

Introduction to Website Building



Taught By: Ayah Aboelela and Avery Blankenship
Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI)

GRMN 1101

Professor Carolin Fuchs

Fall 2024, November 12, 2024

Workshop Agenda

- Understand best practices in website creation.
- Understand the strengths of building a website with WordPress and Wix.
- Learn how to build a website with WordPress
- For more information, see: [Introduction to Wordpress Handout](#)

Handouts and slides are available at:

bit.ly/fa24-fuchs-grmn1101-wordpress

Website Building Vocabulary

- **Pages:** these are the main areas of your website that your audience will be able to navigate in your site's menu
- **Domain:** your domain name is the unique URL that leads to your website
- **Design:** the aesthetic choices for your website, including colors, font, and more

Thinking Critically about Website Building

Why are you building a website?

- A website is just like a research report or an essay—it needs to clearly communicate its message or purpose to a specific audience.
- Critical first steps in website design are to consider **who** your audience is, **what** they will need to be able to find and do on your site, and **how** they will move through the site.
- It can be tempting to add media and components to a website that don't contribute to the site's message/purpose, but resist this temptation. Going into any site-building platform with a clear idea of what your site needs is essential! Anything unnecessary is likely to be distracting.

Starting Points: Questions to Consider

- *Who* is this site for?
- *Why* would your identified audience(s) visit your site?
- *How* will they find what they need, and navigate around?

Starting Points: Questions (cont.)

- **What is the purpose** of this site?
 - How can you communicate this clearly in the site's content and design?
- **Can *everyone* use your site effectively?** Is it accessible on mobile devices, and to people with disabilities?
- How can you make **smart design choices** to enhance the site's
 - Look
 - Navigability
 - Functionality
 - Accessibility

Considerations when planning your website

- Structure
 - Audience (Message/Purpose)
 - Content (Posts, Bio, Images)
 - Navigability (Headers, Pages, Menus, Hyperlinks)
 - Accessibility (Color scheme, Readability, Alt text)
- User Experience and Impact
 - Look (Font size, Typeface)
 - Media (Images, Embedded elements)
 - Other Functionalities (Widgets, Buttons, etc.)

Website building tools: WordPress and Wix

What are WordPress and Wix?

- WordPress and Wix are professional **website-building tools** that allow you to build your own website
- They provide a free **domain name** with “WordPress” or “wixsite” in the URL, but both have paid versions
- They both support **themes** (both), **widgets** (WordPress), and **apps** (Wix) to customize your website



WordPress vs Wix



WordPress	Wix
Often used for academic websites	Often used for businesses and artistic websites
Template-based design (You can change your theme at any time)	Customizable design that is less template-bound (You cannot change your template on an existing site)
Better for websites with a blog component (has features for tagging and categorizing)	AI Design feature—recommends features to you

WordPress and Wix examples

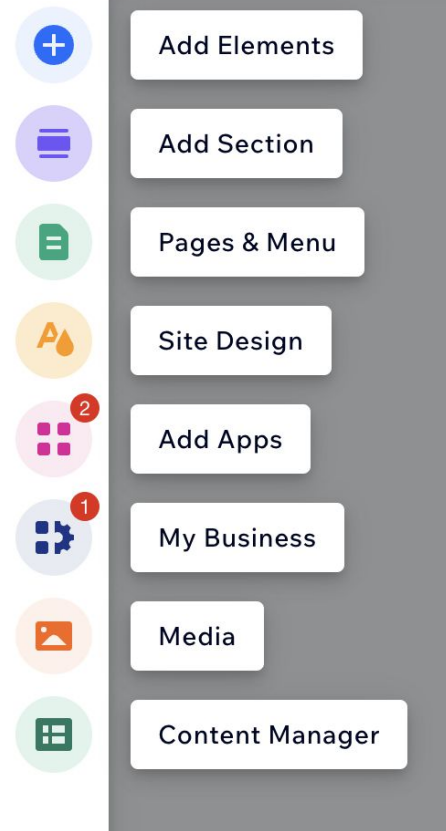


WordPress	Wix
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https://web.northeastern.edu/nulab/	https://www.helenakruger.com/
https://dsg.northeastern.edu/	https://www.laurabaross.com/

