Website 101

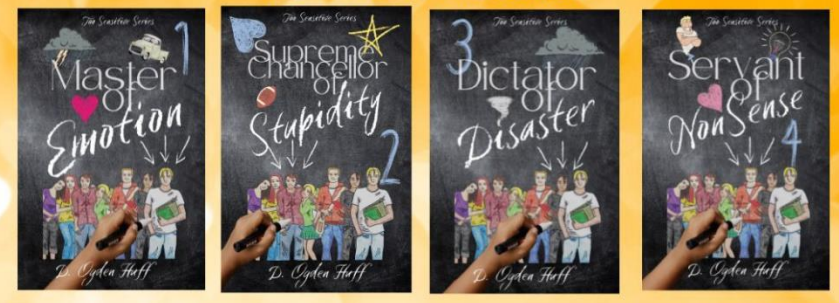
Creating your First Author Website for Free

DeAnn Ogden Huff

BROOKLYN BRIDGES SERIES

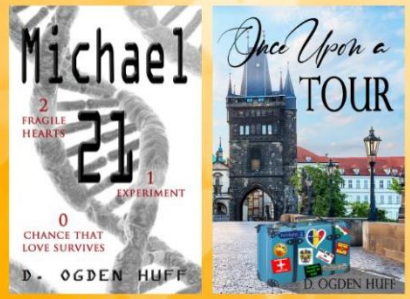
NEW RELEASES!

TOO SENSITIVE SERIES



D. OGDEN HUFF

BECAUSE EVERY GENRE NEEDS ROMANCE



STAND ALONE NOVELS

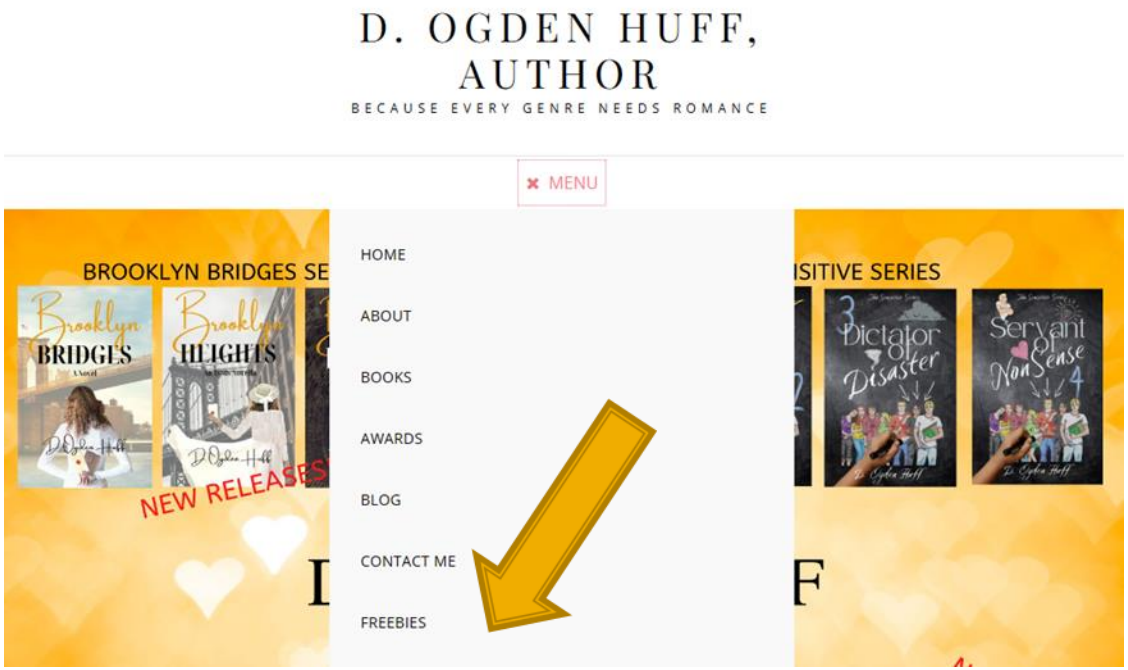
ANTHOLOGIES

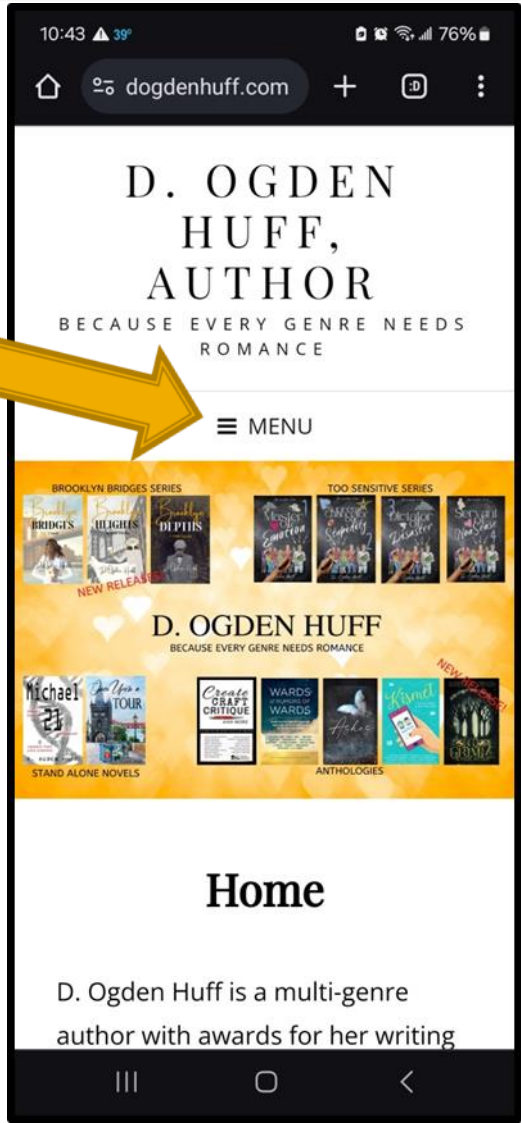
About me

- My qualifications:
  - *Former ANWA webmaster*
  - *Creator of free websites for church and personal purposes*
  - *Webmaster of my own website*

My website and resources

- Find a .pdf of this presentation on my website:
- https://www.dogdenhuff.com/





Why authors need websites

What do you want people to know or find when they search your name?

- Marketing & Discoverability:
  - *Readers, bloggers, and media need a place to find you*
  - *Helps with SEO–shows up in search engines*
  - *Email lists & reader magnets*

Why authors need websites

- Control & Ownership:
  - *Social media isn't enough — websites don't change algorithms*
  - *One place to collect and manage your content that you can control*

Why authors need websites

- Author Branding:

  - *A website is the center of your online "platform"*
  - *Connects you with your readers*
  - *Establishes credibility and professionalism*
  - *Helps create a consistent brand*

Author websites

- Author Branding:
  - https://www.melaniejacobson.net/
  - https://janetterallison.com/
  - https://stepheniemeyer.com/
  - https://www.allycondie.com/
  - https://www.jamesdashner.com/#/
  - https://www.taylortyng.com/
  - https://www.trevorcosson.com/

What to include on your author website

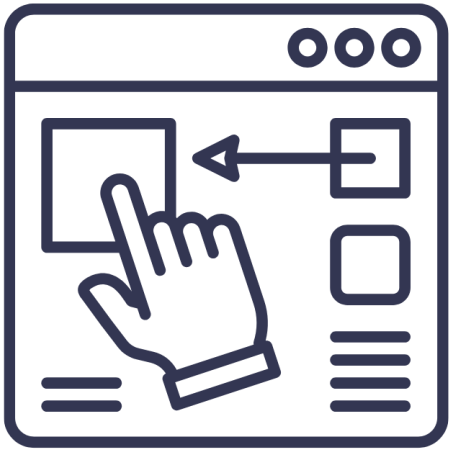
- **Possible Elements:**
  - **Home Page** – Author name/pen name, tagline, a clear statement of your niche or audience, highlight of your latest book, social media links
  - **About Page** – Short bio, author headshot, introduce yourself to readers, and provide an brief, but inviting, summary of your background
  - **Books Page** – Book covers, book trailers, buy buttons to Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc., book descriptions or summaries, blurbs from reviewers, excerpts or quotes from books
  - **Blog (optional)** – Updates, behind-the-scenes, writing tips, insights, book-related content, or other relevant information to keep readers engaged.
  - **Book Awards** – Brag about any awards you receive
  - **Your Writing or Bonus Content** – Include short stories, deleted scenes
  - **Events** - List upcoming book signings, readings, or other events.
  - **Contact Page** –Make it easy for readers to get in touch, whether through a contact form, email, or social media links.
  - **Newsletter Sign-Up** – Use Mailchimp, ConvertKit, or Wix Forms, Build your audience by offering a way for visitors to receive updates and offers.

