

# **Storytelling with Mapping: Knight Lab StoryMap**

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GRMN 2102: Prof. Carolin Fuchs

Digital Integration Teaching Initiative

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# Workshop Agenda

- Best practices and questions to consider before creating your StoryMap.
- Learn about StoryMap as a mode of conveying data and content.
- Demonstrate steps for using Knight Lab's StoryMap.
- Start building!
- All materials + slides for this module can be found here:  
**<https://bit.ly/4qJVRQB>**

For more information, please see: <https://bit.ly/handout-storymap>



# Maps' different uses

Maps can convey all sorts of geospatial information that can facilitate different applications:

- Navigational/orientational maps
- Geological/topographical maps
- Political maps
- Thematic maps
- Artistic maps
- Narrative maps



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Subway Map from MBTA

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

# What are the limits?

- Maps reflect the intention of the map-maker and are **inherently limited**.
  - Maps produce **shared interpretations**, and are not expressions of objective spatial relations.
  - Boston is as much a human idea as a physical space, and thus maps both *represent* and *create* reality. See Quincy Langford's "[Maps Are a Tool to Understand the Past and Shape the Future](#)" to explore how maps can create, erase, and reshape.
- The **simplicity** and **clarity** of maps is deceiving, but **artificial clarity** is necessary for the map to be **useful**.



# Questions for critiquing maps

- What is its subject?
- Who is/are the map's audience(s)?
- What is its message, argument, or purpose?
- How and when was the map made?
- Who made this map? What choices did they make?

## The True Size of Africa

A small contribution in the fight against rampant Imperialism, by Kai Krause

In addition to the well known social issues of *illiteracy* and *imnumeracy*, there also should be such a concept as "*Immapany*", meaning *inappropriateprojection*".

A survey with random American schoolkids let them guess the population and land area of their country. Not entirely unexpected, but still rather unsettling, the majority chose "7-2 billion" and "largest in the world". In contrast, when asked to estimate the land areas were often off by factors of 2-3. This survey was conducted in 2009. Interestingly, estimates were often higher than the true values, reflecting the predominantly used mapping projections (such as Mercator).

A particularly extreme example is the worldwide misjudgment of the true size of Africa. The USA is often chosen to embody the massive scale, which is larger than the USA, China, India, Japan and all of Europe - combined!

COUNTRY	AREA
USA	9.629
China	9.573
India	3.287
Mexico	1.964
Peru	1.285
France	633
Spain	506
Papua New Guinea	462
Sweden	441
Japan	378
Germany	357
Norway	324
Italy	301
New Zealand	270
United Kingdom	243
Nepal	147
Bangladesh	144
Greece	132
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30.102</b>
<b>AFRICA</b>	<b>30.221</b>

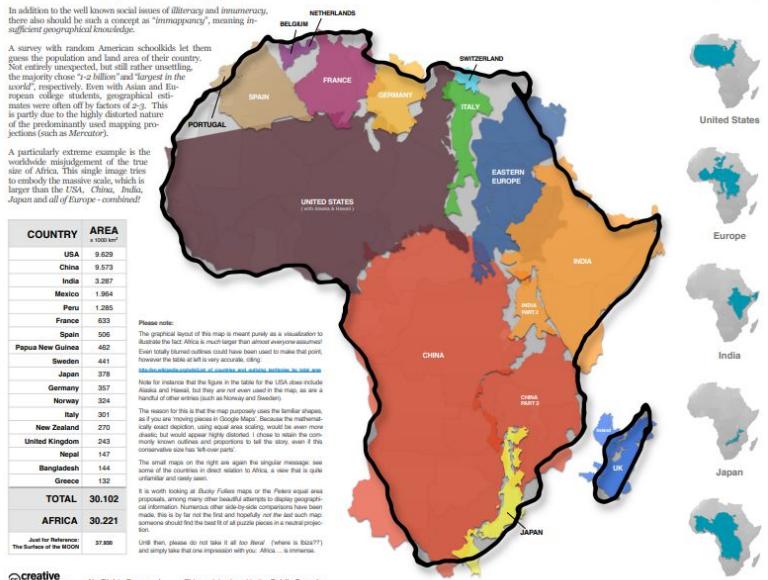
Just for Reference:

