

# TIMELINES

Introduction to TimelineJS

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TimelineJS allows you to create a visually attractive timeline that may incorporate a variety of media. Created by the Knight Lab at Northwestern University, the tool is primarily intended for journalists but can be used in many disciplines and is particularly useful for digital humanities projects.

The code of TimelineJS is open source and hosted on GitHub, but most users will find the Web-based tool offered by the Knight Lab as the easiest approach.



# GETTING STARTED

# Steps

## 01

The *first step* is to get familiar what TimelineJS can do for you.

The [TimelineJS home page](#) is very well-written and should be your first source of information for learning about this tool.

[Examples](#) showcase the types of projects that can be developed with TimelineJS.

## 02

The *second step* is to think about what you want to accomplish with TimelineJS. Remember that TimelineJS is created by and for journalists. That means it aims to present a story about an event in current or recent history.

Of course, the purpose of any timeline is to visually convey information. TimelineJS does that through combining the timeline feature with the options of media, audio, video, and nicely formatted text..

## 03

The *third step* is to gather your data. This is the most time-consuming part of the process and, possibly, the most difficult depending upon your project. You may choose to gather the data in whatever way works best for your project, but it ultimately will need to go into some type of spreadsheet.

The Knight Lab provides a Google Spreadsheet template available from the [TimelineJS home page](#).

# Before Creating Your Timeline



Before diving into the spreadsheet you may want to prepare a storyboard for your timeline.



While you can do this via the spreadsheet, doing so prior on paper or other form can help organize your thoughts and the story you're telling through the data without the distraction of the spreadsheet and the software.



Later, once you have all your data organized then you can more easily see how it fits together through the TimelineJS Google Spreadsheet.

# Editing the TimelineJS Google Spreadsheet

- There are two components to the timeline — the narrative area at the top and the actual timeline at the bottom.
- One of the more confusing aspects of TimelineJS is understanding how the seven fields in the provided spreadsheet map to what is displayed on the timeline even though the spreadsheet template does provide sample data and description within the file, so let's break down the sheet.

The image shows a screenshot of a TimelineJS narrative area. At the top, there are navigation arrows and a date range: "NOVEMBER 22, 2003 Thanksgiving 2003" on the left and "MARCH 1, 2004 India" on the right. The main content area features a photograph of Machu Picchu with the following annotations:

- media**: Points to the photograph.
- media caption**: Points to the text "Huayna Picchu in the background".
- media credit**: Points to the text "CC https://www.flickr.com/photos/thibaultouspic/".
- dates**: Points to the date range "December 25, 2003 — January 3, 2004".
- tag**: Points to the "peru" tag.
- headline**: Points to the main title "Christmas in Peru".
- text**: Points to the descriptive text "Machu Picchu, during the rainy season, is spectacular".

Below the narrative area is a timeline view showing a horizontal axis with years 2003, 2004, and 2005. A blue vertical line is positioned at the start of 2004. A tooltip for "Christmas in Peru" is visible, along with other events like "2nd trip" and "Thanksgiving 2003".



# Creating Your Timeline

- **Before you begin**, you'll want to be sure you have a Google Account, because TimelineJS uses a Google Spreadsheet. If you have a Gmail email address, you already have a Google Account. To create a new Google Account, you can go to [accounts.google.com/signup](https://accounts.google.com/signup). Once you're set up with your Google Account, you're ready to get started with TimelineJS.
- **Now you're ready to create a timeline**. Go to [timeline.knightlab.com](https://timeline.knightlab.com).
- You'll want to download the Google Spreadsheet template provided on the TimelineJS website. This will be automatically placed into the Google Drive connected to your Google Account.

1  
Create your spreadsheet

Build a new Google Spreadsheet using our [template](#). You'll need to copy the template to your own Google Drive account by clicking the "Use this template" button.

Drop dates, text and links to media into the appropriate columns. For more about working with our template, [see our help docs](#).

