StoryMaps JS: Introduction and Tutorial

Reckonings Summer Institute 2023

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What is a StoryMap?

- **A StoryMap** is a way to tell a "story" via a map.
  - Essentially, you can place dates, media & text across a space.
- **StoryMap JS** is an interactive, Web-based tool that maps space and place. It is different from Timeline, which is a similar tool, and not what we are using.
- **StoryMap JS** was developed by the KnightLab at Northwestern University.

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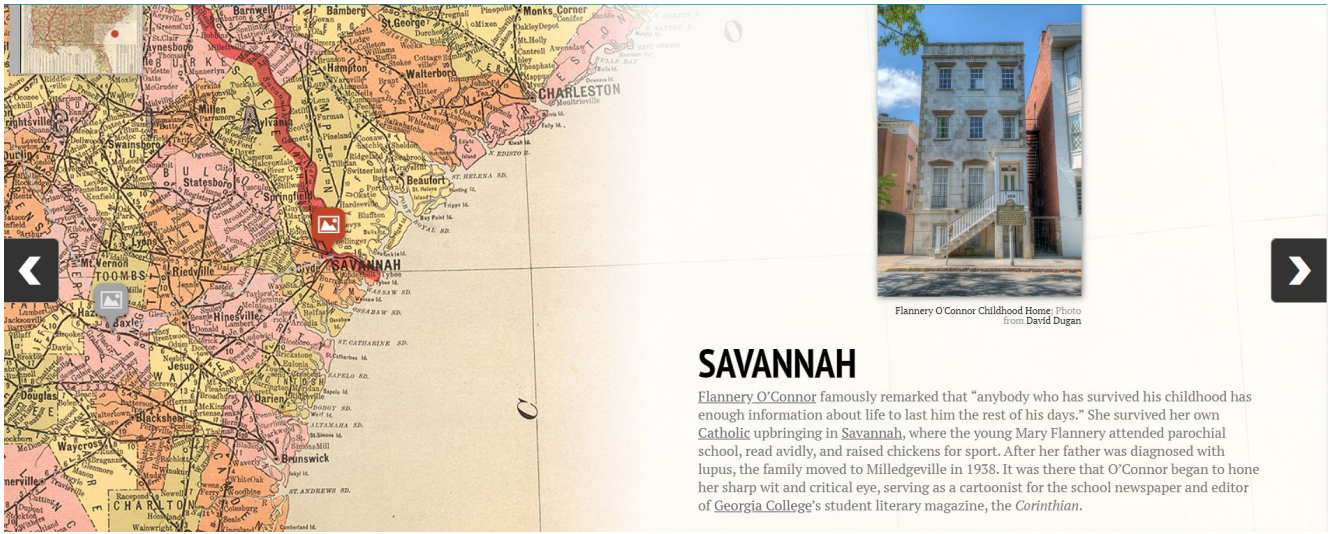
So how does it work?

- A StoryMap functions like a slideshow, but with map abilities and markers. Let's see an example below! This was created by the Georgia Humanities and is titled the "Southern Literary Trail." Let's click through together.
  https://www.georgiahumanities.org/southern-literary-trail-story-map/



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Okay. What do I need to get started?

- A computer and a keyboard
- An Internet connection and web browser like Firefox, Chrome, etc
- A Google account (email)
- Some images (optional)
- A story/an idea

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What makes mapping so important?

- StoryMaps allow you to visualize a space and understand its varying identities, history, and meanings.
- Mapping also allows marginalized communities to map their own history and space, reclaiming their "place."

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Okay, now let's see it in action!

- Follow our tutorial along here: https://www.loom.com/share/f1f761a22d0a487f92f03b8d41f6e1d8?sid=f3b1b133-095f-4437-bac1-73e70127cce1

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Creating Your StoryMap JS Project

To start, you will first need to navigate to the following URL:
https://storymap.knightlab.com/
To begin making a project, click the green button that says 'Make a StoryMap'.

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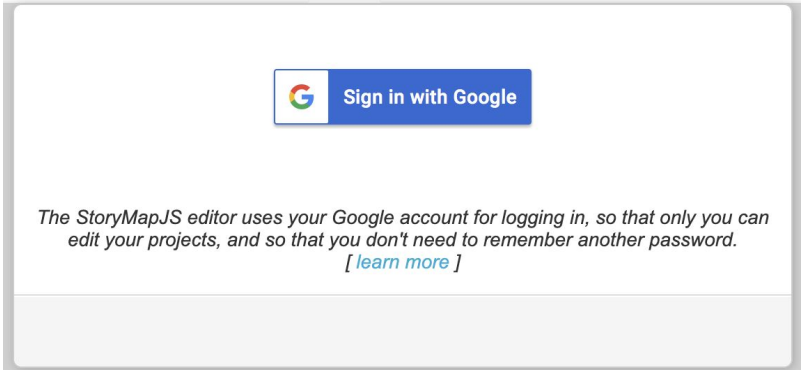
Sign in with Google

You now will be asked to sign in to Google. This is because StoryMap JS stores the projects you create to your Google account. It is safe to sign in to Google using the StoryMap JS website.



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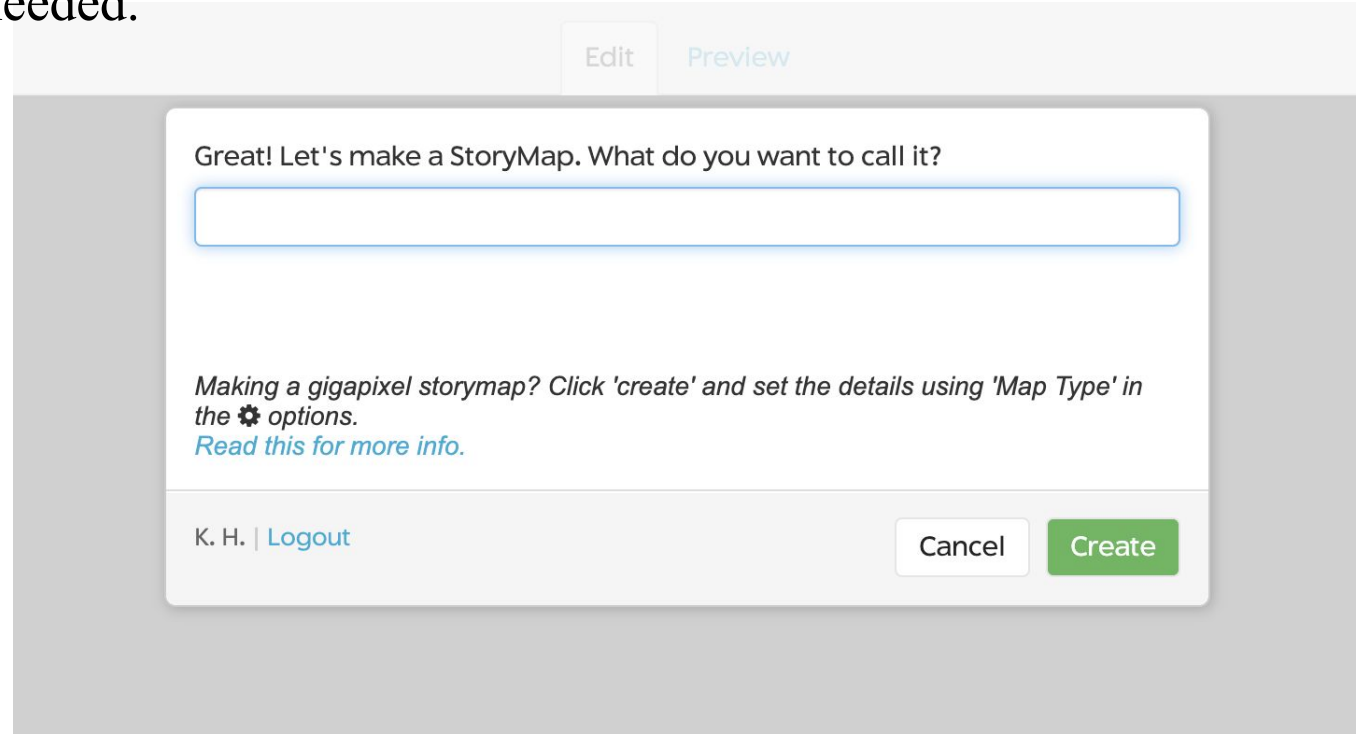
Name your project

Now give your StoryMap a name. This can be changed later if needed.



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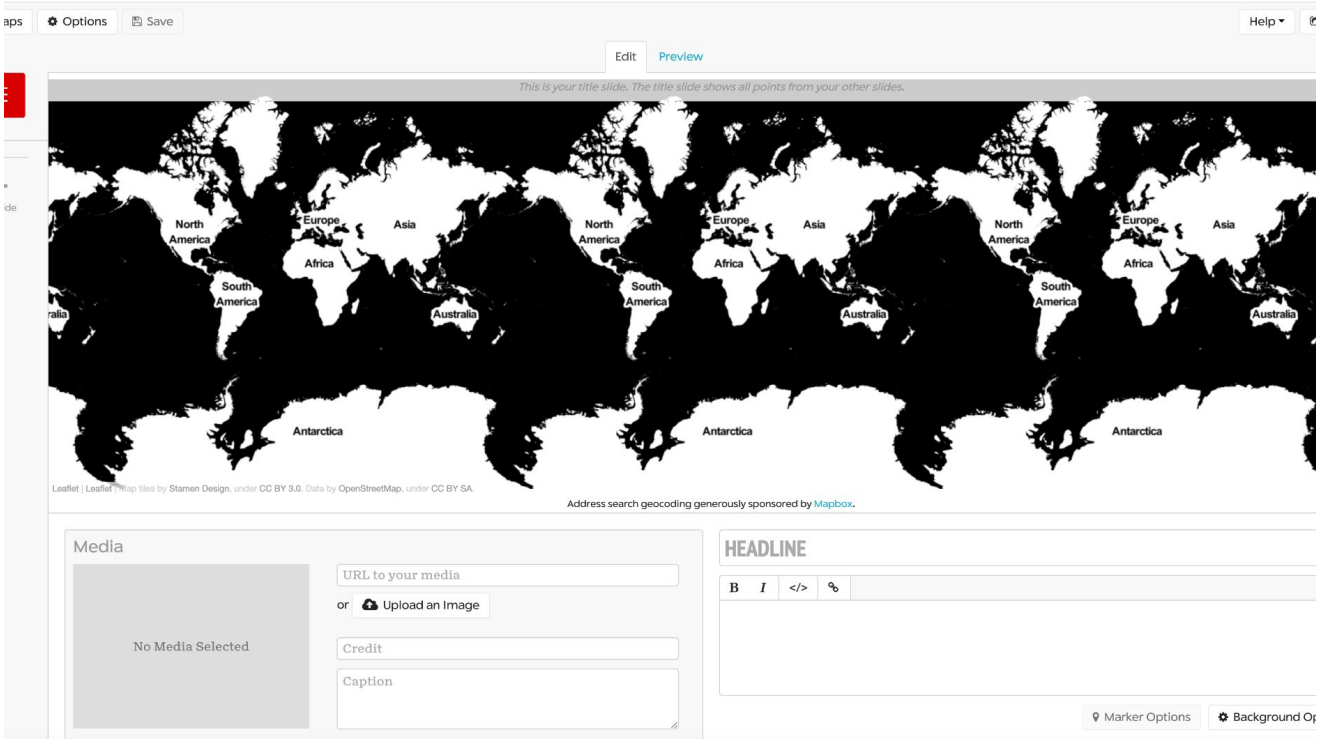
Exploring the StoryMap screen

You will now see a screen like in the image below; we will now explore each part of StoryMaps' interface together in greater detail.