The Surface of the MOON

37.856

Please note:  
The graphical layout of this map is meant purely as a visualization to illustrate the fact Africa is much larger than almost everyone assumes! Even though it is a bit counter-intuitive, it is better to make that point, however the little art is very accurate, citing:  
<http://www.mapsoftheworld.com/size-area-and-surface-area-of-africa.html>  
Note for instance that the figures in the table for the USA alone include Alaska and Hawaii, while the USA map itself does not. That is, as far as I know, the USA map is not even a map of the USA at all, but a map of the handful of other entities (such as Hawaii and Seaborg).  
The reason for this is that the map purposely uses the familiar shape, and the same projection as the USA map. A map that would be geographically exact depiction, using equal-area scaling, would be even more misleading, because it would look like Africa is even smaller than most people know, outliers and proportions to tell the story, even if the conservative size has leftover parts.  
The reason for this is again the singular message, see some of the countries in direct relation to Africa, a view that is quite unfamiliar and rarely seen. In Baby Polton maps, or the Peirce equal-area projections, among many other beautiful attempts to display geographical information. Numerous other side-by-side comparisons have been made, and I am sure you can find them online. I am sure that if someone found the time to build it off of puzzle pieces in a mazel-project, Unit then, please do not take it all too literal ("where is India??") and simply take that one impression with you. Africa... is immense.

creative commons No Rights Reserved This work is placed in the Public Domain



From "[Critiquing Maps II](#)", by Shannon Mattern

[The True Size of Africa](#), Kai Krause



# What is a StoryMap?

KnightLab's StoryMap tool allows users to tell narrative stories connected with specific geographic locations.

**Welcome to the Fenway**

Welcome to this Community Walk! The purpose of this walk is to introduce people to the history and context of one of the neighborhoods that surround Northeastern. Most importantly, this walk is designed using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) perspective. ABCD is a philosophy that recognizes communities' abilities to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills, and lived experiences as well as existing resources and infrastructure.

Another way to think about it is to consider a community's strengths rather than

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20177227>

**Fenway Community Walk**

Welcome to this Community Walk! The purpose of this walk is to introduce people to the history and context of one of the neighborhoods that surround Northeastern. Most importantly, this walk is designed using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) perspective. ABCD is a philosophy that recognizes communities' abilities to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills, and lived experiences as well as existing resources and infrastructure.

Another way to think about it is to consider a community's strengths rather than deficits, or problems.

For example, instead of saying, "This community has a high crime rate and it can't be fixed," we say, "This community has an organization that serves the previously incarcerated and is collaborating within the community to work towards

*v point*



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# Why use a map to tell stories?

- StoryMaps help us **render visualized, spatialized, and contextual information about spaces** in the past or today.
  - StoryMaps can be about places you've never been to. The goal is to help users “see” the spaces/places/routes as accurately as possible, and to get a sense of the people and things in the environment.
- Think about StoryMaps as **giving directions**, relating not only direction and **distance** but also **sequence**.



# Example Projects Using Maps to Tell Stories

- “[The Black Jazz Heritage Trail of Boston](#)”: uses a mix of textual, image, and student-researched location data to map historic Black jazz clubs.
- “[Mapping Shared Spaces: A Visual History of Boston's Black and Jewish Communities](#)”: presents the story of migration of Boston religious communities by following the changing locations of places of worship.
- “[Contemporary Indigenous Spatiality](#)”: created by Agléška Cohen-Rencountre (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) to interrogate settler-colonial epistemologies about water-ways, as well as trace personal and community connections to Rapid Creek and the Mississippi River.



# Making a StoryMap



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# StoryMap Best Practices

- Think carefully about the **audience** you are trying to reach with your map. This will impact your language, the order of your points, and the media that you choose.
- Think also about the **tone** of the map: the default for StoryMap can be very upbeat and informal, and that may not match the content you are sharing.
- **Test your map** after you have created it, to make sure that all the narrative points flow and that the language is clear and concise.



# Optional: Spreadsheet Template

Make a copy of the StoryMap template below and use it to fill in the different sites you want to map, images you want to include, etc.

## StoryMap Spreadsheet Template

Template based on the StoryMap Spreadsheet Template created by Molly Brown, Reference and Outreach Archivist, Northeastern University Library.

For more information about collecting and organizing data for StoryMap, please see:

<https://bit.ly/handout-storymap-spreadsheet>



# Data collection: Site

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Slide #	Site Name	Site Location	Image URL/File Location	Image Credit	Image Caption	Headline	Historical Profile/First Person Narrative	Citation(s)	Additional Media	Additional Media Caption & Credit
2	Title Slide	n/a	n/a	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126">http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126</a>	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections		Walking the Emerald Necklace				
3	Site 1	Back Bay Fens Community Gardens	42.344888, -71.093221	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20157723">http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20157723</a>	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections	Community garden in Back Bay Fens.	Back Bay Community Gardens	This is an introduction to the project that will continue on.  Two men tend community garden in the Back Bay Fens. A public water building can be seen on the left. The Back Bay Fens (also called The Fens, or Fens) is a freshwater marsh and lagoon area within Boston's larger Emerald Necklace park system.			
4											
5											
6											

The slide number can serve as the order in which your sites appear on your map and the site name can be used to label sites on your map.

