

Introduction to Website Building

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Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI)

GRMN 1101

Professor Carolin Fuchs
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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 Wix

Handouts and slides are available at:

<https://bit.ly/sp26-fuchs-grmn1101-wix>

Website building vocabulary

- ② **Pages:** these are the main areas of your website that your audience will be able to navigate in your site's menu
- ② **Domain:** your domain name is the unique URL that leads to your website
- ② **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 is Wix?



- ❑ Wix is a professional **website-building tool** that lets you build your own website
- ❑ It provides a free **domain name** with “wixsite” in the URL (it has a paid version that allows you to make your own domain without “wixsite” in it, but it is unnecessary for this class)
- ❑ It supports **themes** and **apps** to customize your website
- ❑ Similar to Wix, **WordPress** is another popular website-building tool that has different advantages.

WordPress versus 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

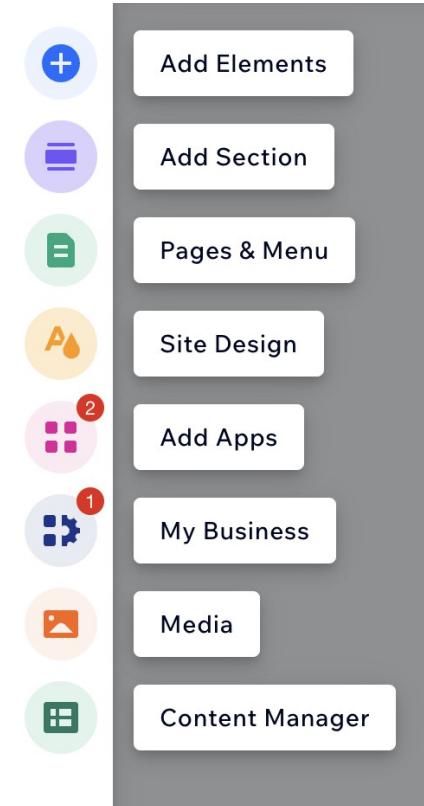


WordPress	Wix
https://madisonwaldron.WordPress.com/	https://bellama9.wixsite.com/website
https://jordanwlai.WordPress.com/	https://johnsonmaryb.wixsite.com/firstyearwriting2020
https://web.northeastern.edu/nulab/	https://www.helenakruger.com/
https://dsg.northeastern.edu/	https://www.laurabaross.com/
	https://houstonav.wixsite.com/bioengineer/general-clean
	https://rawans2.wixsite.com/srawandigitalprofici

