
Mapping Prohibition: The Challenges of Digitally (Re)creating Historical Spaces

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This poster will explore the challenges of creating digitized historical spaces as faced through the design and subsequent exhibition of the interactive, open-access map, *Prohibition Raids in New Orleans, 1919-1933*. During Prohibition, Federal agents (or ‘Prohis’) raided thousands of establishments throughout the city of New Orleans, arresting thousands more. Using data gleaned from *The Times-Picayune*, one of New Orleans’s oldest newspapers, this map documents the proliferation of these raids through the 1920s into the early 1930s. Currently housed in [The Museum of the American Cocktail](#) in New Orleans, this exhibit is a collaboration between the [Southern Food and Beverage Museum](#) and my digital humanities project, [Intemperance.org](#), an Omeka archive of cocktail culture in New Orleans. The goals and questions raised by this project will be presented in this poster. These include:

1. Summarizing the historical context of the project and considering the ways in which early 20th century New Orleans constructed and created spaces of leisure, as well as assessing the cultural importance of the bars, restaurants, residences, and other locales raided by Prohibition agents;
2. Exploring how to turn historical spaces into modern spaces in ways that are intuitive and accessible to diverse audiences and different publics;

3. Optimizing user experience for those viewers unfamiliar with the historical information presented and/or the digital platform(s) with which the exhibit was created;
4. Acknowledging the limitations of visualization and user experience of digitized historical spaces.

As a project rooted in Public History, the challenge of achieving the aforementioned goals lay in the digital platform. This poster will explain the exhibit’s functionality goals and specific interactivity issues encountered during the exhibition’s creation. This includes the ability to

- optionally read a description of the exhibit and summarized history;
- view details of each individual Prohibition raid;
- organize and view raids by year;
- filter by type of establishment raided;
- zoom in, zoom out, and view the page in full.

In order to achieve these goals, the exhibit was initially built in Neatline using the [Starter Theme from Scholars’ Lab](#), which works capably on any modern browser. Neatline advantageously allows users to explore the breadth of the historical archive by connecting Neatline points to Omeka items. When displayed on the Museum’s multitouch tablet, however, issues of mobile compatibility and long loading times resulted in poor user experience. Ultimately, we had to modify the exhibition by changing the visualization platform to Tableau Public. Tableau not only circumvents the mobile compatibility issues found with Neatline, but it allows users to interactively filter historical data by year and raid type, a feature not currently possible in Neatline.

While both Neatline and Tableau are capable platforms to achieve these goals, each has its own advantages. With these specific goals in mind, this poster will furthermore compare and contrast the advantages and limitations of Neatline and Tableau Public as both mobile and desktop interfaces. This poster

will furthermore highlight the exhibition's successful outcomes as well as the limitations of its interactivity. Much could be learned about visualization from the challenges faced in the creation of this exhibition.