The site location is used to identify a point on your map where the site is physically located (address or coordinates).



# Data collection: Image

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Slide #	Site Name	Site Location	Image URL/File Location	Image Credit	Image Caption	Headline	Historical Profile/First Person Narrative	Citation(s)	Additional Media	Additional Media Caption & Credit
2	Title Slide	n/a	n/a	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126">http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126</a>	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections		Walking the Emerald Necklace				
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4											
5											
6											

The image URL/File location is useful in keeping track of images of sites. Always credit your images to indicate their origin. Also include a caption describing your image.



# Data collection: Narrative and Sources

fx | http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126

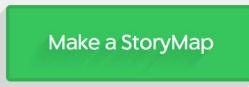
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Slide #	Site Name	Site Location	Image URL/File Location	Image Credit	Image Caption	Headline	Historical Profile/First Person Narrative	Citation(s)	Additional Media	Additional Media Caption & Credit
2	Title Slide	n/a	n/a	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126">http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126</a>	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections	Walking the Emerald Necklace					
3	Site 1	Back Bay Fens Community Gardens	42.344888, -71.093221	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20157723">http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20157723</a>	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections	Community garden in Back Bay Fens.	Back Bay Community Gardens	This is an introduction to the project that will continue on.  Two men tend community garden in the Back Bay Fens. A public water building can be seen on the left. The Back Bay Fens (also called The Fens, or Fens) is a freshwater marsh and lagoon area within Boston's larger Emerald Necklace park system.			
4											
5											
6											

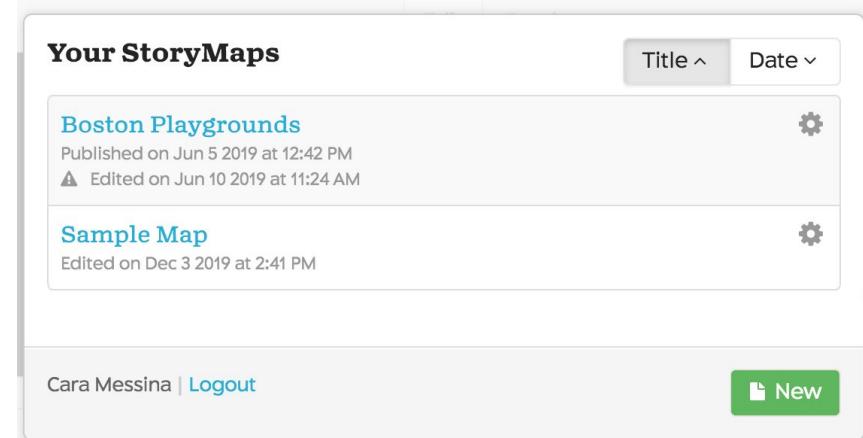
The headline can serve as the official title or label of your site. Including a narrative provides more context as to why your site is important.

Don't forget to cite your sources!  
Also, you may want to include additional media related to your site (e.g. newspaper clippings, additional photos, etc.).



# Create a StoryMap

- Go to <https://storymap.knightlab.com/>
- Click “Make a StoryMap.” 
- Either create a new account or sign in through Google.
- Once you’re signed in, click “New Map” (once you have created your map, it will be there for you to work on).
- Name your project.



The screenshot shows the 'Your StoryMaps' dashboard. At the top right are 'Title ^' and 'Date ^' dropdowns. Below them are two map cards. The first card for 'Boston Playgrounds' is published on Jun 5 2019 at 12:42 PM and edited on Jun 10 2019 at 11:24 AM. The second card for 'Sample Map' was edited on Dec 3 2019 at 2:41 PM. Both cards have gear icons for settings. At the bottom left is the user name 'Cara Messina | Logout'. A green 'New' button is at the bottom right.



