

Making Exhibits in Neatline

Based on guidelines created by Jim McGrath (Brown University)

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Introduction

This guide provides an overview of Neatline, an exhibit-building plugin for Omeka that students will be using to make digital exhibits.

What is Neatline? Neatline is a tool that was designed to let users map time and space in digital exhibits that users can access via web browsers (ideally on laptops, but it can also be accessed on tablets and phones). It's designed to encourage interaction: users can click whatever content populates the exhibit in any order they'd like, and you can also allow users to zoom in and out and around a map or move backwards and forwards along a timeline.

Neatline is designed to be user-friendly, but it does take some time to get used to its mechanics and features, so I've designed this guide for you as a reference tool. Here you'll find info on how to:

- Create an exhibit in Neatline

- Create annotations for your exhibit(s)
- Document and save your work while you're using Neatline

We're going to walk through these steps in class: this documentation is intended for use there, but it's also written in case you forget some of the steps we cover as you're tweaking and revising your work. If you get stuck anywhere, check in with me!

Here are the main things we're going to do in our in-class session. I'll walk you through these particular steps as a class: documentation on how we did everything is in this document!

1. Create a Neatline Exhibit (this will be the "sandbox" where you will test out and explore Neatline's various features and review guidelines).
2. Set your exhibit map's view to Italy (but this could be changed later)
3. Learn how to make an annotation (adding a point to the map; creating an annotation with text, image, and dates)

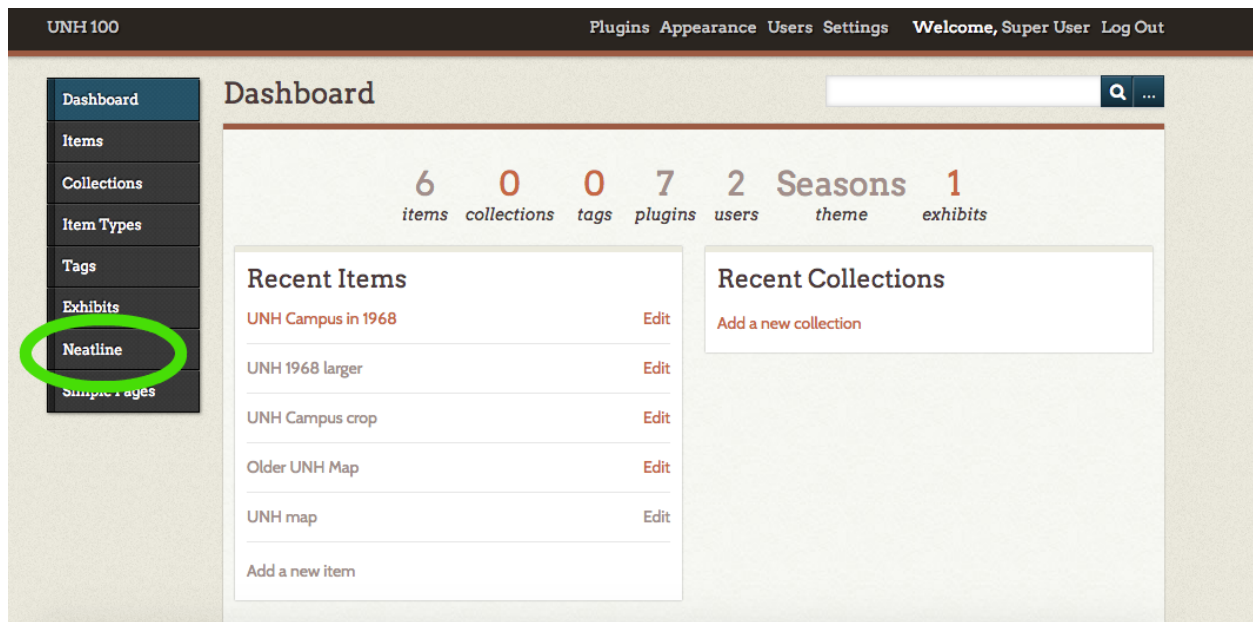
Creating Your Exhibit

Intro

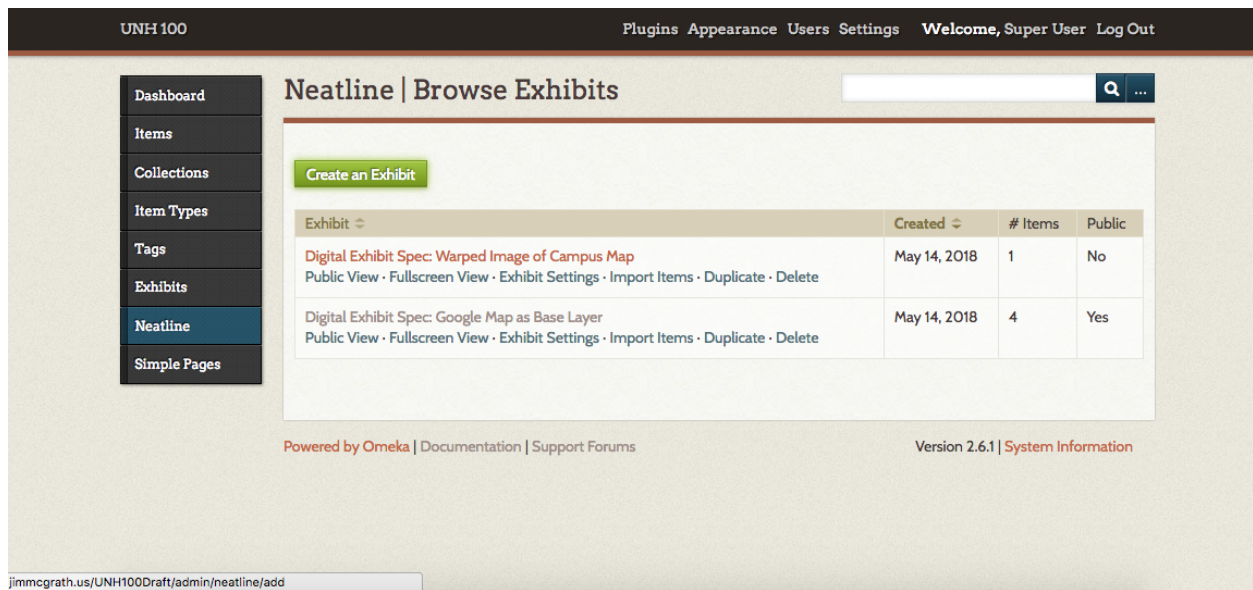
IMPORTANT: When creating content in Neatline, use a laptop or desktop. Some exhibit-building options work with tablets or phones, but some features do not display in these contexts, so you might not be able to complete certain tasks or see options if you try to make your exhibits with mobile devices.

