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Introduction to GIS Methods  
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## Final Report

### **1. Title**

Measuring the Reach of Take Back the Night on Campus

### **2. Project Summary**

This project compares the attendance of various Take Back the Night (TBTN) marches from 1988 to the present day.

### **3. Purpose & Background**

Take Back the Night emerged in the early 70s, right at the tail end of what is considered second wave feminism, as an anti-sexual violence organization focused mainly on college campuses (Take Back the Night). The first march occurred in 1972 at the University of Southern Florida, and was then followed by a 1972 anti-porn protest in San Francisco (Take Back the Night). Take Back the Night reached Barnard in the early 80s, but the march began to emerge as a major event in the late 80s. Since then, the size of the march has fluctuated. Recently, the march was abandoned in favor of a rally, as a march necessitates the presence of the NYPD. This change has caused a drop in attendance, but no research has been done into past changes in attendance.

I believe that researching how attendance has changed will impact the future of TBTN organizing on campus. Hopefully, when given this information, TBTN organizers will be able to

analyze trends in attendance and recalibrate the rally to raise attendance numbers and increase their campus presence.

#### **4. Literature Review**

My major sources, as cited above, are the Take Back the Night national website and my own anecdotal experience as a TBTN organizer. Additionally, I used the Columbia Spectator archive to gather estimated attendance numbers. From what I have been able to see, there has not been any substantial research done into trends in TBTN organizing. As such, I had to collect my own data.

#### **5. Data**

My data spans from 1988, the date of the first formal march, to the present day. I was able to find attendance estimates in the Daily Spectator and transcribed those for my data. Some years did not have estimated attendance numbers included in the articles and were not included in my analysis. In total, I was able to analyze the attendance of 25 marches/rallies. Finally, I used an ArcMap basemap of New York.

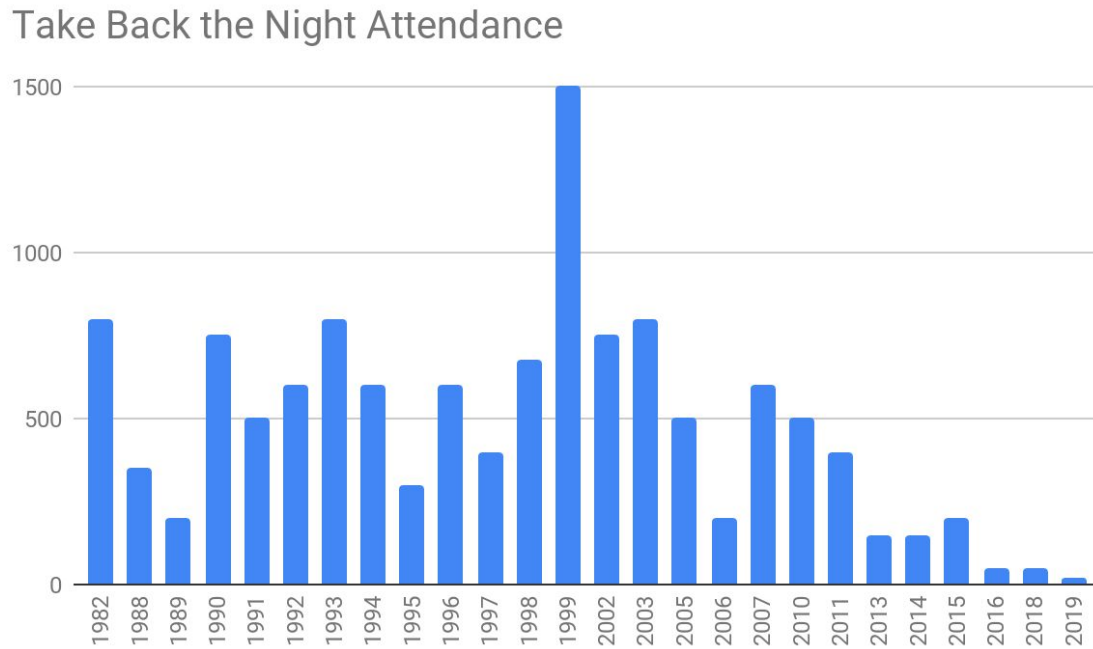
#### **6. Methodology**

In order to represent my data, I used an old march route found in the Take Back the Night archives. I created a shapefile for the route and then changed the line weight of the march route in proportion to the attendance estimates. I multiplied the attendance estimate by .01 in order to find the desired line weight.

When making maps for the rally, I created a shapefile of lines surrounding Low Plaza, which is where the rally is located. I then used the same equation to change the line weight in proportion to attendance numbers.

