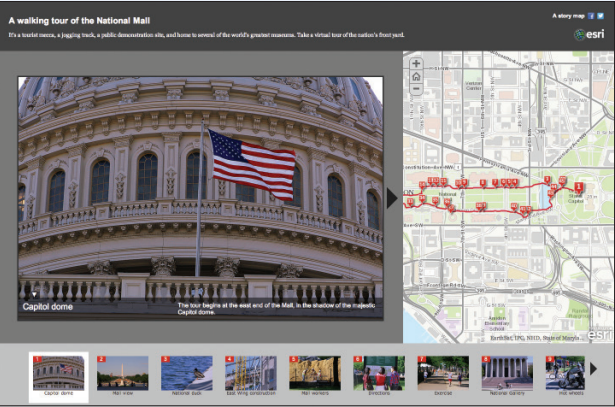# Using the Story Maps Publishing Platform

Story maps are simple web applications that let you combine web maps with text, photos, and other content to tell geography-based stories. Esri has developed a series of apps that accommodate various forms of storytelling, including point-to-point tours, points-of-interest collections, and thematic map series.

These pages present an overview of Esri's storytelling apps. All the apps are open source and can be downloaded from the story maps website or GitHub. Increasingly, configurable apps are directly accessible on ArcGIS Online. Use the share function to choose an app and configure it to suit your needs. These apps are changing rapidly; visit the story maps website for the latest.

storymaps.esri.com

How to make a story map

1 Consider your audience

Before building your story map, it's important to think about exactly what story you're trying to tell and the audience you want to reach. Text should be brief, maps simple, and message as clear as possible.

2 Build your web map

Web maps combine basemaps with overlays, map and feature services, and additional data derived from spreadsheets and shapefiles. Before you build your map, determine which storytelling template you'd like to use. Some have special requirements; various apps consume either a single web map, two or more layers of a single map, or several web maps.

Relationship of unemployment to population change

3 Assemble multimedia content

Text should be brief. Make your headlines active and descriptive if you can. Some story apps tap web map descriptions; read our how-to documents for details. Images must be accessible via web addresses, unless they're part of a feature service (Map Tour app). Remember: Large images take longer to load, so optimize them to fit the story map.

4 Configure your story map app

Story map apps can be configured by providing your web map ID number and selecting a few preferences. Many can be configured directly through an ArcGIS Online web interface. For the rest, a README file provided with every app steps you through configuration and hosting options.

5 Refine your story map

Our apps enable users to quickly create and publish story maps. As with all creative efforts, however, the quality of your story will increase as you refine it. Details, such as map colors and symbols, pop-up design, wording of map legends, and choice of photographs, are all vital. Don't be afraid to go back and forth—perhaps many times—to make adjustments.

6 Publish your story map

Place your story map on a server that is accessible to your audience—whether it's the general public or a specialized group behind an organizational firewall. Your ArcGIS Online account provides an ideal platform for publishing your story maps—and for sharing your data, collaborating with colleagues, and accessing the best and latest storytelling apps.

Comparing unemployment and population change reveals regional patterns

Featuring four story map apps . . .

Map Tour

A sequential, place-based narrative

A growing community of storytellers has found many uses (right) for the Map Tour app. The app presents a place-based narrative of photos and captions, each with a map location. A recent enhancement provides "responsive" design, adjusting the format to suit a variety of screen sizes. A builder mode facilitates easy compilation and editing.

Features

- A series of geotagged photos with map and thumbnail carousel is available.
- Previous/Next pointers enable users to click sequentially through the tour.
- Users can use the map controls and carousel to move around at will.
- Responsive design accommodates smartphone screens, as well as tablets and PCs.
- Builder mode enables easy editing.

Use Cases

TOP: National Parks of India by Abhishek Sindal.

MIDDLE: Lower Sheboygan River Restoration by NOAA Coastal Services.

BOTTOM: Downtown Santa Cruz Buildings by the City of Santa Cruz.

Tabbed Viewer

A single map or series of related maps

The versatile Tabbed Viewer app is useful for featuring a single map or presenting a series of related, thematic maps. If the author adds two or more maps to the app, a tab for each map appears along the bottom of the title panel. If these maps have a temporal component, a timeline will also appear.

Features

- The app accommodates a single web map or between two and five related maps.
- The side panel text is generated from the web map descriptions on ArcGIS Online.
- A timeline is included (if enabled).
- Coming: responsive design to accommodate smartphones and tablets; builder app for easier editing.

Use Cases

TOP: Poverty in School Age Children by Blue Raster.

MIDDLE: Toronto Crime: Mapping over Time by Esri Canada Limited.