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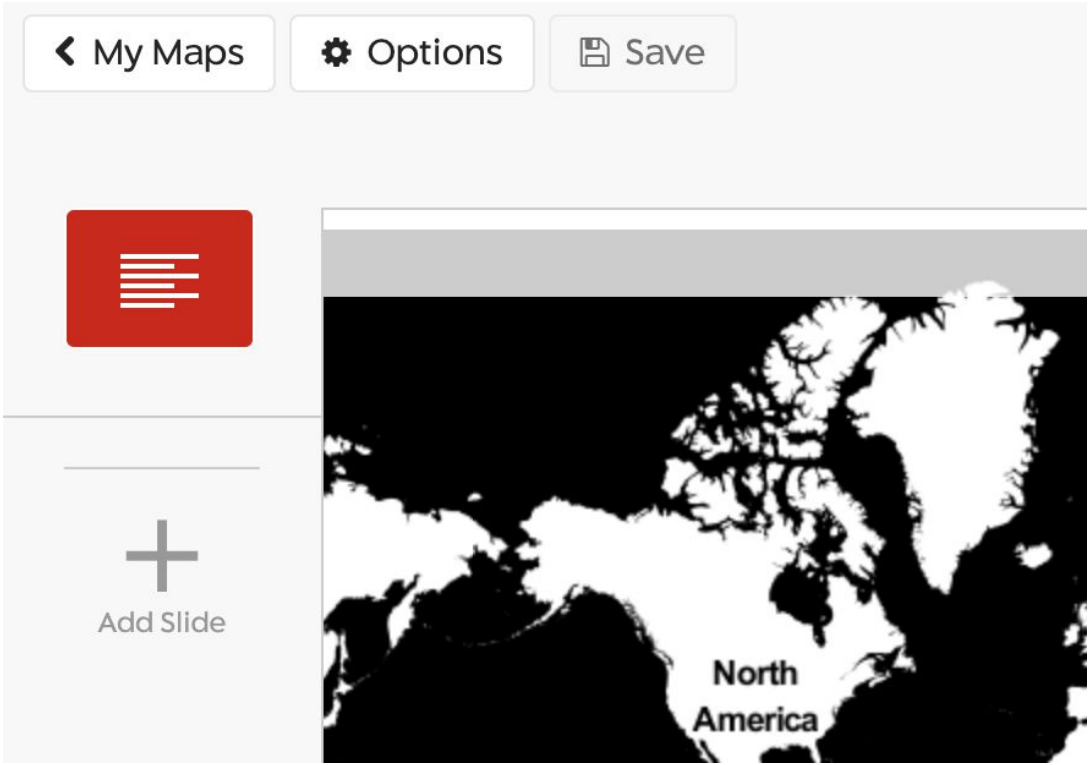
Exploring the StoryMap screen

In the upper left-hand corner, you will see 3 buttons at the top:

- My maps
- Options
- Save



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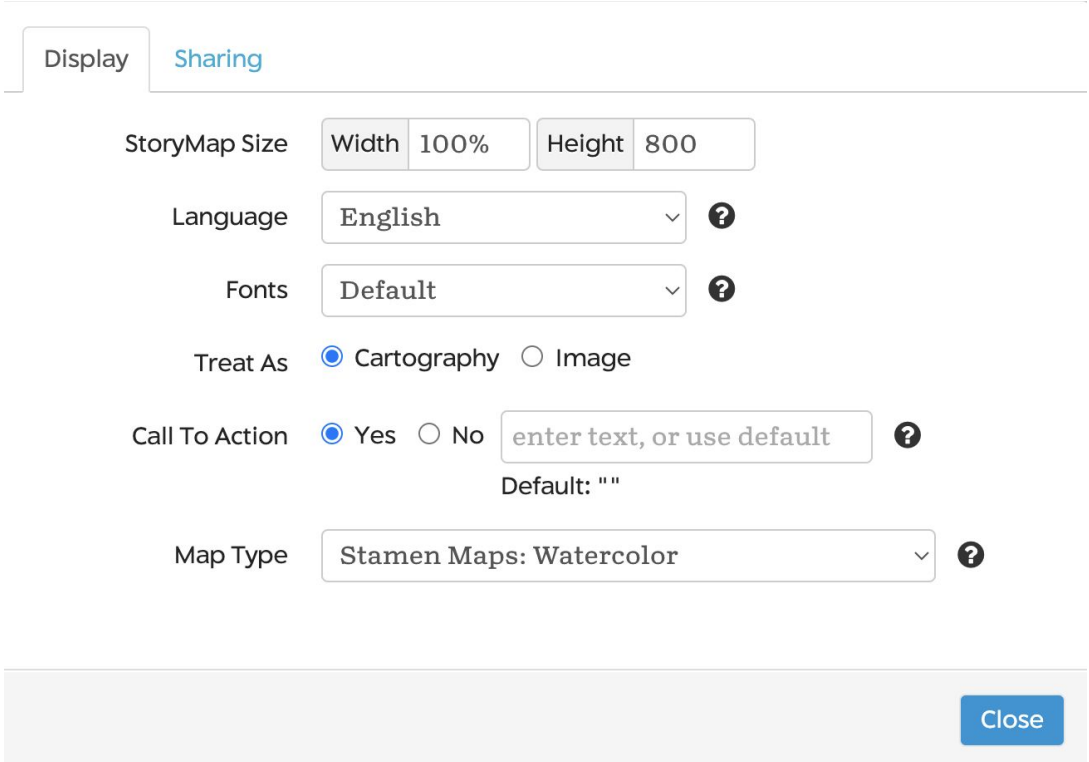
Exploring the StoryMap screen

In the upper left-hand corner, you will see 3 buttons at the top:

Clicking **'Options'** will bring you to a screen like that on the right. You can change the language, font, and how your map looks. We will change how the map looks later in the tutorial.



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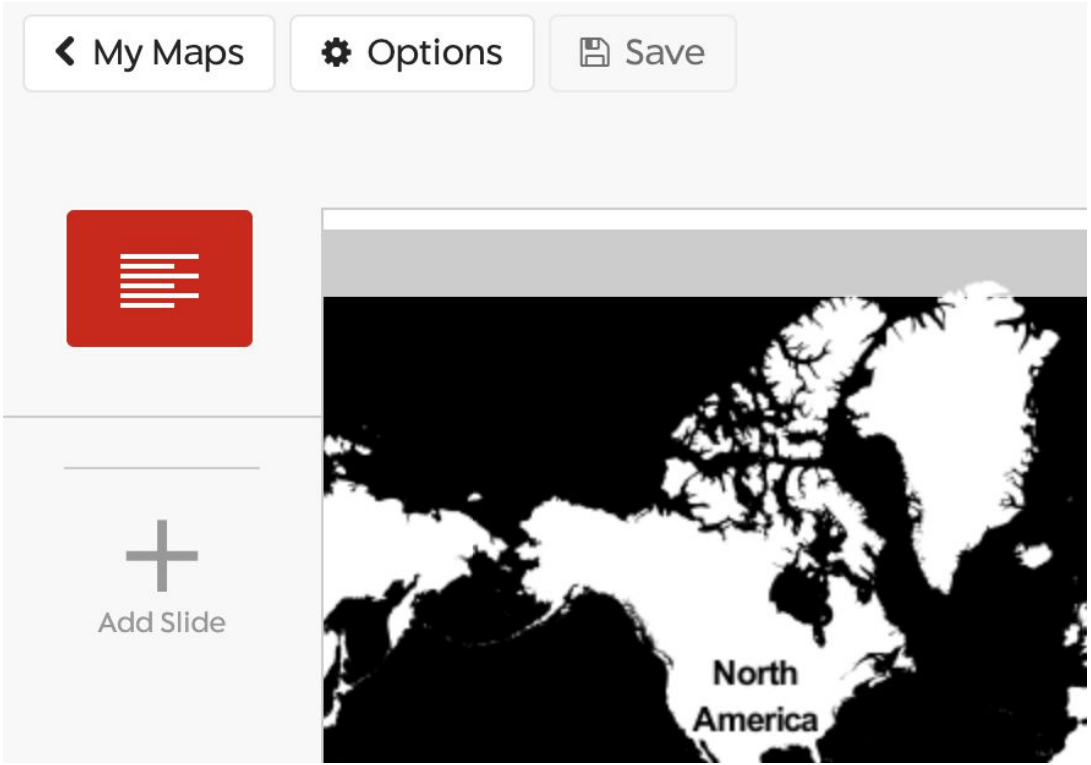
Exploring the StoryMap screen

In the upper left-hand corner, you will see 3 buttons at the top:

Clicking **'Save'** will save what you have created thus far. Clicking the button will not bring up another page or menu, and the 'save' animation is a little subtle. You can save as much as you need to!



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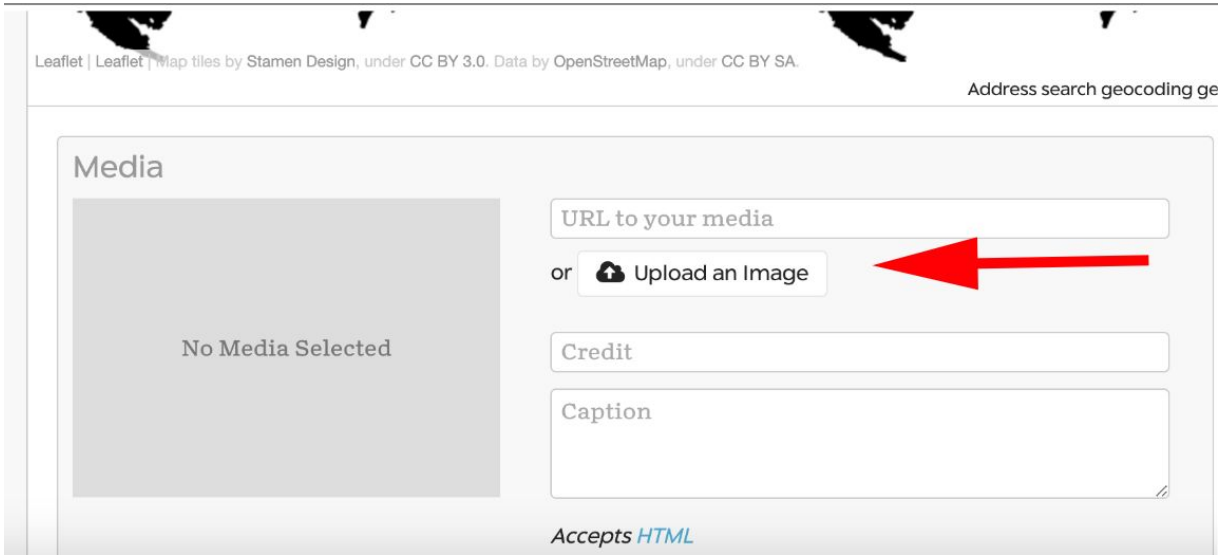
Exploring the StoryMap screen: Images

If we directly look below the top menu, on the left-hand side, you will see the 'media' section. To add a photo to a slide, click 'Upload an image'. Click this button, and a new window will open. You can now select an image from your computer. You can change this photo at any time by going through the same steps.



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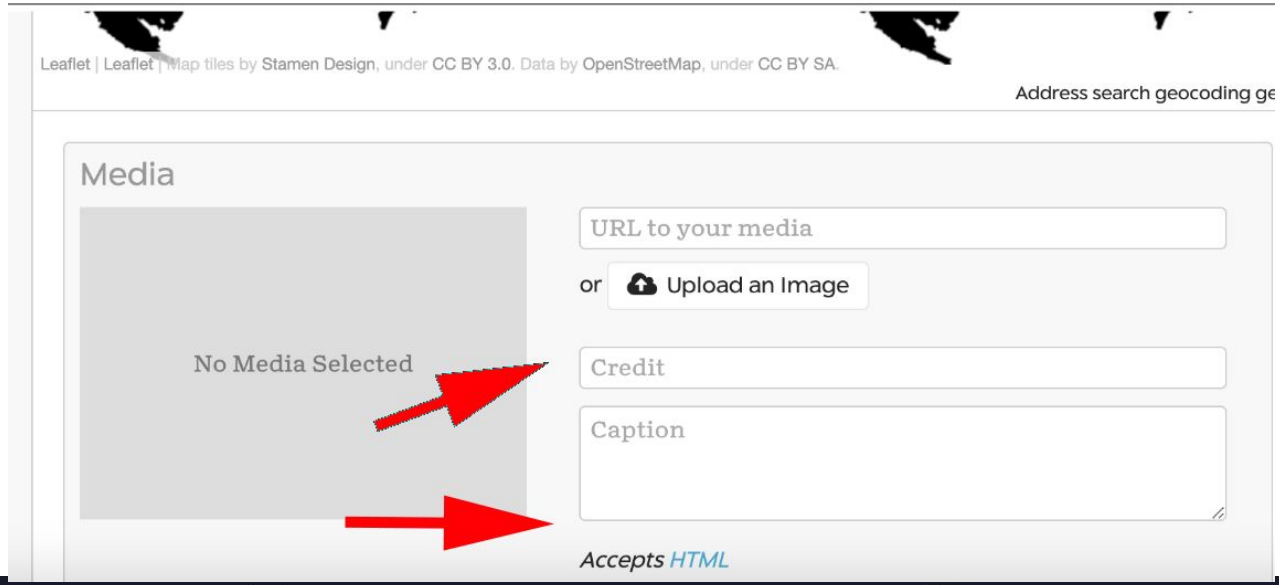
Exploring the StoryMap screen: Images

You can add a credit to the image, such as who took the photo or where the image was first published. This credit will appear in small text beneath the photo in our project. A caption for the image will also appear in small text on our slides.



