

Storytelling with Knight Lab TimelineJS

British Literature Survey - ENGL 1500
Erika Boeckeler
Spring 2021



Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

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

Workshop Agenda

- Learn about Timeline as a mode of conveying data and content
- Best practices and questions to consider before creating your Timeline
- Steps for using Knight Lab TimelineJS
- Start building!

Slides, handouts, and data available at

<http://bit.ly/diti-spring2021-boeckeler>



Workshop Objectives

- Articulate specific choices you will make when telling a story using a timeline
- Follow a step-by-step guide for creating, saving, and publishing spreadsheets using Knight Lab TimelineJS
 - Navigate Timeline's spreadsheet template
 - Upload data into Timeline, including images, text, and media



What is a timeline? Do we encounter any timelines in everyday life?

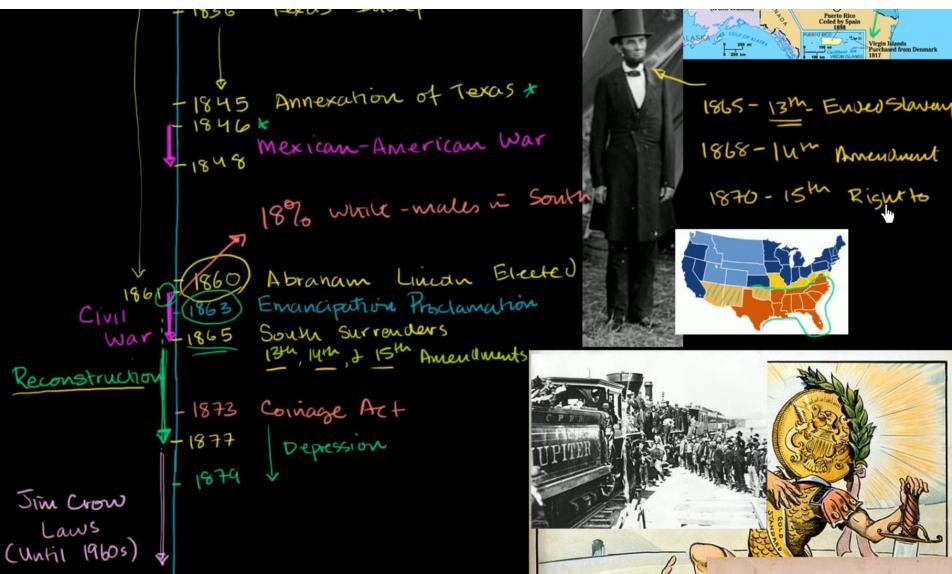


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From FiveThirtyEight's election forecast model:

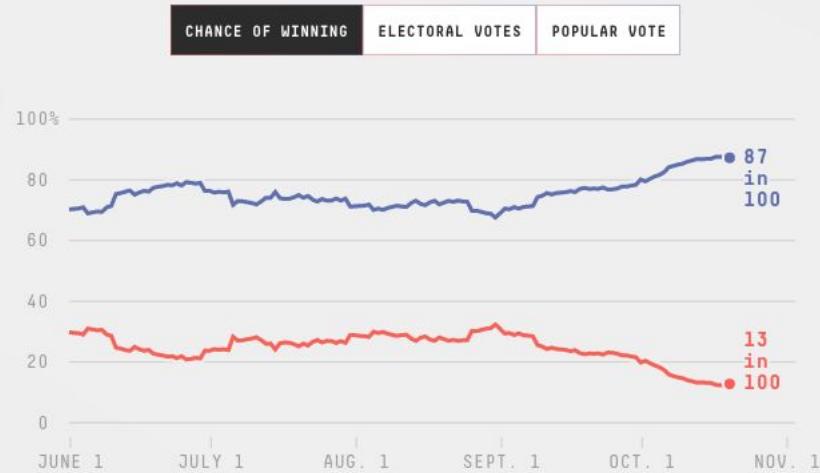
From Khan Academy's U.S. history overview:



<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/history-survey/us-history-survey/v/us-history-overview-2-reconstruction-to-the-great-depression>.

