A website offers people an easy way to find you and your work in one centralized location. It also helps you establish your brand. If you are in an early stage of your career, a website can help people understand you are serious about communicating your ideas. “Crafting an online scholarly identity… exposes you to a level of public engagement with your ideas that simply is not feasible through other modes of dissemination” (Stewart, 2016, p. 81).

You have many website and webpage options. Regardless of which you choose, the site should allow you access to personally edit and add extensive and varied content.

Two different approaches for your web presence are detailed in this guide: hosting your own website (Option 1) or maintaining a webpage within an existing website (Option 2), such as one hosted by your institution, organization, company, or publisher, including bio and profile pages. Think carefully about which will work best for you. If you choose Option 1, however, you should also utilize Option 2 whenever the scenario is available to you.

**Option 1: Host Your Own Website**

Creating your own website on your own domain (example: www.JennyRankin.com) is one of your options. Table 1 (on the next page) details the pros and cons to hosting your own website.

The following approach can help you create your own website:

- Based on your brand (determined with guidance from “Chapter 2. Image” in the book *Sharing Your Education Expertise with the World: Make Research Resonate and Widen Your Impact*), pick a web address and ensure it doesn’t already exist. A free service like LeanDomainSearch (www.lean domainsearch.com) can help you determine which domains are available. Also try the website with various extensions (e.g., ending in .com, .net, and .org) to ensure all of these are free.
Table 1: If You Opt to Host Your Own Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You control the site.</td>
<td>• It costs money to purchase a domain name (e.g., $11.99 per year) and subscribe to a website hosting tool (e.g., $0-$144 per year), which is preferable to hiring someone to build your webpage (covered later).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You have maximum flexibility to pick a format, elements, and capabilities that best suit your content.</td>
<td>• You have to learn to use the web hosting tool, which can be harder than simply editing something like a university faculty profile page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When done right, this looks polished and professional and can most easily reflect your brand (icon, colors, design, etc.).</td>
<td>• You might experience some technological frustrations or fears when you first set up the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If you change jobs, you won’t lose this space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purchase your chosen web address, which is known as your domain. I purchased my domain directly through my webhosting software (covered below), though other options (like www.GoDaddy.com) are available. You might opt to purchase more than one extension (e.g., .com, .net, and .org) so someone else doesn’t purchase the others, as that could cause confusion between the sites. This also allows you to point all versions to a single site (so when people use the .net or .org extensions, they all land on your .com site).

Select web hosting software you’ll use to create and maintain your webpage. I use SquareSpace, because I find it to be robust yet easy to use. Options include:

- Jimdo (www.jimdo.com)
- SquareSpace (www.squarespace.com)
- Weebly (www.weebly.com)
- Wix (www.wix.com)
- WordPress (www.wordpress.com)
- Yola (www.yola.com)

Some of these let you start or use a pared-down version of the software for free. Reasons using software is better than hiring someone to build your site include:

- Unless you are a tech giant like Google, your website needs will likely not be more complex than a standardized tool can accommodate.
- A tool like SquareSpace will automatically adjust your webpage to display well on any device (e.g., laptop, tablet, smart phone). Getting a website to do that –
particularly as devices and their programming requirements evolve – is quite complex. For this reason, some “website developers” who are paid to build a website actually use a tool like SquareSpace for the task – something you could have done.

- If you pay for a custom site, you’ll have to wait on (and likely pay) a developer to make any changes. This is a frustrating set up that limits the timeliness of your web content.

- A tool like SquareSpace comes with built-in analytics you can use to see which of your links and posts are visited the most, how your audience is growing, and more.

If you still want to hire someone to build your site, insist that she does so using a web hosting tool (like those listed earlier). That way you can easily maintain the site on your own from that point forward.

**Integration**

Take advantage of your site’s integration with other tools. For example, I integrated free MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com) with my SquareSpace website to achieve this:

- People use the SquareSpace form I embedded at www.JennyRankin.com/subscribe to subscribe to my blog, but I can also manually add people when I want. This form can ask for any information I want to collect. “A mailing list of 100 people interested in your work is worth more than 1,000 people who potentially are not interested” (Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2017, p. 2).

- I am automatically notified via email when people sign up, and people who sign up are automatically added to a list I set up within MailChimp. I call this my “Blog Subscriber List”.

- Whenever I post a new blog entry to my site, the post is automatically emailed to everyone on the “Blog Subscriber List” and looks however I designed it to look in MailChimp. I can even adjust the clock so emails only go out at specific times.

