

THE HOLOCAUST CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONSULTING PROJECT

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COMMUNITY PARTNER BACKGROUND

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 space they inhabit 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.



The current exhibit, a showcase of the newest volume of Chutz-Pow!



Visitors leaving the center after an event.

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.

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.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The platform we built provides an intuitive, seamless avenue for staff at the Holocaust Center to create and showcase the collection of stories and artifacts they have about the Holocaust. In terms of technology, we created a responsive web app that enables admin to create and edit stories with a few clicks and provides general users a more engaging way to interact with the history of the Holocaust.

We followed a user-driven process consultation model to ensure honest feedback and open channels of communication. We maintained great



A sample title page

rapport with the client through mutual trust and support; they have been excited about this platform as we have been throughout the semester.

This site is configured to allow admin to create new accounts but it is not open to the general public to make accounts. It is configured such that admin have all the power when it comes to building stories, but their view is consistent with a regular user. All general CRUD operations are available to admin, and the layout of panels within stories are highly configurable.

We have populated the database with one full story to start. It contains approximately 40 comic panels and 3 annotations. Not every annotation has been written yet, but admin of the site can always edit existing annotations or add more.

Throughout the term, we have been completing user testing sessions with the client. We have demonstrated how to use the platform several times, and we have also watched the client use it as we instruct them to complete specific tasks.



One panel of a story

Though we wrote models for categories and tags, annotations took precedent, and we did not ultimately create views for categories. We did, however, implement tags. We also discussed enabling general users to have accounts through which they could save or comment on stories, but we also did not have time to implement that feature.

FINAL DELIVERABLES

We are delivering a mobile responsive web application deployed to Heroku that allows administrator to freely create and edit content in comics and annotations. The application will be accompanied by the appropriate documentation and automated test cases, and we will be providing brief training to staff about how Markdown can be used for more robust content customization for their annotations.

The web application can be found online at chutz-pow.org, and we have provided a staff user guide for future developers and staff members. The guide lists all passwords, explains how the site is deployed, how the client side works, and how to restart and stop the system. We have also provided a brief FAQ document to onboard new admin that contains screenshots and instructions for how to do all the basic actions.

The codebase contains comprehensive unit tests for all the models and controllers that can be run via command line. Additionally, we have provided online materials for staff members to learn markdown as well as sample annotations that users can copy and build upon.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The project is focused on the delivery of the customizable online comic experience, which is a recommendation for how the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh can improve the outreach of Chutz-Pow and expand their focus of curating more educational resources for high school students. The customizable nature of the platform's design allows the client to publish new content with freedom in what content they choose and how they organize the educational resources.

Sustaining Progress

In order to fully hone the power of this web application, staff members should familiarize themselves with Markdown, as that is how annotations will be written. A lot can be done in terms of style and content with Markdown, and if staff members read our resource guides and find supplementary online materials, they should be able to write excellent annotations.

Why Does It Matter?

The more interesting the annotations are, the more engaged students will be and the more they will get out of their experience. Increasing engagement with the history of the Holocaust is the Holocaust Center's primary goal, and this platform will not only increase engagement with student visitors, it also has the power to reach remote students and teachers. Teachers will be able to use this as a teaching tool in their classrooms, no matter where in the world they are.

Future Teams

Future teams have the potential to do a lot with this platform. One key feature the client wants to integrate in the future is the ability for users to pay to unlock content so that they can essentially sell the digital version of the books online. Additionally, there is potential for more general user functionality - in our original user stories, we imagined that users would be able to bookmark, comment on, and save their spot in stories. Implementing more user actions would be a great step in creating a more interactive experience.

ABOUT THE TEAM



KENNY COHEN

served as the SCRUM master for this project overseeing the development process as well working as a full stack developer on the project. Kenny is an Information Systems major with a minor in Software Engineering on his way to Apple to work as a Software Engineer.



SEAN PARK

was the designer of the platform's structure and core experience. He was also a full-stack developer, mainly leading the development of the annotation feature. Sean is a IS / HCI major who is heading to Deloitte to complete his second internship in digital consulting.



EMILY PORAT

led the UX/UI and frontend development portion of the project. She is a junior IS major, minoring in HCI. She is interning at Deloitte this summer where she hopes to hone her interdisciplinary skills.

APPENDIX | USE CASES

As a student, I want to...

- Read stories about Holocaust survivors.*
- Filter stories based on theme.
- Access external and internal resources that pertain to survivor stories.
- Save my place in a story so I can come back to it later.
- Make my own annotations regarding my thoughts or feelings on a given story or artifact.

As a teacher, I want to...

- View the list of stories.
- View the list of themes.
- View the list of lessons for each topic.
- View a teacher's guide with each lesson.
- Annotate lessons with my own notes.

As a visitor...