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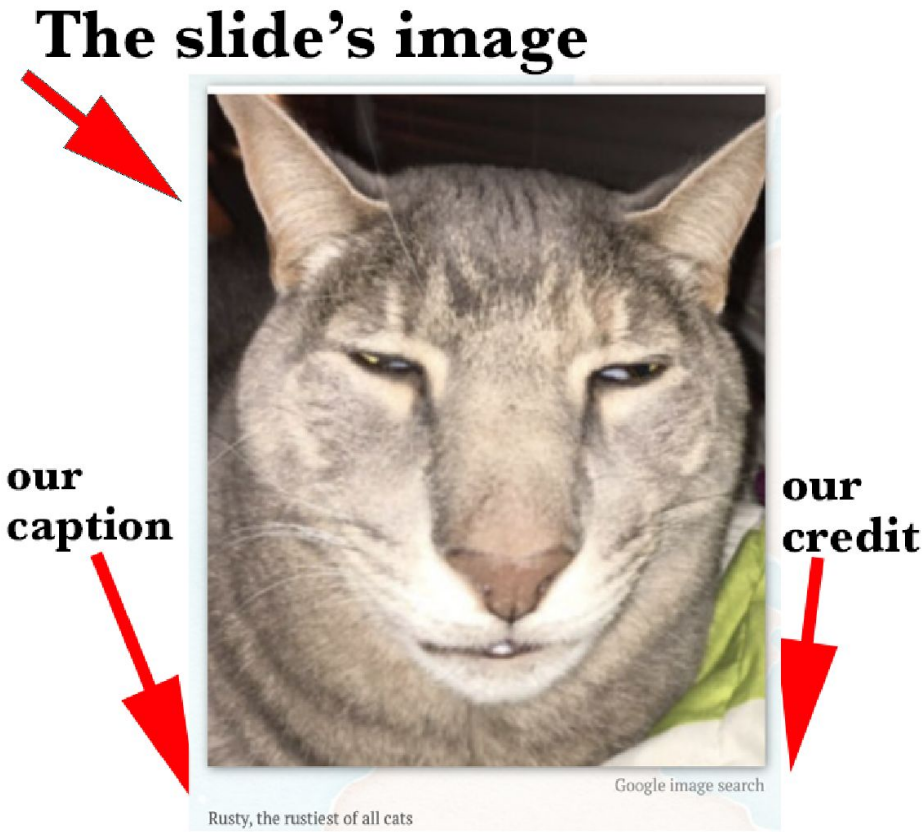
As you can see, the caption and credit text is quite small. The caption could be used to describe what the image visually looks like, for example, if you choose to give the image a caption at all.

The larger text for our slide will be addressed shortly in this tutorial.



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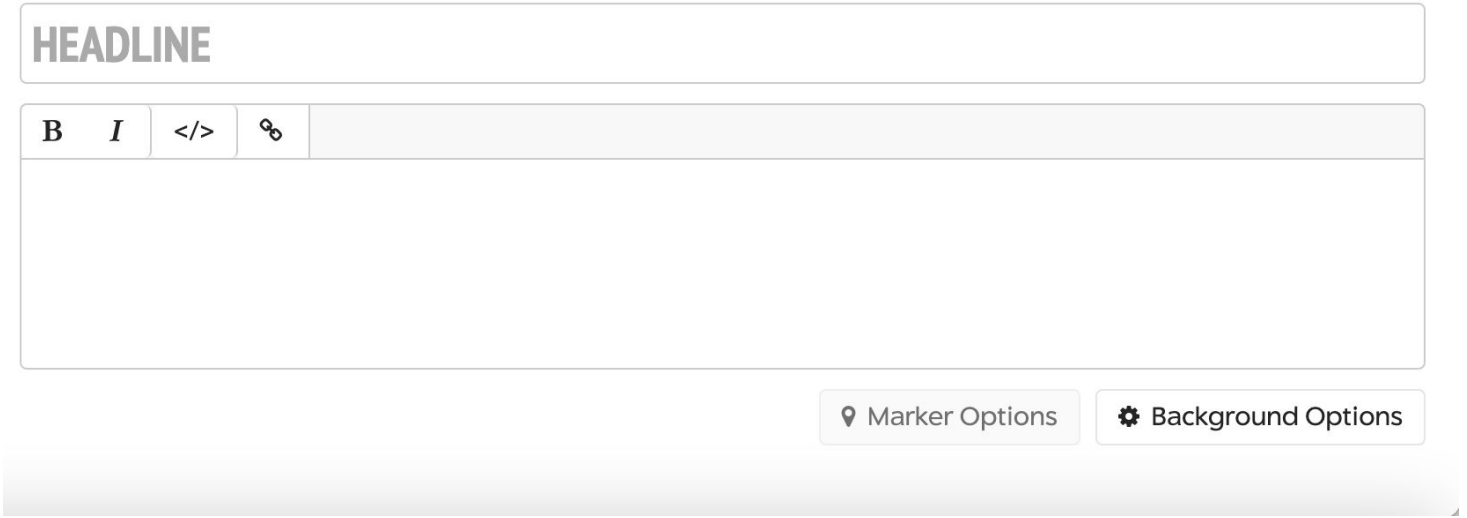
Exploring the StoryMap screen: Text

If we turn our attention to the bottom right of the screen, we will see some text fields. One reads ‘Headline’ and the other is blank. This is where we will put the text that tells our image’s story.



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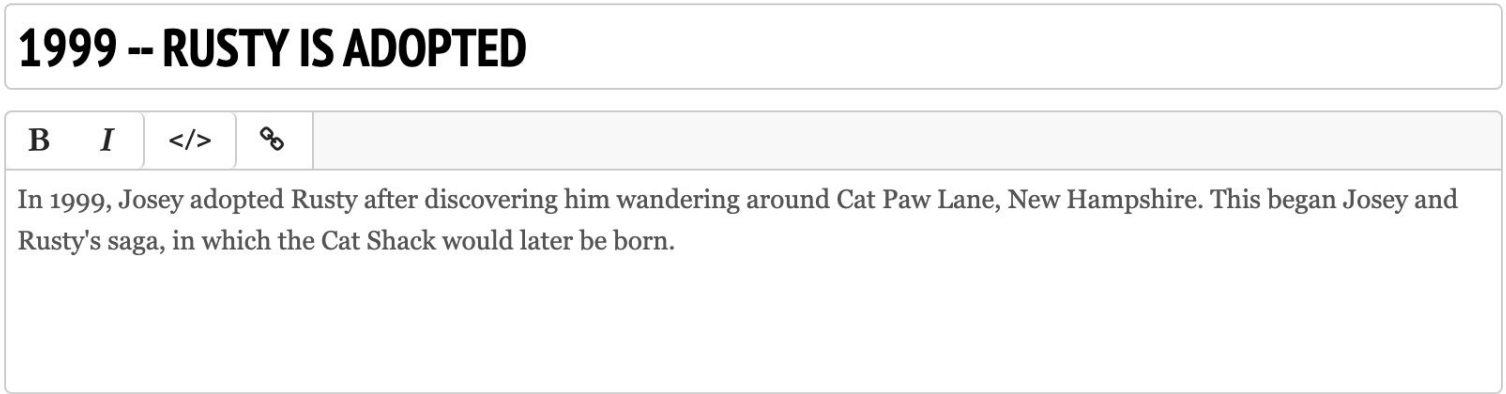
Exploring the StoryMap screen: Text

In my example – which is about the travels of a person and their cat – I have entered a date and short blurb into the headline section. In the larger text section directly below the headline, I have begun to talk about the event that I described in the headline (in this case, the cat being adopted).



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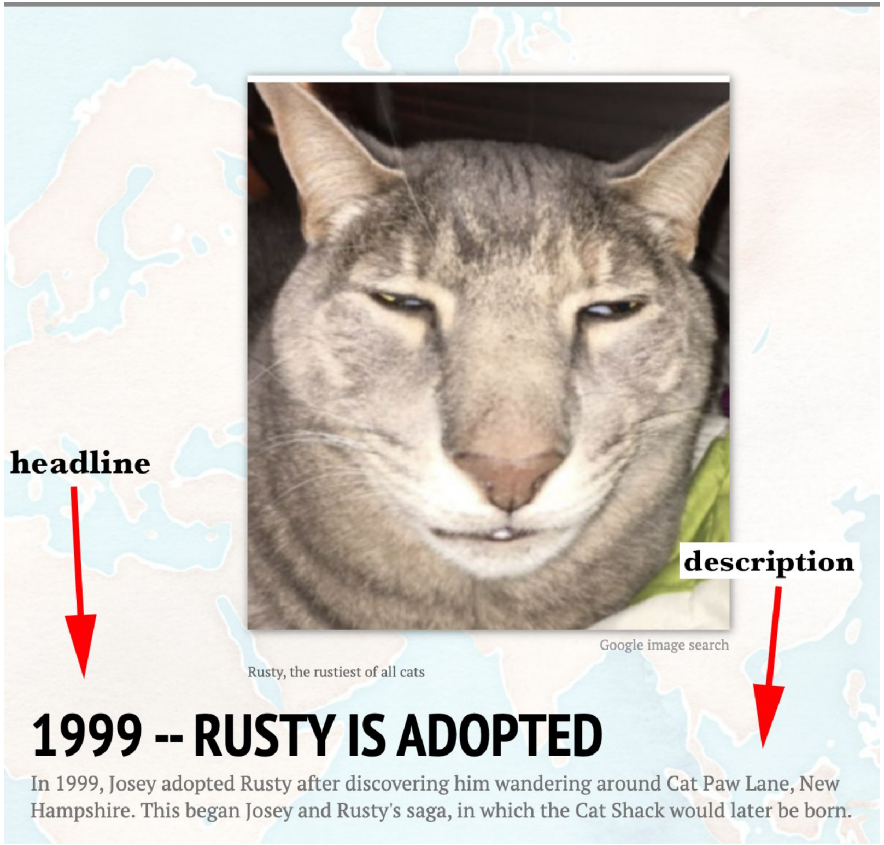
This is what the preview text and description will look like to people viewing our project.

You can add as much text to the headline and the description as you need, and also **preview** what the slide will look like when live on the Web. We will check out the **preview** option shortly.



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Exploring the StoryMap screen, continued

Below the headline and description boxes, you will see two more small buttons: Marker Options and Background Options.

Clicking these two buttons are optional and will change how your project looks. We will test out these two options further in this tutorial.

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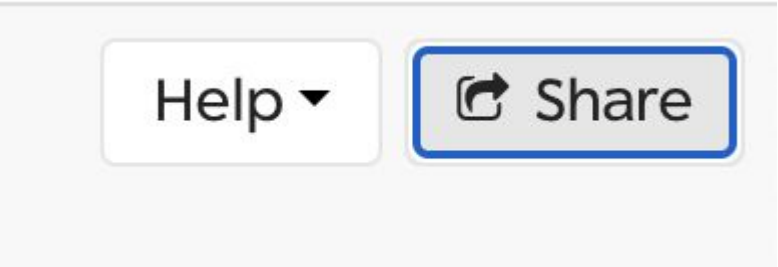
Exploring the StoryMap screen, continued

In the upper left-hand corner, you will see a Help button and a Share button. Click 'Help' will provide you with some links you can click on if you choose, including a forum where people can ask questions.