Building your website with Wix

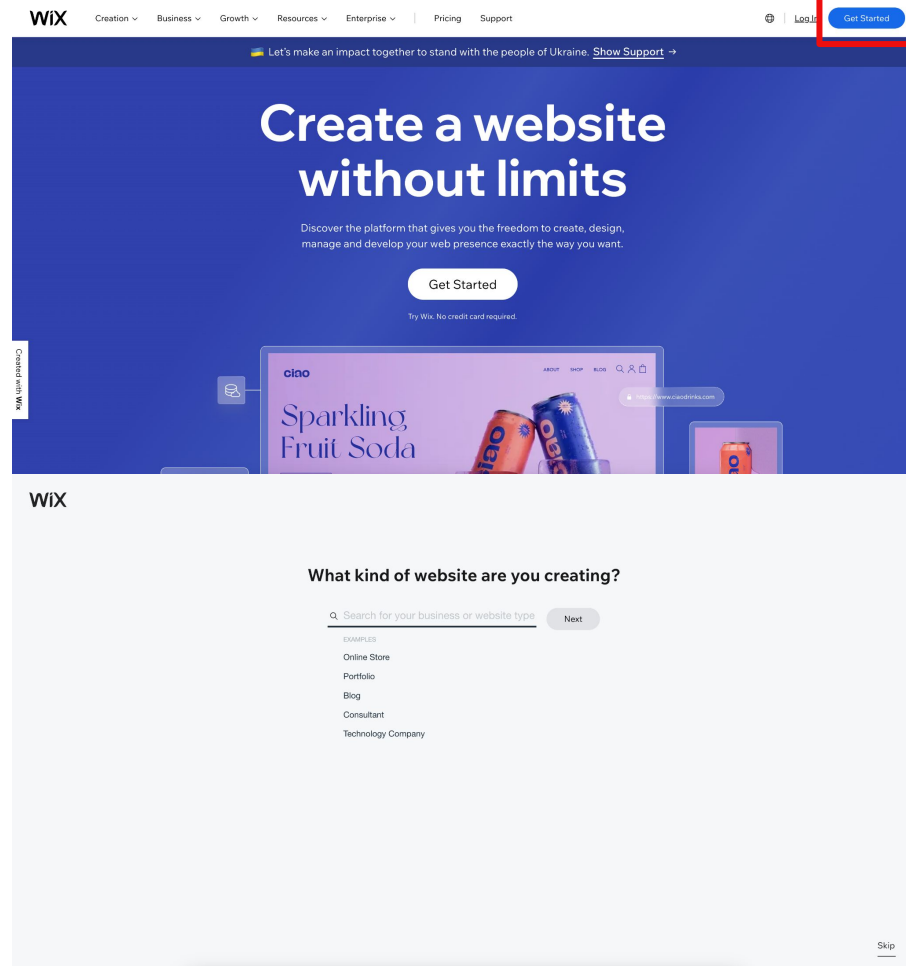
Wix vocabulary

- **Element:** the basic unit of content for your site. Headings, paragraphs, media, buttons, lists, galleries etc. are elements.
- **Section:** pages are divided into large chunks of content called “Sections.” They can be easily repositioned to change the layout of the page.
- **Pages & Menu:** pages are collections of sections and the menu lets your user navigate between them. You might have a “Home” page, an “About Me” page, and a “Projects” page on your website.
- **Site Design:** this is where you can apply themes to coordinate your website’s aesthetics across its pages.
- **Apps:** these are Wix-specific widgets designed for businesses, including things like ordering platforms, live chats etc.



