

or less—peaking at thirty-seven in 1971, the police department’s deadliest year since 1929.

Those figures strongly suggest that the decisive factor in the escalation of fatal state violence in Detroit was not the Cavanagh administration’s liberal War on Crime. It was the relentless repression that followed the 1967 uprising, driven by politicians beholden to white voters’ fear and rage. A distinction between the site’s two detailed cases highlights the change. The patrolman who stopped Scott in 1963 did so in violation of department rules, which prohibiting him from pulling someone over without cause. The officer who stopped Buck and Mitchell eight years later was working in a unit designed to bait its targets into the sort of confrontation that got them killed. The unit had been created nine months earlier, not by Cavanagh but by his conservative successor.

That is not to suggest that *Detroit under Fire* is flawed. In writing its text, the students followed the scholarship’s dominant narrative, a perfectly reasonable move to make. But it is not the narrative that makes the site so valuable. It is the data that the students developed, the detailed accounting of unconscionable violence committed in the name of order: the work of superb historians speaking to one of the most urgent issues of our time by uncovering the brutal facts of urban America’s torturous past.

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ClioVis: Visualizing Connections. <https://cliovis.com>. Created and maintained by Erika Bsumek. Reviewed Aug. 1, 2023–Oct. 20, 2023.

ClioVis provides an interactive, visual approach to historical events and sources. The platform is developed and maintained by a small team at the University of Texas at Austin led by Erika Bsumek and the developers Ian Diaz, and Braeden Kennedy. The team has built an incredibly useful platform for history educators.

The core visual focus of the platform is a timeline where historical events are laid out with a node and, if there is a duration for the event, a visual indicator that spans time. In the background, a colored band can indicate more general durations (for example, the years of World War II) that also help visually distinguish nodes within broader events. Events are laid out chronologically, as one would expect with any timeline tool, but the innovation here is the ability to link together related nodes. A timeline displaying the onset of the Cold War, for example, can begin with a node and duration that spans 1945 to 1990. But the originating Cold War node can also point to related, additional nodes on the timeline such as the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, or the Iron Curtain. Thus, ClioVis helps not only visualize the chronology of events but also emphasizes the connections and contingencies of historical moments and how they relate to one another. Think of it as a chronological mind map.

The process of creating a timeline is fairly straightforward. The editing interface provides a pane for creating an event title, duration, description, the ability to embed images, audio, or video, include references, and select a color for the category and event. The categories are optional but free-form, meaning you can create as many categories as necessary with their own color coding to visually track different kinds of events. Returning to the Cold War example, one color could represent military conflicts, another political or diplomatic maneuvering, and another a social or cultural aspect of an event. Linking between nodes is also quite simple, either by dragging and dropping to another node or by opening the “Connections Manager” in an individual node’s editing pane. ClioVis achieves an incredible amount of visual styling without becoming overly cluttered.

In addition to the timeline creator, other tools for working in the platform include a notepad, a chat window for sending messages to other members on a project, a genealogy importer that searches open records for genealogical information that can be added to a timeline, and a presentation mode that hides the editing panes and focuses on the timeline.

The platform provides several video explanations for getting started for educators, librarians, and researchers. Pricing is reasonable, with a free tier offering a way to mostly experiment with the platform. Premium pricing includes unlimited projects, unlimited timeline events, and a much higher limit on the number of images or audio files that can be uploaded. Additional enterprise and group pricing are available that include the ability to integrate into a learning management system. The pricing is lower for users with an .edu email address. All money is funneled back into the development of the project.

While there is much to applaud about the project, some nit-picky points can be raised. The design of the website is not always particularly clean (stock photos feel out of place) and the timeline builder is not particularly intuitive. Thankfully, the project provides several brief video tutorials to explain how it operates. From a technical standpoint, there is no obvious sense of how the project has been built—it is not immediately clear what language or

framework powers the site, making it a little harder to determine the sustainability or longevity of the project and the technical sophistication that underlies it (a cursory look at the source code suggests it is a Vue.js application, but a “Technical Notes” section would be very welcome). However, the platform does provide a way to download material as a comma-separated document or as a Word document if one has concerns about the longevity of content in the platform.

These minor design details aside, educators will find ClioVis a tremendously useful tool for students exploring historical events and the connections among them. As a tool for research, organizing ideas, and presenting material, ClioVis provides a rich set of options that are well suited for chronological visualizations.

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