

Storytelling with Mapping: KnightLab StoryMap

Taught By: Chris McNulty & Dipa Desai

HUSV 2400: Food Justice & Community Development

Prof. Liz Allen

Summer 2022



Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Workshop Agenda

- Articulate the choices you make when telling a story using a map
- Best practices and questions to consider before creating your StoryMap
- Follow a step-by-step guide for creating, saving, and publishing maps using KnightLab's StoryMap
- Start building!

Slides, handouts, and data available at:

<https://bit.ly/su22-allen-storymap>



What is a “story map”?

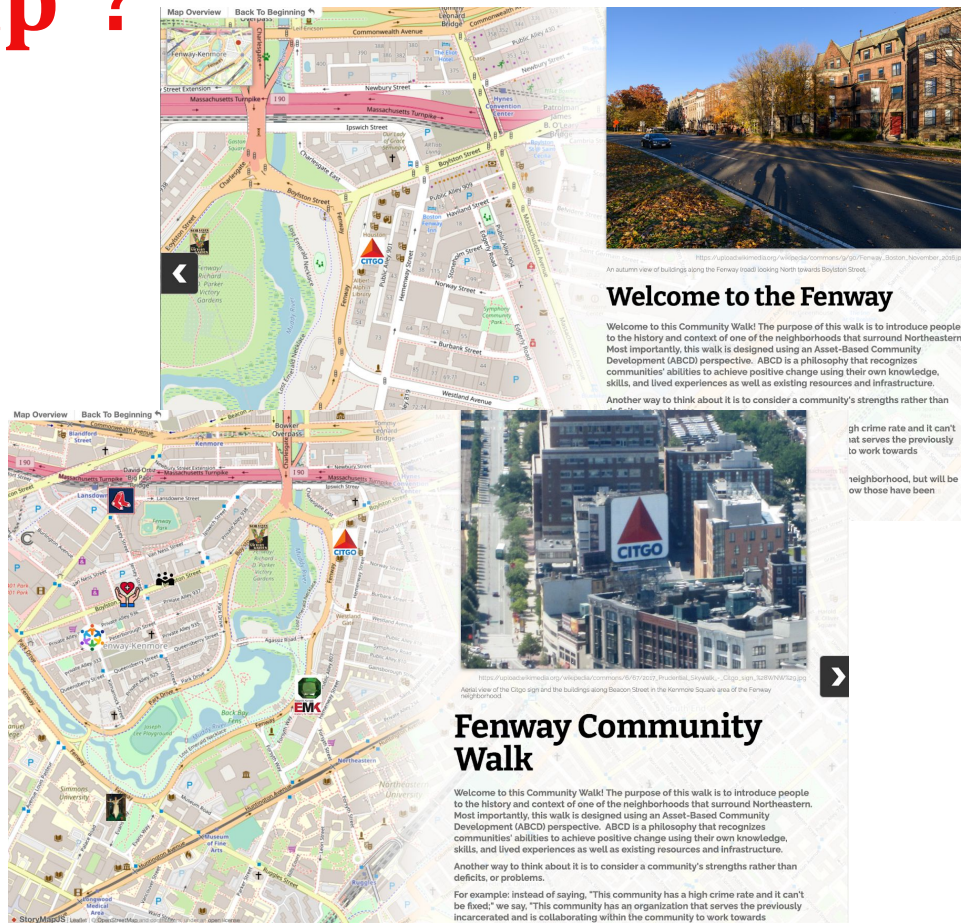
Telling a **story** using **maps**!

“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



Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks



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?



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(s) 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

StoryMaps are powerful teaching tools and rich archival artifacts.

Sometimes it's a matter of simple recording -- i.e., StoryMaps allow us to participate in the Archival process (by using images, descriptions, and other contextual data to generate scenes).

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



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 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



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	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.			
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	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.)



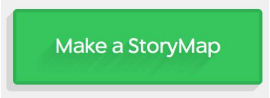
Adding to StoryMap

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.