Share will be an important button that will allow us to put our project online and allow other people to see it. Sharing our project will be at the end of this tutorial.



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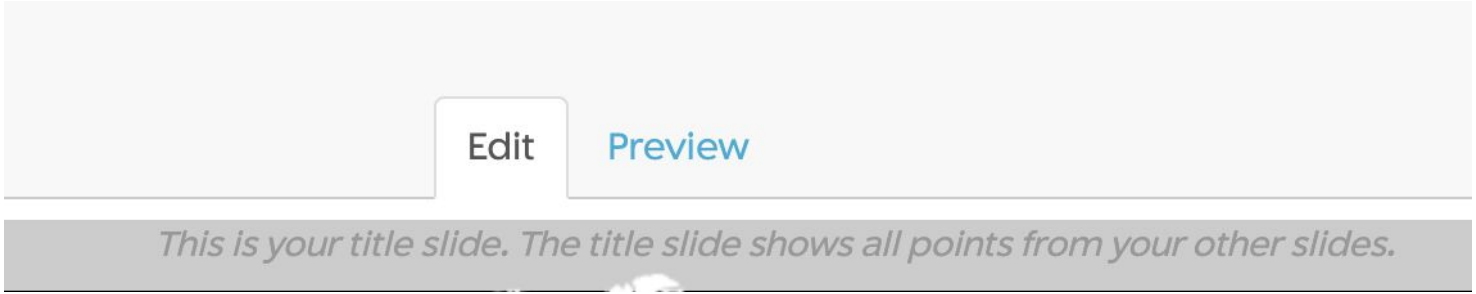
Exploring the StoryMap screen: Edit/Preview

The last part of the page we need to look at is in the top-center: the Edit and Preview tab. You can freely click between these tabs. 'Edit' is where you will be adding images, text, and geotags, while 'preview' is what your slide will look like on the Web.



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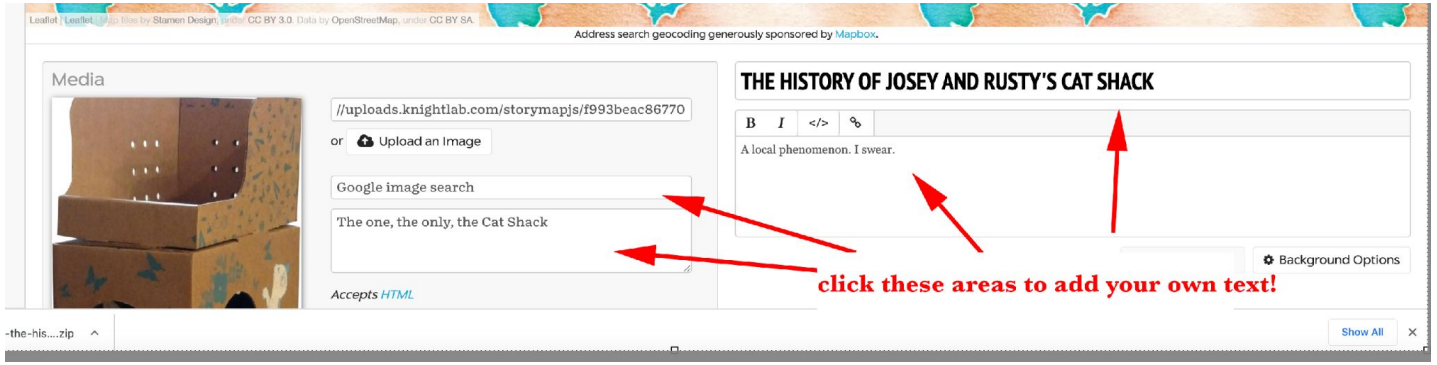
Making the title slide (slide zero)

Now that we have explored each part of the page, let's make a slide.

Your very first slide is the title slide. This is where you may want to introduce your project. Think of the title slide as like the cover of a book: pick out a picture that represents your project, give it a title, and a brief description. You can also add a background if you want by clicking the 'background options' button below the description text box. The background will only be visible on the title slide and completely optional.



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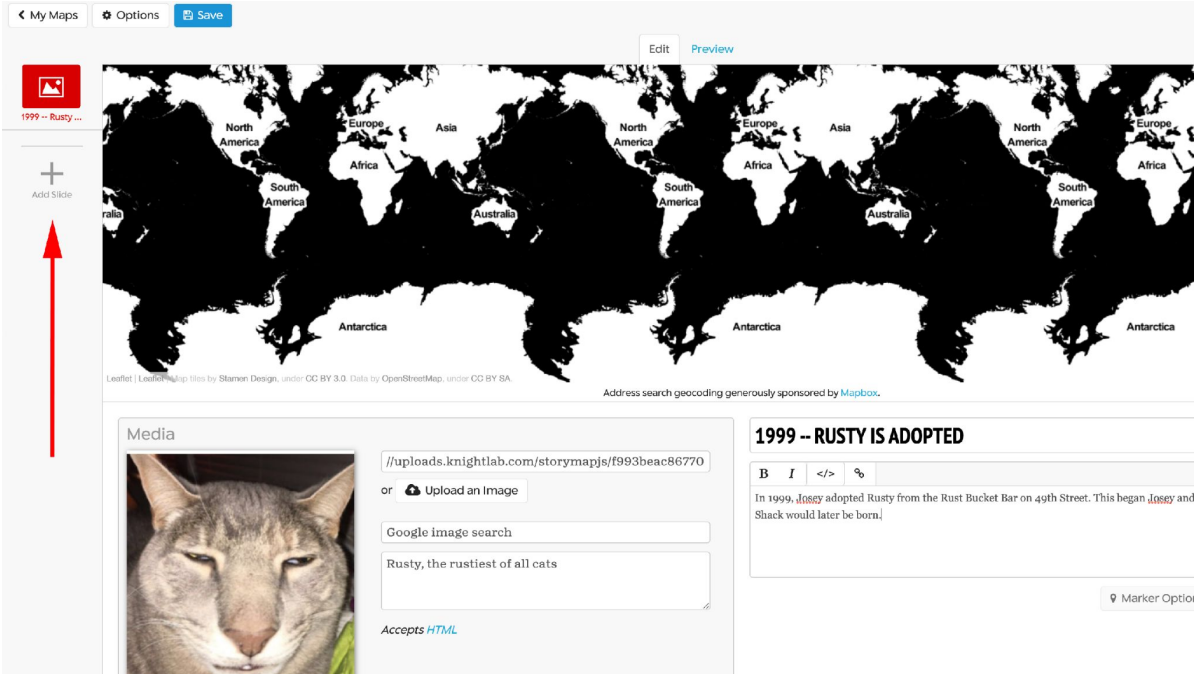
Adding more slides

Now we need a second slide where we will begin adding content. On the left-hand side, click the plus (+) icon to create a new slide.



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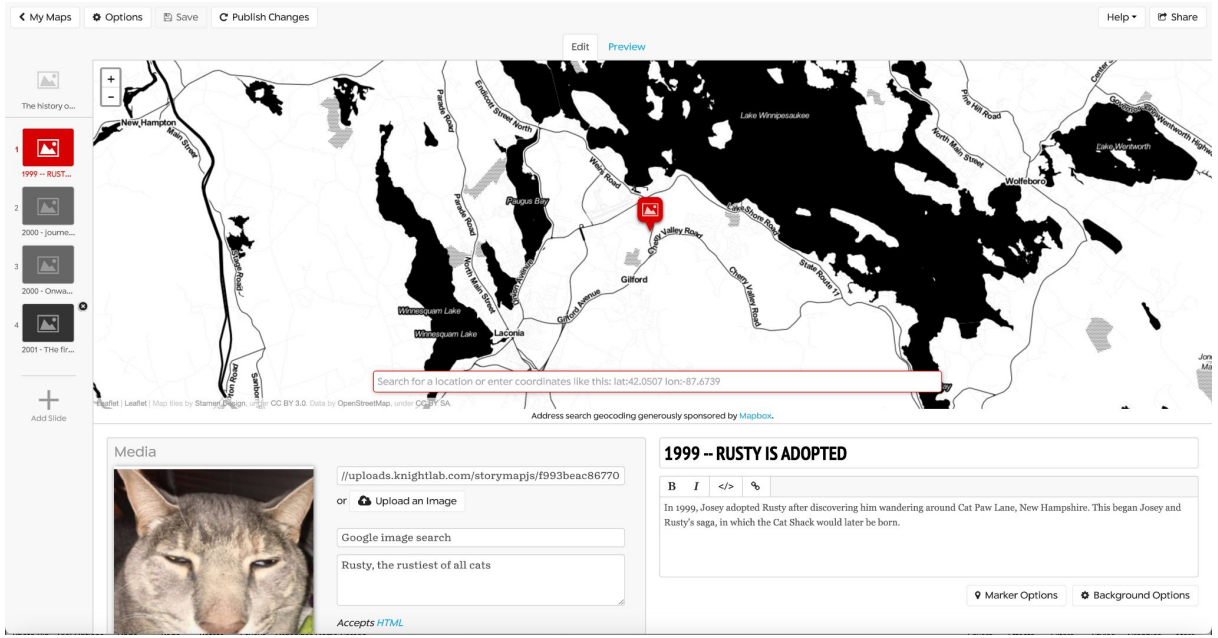
Adding content to slides

Slide 2 is where your project's story will begin. If your project is about someone's life, you might start with their birth. In my project, I am describing the fictional adventures of a person and her cat. Your project does not have to be linear, like a timeline; StoryMaps is a wonderful tool for documenting space and place.



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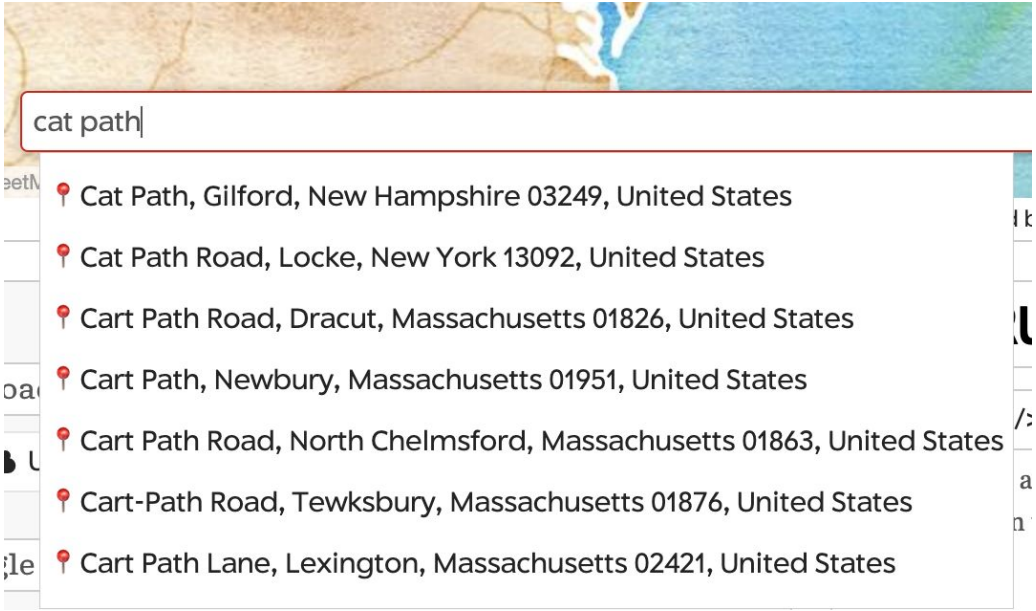
Adding content to slides – geotags

StoryMaps features a geotagging feature that allows you to associate a place with each slide, each individual person, artifact, place, etc. In my example, the story begins with Rusty the cat being adopted in New Hampshire. I began by typing in 'Cat Path Lane' and then selected the address from the menu. This now adds this geotagged location to both this slide and our larger project. Geocoding tags are optional but a useful way for viewers to understand and interact with your story.



