on Cardano in March 2021 were the Berry NFT series². When we launched in early December '21, our index contained roughly 2.1m NFTs. We shut this service down in September of this year and looked at the data.

Index size: over 4.5m NFTs were indexed - more than doubled in size in 9mo, over 72% growth.

721 Metadata Properties: average number of properties grew March '21 from 2 to 15 by September '22 - over 150%.

Searches: monthly searches on our index grew from ~300/mo in December '22 to ~3500/mo in September '22 - a 168% growth.

Our search experiment proved a success for us and allowed us to collect appropriate data for the quantity of NFTs produced, useful 721 metadata for indexing, and actual search count (usage). With this data, we see a place for search in SoBloks providing useful information not only for users of the platform, but for information seekers outside the platform. We think search can then drive two potentially lucrative sides of the business: ads and marketplace.

Ads

SoBloks was never conceived as an ad-first business, and to be honest, we don't think it's a primary way to generate revenue for a business - we are trying to find the next generation of ways to monetize a business without "you being the product". That being said, we still believe ads can generate revenue if done the right way.

Google and Facebook have shown that given a large enough audience, ads can drive a substantial amount of revenue. However, we have also seen the dark side of this, where these large companies not only profit off ads, but also the selling of user data, usually unbeknownst or permitted by them.

On the other side of this are newly established networks such as those that use the BAT (Basic Attention Token) token to reward users for ad viewership. We envision providing a targeted audience for creators where users have a better way to choose what data they want to expose for ads.

As users build out their profile, we want to provide a set of controls that allow them to surface any of their personal data that ad creators can target. Ad creators can then get access to these anonymized statistics for their campaigns for measurement. Each user can specify the price of

² Berry NFT series - <https://cardano-nft.github.io/BerryNFT/>

their personal data and this is then factored into the ad costs. All pricing and payment is made in BLOK.

We anticipate as user growth occurs and we have the resources to spin search back up into SoBloks, we can then expand further on the feature specifics, timelines and expectations for the ad system. Our big feature for later '23 will be search and ads.

Marketplace

In Jan '22 we also launched another experiment - an NFT marketplace. Our intent for this experiment was to collect data on complexity and usage of an NFT marketplace. Unlike other Cardano NFT marketplaces that had already launched in '21, we decided to build one that contained an escrow from the start. We envisioned this as the simplest, least friction way for individuals to sell their NFTs. Like search, we shut this service down in September '22

What did we learn?

First off, our hypothesis of escrow first was spot on. We had numerous NFT owners putting their NFTs for sale quickly and telling us that our process was 'the best' they experienced in relation to other marketplaces.

Sellers would send their NFT to a system generated on-chain address and then create their auction listing. This process did not require any validation or delays for the seller. Buyers could then place their bids - all on-chain - and once the auction closed, the system automated the refunds of any losing bids, payment to the seller (minus any royalty), and transfer to the buyer. When an auction closed, the buyer usually had the NFT in their wallet in minutes.

Naturally, when we started discussing how we would build SoBloks, it made perfect sense to us that creators that NFT their posts would want a place to sell them. Therefore as far as a marketplace is concerned, our goal for '24 - provided we have the resources - will be to roll out or partner with an existing marketplace. We will announce more information on this in the future.

Blockchain Gaming

Blockchain gaming is still in its infancy, however, we have identified a few initial ways we can provide some feature integration.

Wargum

Wargum is an NFT based tactical multiplayer game that will be made available within SoBloks. A tabletop game in digital form whereby players will purchase models for their custom armies and create competitive lists based on a Point System. These models/NFT's can be sold and traded within the SoBloks marketplace. Tournaments and play data will be maintained on the blockchain.

In addition to Wargum, we will be adding specific Gaming categories to be used in posts, groups, ads, and the marketplace. We envision providing ways creators/owners can upload and provide unique content such as audio, images, and video to deepen the community experience.