Get the Spreadsheet Template ↻



**Note:** Don't change the column headers, don't remove any columns, and don't leave any blank rows in your spreadsheet.



Week 10: Building the Pieces - T... x (1) How to make an online time... x Tutorial: Creating a Narrative Tim... x Timeline Copy of Official TimelineJS3 Tem... x +

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cg0ppq9TzYH-8w5yvbJBZme\_4uCY85XeGhJfXvOhDuE/edit#gid=0

Copy of Official TimelineJS3 Template

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was seconds ago

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
1	Year	Month	Day	Time	End Year	End Month	End Day	End Time	Display Date	Headline	Text	Media	Media Credit	Media Caption	Media Thumbnail	Type	Group	Background
2											This is a test of using google spreadsheets as a source for the timeline tool. This is a 'title' slide, so it doesn't need a date. It automatically occurs first, and doesn't appear in the timeline below.			<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/" title="Chicago by zach.wise on Flickr">Chicago by zach.wise</a>				
3	2011	11	1		2011	12	15			Google Spreadsheet Example	It's Easy to Make Your Own Timeline	<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/">http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/</a>	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC				#333333
4	2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		Another Flickr Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.	<a href="http://vimeo.com/1...">http://vimeo.com/1...</a>	Knigh Lab	A video about how to make timelines!				<a href="http://knightlab.nor...">http://knightlab.nor...</a>
5																		
6																		
7																		
8																		
9																		

Add 1000 more rows at bottom.

- You can re-name the spreadsheet if it helps you better organize your files.

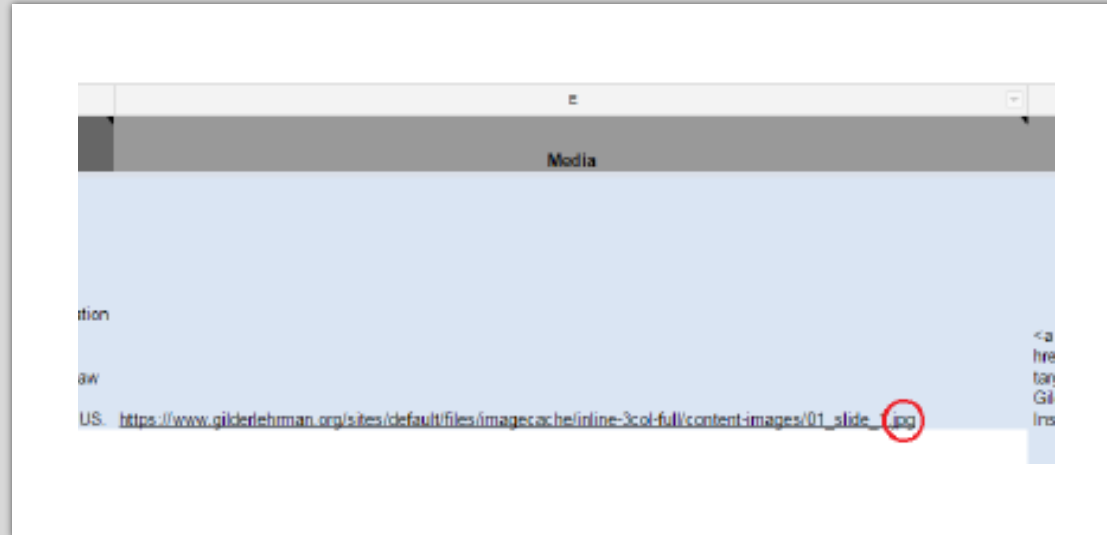
- Here's a helpful note to prevent errors in your spreadsheet: Don't change the column headers, don't remove any columns, and don't leave any blank rows in your spreadsheet.

- **For your first row:** in a Start/End Date and Time. **End Date:** Leave end time blank to create an introduction to your timeline that will work as a cover. **Headline:** Use this column to change the headline of that particular point on your timeline.