What to include on your author website

- **Other Considerations:**
  - **Navigation**: Ensure your website is easy to navigate, with a clear menu and logical organization.
  - **Design**: Choose a design that is visually appealing, easy to read, and reflects your genre and brand.
  - **SEO**: Optimize your website for search engines to improve visibility.
  - **Mobile Optimization**: Ensure your website is mobile-friendly for optimal viewing on all devices.
  - **Regular Updates**: Keep your website fresh and relevant by adding new content and updating information regularly

Pros & cons of free websites

- **Pros:**
  - No upfront cost
  - Quick setup with templates
  - Good for getting started without tech skills
  - Drag-and-drop ease (no coding) (Not all platforms)



Pros & cons of free websites

- **Cons:**
- **Limited customization** and design options
- Free plan includes ads and **branded URLs** (e.g. yourname.wixsite.com)
- Can be **harder to move** later
- **Limited storage** and bandwidth - Free websites often restrict storage space for files and bandwidth for website traffic
- **SEO limitations** and fewer advanced features that are essential for growth, such as email marketing, analytics, or e-commerce functionality. Free websites with subdomains may be less prioritized by search engines, making it harder to rank for relevant keywords.
- Potential issues with **security** - Free websites are often less secure than paid websites, making them more vulnerable to hacking and malware.
- **Lower brand credibility** - Free websites often use subdomains, which can look unprofessional and negatively impact brand credibility
- **Limited customer support** - Free hosting providers may have unreliable servers, leading to site downtime and outages. They might also prioritize customer support to paid websites.

Popular free platforms

- **Wix** (user-friendly, drag & drop)
- **Weebly** (simple, blog-friendly, drag & drop)
- **Square Online** (commerce-focused but basic sites possible)
- **WordPress.com**
- **Carrd**
- **Google Sites**

Here are some **popular website builders** that offer both a **free website plan** and a **drag-and-drop feature**:

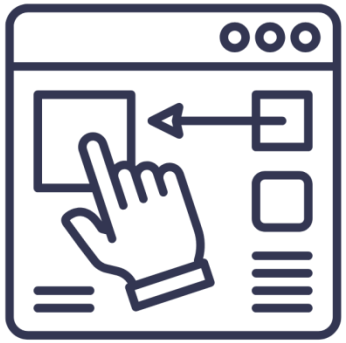
Website Builder	Free Plan	Drag & Drop Editor
Wix	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
Weebly	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
WordPress.com	✅ Yes	✅ ⚠️ Limited (Block-based, not traditional drag & drop)
Google Sites	✅ Yes	✅ Yes (Simple layout blocks)
Carrd	✅ Yes	✅ ⚠️ Sort of (Section-based; not full drag & drop)
Square Online	✅ Yes	✅ ⚠️ Limited (Section-based editing, not full drag & drop)

How to build an author website

- **Establish goals for your author website:** Before exploring how to create a website, decide what you want your website to accomplish. Are you looking to sell books, share updates, grow your mailing list or attract speaking engagements? Clear goals will help you shape your site to meet your needs.
- **Choose a website builder:** Opt for a platform that's easy to use and offers creative tools to help you share your story.
- **Pick a template:** Select a website template that matches your writing style and personal brand. Clean and professional layouts work well to highlight your books and create a welcoming space for readers.
- **Register a domain name:** Secure a custom domain name that reflects who you are as an author. A name like yournameauthor.com keeps it professional and easy to remember.
- **Set up your website pages:** Your author website should include a homepage to welcome readers, an About page to share your story, a Books page to showcase your work with descriptions and purchase links, a Blog page for updates or writing insights and a Contact page for easy communication.
- **Showcase your books:** Upload quality images of your book covers and organize them thoughtfully. Provide descriptions, purchase links and excerpts to give visitors a deeper understanding of your work.
- **Make your site mobile-friendly:** Ensure your site works smoothly and looks good on mobile devices. A polished mobile experience creates a strong impression for readers browsing on phones or tablets.
- **Review and publish:** Check every page for typos, broken links or areas that need refining. Once your site is ready, hit publish and share it with your audience.
- **Maintain your author website:** Keep your website up to date by adding new releases, sharing blog posts or announcing events. Regular updates show that you are active and engaged, giving visitors a reason to return. (Source: https://www.wix.com/blog/best-author-websites)

