Storytelling with Knight Lab TimelineJS

PPUA 5390: Special Topics

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Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

Workshop Agenda

- Learn about Timeline as a mode of conveying data and content
- Best practices and questions to consider before creating your Timeline
- Steps for using Knight Lab TimelineJS
- Start building!

Slides and handout available at:

https://bit.ly/DITI_spring22_zellner_timeline

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Check out the KnightLab Timeline Handout for...

- General KnightLab Timeline information
- Components of an effective timeline
- Questions to consider before building a timeline
- Timeline examples

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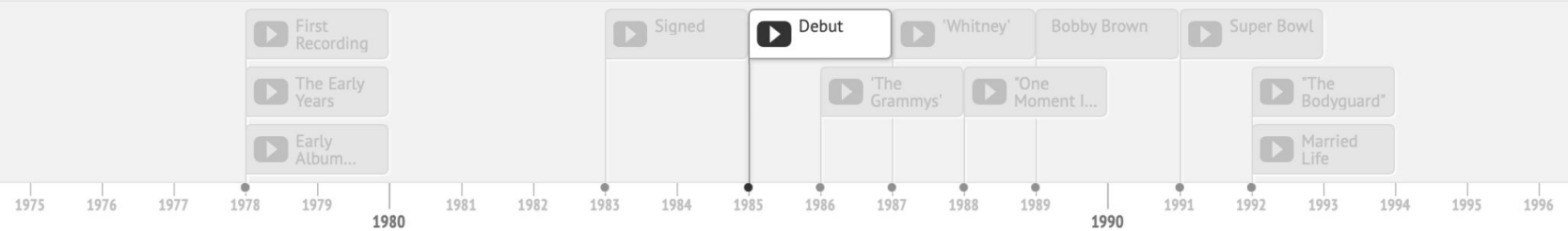
Knight Lab TimelineJS Examples

- **Whitney Houston 1963-2012**: Telling the life of Whitney Houston through key dates and events

1978

EARLY ALBUM CREDITS

As a teen Houston's credits include background vocals for Jermaine Jackson, Lou Rawls and the Neville Brothers. She also sang on Chaka Khan's, 'I'm Every Woman,' a song which she later remade for the *Bodyguard* soundtrack which is the biggest selling soundtrack of all time. It sold over 42 million copies worldwide.



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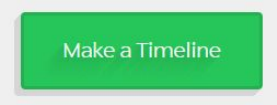
Create a Timeline (step 1 on the Timeline website)

- Go to https://timeline.knightlab.com/
- Click “Make a Timeline” 

- You don’t need an account to create a timeline
- Click "Get the spreadsheet template" and follow the instructions to copy it to your Google Drive
- The main place where you build your timeline is Google Sheets, so when you make a copy, the file will be saved in your Google Drive

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Make a Timeline

TimelineJS works on any site or blog. Make your own in four easy steps.
Having trouble? Watch our video, or see the help section below.

1

Create your spreadsheet

Build a new Google Spreadsheet using our template. You'll need to copy the template to your own Google Drive account by clicking the "Make a Copy" button.

Drop dates, text and links to media into the appropriate columns. For more about working with our template, see Making a timeline from a Google Spreadsheet

Get the Spreadsheet Template

Note: *Don't change the column headers, don't remove any columns, and don't leave any blank rows in your spreadsheet.*

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Using the TimelineJS Google Sheets

[Template available on their website](#) (make a copy on your drive)

Official TimelineJS3 Template

USE TEMPLATE

Year	Month	Day	Time	End Year	End Month	End Day	End Time	Display Date	Headline	Text	Media	Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail	Type	Group	Background
									Google Spreadsheet Example	This is a test of using google spreadsheets as a source for the timeline tool. This is a 'title' slide, so it doesn't need a date. It automatically occurs first, and doesn't appear in the timeline below.	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/in/photostream	Zach Wise/verite.co	<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/" title="Chicago by zach.wise, on Flickr">Chicago by zach.wise</a>		title		
2011	11	1		2011	12	15			Another Flickr Example	It's Easy to Make Your Own Timeline	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6894476777/in/photostream	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC				#333333
2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.	https://vimeo.com/143407878	Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!	http://knightlab.northwestern.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/front-page-image.jpg			

