Building Personal Academic Websites

BIMODAL Workshop - Day 1, Session 4
August 2024

Putting it all together!

Now you have:

1. Your brand
2. Your science communication purpose
3. Written “sound bites” about your research or interests
4. A science story and media content
5. CV + Resume

Where can all of this content go?! A website!

Context: Why build a personal website?

Benefits to you as a scientist

- The most complete opportunity to tell the story of you & your science!
    - Link the story of you all in one place

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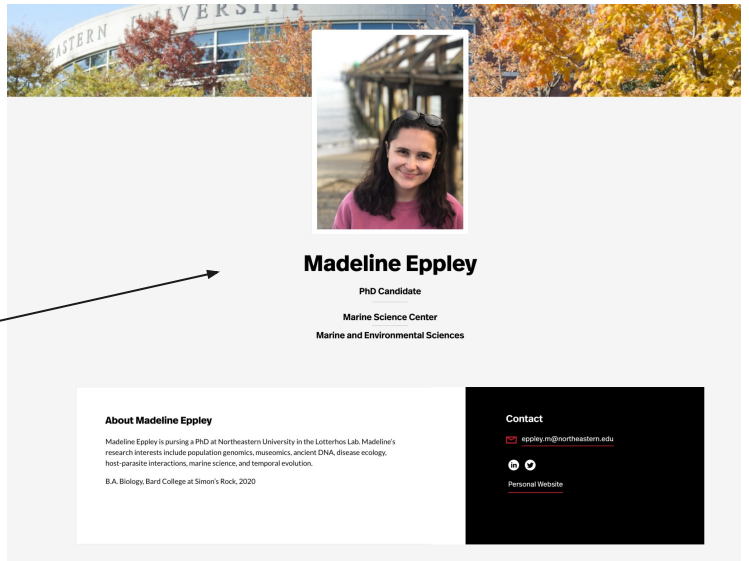
  - Link the story of you all in one place
- Increased exposure of your work
- Ability to keep URLs, CVs, email addresses up-to-date
  - An institutional page may not do this for you, and it can expire when you leave
- Demonstrate that you can communicate science with general audiences (this is a very valuable skill!)



Website Terminology 101

- **Domain:** unique web address where your site can be found
- **Host:** a platform that makes your website renderable & searchable online
- **Website:** a collection of pages, blogs, etc. that are found at a domain
- **Search engine:** software system (like google) that provides links to websites
- **Algorithm:** rules that rank websites in search results by quality and relevance
- **HTML:** a standard “file format” for documents displayed as a website
- **Repository:** a storage folder for a complete set of code, html documents, images, etc. used to build a website
- **Embed:** Directly integrate external content within the html file or website
- **Blog:** a regularly-updated, casual, and short format digital writing collection

Custom Domains - optional, but have to purchase

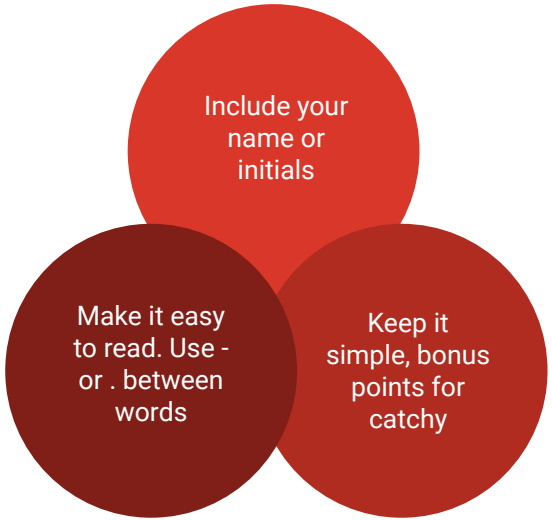
Website hosting platforms will do one of two things:

1. Make you purchase a custom domain
2. Give you a free domain with their platform name in it (e.g. website-name.weebly.com)

Purchasing a custom domain is easy and costs ~$20-30/year.