Your Neatline exhibit "lives" on the Omeka instance that the class is using, so the first thing you need to do is visit the project site and log in with your user credentials.

Once you're logged in, you'll see Omeka's "Dashboard." Get to the "Neatline" portion of the site by clicking on "Neatline" on the menu on the left side of the screen.



If this is your first time using Neatline, you should test out some of its features by creating your first exhibit. Click the green “Create an Exhibit” button at the top of the screen. (If you’re returning to edit an exhibit you’ve already created, this screen will list that exhibit on this page. To edit and revise your exhibit’s annotations, click the name of your exhibit.)



Basic Exhibit Settings

You get a number of options on the “Create An Exhibit” page. These settings can be revised later, so don’t worry if you make any typos or miss anything when you’re first making your exhibit. That being said, *settings with a black star* next to them are required, so you need to fill out something in these fields in order to make your exhibit. Here are the options you should care about, and why:

Title (required): Give your exhibit a name!

For now call your exhibit: **Your first name-Your last name-Sandbox**. This can be the space you play around in to learn Neatline.

When it is time to actually work on your final project, you can either rename your Sandbox or create a new Neatline exhibit. Think about a name that is descriptive but concise, attention-getting, and relevant to the goals of the exhibit and its annotations.

URL Slug (required): A URL slug is the name of the page’s home on the web. This slug is public-facing and it impacts how search engines like Google read and rank the site, so think about one or two words that might concisely distinguish your page. You can use multiple words or numbers, but if you want them distinct they need to be separated by a hyphen. Each slug must be unique, so only one exhibit could use “new-haven” as its slug, for instance. Once you’ve finalized a slug for your project, I’d recommend settling on one and NOT changing it unless it’s absolutely necessary to do so: the slug is the web address of your project, so changing it would impact any links to the exhibit that you’ve previously shared.

For now make your slug: **Your first name-Your last name-Sandbox**

Narrative: This narrative text would appear underneath the public-facing home page of your Neatline exhibit. Depending on how the Neatline exhibits will be displayed, this would be a place to include general information about the exhibit and its creators. However, this information is ONLY displayed on the public-facing home page, so if the exhibits are circulated elsewhere (or if users are viewing them in full-screen mode), then the information will not be visible to users. You can use HTML in this text box, so you can add hyperlinks, images (if they’re hosted somewhere on the web), bold / underline / italicized text, and other formatting here. You can also revise this information whenever you’d like to and revisions should immediately display on the public site.

Accessible Alternative URL: Don’t worry about this feature.

Widgets (not technically required, but required if you want to be able to use the exhibit tools we're using!): A "widget" is Neatline's name for the tools you'll use to create and organize annotations and your timeline. **Make sure to select "SIMILE Timeline" and "Waypoints" here.** You'll need these widgets to create your exhibit's Timeline and its menu for annotations. If you don't see these options, let us know!

Enabled Spatial Layers: Neatline gives content creators several options for mapping layers from Google and OpenStreetMaps. If you've never used Neatline before, you might want to add all of the available layers to your exhibit. HOWEVER, when you're ready to share your exhibit with the public, you should think about how many map layers you want your users to be able to access: users will have the option to swap out your default layer for any of the layers added to this section. There are benefits and drawbacks to giving users multiple options here: this will likely be discussed in class. You can always go back and add or remove spatial layers. For now, add all the spatial layers to your exhibit.

Default Spatial Layer (required): This will be the default layer that users will see when they visit your exhibit. For now, let's set the default layer to Google Streets.

Image Layer: Some projects use a high-resolution image to map and annotate instead of the maps provided by Neatline. This image needs to be hosted somewhere on the web and publicly-accessible, so exhibits interested in this option would paste in the URL of the image here. We won't be using this feature now, but it's useful to know that this is an option.

Zoom Levels (required): You can control how many times users can zoom in or out on your exhibit, from a 0-20 range. Some projects may want to limit how much users can zoom so exhibit materials are more visible or prominent. I tend to begin by setting this to 10, but you can always go back and change this setting. You can also set the zoom levels on your individual annotations elsewhere: we'll talk about that in the annotations section.

WMS Address and WMS Layers: Options for projects that are using georectified maps (i.e., maps that pre-date Google Maps or Open Street Maps that have been "warped" so the coordinates used by these digital maps line up with the earlier geographic maps). We won't be using these features now, but it's useful to know that these options are available.