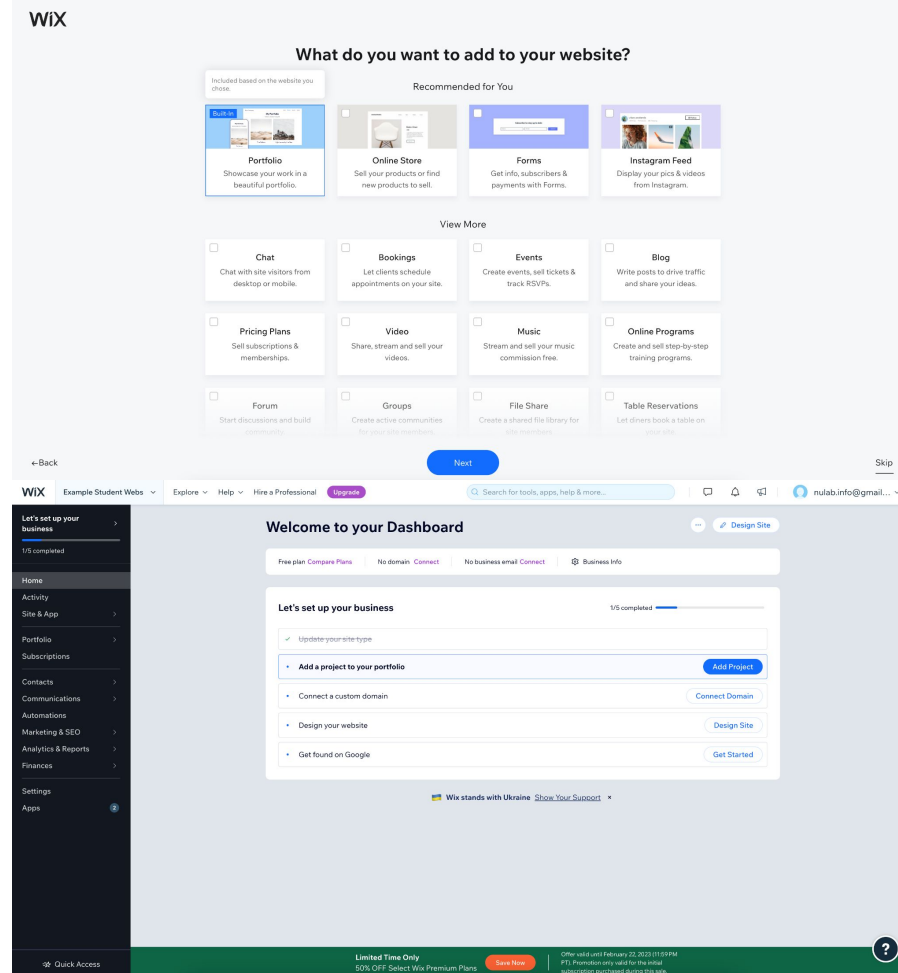
Getting started

- Go to <https://www.wix.com/> and click “**Get Started.**” Sign up for a Wix account using your professional email.
- Click “**Create New Site,**” and then select what kind of site you want to create (e.g. “**Portfolio**”).
- Give your site a name (this doesn’t need to be the domain name).



Getting started

- Select any elements you want to include (e.g. “Online Store,” “Forms,” “Events”). You can edit these later.
- Select “Go to Dashboard” to go to the back-end hub of your website.
- From here you can design your website, connect a domain that you might own, and add type specific content (e.g. projects for a portfolio).



Designing your website

- Once you click on “Design Site” in the dashboard, you will be asked to choose a starting point: customizing an existing template, or generating a design with AI
- We recommend choosing a template, as you have more creative and operational control in the Wix Editor.

WIX | ← Back

How would you like to design your website?



Customize a Template

Browse thousands of designs, then pick one to customize.

