

Community as a Geographic Story Map

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Community as a Geographic Story Map

By Kathy Thornhill



*Road Map to Learning: HSU
Community Partner Sites*

Sam Salek

Sam Salek will graduate from HSU in Fall 2021 with a degree in Geography. While at HSU, Salek took advantage of opportunities to enhance her education and advance her skillset. Her legacy includes the [*Road Map to Learning: HSU Community Partner Sites*](#), an interactive, geographical Story Map charting local community partners to bus routes. The *Road Map to Learning* includes mapped links to explore some of the most popular community learning sites in the greater Arcata and Eureka area, and associated bus routes.

Salek transferred to HSU from Santa Rosa Junior College originally as an Environmental Studies major. She chose Humboldt State as it seemed the perfect place to study the environment. However, in her first semester, she took a Geographic Research and Writing course that inspired her to change her major to Geography. She was excited about the technical aspects of geography and the many career paths the major offers. In her second year at HSU, she was hired by the Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL) to do database work. She expanded her role to include website maintenance and accessibility for the Academic and Career Advising Center, as well as other technical work for both centers.

The Story Map idea stemmed from a presentation that Raven Palomera, Hispanic Serving Institution Stem Coordinator, had given about HSU's Place Based Learning Communities. Salek used this project to bring her passion into her current workplace. "When I first started at CCBL, I thought it would be great to have that kind of visual representation of the community partner sites. I like things in map form, which makes sense so I was happy to get involved in something like that." She went on to explain the synergy between CCBL and this Story Map. "A community you can think of as a geographic entity. The work that CCBL does just lends itself to tell geographic stories. Using a Story Map allows you to tell the work that CCBL, community partners and students are doing in those courses."

Although Salek had built a Story Map in a cartography course, she had to learn quite a bit for this project. Salek explained that there are two different types, the classic ESRI Story Maps, which are currently being phased out, and the current ArcGIS Story Maps. This project gave her more real-world, hands-on experience delving into the platform. She noted that Story Maps are applicable to many different fields. "I've seen Story Maps for government entities, journalists use them to tell stories, scientists use them to show research.

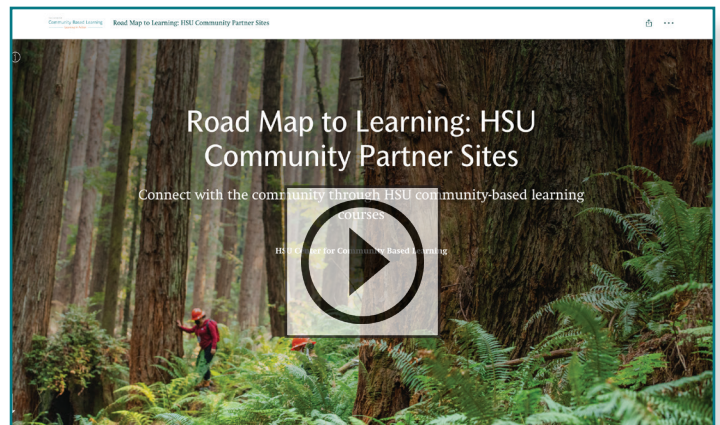


“Using a Story Map allows you to tell the work that CCBL, community partners and students are doing in those courses.”

It is useful technology. Web maps in general, you see them everywhere, but having the experience of creating them is something that I wanted to do while I was in school.”

Salek encouraged other students to learn the platform. “Take advantage of the fact that we have access to all the technology that is included in our school fees right now. It is a great time to learn. It is so easy to jump into it and mess around. There are a lot of different features to explore. It is a great platform.”

She explained the process she went through to create the Story Map took longer than expected and had aspects that she had not expected, such as getting permission from community partners to use their photos. Salek was grateful for the opportunity to create this project in a learning environment



and feels more prepared for her professional experience. She enjoyed working with the community partners throughout the process and learning the different capabilities and possibilities of the Story Map platform. Salek acknowledged that connecting the bus map took a lot of work, but she is really happy with how it turned out. She also shared ideas for enhancing the Story Map in the future, including featuring specific partner organizations and giving additional context for what it is like to work with different organizations. Salek explained, “There are lots of opportunities to tell stories like those with all the program sites around town, to delve into the work they are doing and share the student experiences.”

Salek credited Faith Rehagen and Reanne Meighan from Amy Rock’s Community Geography course for the original bus map concept. She explained, “I sourced and used entirely new data for all of the map content (routes, stops, program sites, etc.), but the design framework is essentially the same as the product they originally created.” She also thanked Amy Rock “for her continued help and support.”

The CCBL staff is thrilled with the result and appreciate all the efforts to make this useful tool available.

