

# Dynamic Storytelling: KnightLab StoryMap

**Taught by:** Anna Zhang and Dipa Desai, DITI Research  
Fellows

ENGW 1111

Prof. Michael McCluskey

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

# Learning Objectives

During today's workshop, you will...

- **Learn** best practices and questions to consider before creating your StoryMap
- **Determine** how to 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
- **Navigate** StoryMap's map markers and location-finding system
- **Learn how to upload** data into StoryMap, including location information, images, & text

Slides, handouts, and data available at: [bit.ly/fa22-mccluskey-storymap](https://bit.ly/fa22-mccluskey-storymap)



# 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



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**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 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

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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 the present.
  - 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 this class today (or how you get to your favorite cafe or market), using words only.
  - What visual markers you would use to convey your movement in/across space to be here today. How would a reader 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?



# Discuss: A Neighborhood Walk

With your partner(s) explain either of the following options *without using any map or other visual aid*:

- a. Your former daily route from your house to your high school, or
- b. The route from your dorm/apartment/house to your favorite off-campus restaurant or café

**Remember:** your partner probably does not have the same geographical sense or reference points as you do. *How will you help them visualize or understand the route without visuals?*

On a scale of 1-5, how likely would it be that your partner(s) *could navigate the route you explained without a map?* (ask them!)



# Discuss: A Neighborhood Walk

- Was this a difficult task? What about it was difficult?
- How did you convey a sense of space (geography, scale/distance)?
- Did you use visuals, landmarks, place names, etc. to explain where you went? Which ones?
- How did their knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of the area affect their understanding of your route? Did that affect the way you explained your route? How?
- Did your partner(s) feel confident that they could navigate your route using only your directions?

**If you were able to tell the story of your route today using a map, which components of this exercise would you most want to consider to develop a clear narrative using a map?**



# Big Picture: StoryMaps as Tools for Dynamic Storytelling

Telling people a story that's relevant to their location is powerful—especially if it's related to an issue they care about.

Giving a narrative form to geographic information impresses it with realistic character that just doesn't come across in charts or graphs. Story maps, which combine interactive maps with multimedia content, provide an engaging way to explore data and navigate information nuances.

- ESRI Story Maps Website



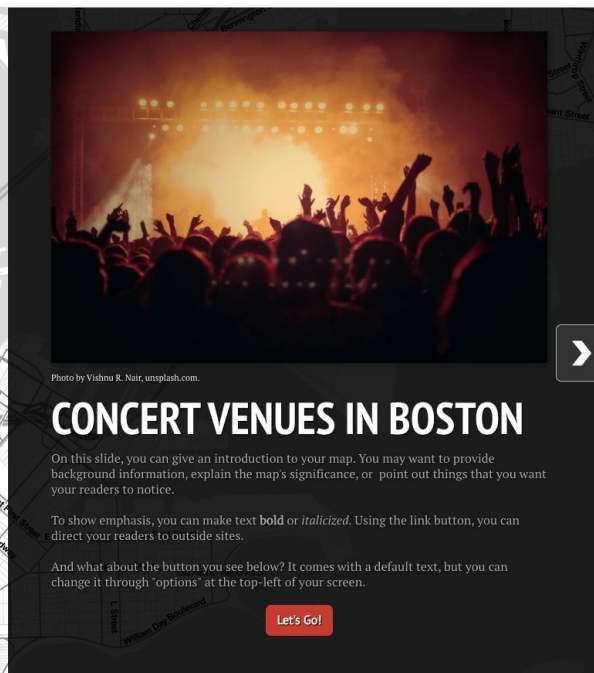
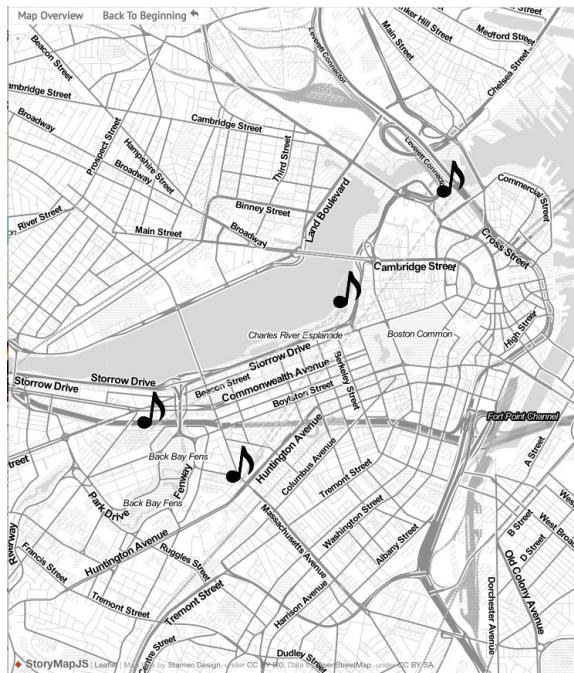
# Example Projects Using Maps to Tell Stories

