StoryScapes101: Introduction to the StoryScapes platform

Module 1- Conveying Intelligence with StoryScapes

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This work was adapted from an original GeoAcademy course and continues to be modified and improved. Credit to GeoAcademy for inspiring this open course format.

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Introduction

In this module, students will build a profile on StoryScapes and learn to explore and use content to make presentations that convey critical geospatial intelligence to a variety of audiences. This module lays critical groundwork that will enable StoryScapes users to engage in more creative and complex actions in later modules.

This module includes the following lessons:

- Lesson 1 – Build a Profile
- Lesson 2 – Search and Share
- Lesson 3 – Present with StoryScapes

Each lesson is planned to take about XXXX minutes to complete. Combined, this module should take XXX hours to complete (assuming ten minute breaks between each Lesson).

Lesson 1: Build a Profile

Objective

In this lesson students will learn to login and build your StoryScapes profile.

Lecture

While anyone with access to the StoryScapes platform can *view* published content, such as StoryLayers or StoryScapes, only users that are logged in can *create* content. StoryScapes operates similarly to popular social media platforms like YouTube and Twitter in this area.

This Lecture will use a completed profile as an illustration to explain the purpose of the StoryScapes profile and the elements it includes. In the Demonstration that follows we will build a new profile together. Finally, in your Task for this Lesson, you will go ahead and build your own StoryScapes profile.

The Role of Identity

StoryScapes is designed as a 'high attribution' environment. This means that all actions taken within the platform are tied to the user who has performed the action. What's more, users should be represented as human beings with real names, rather than as anonymous figures using only usernames. Since StoryScapes is a knowledge platform, akin to an academic journal or professional resource, it is important that users be able to assess the experience and credentials of people who contribute content.

Who is StoryScapes for?

StoryScapes was built to enable knowledge-sharing amongst stakeholders across the United States National Security Community, from analysts to diplomats to soldiers.

Technical requirements to use StoryScapes

TBD, ie Browser

Skill requirements to use StoryScapes?

TBD

The Anatomy of a StoryScapes profile

SCREENSHOT

Sidebar fields

On the left side you'll see space to display your brief bio summary, the location where you spend most of your time, your education background, and your tags and interests.

Along the top

On your public profile you'll see a set of tabs going across the center of the page where you can filter for your StoryScapes, your StoryLayers, your Uploads (data you've uploaded but not published yet as a StoryLayer, your Messages, and your Favorites.

Profile in Explore

Representation elsewhere

Drop down options

Demonstration

Now that you have a sense of who StoryScapes is for and what is entailed in a user profile, lets try creating a new one from scratch.

Watch this video. VIDEO.

Tasks

Now it's your turn! Your assignment is to build your Profile in Storyscapes. When you are finished, ask a colleague to find your StoryScapes profile and confirm it includes the following elements:

- [x] First and Last name
- [x] About statement
- [x] City and Country
- [x] Education and Expertise
- [x] Interests
- [x] Avatar

Lesson 2: Search and Share

Objective

In this lesson students will learn to find content and share it with colleagues.

Lecture

Once you're logged in with an account and have built a profile, the next thing to do is spend some time exploring the content that is already in StoryScapes.

StoryScapes is designed to let users easily browse and explore for content based on their interests.

Types of Content to Explore

In StoryScapes there are three types of content a user can search for - StoryLayers, StoryScapes and Storytellers.

StoryLayers

A StoryLayer is a data file that is used to display geographic information with temporal attribute(s) on StoryScapes. Module 3 will cover StoryLayers in more detail.

Once you find a StoryLayer, you can take a variety of actions. For example, you may want to:

- Hit "play" and watch the StoryLayer data animate over space and time
- Peer review the StoryLayer (more details in Module 3)
- Edit the StoryLayer to make it more complete and accurate (more details in Module 4)
- Use the StoryLayer to compose a MapStory (more details in Module 2)

To begin exploring for StoryLayers, hit Explore at the top of your screen. You'll see a set of filters along the left side of your screen that will help you narrow your search. First, check the box for StoryLayers. You can then filter by pre-set Categories, by user-generated tags, or by the Storyteller that imported the StoryLayer.

SCREENSHOT

StoryScapes

A StoryScape is a form of geospatial narrative. By combining StoryLayers with other mixed media (video, image, text) a StoryScape seeks to visualize and explain phenomena of spatial change over time.

Once you find a StoryScape, you can take a variety of actions. For example, you may want to:

- Hit "play" and watch the StoryScape play over space and time
- Peer review the StoryScape (more details in Module 2)
- Share the StoryScape (more details in Lesson 3 of this module)

To begin exploring for StoryScapes, hit Explore at the top of your screen. You'll see a set of filters along the left side of your screen that will help you narrow your search. First, check the box for StoryLayers. You can then filter by pre-set Categories, by user-generated tags, or by the Storyteller that composed the StoryScape.

StoryTellers

In StoryScapes, we refer to individual users as "Storytellers". You can browse all Storytellers by clicking Explore at the top of your screen and then going to the Storytellers tab.

Filters on the left side of the screen help you narrow your search for Storytellers. You can search for individual Storytellers by name or filter by the city or country where a Storyteller is located or by the Storyteller's topical interest areas.

