

Abstract

This proposal seeks to gain funding and support for an archiving site for the history of the Pitt Band. Specifically, this plan will condense other repositories, both physical and scanned, into a searchable archive. The site will also feature exhibits and simple web pages to further add context to the items added. This project will reduce the time needed to find historical objects for the current band and related band organizations, as well as documenting items for alumni whose lives are tied deeply to the Pitt Band. Support for this project will help tie together the past and current band and will provide a better understanding of the history of the organization and how this affects the organization today.

Introduction

The Pittsburgh Varsity Marching Band is the largest student organization on the University of Pittsburgh's campus. The organization formed in 1911 as a 8 person contingent ("History," 2019). An excess of material relating to the band exists, from photos, to halftime programs, to oral stories as the band marches its 113th season and has grown to over 300 members per season. Currently, several collections contain Pitt Band History, but they are all separate, not searchable, and not organized. Several band organizations use historical pictures and documents for projects, as well as a historical book produced every 25 years. The lack of a consistent collection leads to each of these projects needing to effectively start from scratch, wasting time and resources. Other University marching bands, such as Purdue and Oregon State have created multimedia archives, but most do not have histories earlier than the 2000s and are focused on halftime marching shows. This project would create an archive with materials from the beginning of the Pitt Band in 1911, recording not only the shows, but also the culture and experience of a marcher in the Pitt Band.

Project Description

The goal of this project is to use Omeka, an open source platform for digital collections to reduce the time needed for searching through photos and papers by digitizing and organizing materials related to the Pitt Band and its history. The University of Pittsburgh Library System has provided the band with a platform called Omeka, which can store files as items, as well as provide an option to create simple web pages and exhibits using the files on the site. This website will combine materials from the various collections into one location, complete with titles, tags, and collections to make the materials much easier to find.

To create this archive, the members of this project will need to contact alumni about their lived experiences. The alumni can also assist through organizing documents that are mislabelled. After receiving the files, the team will categorize and store them as items within the site, sometimes with several files under one item. Information will accompany

these items to provide context and citations. The titles will inform future users an understanding of the files contained within, as well as descriptions given when additional context is needed. The team will heavily utilize the “tagging” feature of the Omeka sites, providing each item with as many tags as apply. This system will allow for users to click on a tag, for example “bandcamp,” and see all of the images that fall into that category.

In addition, the stories of these alumni can help put together compelling exhibits and anecdotes for the website, as well as providing context to the materials. The exhibits will highlight certain aspects of the Pitt Band, such as uniforms, letters from organizations, and band camp history, using the Omeka site’s layout with text and images to give a greater understanding of the historical and present Pitt Band. The web pages on the overall website will further focus the attention, with pages for each band organization, as well as one for the former organizations.

The work of proper archiving takes extensive time, especially with the lack of consistent record keeping. Many of the items in other collections are incorrectly dated, which can create conflicting timelines and data. By supporting this project and providing guidance on archiving, the Pitt Band’s long and full history will be properly recorded.

Conclusion

The Pitt Band Omeka Website will help bring together all of the resources on the Pitt Band. The site will have exhibits providing a deeper appreciation of the items and history. The site will also allow for easier access to archival material for future projects.

The Pitt Band has played an integral part of countless member’s lives, completely forming their college experience. Band organizations are a vital part for both helping run Pitt Band and band members’ experiences within the band, so showcasing their history will make the website a more holistic view of the Pitt Band. The ability to highlight aspects of the program that led to the positive experiences is a worthwhile endeavor, especially to provide the future members of the Pitt Band an easy trove of information to further educate them on Pitt Band History.

References

History of the band: Early Years. University of Pittsburgh Band. (2019).
<https://pittband.com/sports/2019/8/7/history-of-the-band-early-years.aspx>