Date, end date (optional), and display date (also optional)

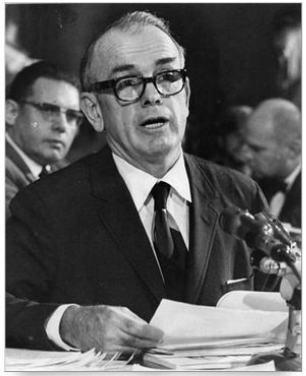
Text and headline for the slide

Entering media and related info

Additional options with slides

Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

What the end result looks like



Bob Burchette/The Washington Post

Former IRS Commissioner Randalph Thrower

1971

Commissioner Thrower leads defiance

Nixon fires one of the commissioners, Randolph Thrower. As the story goes, he returns a few years later for a visit to the agency. Employees hear that he's in the building and they stream into the hallways to greet him with applause.

1978

IRS tests for racial descrimination met with protest

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What the end result looks like

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Slides

Each row in the spreadsheet is one slide in the Timeline.

Every slide represents a different point or period in time.

Each slide contains:

- **Headline** and **text**. The text box reads basic HTML.
- A **background image**/color
- **Media**: images, videos, and sound files.
  - Only **one** media file can be uploaded per slide
  - Special columns in the spreadsheet are dedicated to incorporating the media onto the slide

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Dates

- Slides in the final timeline follow the **order of the dates**, *not the rows*
- You can choose how specific you want to make your dates, but you must enter at least the **year**
- Entering the end date is optional
- The "display date" is useful when the exact date is unknown/unknowable

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Year	Month	Day	Time	End Year	End Month	End Day	End Time	Display Date
2011	11	1		2011	12	15		
2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00	

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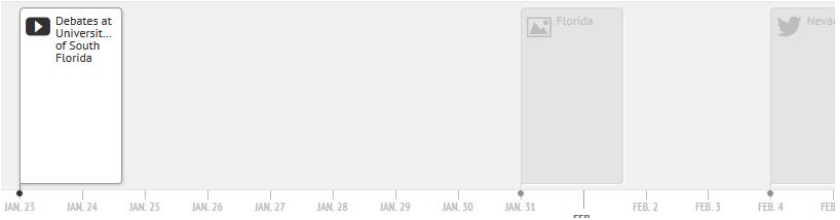
Headlines and text

Headline	Text
Google Spreadsheet Example	This is a test of using google spreadsheets as a source for the timeline tool. This is a 'title' slide, so it doesn't need a date. It automatically occurs first, and doesn't appear in the timeline below.
Another Flickr Example	It's Easy to Make Your Own Timeline
Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.



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Adding media

- Timeline supports various online media platforms (but you **can't** upload from your computer directly)
- Go to the "Supported Media Types" list on the KnightLab TimelineJS site to find more information on file types and embedding

Media	Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail
		<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/" title="Chicago by zach.wise, on Flickr">Chicago by zach.wise</a>	
http://www.flickr.com	Zach Wise/verite.co		
http://www.flickr.com	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC	
https://vimeo.com/14	Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!	
<iframe id="inlineFrameExample" src="https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f8/Mosaic_of_Theodora_-_Basilica_San_Vitale_%28Ravenna%2C_Italy%29.jpg"></iframe>	commons	looking at iframe example	

Using urls

Using <iframe>

Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

Adding media

- **Markup language** (used for writing the content of web pages) can be used to import the media that is not supported by by TimelineJS
  - This is done by adding **<iframe>** instead of the URL in the column L: you can find the model for entry here
  - You can also use **<blockquote>** markup in the same column to add text next to your media: you can find the model for entry here
- In the example to the right, markup language is used to turn the media caption into hyperlink

Media	Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail
		<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/" title="Chicago by zach.wise, on Flickr">Chicago by zach.wise</a>	
http://www.flickr.com	Zach Wise/verite.co		
http://www.flickr.com	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC	
https://vimeo.com/14	Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!	
<iframe id="inlineFrameExample" src="https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f8/Mosaic_of_Theodora_-_Basilica_San_Vitale_%28Ravenna%2C_Italy%29.jpg"></iframe>	commons	looking at iframe example	

Using urls

Using <iframe>

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Timeline Types: *Title* vs. *Era*

The **Type** column (**P**) can be used to activate a few more specialized features in Timeline.