Purchase from: Weebly*, Domain.com, Go Daddy, Wix*, Squarespace*, Wordpress*

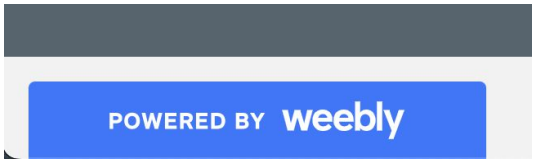
* If you are setting up a website with a paid company, buy your domain from them! Easy integration & often get a discount



Hosting Services - Free & No Coding

Weebly

- **Great design options**
- Free with '.weebly.com' address
- Can purchase custom domain
- Pay to remove banner ad, but it is small and not distracting
- No coding experience required



Google Sites

- Decent design options
- Can purchase custom domain
- Free 'sites.google.com/site/websitehere' address
- **Great version control**
- **No ads or removal fee**
- No coding experience required
- Need to store docs outside of Google Drive
- May be blocked through certain search engines

Google Sites

Hosting Services - Free but coding required

Quarto website published with GitHub pages

- Completely free with no advertisements
- Can purchase your own domain or host at websitehere.github.io
- Design functionality is very limited unless willing to write custom code
- Only one site hosted per GitHub account
- Need familiarity with R Studio, GitHub, and markdown files

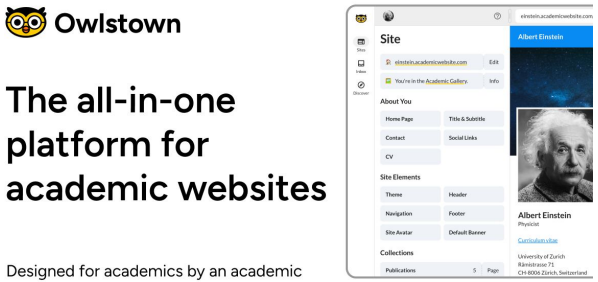
Hosting Services - Other options (mix of free & paid)

Squarespace, Wix, and Wordpress …

- Mixed reviews
- Most require a paid plan or to remove advertisements
- Can purchase a custom domain
- Some may allow a free domain (e.g. '.wordpress.com' address)

Owlstown

- New platform specifically designed for academics
- Offers templates that are easy for publications, CVs, etc.
- Free to use with a .owlstown.net address
- Really interesting platform! Let me know if you use it.



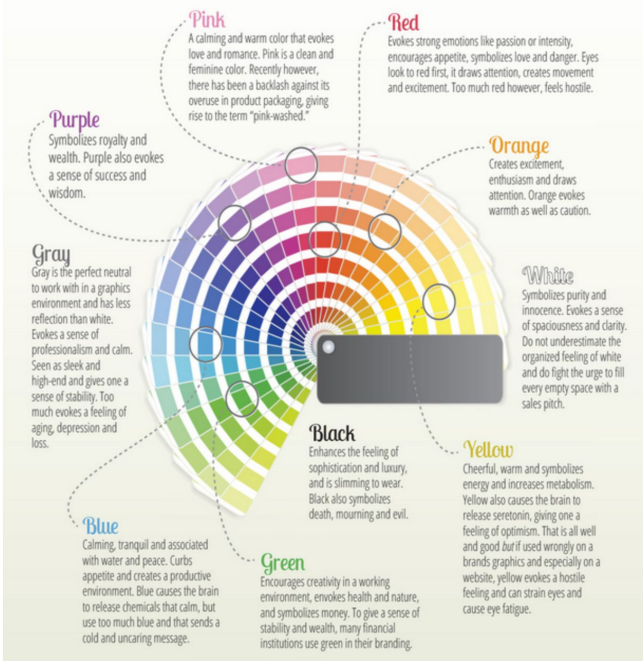
Bringing your brand into your website

Reminder: your brand is …

1. Your purpose
2. Your core values
3. Your color scheme

Reflection - what is your color scheme?