Spatial Querying: Make sure this box is checked.

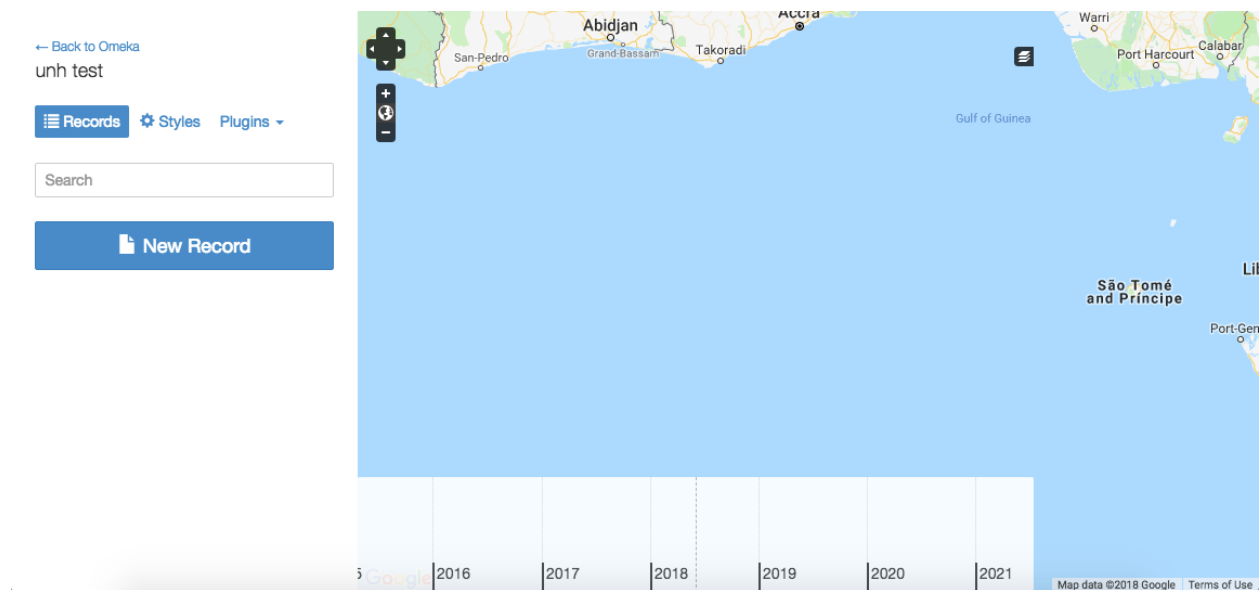
Public: Controls the visibility of your exhibit. I recommend keeping your exhibit private until it's ready to be shared (in fact, your current user settings may prohibit you from seeing this option!), but there may be points in the exhibit-building where you'd like to share your work with someone who doesn't have an Omeka account with this project.

Once you've selected your options here, click "Save Exhibit" at the bottom of the page. You've set up your first exhibit!

Setting Up The Default View for Your Exhibit

Map View

Click on the title of your exhibit to open up the space you'll be using to edit its appearance and make annotations. When you open this up for the first time, it will look weird...something like this!



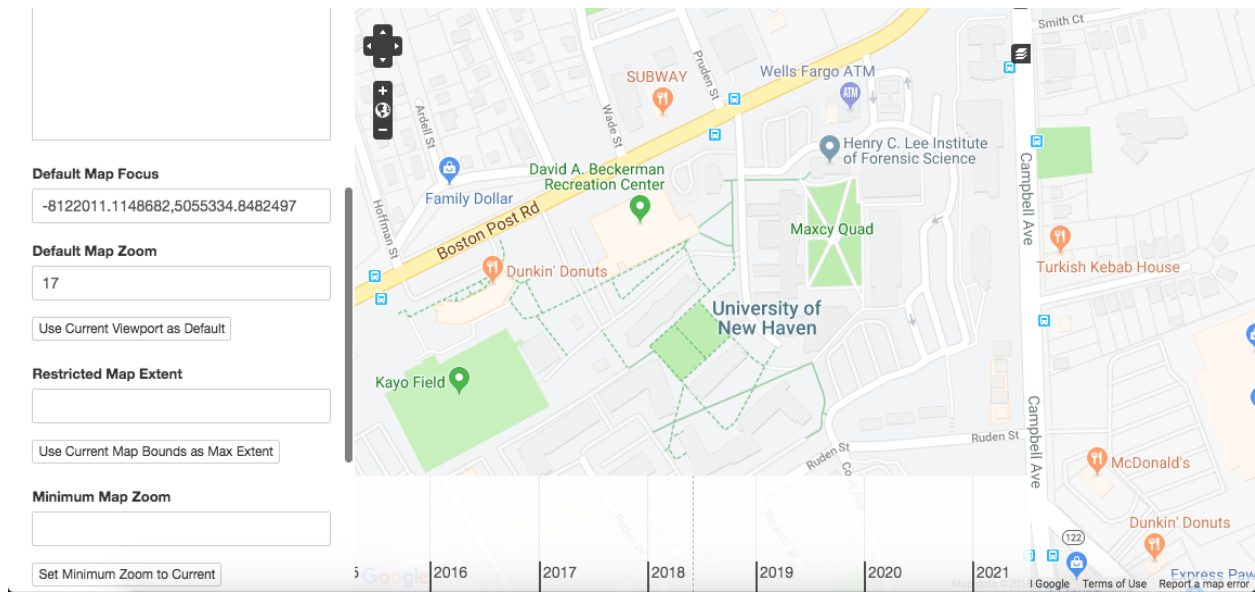
The left side of the screen is where you'll see a list of your "Records" (what Neatline calls your annotations). On the right side of the screen you'll see a map (your Default Spatial Layer) and a timeline. You'll notice that we're not in New Haven (or West Haven) anymore, so the first thing we'll need to do is set the default view for your map!

