

Intro to Narrative Mapping with KnightLab StoryMap

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Northeastern University GIS Day
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during the presentation!*

Workshop 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 StoryMap
- **Navigate** the map marker and location-finding system in StoryMap
- **Upload** data into a StoryMap, including location information, images, & text

Slides, handouts, and data available at bit.ly/fa22-gis-workshop



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Maps and StoryMap



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What is a map?

- A visualized interpretation of geospatial data
 - Presents the spatial relationship between localized sites in terms of: distance, direction, size, (sometimes) sequence
- Digital maps help us to specially render and visualize these spatial relationships by
 - Clearly presenting contextual information
 - Being searchable and layerable



[Hereford Mappa Mundi](#)



What is a StoryMap?

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



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

Fenway Community Walk

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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 StoryMap to tell stories?

- Think about a StoryMap as giving directions. Think how you might explain your commute or a trip to a nearby cafe:
 - What markers might you use to convey your movement in/across space?
 - How would someone else 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?
- A StoryMap helps us render visualized, spatialized, and contextual information about spaces **in the past or the present**
 - Users can “see” the spaces/places/routes and to get a sense of the people and things in the environment



Effective 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...Interactive maps with multimedia content provide an engaging way to **explore data and navigate information nuances**.

StoryMap
Maps that tell stories.

JS

-Adapted from ESRI Story Maps



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Example projects made with StoryMap

Fenway Community Walk - Adapts preexisting CETR materials to demonstrate the utility of StoryMap in public settings

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



StoryMap Prep



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Collecting data for your StoryMap

When collecting data for a project, it is important to organize your data somewhere other than the StoryMap interface (e.g. a Google Sheet)

This will help you to:

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



Optional Spreadsheet Template

We recommend this template below. Make a copy in your own Google Drive or download it to fill in the different sites you want to map, images you want to include, and so on.

[StoryMap Spreadsheet Template](#) - click **File**, then **Make a copy**

(This template was adapted from the spreadsheet created by Molly Brown, Reference and Outreach Archivist, Northeastern University Library)



Organizing data in your spreadsheet

fx	http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126											
1	Slide #	Site Name	Site Location	Image URL/File Location	Image Credit	Image Caption	Headline	Historical Profile/First Person Narrative	I	J	K	
2	Title Slide	n/a	n/a	http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126	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. 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.				
3	Site 1	Back Bay Fens Community Gardens	42.344888, -71.093221	http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d201581723	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections	Community garden in Back Bay Fens.	Back Bay Community Gardens					
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.)



Making a StoryMap

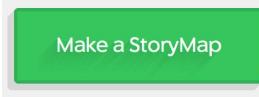
bit.ly/fa22-gis-workshop

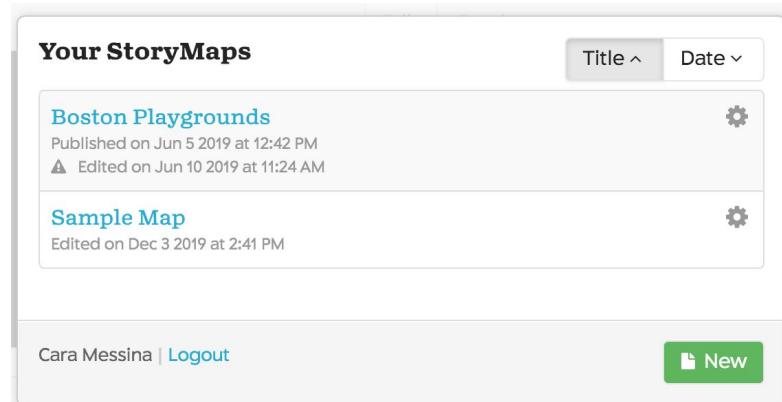


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Create a StoryMap

1. Go to storymap.knightlab.com
2. Click Make a StoryMap 
3. Sign in with any Google account or create a new account
4. Click **New** to begin a new project (or select a previous project to continue)
5. Give your project a name



The screenshot shows the 'Your StoryMaps' dashboard. At the top, there are filters for 'Title ^' and 'Date ^'. Below the header, two projects are listed:

- Boston Playgrounds**
Published on Jun 5 2019 at 12:42 PM
▲ Edited on Jun 10 2019 at 11:24 AM
- Sample Map**
Edited on Dec 3 2019 at 2:41 PM

At the bottom left, it says 'Cara Messina | Logout'. On the bottom right, there is a green 'New' button.