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

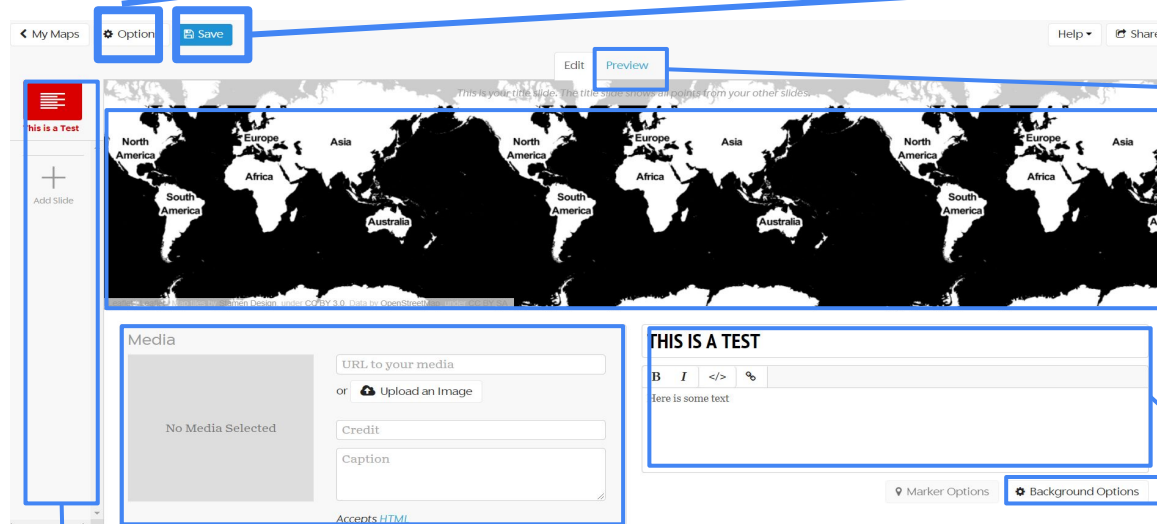
Preview the
geographic points in all
of your slides

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



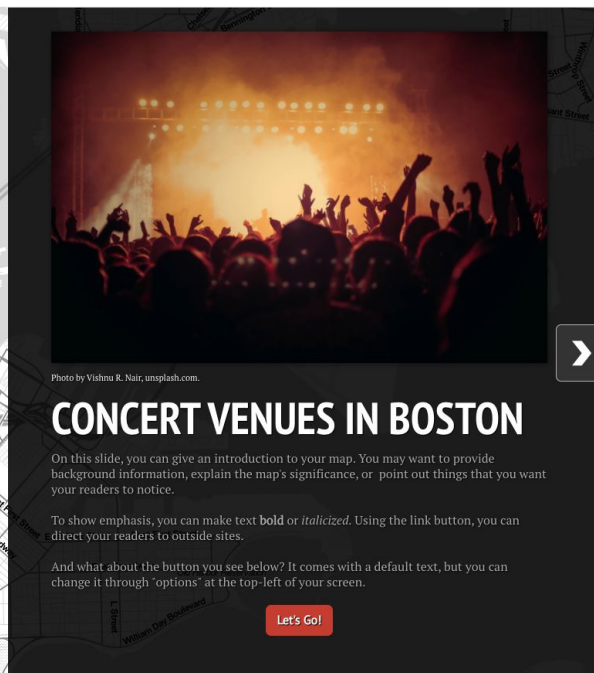
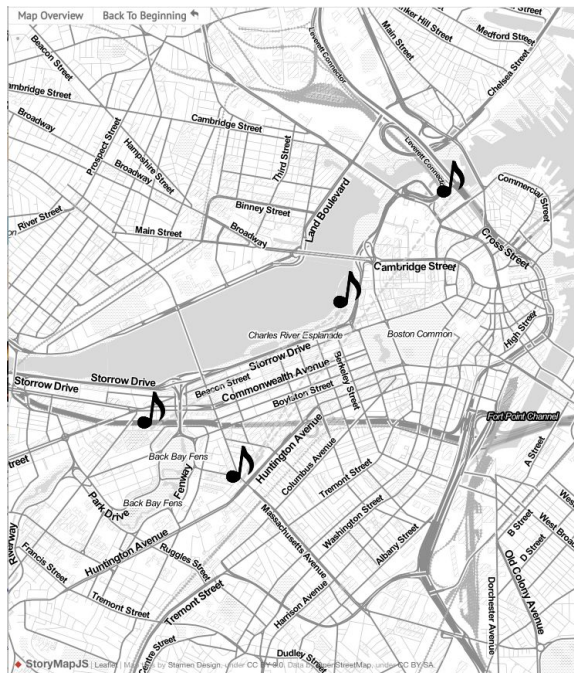
Slides, or map markers

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.