## 7. Findings

My findings demonstrated a significant decrease in march/rally attendance in recent years. Although there certainly have been fluctuations over time, in recent years attendance has dropped sharply.



Particularly since 2007, there has been a significant downward trend in attendance. Since the transition to the rally in 2018, this trend has been even more evident. Finally, even rally attendance has decreased from ~50 participants in 2018 to just 20 in 2019.

**2007 March Legend**

March (Attendance: 600)

World Street Map

**2007 March Legend**

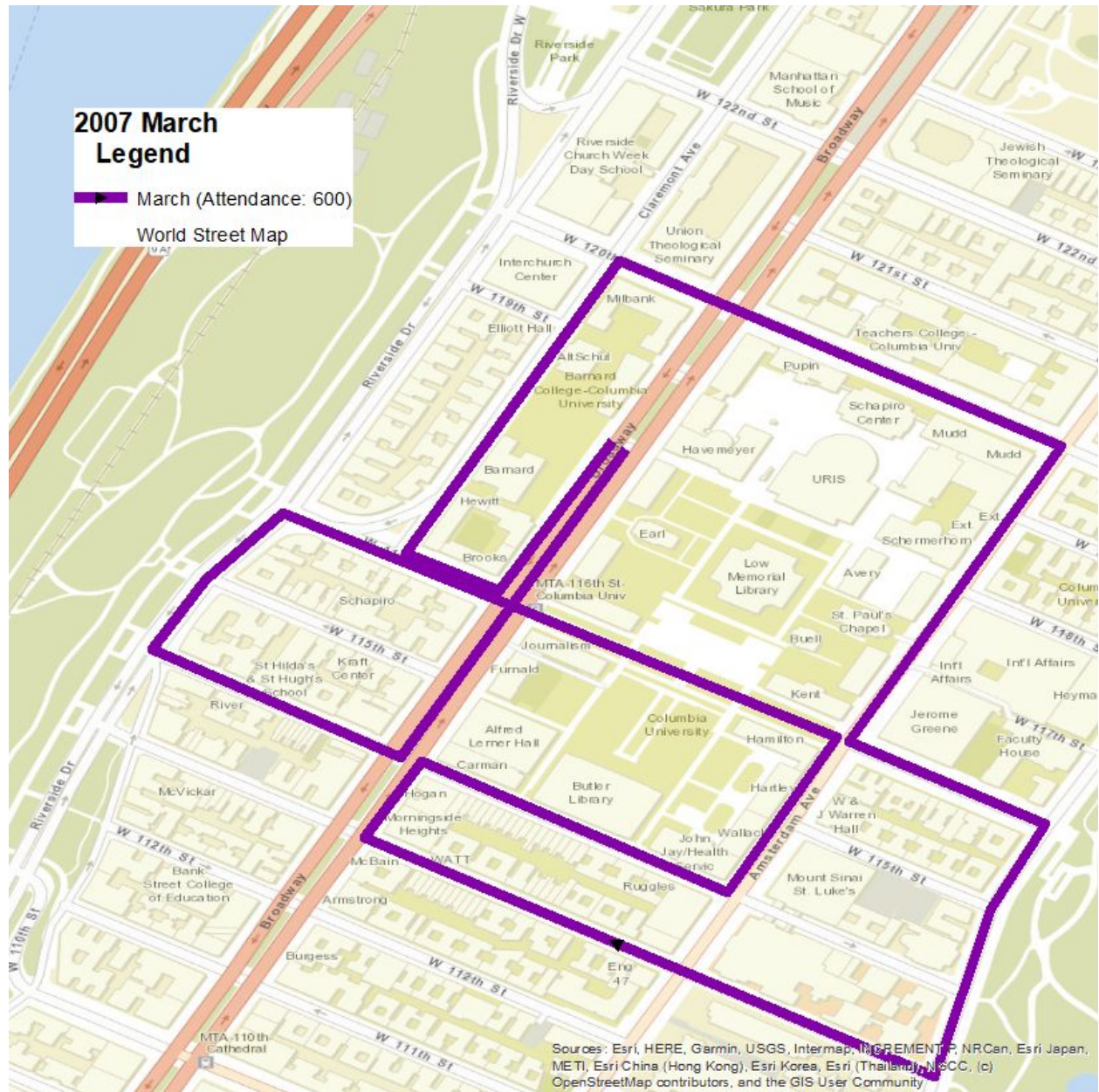
March (Attendance: 600)