Development

Currently SoBloks is built by Jason Appleton (Crypto Crow) and Jason Lee (Nibaru). Jason A. has been a long time advocate for Cardano and Jason L. has been working in cryptosphere since 2016 and the Cardano ecosystem since 2019. All the development of SoBloks has been self funded and for the project to expand, more operations and development resources will be required.

We think the founders executing on the development for the remainder of 2022 will be enough as we continue to work through the details and vision. 2023 will be the year that we need to officially start building out the team and business operations. While we don't expect any immediate profit for 2022-2023, we will need to structure an organization that can onboard official employees and compensate them.

Governance

While we plan to submit a proposal to Cardano's Project Catalyst, we plan to bridge the gap in Q4 2022 by offering a series of NFTs we are calling SoBloks Governance NFTs. We already have code deployed to know if a user is holding a particular NFT (after they have granted basic wallet access to the app), and we are extending this to allow access to governance features for those token holders.

If you look at social media and crypto, there is one glaring, massive difference between the two: centralization.

While crypto has been the pioneer in offering decentralized value over the internet, social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have done the polar opposite. They not only sold user data (unbeknownst to most users) to the highest bidder, they have censored and taken away some of the most important voices of the day, at a time when we need them the most. Say what you will about the man himself, but they even deplatformed the President of the United States.

On one hand, the world seems to be careening out of control while the legacy and social media companies have embraced their role as the champion of all this. On the other hand however, crypto and decentralized blockchain technology have been seen not only as the next internet technology paradigm, but have also been embraced by those that want a more permissionless society.

With SoBlocs we have a unique opportunity to take the best of both worlds. We've embraced the sharing and information exchange pioneered by early social media and have begun to weave it into the decentralized global ledger that is not easily controlled by a few companies or governments. With this approach we can become more censorship resistant as well as more open and transparent with data and processes.

We realized from the beginning when we were building SoBlocs that we needed to open it up. The first phase of this is with our governance plan. Our governance plan will enable holders of a SoBlocs Governance NFT to vote on proposals that bubble up through the SoBlocs Governance groups. All authenticated users have the ability to propose a feature or change to the platform.

Over time, the most popular proposals that do not contain security threats or negatively affect the platform (this will be determined by staff and a small pool of chosen *Representatives*), will then be promoted to a full proposal and then given a formal entry on the governance site. Once a proposal has been scheduled for voting (which lasts anywhere from 48-72 hours), the system will build a Merkle chain of hourly snapshots, hash that information, and then write it on-chain. In addition, SoBlocs will maintain its own cluster of IPFS nodes and all governance and transaction data will be added to IPFS so that there will be a publicly accessible complete snapshot of every proposal's voting data.

We envision governance eventually leading the way on why and how we build the platform. In the beginning, the SoBlocs team will lead with a lot of the design and feature ideation. As we build over time however, and as the community grows, those that use the site day to day (not those that sit in an office and dream up better ways to sell ads) will be the ones that drive the direction.

None of this will be immediate. We are still working through beta level code and features. But we are starting, now, on the first steps. To do this, we are releasing an NFT series that the app will recognize and unlock voting rights for upcoming proposals. Therefore, we have decided on making available 500 of the SoBlocs Governance NFTs. Imagine for a minute if there were 500 regular people, spread out all over the world, that could highly influence how Twitter is built.

With any of the funds we raise through NFT sales, we will use this to continue development and formalize the business entity. During all this time, we will continue working on submitting a project to Cardano's Project Catalyst.

Why Project Catalyst?

Our goal with SoBloks is to expand the number of useful use cases on the Cardano blockchain while increasing engagement and quality content. The success of SoBloks will depend on community involvement, marketing and proper execution of its features.

As we stated in the Governance section, SoBloks has been self funded at this point. We look at the NFT sales as a critical bridge to keep building the system and our first big milestone will be to lock down funding for 2023. In order to do this, we will be creating a Project Catalyst listing in the hopes that we can secure more funding.

