Pfeiffer Report

Adobe Creative Cloud Libraries:

Boosting productivity for creative teams

About this research

This report presents the findings of a market-specific benchmarking project conducted by Pfeiffer Consulting for Adobe. The main aim of the research was **to document the efficiency and productivity gains linked to the use of Creative Cloud Libraries for sharing assets and settings**, compared to results obtained with other methods of sharing design elements, such as e-mail, servers, or cloud storage.

Benchmarks were executed using *Pfeiffer Consulting's Methodology for Productivity Benchmarking*, which has been fine-tuned over more than a decade, and measures the time experienced operators take to execute specific tasks. Please refer to the Methodology section on the last page of this document for more information.

About Libraries

Creative Cloud Libraries were introduced to help streamline the workflow of creative professionals, by allowing them to store and retrieve assets such as graphics or images, text styles, color swatches and more; **Libraries not only speed up work for individual users, they also increase accelerate collaboration**, since they can be shared with other team-members or outside collaborators. **As changes to items in a library occur, they are automatically updated for all users with access to the library.**

The productivity impact of using Libraries can be very significant: On average, based on all 15 workflow scenarios benchmarked for this research, **sharing with Libraries was almost eight times faster than other methods**. (See chart below.)

Executive Summary

▷ **Libraries are a significant extension of the Creative Cloud ecosystem**, that increase integration between different applications, improve workflow productivity, and make sharing and updating of assets and settings much easier than conventional methods.

▷ **The productivity impact of Libraries is particularly notable for creative teams.** Using shared assets and updating modified content is significantly faster using Libraries than working with individual files.

▷ The use of Libraries can **help corporations ensure brand consistency** across a wide range of creative projects.

▷ Benchmarks conducted for this research show that **productivity gains linked to the use of Libraries can be very significant.** (See chart below.)

Key Benchmark Results: Average of 15 Workflow Scenarios

With Libraries (13 %)

Without Libraries (100 %)

Chart based on the average of 15 different workflow scenarios per solution.
A total of 186 individual benchmark measures were taken.
Reference value: Average time when working without Libraries. **Shorter is better.**

Creative Cloud Libraries: Core productivity advantages

How Libraries work

At their very core, **Libraries are a convenient way of storing and accessing frequently used items and settings** — within one specific application, but, more importantly with other Creative Cloud apps as well, in order, for instance, to make Illustrator graphics available for Photoshop or XD users, or to transfer character and paragraph styles between different applications. **This capacity significantly improves integration in the Creative Cloud ecosystem**, tying together applications as different as Illustrator and After Effects, InDesign and Dimension.

The productivity impact of using Libraries is obvious even with very simple examples: Thus, placing a vector graphic from a library is almost three times faster than fetching it from a file on a local hard drive. (See chart below.)
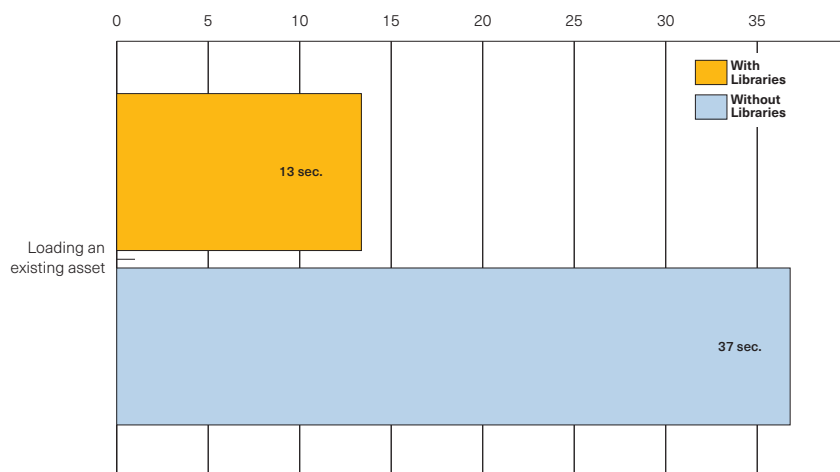
Libraries and mobile apps

For several years now, Adobe has expanded the Creative Cloud ecosystem beyond the realm of desktop applications, by providing companion apps that run on smartphones or tablets. Increasingly, the preferred way these apps integrate with their desktop siblings is through

Major Points

▷ **Libraries is a convenient and efficient way of storing and sharing frequently used assets**, such as images, graphics, type specification, color palettes and more.