**Building your website
with Wix**

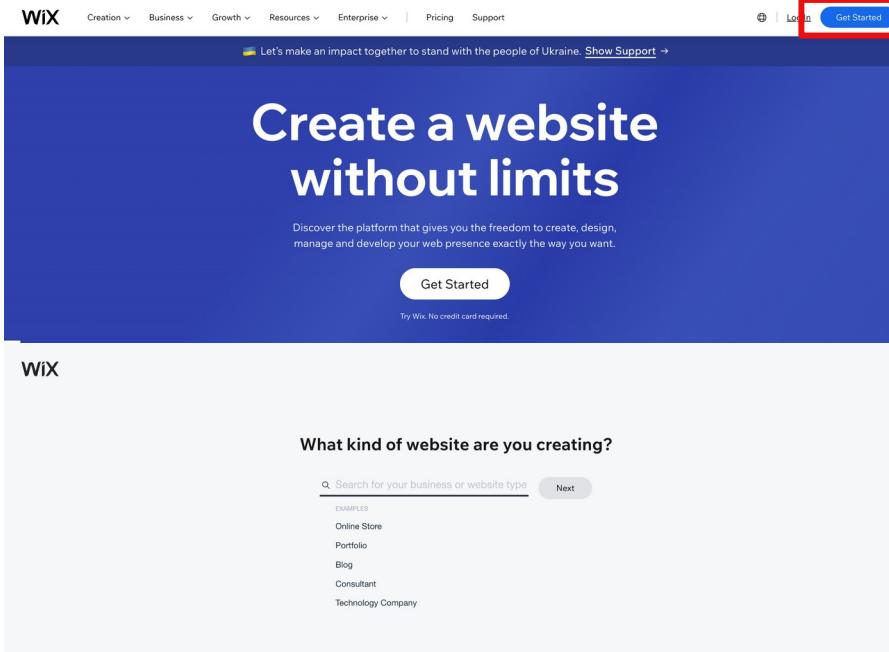
Wix vocabulary

- ?
- Element:** the basic unit of content for your site. Headings, paragraphs, media, buttons, lists, galleries etc.
- ?
- 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 a user navigate between them. For ex: “Home” page, an “About Me” page, and a “Projects” page
- ?
- Site Design:** this is where you can apply themes to coordinate your website’s aesthetics across pages.
- ?
- Apps:** these are Wix-specific widgets designed for businesses, including ordering platforms, live chats etc.



Getting started (1/2)

- ② Go to <https://www.wix.com/> and click “Get Started.” Sign up for a Wix account using your professional email.
- ② Click “Create New Site,” and then select what kind of site you want to create (e.g. “Portfolio”).
- ② Give your site a name (this doesn’t need to be the domain name).
- ② **Note:** You do not need to create a domain. You do not want to use AI to build your site for this project.



Getting started (2/2)

- ?
- 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).

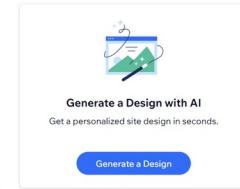
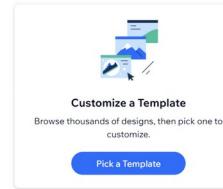
The screenshot shows the Wix website builder interface. At the top, it asks "What do you want to add to your website?" with options like Portfolio, Online Store, Forms, and Instagram Feed. Below this, there's a grid of various website features with checkboxes: Chat, Bookings, Events, Blog, Pricing Plans, Video, Music, Online Programs, Forum, Groups, File Share, and Table Reservations. On the left, a sidebar shows a progress bar for "Let's set up your business" (1/5 completed) and lists various site components: Home, Activity, Site & App, Portfolio, Subscriptions, Contacts, Communications, Automations, Marketing & SEO, Analytics & Reports, Finances, Settings, and Apps. The main dashboard area is titled "Welcome to your Dashboard" and includes sections for "Free plan | Compare Plans", "No domain", "Connect", "No business email", and "Business Info". It also features a "Let's set up your business" section with steps like "Add a project to your portfolio", "Connect a custom domain", "Design your website", and "Get found on Google". A green banner at the bottom offers a "50% OFF Select Wix Premium Plans" deal.