World Street Map

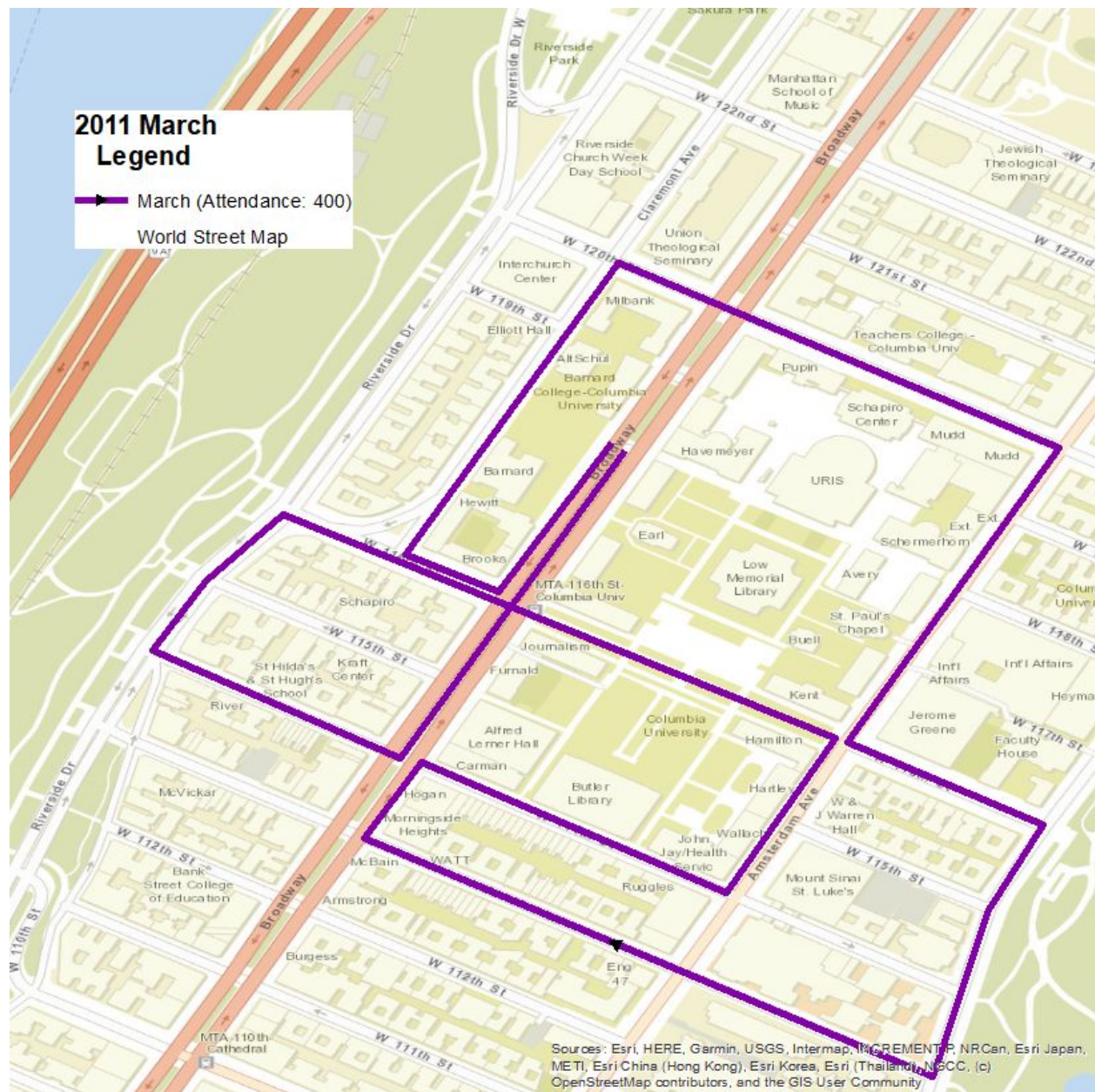
**2007 March Legend**

March (Attendance: 600)

