



ESRI STORY MAPS

Technical Report

SUBMITTED TO

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1. What is a Story Map?

Maps are used to tell stories for thousands of years. From ancient times, people used to inspire people through stories of different places by showing different maps or different points of a map. Esri picked up this beautiful idea of presenting narratives in combination with maps and launched one of their finest products- “Esri Story Maps”. Esri Story maps are interactive maps combined with text and other multimedia contents like images, videos, logos etc. to tell a story that involves places or locations.

‘Esri Story Maps’ are primarily one kind of web applications. The primary focus of these story maps is to interact with non-technical audiences. Therefore, the applications are mostly designed to be attractive and usable by anyone. These maps are very easy to make and easily accessible from different media, which makes them great for delivering information to different kind of audiences.

A very basic story map includes several geo-located points which are called “Story Points”. The application builder describes the story, description or other important information against each story point of the map. The users have the option of clicking sequentially through the story points to see the narratives or they can browse randomly by interacting with the map.

The best way to know how story map works are to go through an example. **Here, I have created a simple story map named “Top 7 Restaurants at Ames” based on my experience on different restaurants at Ames. The example can be found in the following link –<http://arcg.is/2nBlyb2>.**

In this map, I have tried to provide information regarding types of available in different restaurants, their location and contact information. I have also used images to express the environment and

food quality of the restaurants. People can also make our own story maps based on their experience of different places. Many examples and templates are available in the following website- <http://storymaps.arcgis.com>.

2. How to Create a Simple Story Map

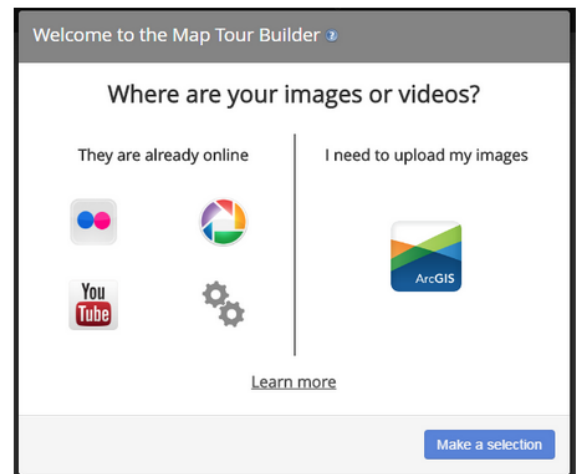
The process of creating a basic story map is simple and easy. One can follow the following sequential steps to create a story map:

2.1 Generating the Idea and Organizing the Information (Stories, images, photos or videos)

At first, the map builder should figure out what idea he wants to demonstrate with the story map. After that, he needs to assemble the necessary information (images, videos, descriptions, videos etc.) which are necessary for demonstrating his idea.

2.2 Uploading the Information

The map builder can upload the selected assembled information in several ways. For images, he can use images stored in Flickr or Google+/Picasa (the application will show the option). The maker can also directly upload the images to the cloud storage of Esri if he owns subscribed account. In addition, he can also use reference



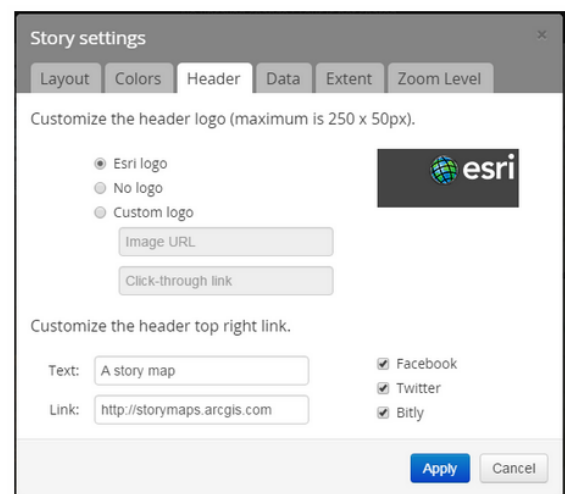
images that are on the web directly via their URLs. In that case, the builder has to upload URLs through a CSV file according to the Esri's provided format. In the case of videos, the builder can use videos stored in a YouTube account directly, or he can specify URLs to individual videos in YouTube, Vimeo, and so on.

2.3 Selecting Story Points

The intention of uploading images or videos in the story maps is to describe the features of a particular location. Therefore, while uploading the images or videos, the map builder has to select the particular locations or “Story Points” on the embedded base map. The map builder can choose the points sequentially if he wants to demonstrate a sequential incident or he can select the points randomly where sequence does not matter for featuring the incident.

2.4 Organizing the items and fixing the appearance of the map

The map builder can organize the uploaded elements and information by using the button named “Organize”. In Addition, the builder can use the “Story Settings” button to customize the appearance and behavior of the map.



The screenshot shows the 'Story settings' dialog box with tabs for Layout, Colors, Header, Data, Extent, and Zoom Level. The 'Header' tab is active. It contains two main sections: 'Customize the header logo (maximum is 250 x 50px)' and 'Customize the header top right link'. The logo section has radio buttons for 'Esri logo' (selected), 'No logo', and 'Custom logo'. Below 'Custom logo' are input fields for 'Image URL' and 'Click-through link'. The top right link section has input fields for 'Text' (containing 'A story map') and 'Link' (containing 'http://storymaps.arcgis.com'), along with checkboxes for 'Facebook', 'Twitter', and 'Bitly' (all checked). 'Apply' and 'Cancel' buttons are at the bottom right.

2.5 Publishing the Map

At the end, the map builder has to share his story map by using “Share” button. At this point, the application will generate a link through which the builder will be able to share his map in the different public domain. To make further changes in the story map, the map builder can go to “my stories”, launch his story map and switch to builder mode again. In addition, the map builder can also add additional layers with the base map by selecting the “settings” of the base-map”. The map builder can beautify his map by different tracks which he can find in this link- <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/faq/#question1> and in different blogs. The map builder can also

use the inbuilt template to create powerful story maps. By using different tips, the builder can make the map more vivid, interactive and user engaging.

3. Potentials of story maps and concluding remarks

The potentials of story maps are immense. GIS technology was often thought as a complex technology and it struggled frequently to communicate with the experts and the general audiences simultaneously. Story maps have expanded the scope of the GIS technology and have made GIS products accessible (as well as understandable) to a large amount interest groups. In future, this newer but larger interest groups might play a key role in enriching GIS database. However, still story maps are comparatively a new product and its features and tools are changing very quickly. Therefore, sometimes, the users, as well as the map builders, might struggle a bit while working with story maps. Nevertheless, I believe that the use of story maps will become widespread in near future.

Sources:

1. Kerski,J.J (2015) Storytelling with Esri Story Maps URL: <http://storymaps.esri.com/downloads/building%20story%20maps.pdf>
- 2.Sabwa.A(2014) Tell Your Story Using Story Maps URL: <http://www.jkuat.ac.ke/schools/scit/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/How-to-Tell-Your-Story-Using-Story-Map-Apps-1.pdf>
3. Esri (2012) Storytelling with Maps: Workflows and Best Practices. URL: http://www.iowagic.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/storymaps_workshop_jkerski_AA.pdf

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4. Esri (2017) Story Map Tour Tutorial URL: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/app-list/map-tour/tutorial/>