StoryMap interface

The screenshot shows the StoryMap interface. At the top left is a sidebar with a red header "this is a Test" containing a "Add Slide" button. The main area features a world map with several blue dots representing geographic points. Below the map is a "Media" section with fields for "URL to your media" (with a placeholder "No Media Selected"), "Upload an Image" (with a "Browse" button), "Credit", and "Caption". A "THIS IS A TEST" text box contains the text "here is some text" and has a rich text editor toolbar above it. At the bottom right is a "Background Options" button. Along the top of the main area are several buttons: "My Maps", "Options", "Save" (highlighted with a blue box), "Edit", "Preview" (highlighted with a blue box), "Help", and "Share". A blue line connects the "Save" button to a callout box labeled "SAVE OFTEN!". Another blue line connects the "Preview" button to a callout box labeled "Preview your slides". A third blue line connects the "Background Options" button to a callout box labeled "Color or image for text box background". A fourth blue line connects the "Text" box to a callout box labeled "Title and content of your text box". A fifth blue line connects the "Media" section to a callout box labeled "Uploading photos or other media! Document what you upload". A sixth blue line connects the "Save" button to a callout box labeled "Overall options (like changing map layout)". A seventh blue line connects the "Edit" button to a callout box labeled "Check out and add new slides here".

- 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



Map overview (or title slide)

The first view users will see on your StoryMap is the title slide.

Use this to introduce your audience to the project and give a visual overview of story locations.

This view never has a specific location associated with it.

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

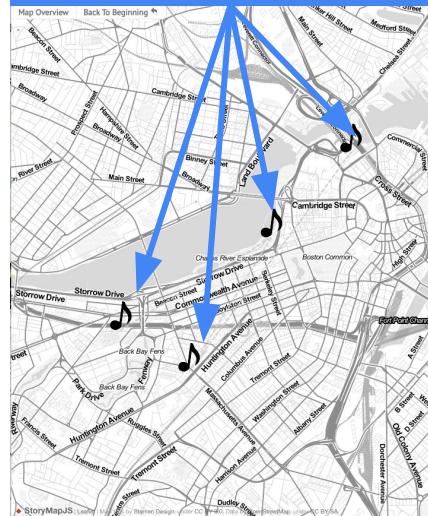


Photo by Vishnu R. Nair, unsplash.com.

CONCERT VENUES IN BOSTON

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!



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[Click for the Freedom House Sample Spreadsheet](#)

Feel free to ask questions in the chat during the presentation!

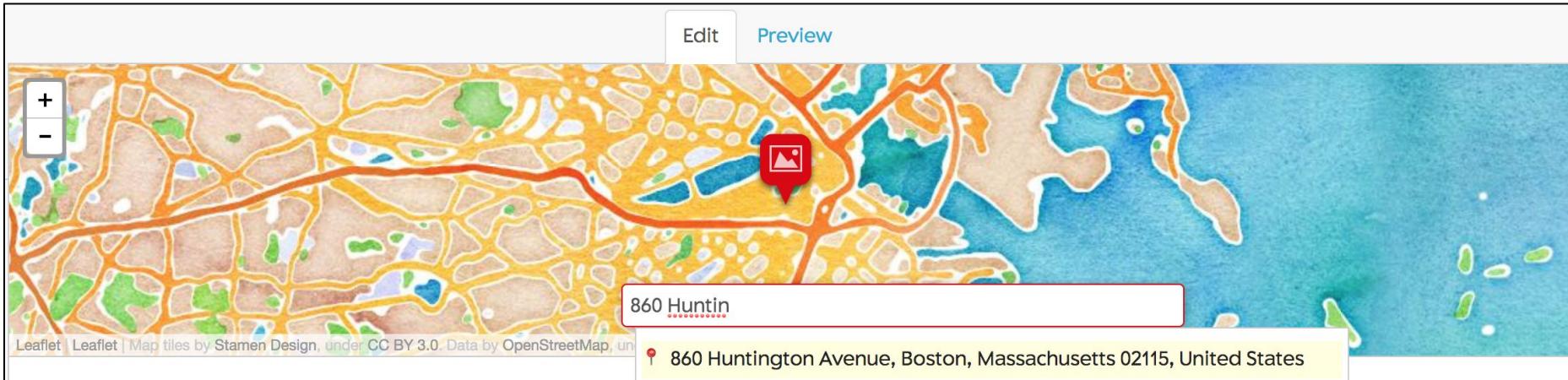
Map markers (or slides)

Each slide is a different marker point on your map/image and 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 textbox's HTML to integrate an image or another media type