▷ Using Libraries not only **makes integration between Creative Cloud apps much easier,** it also allows for assets to be **shared across teams, and provides automatic syncing** of modified elements between applications and users.

▷ **The Creative Cloud desktop app acts as a hub for organizing and managing Libraries,** and helps sorting, grouping and importing of creative assets.

Comparing loading an asset from a local file to using Libraries
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

*Creative professionals often retrieve frequently used assets or settings such as style sheets from previous projects on their hard drive. **Using Libraries to complete these tasks is significantly more efficient,** as these benchmarks show.*

Groups and notes

While many users are unlikely to collect hundreds or thousands of items in a library, **Libraries can actually handle very large data sets** (up to 10 000 items per library at latest count.) But this also means that finding the correct item could be tricky.

To deal with this issue, Libraries has several ways of speeding up work with large numbers of assets. There are groups, of course: **Items can be automatically grouped by type — but users can also create custom groups**, combining, for instance, all essential elements for a specific project.

Equally important are notes which users can attach to each item. Both notes and item names can be searched, making pinpointing the correct item in a large library very efficient.

Libraries. **Case in point: Adobe Capture.** The app is designed to help creatives collect elements in the real world for their work: It can recognize typefaces seen while walking around, capture vector shapes, color palettes, looks and patterns, not to mention real-world details to be used as brushes in Photoshop, — and even materials for 3D visualization in Adobe Dimension. **Every item captured is sent to the currently selected library, and immediately available to all compatible apps.**

The collaboration angle

While there is a clear benefit to Libraries for individual users who are combining different applications in their work, **it is in the context of collaboration that productivity gains are the most notable.**

Creative professionals working on the same project usually share design elements, graphics and settings such as type styles and color palettes in one of three different ways: attaching them to an e-mail, sharing them over a server, or using cloud storage to make these files accessible. **While individually, these operations may only take a minute or two, their frequency in the collaborative design process adds up considerably over time,** as our benchmarks show. (See table on page 7)

One should also point out another, harder to quantify, benefit of using Libraries: By avoiding conventional methods of sharing assets and settings, **it also significantly reduces the risk that a team member inadvertently uses an outdated version of an item.**

## Creative Cloud Desktop App: Managing Libraries — and more…

The Creative Cloud desktop app provides a convenient way for managing Libraries, particularly in a team workflow.

Libraries provide options for managing and organizing library assets as they are created directly on the Libraries panel available in each application. This works well enough, yet it is not the most efficient way of dealing with more comprehensive management tasks.

That's where the new release of the Creative Cloud desktop app comes in. While previous releases of the Creative Cloud app primarily focused on installing applications and downloading updates, as well as accessing Creative Cloud assets, **the new version actually extends the feature set in order to act like a hub for many different aspects essential to Creative Cloud users:** downloading and updating apps of course, but also finding more information on available apps, accessing tutorials for Creative Cloud applications, and managing creative assets — and in particular Libraries.

More specifically, working with the Creative Cloud desktop app, users can **create and manage Libraries, add items in bulk, view assets with resizable previews, and of course rename and reorganize items** as well as export assets stored in Libraries.
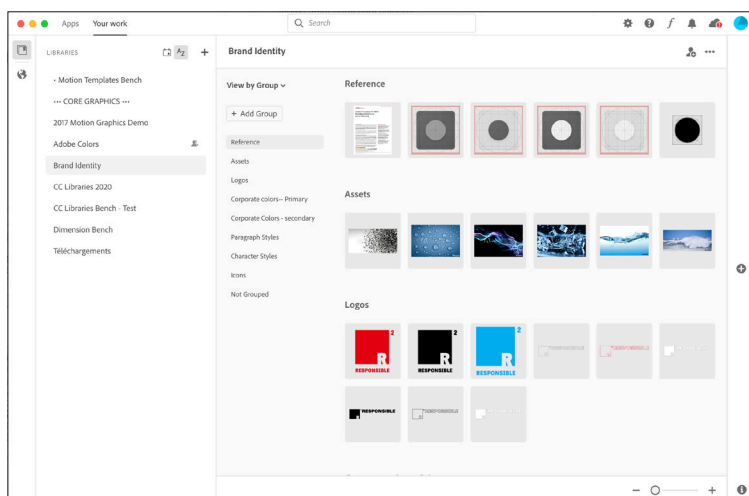
How Creative Cloud Libraries speed up team collaboration