# Your StoryMap

The screenshot shows the StoryMap JS application interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'My Maps' (with a red '(untitled)' placeholder), 'Options' (highlighted with a blue box and connected by a blue line to the 'SAVE' button), 'Save' (highlighted with a blue box and connected by a blue line to the 'Options' button), 'Publish Changes', 'Help', and 'Share'. Below the navigation is a world map with a title slide message: 'This is your title slide. The title slide shows all points from your other slides.' In the center, there's an 'Edit' tab and a 'Preview' tab. To the left, there's a sidebar with a red icon, a red '(untitled)' placeholder, a plus sign for 'Add Slide', and a 'Leaflet' logo. The main area has a large orange callout box containing the text 'Overall options (like changing map layout)'. To the right, another orange callout box contains the text 'SAVE OFTEN!'. At the bottom, there are sections for 'Media' (with fields for URL, upload, credit, and caption) and 'HEADLINE' (with rich text editor controls). Buttons for 'Marker Options' and 'Background Options' are also at the bottom.



# Your StoryMap: Slides

The screenshot shows the StoryMap JS interface. At the top, there are navigation buttons: 'My Maps', 'Options', 'Save', 'Publish Changes', 'Edit', and 'Preview'. A blue box highlights the 'Preview' button. Below the buttons is a title slide featuring a world map with political boundaries. The title slide text reads: 'This is your title slide. The title slide shows all points from your other slides.' To the left of the main area is a sidebar with a red icon labeled '(untitled)' and a '+ Add Slide' button. In the bottom right corner of the main area, there is a note: 'Address search geocoding generously sponsored by Mapbox.' On the far right, there is a 'Media' section with fields for 'URL to your media', 'Upload an Image', 'Credit', and 'Caption'. Below these fields is a rich text editor with bold, italic, and other formatting options. At the bottom of the media section, it says 'Accepts HTML'. A blue box also highlights the 'Add Slide' button in the sidebar.

Check out and add  
new slides here

Preview your  
slides

Preview the  
geographic  
points in all of  
your slides

Feel free to  
during the presentation!



# Your StoryMap: Media and Text Boxes

The screenshot shows a StoryMap interface with a world map background. At the top, there are navigation buttons: 'My Maps', 'Options', 'Save', 'Publish Changes', 'Edit' (which is selected), and 'Preview'. Below the map, there are two text boxes: one orange box containing the text 'Title and content of your text box' and another orange box containing 'Color or image for text box background'. In the bottom left corner, there is a 'Media' section with fields for 'URL to your media', 'Upload an Image', 'Credit', and 'Caption'. A note at the bottom says 'Accepts HTML'. In the bottom right corner, there are 'Marker Options' and 'Background Options' buttons.