- If you use the word title in this column, then Timeline will use the row as a "title slide," which is shown before all others, and which does not require a date.
- If you use the word era in this column, then Timeline will use the row to label a span of time in the "axis" area of the timeline navigation component. Eras should have start and end dates (at least the year for each) and a headline.

M	N	O	P	Q
Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail	Type	Group
Zach Wise/verite.co	<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/" title="Chicago by zach.wise, on Flickr">Chicago by zach.wise</a>		title	
Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC		title	
Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!		era	

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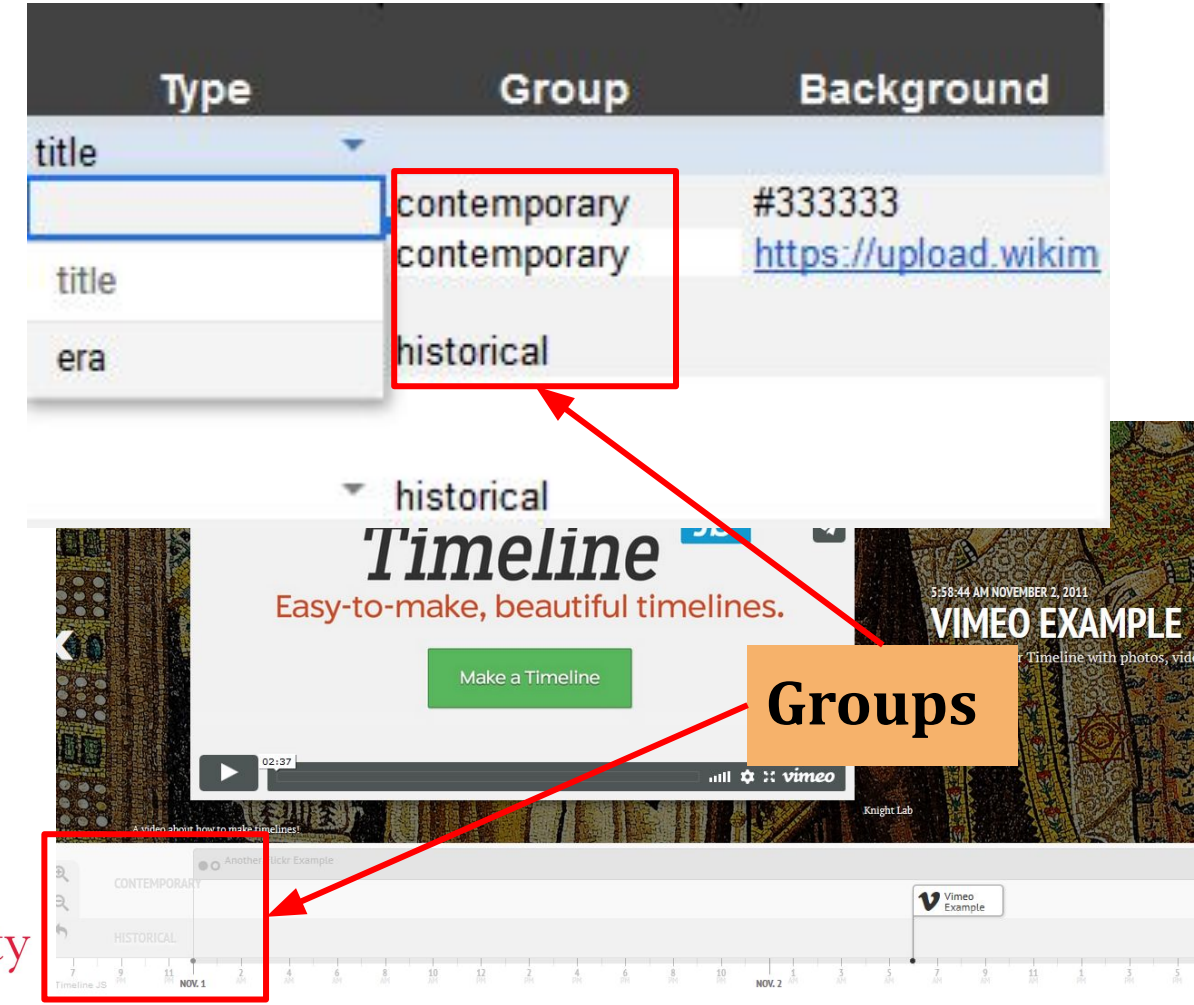
Groups

