ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN MAP LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES
BULLETIN

GIS Trends

Story Map Builder Trends: Moving from Esri Story Maps Classic to ArcGIS StoryMaps

Abstract

In this column we discuss some of the features of the recently introduced ArcGIS StoryMaps, and the significance of this next generation tool for telling our stories

This fall I had the opportunity to instruct in a humanities course that focused on exploring how diverse media influence our understanding of space and place. Lectures were accompanied by practical workshops where students had opportunities to both observe and work with various spatial technologies and simulations.

The library's Maps, Data & Government Information Centre and Critical Making Studio were involved in several of the workshops, including one which I gave on ArcGIS StoryMaps. Students attended the workshop in our new Data Visualization lab and were given a follow-up assignment in which they were to publish a story map, selecting their own themes and content. Course prerequisites required no background in GIS or web development, and students had two weeks to complete their assignment. My role was to expose students to the potential of story maps and guide them through the essential steps involved in creating their own. Students also worked on their assignments during a follow-up session in the Data Visualization Lab.

Planning for this workshop began in early summer, when we decided to use ArcGIS Online and Esri Story Maps. When designing the workshop a key question for me, given the short time available, was whether to steer all students to the same story map template, or instead introduce diverse templates (such as cascade, journal, series, shortlist, swipe and spyglass, or tour). However, in July 2019 Esri launched a new story map product: the "ArcGIS StoryMaps" (Esri Story Maps remains, renamed as Esri Story Maps classic). This new product increased the potential of story maps design and made questions about which template to use less relevant.

This product is a significant advance. One key improvement is that users are no longer locked into one template layout. Esri's ultimate goal is to combine all the functionality of Esri Story Maps classic templates into one product – the ArcGIS StoryMaps builder tool. This change will allow more versatile and robust story telling content. While some templates (for example, Swipe and Spyglass) have yet to be integrated into the ArcGIS StoryMaps tool, the integration of classic templates into a single tool is moving ahead quickly. There have been three releases of the ArcGIS StoryMaps builder to date: in July 2019, an upgrade in August 2019, and a significant and impress-

ive release in October 2019. Eventually ArcGIS Story maps will replace Esri classic story map apps. The projected timetable is for Full Support of Esri classic story map templates to be available until July 2021, Extended Support as of July 2021; and Mature Support as of July 2024.[i]

The significance of being able to readily combine layout options in one story cannot be overstated. Other new features also enhance the attractiveness of the new ArcGIS StoryMaps builder. For example, before publishing our story map, we can now preview content on different devices, and edit content without affecting an existing published version of the story map. Some of the code behind the scenes has been upgraded to new web standards, and story map authors have more options with respect to the overall look and feel of the story. The boxcar feature adds new options which readers should explore. There are also different ways to incorporate maps within a story, including the Express Map tool. Its functionalities are definitely worth exploring, such as the single and double directional arrows, ability to create curved lines by dragging line midpoints, options for text annotations and placement of labels, ordered points numbering, line drawing and more!

Figure 1: Express Map features showing different drawing features including numbered points, double directional arrows, curved lines, and text annotation

During the past decade we have watched story maps being used in many different applications. The new ArcGIS StoryMaps builder will no doubt accelerate this trend and further popularize story maps as an effective vehicle for telling a story and linking it to place and space.

In preparing for my workshop and writing this column I found several useful sources of information.

Those who wish to know more about the intent of the new ArcGIS Story Maps builder app may find the following helpful:

Esri Training Seminar "*Meet the New ArcGIS Story Maps (Esri Web Training Seminar)* (https://www.esri.com/training/catalog/5d2f7a456b9c17664bb0078b/meet-the-new-arcgis-storymaps/) and also Esri Story Map Team Owen Evan's Story Map *"Moving to the new ArcGIS StoryMaps; a helpful guide for authors transitioning from Esri's Classic Story telling Templates"* (Updated, November 6, 2019) https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/472a6ddd582b40b58a5a6af2c30a4573

For teaching, an excellent step-by-step introductory guide (published as a story map) is "Getting Started with ArcGIS Story Maps" https://www.esri.com/training/catalog/5d49a2cb04e5cb3ac549b8a7/getting-started-with-arcgis-storymaps/. A useful supplement (though it is also in story map format, it's almost like a poster with steps and tips) is: "The Anatomy of a Story: An ArcGIS StoryMaps cheat sheet" https://www.esri.com/training/catalog/5d49a2df04e5cb3ac549b8be/the-anatomy-of-a-story/

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[i] Much of the information for this paragraph was paraphrased from : Owen Evans, Esri Story Map Team, *"Moving to the new ArcGIS Story Maps; A helpful guide for authors transitioning from Esri's classic story telling templates*" Updated November 6, 2019, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/472a6ddd582b40b58a5a6af2c30a4573

GIS Trends: Note from the Editor

Submissions and Feedback

GIS Trends is a place to share ideas, observations and discoveries in the area of GIS and other spatial technologies. If you have something you would like to share please write to me. We also welcome feedback on GIS Trends articles. Proposals for articles and feedback should be sent to: bznamirowski@trentu.ca

Thanks for reading and contributing!
Barbara Znamirowski,
Editor, GIS Trend