

NET SIGHTINGS: WORLD WIDE WONDERS MAP MASHUPS AND MAP TOOLS

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There are emerging technologies popping up online every day. This column will pull together some of the recent developments in web-based resources and services to help you keep abreast of the changes. In this first installment, get a bird's eye view of how some libraries are developing and sharing map mashups and tools to enhance service delivery. Future columns will include wikis, blogs, simulations and all the latest "sightings" on the web!



Google Maps Launches Its Own Map-Making Tool for End Users

This spring, Google Maps launched their own map-making tool, My Maps (maps.google.com), with the blog post headline "so easy that a caveman could use it". Without a doubt, My Maps is easy to use. Anyone can create a map and add markers, lines and polygons as well as embed images and videos. One drawback of this service when it was first launched was that the maps you created could not be embedded on your web site or blog. As of August 21, 2007, Google added a simple way to copy the code and add it to your own web site.

Embedding a Google My Map in your web site or blog is quick and easy to do. Just follow these three steps:

- 1) Simply select a map or create a map with the map-making tools.
- 2) Click "Link to This Page" in the upper right hand corner of your map.
- 3) Cut and paste the HTML code into your web page or blog.



Figure 1: Code to embed a Google Map in your web site

Fascinated by the Night Sky

The night skies and twinkling skylines of city lights fascinate many people. In August, Google Earth added a new feature – sky maps (<http://earth.google.com/sky/skyedu.html>). To explore the night sky, click the "Sky Button" in Google Earth or go the View menu and choose "Switch to Sky". Rotate, pan and zoom to explore constellations, planets, and stars.

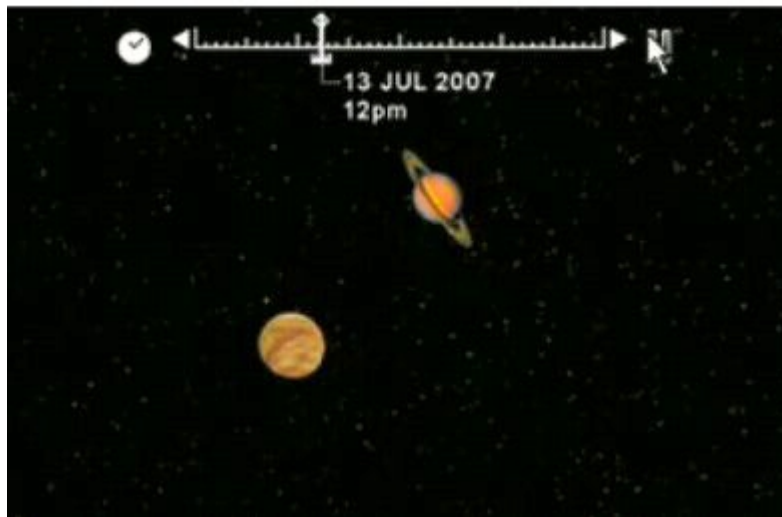


Figure 2. View of the planets moving in their orbits from Google Sky Maps.

Peter Pesti, a Computer Science PhD student at Georgia Institute of Technology, also found the night sky interesting and he combined images of the Earth at night with Google Maps to create Earth Nighttime (<http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/~pesti/night/>).

The images are from NASA's Visible Earth catalogue (http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/view_rec.php?id=1438) and have been used to study urbanization patterns.

Exploring Streets and Views

Stephen Chau, a Product Manager at Google Maps, announced the Street View project and sparked a torrent of discussion about privacy. Google worked with Immersive Media, a company that has designed an eleven lens camera that takes full, high-res video while driving along city streets. The good, the bad and the ugly get captured on film as the car zooms along city streets filming 360 degree images.

The 360° imagery of street view scenes has been praised as providing a rich level of detail for touring and business traveling, allowing you to immerse yourself in streets that you will be visiting to find restaurants, shops, museums, office buildings, or other points of interest.

Not everyone was happy about street views, however. Viewers started to post sightings that infringe on an individual's privacy, from a cat sunning itself inside a house, to individuals leaving strip clubs, even an apartment burglar caught in the act. New galleries of Street View images sprang up overnight called "Street View Sightings" showing funny streets, signs and events, filming bloopers, and examples of privacy invasion. Google responded to privacy complaints by allowing people to report inappropriate images. You can report a particular image by clicking on "Street View Help."

Google has only loaded street view images for selected cities and so far none are outside of the USA. If street views are available for a particular city, a "Street View" button will appear on the upper right hand side of your map. (See Figure 2.) Zoom in on the map until the street details appear. Then, click "Street View" button. This will outline streets with a blue border if they have imagery available and place a human shaped maker on your map. Click the icon or on the street to the load the viewer.

Originally, street views launched with 5 cities: San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, Las Vegas, Denver and Miami. Recently they expanded to include San Diego, Los Angeles, Houston and Orlando.

