

U.S. Archives and Climate Change



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October 2021 presentation for UIUC iSchool

What are the climate risks to archives – short and long-term?

- Archives are institutions (repositories) that care for archival materials – university research libraries, county vital statistics offices, state and national archives, etc.
- Short-term and long-term risks
 - Disasters (fires, hurricanes, floods, etc)
 - Sea-level rise and climate migration



Early Research

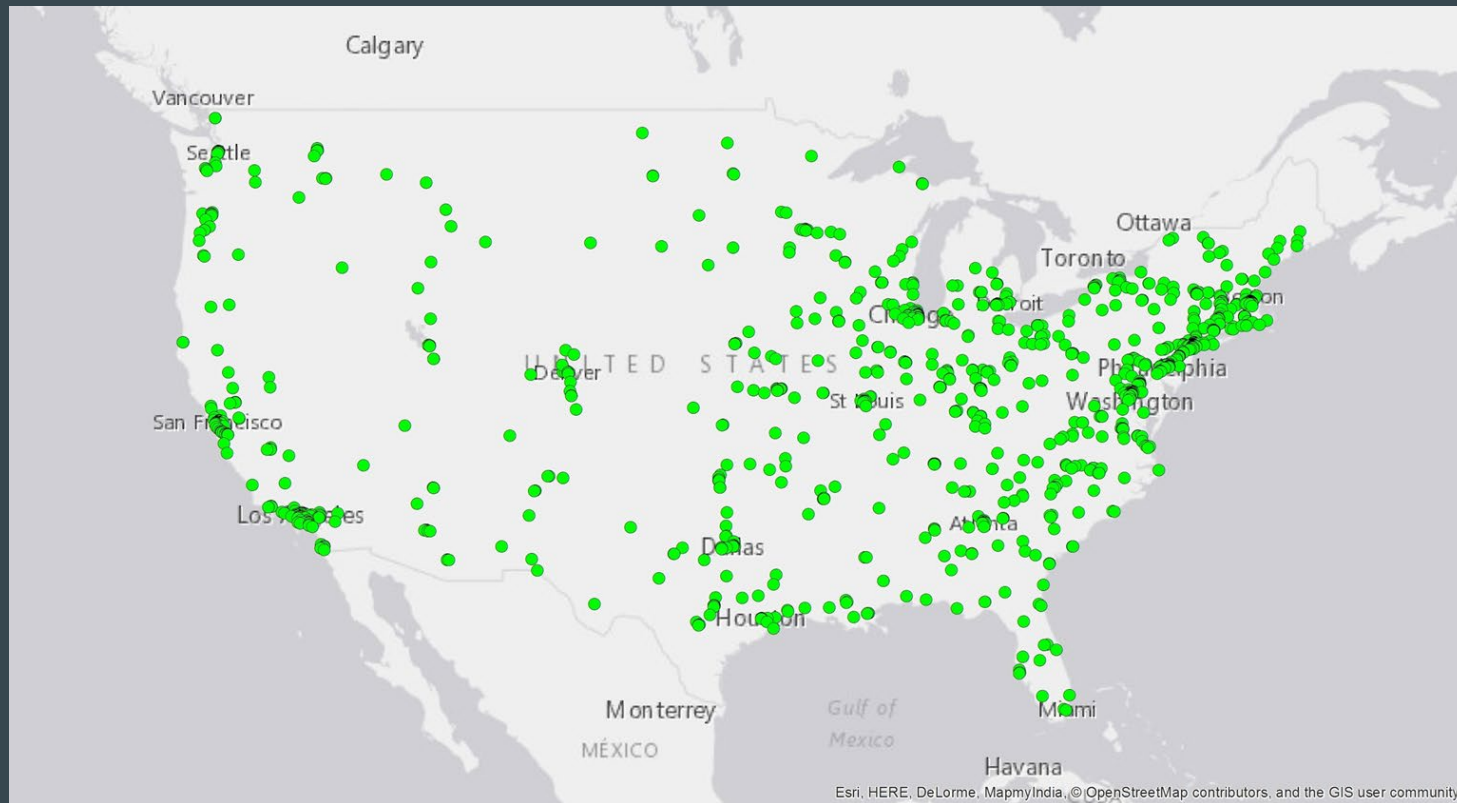
Susceptibility to climate change threats like sea level rise, storm surge, surface water flooding, and humidity, all influenced by a combination of temperature rise and increased precipitation, at a worst case scenario were assessed for 1232 archival repositories. Results indicate that approximately 98.8% of archives are likely to be affected by at least one climate risk factor.