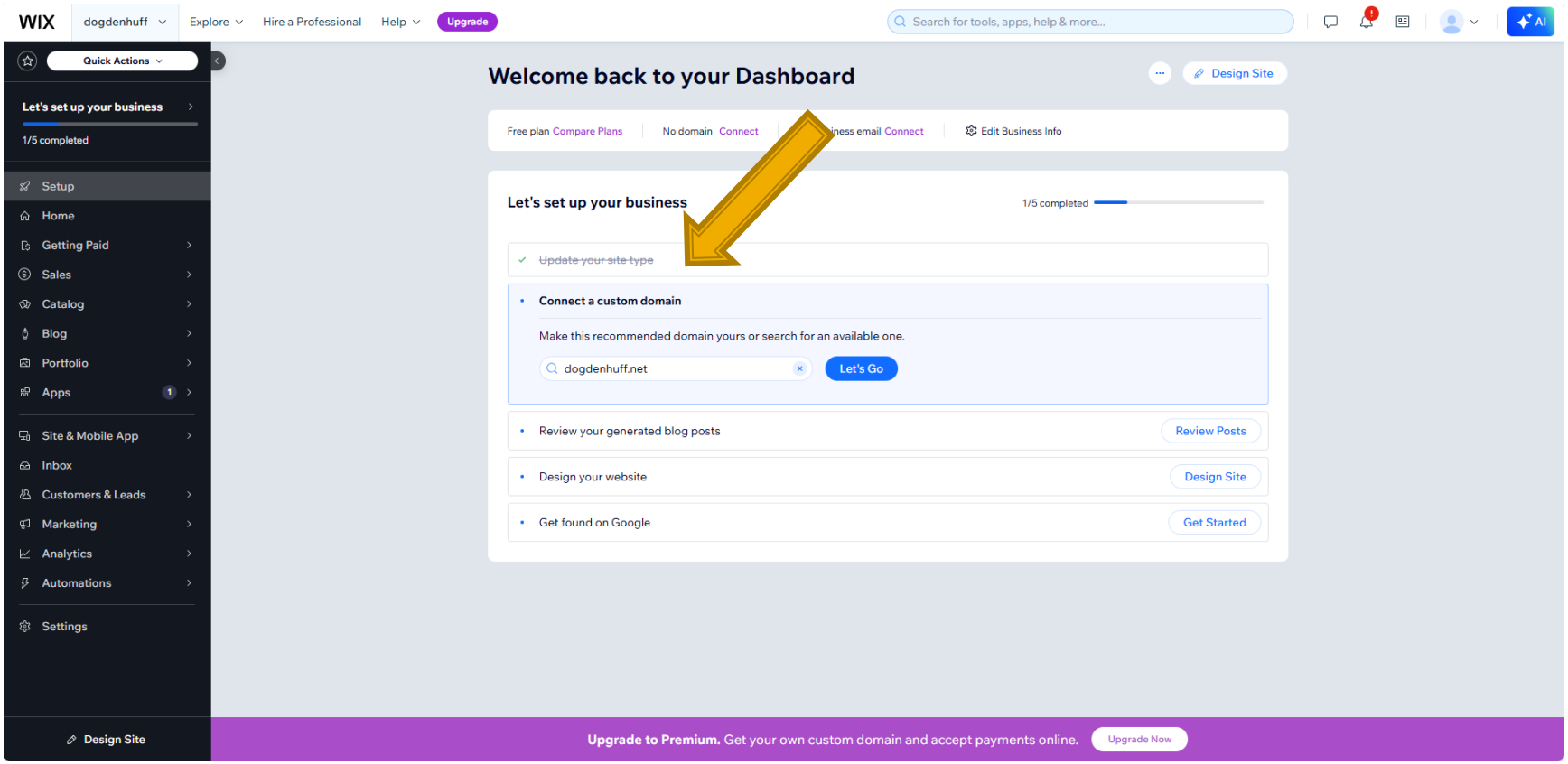
How to build an author website

- Why I chose Wix
  - Well recommended online
  - Weebly purchased by Square and there are rumors of Weebly not being maintained well
  - Must have drag & drop editor



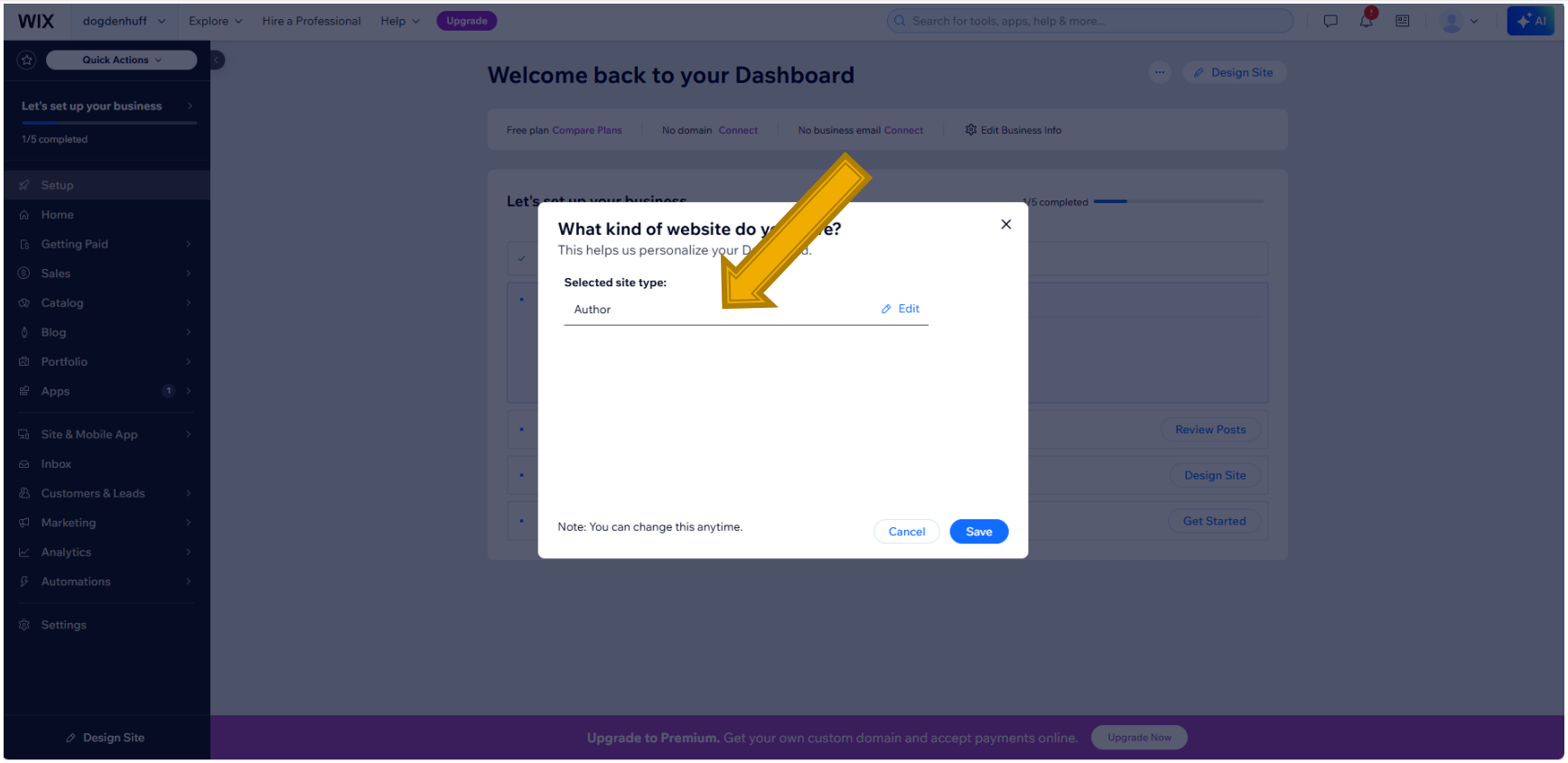
- https://dogdenhuff.wixsite.com/home

Create a Wix account



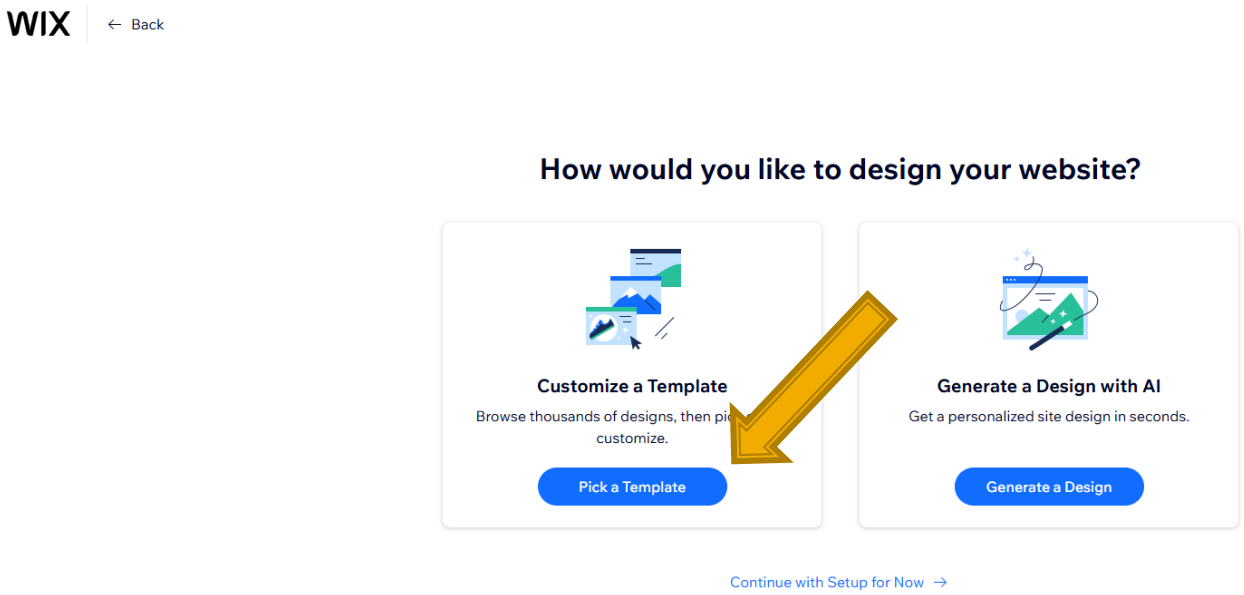
Click Update your site type. (After this, you'll skip the steps to Connect a custom domain and Review your generated blog posts and jump right to Design your website.)