- ‘Group’ - text entered in this column acts as a subheading for moments that you want grouped together
- Moments in the same group will appear in their corresponding row at the bottom of the timeline

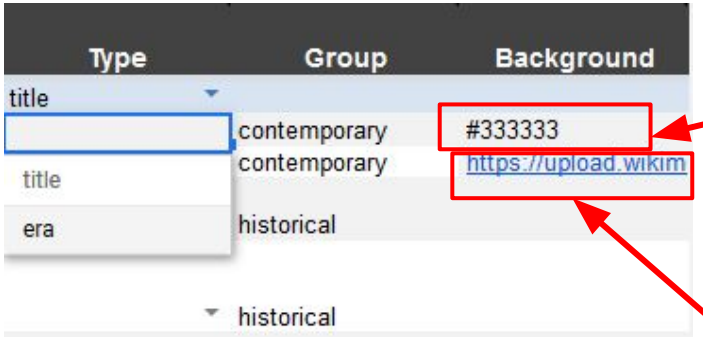


Background

You can customize your background with a color or an image.

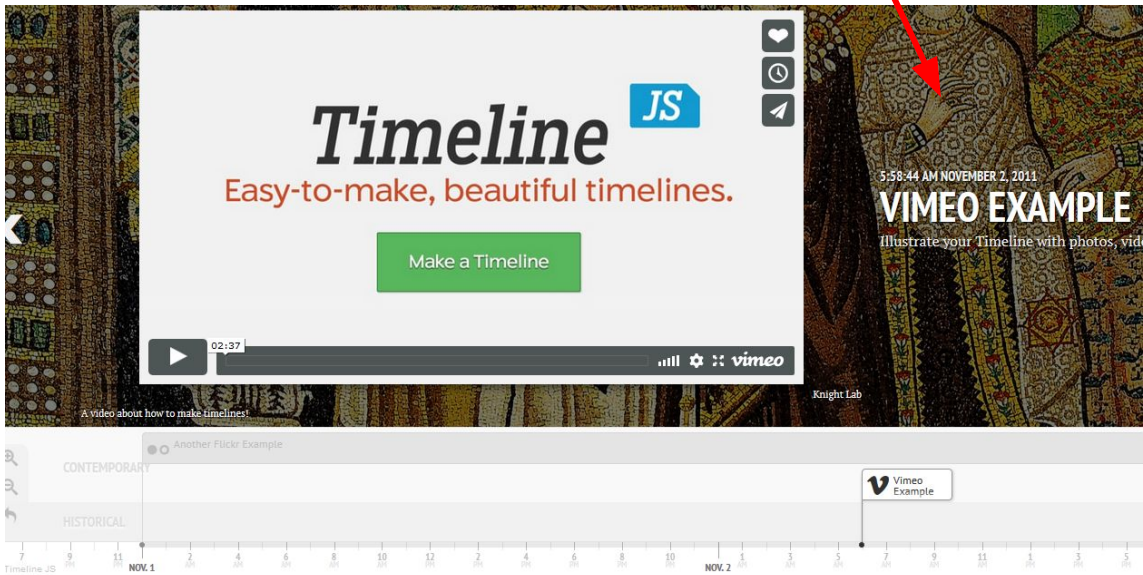
You enter a color by its **hex code** (#333333 in the example on the right).