(Tara Mazurczyk, Nathan Piekielek, Eira Tansey, and Ben Goldman. "American archives and climate change: Risks and adaptation." *Climate risk management* 20 (2018): 11-125.)

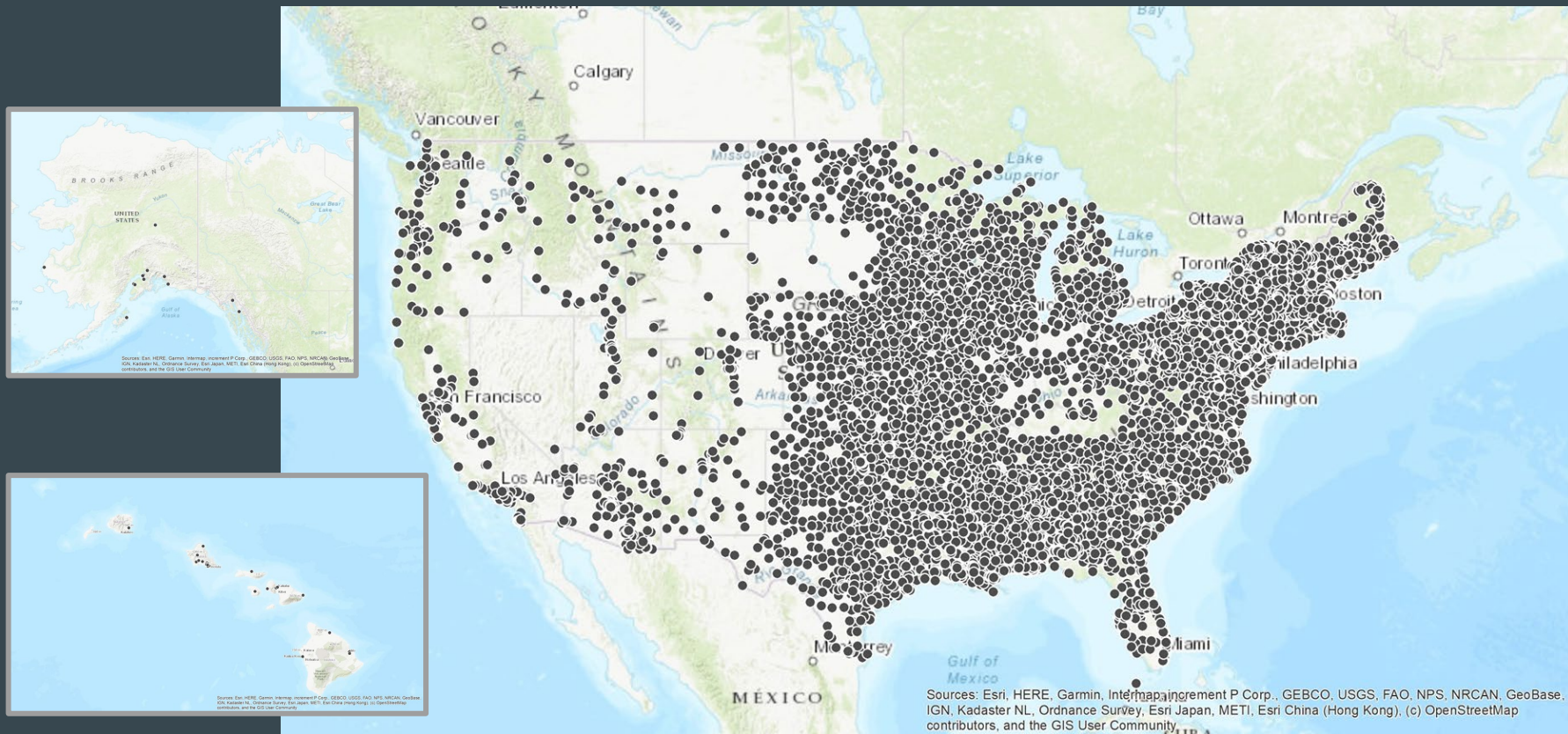
Archives in the US by the RepoData numbers