Besides a guarantee of funds from Project Catalyst, we also expect to use a successful project proposal as a vote of confidence for the project and team. As we continue forward, this will be crucial to raise awareness of the platform and we hope this will entice more people to become involved.

Content and Token

SoBloks has a native token named BLOK. The total supply is 600,000,000.000000.. The policy id 532a883e663cf04c601857fb23f64a5fd4965934508b76e340715aa1. Our goal for Q4 '22 and into Q1 '23 is to give our users the ability to withdraw/deposit their BLOK tokens so that they can drive the demand for exchange on the various Cardano DEX's. Once we see this adoption and can demonstrate significant utility of BLOK, we can provide additional liquidity as needed. We are still working through the final stages of what the allocations will be and we will update this document accordingly.

Through Q1 2023, we will be working on the process flow for getting posts minted on-chain as NFTs.

Boosting

In order to be able to get a post on-chain, it will need to be *boosted* enough to cross a threshold of 'votes'. Boosts can consist of liking a post as well as contributing BLOK to a post. BLOK, naturally, is worth more than a like since there is an actual cost associated with it. Much like how the Cardano network requires ADA to be sent when a native token is sent in a transaction, BLOK will be used as a mechanism of authentic interest and commitment.

As of October 2022, users that hold a Murder of Crows token in their wallet and the wallet has been connected to their account, users can already create content including posts, groups, and likes. As we work through Q4 '22, we will create the first rules that define what the boost

threshold will be. And like Cardano, as the BLOK token value fluctuates, we will be adjusting the threshold.

Minting

Once the boost threshold has been crossed, the system will *unlock* the post and allow the owner to mint it as an NFT. We list below the two main parts of a post and how it gets on-chain.

1 - the post body. While this can be wrapped in transaction metadata and easily written on-chain, this is not very novel. In 2021, Twitter sold Jack's first post as an NFT. It would therefore make sense to create an NFT from each post written on-chain and have it sent to the payee's address. We will add a 1% royalty to this that goes back to a platform address for the resale.

2 - any rich data. Since posts can contain multiple media types (text, images, audio, video, etc), we will need to do our best to preserve that as well. NFT content such as images, videos, audio, etc, are already saved off onto IPFS with the references saved inside the NFT metadata.

Minting costs can be kept reasonable with a 2-3 ADA mint fee (not including transaction and network fees). We will continue to develop this use case though, through the next few quarters.

Marketing and Community

In order to drive adoption of the platform, we will need to get people interested and invested. We think that our blockchain mechanics will naturally appeal to the Cardano community, but we will also need to employ other marketing approaches.

To begin spreading initial awareness, Crypto Crow has an established YouTube, Rumble, Twitter, and Facebook following and he will begin to leverage all those channels when we think the platform has reached a minimum stability.

The Cardano community is vast and passionate about the current and future implications of the Cardano ecosystem and as such will play a major role in the adoption of SoBloks as the first social media platform on the Cardano blockchain. Through awareness, education and empowerment, we believe that SoBloks will attract the interest of many while continuing to expand its use cases.

Further marketing efforts will be a combination of article writing on major news platforms such as Forbes, CoinTelegraph and many others. Most major news outlets have options for paid article features which we plan to take advantage of to build awareness for the platform, featured content creators and other positive efforts.

SoBlocs.com Advisors will be announced over time and will play roles in marketing, development, user adoption and other elements of the platform.

Platform Technology

SoBlocs is built on the NodeJS platform. This allows for easy integration into a few key Cardano JS libraries. NodeJS also has a wide range of support for database, queues, and other ops related servers, as well as being a widely known and performant development stack.

The SoBlocs front end is a SPA (single page app) built with Javascript and using the Svelte framework. Svelte provides a very fast, easy, and robust framework that allows us to quickly deliver necessary features and fixes at a very quick pace.

Our goal for version 1 will be to build the system as pure layer 2. This will allow us to identify the right cases and dial in all the user flows before we commit any of it to on-chain contracts. Once we're ready for the contracts, we will pick out the most obvious flows (based on various criteria like usage, simplicity/complexity, etc) and begin migrating them to on chain contracts.