Update your site type



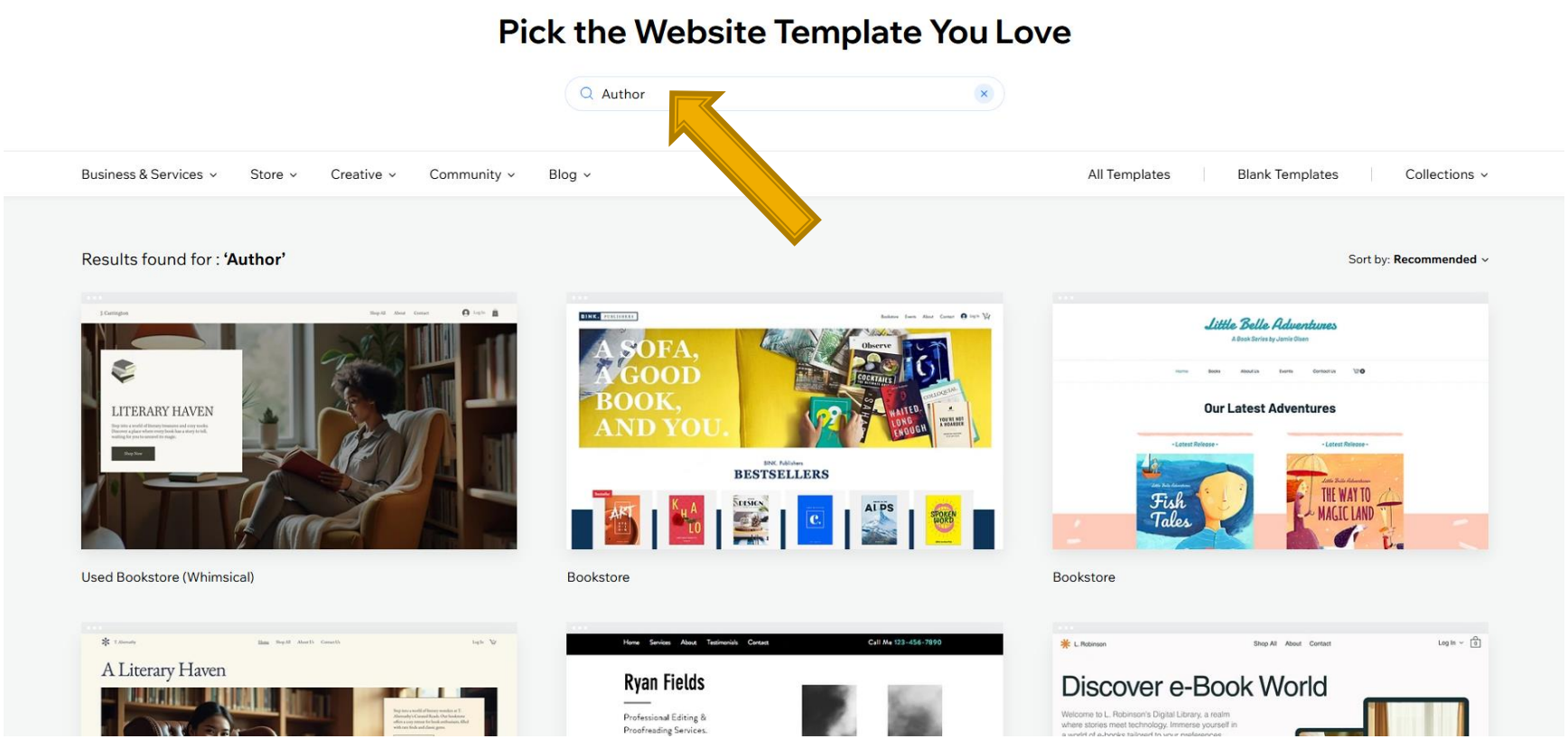
Choose an Author site type.

Choose a design strategy

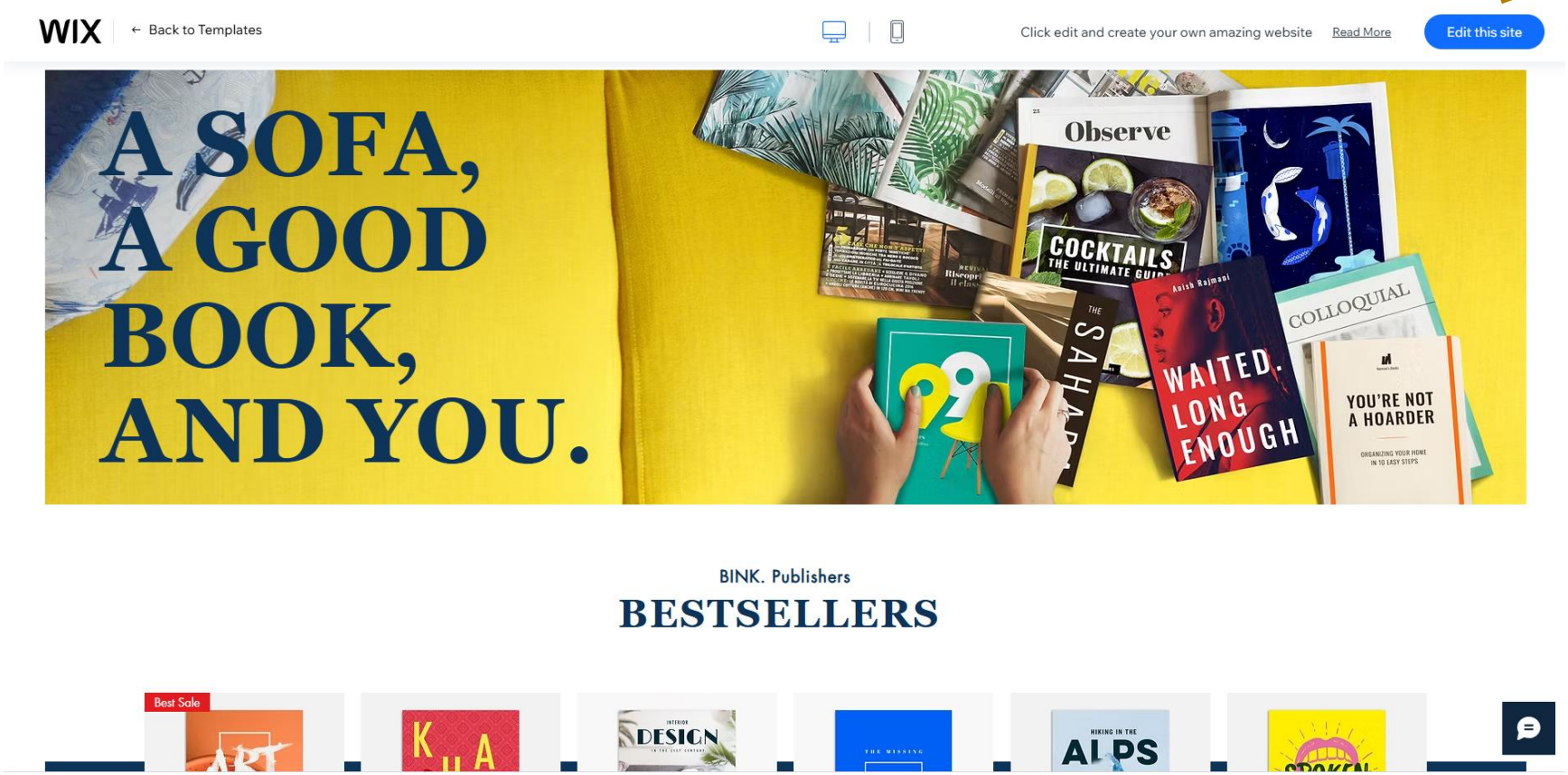


Choose between Customize a Template or Generate a Design with AI. I chose to Customize a Template.