Uploading photos or other media! Document what you upload

Title and content of your text box

Color or image for text box background

Media

URL to your media  
or

Credit

Caption

Accepts HTML

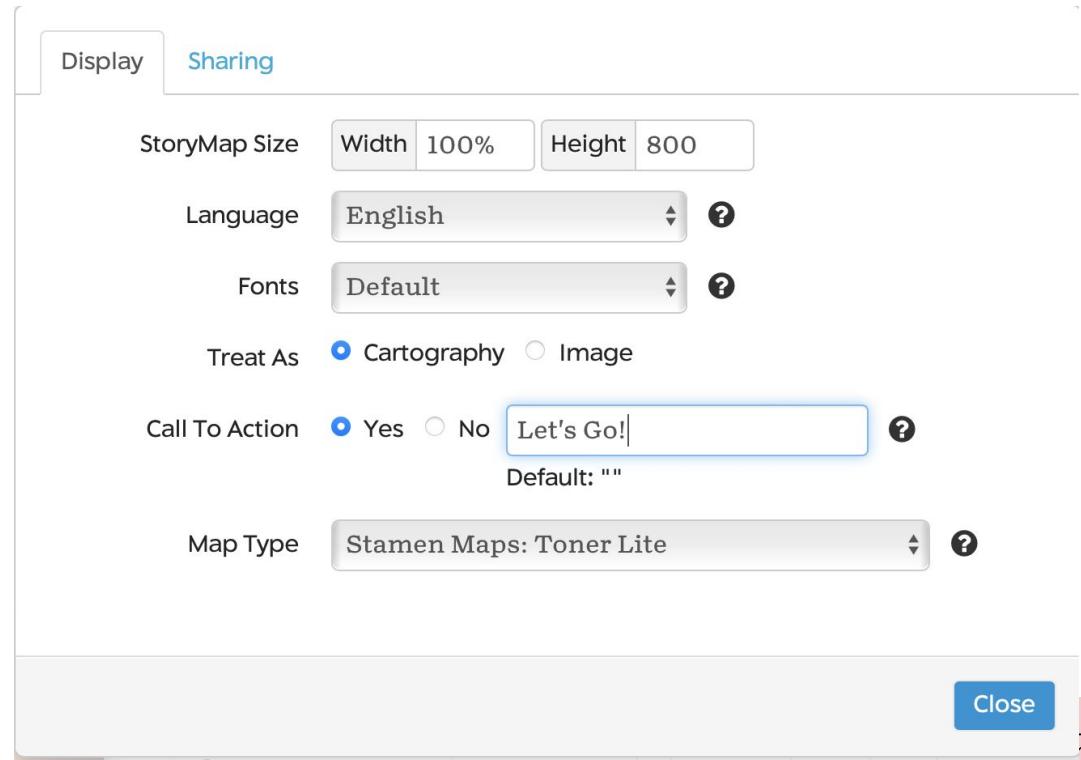
Marker Options

Background Options



# Options for designing your map

- The “Options” button in the top left allows you to change the design of your map.
- Customizable options include Language, Fonts, Call to Action, Map Type and more.



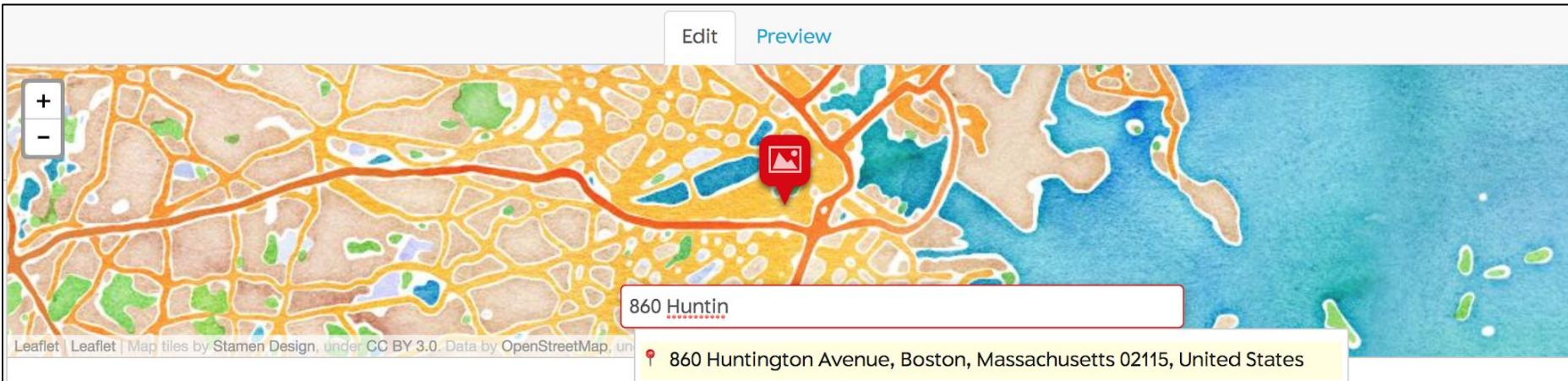
# Slides, or map markers

Each slide is a different marker point on your map. Each slide contains:

- Title and text. The text box reads basic HTML.
- A background image or color.
- A map marker, which can be placed by searching for Google Maps locations or by placing the marker manually.
- Media: images, videos, and sound files can be uploaded. Since only *one* media file can be uploaded per slide, you can use the text box's HTML to integrate additional images or other media types.



# Add A Location



KnightLab StoryMap uses **Mapbox** to locate addresses

StoryMap, however, does **not** always recognize place names; you might need to know the **address** or location of particular structures

You can also **drag and drop the map markers** to the specific location

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



# Add Media and Images to a Slide: Upload or URL

Search for a location or enter coordinates like this: lat:42.0

TEST SLIDE

B I </> %

If you already have an image, insert another image using basic HTML:  
To insert an image, make sure the image is uploaded with a URL. You can use Flickr or Imgur to create a URL for your image. Wikimedia Commons is a great source of images online, don't forget to cite! Turn tagging on, then, use the HTML image tag. 

Marker Options Background Options

Use “media” to upload files. You can upload an image or put a **URL** of an image OR a video (like a YouTube video). If you want to include your own video, you will first have to upload it to YouTube or other online publisher and copy that link.