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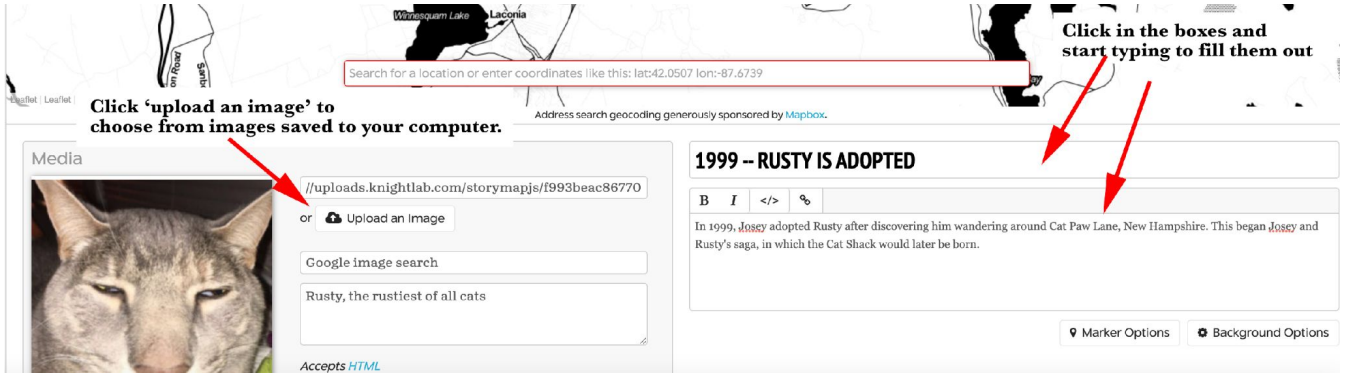
Adding content to slides (images and text)

Adding images and text is a bit of a review, but that's okay! On each individual slide, we can also upload a picture and fill in other text.

To upload an image for the slide, you will see a button the left that says 'upload an image'. Click this, and a new window will open.

You can now select an image from your computer.

On the right side of the screen, you can input information about the image (the previously mentioned image credit and image caption on the screen's left side and the headline and description on the right side).



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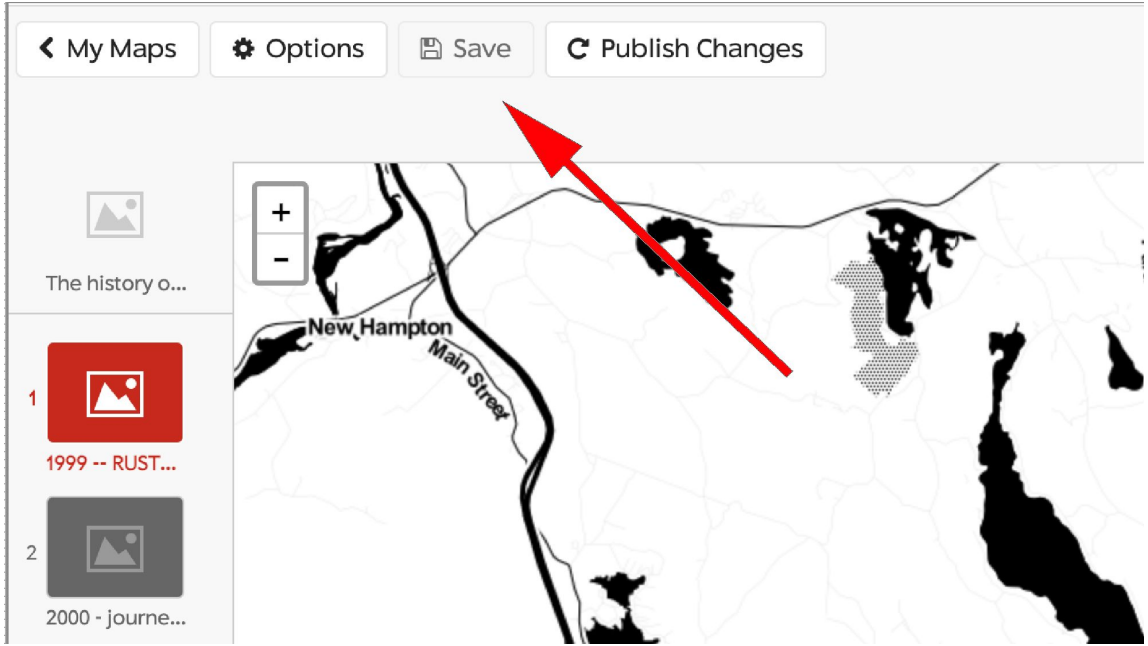
Saving our work

Let's go ahead and save our work. Navigate to the top left of the screen and click 'save'. You can save at any time, as much as you need.



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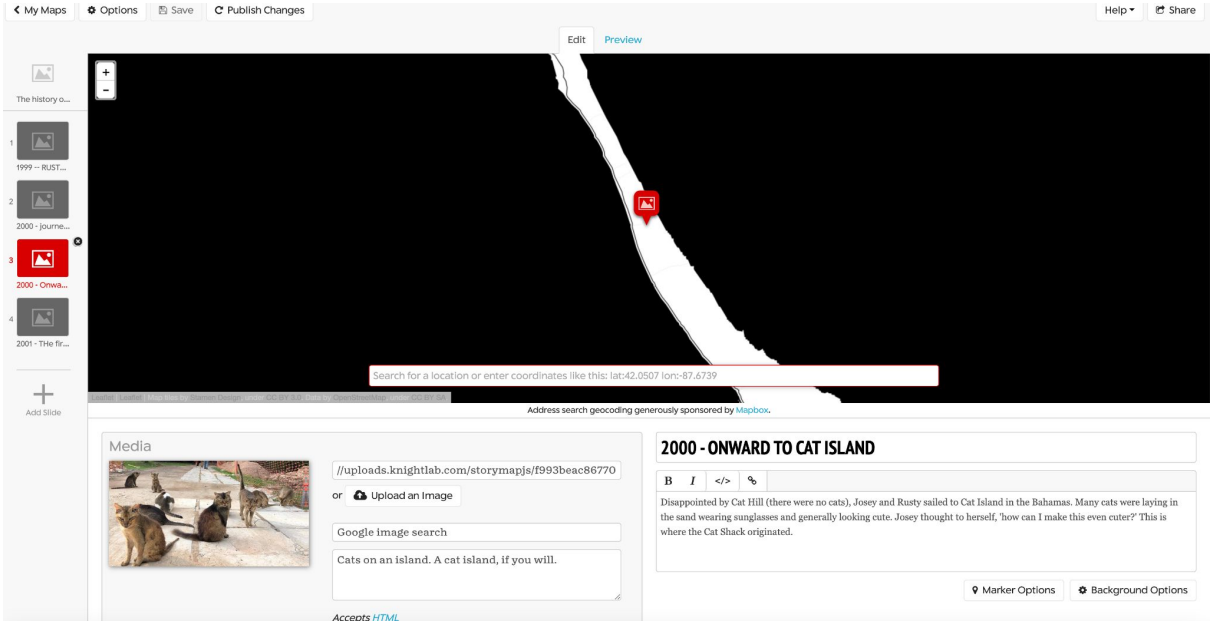
Adding another slide

Now we will continue making our story by clicking that plus sign in the left-hand menu. StoryMap slides all follow the same structure except for slide zero (your title page/book cover). How much or how little information you want to add to each slide is up to you. Whether you want to add a geolocation tag is also a choice you can make.



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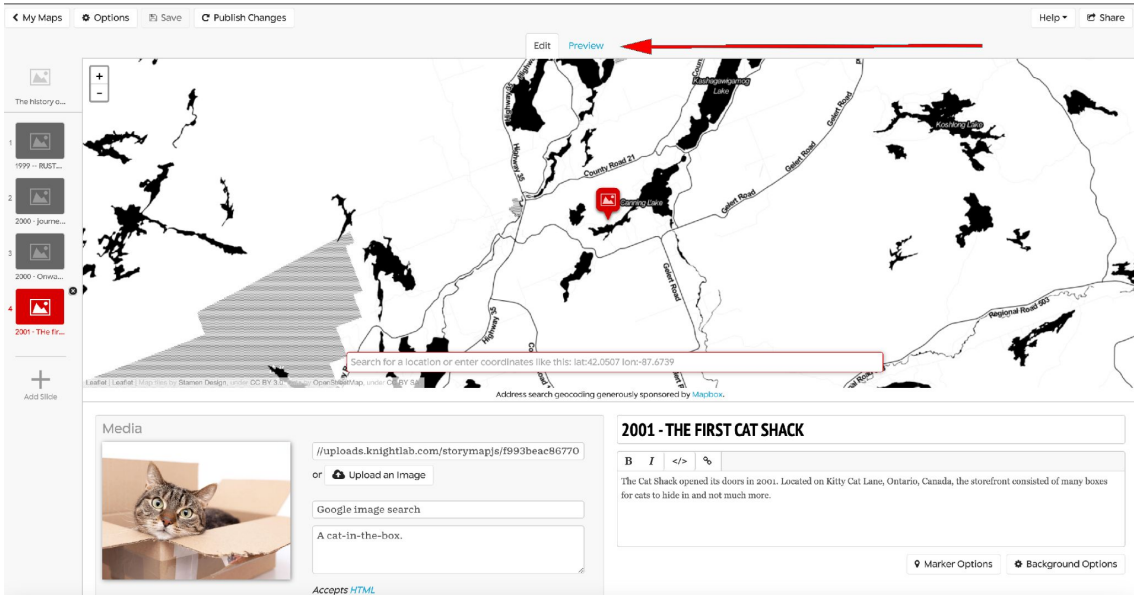
Previewing our project

What will our slides, and our project in general, actually look like on the Web? To view a preview, look in screen's center, near the top, for the 'preview' tab. Clicking it will show you want the selected slide will look like when you publish it.



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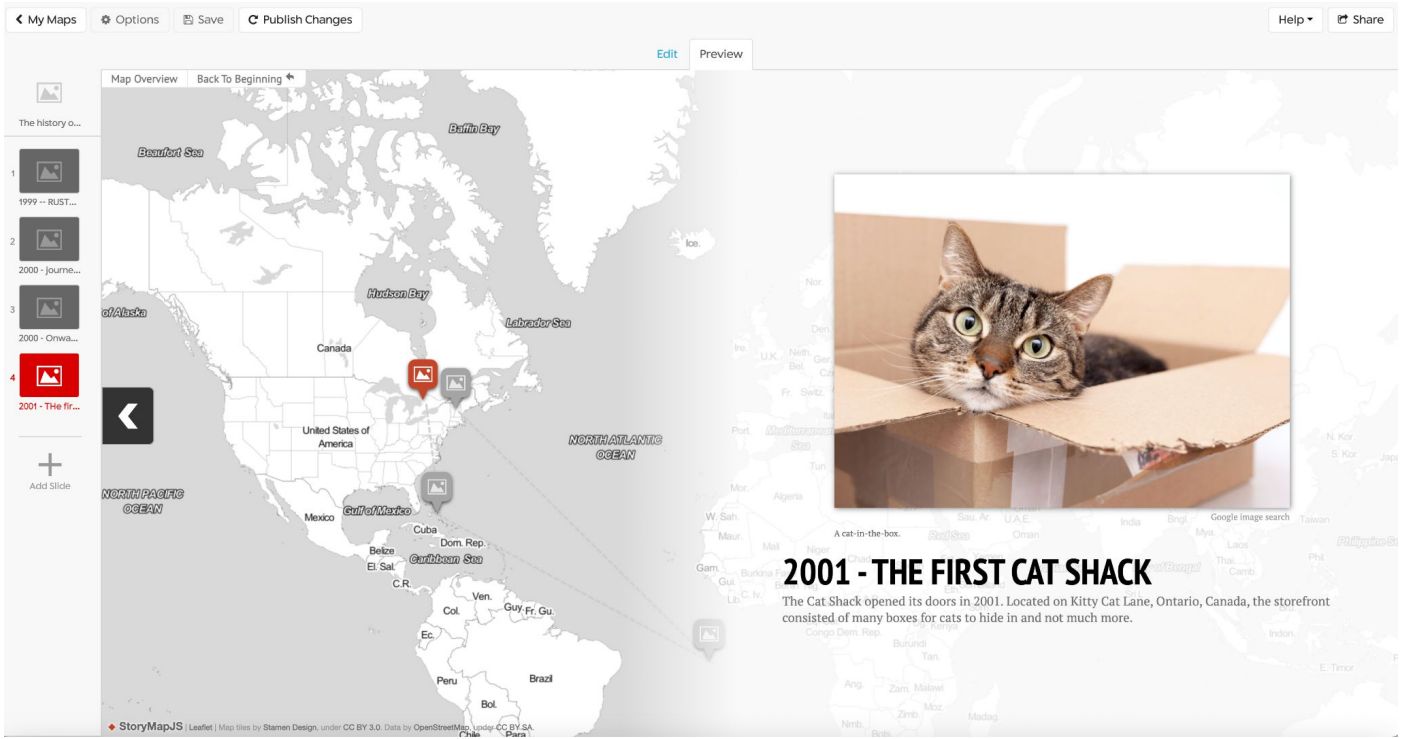
Previewed slide (example)

The slide below is being previewed; you can see how the text looks, and what your geotagged map looks like as well if you choose to use this feature.



