Project Proposal

Client: Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh
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About the Organization

The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, located in Greenfield, is a multi-purpose hub for education, events, art, and more. Its mission is to *inspire engagement with the history of the Holocaust and to connect with it today*. Some of their goals are to connect with other victimized groups, use art as a communication tool, and maximize their impact by working with teachers to develop diverse curricula.

The center provides sixteen different programs, ranging from speaker series to internships to short-term exhibits. Their visitors are mainly student groups who visit the center on field trips as well as Holocaust survivors and the greater Jewish community. The physical location is a compact building within a shopping center, so there are rarely drop-in visitors.

The six staff members of the Holocaust Center work below the visitor center in a cheerful, open space which also houses the library. The center typically holds events for groups ranging from 20 to 60 people. Mostly local schools visit the center, but it is also the closest Holocaust center for schools in Ohio or farther.

Jackie, the marketing and education associate, is the primary technology contact. She developed the website and has worked with HTML and CSS in the past.

Programs

Programs at the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh focus largely on education and exposing first-hand survivor stories to the public. None of the programs currently make use of technology, aside from contact forms found on the organization's website.

<u>Chutz Pow - Comic Book Series</u>
Appropriately subtitled 'Superheroes of the Holocaust', this comic book series aims to place stories of survivor's courage, resilience and sacrifice at the forefront of Holocaust awareness. The series aims to not only educate but also inspire readers to promote social justice, peace and compassion. It was created with a companion educational curriculum so it could be utilized in educational settings. Physical copies can be ordered by phone or through a form on the center's website; digitizing this project was a prospect the clients were very interested in.

<u>Speaker Series</u>
The Holocaust Center hosts survivors and/or their family to speak about their personal connections to the Holocaust. They will often host students on field trips to visit the facility and listen to the speakers' stories. There are footages of speaker speeches on video, but they are not publicized on any online medium. The clients were interested in an online platform to make this resource universally available.

Staff

The center currently has a fairly dynamic staff from our understanding. The staff is made up of 6 staff members. The center is run by the Director, Lauren who has been there for 3 years. She has many roles in the center including overall planning, programming, and development. Another key member of the center who we are working with is Jackie. Jackie has many roles including a focus on marketing and education. Jackie graduated from Carnegie Mellon's Heinz College and has some technical knowledge including how to use wordpress. Additional staff at the center includes a Development and Fundraising DIrector, an Administrative Assistant and an on staff Artistic and Educator.

Information Management

The organization's current primary information systems are their book management system and website. Their book management system helps them manage inventory, but does not support an online archive or a checkout system. This system is currently not a priority given they have two volunteers trained in library management helping update their database, and the center is not focused on growing as a resource center. The website is crucial for the organization for publishing information and collecting orders / sign-ups through embedded forms. The website was created by Jackie, a member of staff who graduated from Heinz and is proficient in HTML.

The client is currently not managing too much data about education. Before and after each school field trip, staff members try to collect ad-hoc feedback by directly calling teachers, but this results in information that is generic, ineffective and unorganized. Currently, this is where both the team and client see the most opportunity for improvement.

Project Opportunity

The Holocaust Center does not have a lack of programs; rather, they lack a platform to connect these programs and the physical space to carry out these programs. They want students to be able to engage with the material before, during, and after their visit, and they want teachers to be able to explore different perspectives when teaching about the Holocaust. Additionally, the Holocaust Center wants to be a resource both for people who visit in-person but also for those who cannot visit.

Holocaust survivor stories are the most impactful and personal ways to communicate the horrors of the Holocaust. Holocaust survivor stories are important to Holocaust education because it puts a face and a real life story to the people that lived through the cruelty of the Nazi regime. Furthermore, a major problem in the contemporary Holocaust education is the aging of Holocaust survivors where they are no longer able to tell their stories and share their experiences with the world. To address this issue, the Center created Chutz-Pow, a comic book series, to tell the stories of Holocaust survivors with a younger audience in mind.

Given the professional standard, historical accuracy and interactiveness of the series, "digitizing" this project will be the perfect focus for an engaging and innovative educational platform that is unique to the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh.

Proposed Project Vision

The tool we are proposing to develop allows users to engage with the stories of the Holocaust through an interactive, online version of Chutz-Pow. It will tie together all of the resources the Holocaust Center has to offer, providing a cohesive platform for learning and engagement. This platform will showcase the unique value of Chutz-Pow and allow students from all over the world to engage with Holocaust stories on a personal level. The platform we build will provide a streamlined user experience for the staff; adding resources (images, video clips, text, etc.) and uploading comic panels from Chutz-Pow will be a quick and easy process.

Currently, most archives of Holocaust Survivor stories are not user friendly, and feel like they are just an interface for dealing with a database. The tool we are proposing makes every step of the process a user-friendly, thought-provoking experience, whether it is for the staff members uploading content or the readers.

We plan to use modern web technologies to create an easy to use tool to develop responsive web pages telling the story of Holocaust Survivors through Chutz-Pow. The core principle of the application is that the data and the view are separated so that data can easily be added to the system and without any work on the users end, a beautifully crafted experience for a reader is prepared through our adaptive technologies.

