

Timemapper Demo

Introduction

Hi, I'm Elizabeth Kelly and I am the Digital Programs Coordinator in the Monroe Library. I manage the library's digital programs including digital special collections and archives, digital preservation, digital scholarship, scholarly communications, and library web services. I'm also the librarian liaison to Mass Communications, Music Industry, Pop & Commercial Music, Urban and Electronic Music Production, and Digital Film, so if you take classes in those areas, you may see me again or want to reach out to me for research and technology help.

Part of my job is working with students and faculty who are interested in using digital tools in their research, either to help them do their research, or to help them tell the story of their research. Today what I'm going to be working with you on is an assignment where you create a collaborative digital timeline of global history with your classmates. The timeline will allow you to easily visualize how you as a class tell the story of world history. What types of events did you prioritize? What time periods did you focus the most on? What geographical areas did you find yourself drawn to the most? And how does that influence your understanding of world history?

For this assignment, you'll be using a tool called TimeMapper which was created by the Open Knowledge Foundation Labs. TimeMapper is free and creates a combination timeline and map. The TimeMapper project is open source, which means the code behind it is available for anyone to access and tinker with themselves. Open source projects like this are very common in digital scholarship and the digital humanities. TimeMapper and similar programs are also frequently used by journalists to help them tell their stories in a way that's visually engaging for online readers.

Information is added to the TimeMap by simply editing a pre-formatted spreadsheet in Google Sheets. In the following video, I will show you how to add information to the spreadsheet and populate the TimeMap.

Adding to the TimeMap

I have created a Google Sheet for this class which Dr. Edgren will provide you. The sheet is linked to a TimeMap that is already published online. You can see that the TimeMap currently has one entry on it already that will need to be deleted once your class has finished the TimeMap at the end of the semester.

To add to the TimeMap, you will fill out the different fields on the Google Sheet. The Google Sheet is available to anyone with its URL, so you should be able to edit it whether you are logged into your Google account or not.

The top row of the spreadsheet has the title for what information you will enter in that column of the spreadsheet. The second row explains what exactly you need to include in that column. I'm going to go through now and add a new entry to the TimeMap so you can see how it works.

For my entry, I am going to add the First Babylonian Empire. That is what I will use for my title. Next I need to add a start date for my entry. If you don't enter a start date, your entry will not appear on the timeline. If your date is BC, you will need to put a negative sign before it. So, for example, if I want the start date of the First Babylonian Empire to be 1830BC, I will need to enter -1830. Next, add an end date, if you have one. If your entry is a single date, for example, just one year, you can leave this field blank. For my end date, I want 1531BC, so I will enter -1531.

Next, enter a description of your event. This should be 2-4 sentences long. While you can refer to other sources to learn about your event, make sure your description is in your own words.

The next field is for a webpage. If you are getting the information for your entry from a website, you can provide a link to the site here for more information.

After that you can add Media. TimeMap will embed the media on the TimeMap. This could be a picture, a video, a sound clip, or anything else you find that helps illustrate your event. All you need to do is include a link to the media, whether it's a YouTube video, Wikimedia Commons image, or something else.

If you do include media, you'll want to provide proper credit for it. The next two fields allow you to add a caption and also a credit for the media. Your credit should include who created the media; you can find this information wherever you found the media. It could be a person's name, or the username that they use on the originating website.

Next you can add optional tags. These are keywords that describe your event.

Now you need to add the location for your event so it will show on your map as well as on your timeline. This is a human readable description, such as a city name followed by a comma and then a state name. If you are entering ancient locations, you may need to do some research to find what the closest modern location is to yours. For example, Babylon no longer exists, but a quick Google search shows me that its center was in modern-day Iraq. In this case, entering Babylon on the spreadsheet gives me a good approximate location, but you may need to try a few different options if you're entering an ancient location to see what works.

The next column automatically generates a machine-readable form of your location, which is what will actually appear on the map. There is a formula already in this column that should generate the latitude and longitude of your location using the information you entered in Column J. If your location does not automatically generate the latitude and longitude in Column K, you may need to try some different entries in Column J until it does. For example, if city and state, or city and country, aren't working, you can try just entering a country name.

The last two columns are for your information sources. Again, it's important to cite any information you're using from someone else, so here is where you can include the name of a book, article, or website where you're getting your information from, as well as the website URL if it is an online source. You may use reliable, scholarly sources such as course texts, encyclopedias, and peer-reviewed articles; Dr. Edgren can provide more info on what sources are appropriate for this assignment.

Finishing Up

Now that you've entered all of your information, you should be able to see your entry on the TimeMap. Go to the URL for your class's timemap, and you will now see your entry on the timeline and on the map. You can navigate to other entries on the TimeMap by clicking the backward and forward arrows; you can also click on points on the map to see the corresponding information for those locations. If you need to edit your entry, just go back to the spreadsheet and make any changes you need. Then return to the TimeMap and refresh it in your browser to see your changes.

As your classmates add more information to the spreadsheet, you'll see your timeline and map filling in. The timeline will automatically add events in chronological order, so don't worry if the spreadsheet is not in chronological order.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the assignment. You can reach me at ejkelly@loyno.edu. You can also schedule a virtual meeting with me at calendly.com/elizabethjoankelly if it would help to look at your TimeMapper work together. Good luck, and I look forward to seeing your finished TimeMapper at the end of the semester!