You can Google a color name, or browse here.



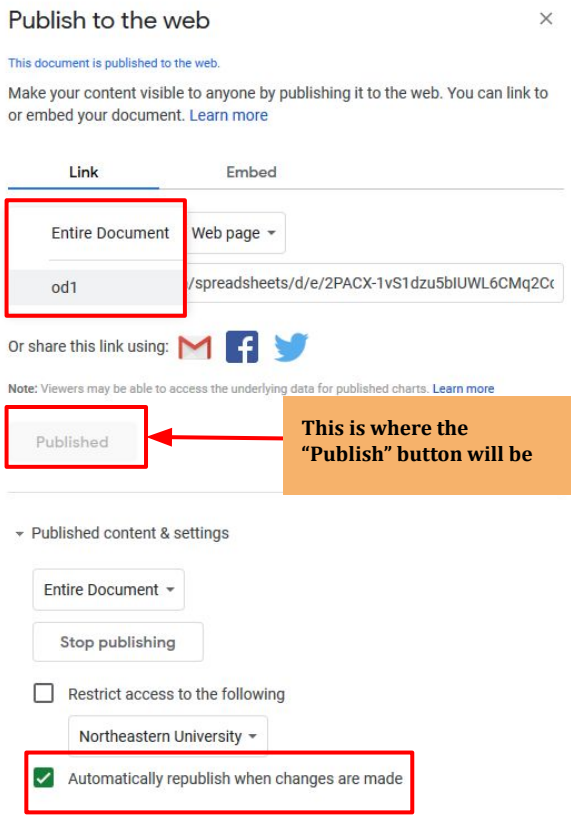
Using CSS color names for background

Using image URL for background



Uploading the spreadsheet (step 2 on the Timeline website)

- In the spreadsheet, select the **"Publish to the web"** option under "File" → "Share".
- In the settings box that pops up…
  - check **"Automatically republish when changes are made"**
  - select **"od1"** under *Entire document* drop down box
  - then click **"Publish"**



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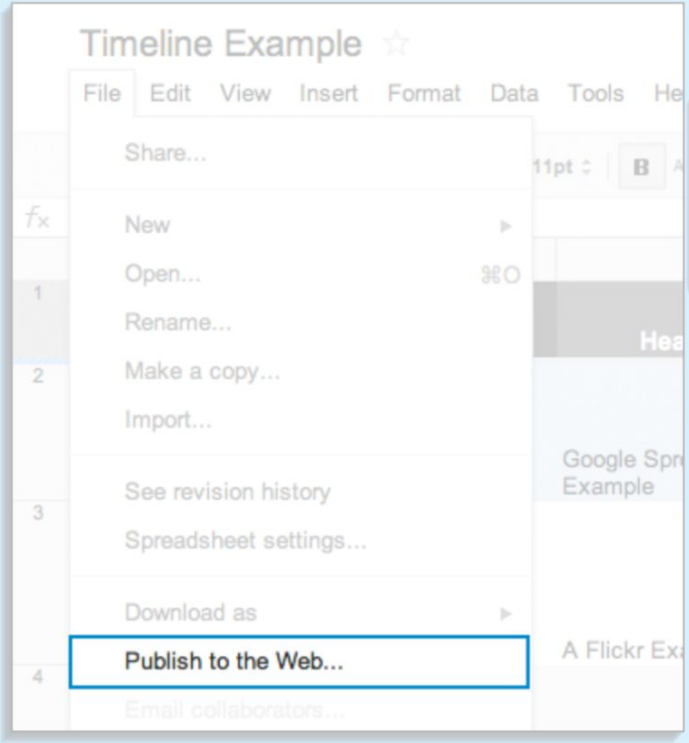
2

Publish to the web



Under the File menu, select "Publish to the Web."

