

Creating a Map using StoryMapJS

Dr. Pam Lach, Digital Humanities Librarian // LA 61N // plach@sdsu.edu

<https://tinyurl.com/hist455-sp2020>

What it does

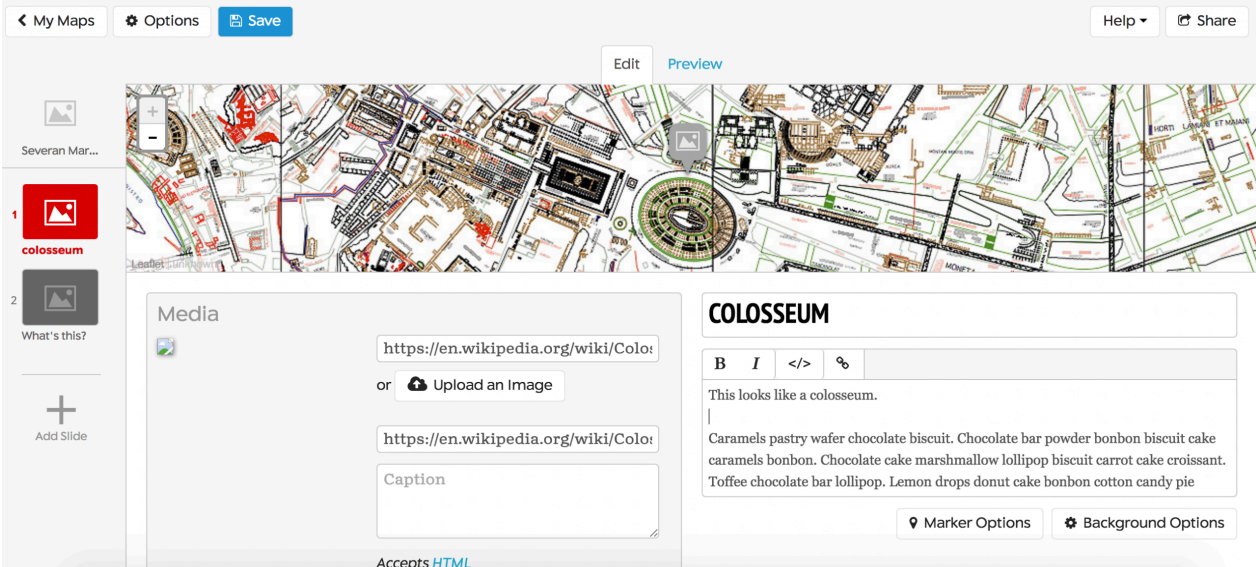
StoryMapJS (<https://storymap.knightlab.com/>) allows you to create media-rich, interactive, and sequential points on a web map, connected by a trail/line. You define the sequence (e.g. chronological, thematic, etc.). The map is hosted online, or can be embedded in another website (such as WordPress or a Google Site). You can also use a StoryMap to annotate a non-spatial image or historic map (“Gigapixel” map), though that is harder to do.

Examples

- Dr. Lach’s map of [places that shaped me](#)
- Spring 2019 HIST 503 collaborative Map of Rome: <https://tinyurl.com/hist503map-sp19>
- Spring 2018 [HIST 503](#) collaborative Map of Augustus: <https://tinyurl.com/hist503-Augustus-map>
- Samples from HIST 503: Ancient Rome: [Spring 2018](#) and [Spring 2019](#)

How it works

Each map is a collection of slides that you enter directly in the interface. **One slide = one location** on the map. Similar to PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Keynote, you can drag and drop to reorder slides. A media object (images, videos, gifs, etc.) can be added media field either by adding a media URL, HTML embed code, or uploading directly from your computer. The description field contains a stripped-down [WYSIWYG](#) editor (bold, italics, and links). Additional formatting can be created with HTML coding.