- 151 archival organizations contacted
- Over 25,000 unique data points for repositories in all 50 states + Washington DC
- Over 18,000 street location data points
 - The difference between these two numbers is mostly due to mailing addresses (e.g., PO Boxes)
- Previous publicly-available US repository data set contained 1,232 locations (OCLC ArchiveGrid)
- More information at repositorydata.wordpress.com/

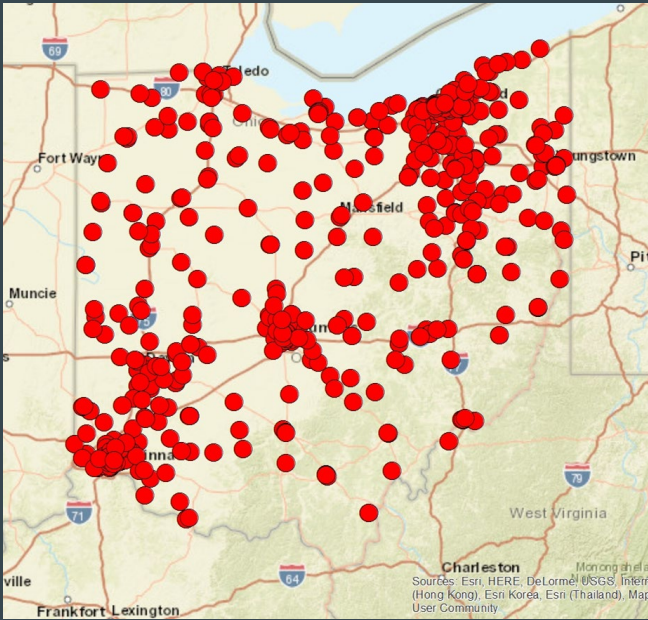
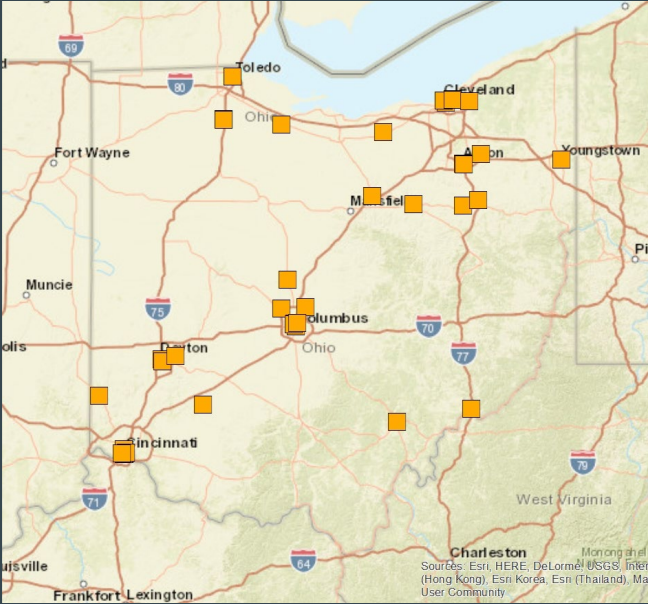
Where are these archives? (Before RepoData)