Adding a location



KnightLab StoryMap uses
Google Maps to locate
addresses

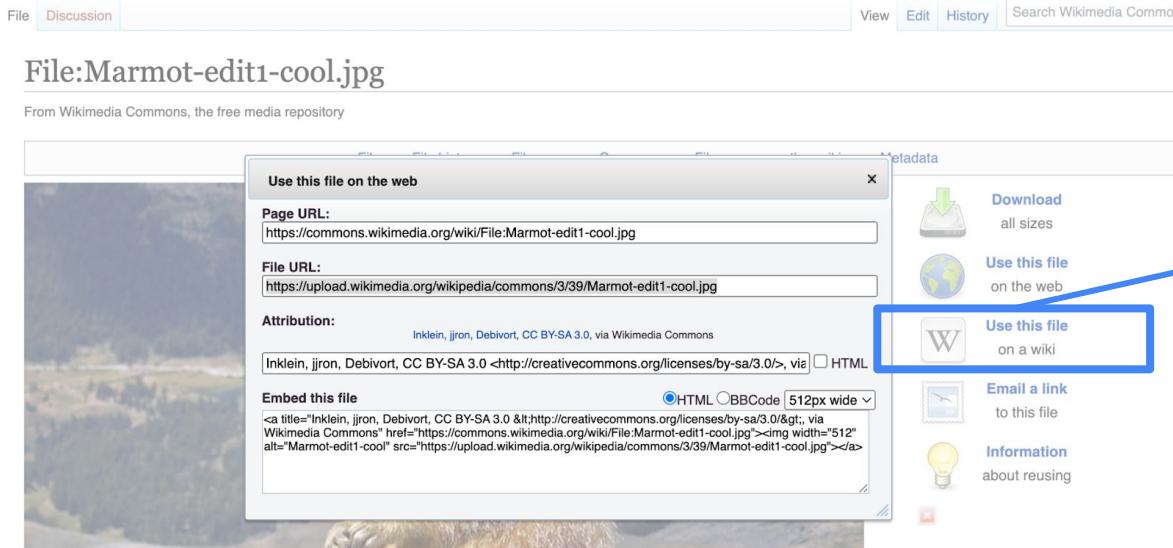
StoryMap, however, does **not**
always recognize place names;
you might need to know the
address or location of
particular structures

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



Adding images or videos (1)

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 a wiki" if you see that option.
2. Copy the "File URL."



Adding images or videos (2)

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.

Credit
Caption

Marker Options Background Options

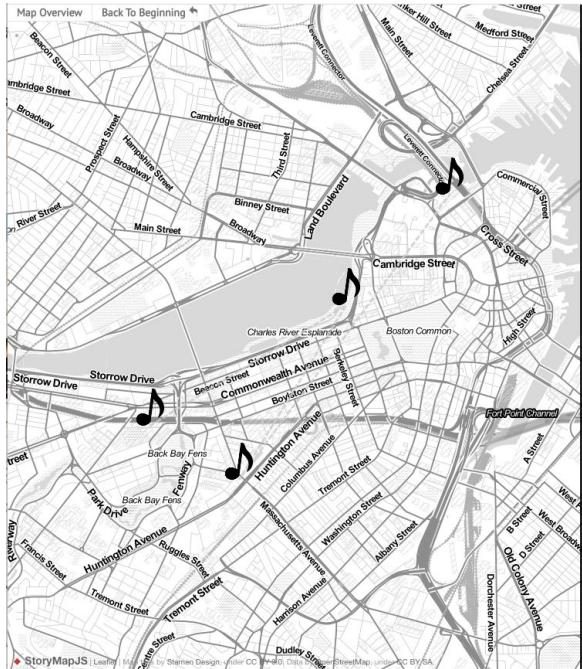
Use “media” to upload files. You can upload an image or put a **URL** of an image OR a video (like a YouTube video). If you want to include your own video, you will first have to upload it to YouTube or other online publisher and copy that link.

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.