Note: *Don't set your Timeline Google Sheet to "anyone with the link can edit." It isn't necessary, and could lead to someone changing your timeline without your consent.*

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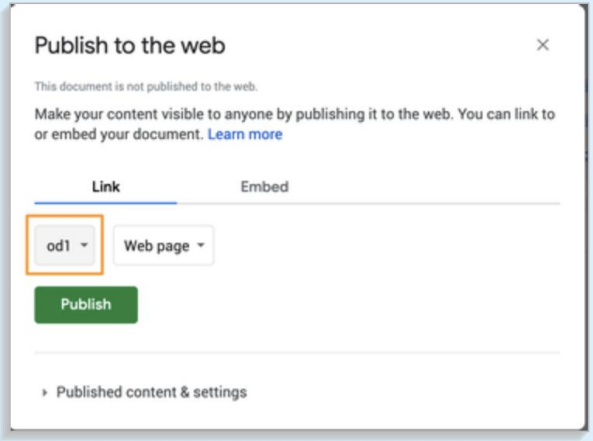
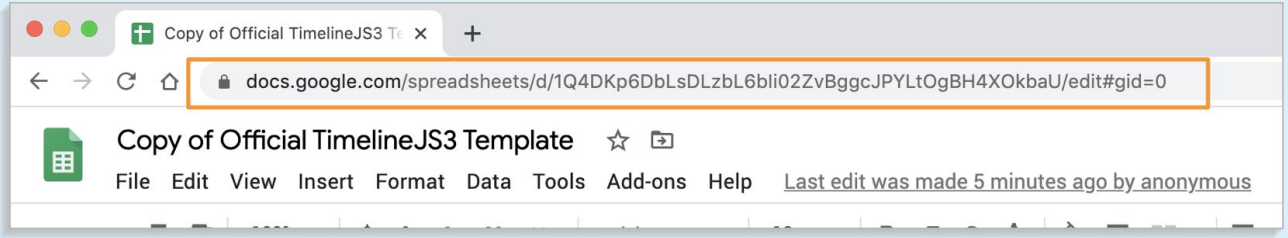
2

Publish to the web



In the next window, change the menu that reads "entire document" to "od1." Then, click the blue "publish" button. When asked, "Are you sure...?" click OK. *Ignore the URL that appears in the center of the window.* Just close the window using the *X* in the top right corner.



After you close the window, copy the URL in your browser's address bar. You'll use this in the next step.

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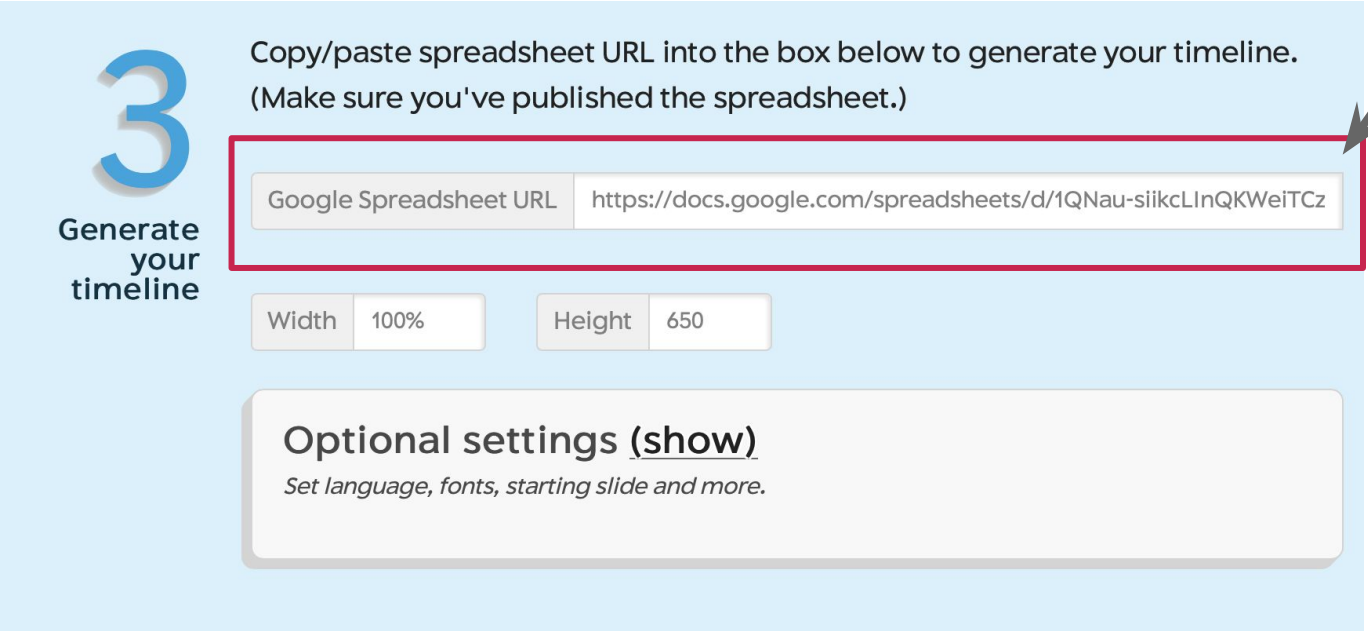
Converting Spreadsheet to Timeline (step 3 on the Timeline website)