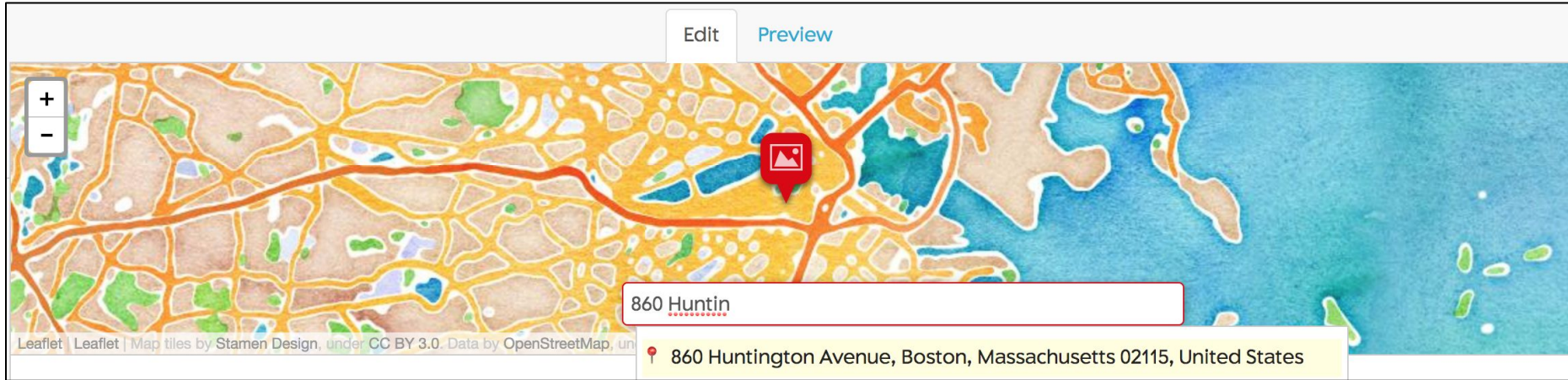
StoryMap Demo



[—Sample Map Link](#)



Add A Location



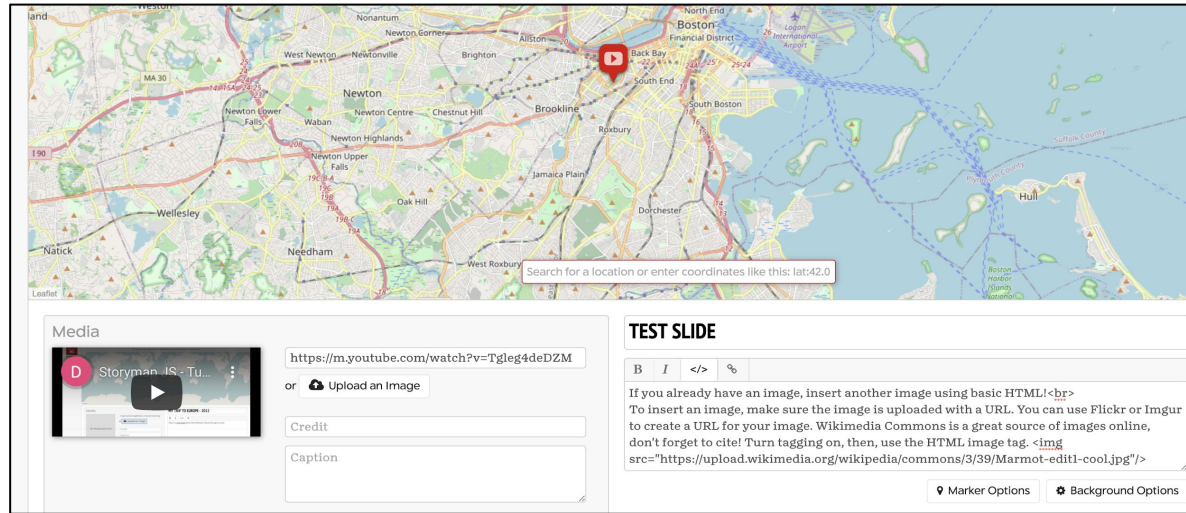
KnightLab StoryMap uses **Google Maps** to locate addresses

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 result!