- [“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.





# StoryMap Demo



[—Sample Map Link](#)



# Preparing to Build Your 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.
- **Curate all the content** (locations, images and media, text and captions) **in a document or spreadsheet** before uploading it into KnightLab StoryMap
- Choose stories that have **strong location narratives**, and include no more than twenty markers/slides



# What you'll need on each marker/slide:

- Slide/location name/title (“headline”)
- Location address/coordinates (you can also place the marker point manually)
- Descriptive text
- Media
  - Media URL (you can also upload media directly from your computer)
  - Media source credit
  - Media caption: this should describe the image in detail, similar to alt-text



# 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, do not 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.



# 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/d201581723">http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d201581723</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.)



# Adding Content 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 on the next slides 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.



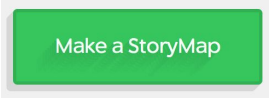
# Creating Your Own StoryMap with KnightLab

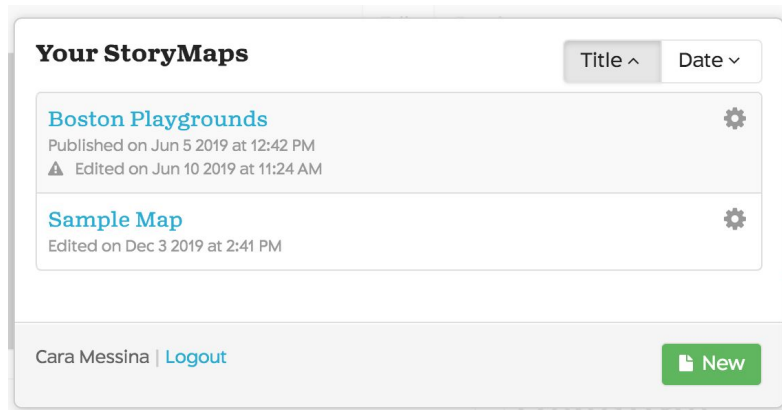


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# Create a StoryMap

- 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

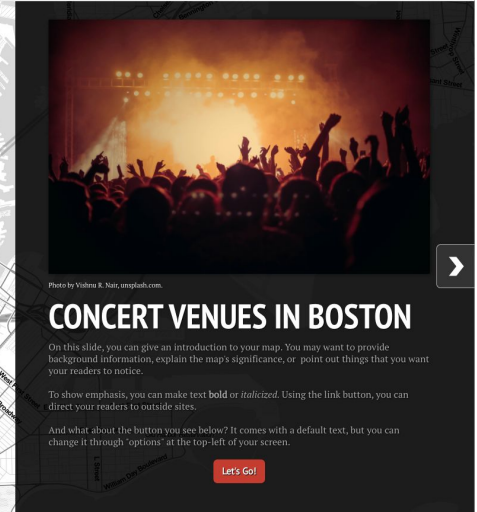
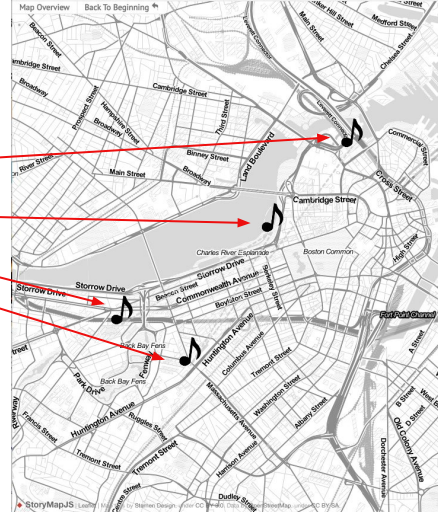


# Title Slide

The first slide of your StoryMap will be the title slide.

