

# Storytelling with Mapping: KnightLab StoryMap

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ENGL 3380: Critical Art & Culture Writing  
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# Today's Agenda

- Learn about KnightLab StoryMap as a mode of conveying data and content
- Consider best practices for creating your StoryMap
- Think about essential questions to ask before creating your StoryMap
- Walk through steps for using Knight Lab's StoryMap
- Start building a StoryMap

Slides and handout are available at: <http://bit.ly/diti-spring2022-kim-storymap>



# Learning Objectives

- Articulate the choices you make when telling a story using a map
- Follow a step-by-step guide for creating, saving, and publishing maps using KnightLab's StoryMap
- Upload data into StoryMap, including location information, images, and text
- Navigate StoryMap's map markers and location-finding system



# What is a “story map”?

Telling a **story** using **maps**!

“You combine authoritative maps with narrative text, images, and multimedia content. They make it easy to harness the power of maps and geography to tell your story.”

- ESRI Story Maps Website



# 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.** Take a moment and consider how you got to class today, using words only.
  - What visual markers you would use to convey your movement in/across space to be here today. How would a layperson know where to go?
  - How would it be useful if you combined text and images to help someone find their way? Can you think of some examples.



# Big Picture: StoryMaps

StoryMaps are powerful teaching tools and rich archival artifacts.

Sometimes making a StoryMap is a matter of recording. That is: StoryMaps allow us to participate in the archival process (by using images, descriptions, and other contextual data to generate scenes).

In other cases, mapping helps us learn a bit more about specific communities and how they lived.



# Mapping and Everyday Knowledge

- 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?



# Example Projects Using Maps to Tell Stories

- [“Mapping Black Paris”](#): uses a mix of textual, image, and archival data to tell a story about where African American expats (fleeing Jim Crow America) built communities in Paris before 1950
- [“Mapping American Childhoods”](#): a repository of final projects from University of Vermont undergraduate students, all of which include StoryMaps among other research materials
- [“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.





# What are the limits?

- 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?**

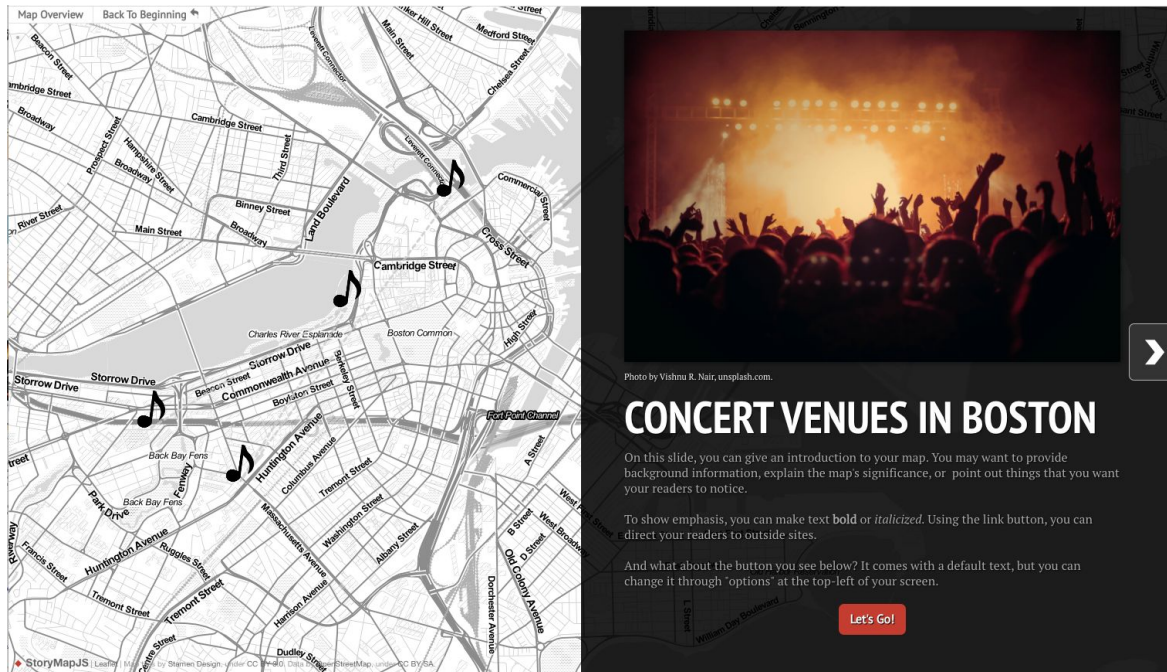
**Who made this map? Editorial  
choices?**

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

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



# StoryMap: Appearance & Key Functions



[—Sample Map Link](#)



# Making a StoryMap



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

# StoryMap Building: 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 (think, for example, about renaming the button that says "start exploring")
- **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



# A Note on Save States

StoryMaps 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.