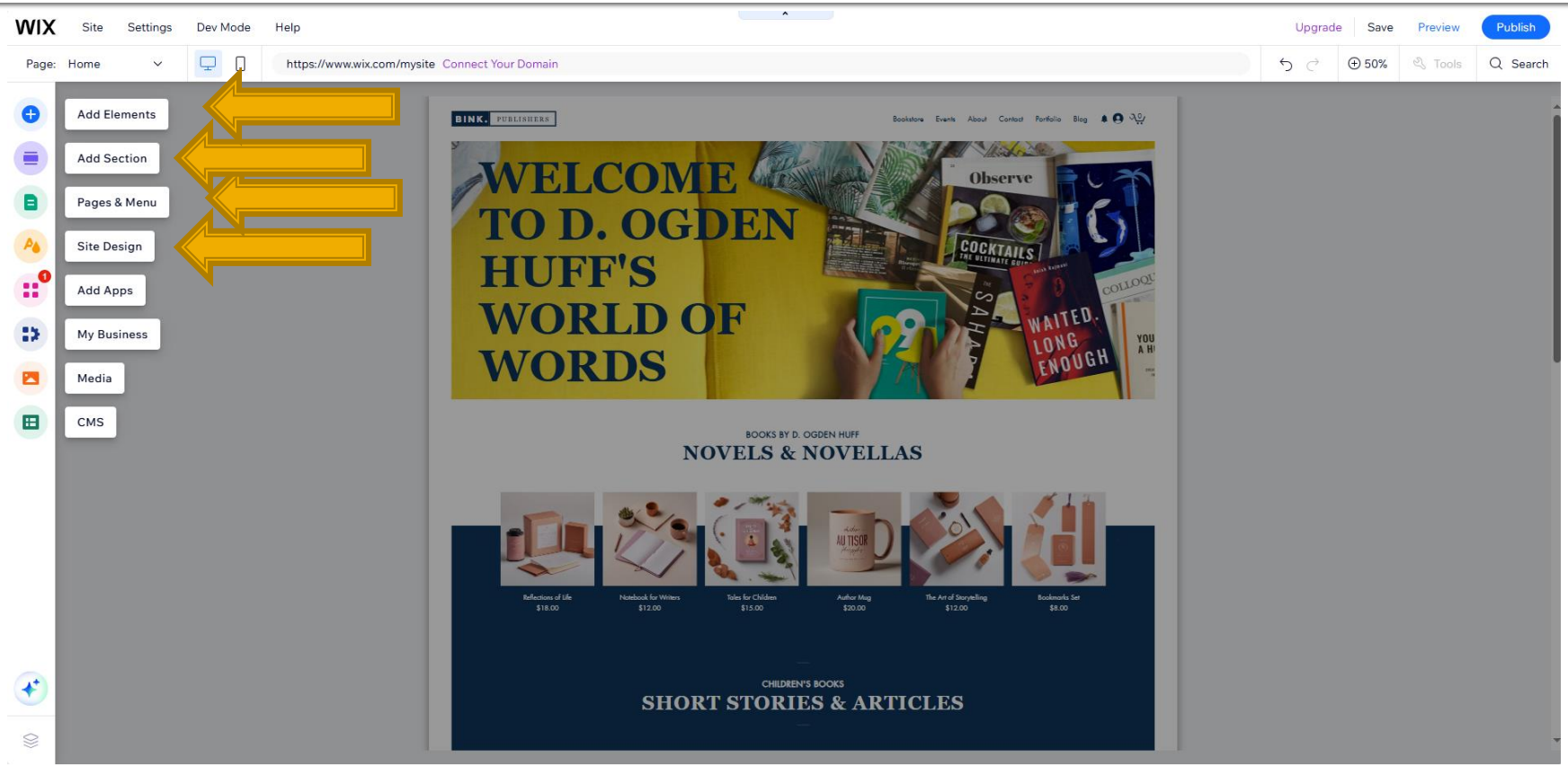
I chose to use a template



View templates, then edit

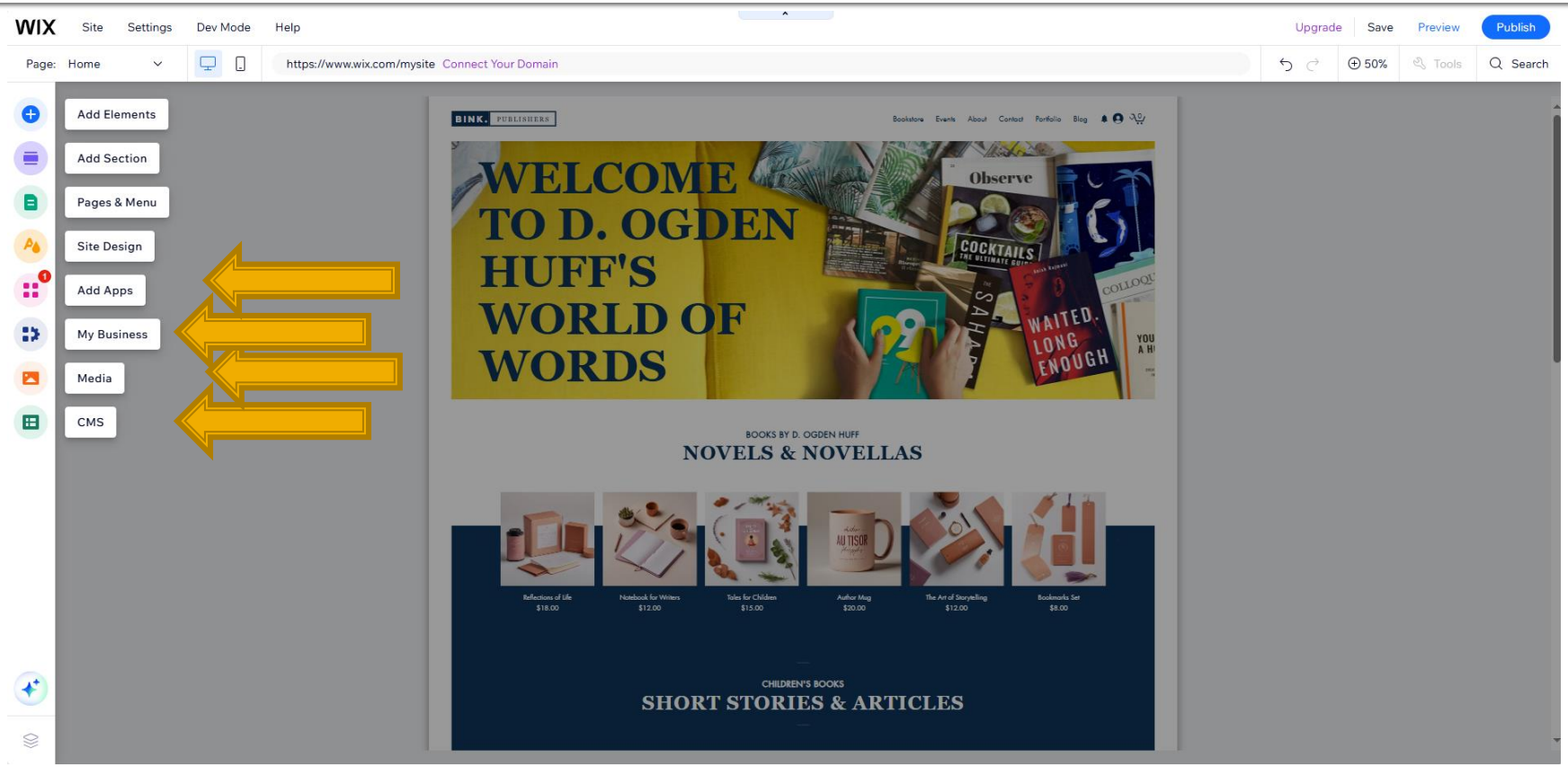


Familiarize yourself with the editor



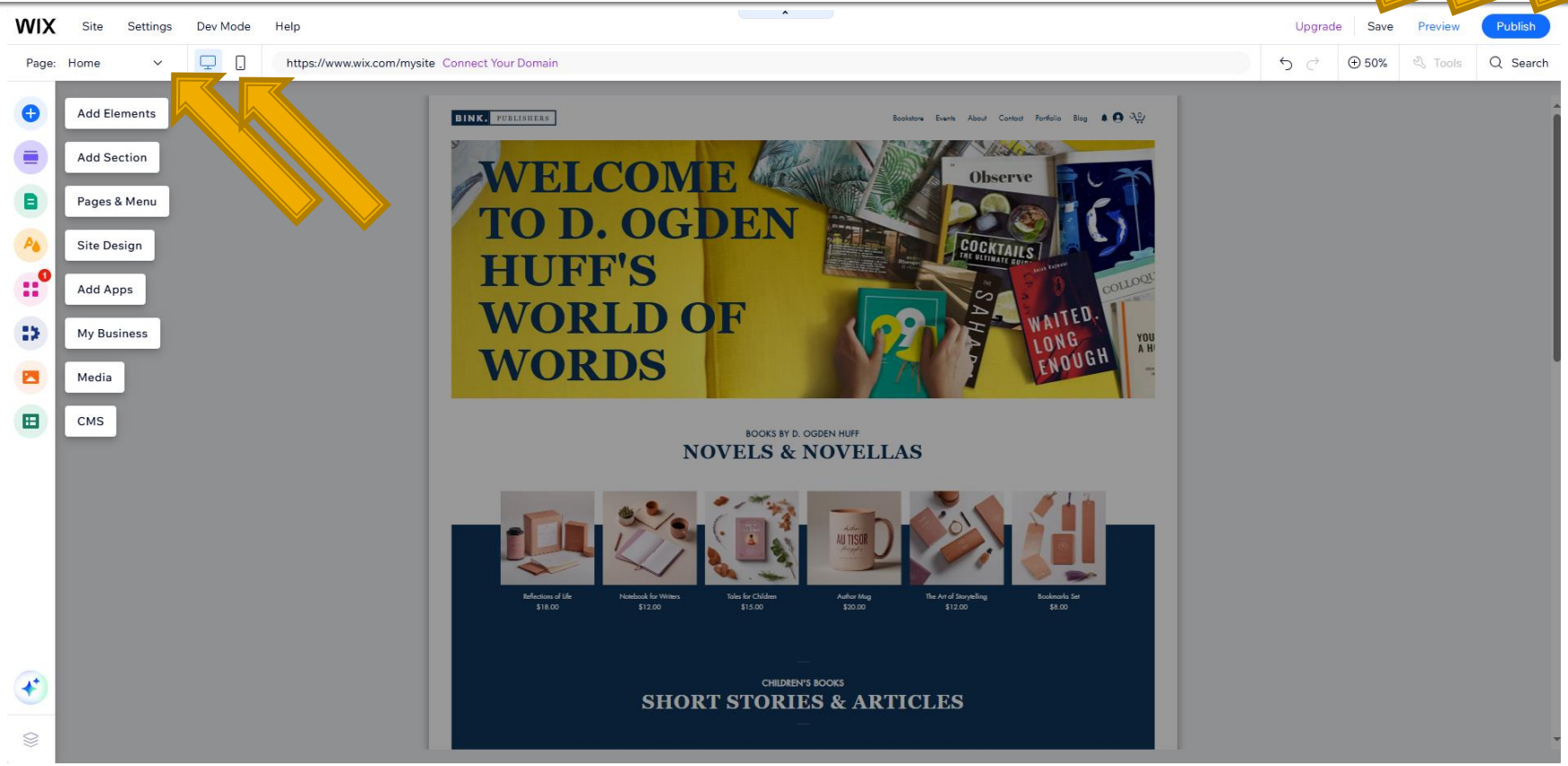
Elements = images, text boxes, buttons, galleries, menus, videos, forms, etc.
Section = horizontal group of elements on a page
Page = all you can see as you scroll up and down
Site Design = consistent color and text choices