How the forecast has changed

The forecast updates at least once a day and whenever we get a new poll. Click the buttons to see the ways each candidate's outlook has changed over time.



<https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2020-election-forecast/>, accessed October 20, 2020

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What is a “timeline”?

Telling a **story in time!** A timeline visually presents a chronological sequence of past or future events, processes, eras, etc.

Timelines are useful when you want to situate various points of a process, narrative, or history in their contemporary circumstances. Timelines can help you visualize the progression of time in a different way.

- How can you interact with timelines?
- Can you think of timelines that have been particularly effective/ineffective?



Components of an Effective Timeline

- Strong content
- A clear series of events and periods (pick stories with a strong chronological narrative!)
- A general theme relating the events to each other
- Media elements



Questions to Consider Before Building

- What story am I trying to tell? What is the message I want to convey?
- What are the key events and processes?
- Which items will require additional detail or context?
- What kinds of media will I need? (photographs, text, maps, videos, etc.)
- Who is my audience?
 - How can I write for this audience?

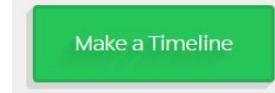


Knight Lab TimelineJS Examples

- Whitney Houston 1963-2012: Telling the life of Whitney Houston through key dates and events
- Revolutionary User Interfaces: Tracing the development of computers and their increased accessibility, showing the influence of various people and agencies
- The decline of IRS Nonprofit regulation: Following the relationship between the IRS and other political and economic entities



Create a Timeline

- Go to <https://timeline.knightlab.com/>
- Click “Make a Timeline” 
- You don't need an account to create a timeline
- Click "Get the spreadsheet template" and follow the instructions to copy it to your Google Drive
- The main place where you build your timeline is Google Sheets, so when you make a copy, the file will be saved in your Google Drive



Google Sheets

Template available on their website (make a copy on your drive)

Official TimelineJS3 Template										Headline	Text	Media	Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail	Type	Group	Background
									Google Spreadsheet Example	This is a test of using google spreadsheets as a source for the timeline tool. This is a 'title' slide, so it doesn't need a date. It automatically occurs first, and doesn't appear in the timeline below.	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/in/photostream	Zach Wise/verite.co zach.wise	href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/" title="Chicago by zach.wise, on Flickr">Chicago by zach.wise, on Flickr					
2011	11	1		2011	12	15			Another Flickr Example	It's Easy to Make Your Own Timeline	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6894476777/in/photostream	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC					
2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.	https://vimeo.com/143407878	Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!				#333333 http://knighlab.northwp-content/uploads/2015/03/front-page-image.jpg	

Date, end date (optional), and display date (also optional)

Text and headline for the slide

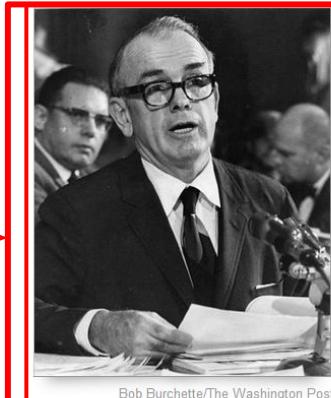
Entering media and related info

Additional options with slides



What the end result looks like

Slide



Date

1971

Headline

1971

Commissioner Thrower leads defiance



1978

IRS tests for racial discrimination met with protest

Text

Timeline

Image and details



Era



Slides

Each slide represent a different point or period in time. Each one contains:

- Headline and text. The text box reads basic HTML.
- A background image/color
- Media: images, videos, and sound files. Only **one** media file can be uploaded per slide. Special columns in the spreadsheet are dedicated to incorporating the media onto the slide.