Team collaboration in the creative space

Under the best of circumstances, team collaboration is a complex issue that requires careful planning. **In the case of creative teams, complexity and potential problems can rise exponentially,** given the diversity of programs, data formats and competencies involved.

Practically speaking, each creative project usually involves programs as diverse as Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, XD, and many more. Integrating and combining the output from each one of them in an efficient way has always been one of the core challenges of managing a creative team workflow.

While integrating data from all these applications is a well-understood process, doing so with minimal friction remains a challenge. **By providing access to core creative assets in a transparent way across all applications, Libraries can have a significant impact on team productivity**, as the benchmarks for this research show.

The key aspect of these productivity gains are based on the fact that seemingly small productivity gains of a few seconds or minutes for a single operation (say, accessing a creative asset through Libraries instead of using a corporate file server) **can add up to hours of time-savings at the scale of a team.** (See charts on page 5 and 7).

Major Points

▷ Using Libraries to share assets and settings among workgroups **can provide very significant productivity gains** over other methods of sharing.

▷ Libraries can help corporations **manage brand consistency in creative projects more efficiently** across teams and projects.

▷ Integration of Libraries with Microsoft Office applications such as Word and PowerPoint **allows companies to insure coherence of corporate design assets in office documents and presentations.**

Collaboration benchmarks: Sharing assets (e-mail/server average)
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.
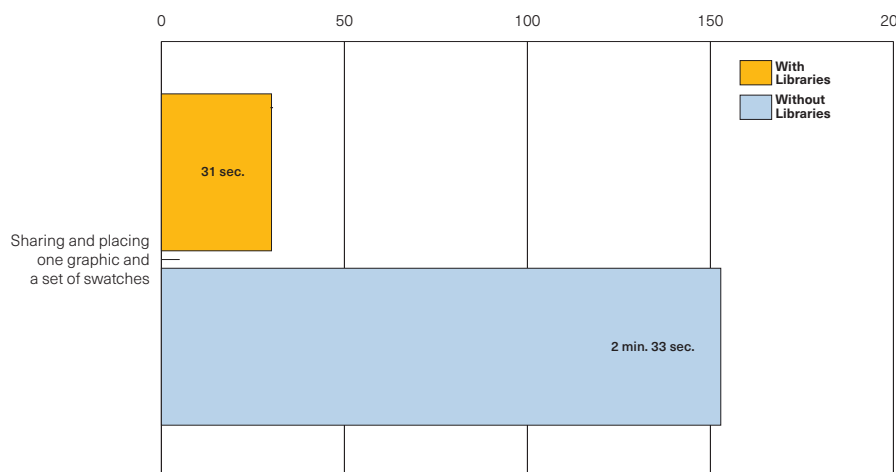
*Sharing settings such as color swatches or style sheets is time consuming using conventional methods, since these data need to be specifically exported from a program to be used in another application. The data in this chart show the average benchmark results for using a file server or e-mail to complete these tasks. **Libraries has a very significant productivity advantage for these operations.***

Beyond productivity, **using Libraries helps insure another vital aspect in corporate creative projects: brand consistency.** Making sure that core elements of the corporate identity such as typefaces, color palettes, not to mention corporate assets are consistently used and pervasively applied in their latest correct version is essential.

Yet, given the complexity and diversity of the applications involved, this can be challenging, especially since very often the list of creatives working on a project extends beyond the in-house creative team to outside collaborators, who may not have access to servers where assets are stored. **Libraries, on the other hand, insure** that everybody with access to a library always has the latest version of any asset or setting, and that they are updated automatically as revisions occur.