Pick a Template



Generate a Design with AI

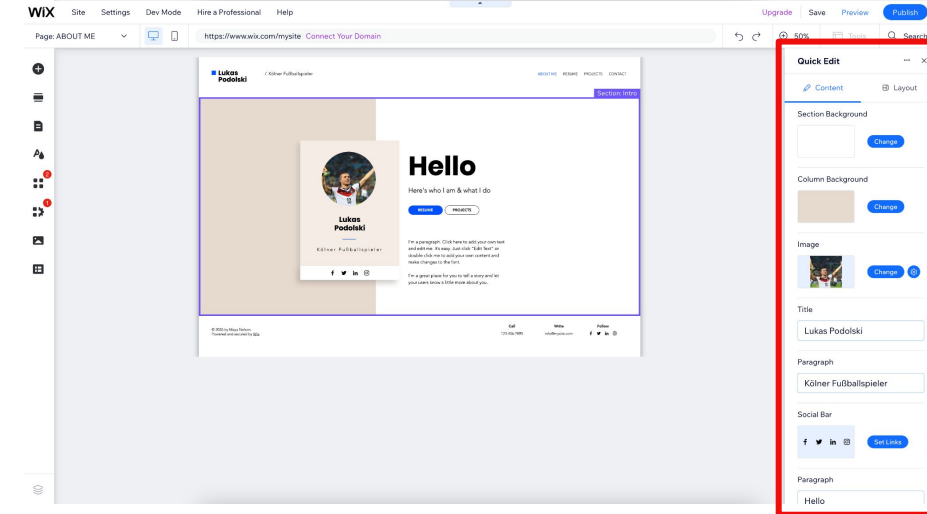
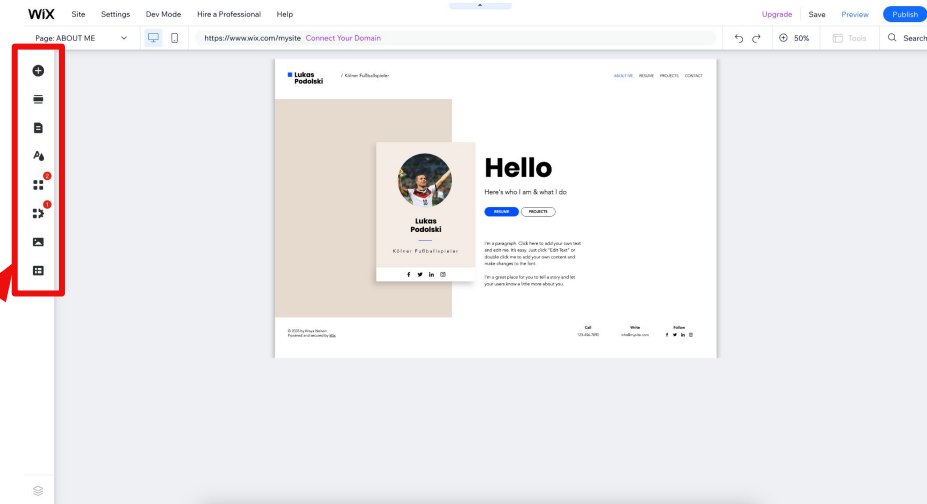
Get a personalized site design in seconds.

Generate a Design

[Continue with Setup for Now →](#)

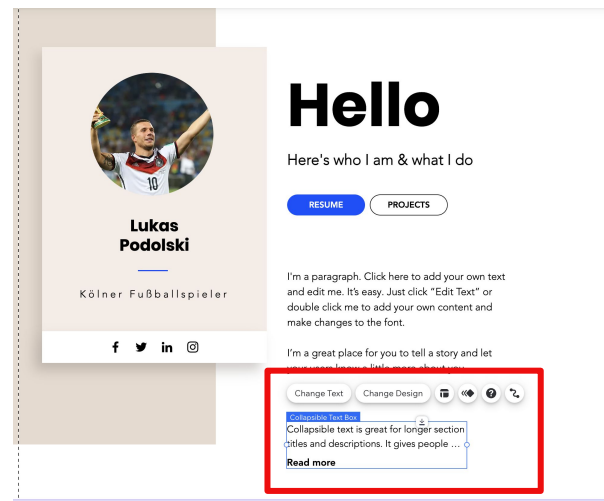
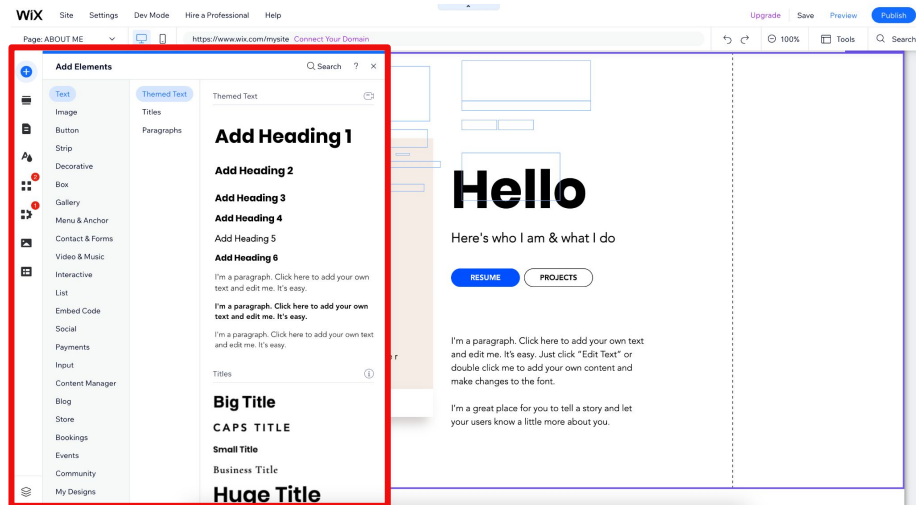
Wix Editor

