

# Storytelling Through Mapping: Google My Maps & StoryMap

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Northeastern University  
*NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks*

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during the presentation!*

# Workshop Agenda

- Learn about Google My Maps and KnightLab StoryMaps as a mode of conveying data and content
- Discuss best practices and questions to consider before creating your project in Google My Maps and KnightLab
- Explore sample maps
- Outline steps for using Google My Maps and KnightLab
- Start building!

Slides, handouts, and data available at <https://bit.ly/FA23-Aljoe-Mapping>



# What are different uses for maps?

- Maps are powerful tools for conveying geospatial information
- Well-made maps can quickly and easily give **content** and **context**, but poorly made maps can be misleading
- How do you use maps in your everyday life?
  - How does a subway map compare to a Google map?
  - What are these maps doing? How do they shape your expectations and experiences?



# How do maps represent reality?

- Maps certainly reflect the intention of the map-maker, but maps are also *inherently limited*.
  - Boston is as much a human idea as a physical space, and thus maps both represent and *create* reality. [Laura Herbert, [“What Do Maps Really Do?”](#)]
  - The simplicity and clarity of maps is deceiving, and we should question it. But the artificial clarity is necessary for the map to be *useful*. Think of the maps that are useful to you: they filter out the information that is less relevant to what you’re using the map for.



# Questions for critiquing maps

From Shannon Mattern, professor  
of anthropology at The New School  
(["Critiquing Maps II"](#)):

**What's its subject?**

**What is its "message" or  
"argument" or purpose?**

**How was the map made?**

**What's its geographic/spatial  
area?**

***When* is this map?**

**Who made this map? Editorial  
choices?**

**Who is/are the map's audiences?**

**What are the map's materiality  
and form?**



# Challenges in historical mapping

- Working with historical maps and data can be particularly challenging.
  - Historical information is often partial or complicated, but maps tend to show specific, concrete information.
  - Historical landscapes can shift over time (for example, a substantial portion of the Charles was filled in during the 19th century to create what is now Back Bay).

Think about what is **particularly difficult to represent** or how there might be complexities you should standardize to map your data. Pay close attention to these moments and think about how they impact your understanding of maps as a method for conveying information.



# Compare: Examples of Google MyMaps & KnightLab

Explore this sample map of [Boston's Black Heritage Trail](#). This map makes use of several Google My Maps features, including color coding, styling of icons and basemap, layers, points, lines, and polygons.

Explore this sample KnightLab story map of [Phillis Wheatley's Journey](#). This map makes use of several KnightLab features including styling of icons, integrating media, and utilizing space as its own narrative tool.



# Making a Map in Google MyMaps



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# Example Projects Using Google My Maps

- [“US National Parks”](#): uses a mix of textual, image, and geo-location data to provide content and context about US National Parks
- [“Freedom Trail Boston”](#): uses a mix of lines, geo-spatial points, texts, and images to map the route of the Freedom Trail in Boston
- [“Davis Square Somerville”](#): maps the businesses of Davis Square, using different icons to demonstrate various types of businesses



# Activity: Explore Boston's Black Heritage Trail

Explore this sample map of [Boston's Black Heritage Trail](#). This map makes use of several Google My Maps features, including color coding, styling of icons and basemap, layers, points, lines, and polygons.

We will learn how to add these features to our own maps, including how to:

- Add and style points, lines, and polygons
- Add images, descriptions, and links
- Utilize layers and basemaps