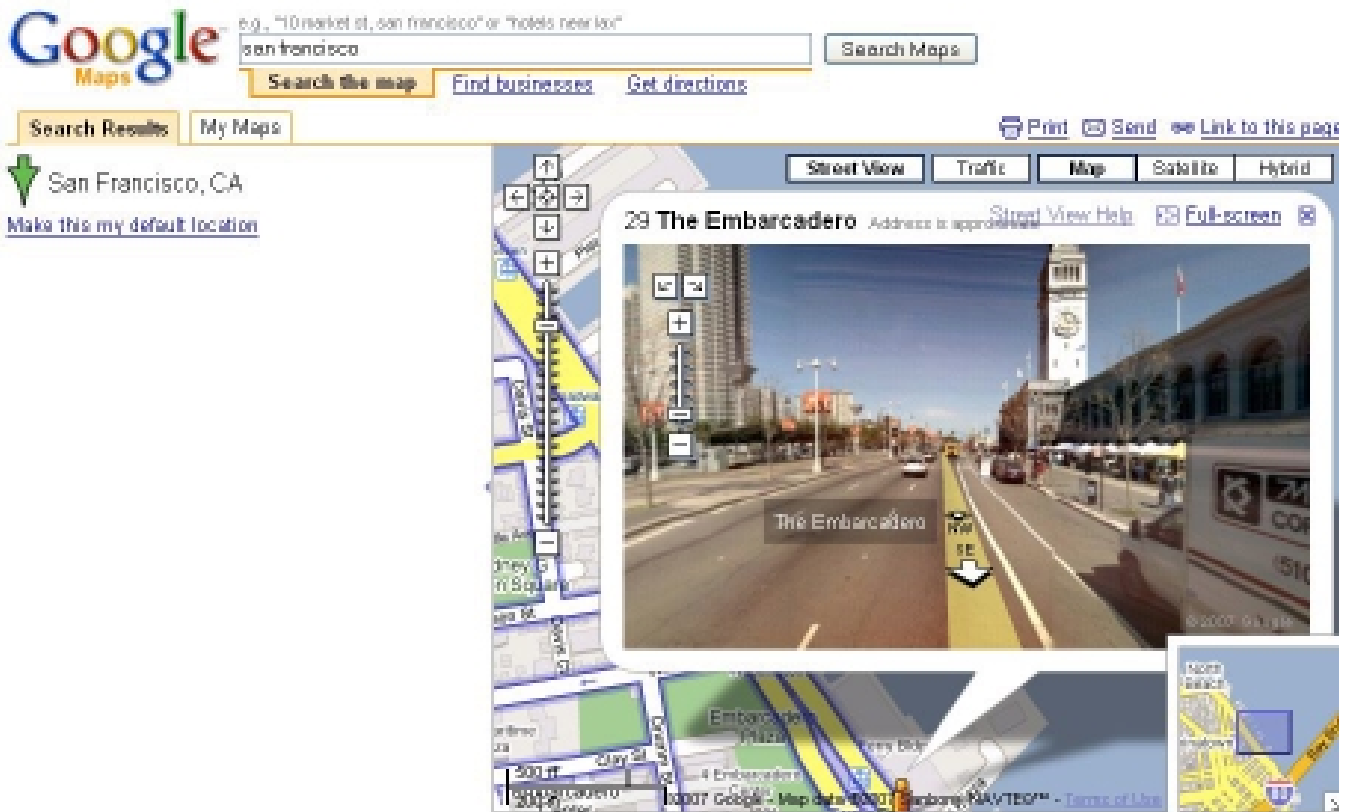


Figure 3. Embarcadero street view in San Francisco, CA.

Microsoft® Live Search Maps offers 3D Views of Canadian, UK and US Cities

Microsoft Live Maps already offered 2D views of cities, aerial and bird's-eye, but Local Live added a 3D view this spring. Three dimension models are constructed by compiling images of cities and terrain for various cities. To switch to 3D mode, click 3D on the floating map control toolbar on the left (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. 3D Model of Parliament Buildings from Microsoft.

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Especially For Bibliophiles and Map Lovers

Last spring Google started displaying places geocoded from literary works as part of the Google Book Search. For example, if you bring up the About page for the book *The Rough Guide to Toronto* by Helen Lovekin and Phil Lee, one section of the page will display a map mashup with pushpins of places mentioned in the book.