SCREENSHOT

Sharing StoryLayers and StoryScapes

As we will review in more detail in Lesson 3, StoryLayers and StoryScapes can be used as visual aids for presentations and articles. In some cases, a user may want *embed* a StoryLayer or StoryScape on another website. This is a common workflow for other types of media, such as video, on the public web. To embed a StoryScape, go to the "Share" tab and copy the Embed code. This code can be pasted on to the website where you want to embed the StoryLayer or StoryScape.

SCREENSHOT

Demonstration

Now that you have a sense of how to find and share content, lets try finding a StoryLayer and StoryScape and sharing it on another website.

Watch this video. VIDEO.

Tasks

Now it's your turn! Prove to a colleague that you can complete the following steps:

- [x] Indicate a subject area you're interested in finding content about (i.e. a region or an issue)
- [x] Use the StoryScapes Explore to find a StoryLayer or StoryScape that addresses your issue area. *Note - use filters and tags to narrow your search. (If you don't find anything, that means someone like you needs to create it! We'll cover content creation topics in future modules)
- [x] Embed a StoryLayer or StoryScape at this tester site XXXXXX.
- [ ] *Challenge*: Embed a StoryLayer or StoryScape on a real site you have administrative access to.

Lesson 3: Present with StoryScapes

Objective

In this lesson students will learn to use a StoryScape as part of a presentation to colleagues.

Lecture

Now that you know how to discover and StoryScapes that interest you, you can learn how to use Storyscapes published by you or any Storyteller to augment a presentation.

A published StoryScape bears similarities to other presentation media, such as powerpoint slides and videos. They are dynamic visual aids that can help a presenter drive home a point and provide perspective.

Once you have discovered a StoryScape you want to present with, first take some time to read about the StoryScape and the chapters it includes, if it has more than one chapter. Also take a look at the StoryLayers that were used to create the StoryScape to help you make judgements about the quality of data they contain. Who were the StoryLayers imported by? Do you trust these sources? Have the StoryLayers been edited much at all? How are they rated? These are questions to ask before deciding the StoryScape is of enough quality to use in your presentation.

If in your assessment of the StoryScape you find any issues, flag them for follow up by an administrator.

You can also click "favorite" to have the StoryScape show up on your profile where you can find it more easily in the future.

SCREENSHOT

Playback Features

StoryScapes can be presented at small size, or expanded into full screen.

The summary description for the chapter is on the leftside of the map canvas.

To start the playback on a StoryScape, simply hit the play. The map and timeline will start to advance. You can pause and restart the playback at any time.

You can change the speed of the playback by using the 'fastforward' and 'rewind' buttons or by opening the *Playback Settings* and selecting a different playback rate (i.e. 2x, 4x, 8x).

In the Playback Settings you can also decide if you want features to play instantly or cumulatively. In instant mode, features will only appear on the map from their start time to their end time. In cumulative mode, features will appear on the map from their start time until the end of the chapter.

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Next to the Playback Settings there is a button to expand the timeline to see the distribution of features over time.

SCREENSHOT

Next to the Timeline button there is a button to Loop a chapter, or the Loop whole StoryScape, if you want either an individual chapter or the whole StoryScape to keep repeating.

If the the StoryScape has any StoryFrames, they will cause the StoryScape to automatically zoom the map to different places at specific times. When there is no StoryFrame, you can use zoom buttons to zoom in and out on the map, and you can use your mouse to click and move the map around.

SCREENSHOT

If StoryPins were added, they will pop up on the map at specific times. If StoryPins have media (such as a video) the media will begin playing automatically if that is how the Storyteller set it up. If the media doesn't begin playing automatically, that means you can control the media's playback by clicking and pause as you prefer.

In the top right corner a legend explains what the colors on the map features represent. You can minimize the legend.

SCREENSHOT

At the end of a chapter, click the arrows to advance the StoryScape to the next chapter.

SCREENSHOT

Demonstration

Now that you have a sense of all the features that support the playback of a StoryScape, let's have a look at someone using a StoryScape as part of a presentation:

Watch this video. VIDEO.

Tasks

Now it's your turn! Your assignment is to find and present a StoryScape to a colleague. Your presentation should cover the following elements:

1. Explain what the StoryScape is all about, what StoryLayers it uses, and why you feel this is a quality StoryScape to present.
2. Present in Full Screen mode for at least part of your presentation.
3. Adjust the playback rate to the most appropriate speed for your presentation.
4. Explain what the legend means, and then minimize the legend.

5. Use StoryFrames and StoryPins in your StoryScape (if applicable) to help focus your spoken presentation.

Conclusion

In this Module you have learned to how to build your StoryScapes profile, find the people and content on StoryScapes relevant to your work, and to use content created by others as part of presentations to colleagues.

With these skills, you can quickly and easily add dynamic spatio-temporal visualizations to your workflow, and help those you communicate with to better understaand phenomena as it arrays across space and time.

Discussion Questions

Before moving on to the next Module, take fifteen minutes to reflect independently or in a group on the following questions: As you end this Module, discuss the following issues with your colleagues:

1. What kind of work projects might benefit from the StoryScapes platform?
2. What challenges or obstacles do you foresee in using StoryScapes as part of work presentations?
3. What is a StoryLayer you would like to see imported into StoryScapes that you don't see there yet?
4. What is a StoryScape that you would like to see published that you don't see published yet?
5. What other comments, questions or concerns do you have about this Module?