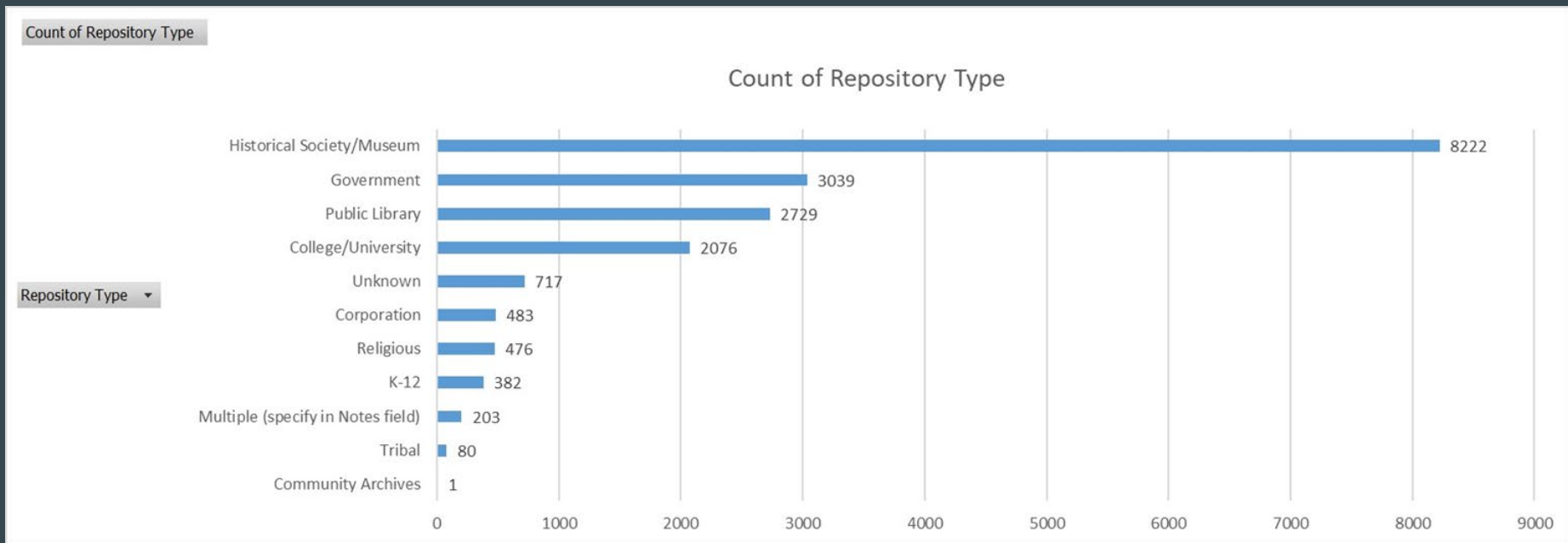
Where are these archives? (After RepoData)



Before RepoData and After RepoData

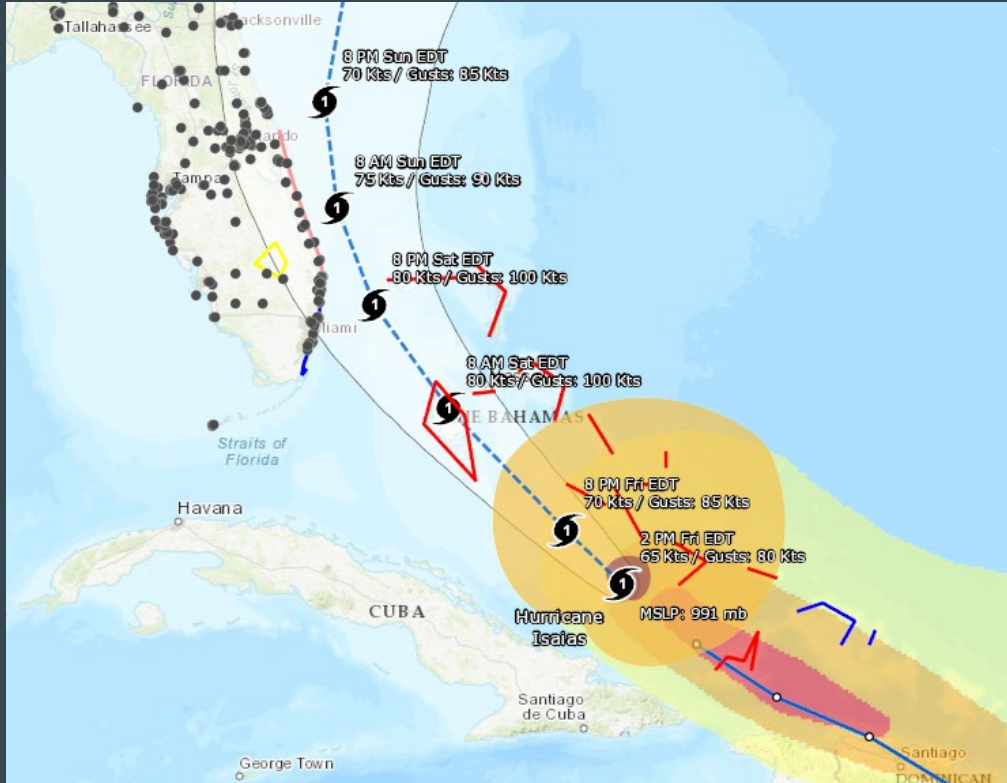


What do we know about them?