- Once you have chosen a template, the Wix Editor will open.
- To add elements, sections, apps etc., use the panel on the left.
- Hovering over any part of the page will allow you to open the “Quick Edit” panel, in which you can edit the content of the template.



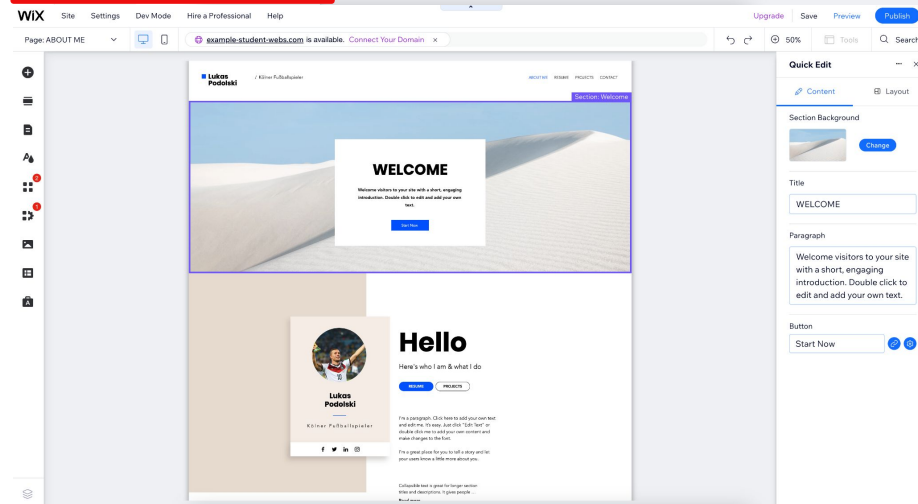
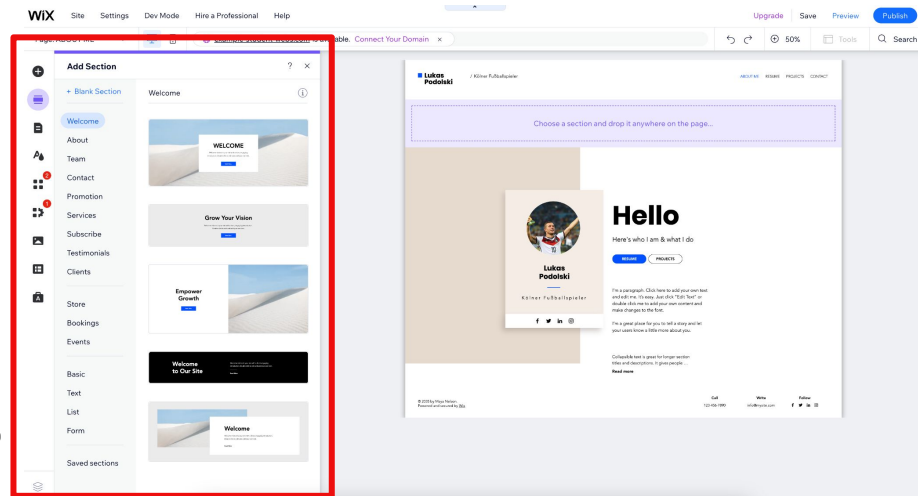
Adding Elements

- To add Elements, click the top icon on the left panel. **+**
- This will open the Elements menu and you can choose from a huge variety of options.
- Adding an element will float it in the center of your page, but you can drag it into position and edit it.
- NB. To embed external media (like a StoryMap), add the “Embed” element from this menu.