This slide introduces your audience to the story locations and topic with a title, image, and text.

The title slide shows a zoomed out view of all the locations in your StoryMap.



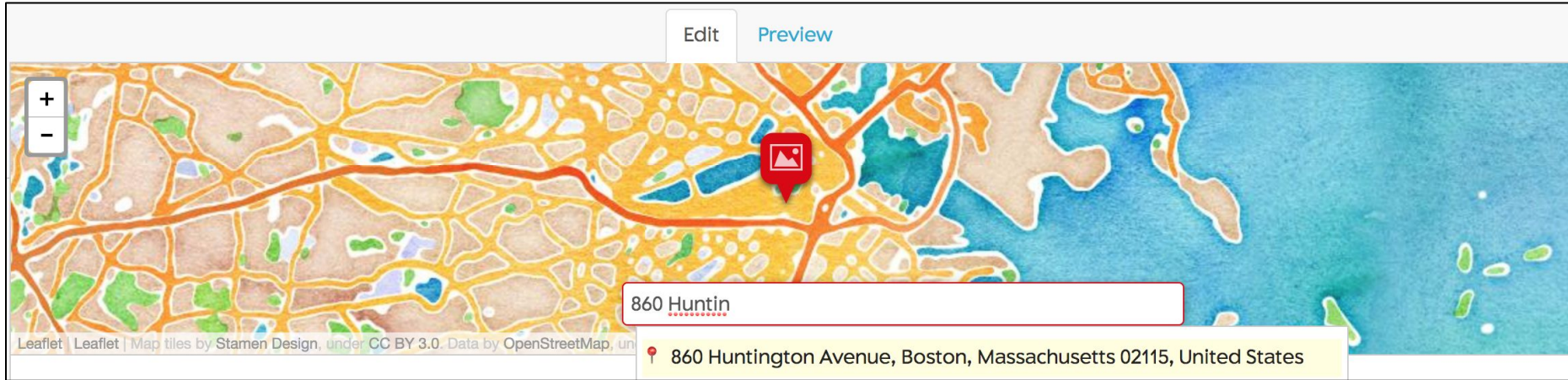
# Slides, or map markers

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

- A **headline and text**: the text box reads basic HTML.
- 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. Media should include source citations and a descriptive caption. 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.
- A **background image or color** for each slide/marker. Be sure to choose a color that has high contrast from your font color.



# Add a Location



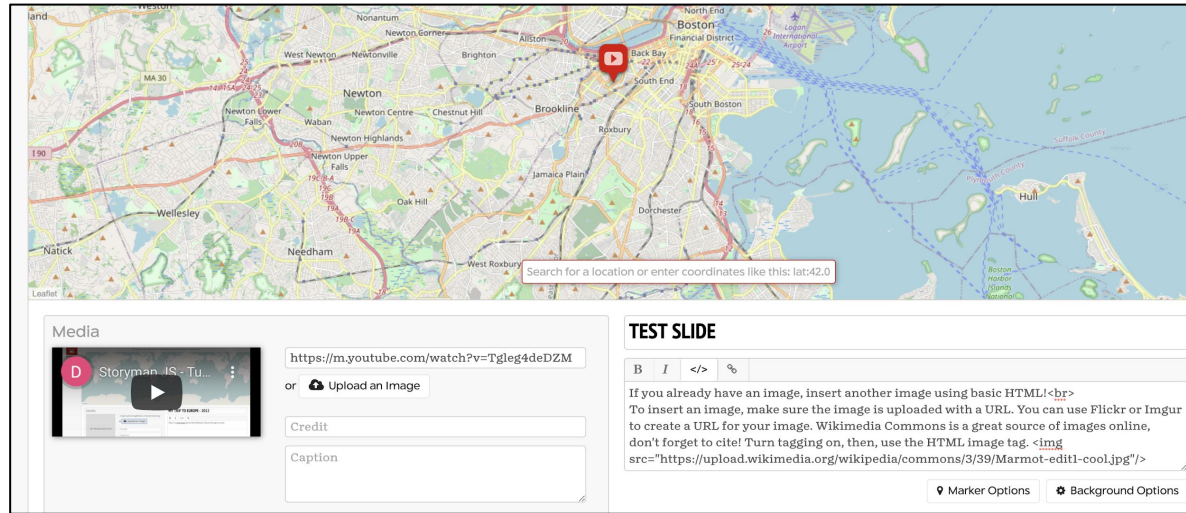
KnightLab StoryMap uses **Google Maps** to locate addresses

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 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 results!