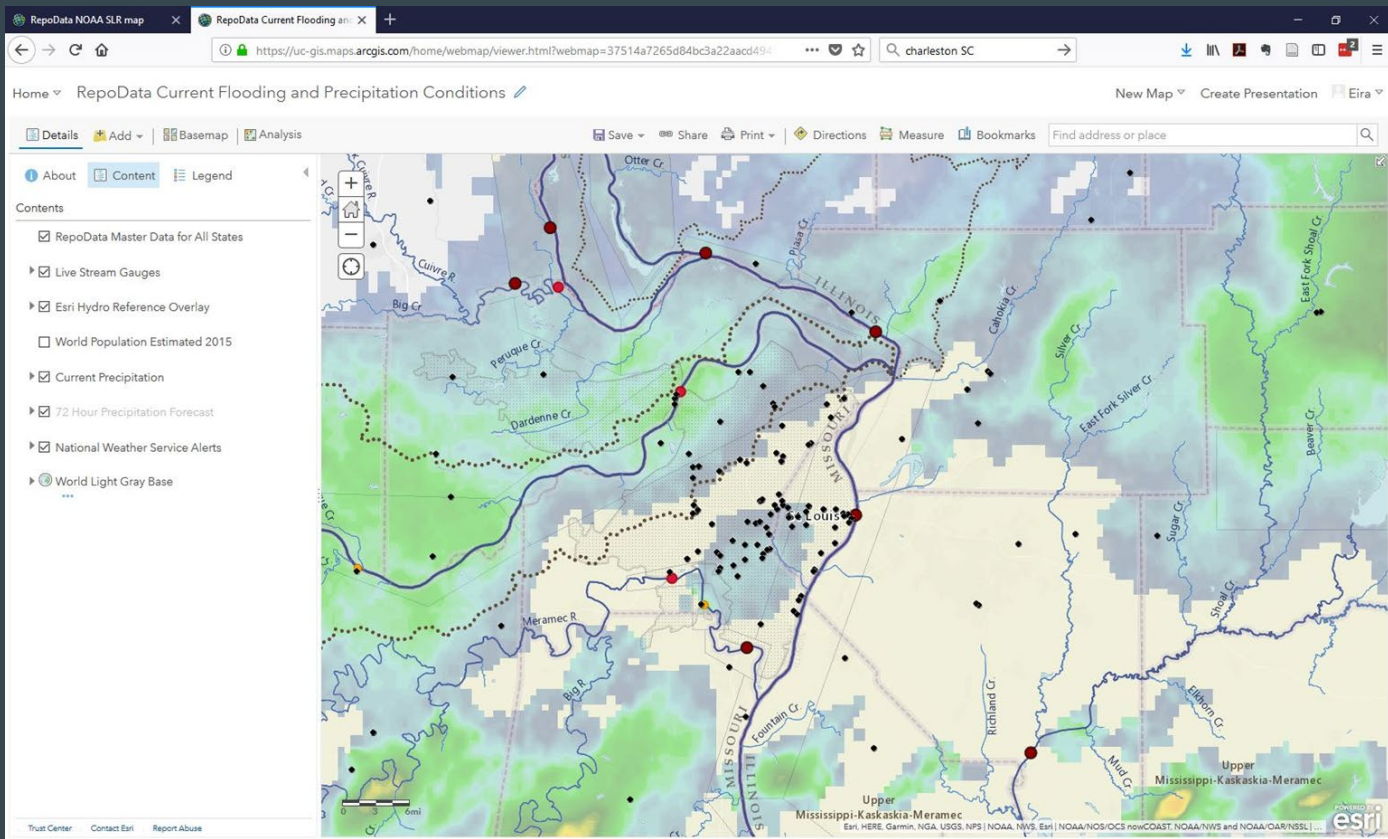
This chart only includes geocoded addresses

Why is this useful? (hurricane impacts –Hurricane Isaias)