- Before I visit, I would like to get a preview of the artifacts on display.
- During my visit, I would like to read more about artifacts using my phone in case the text is too small or there are too many people crowding around.
- After my visit, I would like to read more about the artifacts I saw during my visit.
- I would like to provide feedback or reflections after the visit.

As a staff member, I want to be able to...

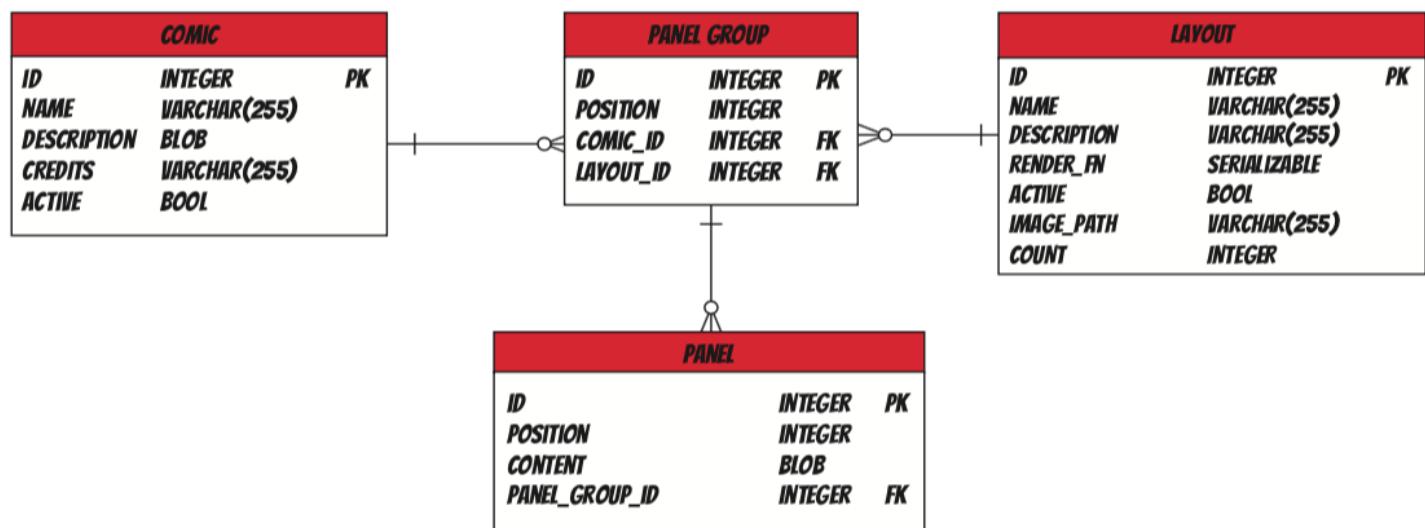
- Create a new story
- Edit a story.
- Delete a story.
- Add a comic strip to a story.
- Add text to a story.
- Connect an annotation to a part of a story.
- Add a video to an annotation.
- Add an image to an annotation.
- Edit an annotation.
- Delete an annotation.

*Blue use cases were completed

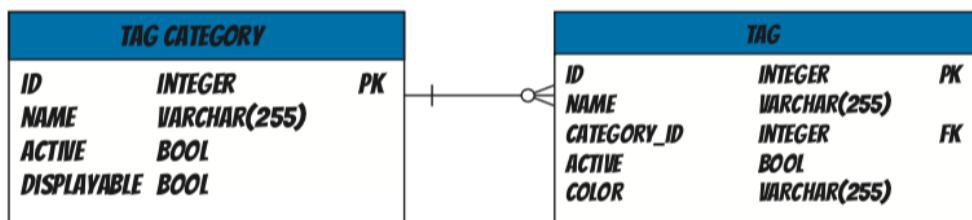
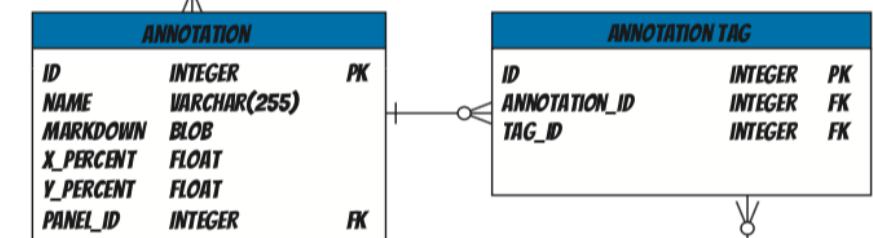
APPENDIX | ENTITY RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM

USER		
ID	INTEGER	PK
FIRST_NAME	VARCHAR(255)	
LAST_NAME	VARCHAR(255)	
EMAIL	VARCHAR(255)	
PASSWORD	VARCHAR(255)	
ROLE	VARCHAR(255)	