BOTTOM: Utah Fire Suppression and Restoration by State of Utah Department of Natural Resources.

Shortlist

Points of interest in and around a destination

A curated list of points of interest can be organized into two to four categories, presented in the Shortlist app as tabs. Clicking a map icon causes an overlay panel to appear, with photo, text, and web link. Neighborhoods can be featured in a drop-down list.

Features

- Points of interest (POIs) appear as a thumbnail grid in a side panel.
- POIs can be organized into categories, which appear in the app as tabs.
- As users pan and zoom around the map, the thumbnail list updates to show only the POIs in the current map extent.
- Clicking a map icon calls up an overlay panel with more detailed description, photo, and web link.
- A drop-down menu enables users to zoom to neighborhoods or other locations.

Use Cases

TOP: MyMunich by Esri Deutschland GmbH.

MIDDLE: Citadel Agriculture, Italy, by GeoCare GIS Lab.

BOTTOM: Ruins of Carthage Tour (Tunisia) by Graphtech.

Swipe

Comparing two maps using a swipe function

The Swipe app makes it easy for users to compare two thematic layers by moving a swipe bar back and forth across the screen. The app consumes a single web map with two layers. Although the Compare app (opposite page, bottom) also enables comparison of two maps, the swipe function is generally more engaging. It's effective for showing change over time with imagery, as well as comparing related polygonal map themes.

Features

- Two layers of a single web map are displayed.
- Users move a swipe bar back and forth across the screen.
- If both map layers include pop-up windows, these will change as the swipe bar moves across a point.*
- Dual map legends and text are displayed in a side panel.*
- A series of views can be created by adding bookmarks to the web map.*

* Note: The last three features were in production at press time.

Use Cases

TOP: Staffanstorp Then and Now by Geoinfo Staffanstorp-Kavlinge.

MIDDLE: Human Activities Are Reshaping Earth's Surface by Esri.

BOTTOM: Feeding the World by University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment and Esri.

Other story map apps . . .

Although the apps described above are the most popular with users, additional storytelling formats are available. Check the story maps website regularly, as apps are being enhanced and updated frequently.
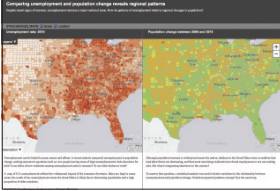
Playlist