Use the **Zoom** tool on the top lefthand corner of the map to zoom out, then hold down your mouse and move the center of the zoomed-out map away from Africa and towards Italy. Then begin to zoom in, adjusting the map until you've got a view of Florence. Once you've got Florence at the center of your map (it's OK if you're off a little: we can always adjust!), then:

Click the "Styles" tab on the left side of the screen.

Scroll down and click the "Use Current Viewport as Default" button.

You'll see that some numbers (Geocoordinates) have been populated here.

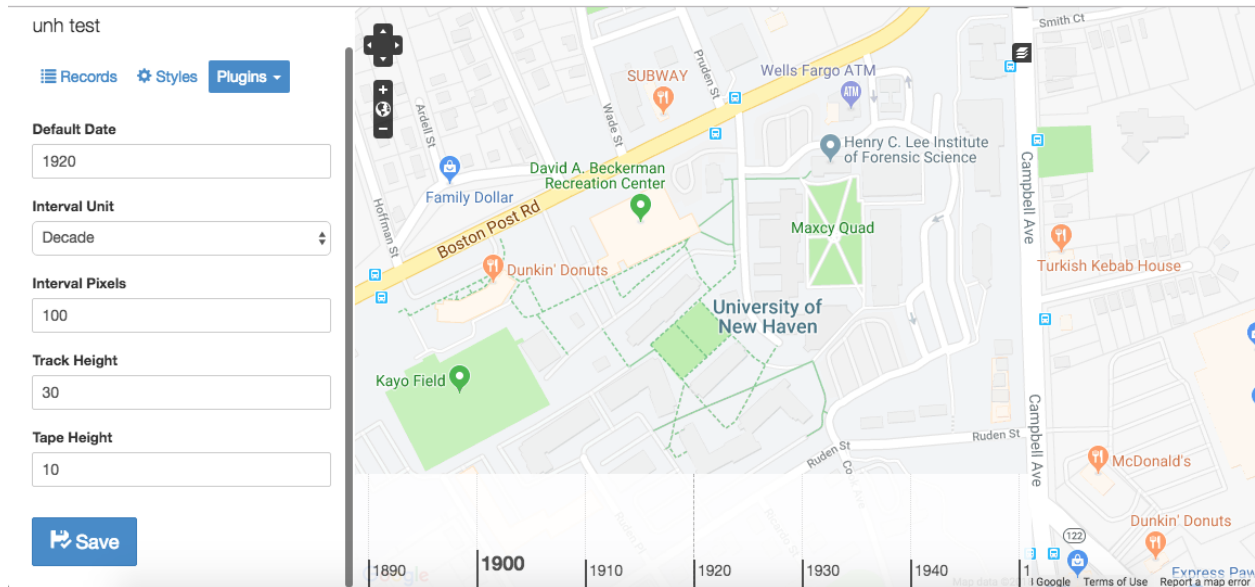


Click "Save."

If you want to check to make sure your Default View is now saved, scroll up to the top of the left-hand bar, Click "Back to Omeka," and then reopen your exhibit. You should be staring at Florence!

You can always revise this default view. Additionally, you can swap out your spatial layers and change those settings as well: you might find, for instance, that the Google Satellite layer is more aesthetically appealing to users than Google Streets. REMEMBER, if you do want to change your Default Spatial Layer, you'll need to go back and do so in the "Exhibit Settings" section of your exhibit.

Timeline View



You'll notice that the default timeline view starts the timeline in 2015 and ends in 2021. To change this view:

- Click "Plugins," then "SIMILE Timeline."
- Change "Default Date" to "1400"
- Change Interval Unit to "Decade"
- Click "Save."

You've now got the timeline set up to begin at 1400 (chosen here because of the course's subject matter - you will want to modify this and perhaps the interval unit once you decide on a specific topic).

You'll notice some other options here:

Interval Pixels lets you control the distance between your Interval Dates: if you're finding that the text of your Annotation titles is getting a little cluttered, you might want to increase this number (up to 500).

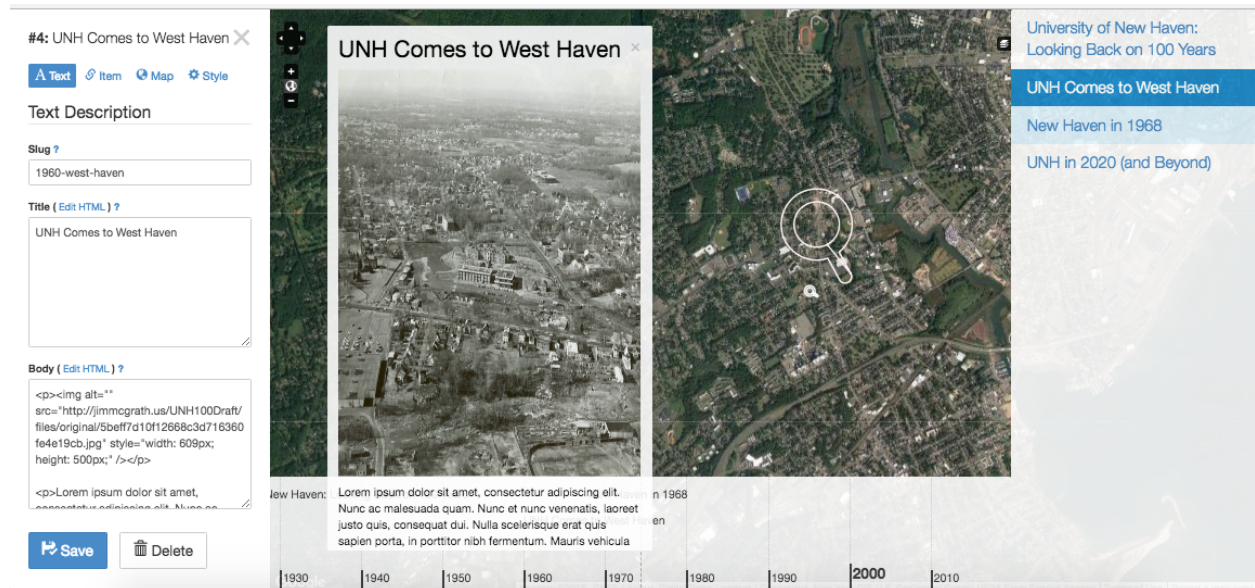
Track Height controls the size of your "Labels" (what Neatline calls the Titles of your annotations). Again, if things get a bit cluttered or hard to read here, you can change this setting.