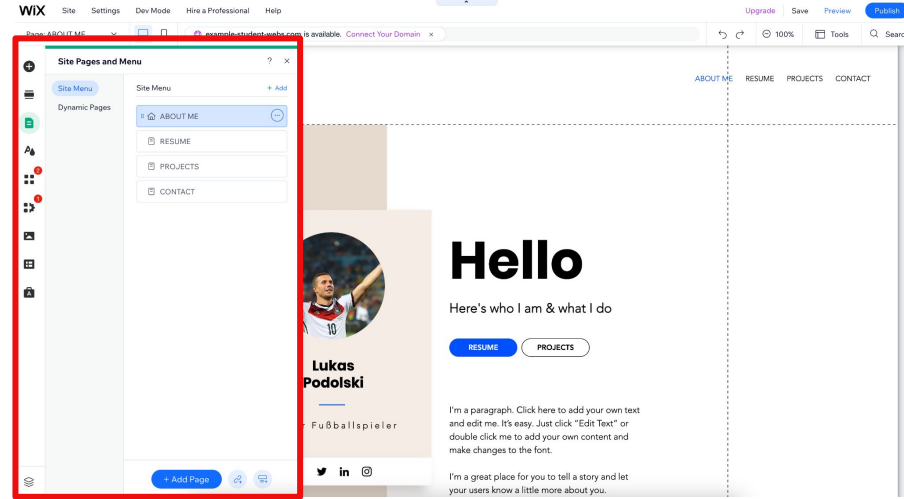
Adding Sections

- Adding Sections works in the same way. Select the second icon on the left panel to open the menu. ☰
- You can choose from various sections, such as “Welcome,” “About Us/Me,” “List” and “Testimonials.”
- Edit sections in the same way: hover over a section and open the “Quick Edit” panel or reposition it as desired.




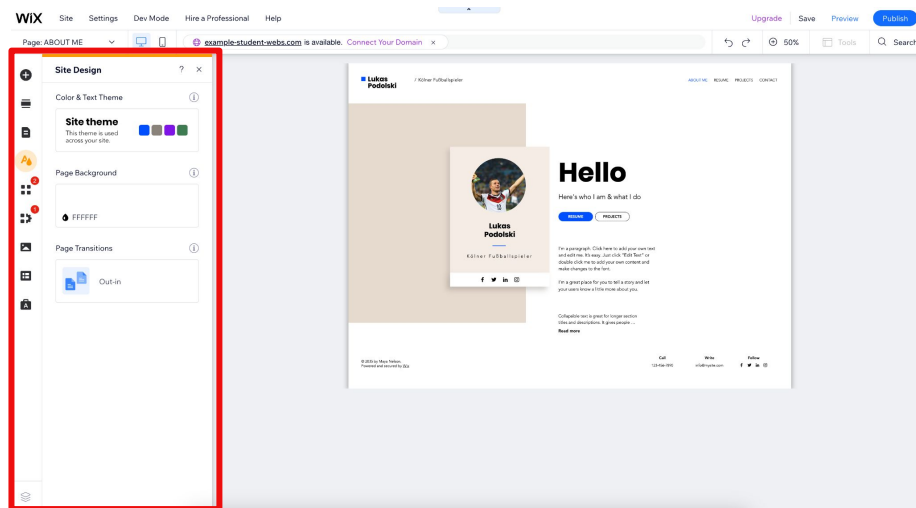
Adding Pages, editing the Menu

- To add pages and edit the menu, select the third icon on the left panel to open the menu. 
- Your template will have a selection of pages, and you can navigate to them here.
- Edit these pages in the same way using Elements and Sections.
- Adding a new Page will automatically add it to the Menu.




