

# Digital Timeline Guide

Process for Creating Timeline  
with Knight Lab TimelineJS

VOICES  
*from the*  
**GRASSROOTS**



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## STEP ONE: The Process

### 1. Determine your topic

- Timeframe can be long, but should have a clear storyline that connect the points on the timeline.
- Think about the major themes, analyses, arguments you want to present
- Given that these timelines can get unruly, keep your core arguments in the front of your mind to be selective in choosing events, etc. to ensure alignment

### 2. Review instructions and examples on Knight Lab website to get familiar with tool

- *Examples:*
- [A History of Detroit's Water Crisis](#)
- [The Road to Rebellion in Newark](#)

### 3. Conduct research and compile resources

### 4. Write content (see section below for instructions)

### 5. Curate visual resources

- Use a variety of videos, photos, and documents that both illuminate and expand upon the content provided in the body text.
- At the same time, assume that viewers will not click on the visual resource so don't lean on it for content delivery.

### 6. Transfer content to Google Sheet

## STEP TWO: Writing Content

### Title Slide

[Title, author/organization]

### About the Timeline

[A 3-4 sentence overview of the major storyline that you are presenting in this timeline and the intentions that you are setting for its use]

*Example:* This timeline provides a history of Detroit's water system and the critical moments which have led to the city's ongoing water crisis. This timeline was created to present an accurate, accessible, and engaging presentation of this complex history that centers the voices and experiences of Detroiters who have been fighting for an affordable, safe, and equitable water system. We hope that you will use this resource to better understand the history of Detroit's water crisis, challenge harmful narratives about the city and its residents, and support the ongoing struggle for water affordability.

### **Template for Points on the Timeline**

#### Title:

Keep it short, 4-5 words

#### Body text:

3-4 sentences. A basic formula would be: 1- Context (what led up to this point, in broad strokes/connect to previous point for continuity; 2- overview of the event, etc. ; 3- Analysis/significance of this event; 4- Foreshadowing

- **Visual Resource:** Link to a video, photograph, document, etc. that illuminates and expands upon the content provided above.
  - **Caption:** A 1-sentence description of the resource. Think about what information a viewer needs to know about this resource to fully understand it. Include a credit line as well.
- **For more information, see:** This is an opportunity to include a hyperlink to an important article, interview, documentary, etc. that offers more information for a reader who wants to learn more.

***Example Point on Timeline:***

Origins of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department-1830

In the early 1830s, Detroit's water services are provided by a privately-owned company called the Hydraulic Company. When the company fails to meet Detroit's growing water needs, the City buys the company and creates a new plant. The city takes on debt to expand and improve the system, raising calls for the water system and its debt to be sold in 1852. Instead, a Board of Trustees (later Board of Water Commissioners) is created to re-organize the system's operations<sup>1</sup>. Under this new structure, the system will continue to expand for over a century, officially becoming the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) in 1973<sup>2</sup>.

**VISUAL SOURCE:** <http://www.waterworkshistory.us/MI/Detroit/1852Condition.pdf> — **CREDIT:** <http://www.waterworkshistory.us/MI/Detroit/>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/omui1fouyh4sukyh/AAD19M9puVhpF2uGzF5T8tRSa/DWSD%20History?dl=0&preview=DWSD\\_300yrs.pdf&subfolder\\_nav\\_tracking=1](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/omui1fouyh4sukyh/AAD19M9puVhpF2uGzF5T8tRSa/DWSD%20History?dl=0&preview=DWSD_300yrs.pdf&subfolder_nav_tracking=1) pgs. (1-12)

## STEP THREE: Populating Google Sheet

### 1. Transfer data from Google Doc to Google Sheet

- a. Year/Month/Date (date where the slide will be plotted on the timeline)
- b. Display date (date that will show up on slide)
- c. Headline (4-5 short words, max)
- d. Text (no longer than 3-4 sentences)
  - Include For More Information line and link
- e. Media
  - Include link to visual resource
- f. Media Credit
  - Include text from Google Doc for caption, including credit line
- g. Background image
  - Shouldn't be too busy or distracting

### 2. Visual Resources

- a. For links to external documents/photographs:
  - Download file
  - Upload file to Google Drive folder with title
  - Create shareable link to resource
  - Paste link in Google Sheet

### 3. For More Information

- a. Add to Media Caption column
- b. To add specific pages, write: “For more information, see pg. \_\_\_\_: [hyperlink]”

4. Add footnotes to Text on Google Sheet
  - a. Change citations from footnotes to brackets in text body
    - Ex. [1], [2], [3]
  - b. Add citations to Endnotes Google Doc
  - c. Shorten endnote for successive references to the same source
  - d. Revise footnotes in Narrative Google Doc as necessary

## STEP FOUR: Publish!

1. Follow the [instructions on the Knight Lab website](#) to publish and share your timeline
2. Use the embed code to add your timeline to a website, news article, or other online platform

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Rossi, “Regionalizing the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department,” 61-63

<sup>2</sup> City of Detroit, “About DWSD,” <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/water-and-sewerage-department/resources/about-dwsd>