# Create a map with Google My Maps

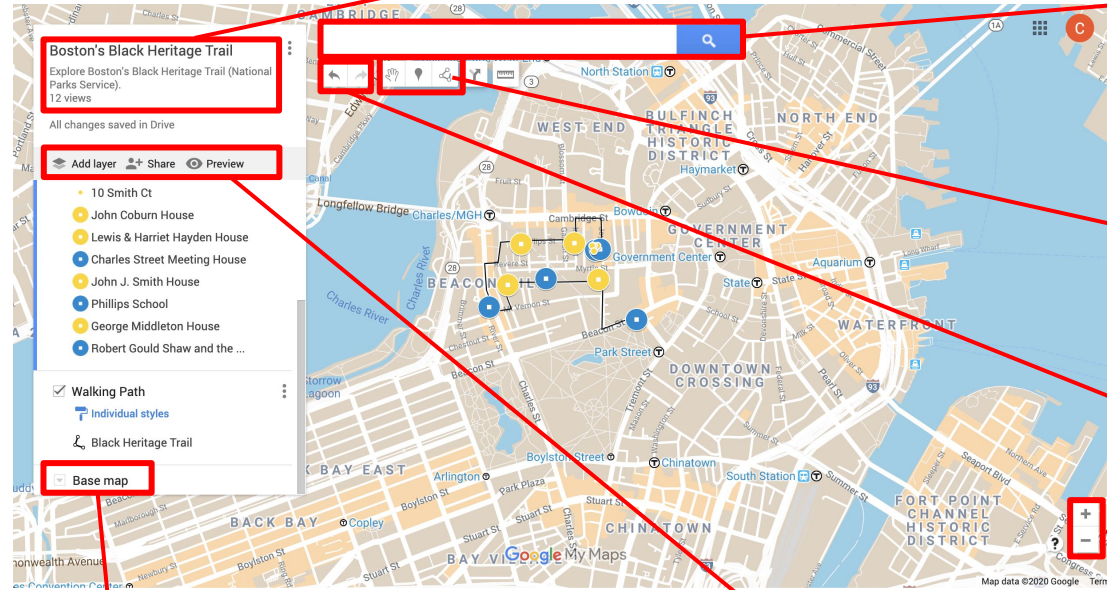
- Go to <https://www.google.com/mymaps>
- Sign in through Google
- Click “Create a New Map”
- Once you have created your map, it will be there for you to work on
- Name your project and give it a description



+ CREATE A NEW MAP



# Google My Maps



Map title and map description

Search for locations using their addresses

Add and move points, lines, and polygons

Undo and redo

Zoom in and out

Change basemap

Add new layers and preview the finished product



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# Selecting Your Basemap

To change your basemap, go to the bottom of the left-hand column and click “Base Map.” Google provides you with a variety of options to choose from.

Basemaps can help:

- Situate the map a particular context
- Make certain content easier or more difficult to read

What other impacts and implications can you think of?



# Map Markers

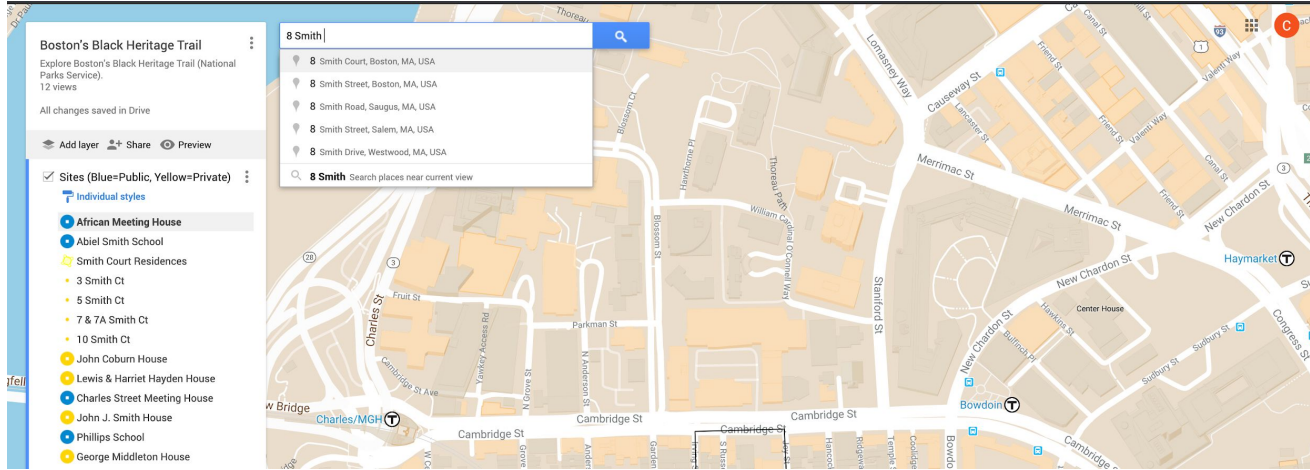
Map markers are the different points on your map. You can place markers using coordinates or addresses, or add them manually.

Each marker can contain:

- Name and description
- Street address
- Latitude/longitude geospatial coordinates
- Customizable icon and color
- Media: images, videos, and links



# Add A Location



Search for the location you want and select "Add to Map."