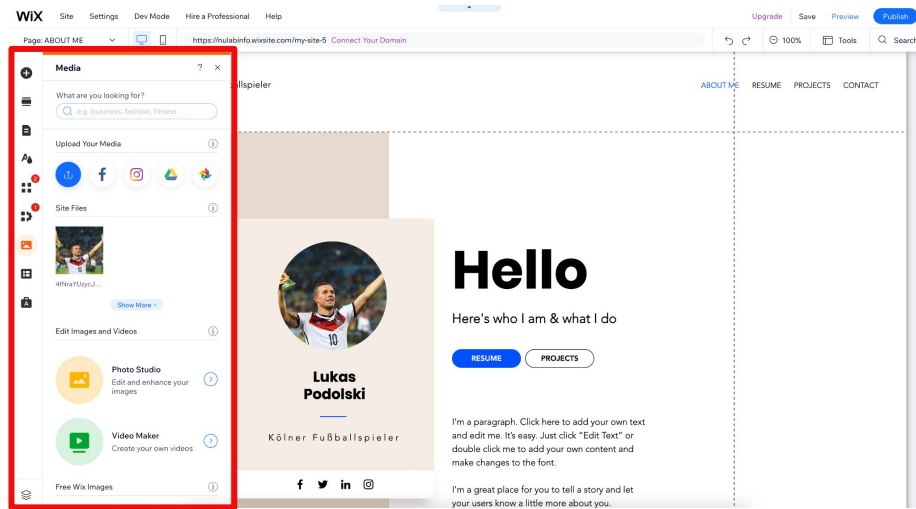
Site Design

- Selecting the Site Design icon allows you to change the appearance of your website. 
- Editing the theme will change the color and text across your pages.
- You can also customize the transitions between your pages.



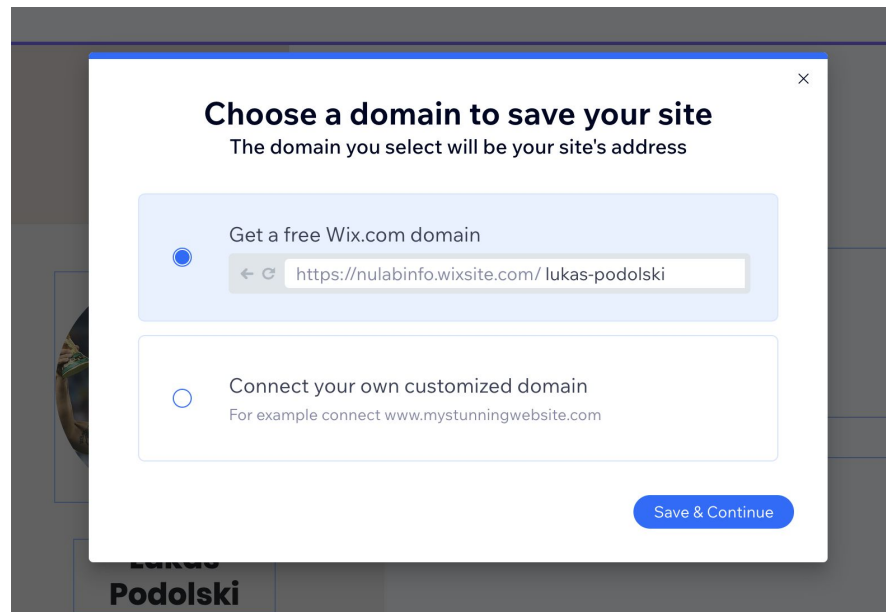
Adding Media

- You can add media from the “Element” menu, but also by selecting the media icon.

- You can select free images from Wix or Unsplash, upload files from your computer, link to URLs, or connect to social media.
- You can drag and drop media within sections, and apply filters, effects, and otherwise edit it on the page.



Publishing your website

- Click “**Save**” from the top menu and select the domain name for your site. Free Wix sites will always have the “wixsite.com” suffix.
- Preview your page, and, when you’re ready, click “**Publish**” in the top right to take your site live.
- You can edit your website and monitor traffic from your dashboard.



