

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 displays a TimelineJS interface. The top section shows a detailed view of an event titled "Christmas in Peru". This view includes a photograph of Machu Picchu, a date range from December 25, 2003, to January 3, 2004, and a tag "peru". The headline reads "Christmas in Peru" and the text below it says "Machu Picchu, during the rainy season, is spectacular". A media credit is provided: "CC https://www.flickr.com/photos/thibaultouspic/". A caption below the photo reads "Huayna Picchu in the background".

The bottom section shows a spreadsheet view of the timeline. The spreadsheet has columns for dates and event details. The event "Christmas in Peru" is highlighted in the spreadsheet, showing its date range and tag. Other events visible in the spreadsheet include "2nd trip" and "Thanksgiving 2003".

Labels with arrows point to various elements in the interface:

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

- The multiple **date** columns feed the actual timeline and will accept months, days, years, and time stamps. Please see the Timeline documentation for how to format these dates.

- The **Display Date** column feeds the narrative area at the top of the map, so you can display the date in any textual format you decide.

- The **Headline** and **Text** columns feed the narrative. The Text column will accept basic HTML, including links, bold, italics and paragraphs, but you will need to hard code these. Please refer to the slides from our HTML class or another web source on how to do that.

- The **Media** column is where you paste the URL of any media-images, videos, etc.- you want to include. 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.

- The **Media Credit** column is where you will cite your source for the image — please record this information and be as complete as possible.

- The **Media Caption** is where you'll type the caption — what is the significance of this photo. What is it showing us? What should I know about how it relates to your text?

- Ignore the **Media Thumbnail** column

- **Type** column is ONLY used for the first row, which is your title row. Do not change this.

- Ignore **Group**.

- The **Background** column is where you'll style your timeline. You can use [web color hex codes](#) OR you can paste the URL of an image here. You can use the same image

Copy of Official TimelineJS3 Template

	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.			Chicago by zach.wise				
3	2011	11	1		2011	12	15			Google Spreadsheet Example	Another Flickr Example	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC				#333333
4	2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.	https://vimeo.com/111111111	Knigh Lab	A video about how to make timelines!				http://knightlab.northwestern.edu
5																		
6																		
7																		
8																		
9																		

Add 1000 more rows at bottom.

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. 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.
- 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.

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
2011	11	1		2011	12	15			Google Spreadsheet Example	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.	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago by zach.wise on Flickr<> Chicago by zach.wise		title		
2011	11	16	05:58:44	2011	11	16	07:30:00		Another Flickr Example	It's Easy to Make Your Own Timeline	http://www.flickr.com/photos/zachwise/6115056146/	Zach Wise/verite.co	Chicago to NYC				#333333
									Vimeo Example	Illustrate your Timeline with photos, videos, tweets and more.	http://vimeo.com/1...	Knigh Lab	A video about how to make timelines!				http://knightlab.northwestern.edu/

- 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.

