The project

Virginia Archaeology: On the Map!

http://aejolene.github.io/virginiaarchnews/

Source Files

https://github.com/aejolene/virginiaarchnews

Images / videos for the Gallery

JPG attached. It's not much to see yet

Brief Bio and CC info

I'm the Archaeology Inventory Manager (I wrangle site-level data) for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, where I've been since 2008. Recently, I've found myself diving headfirst into the digital humanities deep end as part of the Institute on Digital Archaeology Method and Practice. I'm interested in learning new ways to visualize the amazing dataset I have at my fingertips.

I'm on Twitter and GitHub as @aejolene.

Tools: Leaflet, Scraper for Chrome, Google News, Open Street Map, Ogre (for GeoJSON conversion), CLAVIN, geojson.io.

Paradata

Project Title: Virginia Archaeology: On the Map!

State of Completion: 10-20% ☹

I manage archaeological data for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Usually, this involves wrangling quite technical information provided by professional archaeologists back into a system designed to be used by professionals. The information isn't accessible to the lay public, and if it were it would be fairly unapproachable. We do, however, celebrate Virginia Archaeology Month in October of every year. The concept of this project was to create a web map showing georeferenced news articles related to sites, museums, and collections throughout Virginia. I didn't give myself much time for this project. I hoped it would be something small and fun that I could figure out with a hard day's work, but it turned out to be bigger than that. I saw this as an opportunity to play and learn, and in that respect, I succeeded.

I'm learning most of these applications used in development for the very first time, so there has definitely been a major learning curve. Unfortunately I should have budgeted a lot of additional time for learning, watching tutorials, and breaking things. I've also faced some pretty significant technology

restrictions. Since I'm working on government equipment, I'm restricted from downloading a lot of software, etc.

My initial hope was to scrape results from Google News relating to Virginia Archaeology over the past few years. I also learned how to pull daily RSS feed results into a Google spreadsheet (using this tutorial), and hoped to set up a dynamic map. I never did get that far, but it would be cool. Scraping older results has been tricky. I've found a few tools to get the job done, but nothing perfect that I've been able to master in a very short amount of time.

I also played around with geoparsing, but I was quite limited by software installation restrictions as well as my own level of technical understanding. In a perfect world, news stories would be added to the map via the RSS feed and automatically geoparsed (allowing for manual correction). Since my reality was much different from the ideal, I cheated by manually entering coordinates, but I input article text into the demo of CLAVIN (with mixed results).

Each of the points on the map represents an article. When clicked, attributes should display including the URL for the original article, title, text snippet from Google, and thumbnail if available. This part isn't coded yet (with T minus 7 hours on the clock); I have found some solutions from others, but I haven't figured out how to implement it on my map.

A lot could be done with the aesthetics, for sure. Currently this is just a naked map. An attractive webpage with links to information about my agency is a goal. It might be interesting to explore a BootLeaf setup with a preview of the article appearing in a pane on the side of the window. Another possibility could include revolving graphics from the articles.

So, the deadline for Heritage Jam is here and I don't have a whole lot to show, but I did learn a ton along the way. I'm going to continue working to make this functional and pretty (pretty functional?) in time for October's Archaeology Month festivities. Watch the GitHub Pages link for changes. This is still just a seed of an idea.

Tools: Leaflet, Scraper for Chrome, Google News, Open Street Map, Ogre (for GeoJSON conversion), CLAVIN, geojson.io.