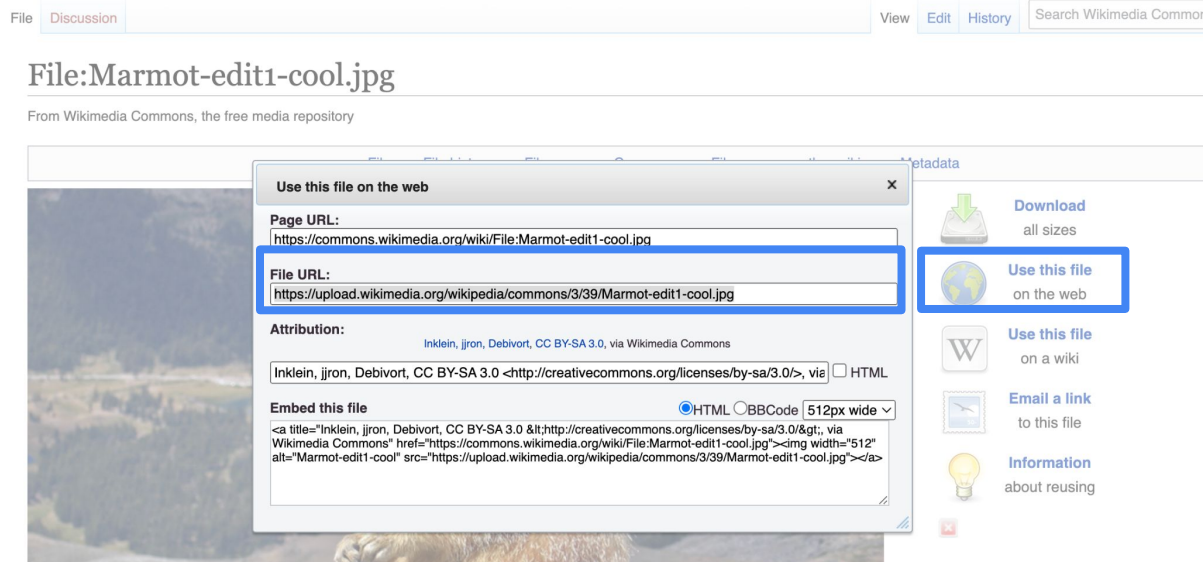


# Embed codes and image files

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."



# Alt-text and Linking Media in StoryMap

StoryMaps has a couple of places to add descriptive, alt-text of images. Alt-text is a description of a digital image attached to the image file. People that use screen readers are able to hear the image description.

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

Write descriptions of images and media in these places to provide critical information to screen reader users. If linking media, be sure to use a descriptive link name.



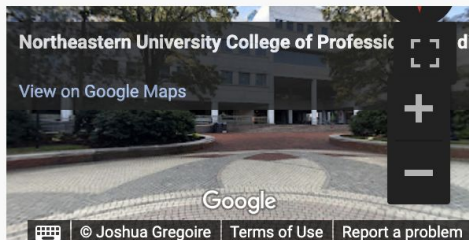


# Add Google Street View to a Slide

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



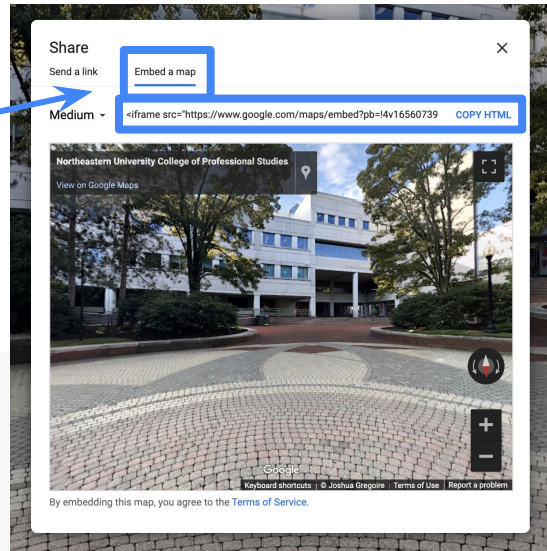
`<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?"`

