Narrating Time: A TimelineJS Workshop

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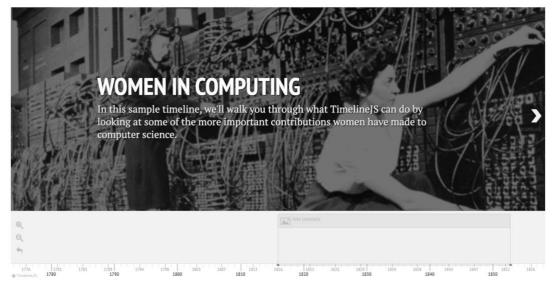
1.   Learning objectives

- **Explain** what TimelineJS is
- **Name** examples of how TimelineJS can be used
- **Design** a TimelineJS project applying digital humanities methods
- **Create** a TimelineJS project using a variety of media
- **Reflect** on decisions behind creation process
- **List** some pros and cons of TimelineJS
- **Analyze** TimelineJS as an example of a digital humanities project

2.   What's TimelineJS?

- Open-source tool for building timelines, built by Knight Lab at Northwestern University
- Allows a variety of media to be displayed with explanatory text
- Uses a Google spreadsheet to read information

https://timeline.knightlab.com/

3.   Designing a TimelineJS project

Some things to think about before you begin:

1. **Research question/narrative**
   a.   How do I present the story of women in computing?
   b.   How have school traditions evolved at Loyola?
2. **Personas (see this for more details)**
   a.   Who's your audience? Who's going to use this timeline?

3. **(Wireframe)**
    a. What will this look like?
4. **Organizing research and metadata**
    a. How do I keep track of my research?
    b. What metadata do I want/need to include?

4.   Building a TimelineJS project

1. Set up your TimelineJS Google spreadsheet.
2. Create a timeline with at least 4 slides (1 title slide, 3 normal slides).
3. Include at least 1 image and 1 video/audio clip into your timeline.
    a. To get the URL of an image, right click and select "Copy image address" from the menu that opens up.
    b. For Vimeo, YouTube, DailyMotion and Vine videos, use the URL at the top of the page.
    c. Refer to TimelineJS' documentation on other supported media types.
4. Make sure that information is included in the "Media Credit" column. Keep the tabs for these sources open!

5. TimelineJS and digital humanities projects

A. Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
Free	Dependent on Google, so susceptible to breaks
Visually appealing	Not easily customisable
Variety of media can be used	
Easy to use and access	

B. Analyzing TimelineJS as a digital humanities project

● What do the categories for metadata tell us about the authors' concerns?
● What information do you notice on the project home page? What impression(s) does it give you about the project?
● What can TimelineJS do? What can't it do?

6. Further resources

Digital Scholarship Services, Yale University Library (undated). User analysis. Yale University Library. https://dhlab.yale.edu/assets/docs/DH-User-Analysis.pdf
A guide on the steps for creating user personas, user stories and user scenarios.

Grumbach, Elizabeth (2018). Designing a DH Project. Institute for Humanities Research, workshop presentation. http://hdl.handle.net/2286/R.I.50759
Grumbach gives a helpful overview of best practices to adopt when designing and building a digital humanities project, framing the steps as a series of questions.