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

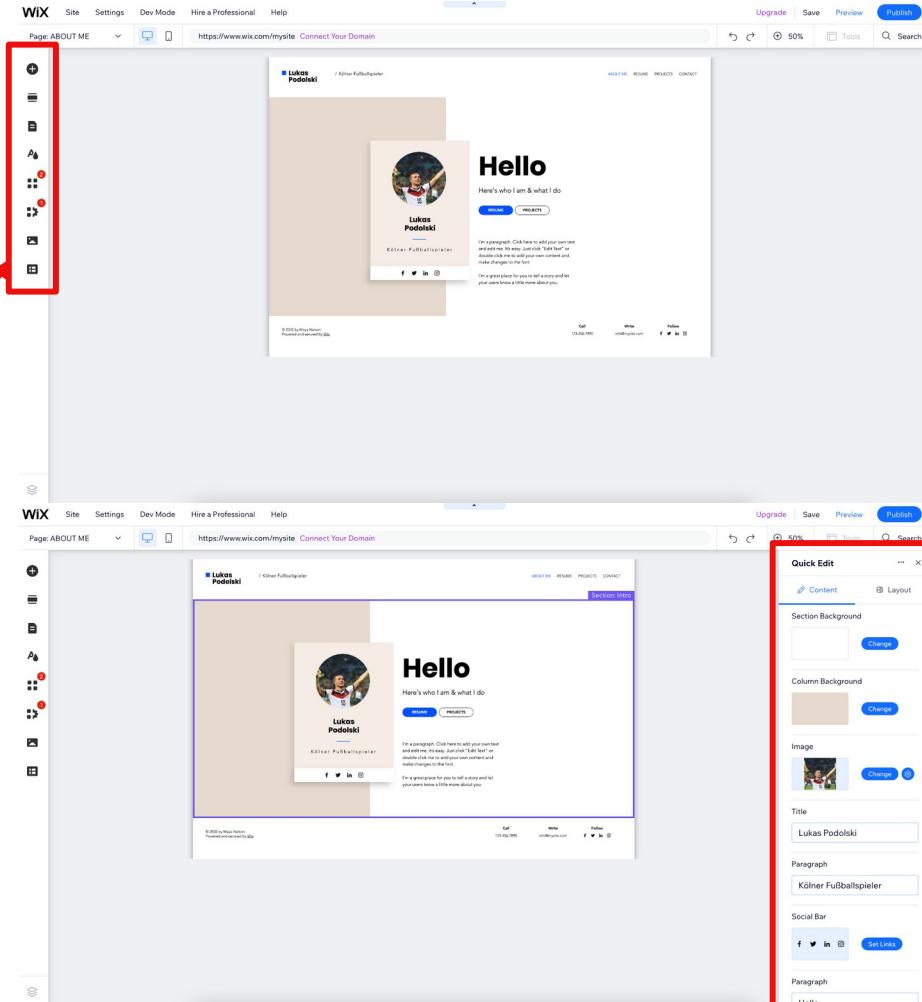
How would you like to design your website?



[Continue with Setup for Now →](#)