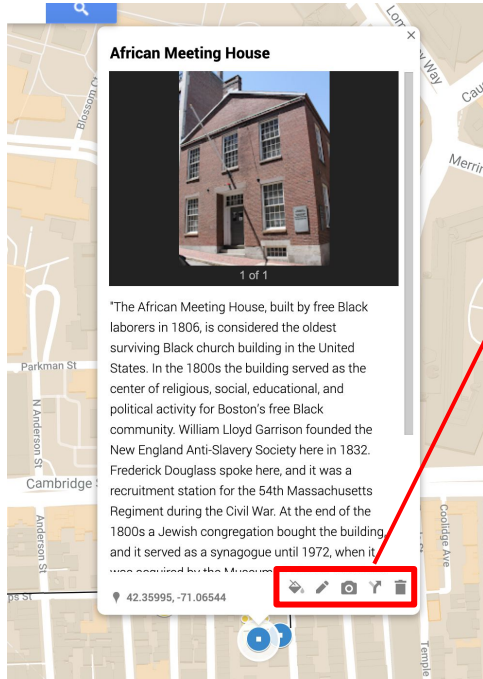
Google My Maps does not always recognize place names; you might need to look up the address or location instead

If you cannot find the address for a location, you can select the marker icon and click on the spot where you wish to add the marker





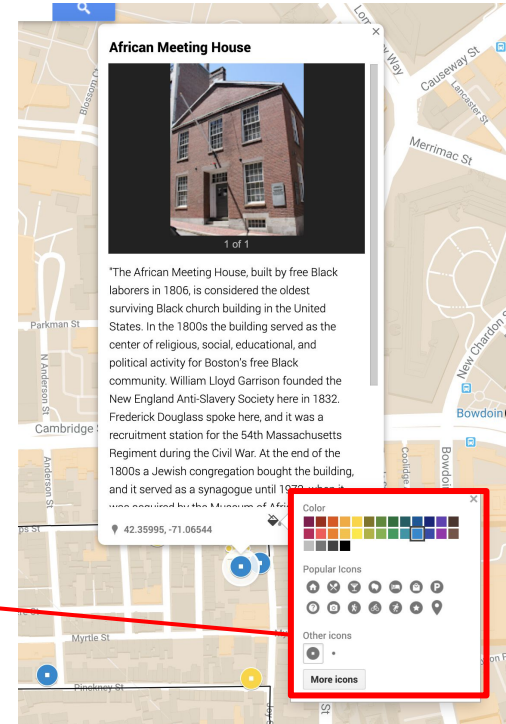
# Add More Data to Markers



Tools, left to right: Style, Edit title and description, Add images/video, Delete marker line or polygon

For all markers, you can add a title, description, images, videos, links, and customizable color.

You can change the color and icon of the marker.



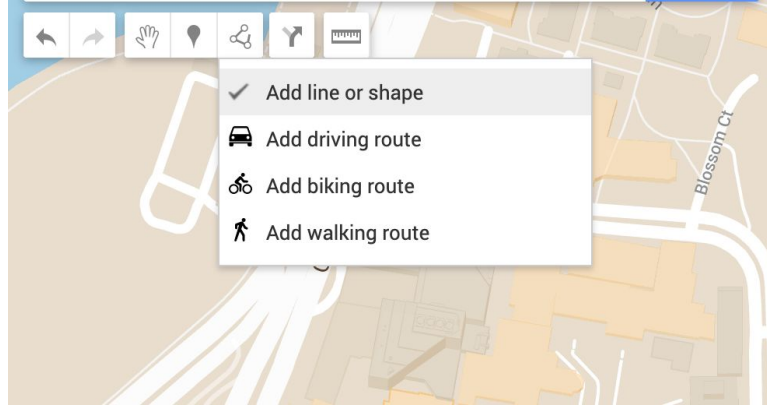


# Lines and Polygons

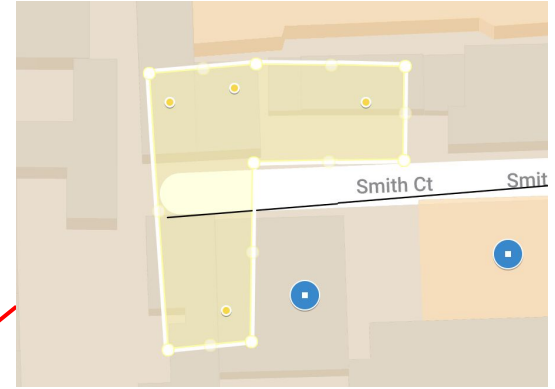
- Google My Maps can also add **lines** and **polygons** to your map. Lines and polygons use fixed points on the map that you select to visualize key information.
  - Lines can demonstrate routes and directions. Lines are easiest to add when you're representing the shape of a route that presently exists.
  - Polygons can demonstrate towns and neighborhoods. Polygons are best for representing the shape of a historic area whose boundaries have since changed.