Expected Outcome

This educational platform will provide a unique learning opportunity for visitors. It will allow them to engage with the material that the Pittsburgh Holocaust Center offers in a different way than they might have in the past or at other Holocaust Centers, and allow remote users to have an equally meaningful experience. By creating an interactive and enjoyable storytelling experience, our platform will help adults and children alike connect with Holocaust survivors without having to visit the center, and will preserve these powerful (and fleeting) stories for generations to come. We expect this platform to preserve and enhance the current resources available so that the center may take advantage of the unique stories they have collected and created.

For students who visit the center, the ability to synthesize what they have learned by exploring more information in an online tool will deepen their knowledge of the topic and allow them to re-experience the material they have learned after they visit. This will provide students the opportunity to process what they have learned after their visit in a productive manner and provide a continued learning experience.

For teachers who bring their students on field trips to the Pittsburgh Holocaust Center, this platform will empower them to break away from traditional Holocaust resources and show their students unique perspectives.

For individuals who do not have the means to visit the Center in-person, this platform will connect them to survivors stories from around the world in a way that other similar platforms do not. We expect many schools and potentially other Holocaust Centers to utilize this tool to help tell the stories of the Holocaust.

Feasibility

Planning & Architecture
Given the client currently does not have any existing infrastructure for educational data, the team will have flexibility in choosing a suitable software stack for the project. The team is currently considering building an API to interact with the client's data to establish a foundation for future development of software tools and allow other Holocaust centers around the world to access the resources available at the Pittsburgh center. The team will take further considerations to select an appropriate stack and design an API that will not only cater to the proposed project but also prepare the client to move forward with other future projects. The breadth of experience and expertise on the consultant and advisor teams will ensure that the software architecture is designed appropriately for the identified purposes and the team's skillset. Although this is a crucial stage in the project, this step should not take a significant amount of time to complete.

Development
With project experience ranging from database management to full stack development and UI/UX design, the consulting team is well-prepared to work effectively on any selected stack. Because the team has freedom in technology selection, all members should be able to move relatively quickly through this process. Because the focus of the project idea is the interactiveness of users learning about survivors' stories, the biggest challenge will be designing an intuitive experience and building a smooth, bug-free front-end. However, there is freedom to simplify the proposed project down to a simple dashboard-like platform by removing degrees of interactiveness. The most simplified version of this project could be completed within 1-week by using Ruby on Rails, which is a software stack that all members of the team are proficient with. This possible adjustment will help ensure completion of the project within the 10-week timeline in the case that other stages take longer than expected.

<u>Testing & Revisions</u>
The team will communicate frequently with the client both throughout and following the development process to ensure that the product is both well-designed and developed. This will help further mitigate the risks of misjudging the client's problems and designing an ineffective solution. The team has established regular weekly on-site meeting times and other online communication channels to ensure this process can be carried out smoothly.

<u>Future Maintenance</u>
The project will include an administrator panel that will allow staff at the Holocaust Center to customize the platform and content without programming knowledge. The codebase will be accompanied by thorough documentation to facilitate management of the platform by future staff members with programming knowledge.

Risk Analysis

1. Misjudgment of primary client needs

The client has proposed many different directions this project could take within the scope of Holocaust education. The team has been given freedom to explore many different options, and if the initially targeted objectives are not as crucial as others, the effectiveness of the final deliverable could be compromised. Although this is not a risk that could compromise project completion, it could be easily avoided by careful planning and communication. The team will ensure that key decisions are made together with the client, guiding the decision-making process by proposing multiple options with appropriate supporting details.

2. Underestimation of required time

Because of flexibility in design direction, the team may end up spending a lot of time ideating on what the platform could be. Because the focus of the project is interactiveness, many of the features we design may be time-consuming despite not being crucial to addressing the client's needs. To avoid having to stop the project because some optional features took longer than expected to build, it will be important to design our project timeline to ensure that as little features are dependent on others as possible.

3. Misselection of technologies

Ruby on Rails is the only framework all team members have solid, standardized proficiency in. However, the proposed project will most likely be best built using another framework. Therefore, one or more team members will have to learn another language and/or framework. The time required for this learning process is difficult to forecast, and may end up causing unforeseen setbacks. To minimize the impact of this process, it will be important to consider the technical debt of the proposed software design following the design of the final project scope.

4. Lack of end-user feedback

Although the team is well-prepared to communicate frequently and effectively with the client, it is currently difficult to assess how the team will collect feedback from end-users. If insufficient end-user feedback is taken into account, the final product may not be as effective as possible. This is not a high-priority risk, given the center frequently has groups of students visiting on field trips. This risk will be mitigated through clear scheduling of end-user feedback collection whenever there are visitor groups at the center.

5. Requirements Inflation

There is a possibility that the project specifications will evolve with more feedback, and later hurt our initial estimates and timeline. This issue will likely surface given the client's varied needs for the project. However, it would be counterproductive to assume there will be no changes to the requirements in the next 10 weeks. This risk should rather be mitigated through constant reevaluation of estimates and timeline throughout the design and development process.