The screenshot shows the StoryMapJS interface. At the top, there are navigation buttons: "My Maps", "Options", "Save", "Help", and "Share". Below these are "Edit" and "Preview" buttons. The main area features a map of Rome with a red marker at the Colosseum. To the left of the map is a sidebar with a list of slides: "Severan Mar...", "1 colosseum", and "2 What's this?". Below the sidebar is an "Add Slide" button. The "colosseum" slide is selected, showing a "Media" field with a URL: "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colo:". Below the URL field is an "Upload an Image" button. The "Caption" field is empty. To the right of the media field is a text editor with the title "COLOSSEUM" and a rich text editor with bold, italic, and link buttons. The text in the editor reads: "This looks like a colosseum." Below the text editor are "Marker Options" and "Background Options" buttons. At the bottom, it says "Accepts HTML".

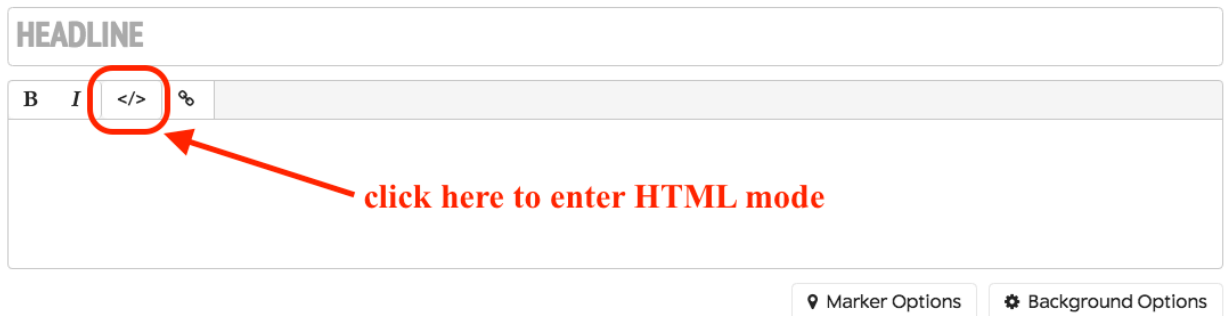
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Limitations

- While this tool allows you to combine space and time, it is not explicitly designed for this type of visualization. Because there are any number of ways to connect map points, you will need to specify what the connection is. If it's temporal, you might consider including the year in the location point's title.
- Some of the base maps are wonky; if you notice that your points are not in the right place, change the base map (Options in the top left of the screen).
- The interface can be a little slow, especially if you are typing a lot of text quickly. Consider drafting your text in Google Docs, Word, or a plain text editor, which will also allow you to backup your work (always a good idea in case you lose connectivity or the StoryMap interface crashes).
- StoryMapJS is connected to an individual Gmail account, and thus does not allow for real-time collaborative work, unless you share your email and password with someone (**never** recommended). See [details below](#) for suggested workarounds.
- StoryMapJS accepts HTML in many of its fields (such as the media caption). If you're adding HTML to your main marker description, you will need to switch over to HTML mode (HTML will be lost if you paste it in normally):



What you need to get started

- Google account; maps are stored in your account for you to go back and update.
- You can load images, YouTube links, gifs, and even Google StreetView!
 - Images can be loaded directly into the interface, or linked out from the web.
 - Videos, Google street views, and other dynamic content should be shared via the HTML embed code provided by YouTube or Google Maps. This can be entered directly in the Media box.
 - HINT: all embed code starts with `<iframe>` and ends with `</iframe>`
 - Gifs should be downloaded to your computer and uploaded into StoryMap directly.

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Questions to get you thinking

- How will you use the StoryMap to tell a cohesive story about a series of places?
- How will you weave that story from place to place on the map?
- What is the most salient way to sequence your marker locations? (e.g. chronologically? thematically?)
- What media (image, video, etc.) might help convey information about why a location on the map matters?
- What primary and secondary sources will you need to build your argument and tell your story?

Alternative Tool

ESRI's Story Maps, which we can access via our SDSUid. Story Maps is one of many geo-based apps from ESRI (best known for ArcGIS): Use your SDSUid to log in: <https://sdsugeo.maps.arcgis.com/home/> and then select the Story Maps app from the upper right. There are many templates to choose from. N.b. if you create a map here you will lose editing access when your SDSUid is deactivated (upon graduation) -- the published version of the map will continue to be viewable. Also, it is similarly difficult to create a collaborative map in real time using ESRI Story Maps.