# Add Lines and Polygons



Click “Add line or shape”

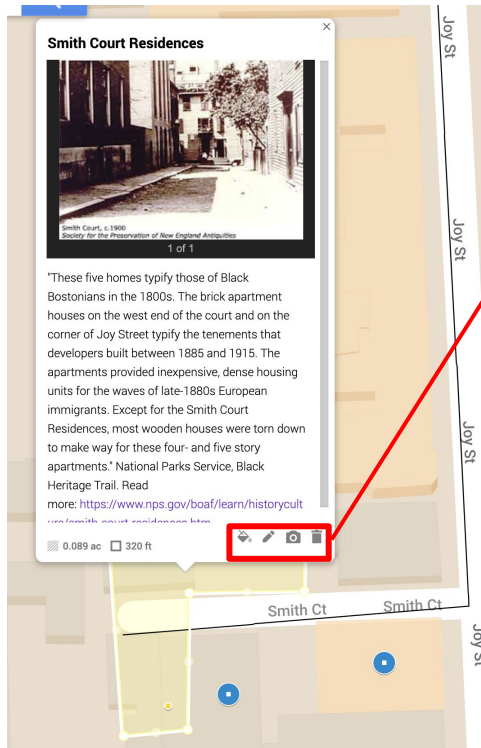


For lines, click where you want to start drawing and then click each corner or bend of the line; double click when you are done with the line.

For polygons, click where you want to start drawing, click each corner or bend of the line, and click back on the first point to finish the shape.



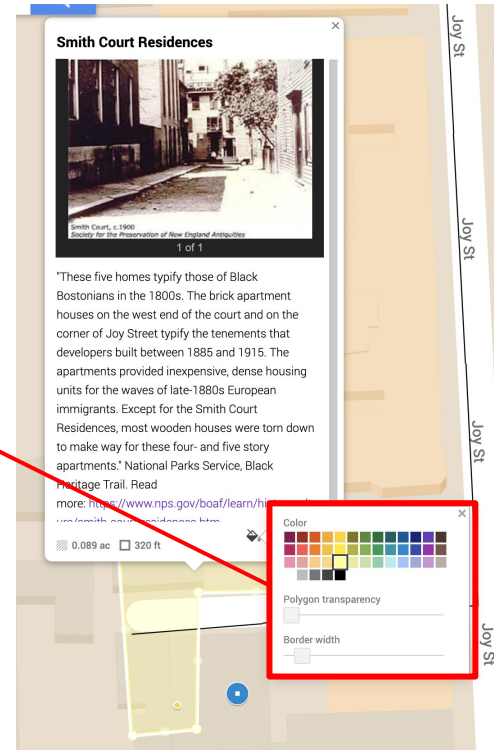
# Add More Data to Lines and Polygons



Tools, left to right: Style, Edit title and description, Add images/video, Delete line or polygon

For lines and polygons the color, transparency, and width can be customized.

For all lines and polygons, you can add a title, description, images, videos, and links.



# Layers

Layers allow you to sort/filter your geospatial information into different groups. All of your markers, lines, and polygons will be placed into an “Untitled Layer,” so always make sure to title the layer even if you will only have one.

- Individual layers can be turned on and off.
- Layers can be exported individually as KML (a markup language for expressing geographic annotation) to view in Google Earth
- To add a new layer, click “Add Layer”
- Title the layer
- Add markers, lines, or polygons!



# Making a StoryMap



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# Examples Projects Using KnightLab StoryMaps

- [“Boston Parks and Playgrounds: Community Scan”](#): uses a mix of textual, image, and geo-location data to tell a story about playgrounds in Boston’s neighborhoods.
- [“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.
- [“Commonwealth: A Offshore wind hub”](#): uses textual, image, video and geo-locations data to showcase key infrastructure of Massachusetts Clean Energy Center’s (MassCEC) Offshore Wind Energy Initiative.



# 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/storymap-spreadsheet>



# Spreadsheet data collection

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	Back Bay Fens, Boston, Mass.	Walking the Emerald Necklace	This is an introduction to the project that will continue on.			
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	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											

1. 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.