Integration with the office environment: While currently limited to Creative Cloud applications, future releases of **Libraries will provide integration with two key applications in corporate communications, Microsoft Word and PowerPoint,** allowing office users to easily access corporate assets, and insuring that the correct version is used, effectively **extending brand consistency beyond the realm of creative applications**.

Libraries collaboration benchmarks: Key results
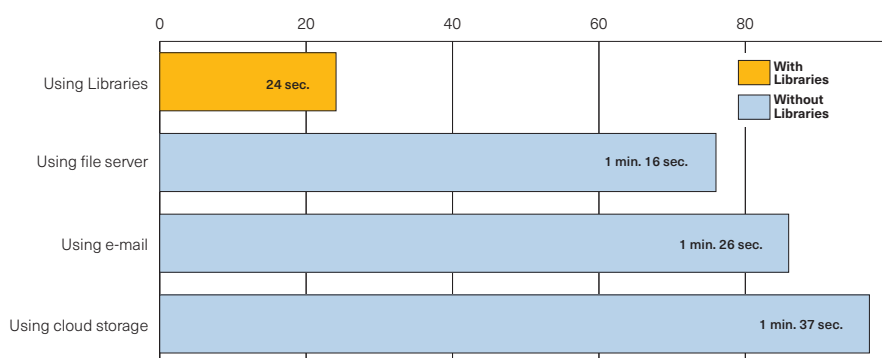
Sharing assets through Libraries:
Creative teams usually share assets and settings using a file server, e-mail, or a cloud storage solution, but these methods are far less efficient than using Libraries for the same tasks.
Sharing a single item with a co-worker using **Libraries required less than 30 seconds on average in our benchmarks, while other methods took three to four times longer.**

Time necessary for sharing one asset with a co-worker (best case scenario)
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

	With Libraries	Without Libraries

Using Libraries — 24 sec.
Using file server — 1 min. 16 sec.
Using e-mail — 1 min. 26 sec.
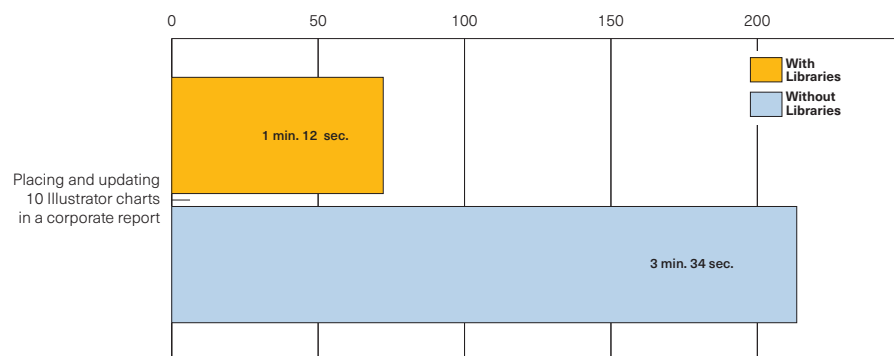Using cloud storage — 1 min. 37 sec.

Design collaboration: In our benchmarks we measured the time necessary for a designer to place ten individual charts in the InDesign layout of a corporate report, and to update them as one iteration occurred. **Using Libraries, these tasks could be completed three times faster than sharing charts and updates through e-mail.**

Collaboration benchmarks: Illustrator and InDesign
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

	With Libraries	Without Libraries

Placing and updating 10 Illustrator charts in a corporate report
With Libraries: 1 min. 12 sec.
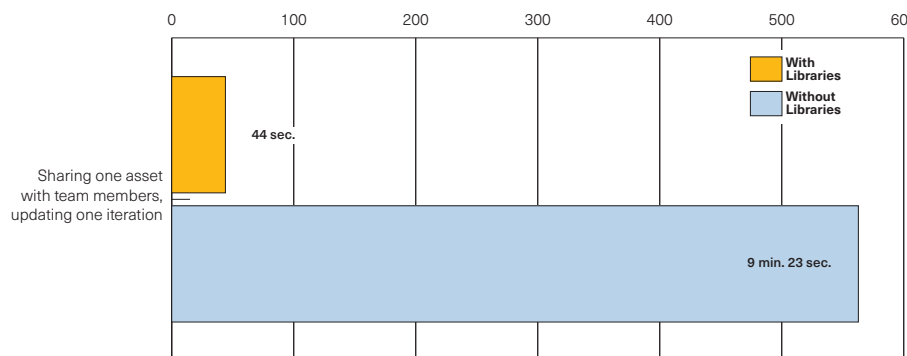Without Libraries: 3 min. 34 sec.