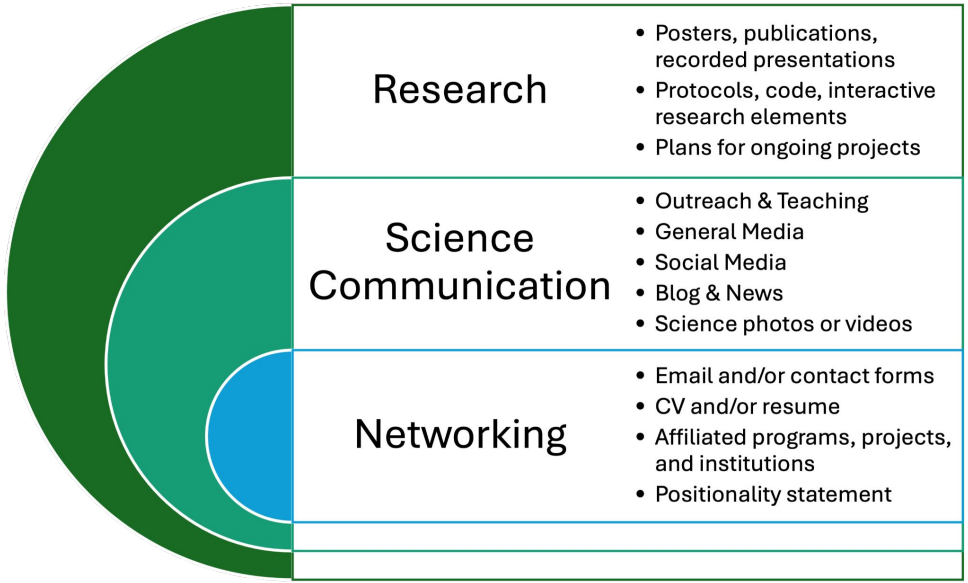
Think about your core values and what you want to evoke in your audience.



Content for your website

Interactive elements!

- Recorded presentations, videos, apps, **photos**, posters, .pdfs, and protocols
- Contact forms, social media feeds, podcasts, interviews, teaching products



Website Best Practices

Always include links to publicly-accessible content wherever you can.

Example: You were in a working group that published a paper. The working group was established out of an academic society where you all met.

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You should link:

(1) the academic society website AND

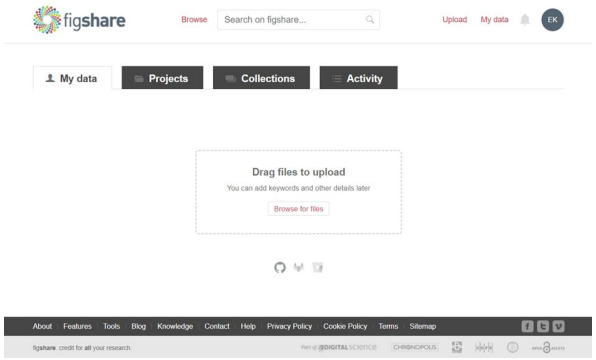
(2) the DOI and link to an open-access paper OR (3) a link to download a .pdf of the paper.

Website Best Practices

Better yet, embed content directly into the site!

Example: You went to an academic conference and presented a poster.

Website Best Practices



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Example: You went to an academic conference and presented a poster.

You should:

(1) register your poster online through a service that makes it citable, like figshare to link the DOI, AND

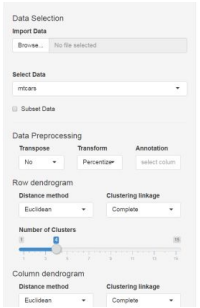
(2) embed it directly on your website by uploading it as a high-quality .pdf, .png, or using a service that can be integrated into your website, like SCRIBD.

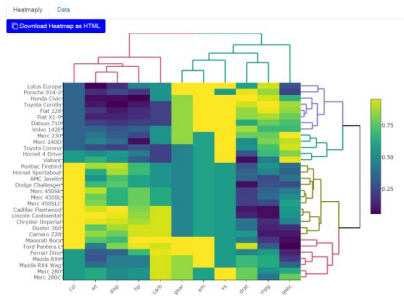
Website Best Practices

Present all material without scientific jargon and include as many interactive elements, photos, and links as you can. When you've developed multipurpose products and tools, they are worth sharing with multiple audiences in distinct ways

Example: You developed an R Shiny app for visualizing an equation you use in your research.

Website Best Practices





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Example: You developed an R Shiny app for visualizing an equation you use in your research.