Familiarize yourself with the editor



Apps = additional elements that you can download
My Business = set up an online store
Media = images and video storage area
CMS = content management system to organize your website data

Familiarize yourself with the editor



Page = toggle between pages

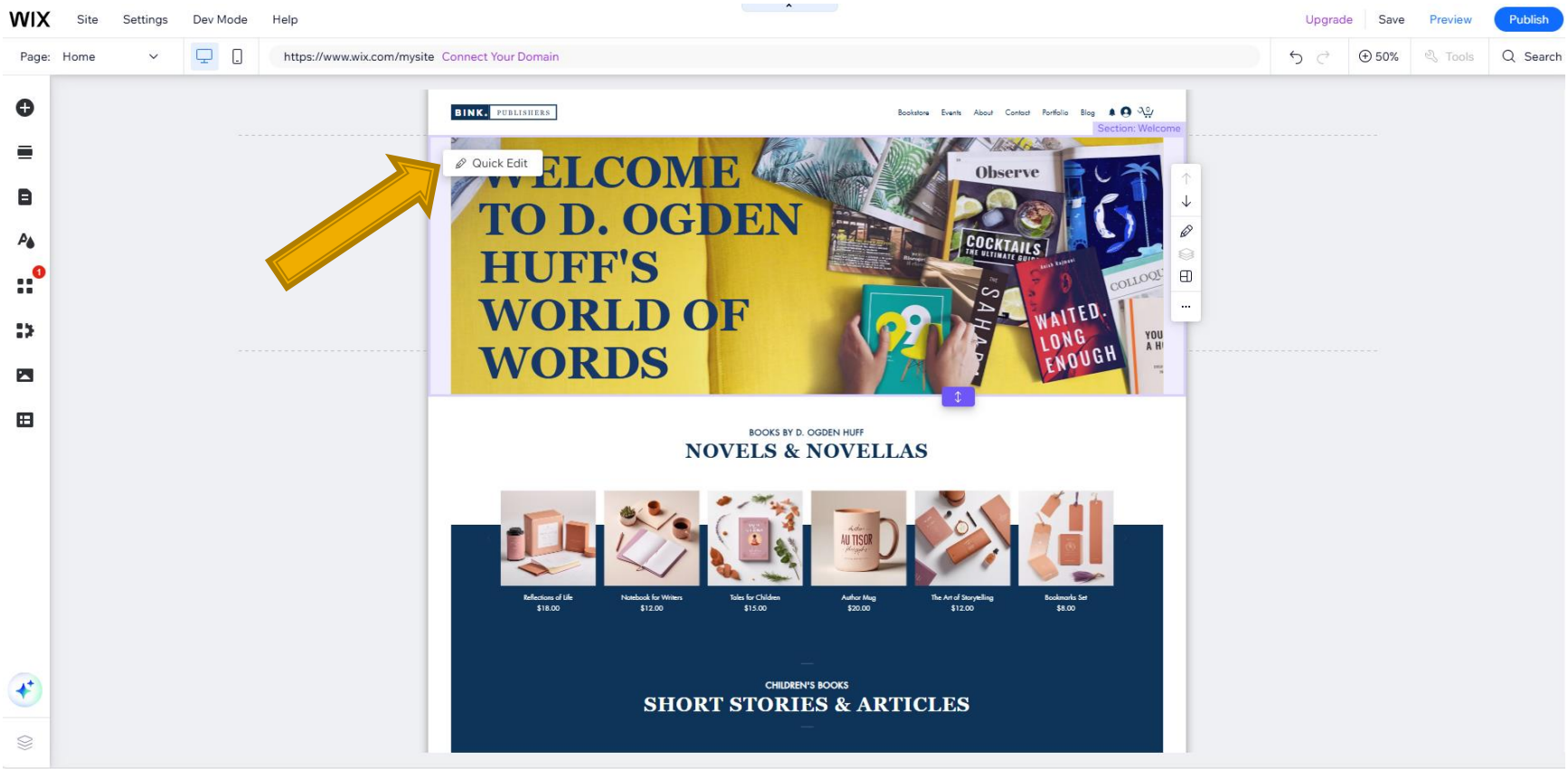
Computer vs Mobile = toggle between Computer view and Mobile view

