

Project 3: Creating Maps with Google My Maps

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Libraries services are evolving over time to better serve its patron base. Once a repository for books and public information, libraries have shifted to meet the needs of the communities they serve and many now check out movies, video games, and board games, amongst many other services. This is all done to help the community it serves. Maps have been in libraries for a long time but many are seeing their print collections sit idly in a dark corner or basement or worse yet, discarded. We have learned in this course, however, that people still use maps, perhaps more than ever, just not in the traditional sense that libraries have become accustomed. More and more people are taking advantage of the convenience of digital and crowdsourced maps and libraries need to stay up to date with current trends in map and GIS. “For the library to play a significant role, relevant geospatial and cartographic resources and services must be offered,” (Aber & Aber, 2017, p. 95).

Background

This assignment tasked us to design and create a way to make maps and geospatial data visible to the library client. We were to guide clients through the maze of map/GIS resources or help the librarian have a greater appreciation for maps and GIS. According to Bidney & Piekielek (2018), libraries need to stay on the cutting edge of map and GIS use, “map libraries are also at the forefront of new activities like offering centralized geospatial services, involvement in spatial humanities projects... and turning their own print collections into geospatial “big data” scales,” (p. 7). For my project, I choose to demonstrate how to make a map with user-pinned locations using mapping software.

I choose to create two training videos on making maps with Google My Maps. One training video is a traditional, narrated screencast video. The other is a shorter video without narration. I’ve wanted to challenge myself to create one of these style videos for some time and choose this topic for my first attempt. Guo, Kim, & Rubin (2014) found that videos under 6 minutes yield the greatest student engagement (p. 46). As these shorter videos require careful planning to quickly show the important information without overwhelming, it was a rather difficult task.

The map I used for my example is titled College Football in America (https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1viAyBlhKFib2K_E8kiaUsH_amTxxS1rU&ll=36.569537852741206%2C-113.29823569999996&z=3). This is a map that I created and have

been working on for several months. Being an avid college football fan, especially of small college football, I wanted to view a map of all college football teams in America on one map, but I was unable to find one. I was able to find a map of each division but not one that included all teams. So I set out to make my own.

Methods

To create the map, I started without any tutorials. I made a new map and began searching for college football locations and pinning them to a map. Initially, I was happy putting them in one at a time, but when I did some research and found that there are nearly 1,000 college football teams, I knew there had to be a better way. The first thing I did was ask my older brother for help (been doing this for over 30 years). He informed me of how to mass-import several locations at once using a Google Sheets or Excel file. From here it was a matter of find a manageable and accurate list of teams. This required a lot of copy and pasting from official college athletics homepages, such as the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). While it was much quicker to import a large list of teams, it was not perfect. Several locations were out of place and needed to be manually corrected.

For my project, I created two training/tutorial videos on how to create your own map with Google My Maps (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eg6u5RpHBaQ>). Google My Maps is a great digital tool which allows users to create maps with pinned areas. I choose to create the narrated screencast tutorial first as I am familiar and more comfortable with that approach. First I created a list of bullet points of what I perceived to be the most important steps and features of creating a map with Google My Maps. The list was very long, so I cut it down to the most important pieces; creating a new map, the three different methods for adding locations, previewing your map, and sharing. I then created a script based on how I would explain the method to someone sitting next to me. I also carefully choose my example areas so the narration would be fluid and without many breaks for searching on the map. From there I recorded several recordings of my presentation. I used a Google Extension called Screen Recorder to record the presentation on my computer screen. To edit the video, I used Windows Movie Maker which is a fine tool for basic video editing.

For my shorter, non-narrated tutorial (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeYi5AG2ITE>), I pared down the talking points even more

to keep the video short. Again, I used Screen Recorder to record myself doing the various tasks and procedures and then used Windows Movie Maker to edit, add text, and background music. The music I used is from a YouTube channel called NoCopyrightSounds. This channel posts songs that are available for download and use for all.

Discussion

Going through this process I learned a lot about making maps with Google My Maps and about creating tutorials. The map making process was very informative. I learned how to mass import and the limitations of this technique. I learned that crowdsourcing feedback can be very crucial. After I completed the map, I shared it on a few college football online communities and forums. People found many mistakes that helped me create a more accurate map. While in the process of creating another map of college basketball in America, I discovered that you are only allowed ten layers or groups in Google My Maps. This is a huge limitation and led me to abandon that project for the time being, so I made sure to mention that in my narrated tutorial.

Concerning the tutorials I created, I found it very time consuming and difficult to create a short video without narration. I felt that I left out some important information and the video became more of a brief overview of Google My Maps and not nearly as in-depth as the narrated video. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it does require the learner to understand that it is just a brief look into Google My Maps, not an all-encompassing tutorial.

Overall, I am very happy with the map I created. I think it is a wonderful look at the geography of college football in this country. It is currently out of date as programs are created and discontinued every year, this will require my attention on at least a yearly basis for accuracy.

Conclusion

I created this map as a way to visualize college football in the United States of America. I created the tutorials to show others how to efficiently and accurately create their own map using Google My Maps. I think these tutorials would be of use for librarians as community members may have a need to create their own map.

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