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

3. 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.

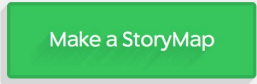
4. The headline can serve as the official title or label of your site. Including a narrative provides more context as to why your site is important.

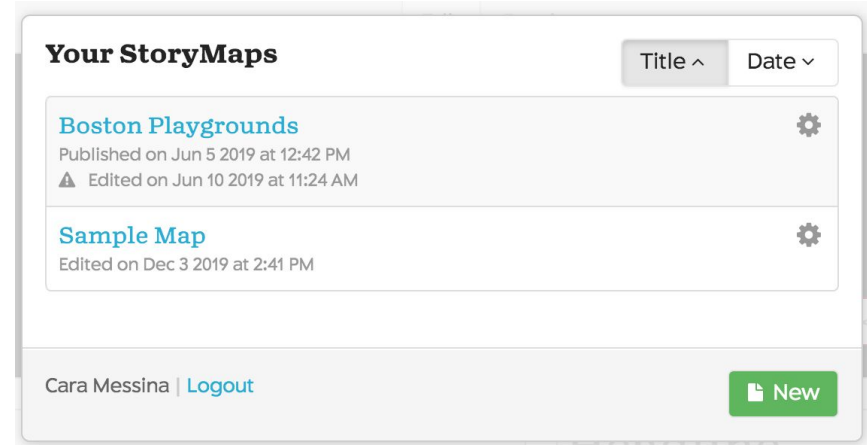
5. Don't forget to cite your sources! Also, you may want to include additional media related to your site (e.g. newspaper clippings, additional photos, etc.).






# 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.



# Your StoryMap



The screenshot shows the StoryMap interface. At the top, there are buttons for 'Option', 'Save', 'Edit', 'Preview', 'Help', and 'Share'. A world map is displayed in the center. Below the map, there is a 'Media' section with a 'No Media Selected' message and fields for 'URL to your media', 'Upload an Image', 'Credit', and 'Caption'. To the right of the media section is a text box titled 'THIS IS A TEST' with a 'Background Options' button. At the bottom left, there is a button to 'Add Slide'. Callout boxes provide detailed instructions for each of these features.

Overall options  
(like changing map layout)

**SAVE OFTEN!**

Preview your slides

Preview the geographic points in all of your slides

Title and content of your text box

Color or image for text box background

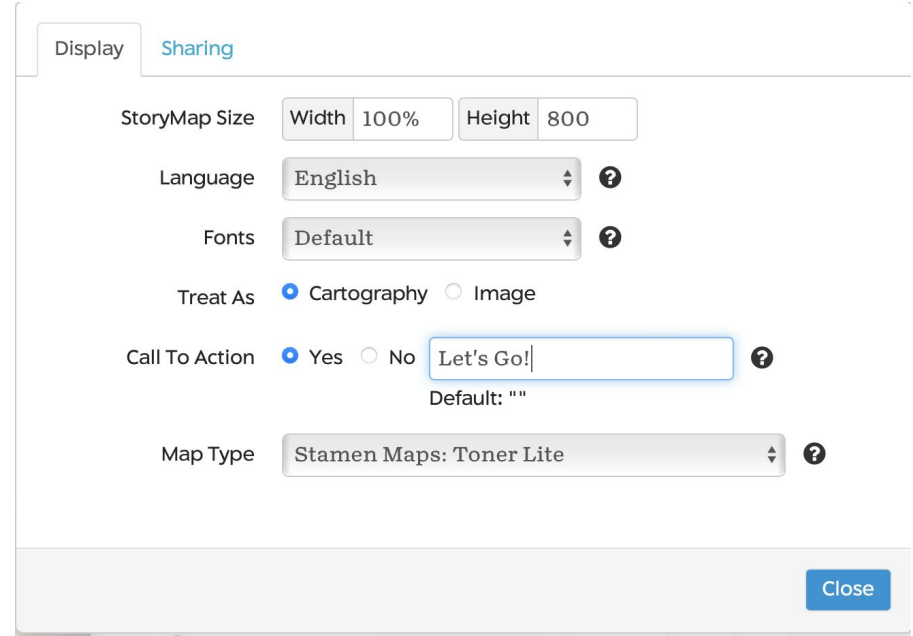
Uploading photos or other media!  
Document what you upload

Check out and add new slides here



# 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.



The screenshot shows the 'Options' panel for a StoryMap, with the 'Display' tab selected. The panel contains several settings:

- StoryMap Size:** Width is set to 100% and Height is set to 800.
- Language:** A dropdown menu showing 'English' with a help icon.
- Fonts:** A dropdown menu showing 'Default' with a help icon.
- Treat As:** Radio buttons for 'Cartography' (selected) and 'Image'.
- Call To Action:** Radio buttons for 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'. A text input field contains 'Let's Go!' with a help icon. Below it, the default text is shown as 'Default: ""'.
- Map Type:** A dropdown menu showing 'Stamen Maps: Toner Lite' with a help icon.