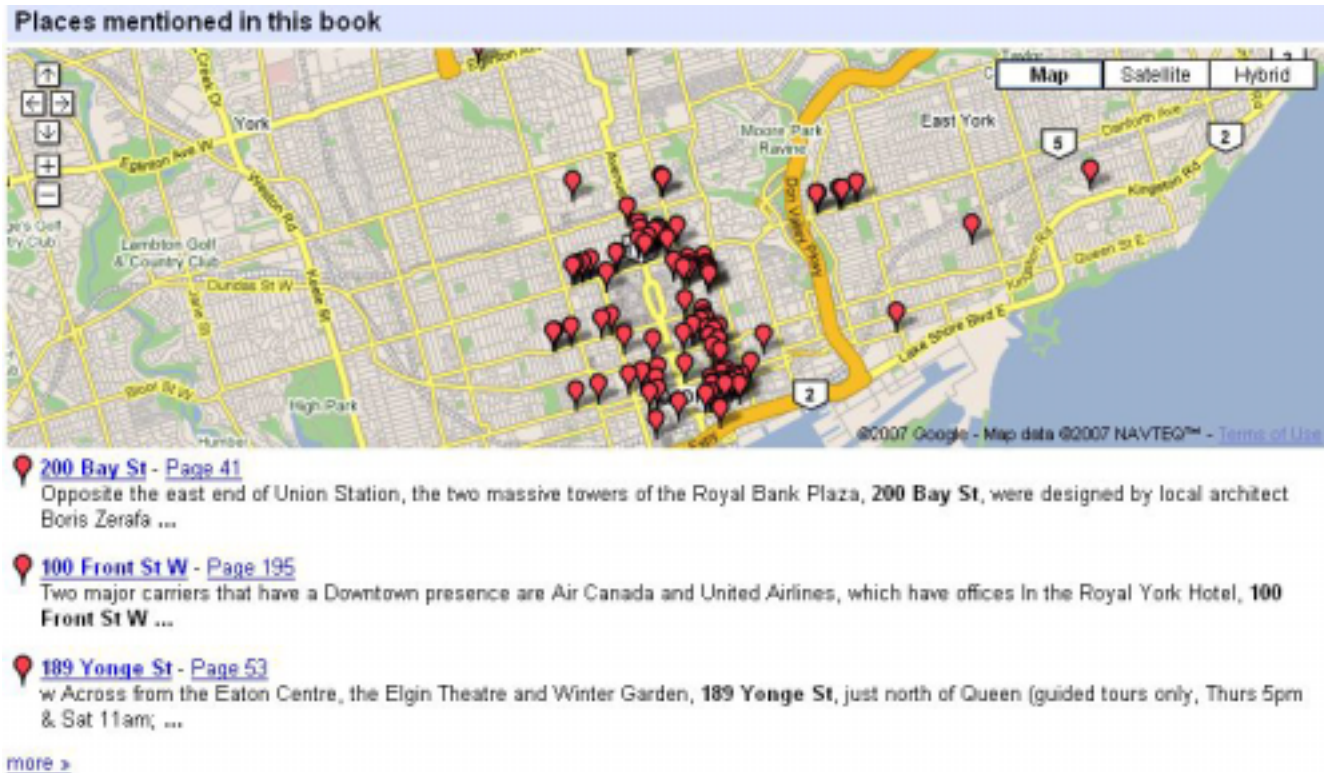


Figure 5. Places Mentioned in *The Rough Guide to Toronto*.

Not to be left behind, Google Earth announced a “Google Book Search” layer this summer. To view this layer, check the “Featured Content” folder in the “Layers” menu. Small book icons will pop up. Click on an icon to display a snippet of text that references that location.

Library Mashup Sightings

Morraine Valley Community Library

Many libraries have added a map mashup to show branch locations. Some libraries have started to put map mashups to work to for information services. Referrals are part and parcel of library information services. Sometimes using a map is a quicker and better way to provide directions to other local libraries, archives, colleges, print shops open 24 hours and so on. Morraine Valley Community College Library has created a Google map mashup and added it to their web site to help with these types of questions (see Figure 6).

Illinois Metropolitan Library Interlibrary Loan Mashup

Would you like to answer the question about where in the world does your library send and receive interlibrary loans? Just map it. Kate Boyle mapped the loans sent and received using the Community Walk site to create the mashup. (<http://www.communitywalk.com/map/41991>). Click on the markers to see the title of the item, the library name and photo of the lending library if available.



Figure 6. Maps of Various Places of Interest to Students, Staff and Faculty (http://www.morainevalley.edu/library/maps/public_libs.htm).

McMaster University Library Aerial Photo Index

How about creating a map to find aerial photos? Cathy Moulder did just that for McMaster University Library's Map Collection. (<http://library.mcmaster.ca/maps/airphotos/1919.htm>)

Thomas Ford Memorial Library

The Western Springs History site publishes photographs and descriptions of some historic homes in the Western Springs, IL area. Aaron Schmidt created a Western Springs History interactive map that displays markers for each of the historic houses and links to information about the houses. (<http://www.westernspringshistory.org/map/>)

In the past six to nine months there has been a flurry of new features added to online mapping services from Yahoo, Google and Microsoft. There's no sign of a slowdown from these companies who are enhancing their geospatial data and services.

If you spot something noteworthy that you'd like to see covered in this column,
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