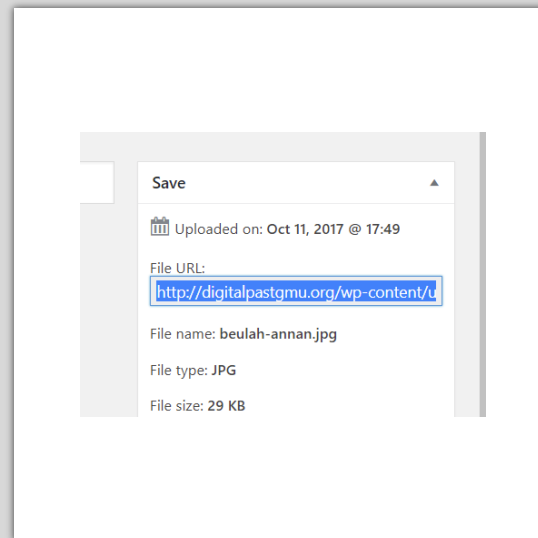
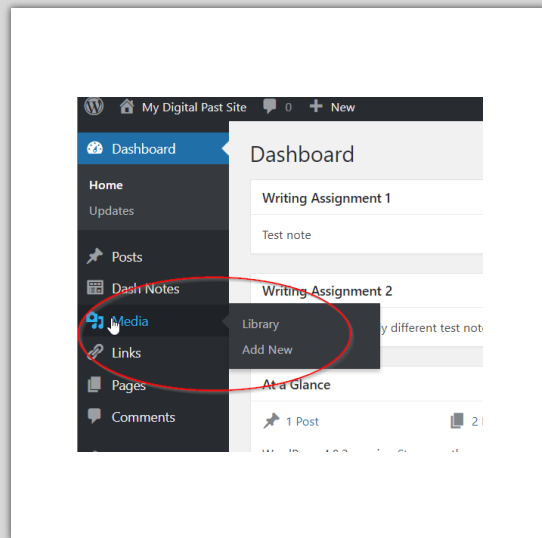
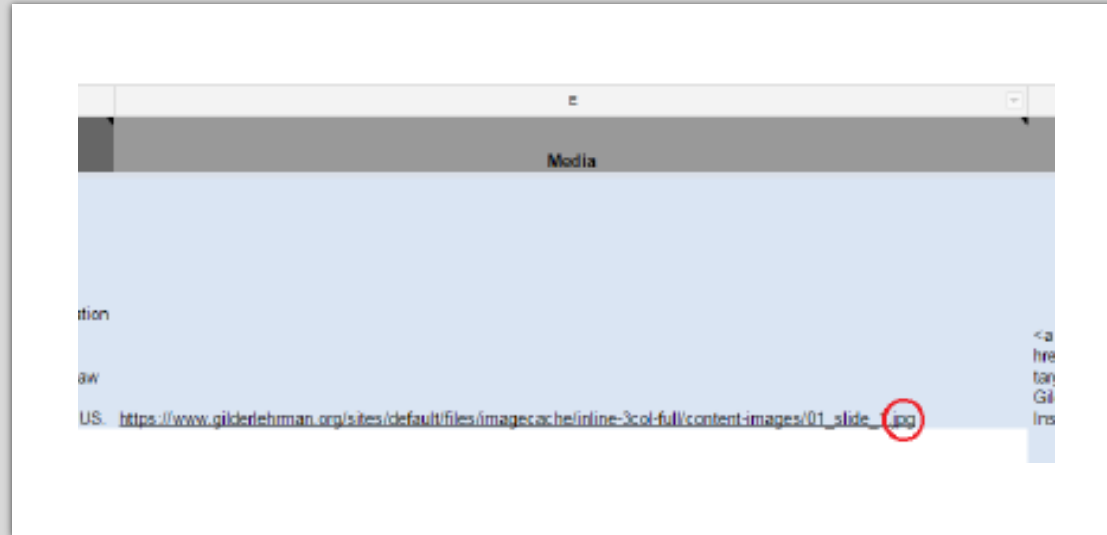
- **For your first row:** in a Start/End Date and Time. **End Date:** Leave end time blank to create an introduction to your timeline that will work as a cover. **Headline:** Use this column to change the headline of that particular point on your timeline.

- 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.

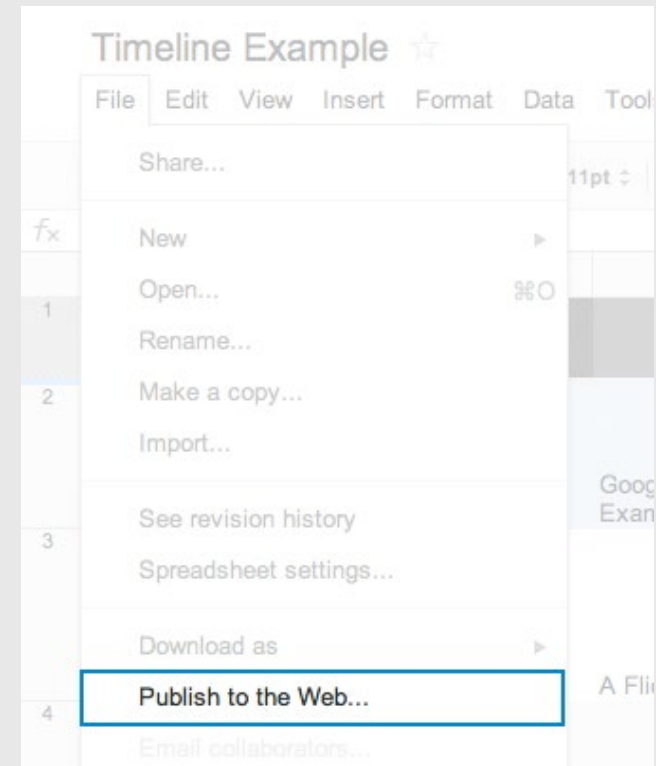
To enter a *specific year* (e.g., 1500): enter "1500" in the start date.