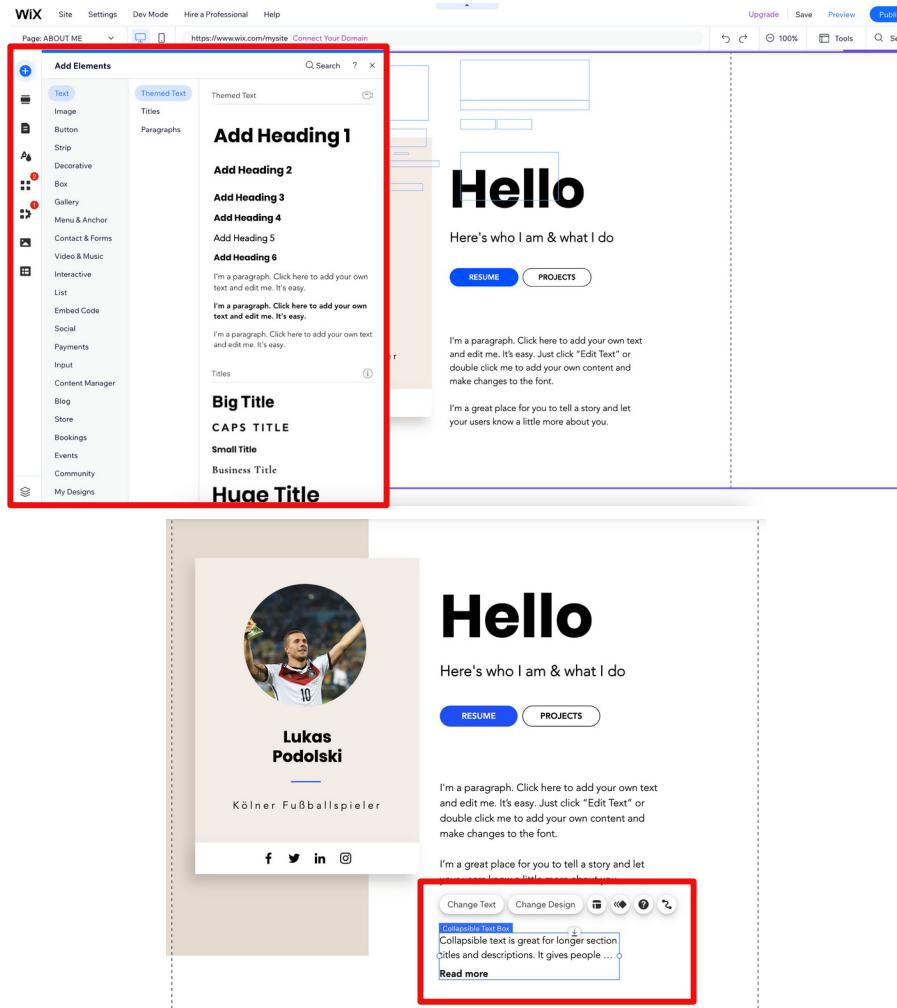
Wix Editor

- 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

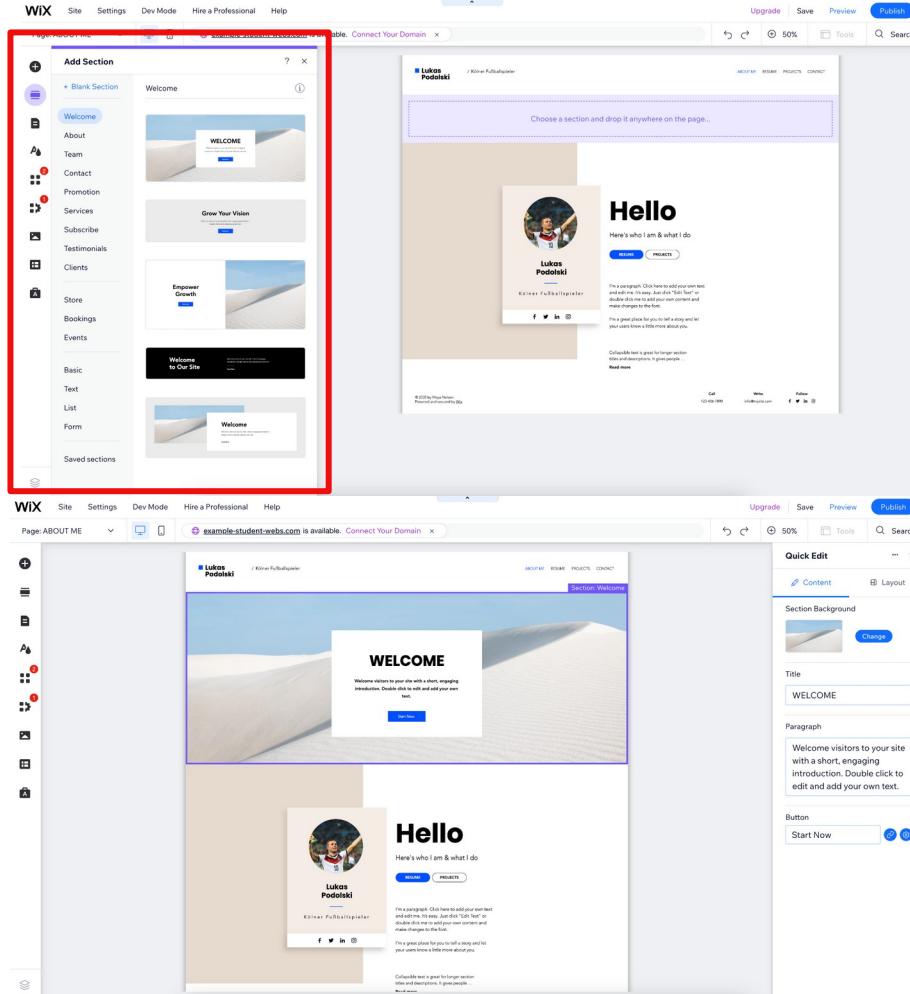
- ? To add Elements, click the top icon on the left panel. 
- ? This will open the Elements menu and you can choose from a huge variety of options.
- ? Adding an element will float it in the center of your page, but you can drag it into position and edit it.
- ? NB. To embed external media (like a StoryMap),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