Copy the **Page URL** (**not** the Publish URL) into the [Timeline website]



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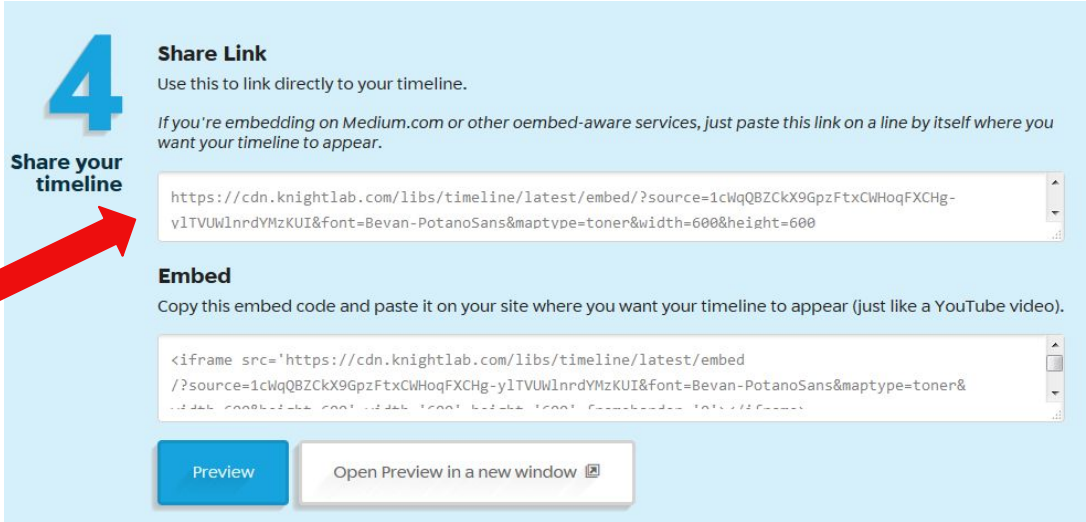
Viewing the timeline (step 4 on the Timeline website)

After you have entered the link from the spreadsheet URL, you will get a **shareable link**.

Copy and paste the **'share link'** in your browser to open your timeline or to share it with others. USE THIS OPTION!

(ONLY use the **'embed' code** if you are going to embed your timeline on a website.)



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Preview Embed

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Discussion

What do you think of this tool? Do you find it accessible?

Are there any features you think you will need help with?

Do you find timeline useful? What for?

What type of information, stories, and narration are especially compatible with the timeline format?

What do you see yourself using it for?

Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

Thank you!

If you have any questions, contact DITI at nulab.info@gmail.com

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Slides, handouts, and data available at
https://bit.ly/DITI_spring22_zellner_timeline

Schedule an appointment with us! **https://calendly.com/diti-nu**

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