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

Preparing Your Timeline to Publish

- Once your timeline is more or less finished, the next step is to click “publish to the web.”
- Under the File menu in the Google Spreadsheet, select “Publish to the Web.”



Preparing Your Timeline to Publish



In the next window, change the menu that reads "entire document" to "od1."



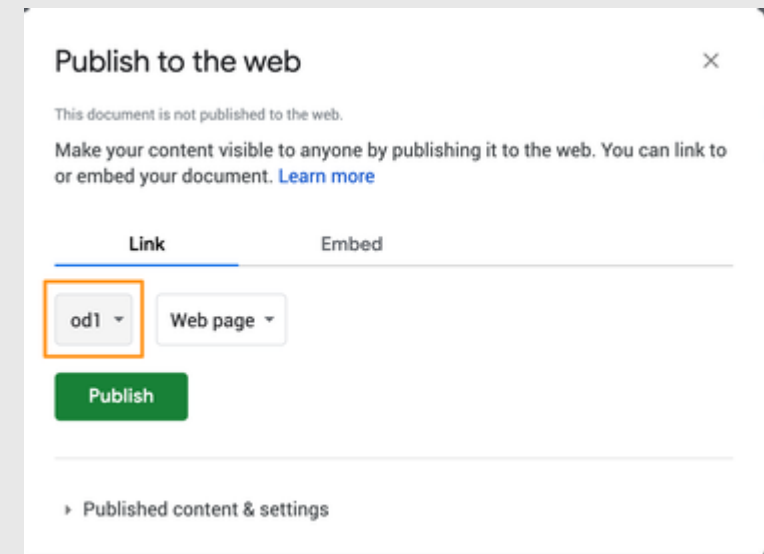
Then, click the blue "publish" button.



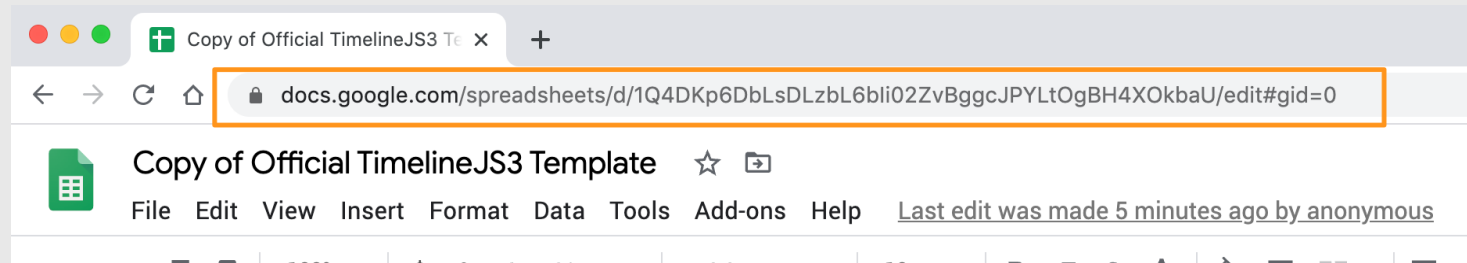
When asked, "Are you sure...?" click OK.

Ignore the URL that appears in the center of the window.

Just close the window using the X in the top right corner.



Preparing Your Timeline to Publish



- After you close the window, copy the URL in your browser's address bar. You'll use this in the next step.

Preparing Your Timeline to Publish

3

Generate your
timeline

Copy/paste spreadsheet URL into the box below to generate your timeline. (Make sure you've published the spreadsheet.)

Google Spreadsheet URL

Width

Height

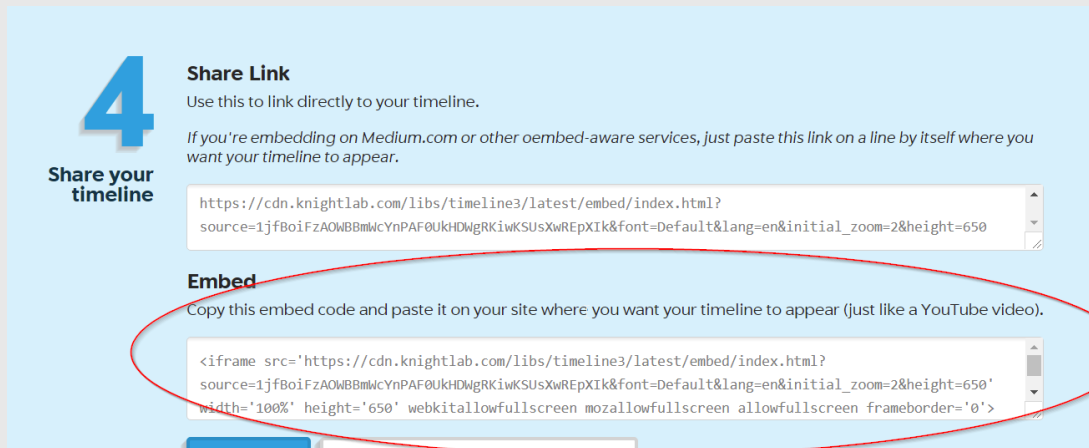
Return to the Timeline page and proceed to Step 3, “Generate Your Timeline.” Paste your URL into the box labelled “Google Spreadsheet URL.”