The screenshot shows the Wix website editor interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Site, Settings, Dev Mode, Hire a Professional, Help, Upgrade, Save, Preview, and Publish. The main area shows a page titled "ABOUT ME" with the URL https://www.wix.com/mysite. The page content includes a large "Hello" heading, a "RESUME" button, a "PROJECTS" button, and some descriptive text. A "Text" element is currently selected, indicated by a red border around its edit box. The "Text" element has several sub-options: "Big Title", "CAPS TITLE", "Small Title", "Business Title", and "Huge Title". On the left side, there's a sidebar titled "Add Elements" with a list of various element types: Text, Image, Button, Strip, Decorative Box, Gallery, Menu & Anchor, Contact & Forms, Interactive List, Embed Code, Social Payments, Input, Content Manager, Blog, Store, Bookings, Events, Community, and My Designs. The "Text" option is highlighted with a blue background. Below the "Text" element, there's a "Collapsible Text Box" with the text: "Collapsible text is great for longer section titles and descriptions. It gives people ...". A "Read more" link is at the bottom of this box. A red box highlights the "Change Text" and "Change Design" buttons at the bottom of the text box.

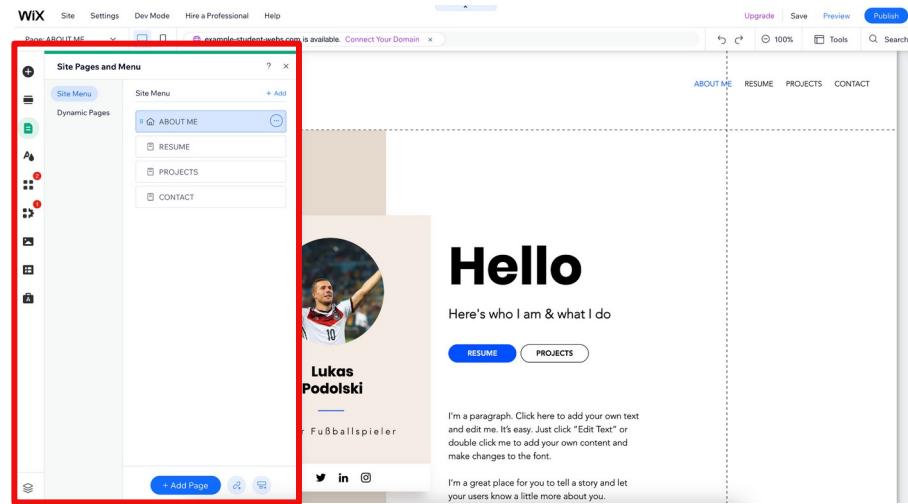
Adding sections

- ? 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.



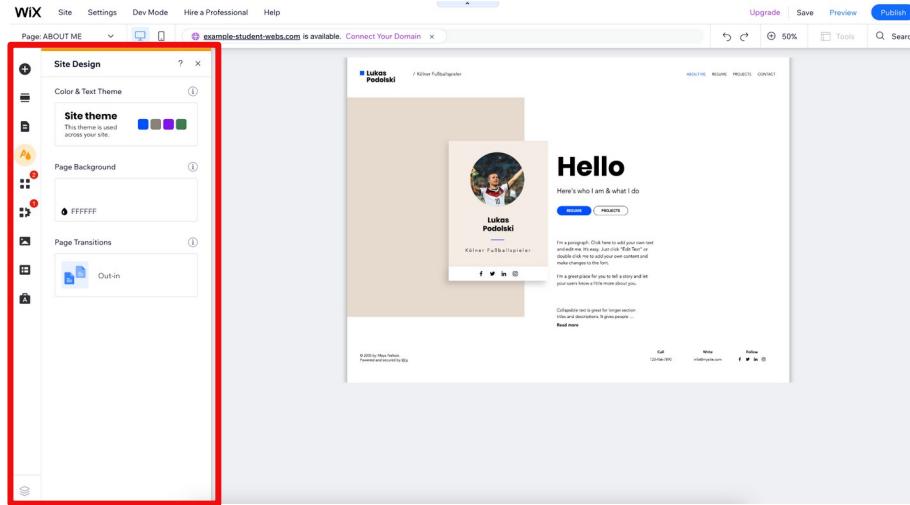
Adding pages, editing the menu

- ? 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.