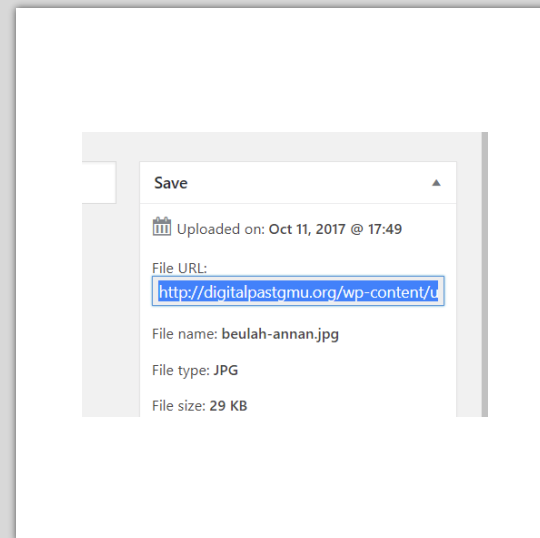
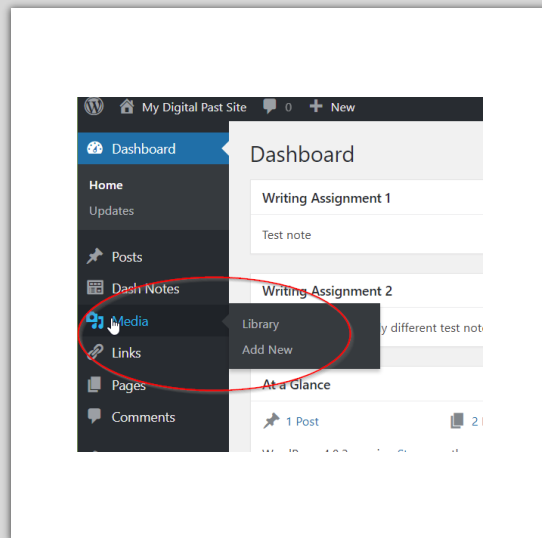
- Drop dates, text and links to media into the appropriate columns

- If you want to do anything fancy, like italicize text or hyperlink to a URL, you'll need to type in HTML language in this step (see previous class slides for your refresher on HTML)

# A word on Media



- The Media column is where you paste the URL of any media-images, videos, etc.- you want to include.
- A word about the “media link” -- Videos that are hosted on YouTube or Vimeo already have links - just click “share” on YouTube or Vimeo and copy and paste the URL link. For images, you’ll need to make sure they are hosted online and use the image URL (web address), which almost always ends with JPG, GIF, PNG or BMP.
- Keep in mind that the image URL does not usually match the web address of the page where the image appears. In this box, you can also add links to Tweets, or media entries such as Wikipedia, or even a Google Map...the possibilities are endless.



- You may include any images that are rights-free.
- I *strongly* urge you to upload all images to your own websites and use that URL. This will ensure that your images don’t disappear.
- To add media to your WordPress sites.
- Download the media and rename it.
- In your WordPress Dashboard, select Media > Add New
- Upload your new image by navigating to the file on your computer.
- Once your file has uploaded, you can grab the URL by going to Edit and copying the File URL.
- You will paste this URL into the media column of your timeline spreadsheet.

# A Little More on Dates

To enter a *single day* (e.g., January 1, 1525): enter "01/01/1525" in the start date.

To enter a *span of days* (e.g., June 20 – 25, 1550): enter "06/20/1525" in the start date. and "06/25/1550" in the end date.

To enter a *single month* (e.g., July 1575): enter "07/1575" in the start date.

To enter a *span of months* (e.g., January 1605 – June 1505): enter "01/1605" in the start date and "06/1605" in the end date.

To enter a *specific year* (e.g., 1500): enter "1500" in the start date.

To enter a *span of years* (e.g., 1485-1603): enter "1485" in the start date and "1603" in the end date.

If you are using BCE, you will add the – sign. So, for example 500BCE becomes -500