StoryMapJS Pro Tips

Collaborating in a StoryMap... (is difficult to do)

StoryMapJS is connected to an individual Gmail account, and thus does not allow for real-time collaborative work, unless you share your email and password with someone (**never** recommended). Options and Workarounds for working collaboratively:

- ❖ Select one member of your group to work in the StoryMap using their personal gmail account (do NOT share your password with your groupmates)
- ❖ OR, create a new, shared Gmail account (do NOT reuse an existing password).
- ❖ N.B. even with a shared account, only 1 person can be logged into the StoryMap at a time.
- ❖ StoryMap will not save the work of simultaneous users; rather, *you will need to coordinate your work (hand things off and stagger your work shifts)*.
- ❖ **Make sure to LOG OUT of your session when you're done so that your changes won't be lost when the next person logs in.**

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Working outside the StoryMap interface

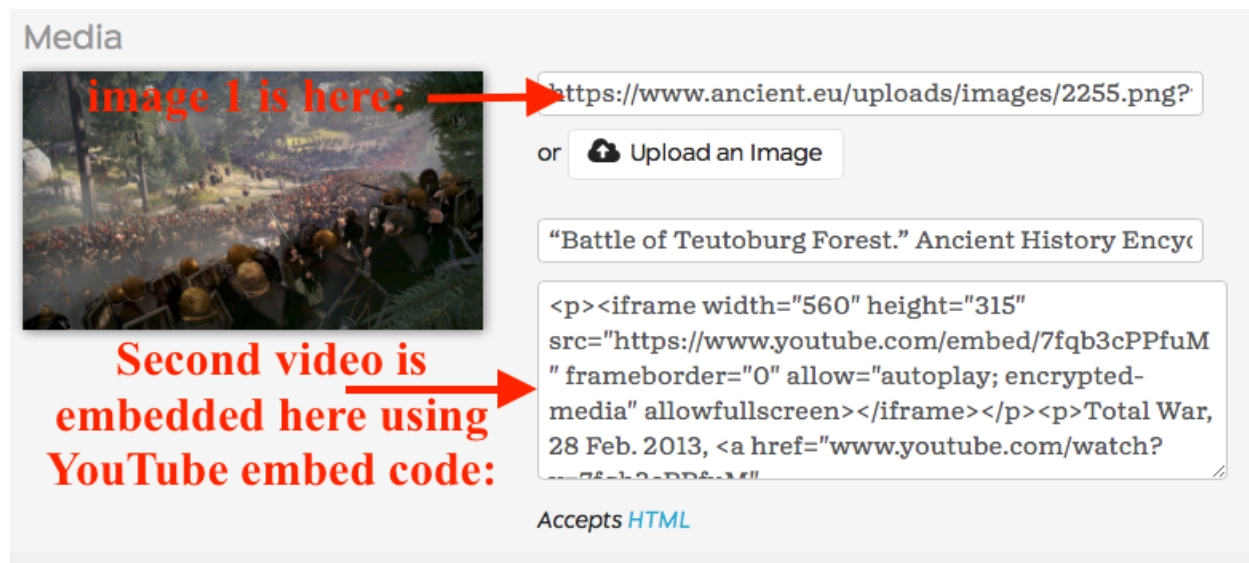
The StorymapJS interface can be slow, especially if you are working with a lot of content.

- ❖ It's highly recommend that you compose lengthy text descriptions elsewhere, such as a Google Doc (best for group work) or a Word Doc.
- ❖ This will protect you in case StoryMapJS ever crashes or is particularly slow.

How can I add multiple images/videos to a location entry?

Unfortunately, StoryMapJS only supports media in the main media field. But, using the magic of HTML, we can add additional images and videos using the [appropriate embed code](#): for images and <iframe> code from YouTube.

NOTE: adding media objects to the main description field doesn't always work. If you run into problems, I recommend adding them to the MEDIA CAPTION field.