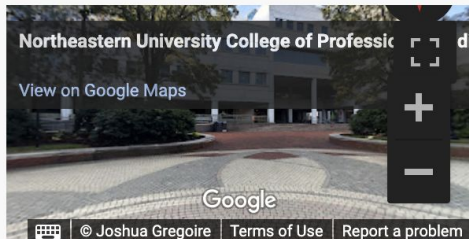


Add Google Street View to a Slide

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



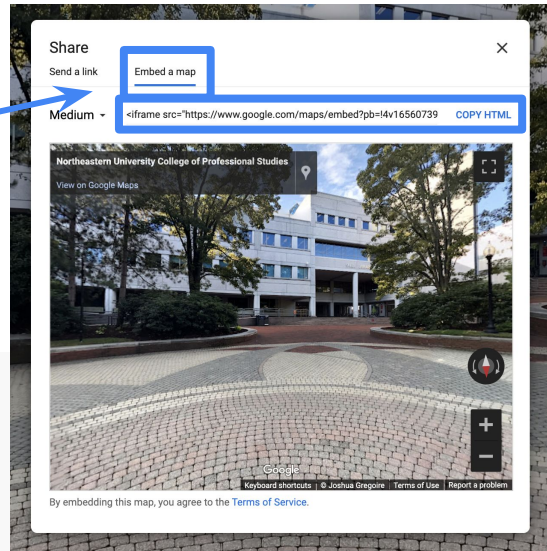
`<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?"`

or  Upload an Image

Credit

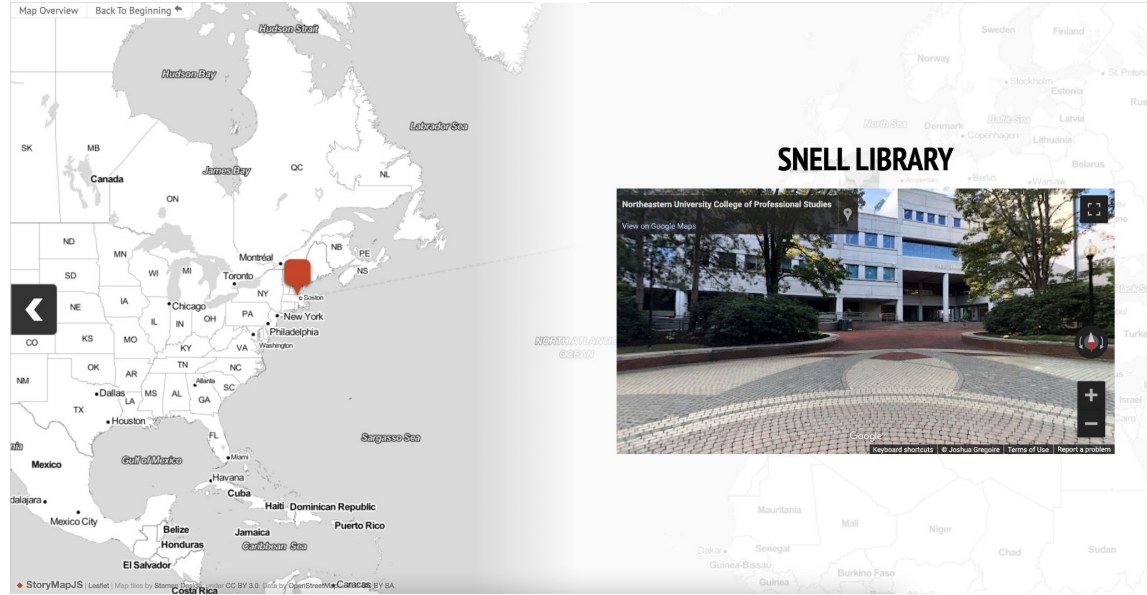
Caption

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.



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!

Taught by Chris McNulty
Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
Research Fellow

Dipa Desai
Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
Research Fellow

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

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

Link to Online Materials: <https://bit.ly/su22-allen-storymap>