Dates

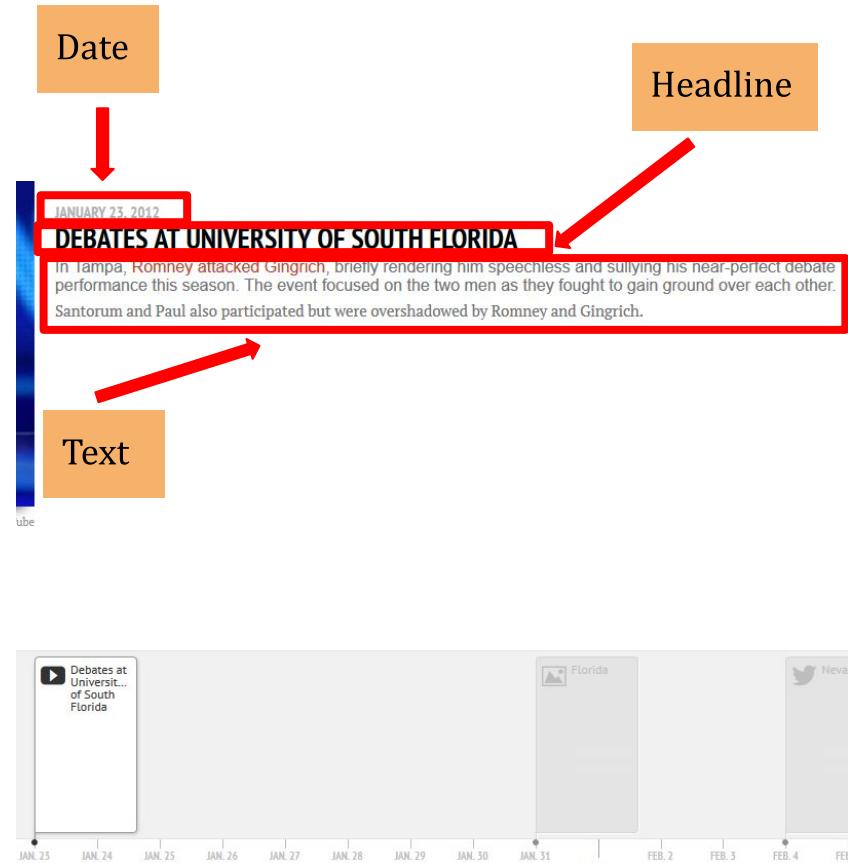
- Slides in the final timeline follow the order of the dates, not the rows
- You can choose how specific you want to make your dates, but you must enter at least the year
- Entering the end date is optional
- The “display date” is useful when the exact date is unknown/unknowable

I	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Year	Month	Day	Time	End Year	End Month	End Day	End Time	Display Date	
2011	11	1		2011	12	15			
2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		



Headlines and text

Headline	Text
Google Spreadsheet Example	This is a test of using google spreadsheets as a source for the timeline tool. This is a 'title' slide, so it doesn't need a date. It automatically occurs first, and doesn't appear in the timeline below.
Another Flickr Example	It's Easy to Make Your Own Timeline
Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.



Adding media

- Timeline supports various online media platforms (but you **can't** upload from your computer directly)
- Markup language (used for writing the content of web pages) can be used to import the media that is not supported by TimelineJS
 - This is done by adding <iframe> instead of the URL in the column L: you can find the model for entry [here](#)
 - You can also use <blockquote> markup in the same column to add text next to your media: you can find the model for entry [here](#)
- In the example to the right, markup language is used to turn the media caption into hyperlink

Media	Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail
	Chicago by zach.wise	Zach Wise/verite.co Chicago to NYC	
http://www.flickr.com http://www.flickr.com https://vimeo.com/1	Zach Wise/verite.co Zach Wise/verite.co Knight Lab	A video about how to make timelines!	
<pre><iframe id="inlineFrameExample" src="https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f8/Mosaic_of_Theodora_-_Basilica_San_Vitale_%28Ravenna%2C_Italy%29.jpg"></iframe></pre>			<p>Using urls</p> <p>Using <iframe></p>