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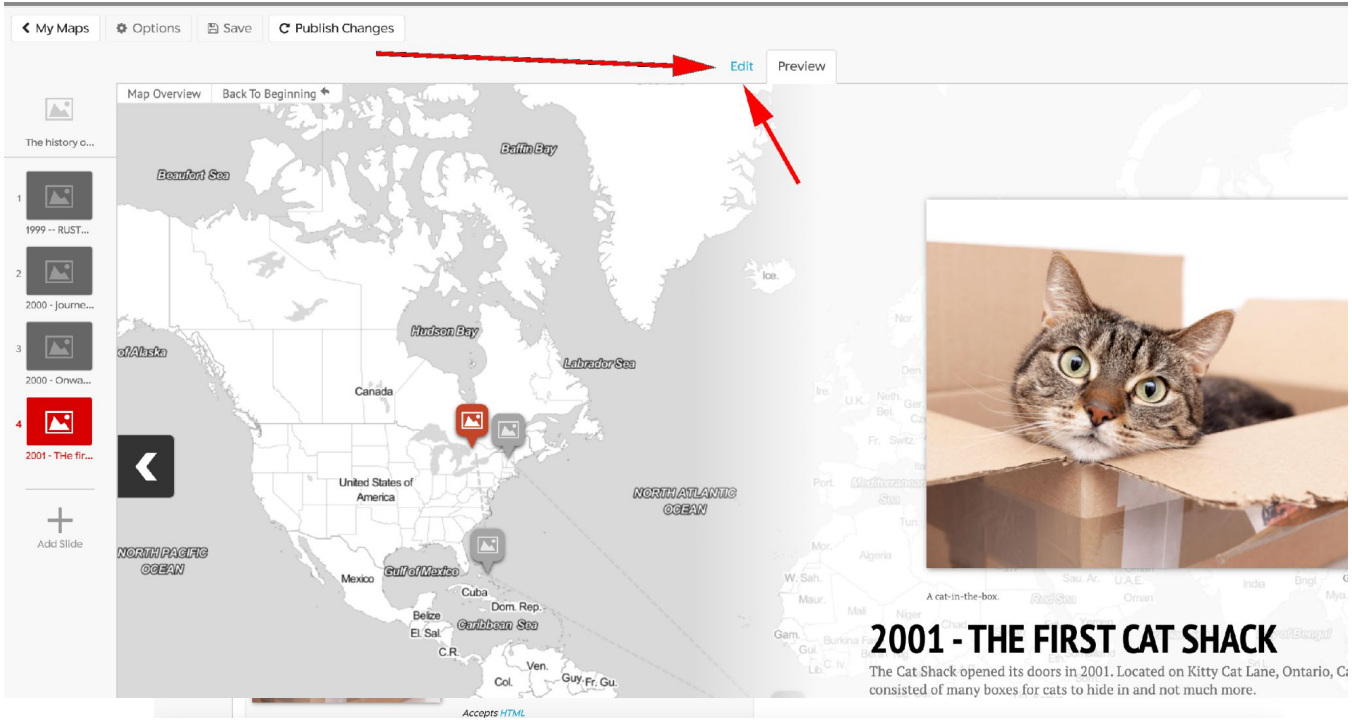
Previewed slide (example)

To return to editing your slide, click the ‘edit’ button next to ‘preview’. This will take you back to the editing menu.



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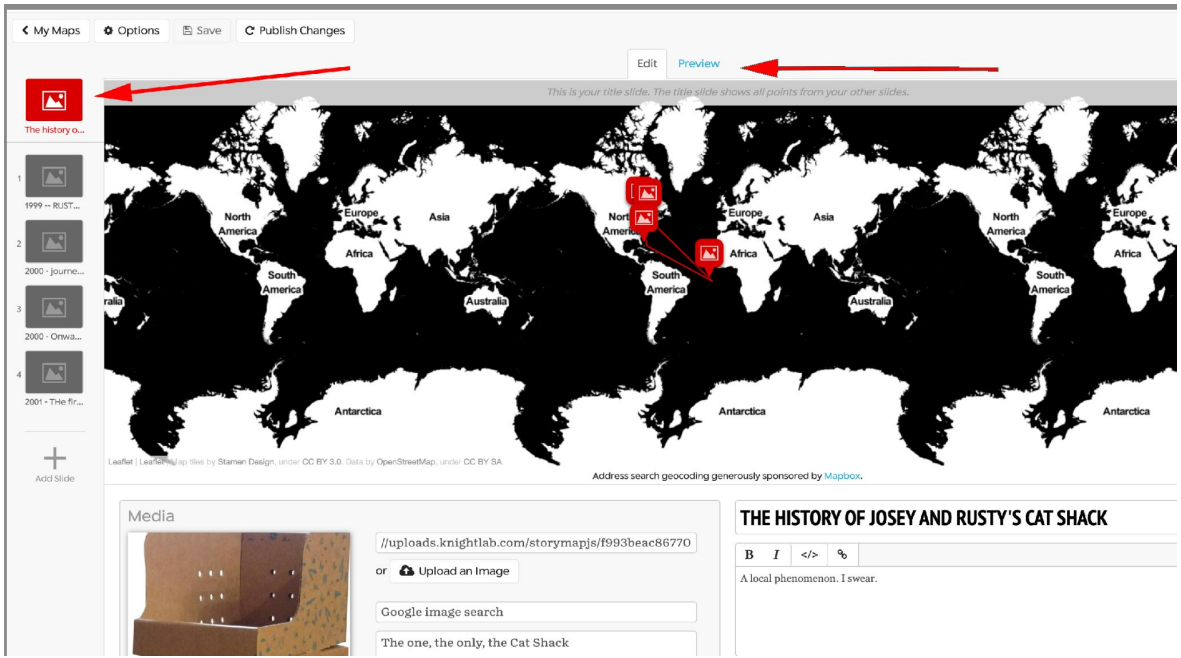
Previewing the entire project thus far

To preview what our entire StoryMap JS project looks like at any given time, click to the first slide, that **title slide** – it's in **red**. Once you have selected the title slide, click **preview.**



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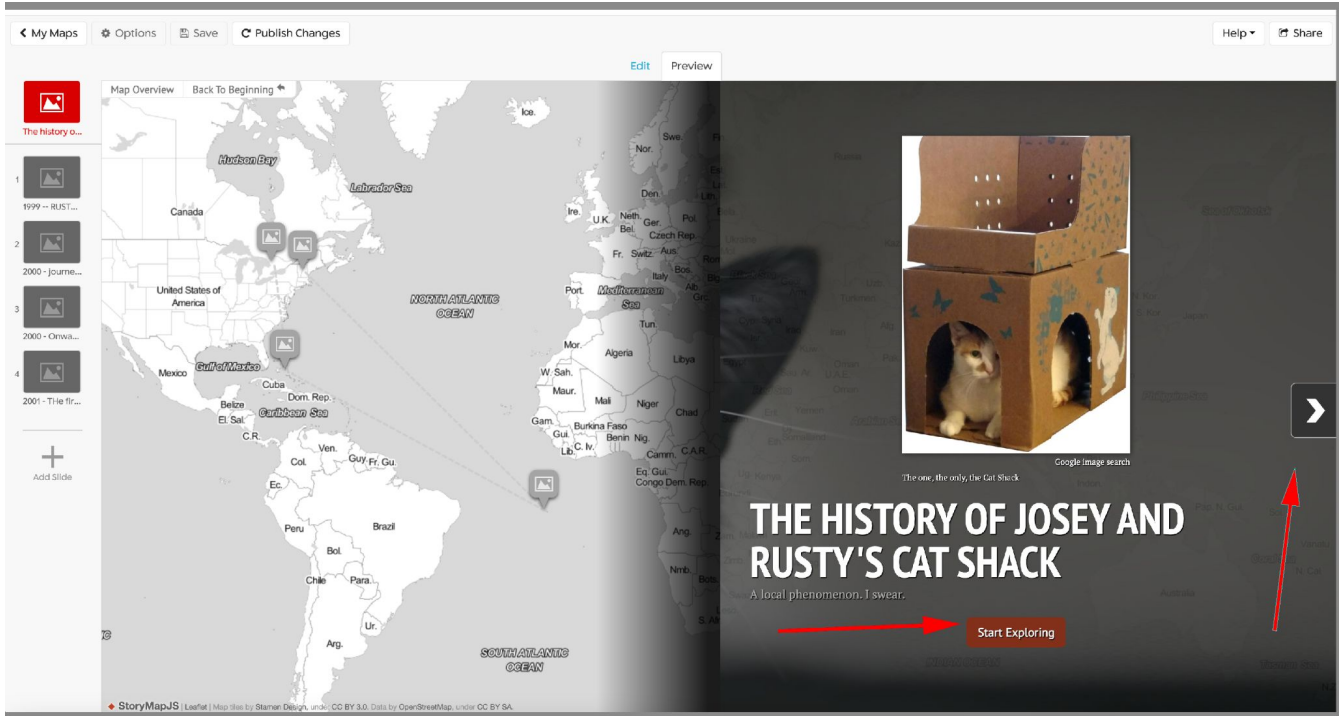
Previewing the entire project thus far: navigation

To navigate through your preview project's pages, click the arrow on the right part of the screen, or click the red 'start exploring' button.



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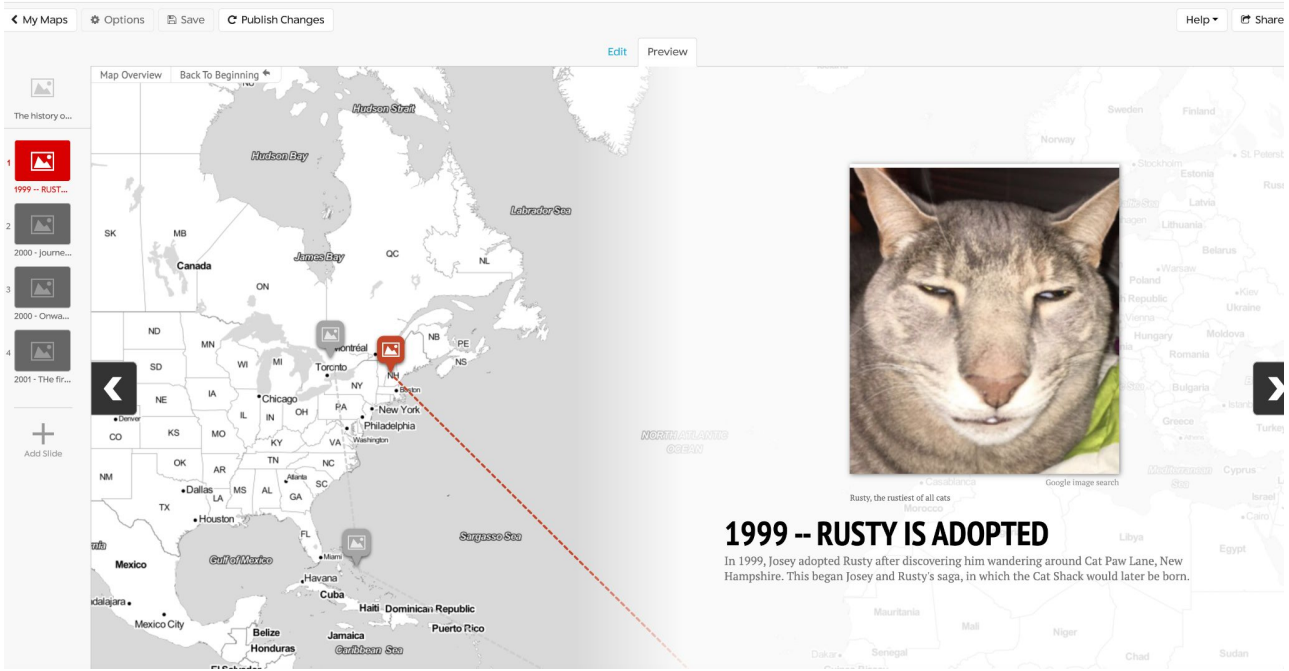
Previewing the entire project thus far: navigation

Clicking 'start exploring' or the arrow will bring us to our first slide in our project! Using the arrows on each side of the screen, you can go back-and-forth between slides like pages in a book.