# 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, and so on.

**Important: make a copy, don't edit the main template!!**

(Go to File > Make a copy)

## [StoryMap Spreadsheet Template](#)

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



# Gathering Data for your StoryMap

When collecting data for a group project, it is important to organize the data in one communal place, such as a Google spreadsheet. This will help you to:

- Keep track of your resources
- Add and edit collaboratively with your team
- Storyboard your map
- Communicate with Knight Lab in case of any issues (they ask for a spreadsheet as well as the webpage of the StoryMap)





# 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)

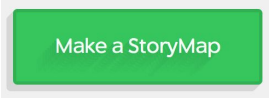
3. The image URL/File location is useful in keeping track of images of sites. Always credit your images to indicate their origin. Also include a caption describing your image

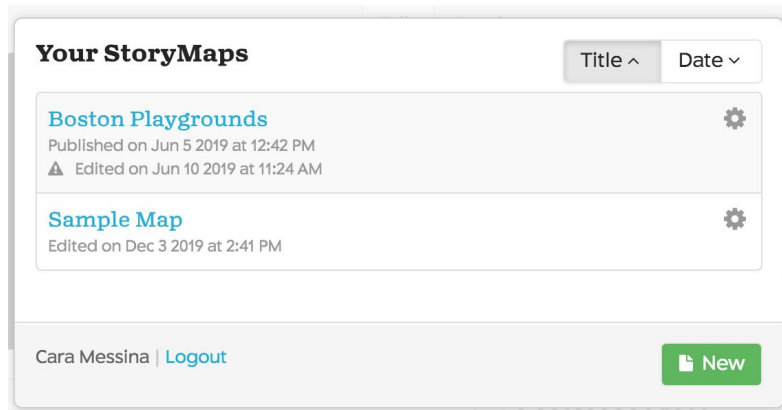
4. The headline can serve as the official title or label of your site. Including a narrative provides more context as to why your site is important.

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

Overall options  
(like changing map layout)

**SAVE OFTEN!**

Preview your slides

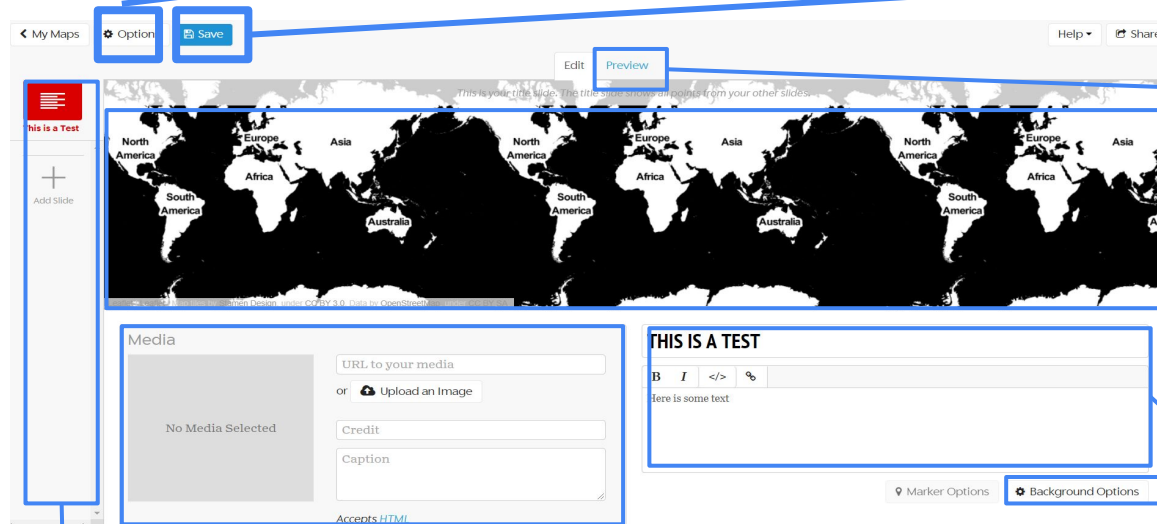
Preview the  
geographic points in all  
of your slides