You should:

(1) link your R Shiny app to your research page and explain why the equation is important to a scientific audience, AND

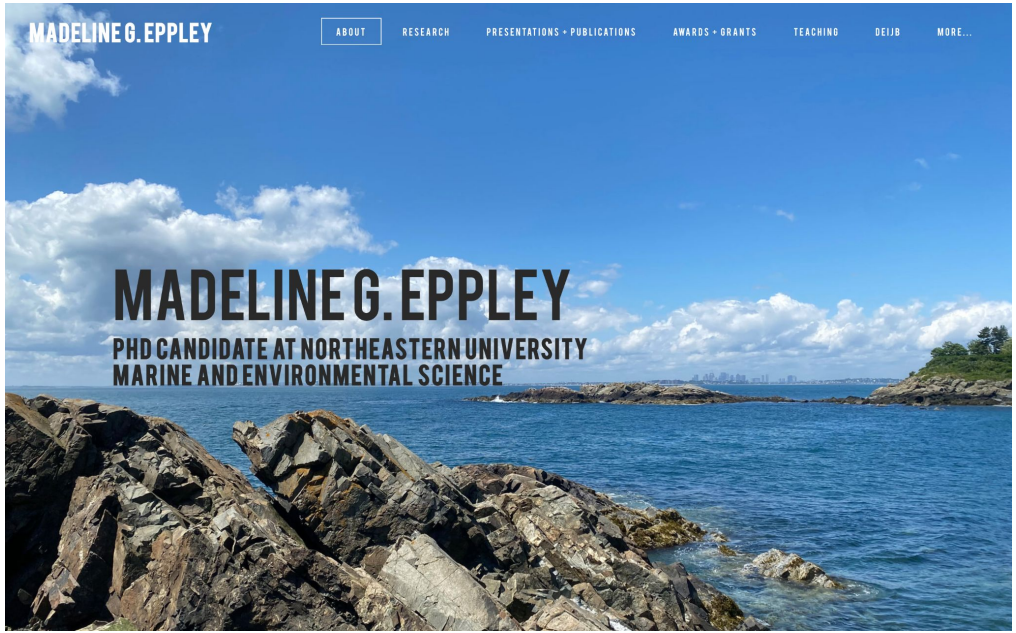
(2) link the R Shiny app in your teaching or outreach page as a science communication opportunity!

Website showcase: Angela

https://www.angelajjones.com/

Website showcase: Madeline

https://www.madeline-eppley.com/



Activity: Can you identify best practices in websites?

What types of content stand out in these websites? Spend ~5-10 minutes browsing through these examples. Use a search engine to look up some of the websites and take note of where it appears.

Weebly

https://kyleagarces.weebly.com/

http://www.cesaroestien.com/

Quarto + GitHub

https://www.mm218.dev/

https://samanthacsik.github.io/

Google Sites

https://sites.google.com/site/katielotterhos/home

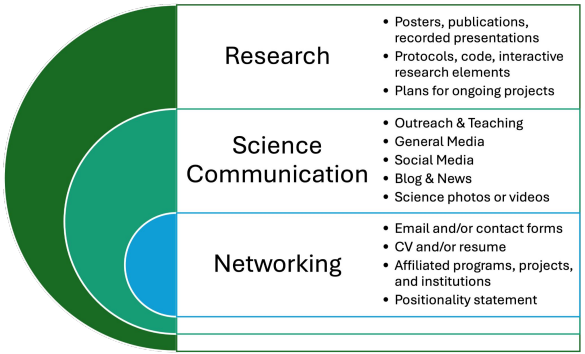
Custom HTML

https://www.robdellinger.com/

Owlstown

https://targuedas.owlstown.net/

Group Discussion



Content

1. What content did the example websites have that were particularly effective or stood out?
2. Did you leave any of the websites feeling like you had a full understanding of who the scientist is & their work? What content helped you gain that understanding?

Mechanics

1. What features made sites easy to navigate?
2. Did you notice a quality difference in sites from different hosting platforms?
3. When you searched for a website (using a search engine) did they pop up close to the top?

GitHub + Quarto tutorials & resources

Package with templates for academic website: https://github.com/andreaczhang/qtwAcademic

Pre-built default templates: https://quarto.org/docs/websites/website-about.html#templates

Great setup tutorial with lots of images: https://ucsb-meds.github.io/creating-quarto-websites/

Customizing Quarto websites: https://ucsb-meds.github.io/customizing-quarto-websites/#/title-slide

Questions, comments? Feedback?

- Have a website that you really like and want to show everyone?
- Do you have any questions about content to include on your website?
- Anyone want to show an in-progress draft of a website and get feedback?