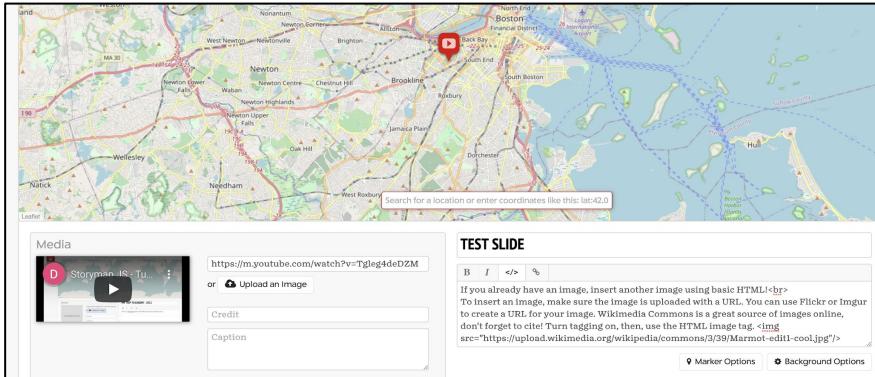
# Add SoundCloud Music/Audio

The screenshot shows a SoundCloud song page for "Adventure" by Ron Gelinas. At the top, there's a media player with a play button and a waveform. Below it is a URL input field containing "https://soundcloud.com/atmospheric-music-portal/ron-g...". There's also a "Upload an Image" button. To the right, the song title "Adventure" and artist "Ron Gelinas" are displayed. A description below says "A SoundCloud song titled "Adventure" by Ron Gelinas." The page includes a "Share" button, an "Embed" button, and a "Message" button. At the bottom, there are social sharing icons for Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, along with a mail icon. The URL at the very bottom is "https://soundcloud.com/atmospheric-music-portal/ron-g...".

You can also upload music from SoundCloud as long as the audio is (1). Royalty free, or (2). You have permission to use it. To do so, you can copy the “share” link from SoundCloud and paste it into the URL box.

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

# Add Media and Images to a Slide:HTML



If you have an image or a video in the “media” section, but want to include an image **in the text**, you can! The text box reads basic HTML.

1. Click the </> button (turn on HTML)
2. Get a URL of your image. Use Wikimedia Commons to search images by content, and filter by license type and image size. Make sure to use the embed file code, and don't forget to cite the source!
3. Use the HTML `` tag to insert the image.
4. Check the “Preview” to see the image. Smaller image sizes may appear as a thumbnail, so stick to larger image sizes and preview your end result!



# Embed codes and image files

If you are adding an image via its URL, make sure that you select the link with **the image file itself**, not just a page with the image on it.



For example, to add an image from Wikimedia Commons, follow these steps:

1. Go to "More Details" and choose "Use this file on the web," or just choose "Use this file on the web" if you see that option.
2. Copy the "File URL."

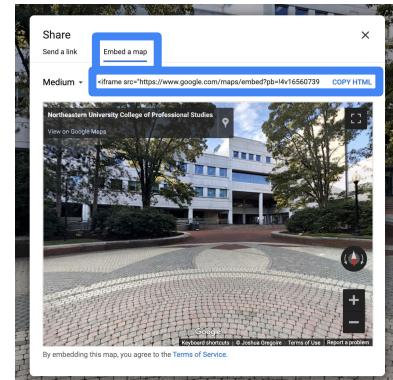
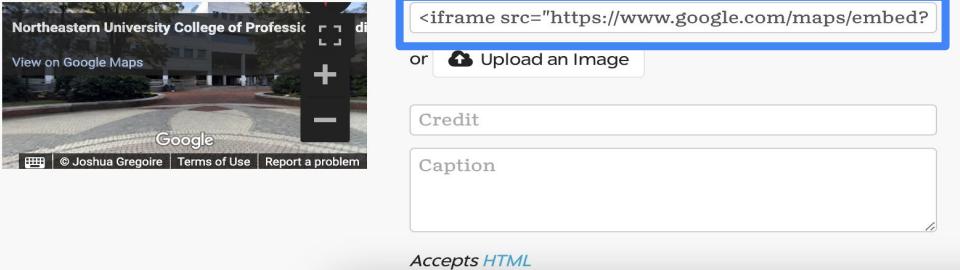


# Add Google Street View to a Slide

As with other media, you can insert a Google street view map into a slide by entering its **URL**.