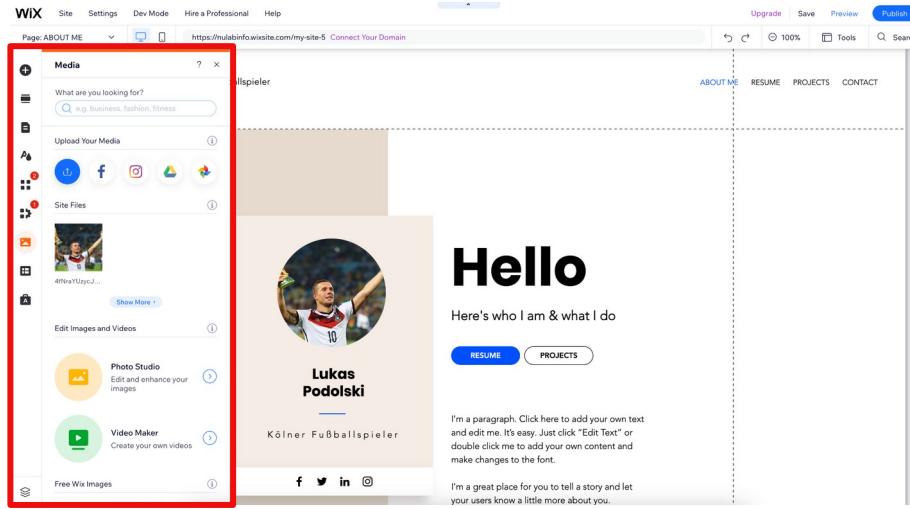
Site design

- ? 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.



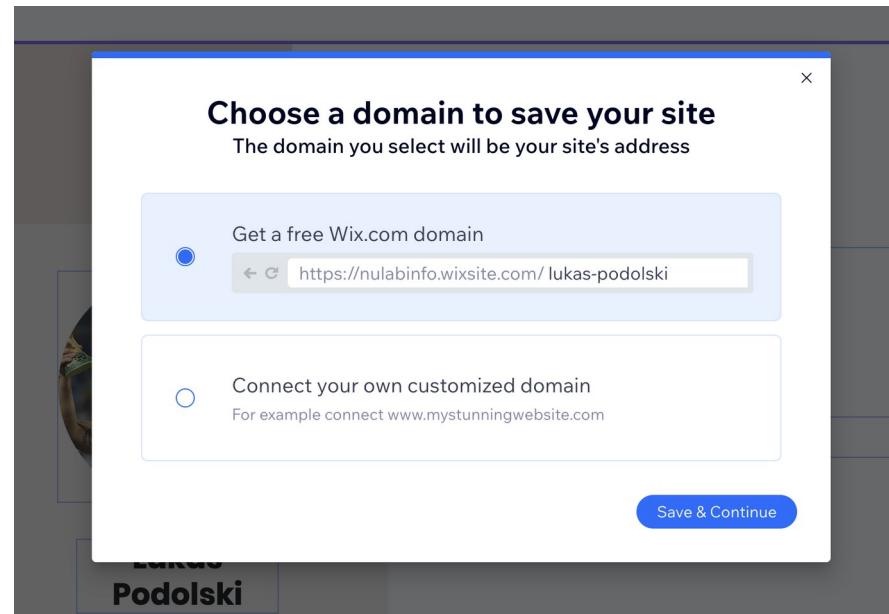
Adding media

- ? 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

② Links

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

② 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

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

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>