Digital Humanities Tools for Disaster Response: Hosting Mapathons and Telling Our Stories

By Dr Laurie N. Taylor

Affiliation: University of Florida and Digital Library of the Caribbean

Abstract:
In the era of climate change, we expect ongoing disasters. Libraries, archives, and museums prepare against disasters with preservation and respond to disasters by connecting across our communities. Digital Humanities tools can help us to work collectively in supporting each other. This workshop will review two Open Access Digital Humanities resources for disaster response: Mapathons and StoryMapJS.

For how to host a mapathon, we will review the Nimble Tents Toolkit (https://nimbletents.github.io/mapathon/). A mapathon is an event where participants contribute to an open access map, with mapathons generally done for relief purposes. While many materials are available online as Open Access, relief workers often lack necessary maps to find people and provide help. Mapathons offer the opportunity for communities to contribute to Open Access maps to aid relief efforts by identifying roads, houses, and landmarks from satellite imagery. The Nimble Tents Toolkit provides: an overview of what mapathons are, tools for finding Open Access maps, ways to contribute to maps, and how to host a mapathon. After learning about mapathons, attendees will develop a plan for a mapathon that could be presented to local institutions. The plan will ask:

- Who are your stakeholders who need to approve the mapathon?
- Who are your collaborators?
- Locally, who will present the mapathon and serve as your trainers?
- Who will you connect with globally to promote your mapathon, and potentially gain other participants?
- Where will the mapathon be held (building and room, with internet access and computers)?
- Who operates the social media accounts for recruiting participants?

- What else would you need to do and know to make this work?

For the second portion of this workshop, we will review StoryMapJS for making Open Access stories with maps. In addition to immediate recovery work, disasters leave an ongoing wake that impacts all aspects of life. As communities, we must come together to cope, respond to, and resist in the face of the negative aftermath from disasters. We build and rebuild our communities by sharing our stories. In the Caribbean, with our communities connected across many physical locations, Digital Humanities tools can aid in helping us to document our worlds and share our stories. A simple Digital Humanities tool for making Open Access stories with maps is StoryMapJS (https://storymap.knightlab.com/#make). Environmental disasters are location-based, and there is a critical need to tell the stories of people and events, in context with the geographic places. For this portion of the workshop, we will discuss the need to share our stories and many ways to do so in the digital age. Then, we will learn about StoryMapJS by working together to select one workshop participant and to collectively create and tell one story of their home, travel, and a series of events. It could be the story of a disaster, of travel to ACURIL, or any story collectively selected by the group. We will create a StoryMap to show this story.

This workshop relates to the conference theme and subthemes: "Innovation and Trends" and "Policy, Strategy and Advocacy."