Tape Height controls the size of the "tape" (what Neatline calls the colored lines that correspond to your Timeline's annotations). You can increase or decrease the size of this line here.

You can always go back and change these settings, depending on the period your exhibit focuses on. I recommend keeping the **Track Height and Tape Height** Numbers within the

10-30 range for the sake of timeline legibility. For more information on Timeline settings, [use this link](#) (courtesy of Neatline's official documentation).

Creating Annotations For Your Exhibit



Creating a New Record

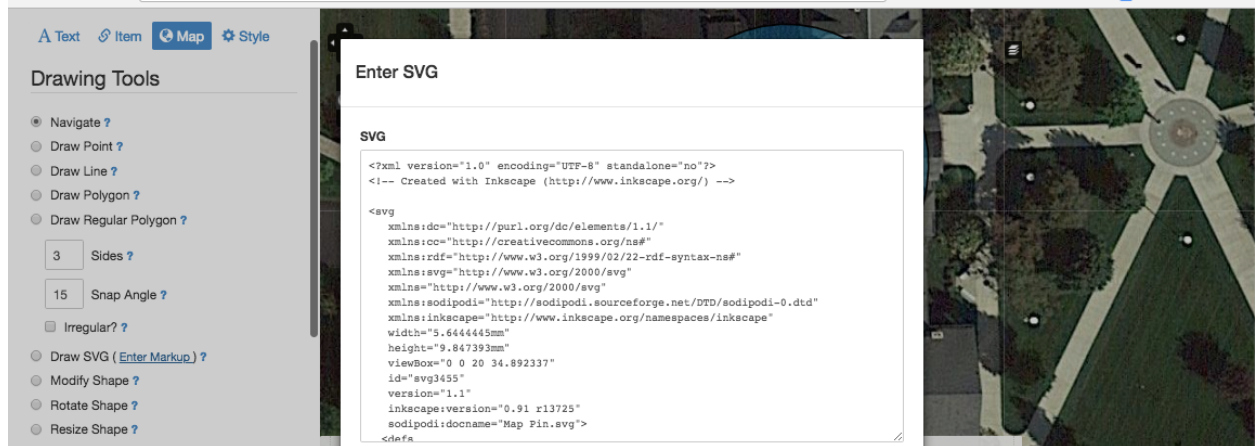
These are some general guidelines to help you get comfortable with the mechanics of creating annotations, which are called **records** in Neatline. You'll see that you have a number of options in terms of style and approach to annotations: over the course of the semester, some of these stylistic elements will be discussed by the class and decisions may be made to adopt certain stylistic approaches to annotations (how to map records, how long annotations should be, etc.). For now, let's see what kinds of things we can do with annotations.

To create a new record, click on the name of your exhibit on the "Neatline: Browse Exhibits" page in Omeka. Then click the blue "New Record" button.

Overview of Annotation Features: Map, Style, Text

You'll see that there are four tabs related to record content. We won't be using the "Item" tab at all, so don't worry about it. Click "Map" to get started.

Map



We're starting with "Map" because you'll want to find a place for your annotation on the exhibit map. Neatline gives you a few different options for annotating maps: you can draw points, lines, or polygons, or you can "Draw SVG" (Scalable Vector Graphics) to use icons like magnifying glasses, pointers, etc. My sense is that we'll likely end up using the SVG option because the icons available via open-source resources tend to look more professional than polygons created in Neatline.

When you've identified a place on the map where you want to drop your point for your record:

- Click "Create New Record" (if you haven't done so already)
- Click "Map" to open your "Drawing Tools" options
- Click "Enter Markup" next to the "Draw SVG" option
- Paste the full SVG Markup code below into the box labeled "SVG"
- Click "Parse"

You should get a note that says "SVG Parsed Successfully." Now you can use the vector graphic for this record! Note: you'll have to walk through this process of cutting and pasting the code for every record you create.