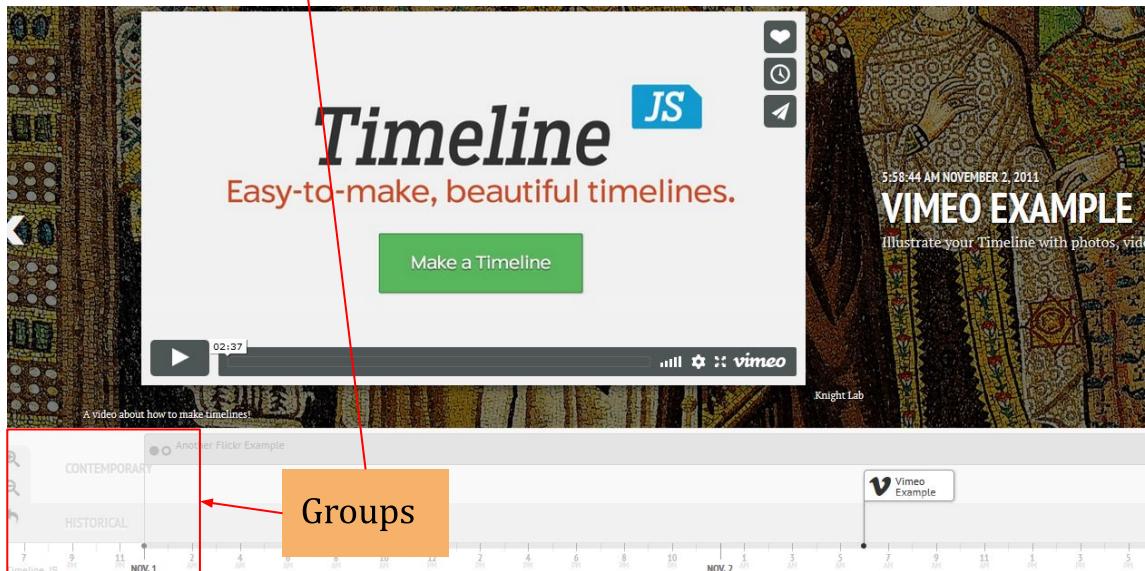
Other options

- Types: other than regular entries, there is the Title type and Era type
 - An Era has to have start and end dates, but not all events with start and end dates have to be eras
- Title can be used only once, for the Title slide
- Note: Eras can't overlap
- Group: text entered in this column acts as a subheading for moments that you want grouped together
- Background (optional): a color or an image
 - You enter a color by its hex code. You can Google the color name, or browse [here](#).

Type	Group	Background
title	contemporary contemporary	#333333 https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Alhambra_Mosaic_01.jpg
title	historical	
era	historical	
	historical	

Using CSS color names for background

Using image URL for background



Uploading the spreadsheet

- Select the "Publish to the web" option under "File"
- In Settings, check "Automatically republish when changes are made"), select "od1" under "Entire document" drop down box, then click "Publish"
- Copy the Page URL (**not** the Publish URL) into the Timeline website <https://timeline.knightlab.com/#make>:

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Generate your timeline

Copy/paste spreadsheet URL into the box below to generate your timeline. (Make sure you've published the spreadsheet.)

Google Spreadsheet URL

Width Height

Optional settings (show)
Set language, fonts, starting slide and more.

Publish to the web

This document is published to the web.

Make your content visible to anyone by publishing it to the web. You can link to or embed your document. [Learn more](#)

Link **Embed**

Entire Document Web page ▾
od1 /spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vS1dzu5bIuWL6CMq2Ct

Or share this link using:   

Note: Viewers may be able to access the underlying data for published charts. [Learn more](#)