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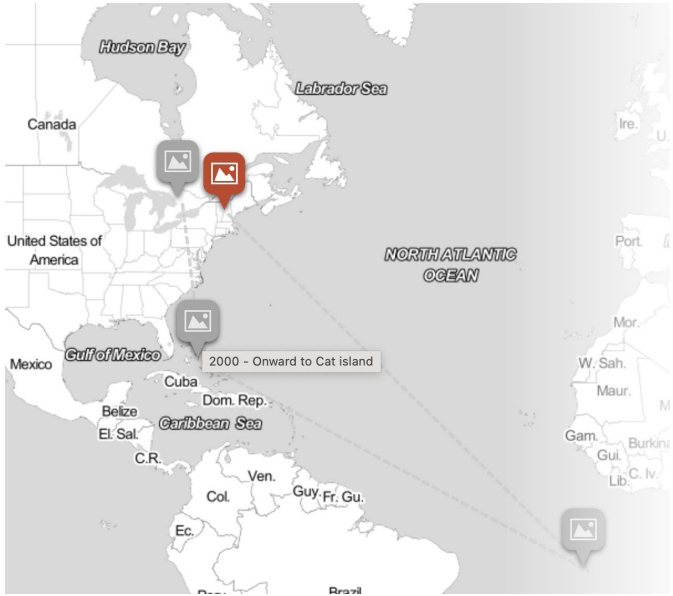
Previewing the entire project thus far: navigation

However, you do not have to use the buttons to flip through the project like a book. You and viewers can click the geotag bubbles on the map to be brought to the slides associated with each tag. This is another interesting way StoryMap JS structures and presents your information.



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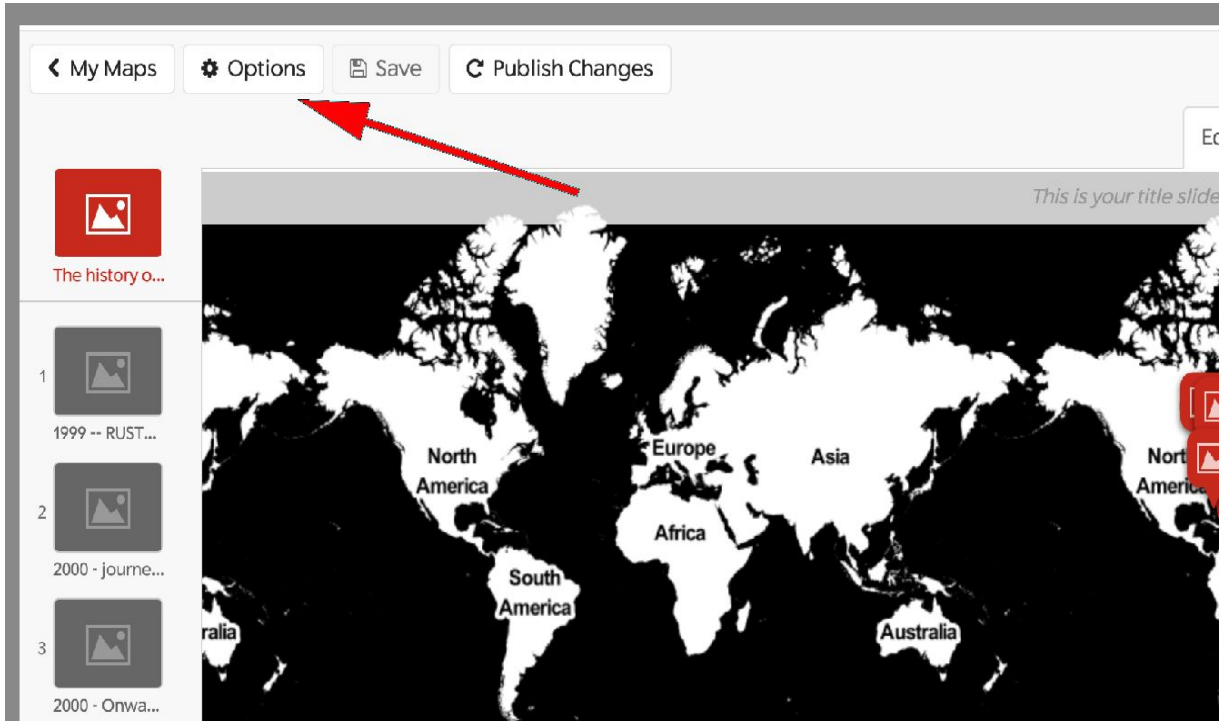
Some optional choices

By the save button, in the upper left, you can click the 'options' button. This feature is completely optional, but you can alter how your StoryMaps project looks by using Options.



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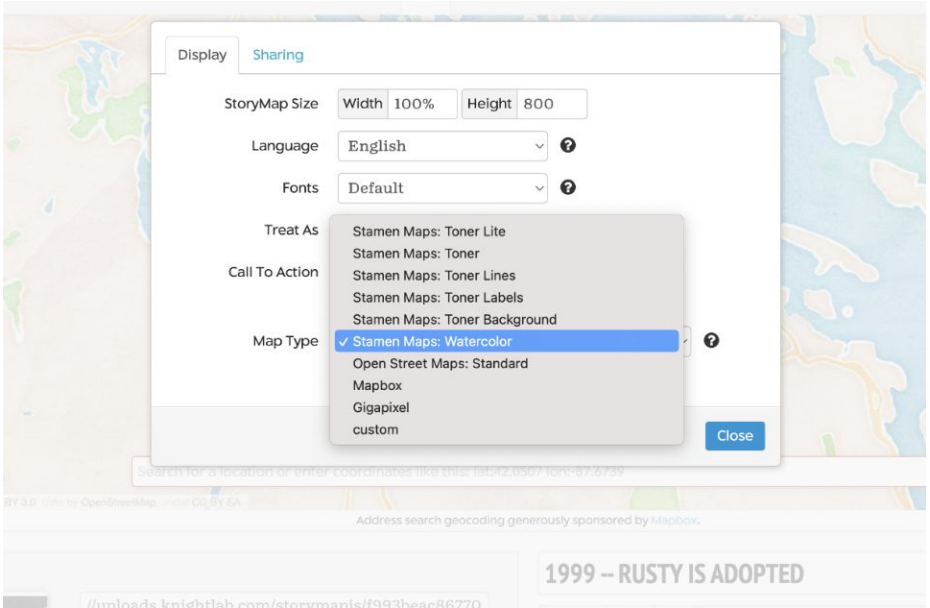
Some optional choices: what are they?

For the intents of this tutorial, the only real option you may want to experiment with is the map type, which will change how the map looks, fonts, and language if you want to change the language from English. Most of the time, you do not need to modify the StoryMap size or other the options.



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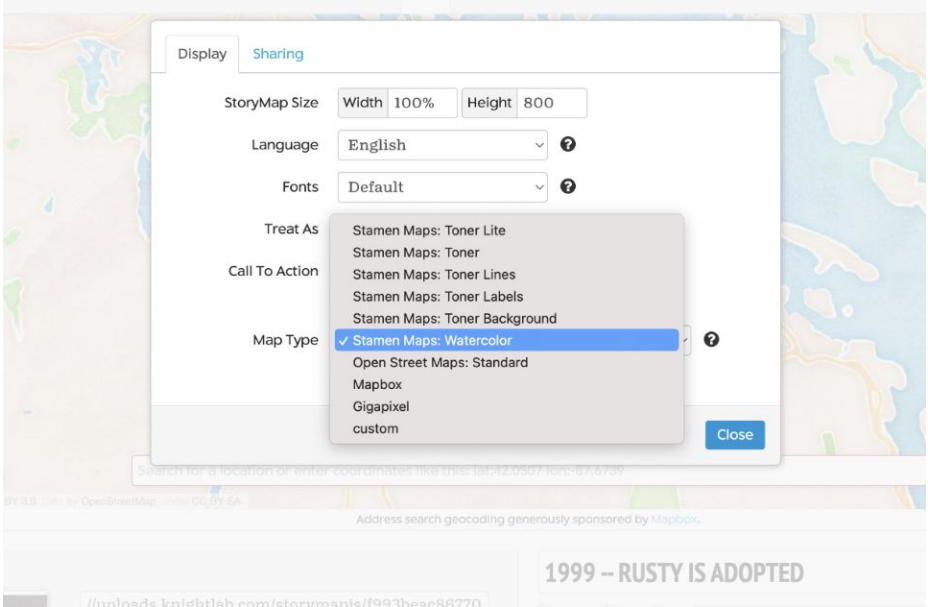
Some optional choices: what are they?

To change the font or language, click the word ‘English’ or ‘Default’; this will present you with a list of options to pick from. You can always change the font or language back by clicking on the menu again. The background map can also be altered: if you click on the map options, you can select from a list. Any of these options will change how your map looks.



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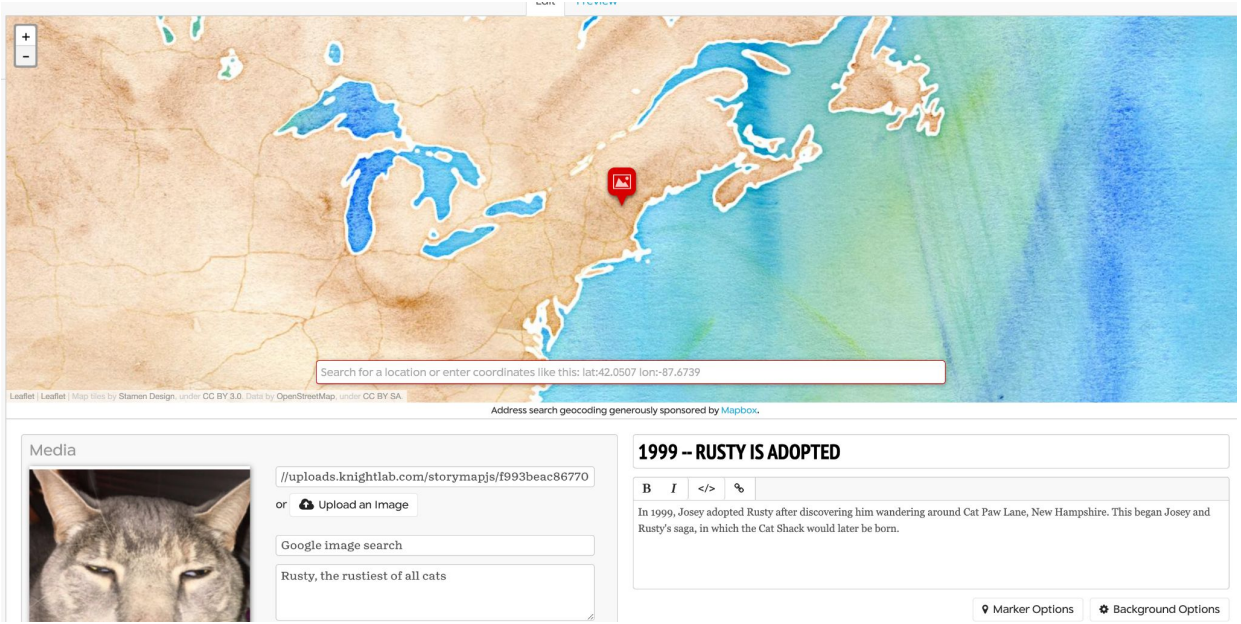
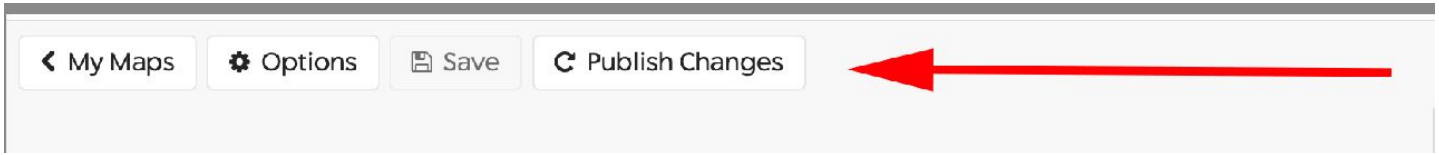
Some optional choices: what are they?