SVG Markup code (for a traditional location marker). Vector graphic from [this page](#). Copy and paste the text below.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" standalone="no"?>
<!-- Created with Inkscape (http://www.inkscape.org/) -->

<svg
  xmlns:dc="http://purl.org/dc/elements/1.1/"
  xmlns:cc="http://creativecommons.org/ns#"
  xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
  xmlns:svg="http://www.w3.org/2000/svg"
  xmlns="http://www.w3.org/2000/svg"
  xmlns:sodipodi="http://sodipodi.sourceforge.net/DTD/sodipodi-0.dtd"
  xmlns:inkscape="http://www.inkscape.org/namespaces/inkscape"
  width="5.6444445mm"
  height="9.847393mm"
```

```
viewBox="0 0 20 34.892337"
id="svg3455"
version="1.1"
inkscape:version="0.91 r13725"
sodipodi:docname="Map Pin.svg">
<defs
  id="defs3457" />
<sodipodi:namedview
  id="base"
  pagecolor="#ffffff"
  bordercolor="#666666"
  borderopacity="1.0"
  inkscape:pageopacity="0.0"
  inkscape:pageshadow="2"
  inkscape:zoom="12.181359"
  inkscape:cx="8.4346812"
  inkscape:cy="14.715224"
  inkscape:document-units="px"
  inkscape:current-layer="layer1"
  showgrid="false"
  inkscape:window-width="1024"
  inkscape:window-height="705"
  inkscape:window-x="-4"
  inkscape:window-y="-4"
  inkscape:window-maximized="1"
  fit-margin-top="0"
  fit-margin-left="0"
  fit-margin-right="0"
  fit-margin-bottom="0" />
<metadata
  id="metadata3460">
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    rdf:about="">
    <dc:format>image/svg+xml</dc:format>
    <dc:type
      rdf:resource="http://purl.org/dc/dcmitype/StillImage" />
    <dc:title></dc:title>
  </cc:Work>
</rdf:RDF>
</metadata>
<g
  inkscape:label="Layer 1"
  inkscape:groupmode="layer"
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  transform="translate(-814.59595,-274.38623)">
<g
  id="g3477"
  transform="matrix(1.1855854,0,0,1.1855854,-151.17715,-57.3976)">
<path
  sodipodi:nodetypes="ssccccsscs"
  inkscape:connector-curvature="0"
  id="path4337-3"
  d="m 817.11249,282.97118 c -1.25816,1.34277 -2.04623,3.29881 -2.01563,5.13867 0.0639,3.84476 1.79693,5.3002
4.56836,10.59179 0.99832,2.32851 2.04027,4.79237 3.03125,8.87305 0.13772,0.60193 0.27203,1.16104 0.33416,1.20948
0.0621,0.0485 0.19644,-0.51262 0.33416,-1.11455 0.99098,-4.08068 2.03293,-6.54258 3.03125,-8.87109 2.77143,-5.29159
```

```
4.50444,-6.74704 4.56836,-10.5918 0.0306,-1.83986 -0.75942,-3.79785 -2.01758,-5.14062 -1.43724,-1.53389 -3.60504,-2.66908  
-5.91619,-2.71655 -2.31115,-0.0475 -4.4809,1.08773 -5.91814,2.62162 z"
```