This app is useful for featuring web maps that display an array of locations and associated images. It gives users the option of clicking a map icon or perusing a "playlist" of thumbnail images and titles.
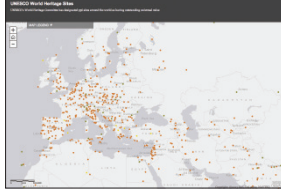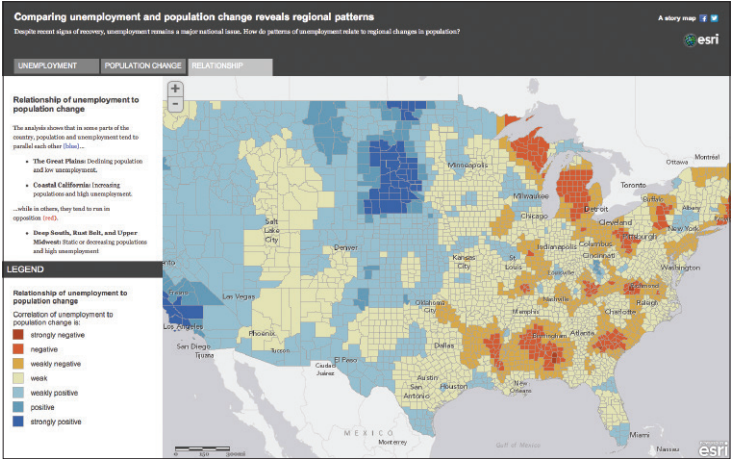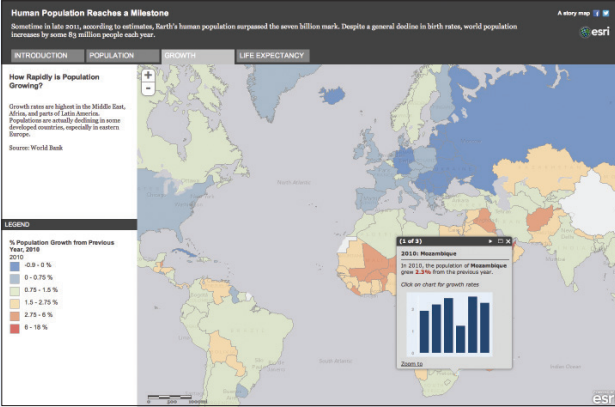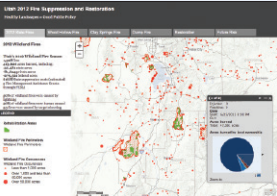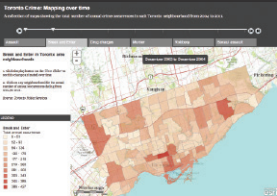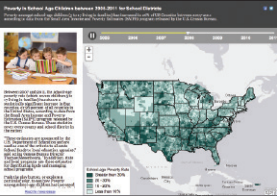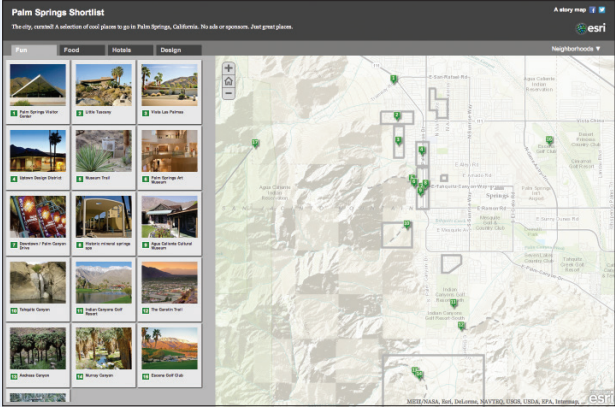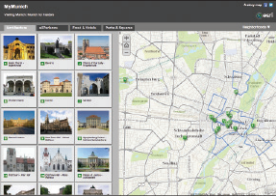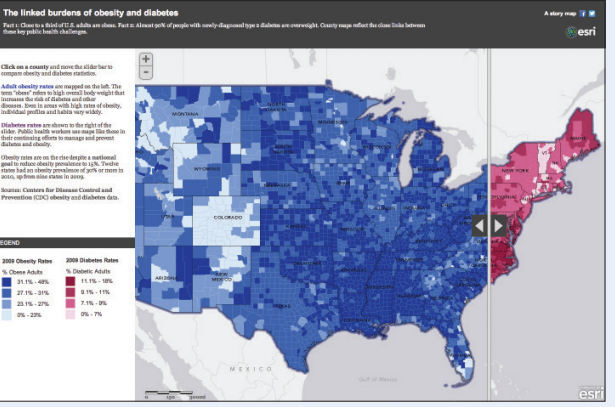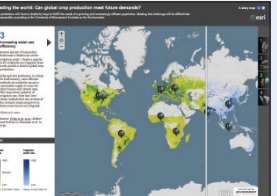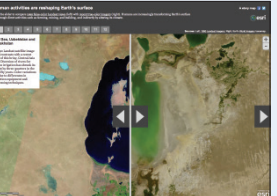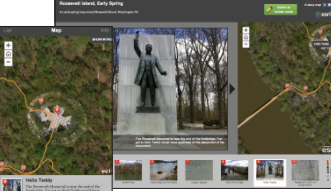
Map Matrix

This app is useful for showing off a collection of web maps. It taps an ArcGIS Online group to display maps in a rotating array of preview windows. Users can access descriptions and larger web map views.

Compare

Two or three maps are displayed side by side in this app. As the user pans and zooms on one map, the other maps also pan and zoom. Users can toggle descriptions and legends on and off.

Basic

Occasionally, a web map is more or less self-explanatory. This app provides a clean and simple context for displaying a map, adding only a title banner and drop-down map legend.

What's next for story maps?

Esri is continuing to produce new stories and develop new user experiences. Meanwhile, a growing worldwide community of storytellers is using these open source apps, spinning new tales and often modifying the apps in interesting ways. We want you to join this community!

Responsive design

A high priority of the story maps team is ensuring that all its apps work flawlessly across all viewing platforms, from desktop to tablet to mobile. The team is working to retrofit its templates with this capability.
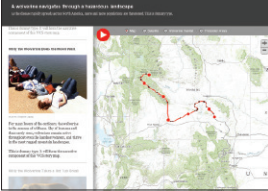
Geoblog

This new app will integrate blog entries with a web map. Part of the authoring process for each blog item will enable customizing the state of its accompanying web map, including scale extent, pop-up window, and theme.

Briefing book

A tablet app will enable users to present "books," or reports, that include text, web maps, and other multimedia content. Some books might be organized around text narratives; others might focus on collections of maps.

Tracker

An app will specialize in presenting routes or tracks along with associated information. Tracks might include radio-collared animals, scientists in the field, or motor vehicles. Data might be archival or near real time.