Now the map looks different: instead of a black-and-white map, we have a watercolor-style map! If you dislike how the map looks, return to the options menu (in the top left) and select from the map list again. This is the easiest way to preview your options for different maps.



Publishing our StoryMap and getting it online

If you are ready to share your StoryMap with the world, let's first begin by **Publishing Changes.** This button is located at the top of the screen next to the 'save' button.



'Publish changes' is not the same as saving; when we publish changes, we are

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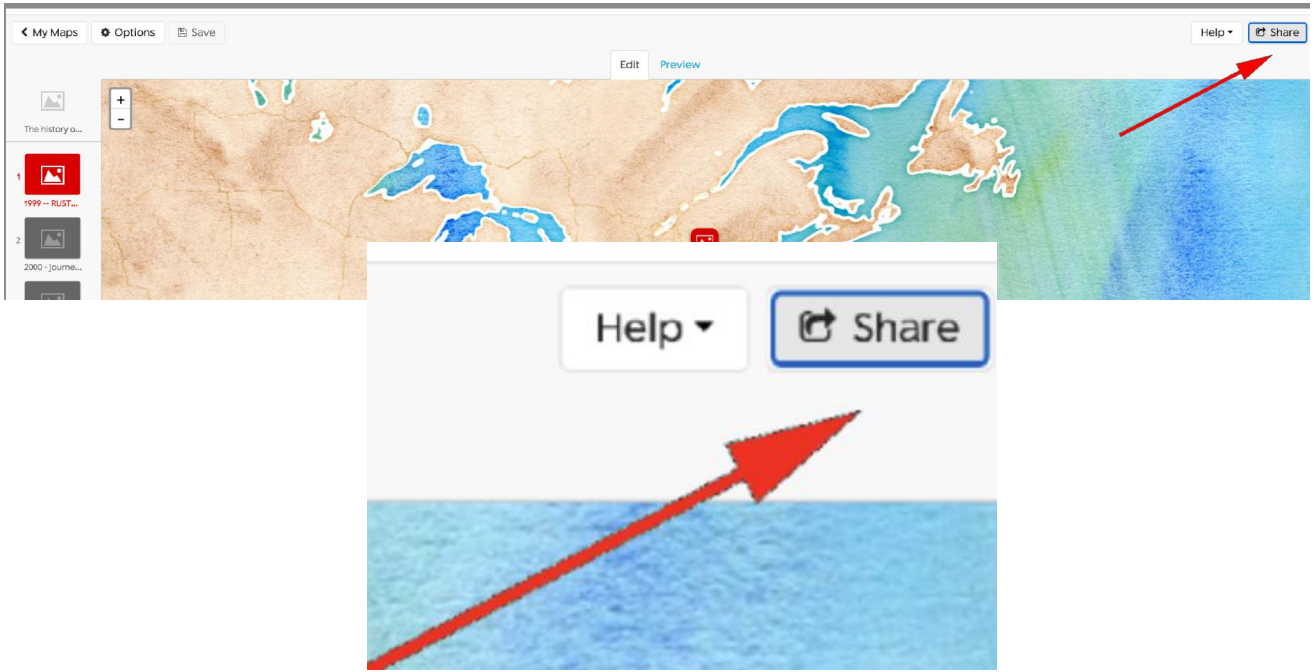
Publishing our StoryMap and getting it online

If you are ready to share your StoryMap with the world, look on your screen's top left, in the far corner, for a button that says 'Share'. It will be located next to 'help'.



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Publishing our StoryMap and getting it online

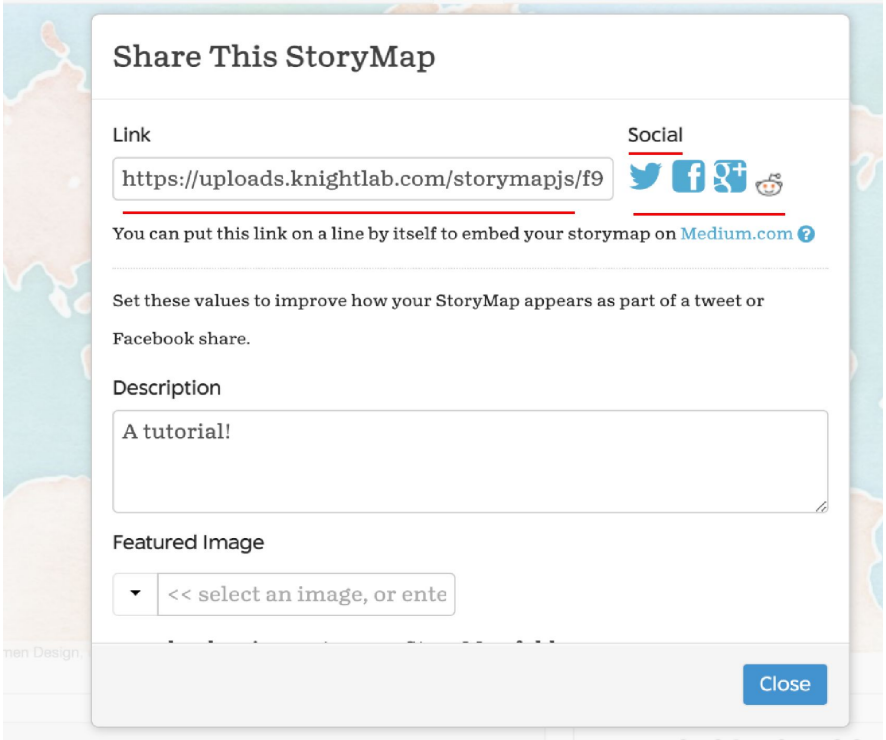
When you click the 'share' button, you will see several options in this new window. We are going to cover each, starting from the top to the bottom.

Link: Copying the text in this box provides you with the URL (web address) your unique Storymap is located at. You can link to your StoryMap using HTML on your webpage.
The code is:

```
<a href="link text">Your Text</a>
```

This is optional.

The social media buttons (the Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and Reddit icons) will post a link to your StoryMap if you click the icon and post to your social media account. This is optional.



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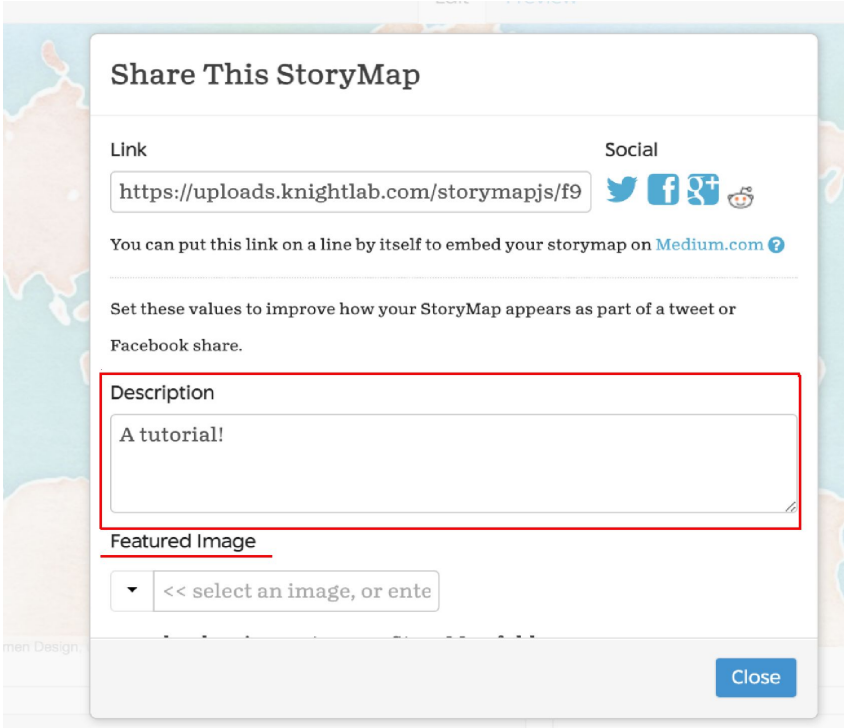
Publishing our StoryMap and getting it online

When you click the 'share' button, you will see several options in this new window. We are going to cover each, starting from the top to the bottom.

Description: You can create a description as brief or as long as you want; this text will show up if you choose to share the link via the social media buttons. Optional.

Featured Image: If you choose to post your link to social media through this prompt, you can add an image that will accompany the text. You will need to choose an image from your computer just like how you added images to your StoryMap slides.



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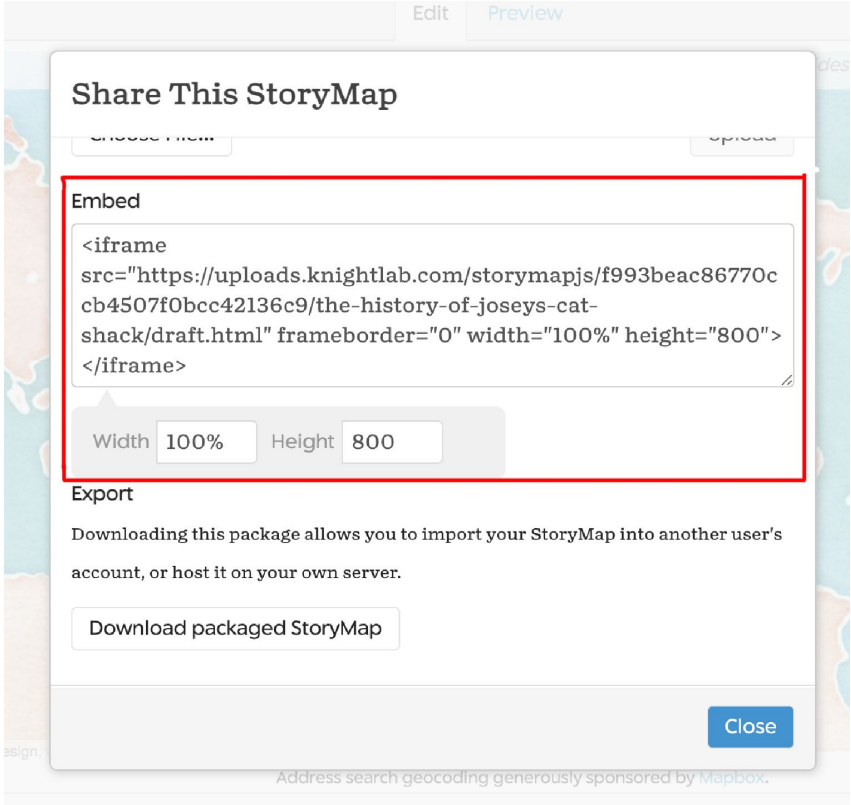
Publishing our StoryMap and getting it online

As we scroll down the window, you will see a large text block under the 'Embed'. If you copy this text and put it on a blank .html file hosted on your website, the StoryMap will appear attached to your domain name.

A step-by-step process on how to do this is covered in our Reclaim Hosting Tutorial.



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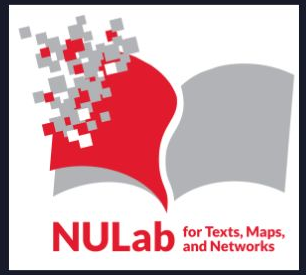
StoryMap JS: In Conclusion

StoryMap JS is a great way to visually and textually illustrate a story, idea, or journey. Its strength lies in its geocoding abilities and how easy the program is for viewers to navigate and interact with.

Customization consists of adding your own images, text, and changing some details on the interface. The entire creating process takes place online in the browser.

StoryMap JS is overall a fun and useful program that can be added to a website in order to enrich viewers' understanding of your project.



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Thank you so much for participating!

We hope you enjoyed this tutorial and presentation!

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