or  Upload an Image

Credit

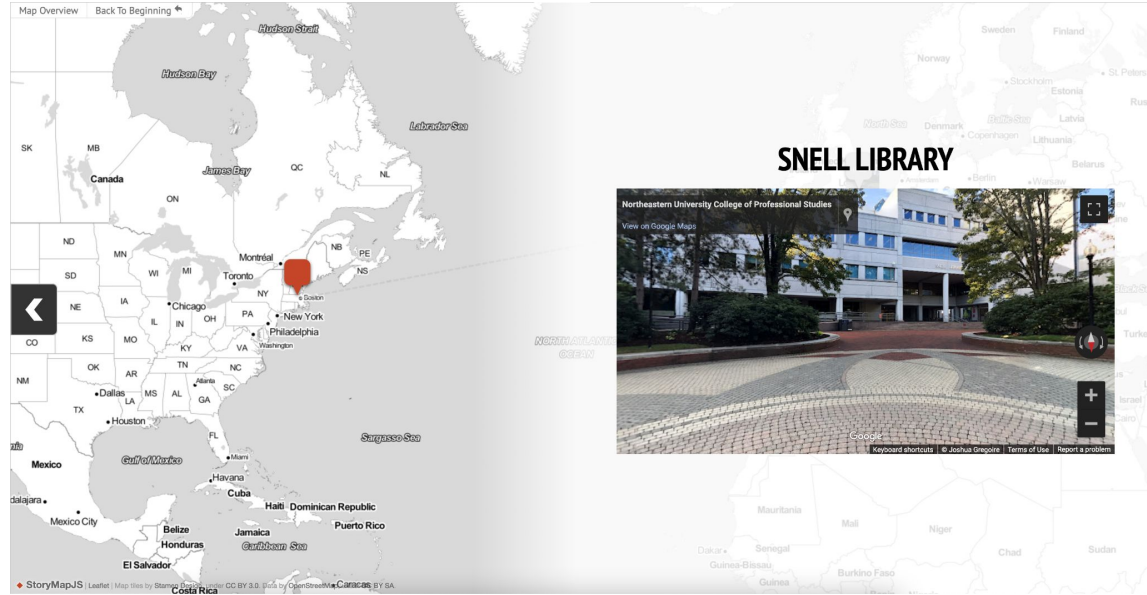
Caption

Accepts [HTML](#)



# A Note on Zoom Levels

Unfortunately, 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: the closer the locations are to each other, the closer the zoom.



# 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.



# More StoryMap best practices

- Save your map frequently as you work: remember that older versions of your map will not be saved
- Don't forget to consider 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
- Use preview mode to **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



# Tools to test your StoryMap for accessibility

**WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool** (<https://wave.webaim.org/>): shows the structure of the web page, with accessibility features and issues flagged

**Color Contrast Checker** (<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>): lets you enter specific text and background colors and check for readability.



# Note on using Accessibility Checker tools on StoryMap

When you test your StoryMap on the WAVE web accessibility tool, you will see some accessibility issues beyond the scope of choices you can make on StoryMap.

Use this tool to optimize accessible design choices within the bounds of the StoryMap platform.

The screenshot displays the WAVE web accessibility tool interface. On the left, a sidebar lists accessibility issues: 4 Errors (4 X Empty heading), 16 Contrast Errors (16 X Very low contrast), 3 Alerts (1 X Image with title, 1 X No page regions, 1 X Missing first level heading), 1 Feature (1 X Language), and 8 Structural Elements. The main area shows a StoryMap titled "BAD DESIGN STORYMAP" with a map of Europe. The map is overlaid with a pink overlay indicating accessibility issues. A "Start Exploring" button is visible on the map. The WAVE tool is powered by WebAIM and the address bar shows the URL: https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymaps2.



# Your Turn!

## Black Heritage Trail

### StoryMap Practice



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



# 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**
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





# Takeaways: How can you use interactive mapping tools to tell a story?



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

# Thank you!

Developed by:

**Dipa Desai**, DITI Research Fellow

**Anna Zhang**, DITI Research Fellow

**Claire Tratnyek**, Digital Integration Teaching Initiative  
and

**Colleen Nugent**, NULab Principal Coordinator, Digital Integration Teaching Initiative

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

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

Link to Online Materials: <https://bit.ly/fa22-mccluskey-storymap>



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