

THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER featured article

Travel though Space-Time with NYPL's Map Tool.

Audrey Wachs

TRAVEL THOUGH SPACE-TIME WITH THE NYPL'S MAP TOOL

Posted on May 18, 2017 by urbanNext



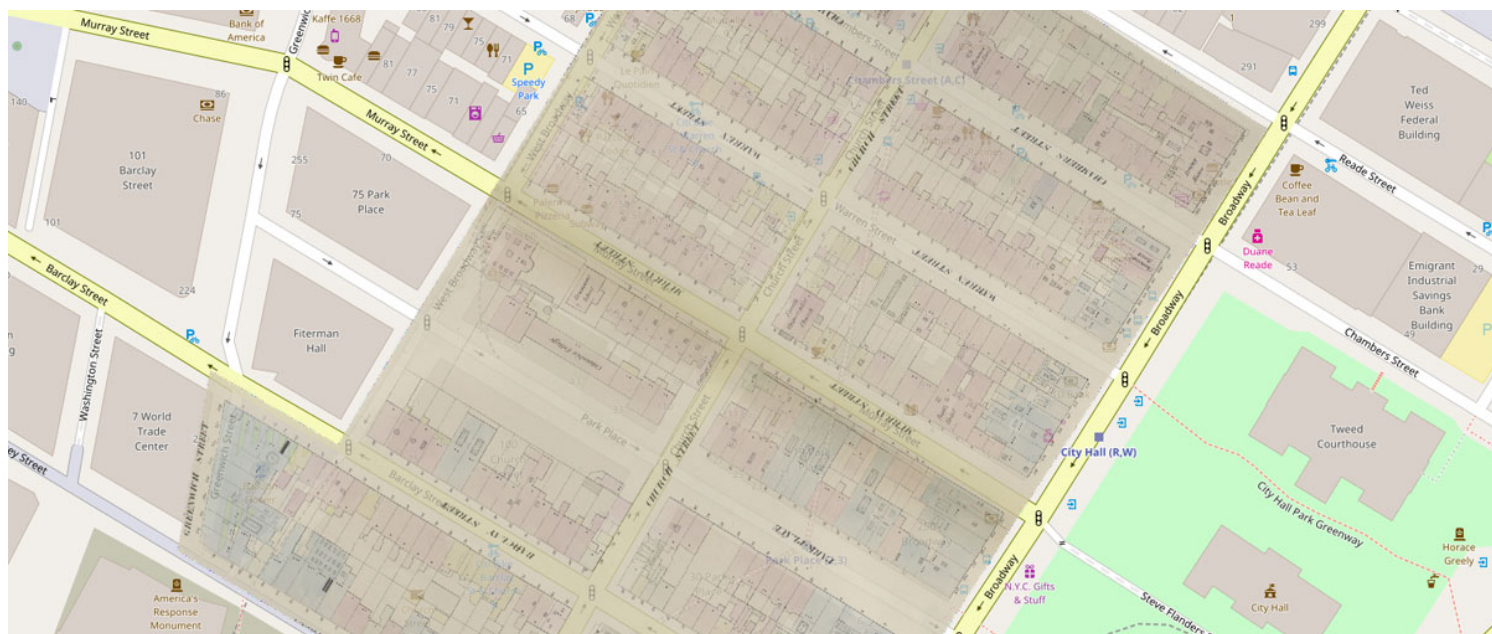
Categories: [Audrey Wachs](#), [Essay](#), [High Density](#), [Territory and mobility](#), [The Architect's Newspaper](#)

Tags: [Background](#), [Bigdata](#), [City](#), [Data](#), [Database](#), [Essay](#), [Geospatial](#), [Maps](#), [New York](#), [New York Public Library](#), [Notes towards a History of Urbanism](#), [Open data city](#), [Space](#), [Time](#), [Urban conditions](#), [Urban infrastructure](#), [Urban planning](#), [Urban sprawl](#), [Visualization](#)

urbanNext Lexicon

Travel through Space-Time with the NYPL's Map Tool
<https://urbannext.net/travel-through-space-time-with-the-nypls-map-tool/>

The past few months have been a blessing to New York City [map lovers](#): Cartography fiends can browse [future skyscrapers](#), [prepare for L-mageddon](#), and [discover the city's noisiest neighborhoods](#) or [hidden civil rights histories](#). Now, the [New York Public Library](#) (NYPL) has unveiled what could be—for history nerds, at least—the mother of all maps: The [NYC Space/Time Directory](#), a “digital time-travel service” that combines the library’s map collection with geospatial tools to illuminate the city’s messy and beautiful development over more than a century.



Travel through space-time with a new map tool from the New York Public Library. (Courtesy NYPL)

The project's first map takes 5,000 street maps from across the city and folds them into one interactive database that spans a century, from 1850–1950. [Maps by Decade](#) aggregates maps from the NYPL collection, an improvement on the library's previous georectification tool, the Map Warper. The NYC Space/Time Directory, which includes more than 8,000 maps and 40,000 geo-referenced photos and counting, is supported by a grant from the Knight Foundation.

Ready to time travel? A click on The Architect's Newspaper's home neighborhood of Tribeca shows six maps from 165 years ago. The user can transpose a ward map from 1852 onto present-day streets, or view the same map in the NYPL's digital collections, or take the map for a spin in the Map Warper, below:

ISSN : 2575-5374

urbanNext Lexicon

Travel through Space-Time with the NYPL's Map Tool
<https://urbannext.net/travel-through-space-time-with-the-nypls-map-tool/>

The New York Public Library
NYC Space/Time Directory | Maps by Decade

1850 - 1859 1860s →

Back to overview

6 maps selected — click again to unlock selection

[Plate 9: Map bounded by Greenwich Street, Barclay Street, College Place...
Year published: 1852
Remove from map
View in Map Warper
View in Digital Collections
View data on geoson.io

[3rd Ward, Plate 5: Map bounded by College Place, West Broadway, Read...
Year published: 1855
View on map
View in Map Warper
View in Digital Collections
View data on geoson.io

[Plate 9: Map bounded by Pearl Street, Chatham Street, Duane Street, Ro...
Year published: 1857
View on map
View in Map Warper
View in Digital Collections
View data on geoson.io

[Plate 7: Map bounded by Murray Street, Broadway, Dey Street, West Stre...
Year published: 1857
View on map
View in Map Warper
View in Digital Collections
View data on geoson.io

[Plate 7: Map bounded by Murray Street, Broadway, Dey Street, West Stre...
Year published: 1857
View on map

How cool is that? (Courtesy NYPL)

Better yet, the project is all open source. Users can access each map's [geospatial data](#), and the source code for Maps by Decade is on [GitHub](#). For those who wish to collaborate on more mapping projects, Hyperallergic [reports](#) that NYPL's Space/Time Directory Engineer Bert Spaan is organizing [IRL meetups](#) around the city to make more maps using the library's resources.

urbanNext Lexicon

Travel though Space-Time with the NYPL's Map Tool
<https://urbannext.net/travel-though-space-time-with-the-nypls-map-tool/>

ISSN : 2575-5374