```
style="display:inline;opacity:1;fill:#ff4646;fill-opacity:1;stroke:#d73534;stroke-width:1;stroke-miterlimit:4;stroke-dasharray:none;stroke  
-opacity:1" />  
<circle  
  r="3.0355"  
  cy="288.25278"  
  cx="823.03064"  
  id="path3049"  
  style="display:inline;opacity:1;fill:#590000;fill-opacity:1;stroke-width:0" />  
</g>  
</g>  
</svg>
```

Now, click the button in “Drawing Tools” next to “Draw SVG” and click and hold the space on the map where you want the location marker to appear. You can rotate and enlarge or shrink the marker until you have it where you want it. If you want to delete the marker, click “Clear All Geometry” under the “Drawing Tools” options. Once you’re ready to save the marker, click “Save” (you can go back and add the text and image for the annotation later).

If you are not using an SVG graphic then you can click “Draw Point” and find a place on the map where you’d like your annotation to reside. The default point will look like a large blue dot with a black outline. We can customize the color and size of this dot if we want in the “Style” tab, but let’s leave it as-is for now, since we’re focused more on the mechanics of creating annotations.

Once you find an ideal spot, release your mouse. If you scroll down on the left side of the screen, you’ll notice that some numbers have appeared in the Geometry text box (under “Spatial Data.”). If you don’t like where you’ve drawn this point, click “Clear All Geometry” and start again. If you’re happy, click “Save” to preserve the point.

You might decide or the class might decide to test out other icons for use in exhibitis (or more than one icon). In order to do so, you’ll need to find open-source and free icons that you can access in SVG format. Once you’ve found the icon that you want to use, you can follow the steps on [this page from Neatline’s official guide](#) to get code similar to what is pasted above. The important step (as the instructions note) is to save the SVG file and then open it with a text editor to see the necessary code.

Style

Important: the first thing you should do under the “Style” tab is enable your two Widgets (Timeline and Waypoints). You can do this by clicking the “Widgets” section, adding both Widgets, and then saving your record.

Remember when I mentioned that you can change the color and layout of your points? This tab controls those settings and others (like the opacity of the color, or whether the color might change when a user hovers over the point, etc.). If you're working in a test exhibit space, feel free to experiment with colors, opacity, and line size. **Just remember to click "Save" and refresh the page to see these changes.**

You should note that Neatline allows you to change the individual style of any point or polygon. While this is freeing, it also means you'll need to pay attention to colors, opacities, and dimensions to maintain consistency across your annotations.

Style also lets you set the "Visibility" of an annotation. For example, if your exhibit's "home page" is a wider birds'-eye view shot of campus and you'd like a particular annotation to focus on a more zoomed-in space or building, you can make that adjustment here. The "Use Current Viewport as Default" option is the easiest way to populate these fields.

"Style" is also the place where you enter information about Dates for the exhibit timeline. You can assign specific dates to particular events (years, days, spans of time) and you can determine when this information will appear to users as they scroll through the timeline. Just remember to compare the view of the timeline to your general timeline settings (for example, if you're interested in particular years or a particular smaller stretch of time, check to see when your timeline begins and ends from the perspective of users).

Annotation Text and Image

"Text" is where you'll add the core elements of your annotation: your title and description. Here are the three basic features:

Slug: As with Neatline exhibits, you can create unique URLs for annotations. As with your exhibit slug, pick something descriptive and concise, and be consistent when writing slugs.

Title: The title of each annotation. If you're adding italics or other special characters, click "Edit HTML" to do so. Remember that your Title will also appear to site visitors in the "Waypoints" section of the exhibit, so make sure it's clear and engaging to users checking out this menu.

Description: Click "Edit HTML" to see your stylistic options here.

You'll notice that you can add hyperlinks, images, italics, paragraph formatting, and other features here. If you're just starting out, feel free to experiment. Once it's time to create your own exhibit annotations, adhere to the assignment guidelines and ask questions or make suggestions if you have other ideas.

Some stuff to keep in mind:

-The “Source” button at the top of the page lets you see the source code for your annotation. This feature is useful if the display of the annotation seems off or buggy: there may be stray lines of code in here from cutting and pasting content.

-Always compare the layout of text and the formatting of images to what you see in the “Public” view of the exhibit site: you’ll notice that images and text may appear differently in the “edit” mode. I’d recommend keeping a tab with the “Public” View of the exhibit open at all times when doing this work.