USERS

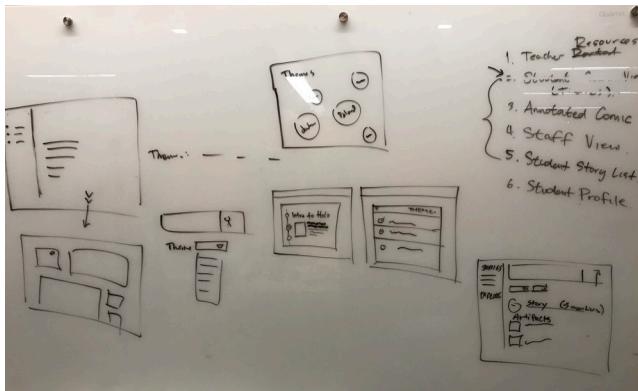


COMIC

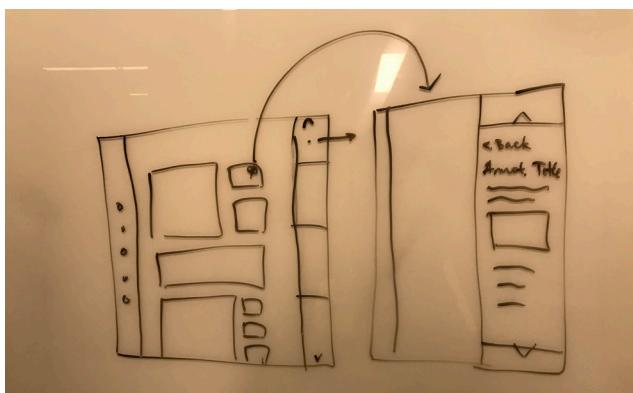


EDUCATIONAL TOOL

APPENDIX | WIREFRAMES



A whiteboard brainstorming session



The ultimate design that came from our first session

Annotation: Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur

Annotation: FILTER OPTIONS ▾

The first iteration of wireframes

Annotation: LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT, SEO DO EUISMO TEMPOR INCIOIUNT.

Annotation: I'M SO MEMPHIS, I WANT TO BE A SUPERHERO.

Annotation: I'M SO MEMPHIS, I WANT TO BE A SUPERHERO.

The second iteration

APPENDIX | FINAL SCREENS

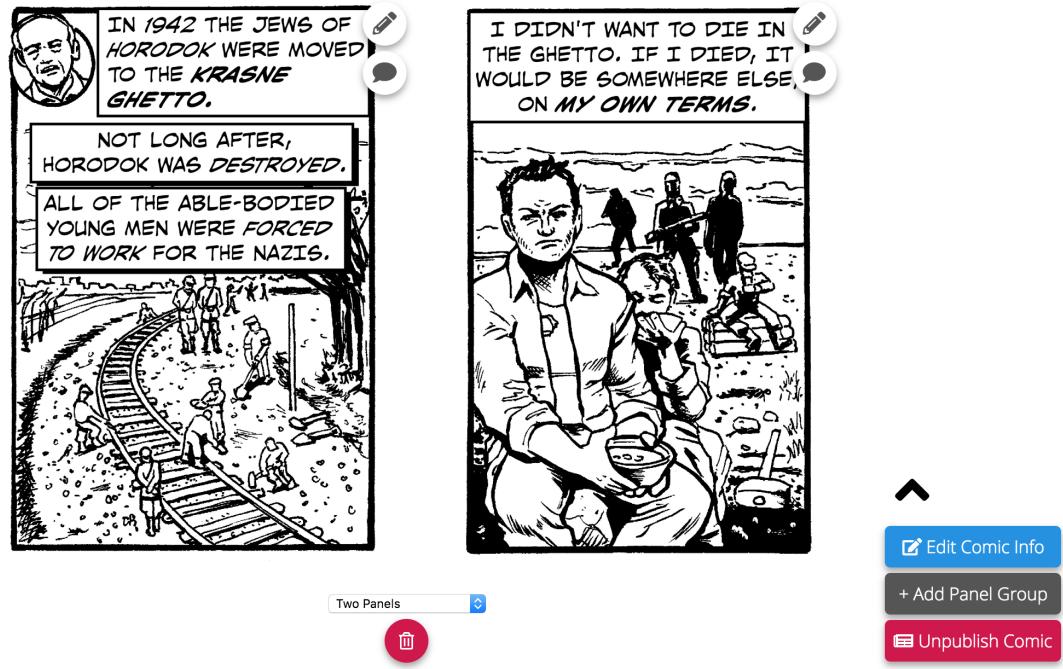
The screenshot shows the homepage of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh. In the top right corner, there is a blue button labeled "Admin Dashboard". On the left side, there is a sidebar with a dark background containing several menu items: "About Chutz-Pow!", "Intro to the Holocaust", "Holocaust Center", "About Chutz Pow", and "Parallel Choices". Below these items is a button labeled "New Comic" with a plus sign icon. The main content area features a large title "Chutz-Pow!" in bold black letters. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text about the comic book series. To the right of the text are three images: a black and white panel from the comic, a colorful illustration of several characters, and a photograph of a stage setup. At the bottom of the page, there is a quote: "If you're dressing up as a superman, you're teaching your children to be supermen." – Fritz Ottenheimer, UpStander.