In addition, we feel that NodeJS has a great balance of speed and developer productivity. In parallel to identifying flows to migrate to contract, we will also be looking at the parts that cannot and whether or not they deserve any type of performance or efficiency boost. Since we have built a fairly modular api, we will be able to break out these pain points and migrate them over to Go. Go can be more performant and memory efficient than NodeJS and we will use that migration wherever needed.

Besides specifics in the api code, we have deployed from the beginning into a load balanced environment that can easily horizontally scale application servers. Once we can get additional funds and time, we will also be adding in failover instances for our data and caching layers.

Finally, we run our own relay nodes that allow us to make and sign transactions. The upside to this is our app servers don't rely on any 3rd parties for any transaction or chain data. We have built our interface code to also allow us to horizontally scale out more relays as needed. This is something we've done from the start and we're very comfortable now running and using this part of our stack.

Datacenter Information and Costs

We currently run all our servers on the Vultr hosting platform. Not only does Vultr have excellent service and pricing, but we also maintain some community decentralization by not hosting on the big providers like AWS, Azure, or Google. While we don't expect any emergencies from

those providers, we have been very comfortable and have enjoyed very reliable service on Vultr.

Currently, the size of this project doesn't require us to span multiple datacenters. However, as we build a user base and increase usage, we can easily stand up other infrastructure all over the globe. We have experience doing this in past companies and will address this issue when we see the need.

Since we think we've developed a robust SPA and server api infrastructure, we've been able to keep costs down. Depending on the system load, we will stick with our current infrastructure and horizontally scale out more app servers as needed. However, once the funding and development resources become available, we will begin a plan to migrate all the infrastructure to be Kubernetes (K8s) based. We've had experience in the past working on teams with large K8s infrastructure and it will allow us to scale more easily in the future.

As of Q4 2022 we had a monthly hosting bill of only \$200. This includes traffic load balancers, application servers, database server, cache server, and Cardano relay.

Currently we've tested the app servers on our most intensive api endpoint (search) and we can accommodate roughly 1k requests per second. The load balancer is configured for simple round robin least connections and the api endpoints are not overly optimized.

Currently (pre-K8s) we build all our instances from scratch and snapshot them at regular intervals. We also maintain some scripts to bring instances up and down as needed. All instances are firewalled on private networks and managed via private vpn connections. Our load balancer is only exposed on the necessary public ports and our relay node as well. We routinely read various forums, Telegram channels, and sites that provide update and security information on all components in our stack.

Once we start the K8s migration (6-8 mos) the hosting costs could approach \$1k-\$2k/mo. We are budgeting between \$12k-\$24k for year 1 hosting costs on the high end.

Founders



Jason Appleton (Crypto Crow) entered the Blockchain space in 2017 where he began venturing into Crypto Mining and ICO investing. Prior to Youtube, Appleton was in the mortgage industry where he began as a Licensed Mortgage Loan Officer turned Director Of Business Development and then a Business Development Consultant that aided companies in launching new branch offices, hiring and training loan officers and more while breaking sales volume records every step of the way. Prior to that he was a Pro/Am MMA Fight Promoter for 6 years where he started a new promotion that ultimately ended up with a regional TV series while pitting UFC veterans against up and coming talent looking for their steps to stardom.

Linked in: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jasonappleton/>



Jason Lee (Nibarū) is a language polyglot. He's self-taught and has been building and programming since he was a teen. Jason has touched every level of the stack, has held a variety of positions at startups and well established companies, and finds out how to make the unknown, known. During his career he's led a number of teams that have started as scribbles on the back of a napkin or whiteboard, to proof of concepts and full blown applications. His focus has always been on breadth and enough depth for every project he's worked on. Through his career, he's worked with a number of inspiring managers and co-workers and has learned how to use that experience to inspire and mentor other team members. Jason's been called an 'ideal founder' by many he's worked with because of his ability to grab hold of an idea and work it into a usable product.

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