A 'Close' button is located at the bottom right of the panel.



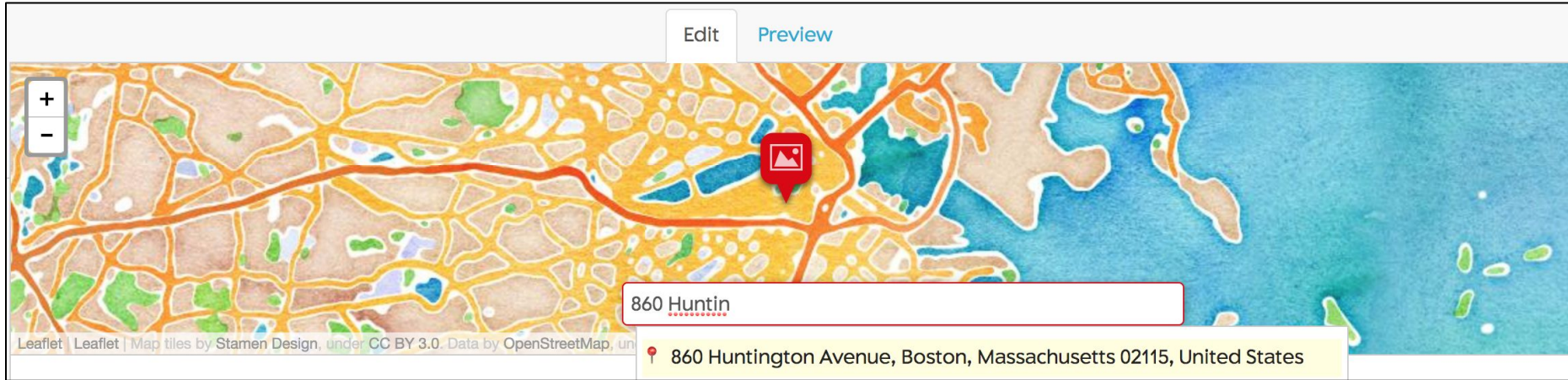
# Slides, or map markers

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

- Title and text. The text box reads basic HTML.
- A background image/color.
- A map marker, which can be placed using 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 an image or another media type.



# Add A Location



KnightLab StoryMap uses **Google Maps** to locate addresses

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

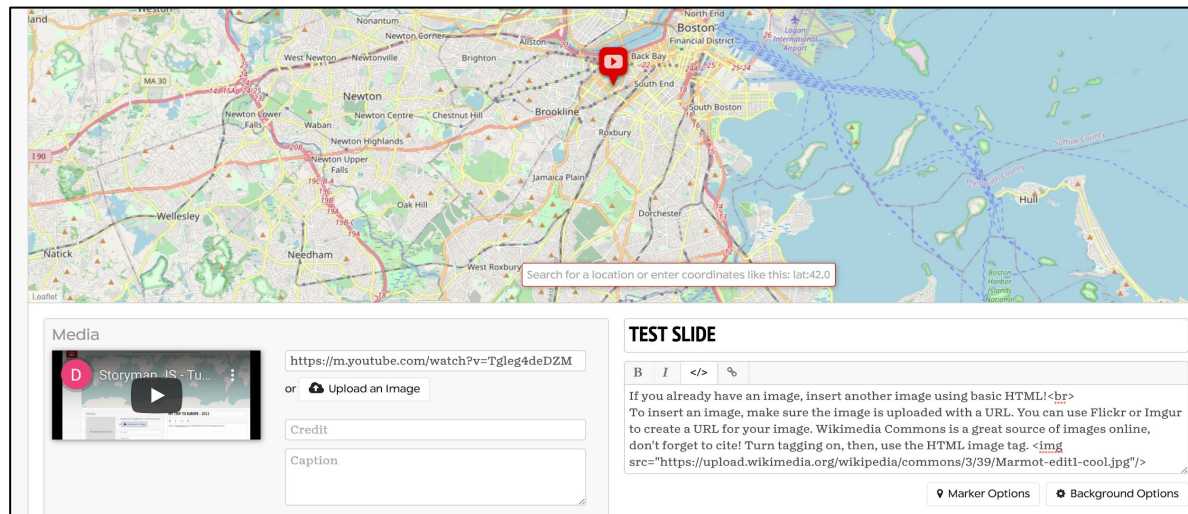
You can also **drag and drop the map markers** to the specific location



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# Add Media and Images to a Slide



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.