Published 

This is where the "Publish" button will be

▼ Published content & settings

Entire Document ▾

Stop publishing

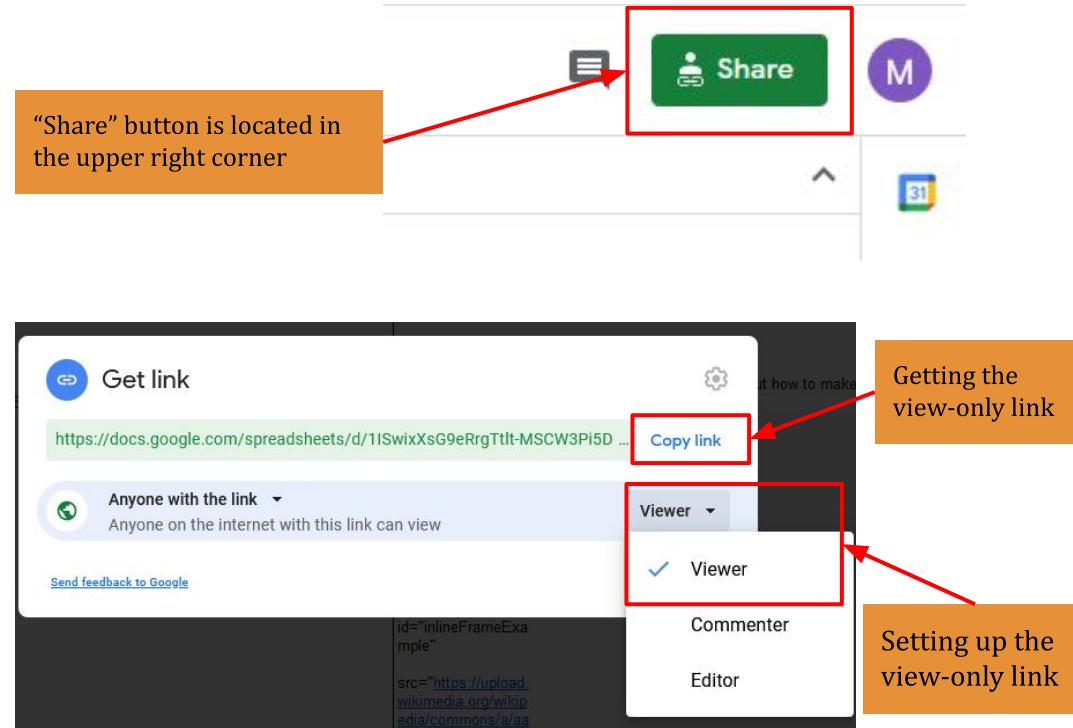
Restrict access to the following

Automatically republish when changes are made



Alternative uploading

- Rarely, sometimes there will not be any “Publish to the web” button
- In that case, as a workaround, you can get a view-only shareable link and use it from there on
- Timeline authors do not recommend this practice as the link is less stable
- Therefore, some collaboration with peers who don't have that problem is also well advised



Viewing the timeline

- After you have entered the link from the spreadsheet URL, you will get a shareable link. You can use this link to inspect the timeline and share it.
- You can use the code under the “Embed” heading to add the timeline to a website

The screenshot shows a user interface for sharing a timeline. At the top left is a large blue number '4'. To its right, the text 'Share your timeline' is displayed above a large blue 'Share Link' button. Below this button is a text input field containing a URL: <https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline/latest/embed/?source=1cWqQBZCkX9GpzFtxCWhOqFXChg-y1TVUWlnrdYMzKUI&Font=Bevan-PotanoSans&maptype=toner&width=600&height=600>. To the right of the URL is a text area labeled 'If you're embedding on Medium.com or other oembed-aware services, just paste this link on a line by itself where you want your timeline to appear.' Below the URL is another section titled 'Embed' with the sub-instruction 'Copy this embed code and paste it on your site where you want your timeline to appear (just like a YouTube video.)'. It contains an iframe code snippet:

```
<iframe src='https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline/latest/embed/?source=1cWqQBZCkX9GpzFtxCWhOqFXChg-y1TVUWlnrdYMzKUI&Font=Bevan-PotanoSans&maptype=toner&...>
```

. At the bottom are two buttons: 'Preview' (blue) and 'Open Preview in a new window' (gray).



Discussion

What do you think of this tool? Do you find it accessible?

Are there any features you think you will need help with?

Do you find timeline useful? What for?

What type of information, stories, and narration are especially compatible with the timeline format?

What do you see yourself using it for?



Thank you!

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

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<http://bit.ly/diti-spring2021-boeckeler>

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



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