World Street Map





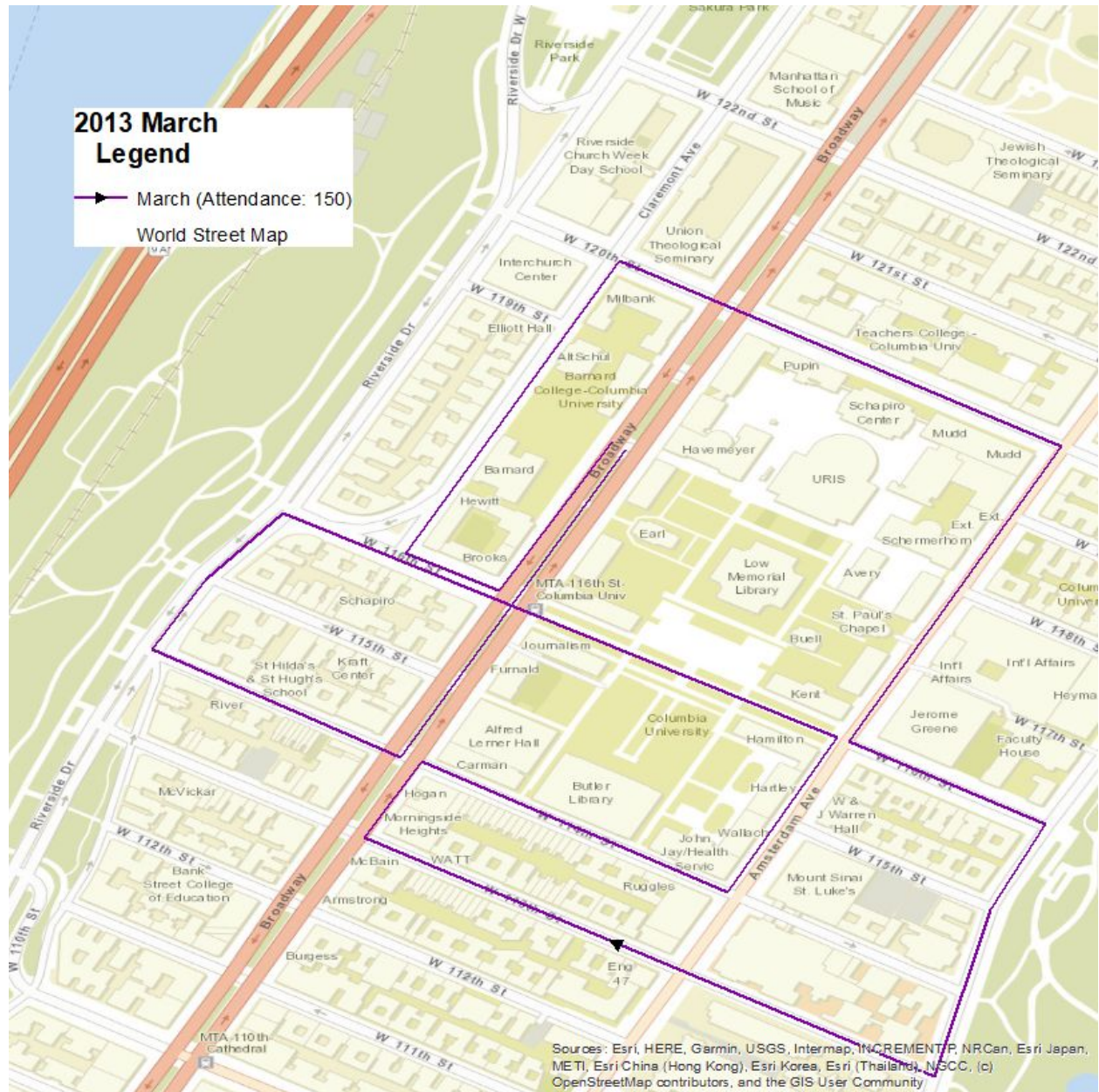


**2013 March Legend**

→ March (Attendance: 150)