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!



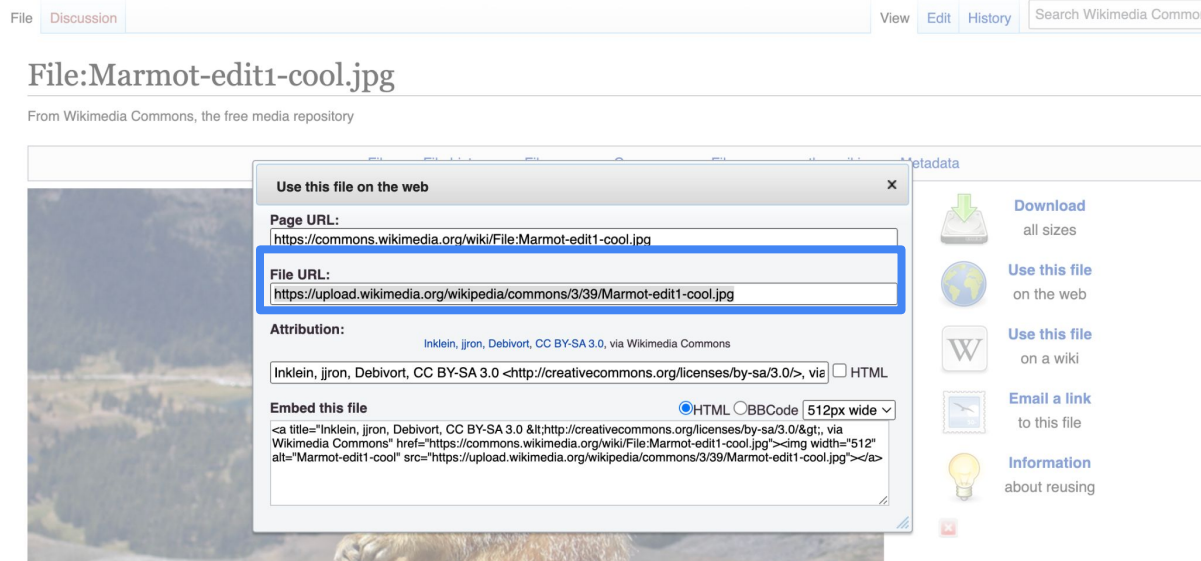


# Embed codes and image files

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."



# Image sharing and permissions

- It is important to verify that you are allowed to use images before you put them in your StoryMap or Google MyMaps.
- 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/diti-fair-use>



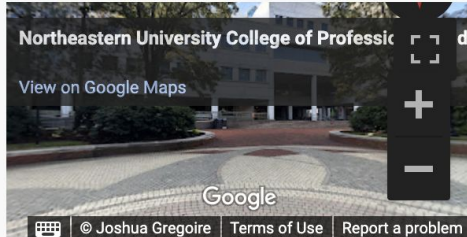


# Add Google Street View to a Slide

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, 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



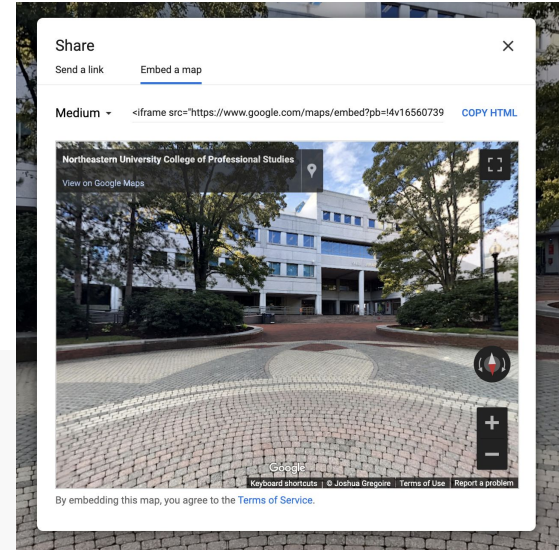
`<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?"`

or  Upload an Image

Credit

Caption

Accepts [HTML](#)