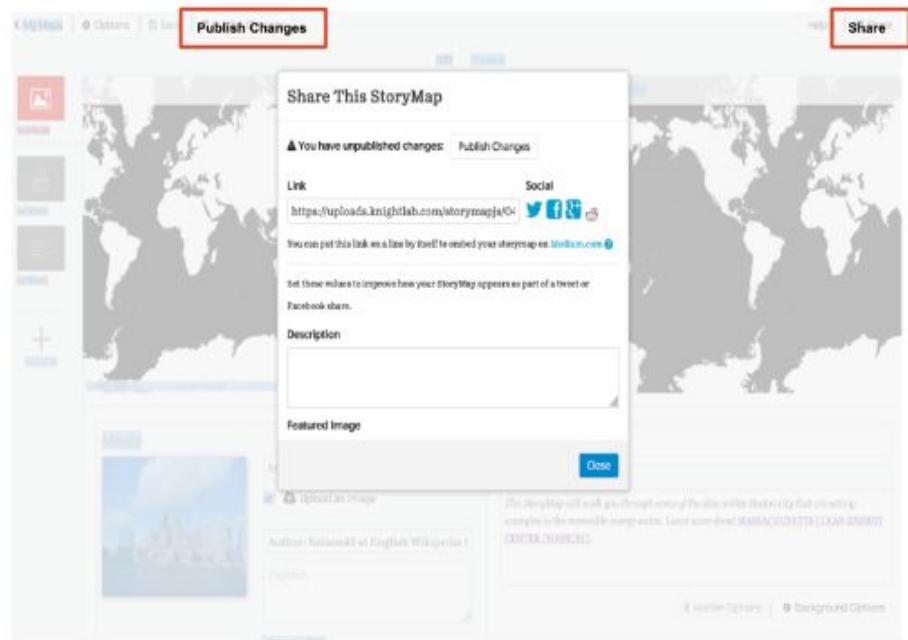
- Click “Share or embed image” from the menu in Google Maps, and copy the **HTML** link from the “Embed a map” tab.
  - Make sure the link has the `<iframe src="URL"></iframe>` code (it should automatically, but the map won’t work without it!).
- Enter the URL into the “URL to your media” box.

## Media



# Publish and Share Your StoryMap

- Click the “Publish Changes” button on the top left side on the editing page.
- StoryMap’s “Share” button is in the top right corner.
- You can add a description and feature image here before sharing your StoryMap widely.



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

# StoryMap Demo

- To see StoryMap in action, click on this [Sample Map Link!](#)
- Here you will be able to explore a map custom-made by DITI to highlight your options for creating maps.

The screenshot displays a StoryMap interface. On the left is a map of Boston with several musical note icons placed on specific locations. On the right is a dark photograph of a concert stage with bright lights and silhouettes of audience members' hands raised. Below the image is a title and some descriptive text.

**CONCERT VENUES IN BOSTON**

Photo by Viethu R. Nair, unsplash.com

On this slide, you can give an introduction to your map. You may want to provide background information, explain the map's significance, or point out things that you want your readers to notice.

To show emphasis, you can make text **bold** or *italicized*. Using the link button, you can direct your readers to outside sites.

And what about the button you see below? It comes with a default text, but you can change it through 'options' at the top-left of your screen.

[Let's Go!](#)



# Best Practices and Advanced Options for StoryMap



# Image sharing and permissions

- It is important to verify that you are allowed to use images before you put them in your StoryMap.
- Search for media that is public domain or shared with permissions that allow re-use.
  - DITI recommends [Wikimedia Commons](#) and DPLA ([Digital Public Library of America](#)).
- Ensure proper credit/attribution is given for all media

For more information on copyright and reuse, please see:

<https://bit.ly/fair-use-handout>



# Accessibility in StoryMap (1/3)

Alt-text is a description of a digital image attached to the image file. When you attach an image or video to your StoryMap, add descriptions of any images and videos in the image caption and text box. People that use screen readers are able to hear content you include in image captions and the text box.

**Headline**

B I </>

Place alt text describing the slide and attached visuals here

**Media**

<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?pb=!3

or Upload an Image

Place image title and credit here

Place alt text describing the image here

Accepts HTML



# Accessibility in StoryMap (2/3)

Color contrast is one way to make StoryMap accessible. Choosing a higher color contrast palette will make the text more accessible. Avoid using red and green colors for differentiation. StoryMap allows users to customize text color using HTML and the slide background color.

**Headline**

B I </> %

```
<span style="color:red">Slide Text: Place alt text describing the slide and attached visuals here</span>
```

**Media**



`<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed...`

or

**Image Credit**

```
<span style="color:red">Image Caption: Place alt text describing the image here</span>
```

Accepts HTML

**Slide Background**

**Background Color**

**Background Image**   
or upload an image to your StoryMap folder.



# Accessibility in StoryMap (3/3)

If linking media in the text box of a slide on StoryMap, be sure to use a descriptive link name. Descriptive link names allows users to know the content and context of the link before they navigate it.

Instead of writing “For more information on accessibility in StoryMap, click [here](#).”

Write “For more information on accessibility in StoryMap, please see: [\*\*Handout: Accessibility in StoryMap\*\*](#).”