Scroll down to Step 4 and select “Preview” to see your Timeline. You will find the link and embed code to share your work there.

Publishing Your Timeline

- The TimelineJS home page has clear directions for generating and previewing the timeline, but some users may be lost as to how to embed the timeline on their website.
- Yes, you need a website in order to display your timeline. The timeline exists as an iframe and can easily be embedded in any website, e.g., WordPress.
- We will work through WordPress today.

Embedding TimelineJS in WordPress



4 Share your timeline

Share Link
Use this to link directly to your timeline.
If you're embedding on Medium.com or other oembed-aware services, just paste this link on a line by itself where you want your timeline to appear.

```
https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1jfBoiFzAOWBBmWcYnPAF0UKHDWgRKiWKSUSxwREpXIk&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650
```

Embed
Copy this embed code and paste it on your site where you want your timeline to appear (just like a YouTube video).

```
<iframe src='https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1jfBoiFzAOWBBmWcYnPAF0UKHDWgRKiWKSUSxwREpXIk&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650' width='100%' height='650' webkitallowfullscreen mozallowfullscreen allowfullscreen frameborder='0'>
```

- Embedding WordPress iFrame is easier than you imagine. The traditional way to do it is by using the HTML attributes <IFrame>.
- To do this, simply take the URL of the page you want to embed and use it as the source for the Tag.
- Then, your code becomes: `<iframe src="your_webpage_url"> </iframe>`
- Then, if you want you can add more parameters to your tag. You can define the window of the iFrame by using:
 - Width/Height – For height and Width of the iFrame window, define values in Px
 - Frameborder – For displaying or hiding the Frameborder, use values ‘0’ or ‘1.’
 - Align – For defining the window’s page alignment, Use values “left” “right” “right” “top” “bottom.”
 - Scrolling – For disabling or enabling Scrolling inside the Window. Use values “yes,” “no”
- `<iframe src="your_webpage_url/" width="50px" height="300px" frameborder="1" scrolling="yes" align="left"> </iframe>`
- Then simply paste your code into the **custom html** of your **post** on WordPress, and that should display your post easily.

Your Timeline - Skills Assessment: Start in class on April 9), Embed timeline no later than before class on April 16 by Noon)

Your timeline:

Should contain 12 events about your topic.

Events should be drawn from your research.

An introductory slide/entry that contains a definition of your topic. What were the major themes, events, and issues that dominate your topic? The twenty events you add to your timeline should support this statement. Consider each event a piece of supporting evidence.

Each event's entry must include an accurate date, a several sentence description, links to more information where relevant, and an image if possible.

Each entry's description needs to address the 5 W's:

who or what is this entry about?

what happened?

when did it happen?

where did it happen?

and lastly, but most importantly, *why* is this event important or significant in the history of your topic? In other words, why did you choose to include this particular event on your timeline? What makes it special or important?

Tips and Resources

- Don't change any of the headings in the spreadsheet template. These headings need to remain the same otherwise the software won't know how to generate and display your timeline.
- Don't add blank rows between entries. This can mess up the template and cause bugs.
- You must have a start and end date. If you don't have a specific day and month, just input something like January 1 and the year and then enter a year in the display date. This allows the software to plot the date on the timeline but the only date that will be displayed is the one in display date.
- Begin your assignment immediately! Waiting until the final project to add more your timeline will make this assignment harder – *I promise*.
- Review sample timelines:
 - [Key Events in the Persian Gulf Crisis](#)
 - [Battle of Appomattox](#)
 - [Women in Computing](#)
 - [Music Inspired by “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp”](#)
 - [Timeline of Roman Catholic Popes](#) (site in Spanish but a good example of a timeline with more than 200 entries.)
 - [British Reformation in Context](#)
- Video Tutorial if you need a refresher: <https://youtu.be/gNQA2HEseso>