Team collaboration benchmarks: This benchmark analyzed the total time spent by a team of five creatives accessing and placing an asset using cloud storage, and updating it after a modification. **Libraries is dramatically faster in these operations,** last not least because updates to an asset retrieved from a library are automatically performed for each instance.

Team collaboration benchmarks: Team of 5 (using cloud storage)
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

	With Libraries	Without Libraries

Sharing one asset with team members, updating one iteration
With Libraries: 44 sec.
Without Libraries: 9 min. 23 sec.

Targeted collaboration scenarios for Creative Cloud Libraries

Integrating profoundly diverse workflows

Over the past few years, the requirements for creative projects have skyrocketed. While not so long ago, the typical creative workflow was more or less limited to print-based designs on one side and web-pages on the other, creative professionals are now confronted with a seemingly limitless variety of output channels, image formats, and platforms.

This also means that assets that start out as an Illustrator graphic or a Photoshop composition will need to be adapted for social media channels, mobile devices and, increasingly, mobile apps. Add to that the fact that the number of individual elements in such a design can be mind-boggling, and it becomes clear that **there are many different ways in which Libraries can optimize this integration.** One of these scenarios is the creation of a corporate style guide, (see sidebar on the following page). Another one is user experience (UX) design.

Libraries and Adobe XD

In just a few years, UX design and the creation of interactive experiences has become one of the most dynamic segments in the creative space. Unlike graphic design, which usually works with a limited

Major Points

▷ **Libraries can help streamline many different workflow scenarios**, by providing easy sharing of assets, settings and type specifications, among others.

▷ Combining Libraries with Adobe XD **significantly improves the integration between the UX design environment and key creative applications** such as Photoshop and Illustrator.

▷ Implementing a corporate style guide using Libraries **simplifies the use of design specifications and improves brand consistency** across a wide range of creative applications.

Style Guide Benchmarks: Retrieving and using type specs and color values
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

Legend:
- With Libraries
- Without Libraries

finding and implementing corporate type specs and colors

54 sec.

6 min. 35 sec.
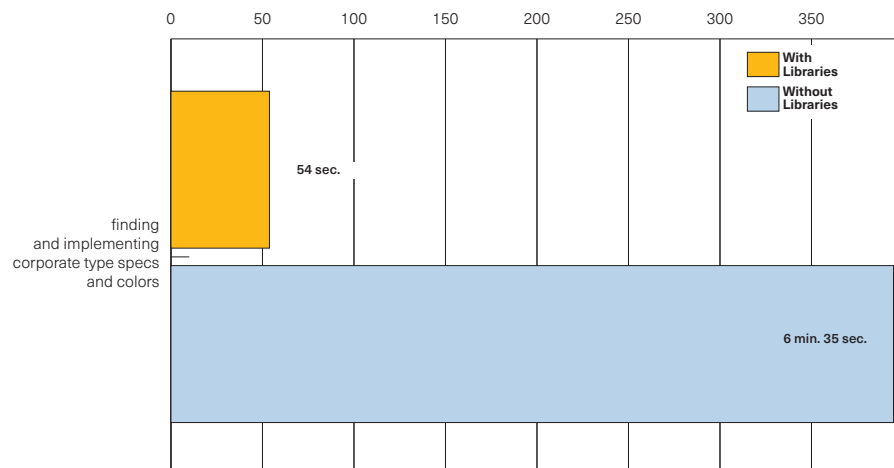
*Retrieving corporate brand guidelines, usually available as a PDF document or a web resource, can take considerable time. In this benchmark we measured the time necessary to retrieve type specs and color values from 3 different real-world style guides, and the time it took to create the corresponding style sheets and color swatches. **Retrieving these settings from Libraries took under one minute, compared to six and a half minutes** on average achieving the same results using a PDF style guide.*