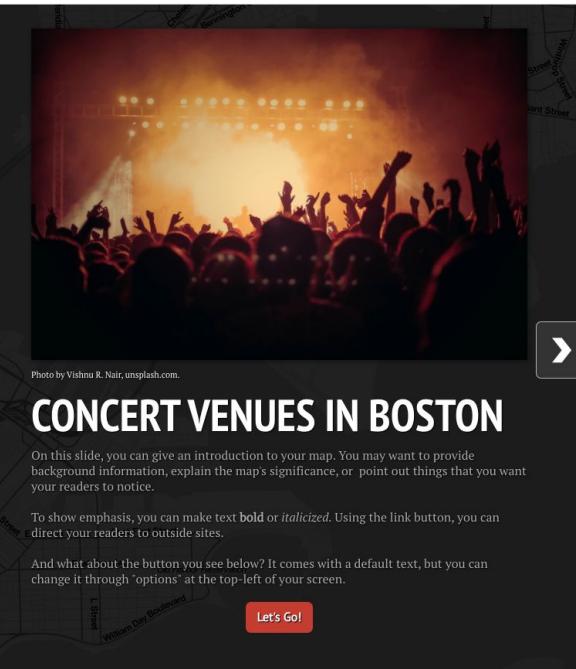
1. Click the </> button (turn on HTML)
2. Get a URL of your image. Make sure to use the embed file code, and don’t forget to cite the source!
3. Use the HTML `` tag to insert the image.
4. Check the “Preview” to see the image. Smaller image sizes may appear as a thumbnail, so stick to larger image sizes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



Demo StoryMap



A detailed map of Boston, Massachusetts, showing street names like Beacon Street, Cambridge Street, and Commercial Street. Overlaid on the map are several black musical note icons, each accompanied by a small red diamond marker indicating a specific location. The map includes a legend in the top left corner with options for 'Map Overview' and 'Back To Beginning'.



A photograph of a concert crowd from behind, with many people's hands raised in the air. Stage lights create a bright, glowing effect in the background. A small white arrow pointing right is located in the bottom right corner of the image area.

Photo by Vishnu R. Nair, unsplash.com.

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[Link to Demo StoryMap](#)



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Things to Consider



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Save states

◀ My Maps

⚙ Options

💾 Save

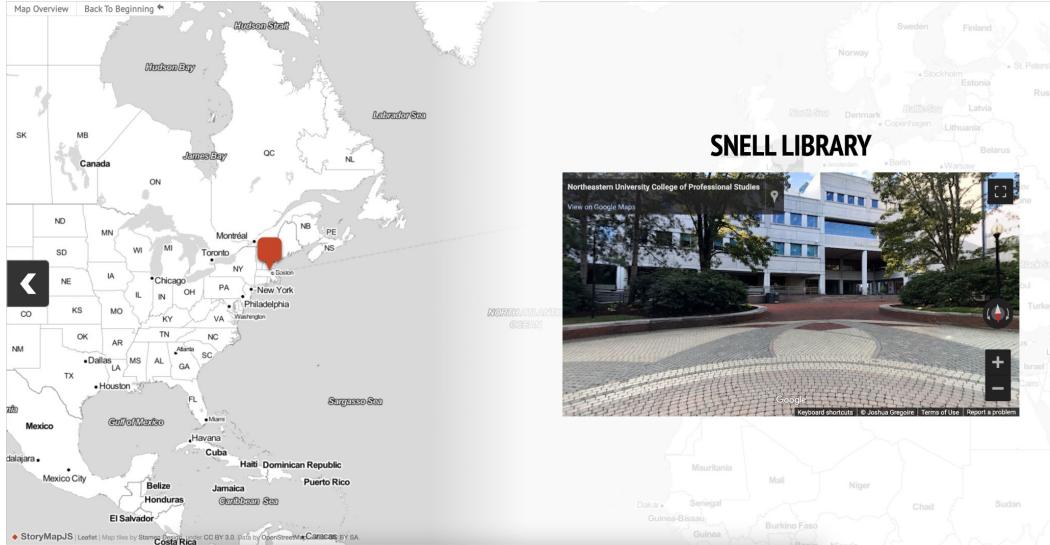
StoryMap does not keep older versions of your project, so once you make and save changes, **you cannot retrieve a previous version**. You can also accidentally overwrite new content if you have a StoryMap open in multiple browser tabs or windows at once.

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.



Map 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 StoryMap with one point in London and the next in Boston)



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Critical mapping questions

- What is its subject?
 - What's its geographic/spatial focus?
 - Who is/are the map's audiences?
 - What is its “message,” “argument” or purpose?
 - How was the map made?
 - What are the map's materiality and form?
 - *When* is this map?
 - Who made this map? What editorial choices did they make?

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



What arrondissement is this, by Laura J. Lawson
(Paris, but as remembered by the artist)

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, which may not match your content
 - Consider renaming the button that says "Start Exploring"
 - Select a base map which suits your project
 - Change map markers as appropriate
- **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.