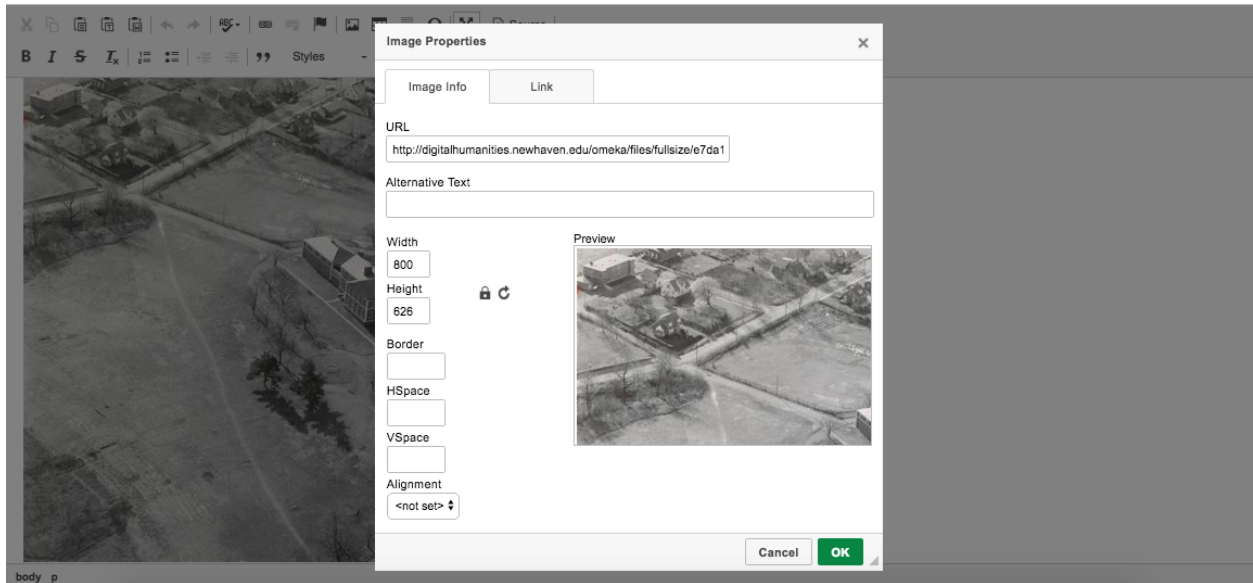
-If you’re adding hyperlinks, I recommend having them set to open in new tabs so your users don’t leave the exhibit completely in their browser.

-To return to the Records view in Neatline (once you’ve finished adding your text and other materials), click the box to the left of “Source” at the top of the window (with the four arrows).

Make sure to click “Save” once you’re back in this view: otherwise, your records may be lost!

-Make sure to save your work! **In addition to remembering to click Save, I’d recommend writing annotations in Google Drive and then pasting content into the “Edit HTML” box.** On the other hand, you may want to type up annotations first in the “Edit HTML” box and then copy and paste them into Drive. I’d recommend the first way. You can also copy and paste the “Source” view if you’d like.

Adding Images To Your Annotations



Before our Neatline session, you were asked to upload images to Omeka (by adding them as items). Part of the reason I asked you to do this was so we could use these images in your annotations. In order to embed images in annotations, they need to be publicly accessible online. Here's a walkthrough that shows you how to add images to your work.

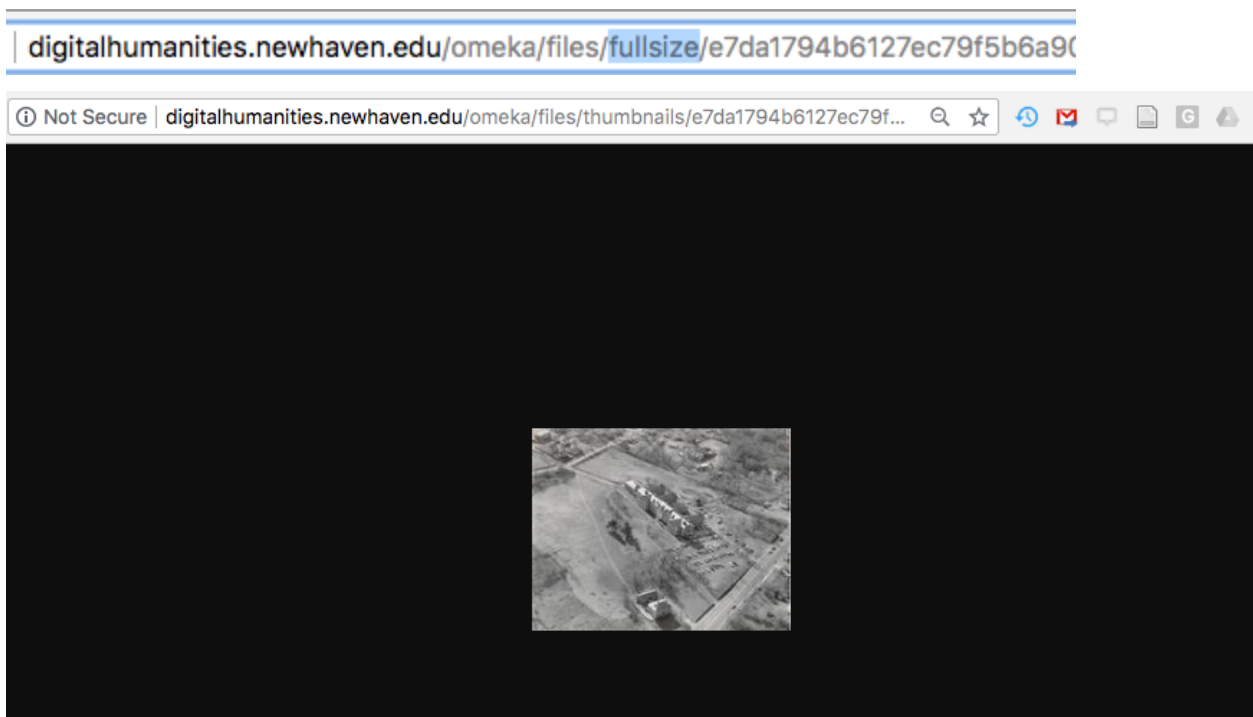
To get the URL you need for your annotation image:

- Open a new window or tab on your computer to Omeka's Dashboard (the main page you see when you log in to Omeka)
- Click "Items" and find the item with the Image you'd like to use
- **IMPORTANT:** Make sure the Item is Public: you'll be able to tell if it says "Public: Yes" here. If it says no, you need to make the item public by clicking "Edit" and checking the "Public" box (In your initial walkthrough of Omeka, you may not have these administrative privileges. For now, ask me to make your items public if they aren't already).
- Click "View Public Page"
- Right-click on the image and click "Open Image in New Tab"
- Copy and paste the URL on this page: this is a public, direct link to your image.

To add the image to your annotation:

- Open the record you want to edit or create a new record in your Neatline exhibit
- You should be open on the "Text" Tab
- Click "Edit HTML" next to the word "Body." This will open a new editing window.
- You should see two tool bars with options above a blank text box (or a box with content you've already created for this annotation). Click the icon that looks like a small picture.
- Paste the Image URL into the "URL" text box.
- Click the green "OK" button.
- Click the "Minimize" box (with four arrows in the tool bar) to leave this page.

- **IMPORTANT:** You'll be brought back to Neatline's annotation screen. Click Save to save the image!
- **ALSO IMPORTANT:** Sometimes images, depending on their size, can get stretched out or look off in your annotations. Check how they appear by clicking the "Public View" option on your exhibit.
- If an image looks off, you can edit its appearance settings by going back to the "Edit HTML" option and adding numbers to the "Width" and "Height" box to reset the image size.
- In some cases, an image appears off because the image you uploaded to Omeka is too small or pixelated (or, in some cases, too big). You might want to re-upload an image with a better quality.
- In cases where an image seems too big, you might want to use the public URL for its thumbnail (i.e. smaller image). Go back to the image URL for your image and change the word "fullsize" in the URL to "thumbnails." Click enter, and you should be taken to the thumbnail page (the image should look smaller on your screen. Copy and paste this URL and try it instead of the full-size image.



General Tips for Working With Neatline

An overview on uploading files and creating metadata in Omeka is covered in the style guide. Items in Omeka are useful to keep in mind in relation to Neatline exhibits: for example, you might want to have an image for an annotation and it could be easy to upload that image as an item in Omeka (so you have a public URL for the image file).

Whenever writing content for Neatline, save backup copies elsewhere: a Google Drive doc should be sufficient (though you might want to double-check how annotation materials pasted from Google look in your exhibit to make sure that there are no formatting issues like weird font or spacing issues).

When working in Neatline, you'll find that it's easier to have a few tabs open in your browser at the same time: a tab with the public-facing version of your exhibit, or a tab with your core records, or a tab with your Neatline exhibit settings. This way you can quickly check and review new additions to your exhibits to see what an audience will see.

If you're not seeing a change registering in Neatline, you might want to delete your browser's cache: sometimes the cache can impact your view of the site in Chrome. If you're still not seeing a change that should be there, email us!

In addition to the documentation here, you might find these materials useful:

[Neatline](#) (official site)

[Neatline Documentation](#) (official site)

[Neatline "Demos"](#) (a showcase of sites that use Neatline)

[Neatline FAQs](#) (Hannah L. Jacobs, Duke University)