The screenshot shows the 'Media' field in StoryMapJS. On the left, there is a preview of an image from the game Total War, showing a battle scene. A red arrow points from the text 'image 1 is here:' to the image. Below the image, another red arrow points from the text 'Second video is embedded here using YouTube embed code:' to the video embed code field. The video embed code is:

```
<p><iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/7fqb3cPPfuM" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe></p><p>Total War, 28 Feb. 2013, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f-l2-PPfuM" data-bbox="441 428 848 444">https://www.ancient.eu/uploads/images/2255.png?</a></p>
```

 Above the code field is a text input with the same URL and an 'or' button with an 'Upload an Image' button. Below the code field is a text input with the text '“Battle of Teutoburg Forest.” Ancient History Ency'. At the bottom of the field, it says 'Accepts HTML'.

How do I publish my StoryMapJS?

There are several steps to saving and publishing your StoryMap. Everytime you make changes, the SAVE button will turn BLUE. When you're ready to publish your map, you'll hit SHARE.

Subsequently, whenever you make changes you'll need to hit SAVE and then PUBLISH CHANGES:

1. Save - the save button won't turn blue until you click away from the field you've edited
2. Share → Publish
3. Post publishing changes: Publish Changes

Changes won't display on the front end until you hit SAVE + PUBLISH CHANGES. If you save without publishing the changes, your changes will be saved the next time you log in but they won't be visible.

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Note about your StoryMapJS link

- Copy the link and paste into your text document. DO NOT copy the URL from your browser's address bar (that links to the backend, which only you can access)
 - **CORRECT link:** starts with <https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/> -- it will be a very long link (make sure to grab the entire link)
 - **INCORRECT link:** starts with <https://storymap.knightlab.com/edit/?id=> -- if you submit this link you will not receive credit for your work

How can I configure my StoryMap?

There are a few ways to configure your map:

1. Marker Options
 - a. Create a marker icon by uploading an image or using an image URL
 - b. You can re-use any images you've loaded into your StoryMap
2. Background Options
 - a. Specify a slide background color using hex color - StoryMapJS has a built-in hex color picker
 - b. Or specify a background image, either using an image URL or uploading an image
3. Map Layer
 - a. You can change the underlying map layer ("base map") by clicking the options button at the top

What map fields accept HTML?

You can use HTML to format your map in the following fields:

- Media - can insert a media link or html embed code (or upload a media object)
- Media Caption
- Marker Description

HTML Tips

You do not need to know/use any HTML when working in a StoryMapJS. However, using a little HTML can enhance your storymap, especially if you want to add additional [media objects](#). You can explore the full range of HTML possibilities with W3Schools [HTML tutorials](#). Also, check out my abbreviated [HTML tutorial](#), originally created for HIST 503: Ancient Rome (Spring 2019).

Below are some basic reminders:

1. HTML formatting elements include a start tag `<>` and an end tag `</>`.

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2. HTML elements may be combined in a nested fashion, meaning that the end tags should appear in inverse order to the start tags: `<p>This is my first paragraph.</p>`
`<p>This is my <i>second</i> paragraph.</p>` `<p>This is my <a`
`href="https://library.sdsu.edu/digital-humanities-center">third paragraph.</p>`
3. You can download images from the web and load them directly into your StoryMapJS, OR you can link directly to the image by pasting in the image URL - [this guide](#) can help you
4. Videos can be displayed using the share link YouTube provides - DO NOT copy the full URL from the browser's address window. Instead, click the SHARE link and copy the URL (or embed code)
5. Adding extra images or videos: Similar to TimelineJS, you can only use one image OR video in the media field. But you can add additional images/videos in the Caption field using HTML code (we've found that this code doesn't work in the marker's main text entry field:
 - a. Images: use the ``. **Example:** ``
 - b. Videos: use the full embed code YouTube provides. **Example:** `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/-qTIGg3I5y8" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture" allowfullscreen></iframe>`
 - i. You can modify this to adjust the sizing or specify a start and end time in the video (see Dr. Lach if you'd like to learn more).
6. **If you plan to use HTML, test your code** before you paste it into the StoryMap: use the "Try it Yourself" [editor](#).