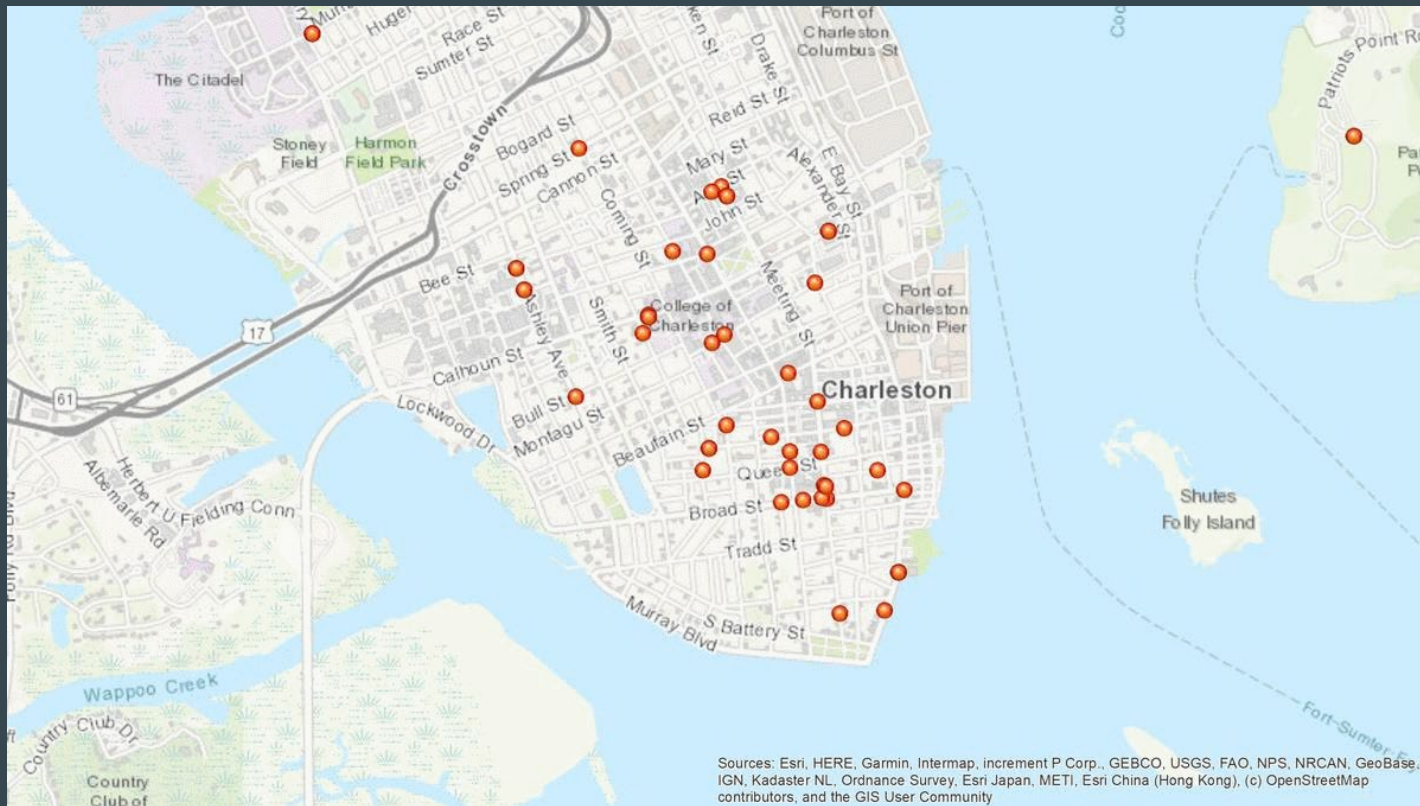


<https://arcg.is/Tm5iu>

Why is this useful? (Flooding & current weather - St. Louis)



Why is this useful? (Sea-level rise - Charleston)



<https://arcg.is/Tm5iu>

What are archivists doing about climate change threats?

- The profession is still mostly in the “raising awareness” phase
- Development of disaster response networks (mostly local and state level)
- Integrating GIS data into work with emergency management agencies
- What inspiration can we draw from examples like the New Deal’s Historical Records Survey?



Historical Records Survey in
Cincinnati and Cleveland