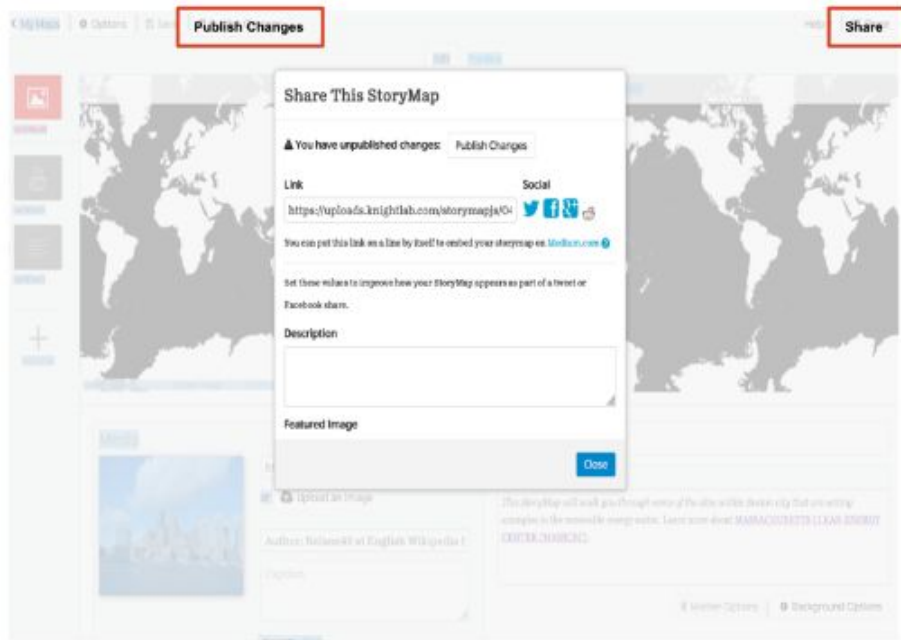


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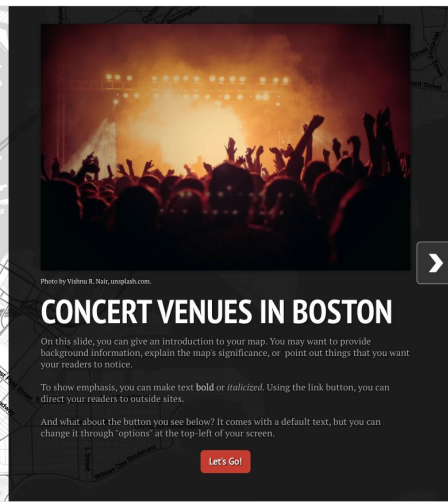
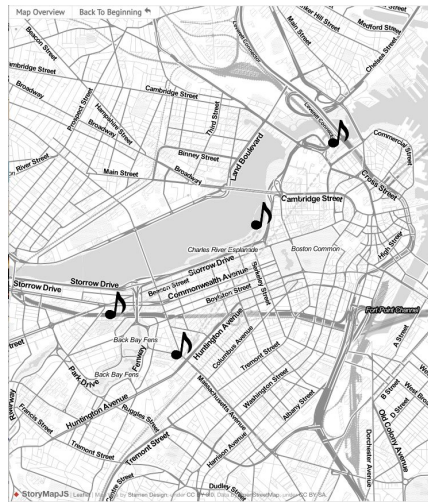
# Publish and Share Your StoryMap

- 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.



# 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.



# Accessibility in StoryMap

Alt-text is a description of a digital image attached to the image file. People that use screen readers are able to hear content you include in:

- Image captions
- Text box (for embedded images and media)

If linking media, be sure to use a descriptive link name.

For more information on accessibility, please see:

<https://bit.ly/diti-accessibility>



# 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.



# Discussion

- What are the main differences you can see between how spaces are presented in Google My Maps or KnightLab format?
- How do mapping softwares facilitate the creation of a narrative about history or literature? Can they challenge a narrative?



# Thank you!

If you have any questions, contact us at: [nulab.info@gmail.com](mailto:nulab.info@gmail.com)

**Developed by Kasya O'Connor Grant, Hunter Moskowitz, Colleen Nugent, and Ana Abraham**

Slides, handouts, and data available at <https://bit.ly/FA23-Aljoe-Mapping>

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



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