# Data Privacy

- It's important to pay attention to data privacy when using digital resources
- At its simplest, **data privacy** is a person's ability to control what of their personal information is shared and with whom.
- To help you make informed decisions about interacting with digital tools in ways that honor your boundaries with your data and/or personal information, the DITI has prepared a handout on **Data Privacy**



# Data Ethics

- Data can render certain communities and their qualities hyper-visible or invisible, as well as reinforce biases.
- It is important to consider what voices are missing from the data or from the archives. Data ethics provide a critical framework for challenging bias in big data, data visualizations, etc.
- To help you engage with and transform your data ethically, the DITI has prepared an handout on [Data Ethics](#).



# A Note on HTML

- You can use HTML to have more control over the display and behavior of StoryMap. Look for the “Accepts HTML” language or this symbol: </>
- For more information on HTML, please see:  
<https://bit.ly/handout-HTML>

## Helpful HTML Codes

#Change Text Color  
<span style ="color:red">YOUR TEXT  
HERE</span>

#Add Link in Caption/Credit  
<a href="URL">text</a>

#Add Image/Media in Textbox  


#Add Alternate Text to Image/Media  


Please do not hesitate to ask questions at any point  
during the presentation!



# A Note on Save States

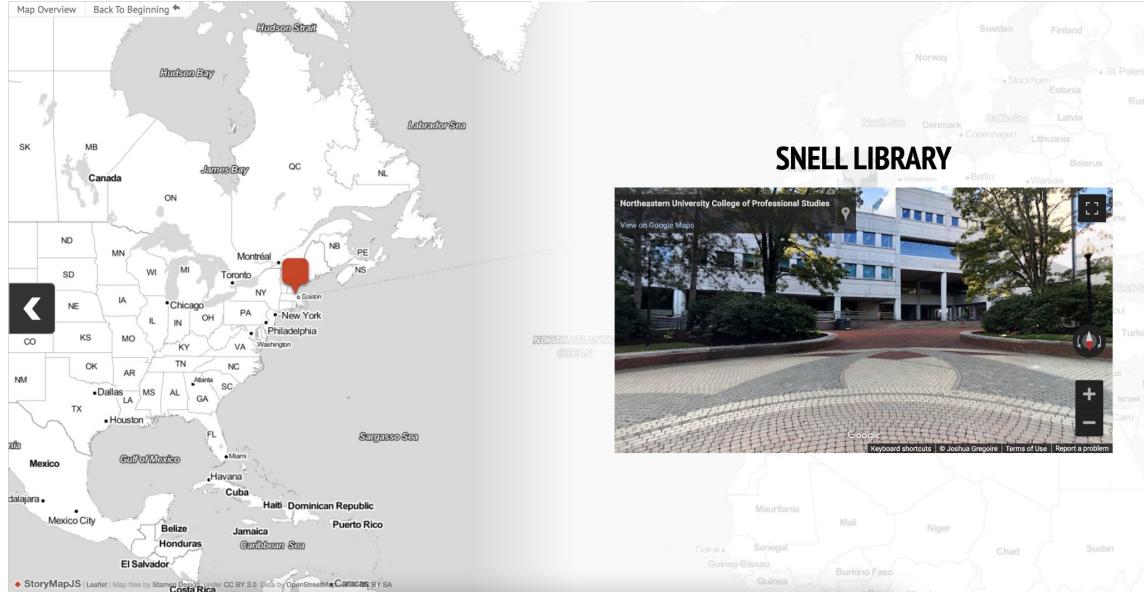
StoryMap does not keep older versions of your project, so once you make and save changes, **you cannot retrieve a previous version.** You can also write over new content if you have your StoryMap open in multiple browser tabs or windows at once.

This is one reason why it is a good idea to plan out your StoryMap in a separate document: if you lose progress, you will have your content saved somewhere else.



# A Note on Zoom Levels

StoryMap does not let you set how far zoomed in or out your slides will be. The zoom level is determined automatically according to the distance between your locations.



# For Further Exploration

Here are all the links presented in these slides:

<https://bit.ly/handout-storymap>

<https://bit.ly/handout-storymap-spreadsheet>

<https://bit.ly/fair-use-handout>

<https://bit.ly/storymap-accessibility-handout>

<https://bit.ly/handout-HTML>



# Thank you!

- Developed by Ana Abraham, Chris McNulty, Benjamin Grey, Claire Lavarreda, and Shannon Peifer
- Taught by Claire Lavarreda and Shannon Peifer

- For more information on DITI, please see:  
<https://bit.ly/diti-about>
- Schedule an appointment with us! <https://bit.ly/diti-meeting>
- If you have any questions, contact us at: [nulab.info@gmail.com](mailto:nulab.info@gmail.com)