How time savings with Libraries scale with team-size

Size of team	Time saved by using Libraries to share assets, compared to using a server			
	Number of occurrences			
	1	5	10	20
1	Time saved by one operation: 52 sec.	04 min. 19 sec.	08 min. 39 sec.	17 min. 18 sec.
5	04 min. 19 sec.	21 min. 37 sec.	43 min. 15 sec.	1 h. 26 min. 30 sec.
10	08 min. 39 sec.	43 min. 15 sec.	1 h. 26 min. 30 sec.	2 h. 52 min. 59 sec.
15	12 min. 58 sec.	1 h. 04 min. 52 sec.	2 h. 09 min. 45 sec.	**4 h. 19 min. 29 sec.**

*Using Libraries instead of a server to share an asset **saves the user at least 52 seconds for a single operation.** (See chart page 5.). As team size and the number of operations increase, **time savings for this simple operations can easily reach hours.***

number of elements, UX design is based on variations of a core design concept, which is then iterated over dozen or hundreds of screen layouts that need to be consistent in terms of style and graphic elements.

In addition, UX design usually happens in an application such as XD, but draws heavily upon elements from Photoshop or Illustrator, usually created by other members of the creative team. Keeping all these elements in sync, and making sure iterations are automatically rippled through every single instance of an icon or a design element can be challenging — as well as time-consuming.

Using Libraries instead of importing Illustrator or Photoshop files significantly eases and streamlines this integration, since all of the necessary elements can be stored and organized in a library, and are updated automatically across the UX design created in XD.

Creating a corporate style guide with Libraries
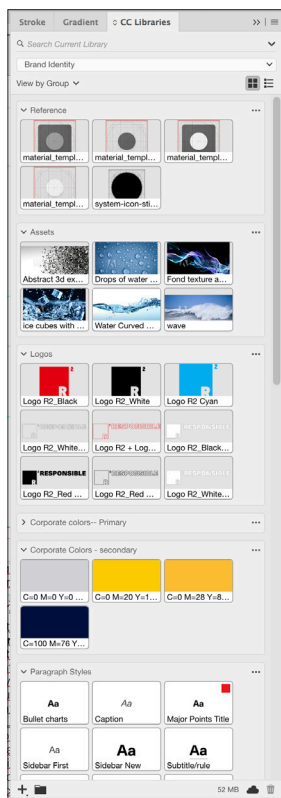
*Libraries can be used to assemble key assets, settings and specifications of a corporate style guide, **making sure that all occurrences of items are always in sync for all users.***

Style guides or brand manuals are the cornerstone of any corporate identity, since they **compile all the information necessary to insure brand consistency:** Corporate typefaces, different logo-designs for each possible use of a corporate trademark, color swatches, corporate imagery, and more.

While these brand manuals are indispensable for designers, putting them to good use is time-consuming, since information such as the CMYK or web-safe values for a corporate color need to be looked up and implemented manually, which is not only slow (see chart on previous page), but also potentially error-prone.

Libraries can significantly ease this process, by giving users direct access to color swatches, paragraph and character styles, corporate assets and approved graphic elements, and by keeping them in sync. Creating such a style guide in Libraries is straightforward: all it takes is to select the properly formatted element and to add it to the proper library.

In addition, design elements can be grouped both automatically by element-type, or collected in custom groups. **Searchable notes can be added to each element to provide precise usage instructions or other vital information to insure brand consistency.**

Methodology

This benchmark project was commissioned by Adobe and independently executed by Pfeiffer Consulting.

All the productivity measures presented in this document are based on real-world workflow examples, designed and executed by professionals with many years of experience with the programs and workflows involved.

How we measure productivity

The basic approach is simple: in order to assess productivity gains that a program or solution may (or may not) bring, we start by analyzing the minimum number of steps necessary to achieve a given result in each of the applications or workflows that have to be compared.

Once this list of actions has been clearly established, we start to execute the operation or workflow in each solution, with the help of seasoned professionals who have long-standing experience in the field and with the solutions that are tested.

Every set of steps is executed three times, the average of the three measures is used.

About Pfeiffer Consulting

Pfeiffer Consulting is an independent technology research and benchmarking operation focused on the needs of publishing, digital content production, and new media professionals.

For more information, please contact
research@pfeifferreport.com

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