Custom Basemaps with Mapbox Studio

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Custom Basemaps with Mapbox Studio

Welcome to the Essential ArcGIS Task Sheet Series. This series supplements the Iowa State University Geospatial Technology Training Program short course series. The task sheets are designed to provide quick, easy instructions for performing mapping tasks.

Mapbox is a versatile mapping platform that allows users to build maps and apps. This task sheet will focus on Mapbox Studio, an interface for styling custom basemaps. Mapbox provides seven template styles from which to start, or users can start from scratch. Check out what has been done with Mapbox here: https://www.mapbox.com/gallery/. Mapbox uses data from Open Street Maps (OSM), so it would be helpful to be familiar with OSM: https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Map_Features. This task sheet will guide you in customizing a basemap that emphasizes water and parks.

1. Getting Started

   a. To get started, navigate to https://www.mapbox.com/studio/ in a web browser. If you do not already have a username, go ahead and sign up for Mapbox here.

   b. Once you have logged in or created an account, click on Styles in the left hand panel. One the next page, click New Style to begin customizing a basemap.

   c. You have the option to start from Empty style or begin from a template. In this case we are going to build off a template. Select Light and click Create.

2. Customizing Labels

   a. There are multiple ways to change the font, size, halo, and color of text fields. One way is to open the Fonts stacks panel by clicking Properties, and select Font stacks.

   b. This will open up all the different text styles set previously in the map template. By default, they are arranged in groups By value, which show all the types of text that have the same style. To see each type of text, select By property.

   c. Sort the Font stacks by Value. There should be six groups of text types. We will be changing the first font listed for each group. The second font listed is the fallback font, which will be used if the primary font is not supported (See example where the fallback font is used for street names in a different language).

   d. For the first two groups, change the primary font to Call Five S Negative OT Reg. For the remaining groups, use a font called Call Five L OT Regular. Leave the secondary font as the default.
3. Customizing fill colors

a. At the bottom of the layers panel, click Properties, and then click Colors. Just as with the Font stacks, Colors can be sorted by value or by property.

b. Find the Fill color for water features. Click on the color code to open the editing box. Adjust the color to be a bold, deep blue of your liking. Adjust the opacity slider at the bottom of the editing box to 50%.

c. Now, find the parks feature. Click on parks to open up the style panel. Find a nice green to represent parks.

d. Next, click on the icon next to Opacity and Enable zoom function. Here, we can adjust the Opacity according to the level of zoom. For the first stop, use a zoom level of 5 and an opacity of 0. For the second stop, use a zoom of 15 and an opacity of .75. This will create an effect of parks slowly appearing as you zoom into the map.

4. Editing, Publishing, Sharing

a. As aforementioned, there are multiple ways to edit how features are displayed. Another way is to click directly on the map—a list of features in that location will appear. Click on the name of the feature to start editing.

b. As you move around your map, you might find some issues. For example, now that we've changed the color of water features, the text labels for water features may be difficult to see. Simply click on the label, select waterway-label, and change to the text color so that it contrasts with the water.

c. After you are satisfied with the changes you've made to your map, change the name of your style to Water & Parks, and then click Publish. (If you publish without renaming the style, it will simply update the Light style).

d. After you have Published your map style, click Preview, develop & use.

e. The following page provides the links and tools you need to share your map with others, use it as a basemap in a Leaflet web map, or integrate it into a GIS app.

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