L01: Introduction to Story Maps

Story maps are web-based applications which combine maps, images, text and other media in order to tell a complete story. This lecture will introduce the concept of story maps and provide some examples.

Things we cover in this session

- What is a story map?
- Which different story map applications are currently available?
- Which media options are there for creating story maps?
- First insights in creating a story map.

Things you need for this session

- W01-1: Analyzing a Story Map

Things to take home from this session

At the end of this session you should be able to

- explain what a story map is
- compare different types of story maps for different purposes
- list different media that can be implemented in a story map
- name different providers of story maps
- analyze a story map

Story maps as representation of spatial contents

Story maps are digital map applications which are characterized by being interactive and able to combine different types of media. Story maps serve to present and communicate specific content or subject matter to a wider audience via the Internet. The “stories“ that they tell through a series of thematic maps, data layers and multimedia embeds can serve to visualize various aspects such as individual narratives, political statements or the presentation of factual/subject-specific content.

Different types of story maps can be used for different purposes (see M01-1). Depending on the type of story map a user wishes to create, there are more or less guided “tours” of ready-made map templates which can be used. These can include certain points or areas of interest, which can also be supplemented with further information. This allows map makers to determine which information is presented how and in which order. These are the features currently available:

- texts
- images
- graphics
- videos

- audio files
- additional maps
- embedded web-content

One advantage story maps have over more “traditional” maps is that story maps can continuously be updated. Furthermore, they enable independent work and interactions with the map, which may enhance users’ interest and willingness to learn.

However, story maps can only be accessed and unveil their full potential on the Internet. Due to the multimedia nature of their content downloading a story map is technically difficult and inadvisable.

The following story map applications are currently available:

- ArcGIS Storymaps
- Google Stories in Google Earth
- MapBox
- National Geographic
- StoryMap JS

Although there is a wide range of possible applications and tools for digital story telling, we are using ArcGIS Online and ArcGIS StoryMap in our summerschool teaching as well as in our university courses. ESRI was the first provider of digital story-telling and continously developed it further. This experience makes it comfortable for users. For more information see ArcGIS StoryMap product roadmap or visit one of the pages listed above.

Time for practice

W01-1: Analyzing a Story Map

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Last update: **2025/03/14 12:52**