Website Development Best Practices

Presentation and Design

- Always remember your audience and **think about how you want to represent your identity** and your work to that audience.
 - Use the “**Preview**” button to see how your site will appear to your audience.
 - **More isn't necessarily better.** You want your website to be easy to navigate, informative, and appealing.
 - Pick a theme/format that is **compatible with mobile phones**.
 - Design choices should be based on the **content** you are communicating.
 - For maximum readability, **use simple fonts and a high color contrast** between text and background color. This is particularly important for accessibility.
- Good Good Not so good *Not so good*

Accessibility

- Some themes are accessibility-ready
 - Some themes support screen readers and keyboard navigation
- [Use accessibility references](#) to ensure your site has sufficient color contrast
 - Use solid and consistent background colors
- Select fonts that are responsive and can resize automatically for different windows
- Make your page layouts consistent and predictable
 - Keep images and text blocks in similar spots page to page
- Another useful resource: “[Five Steps toward Making your WordPress Site Accessible](#)”

Accessibility Tips: Links and Media

- **Links**

- Use descriptive links ("[the NULab homepage](#)" and not "[here](#)")
- Use bolding or underlining, not just color, to make links visually distinct.

- **Images and multimedia content**

- Include captions and alt text for any images that are not purely decorative
- Include captions and, if possible, transcripts for multimedia content
- Avoid putting text over images; this is usually difficult to read

Accessibility Tips: Interactive Content

- **Interactive site contents**
 - Make sure that all interactive site contents are visually distinct; for example, checkboxes or input boxes should be large and visible
 - Think about how things like mouseovers will behave for those who need to zoom in closely

Accessibility and Markup Languages

- Use appropriate heading levels for the contents in your site; that is, don't use a first-level heading for a third-level section
- If you're editing HTML directly, use the appropriate elements; e.g., don't stick a non-table thing in a `<table>` just to get the formatting to look right
- If you're comfortable working with markup, use the semantic `` tag when, by italicizing text, you mean to emphasize its content (e.g. "I'm going to get those books *right now*"). Use the `` tag when, by bolding text, you mean convey the strength of the content's importance (e.g. "**Important:**").
- The semantic tags can be interpreted by screen readers and used to put audible stress on parts of your content.

How to assess accessibility:

- **Accessibility Checker** (<https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/>): provides a list of specific problems and information on how to fix them
- **WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool** (<https://wave.webaim.org/>): shows the structure of the web page, with accessibility features and issues flagged
- **Also of interest: Color Contrast Checker** (<https://contrastchecker.online>): lets you enter specific text and background colors and check for readability
- **Natural Reader** (<https://www.naturalreaders.com/online/>) lets you test your site with screen reader technology

Accessibility: Standards & Guidelines

- **WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**
 - International recommendations for making web content accessible to people with disabilities
 - All web content should be **perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust**
- **ARIA: Accessible Rich Internet Applications**
 - A technical specification for a specific way to make web pages and web-based applications accessible to assistive technologies
 - For instance, through specific additions to web data structures that communicate with assistive devices

Media sharing and permissions

- It is important to verify that you are allowed to use images before you put them in your exhibit if you will be publishing it online.
- Search for media that is public domain or shared with permissions that allow re-use.
 - DITI recommends [Wikimedia Commons](#) and DPLA ([Digital Public Library of America](#)).
- Ensure proper credit/attribution is given for all media

For more information on copyright and reuse, please see:

<https://bit.ly/diti-fair-use>

For further exploration

[Handout: Accessibility in Digital Content](#)

[Handout: Copyright and Fair Use](#)

[Handout: Data Privacy](#)

[Handout: WordPress](#)

[Handout: HTML](#)

Thank you!

—**Developed by** Juniper Johnson, Benjamin Grey, Dipa Desai, Emily Sullivan, Claire Lavarreda, Vaishali Kushwaha, Tieanna Graphenreed, Claire Tratnyek, Colleen Nugent, Talia Brenner, Ana Abraham, Chris McNulty, Sara Morrell, and Ayah Aboelela

- For more information on the DITI, please see: <https://bit.ly/diti-about>
- Schedule an appointment with us! <https://bit.ly/diti-meeting>
- If you have any questions, contact us at: nulab.info@gmail.com
- We'd love your feedback! Please fill out a short survey here: <https://bit.ly/diti-feedback>