World Street Map

World Street Map

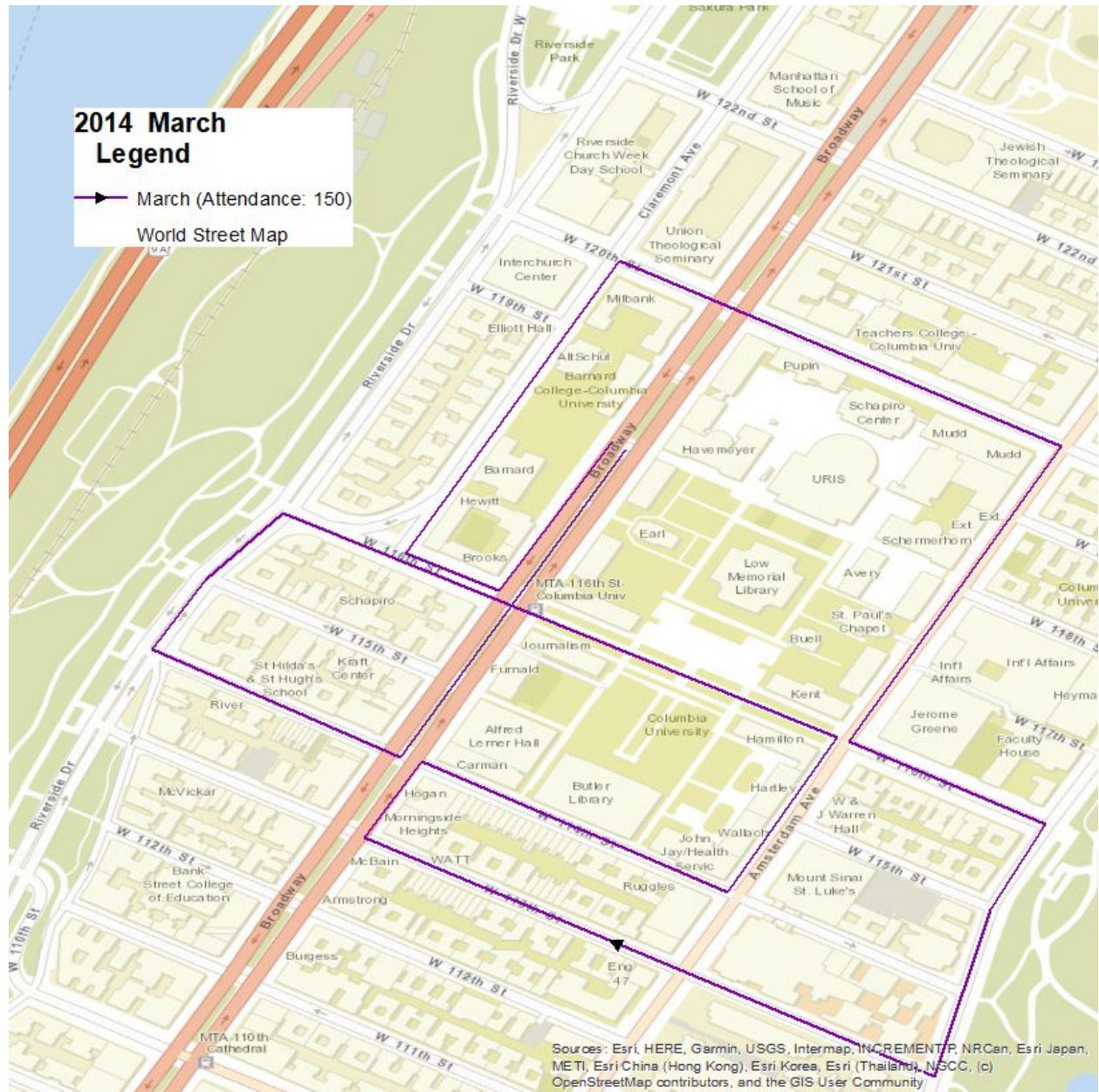


Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



## 2014 March Legend

→ March (Attendance: 150)  
World Street Map



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

**2016 March**  
**Legend**  
—▶ March (Attendance: 50)  
World Street Map

**2016 March**  
**Legend**  
—▶ March (Attendance: 50)  
World Street Map

**2016 March**  
**Legend**  
—▶ March (Attendance: 50)  
World Street Map





## 2018 Rally Legend

— Rally (Attendance: 50)

World Street Map



## 2019 Rally Legend

— Rally (Attendance: 20)

World Street Map



## **8. Limitations**

One significant limitation I faced was the potential inaccuracy of attendance estimates. It is unclear how the Daily Spectator calculated its attendance estimates or if they used the same procedures across multiple years, which could mean some of the counts are incorrect or inconsistent. Additionally, these maps do not reflect why attendance has dropped or the conditions surrounding the march/rally in any given year.

## **9. Recommendations/Conclusion**

To begin, I would recommend that further research be done into the conditions surrounding the rally or march in any given year. I know that for some years the march was responding to events on campus that increased awareness around sexual violence. In 2015, for example, the march included references to a student's year-long protest of Columbia's response to their experience of sexual assault. The publicity surrounding the protest most likely contributed to the slight spike in attendance in 2015. It would be interesting to see if trends in attendance are impacted by other such events that have occurred in past years.

My recommendations to organizers are mostly to publicize the rally more. When looking through the Daily Spectator archive, I noticed that Take Back the Night was mentioned in several articles a semester in its early years. This is not the case anymore - coverage of TBTN events is limited to one or two articles about the rally per year. Additionally, based on my own internal knowledge of TBTN, I would recommend that organizers focus on building relationships with other organizations on campus in order to widen their reach.



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