**Tech Tip**

If you end up with a website tool that doesn’t give you built-in analytics (to see which pages people visit the most, how your traffic is trending, etc.), don’t despair. You can use Google Analytics (https://analytics.google.com), which is free.
Tech Tip

Google your full name. What links show up? If few show up that are related to you (e.g., they belong to someone else with the same name) or if what shows up doesn’t communicate the professional image you want to project, you have some work to do. Clean up undesirable items within your control (for example, stop tweeting about your wild parties) and take advantage of the opportunities in this book so many flattering webpages relate to you.

Option 2: Maintain Webpage within Existing Website

Another option is to maintain a webpage within an existing website, such as one hosted by your institution, organization, company, or publisher (example: www.routledge.com/authors/i14314-jenny-rankin). In other words, a website managed for a larger purpose offers you a webpage devoted exclusively to you. The bio or profile pages of organizations you join also fall under this category. Table 2 details the pros and cons of maintaining a webpage within an existing website.

Table 2: If You Opt for a Webpage within Existing Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There is typically no financial cost.</td>
<td>• You don’t control the site, and in some cases you must rely on others to update the page for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You don’t have to learn new, complicated technology to create the page.</td>
<td>• You have minimum or no flexibility to pick a format, elements, or capabilities that best suit your content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If the institution is prestigious, pointing people to this site simultaneously speaks well of your credibility.</td>
<td>• If the site is hosted by your employer and you change jobs, you will likely lose (and not want to continue directing people to) this space. This can prevent contacts from reaching you if they have outdated business cards or records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Such webpages offer additional exposure when they are used as supplementary webpages that point people to a main webpage you maintain elsewhere.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Such pages should always be utilized, even if you choose to host your own website (covered earlier), since they offer additional ways for people to connect with your work. However, this should only be considered as your sole or main webpage if both of the following are true:

- You have complete access to edit and add content to the page.
- You plan to be associated with (or work at) this institution for at least five more years.

...or if the following is true:

- You’re only using the webpage as your main webpage as a short-term solution, and it will eventually serve as a supplementary webpage that will feature a link to your official webpage once you have one.

These sites make great supplementary webpages, offering additional avenues for people to discover your work, and they should be utilized whenever they are offered. Whenever your number of webpages such as these grows to two or more, maintain a document to keep track of the links. That way each time you hit a milestone in your research (like publish a new paper, speak at another event, etc.), you can quickly update each page and prevent these webpages from becoming stale. The “Time-Saving Tip” text box, however, offers you a shortcut.

**Time-Saving Tip**

If you have a main webpage you host then let supplemental webpages point people there to see your latest work. This way you won’t have to add each new development to multiple sites (unless it is something major like a new Ph.D. after your name). In other words, if a profile page has a field to enter new publications, put a link there that leads to a list of publications you can keep current on your main site.

**Other Options**

If you don’t want to follow Option 1, yet you don’t have a publisher, employer, or organization already offering you a webpage, consider selecting an education website service. Options for creating and maintaining your webpage include:

- Edmodo (www.edmodo.com)
- EduBlogs (www.edublogs.org)
- SchoolRack (www.schoolrack.com)
- Weebly for Education (www.education.weebly.com)
• Academia (www.academia.edu), which is an academic social networking site but also offers a website service, albeit for a fee

Some sites only let people access your page if they also have accounts with the website, so consider those sites only as one means of connecting with others online.

There’s So Much More

This guide offered tips for creating your own website. The book Sharing Your Education Expertise with the World: Make Research Resonate and Widen Your Impact offers much more help with your online presence, directs you to two thousand opportunities to share your expertise, and arms you with the tools to land them. See that book for help with:

• branding (crafting your pitch, leveraging social media, etc.)
• writing (landing book deals and succeeding in key writing opportunities)
• speaking (giving TED Talks, delivering conference keynote presentations, appearing on NPR, etc.)
• participating (making connections, influencing policy, etc.)
• serving (such as joining panels and advisory boards)
• honors (winning awards and recognition to expand your platform)
• media (landing interviews and contributing to public dialogue)

Each chapter includes a “Scrappy Fast Track” giving you an insider’s route to skyrocketing quickly to the top with each endeavor (such as getting a book published if you’ve never been paid in the past for writing).

You have something valuable to share. Use these resources to step onto the world stage so you can help as many students as possible.

References