Save = don't forget☺

Preview = see what your website will look like live

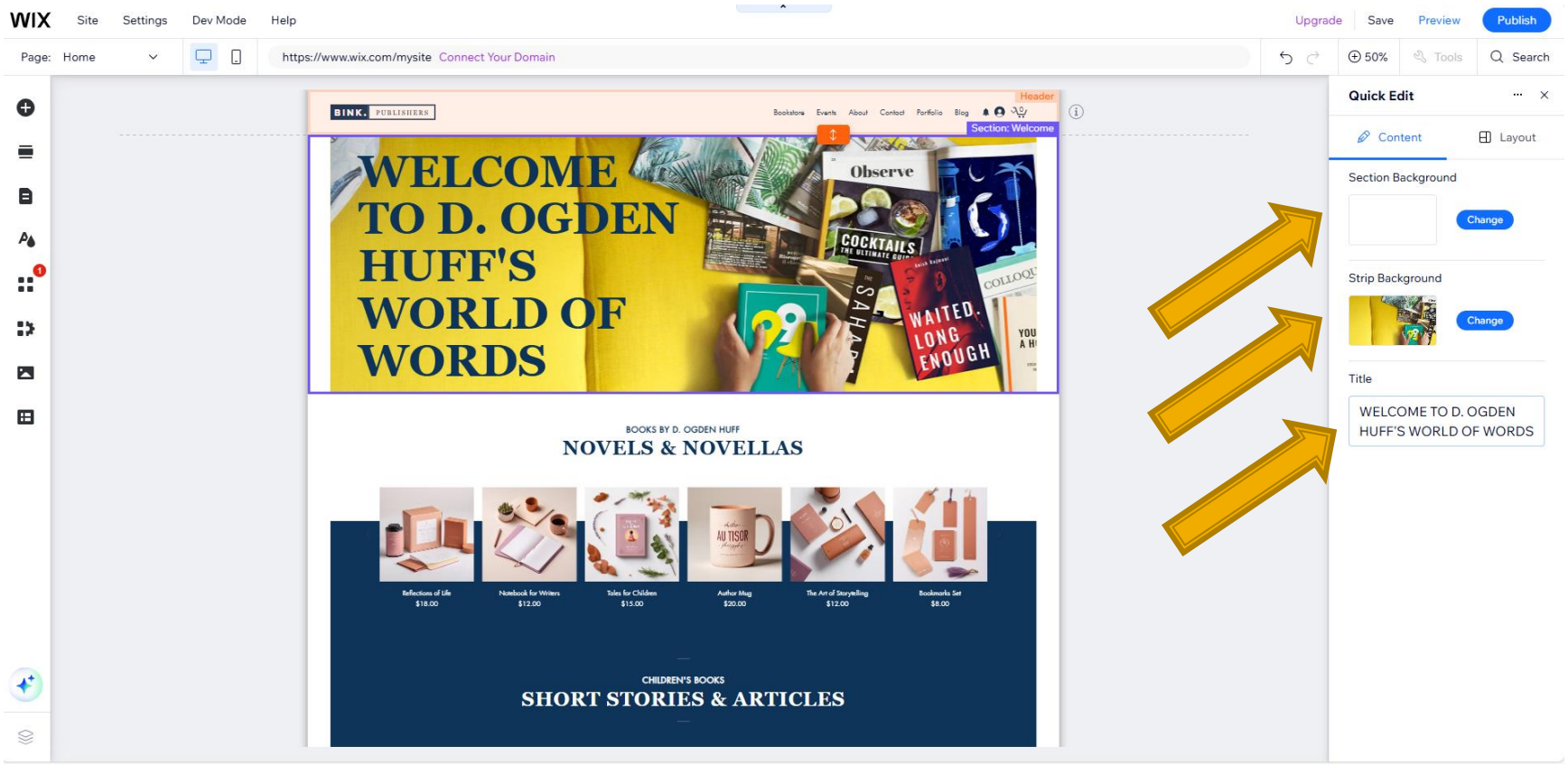
Publish = make your website available to anyone with the URL

Quick Edit a section



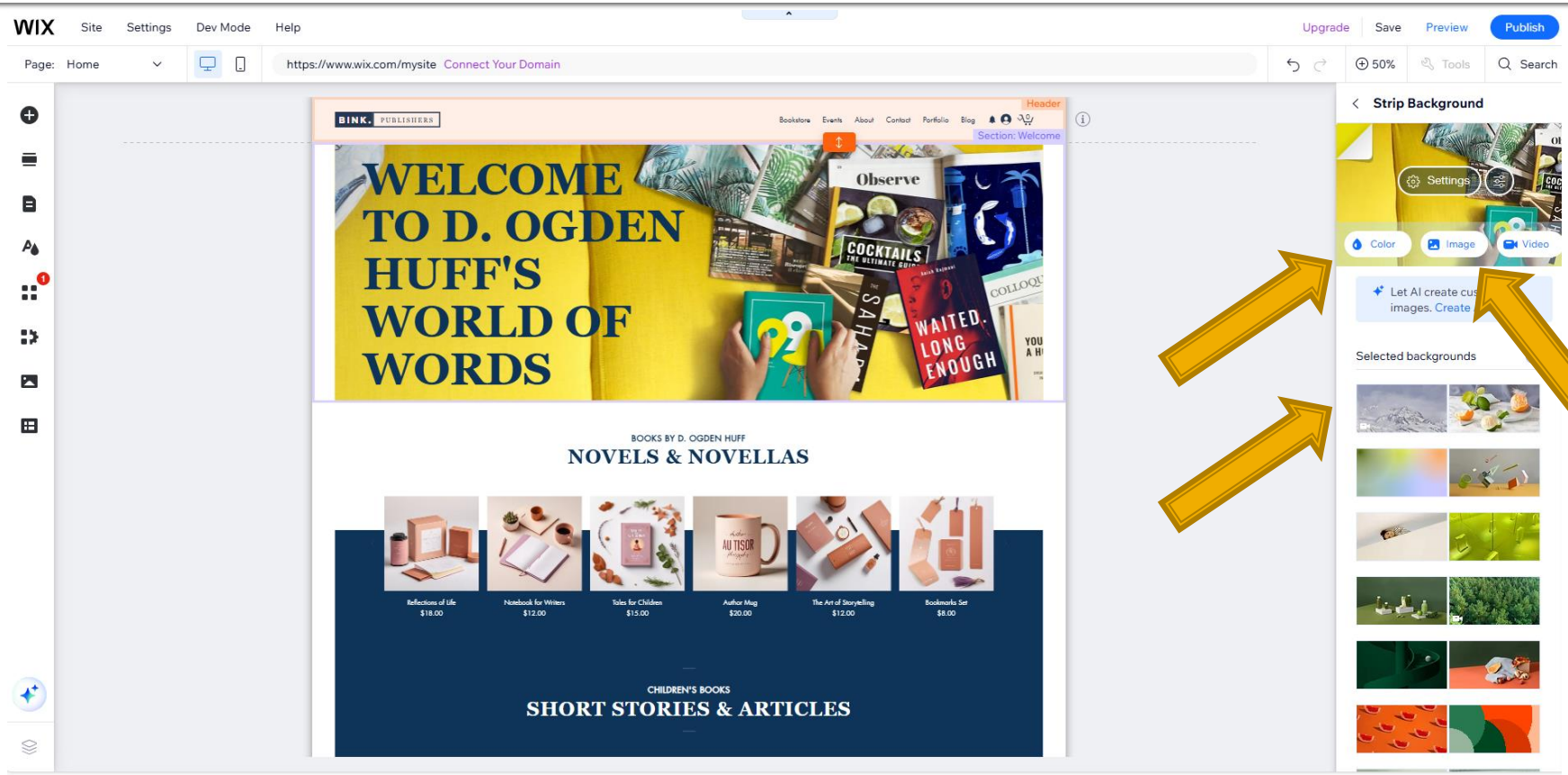
Quick edit allows you to edit multiple section elements at the same time.