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



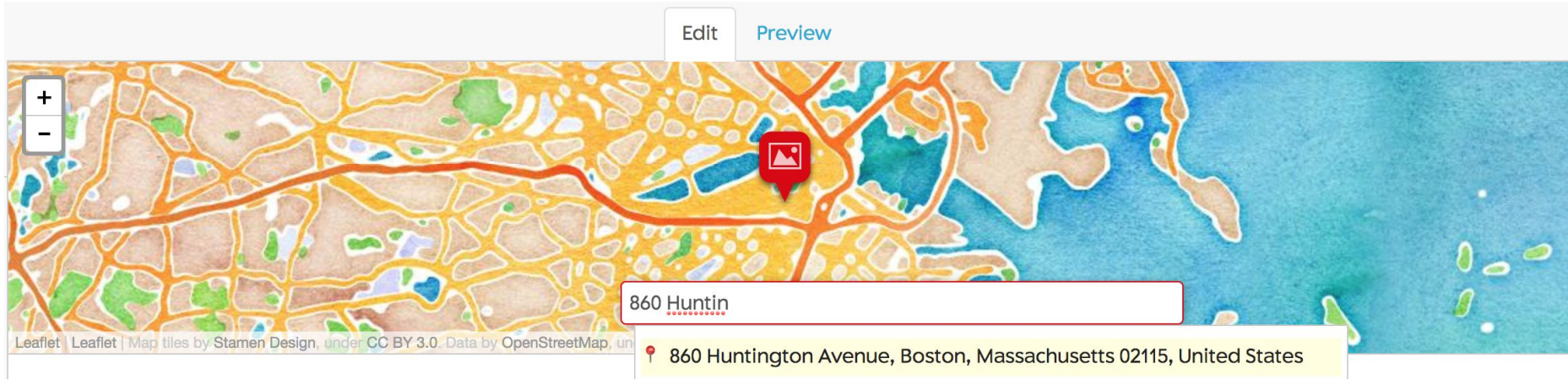
# Slides, or map markers

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



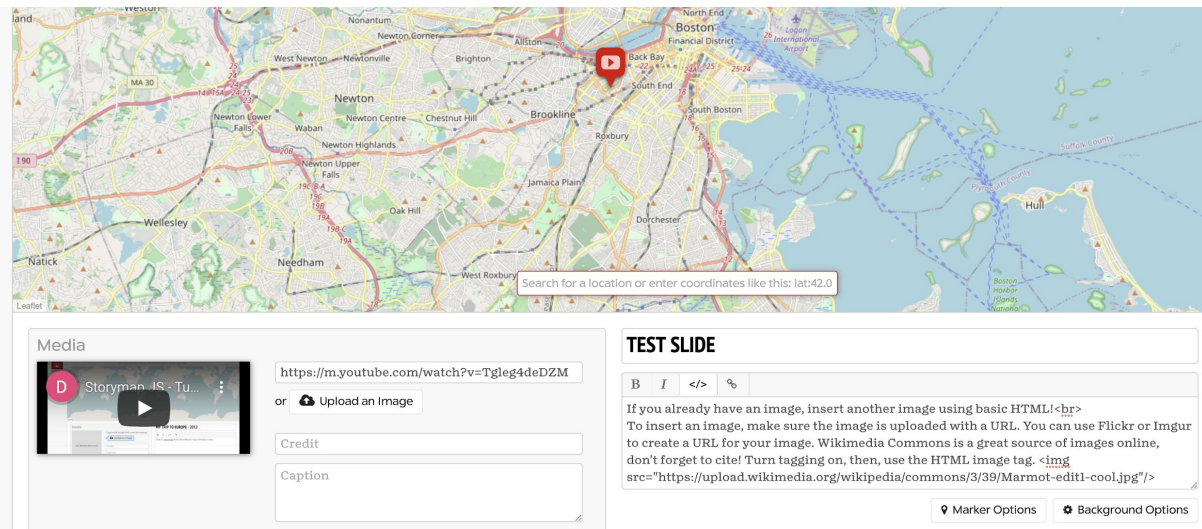
KnightLab StoryMap uses **Google Maps** to locate addresses

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



# 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 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. Wikimedia Commons is a great source of images. Make sure to use the embed file code--don't forget to cite!
3. Use the HTML `` tag to insert the image.
4. Check the “Preview” to see the image



# Adding to StoryMap

Once you're happy with the organization and order of the items in your spreadsheet, you can copy from these into StoryMap, following the directions above for adding images, locations, and so on.

This can help you stay organized and keep track of your resources. It's a quick way to storyboard your project, making sure that your flow between locations makes sense, your writing is consistent, and you have the right amount of research and info at each location.





# Hands-On Demo: Black Heritage Trail

Identify **your** hands-on practice and troubleshooting needs—this practice time should work for **you**!

1. Select the **handout** “Black Heritage Trail [demo]” and **create a new map** in Knightlab
2. Practice setting up **map markers**
3. Practice adding **video or images** to your markers
4. Try using HTML to embed an image to your map





# Thank you!

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

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Slides, handouts, and data available at  
<http://bit.ly/diti-spring2022-kim-storymap>

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



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