Consider accessibility concerns

Interactive multimedia is frequently effective, but not always accessible to all users. Take time to make your project as accessible as possible:

- Add rich textual descriptions which complement images/media
- Choose colors with high contrast for backgrounds and text
- Communicate information in ways beyond color differences
- Include transcripts of embedded audio
- Provide descriptive links (more StoryMap resources, NOT click here)

[WAVE Accessibility Tool](#): shows the underlying structure of web pages

[Color Contrast Checker](#): clarifies accessible levels of color contrast



Advanced Media

Stretching the capabilities of
the StoryMap platform



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Google Street View
(current or past)

Soundcloud Audio

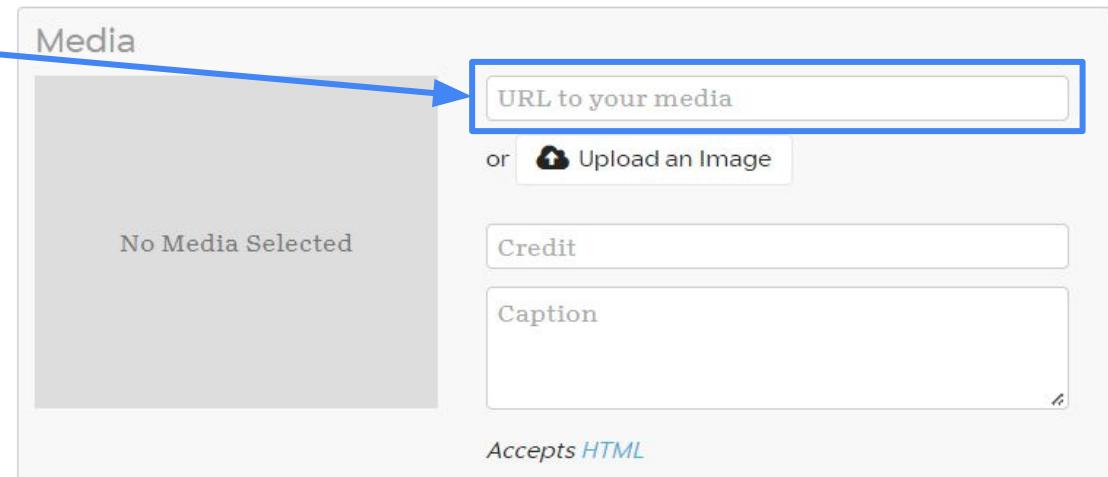
Live Tweets

Full Websites

Advanced multimedia

The media upload field can accept links to much more than just images.

Try using the URL of a website, a song or podcast on soundcloud, or a tweet to put them in a StoryMap



(Adding websites can be temperamental, so we don't recommend it unless necessary)



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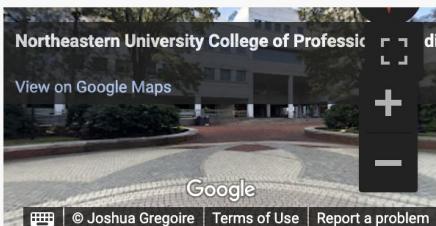
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Adding a Google Street View

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



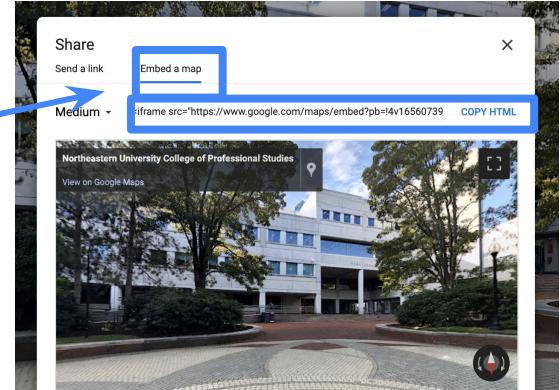
`<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?`

or Upload an Image

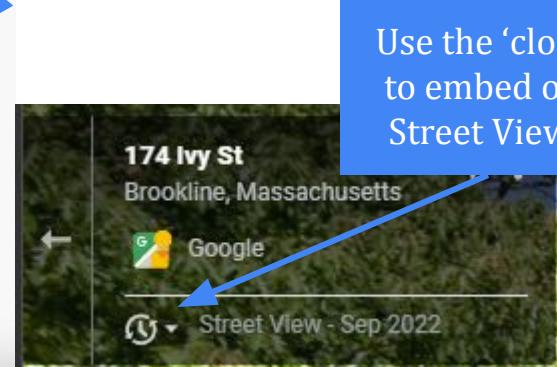
Credit

Caption

Accepts **HTML**



Use the ‘clock’
to embed old
Street Views



Thank you!

Developed and taught by:

Ana Abraham

Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
2022 Assistant Director

Benjamin Grey

Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
2022 Research Fellow

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

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



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