The home page with the sidebar.

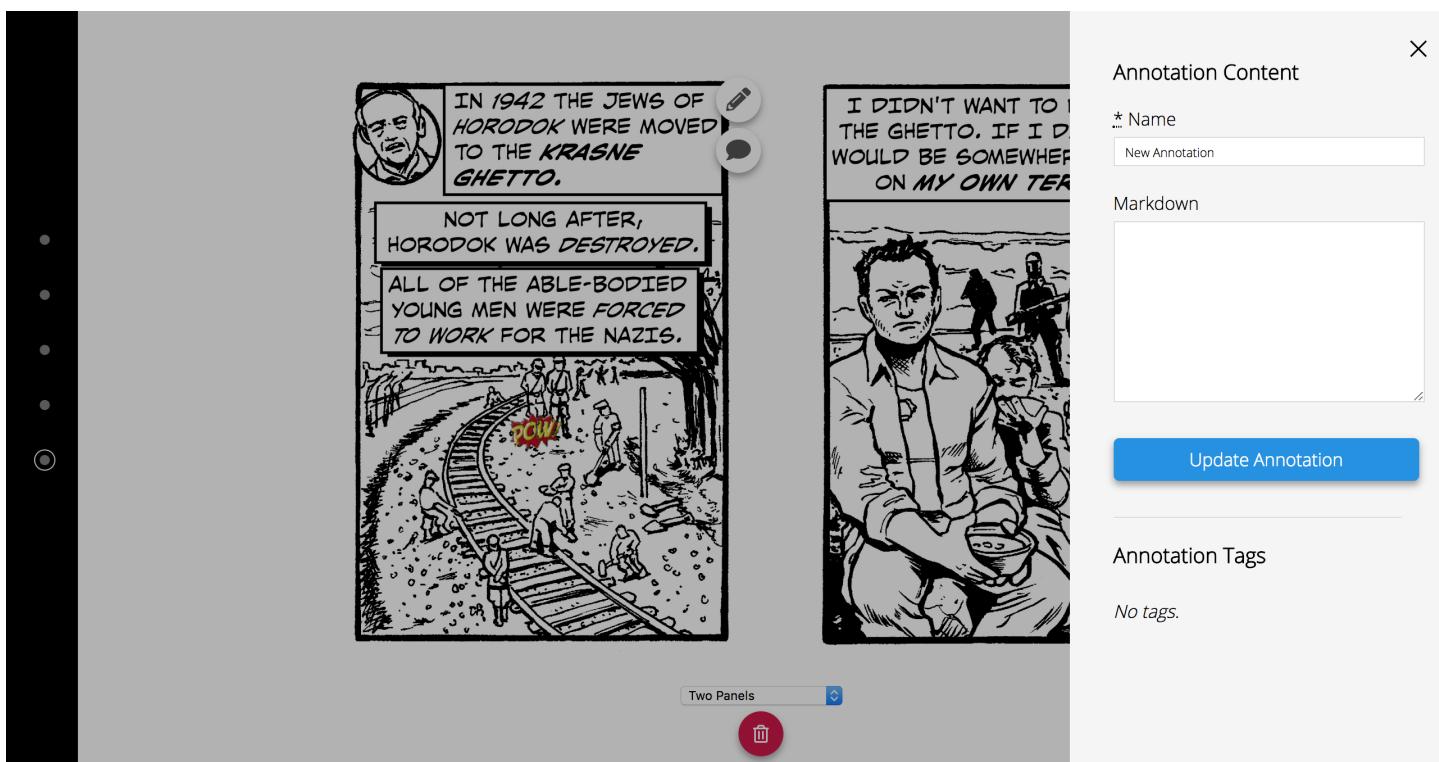
The screenshot shows a comic book title page. The title "PARALLEL CHOICES" is prominently displayed in large white letters at the top. Below the title, there is a list of credits: "WRITTEN BY WAYNE WISE" and "ART & LETTERING BY M.L. WALKER". A short blurb follows: "The story of Moshe and Malka Baran From Chutz-Pow: Volume One "The UpStanders"". On the right side of the page, there are three buttons: "Edit Comic Info", "+ Add Panel Group", and "Unpublish Comic". The background of the title page is a colorful illustration of several characters, including a man in a military uniform shouting and a woman holding a child.

A title page for a story.

APPENDIX | FINAL SCREENS



The admin view of a panels in a story.



Adding an annotation to a panel.