Quick Edit a section



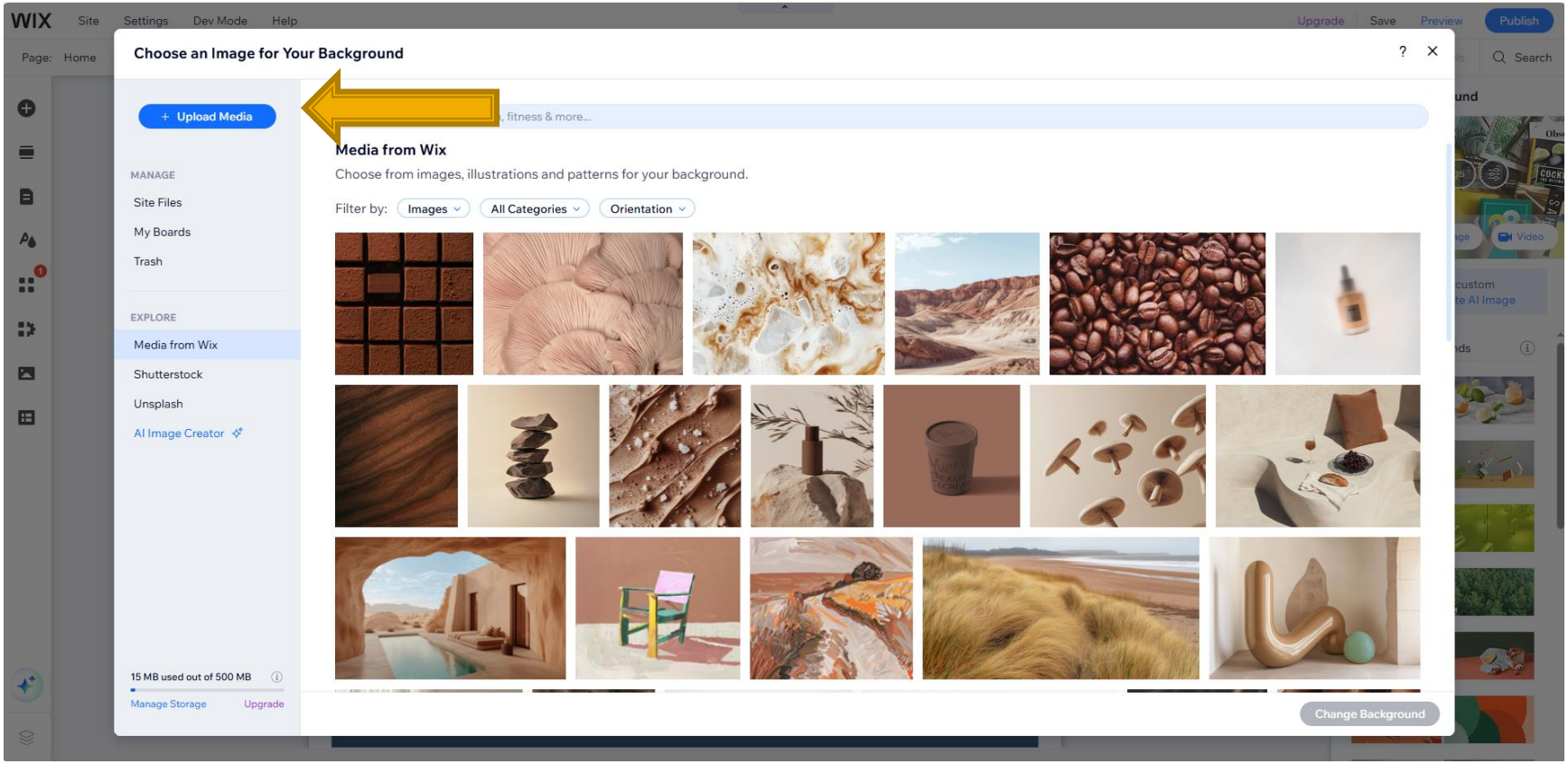
Background color, image, and text are all available to be changed here.

Choose a background



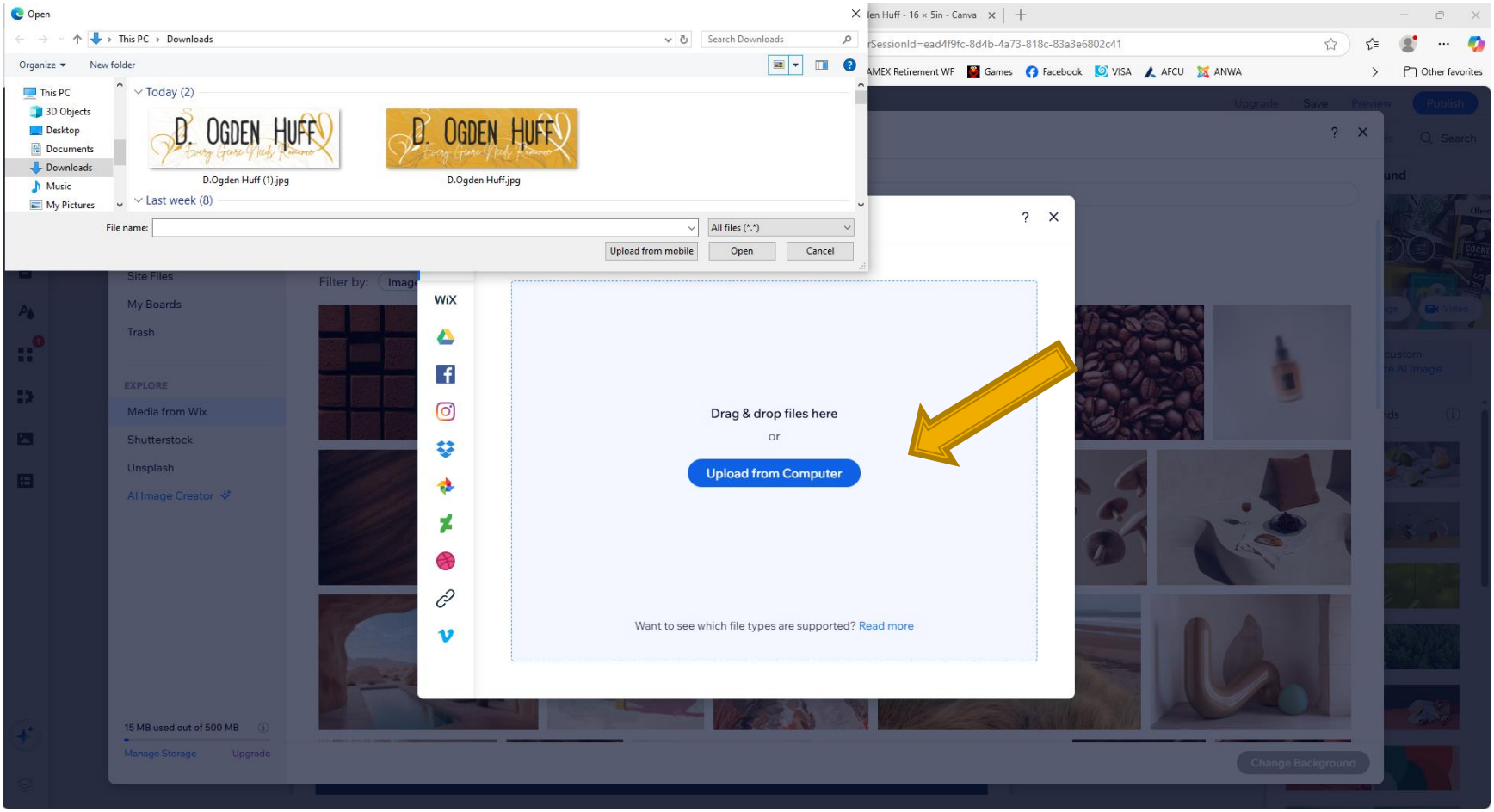
Choose a color, provided image, or upload your own image or video.

How to upload your own image

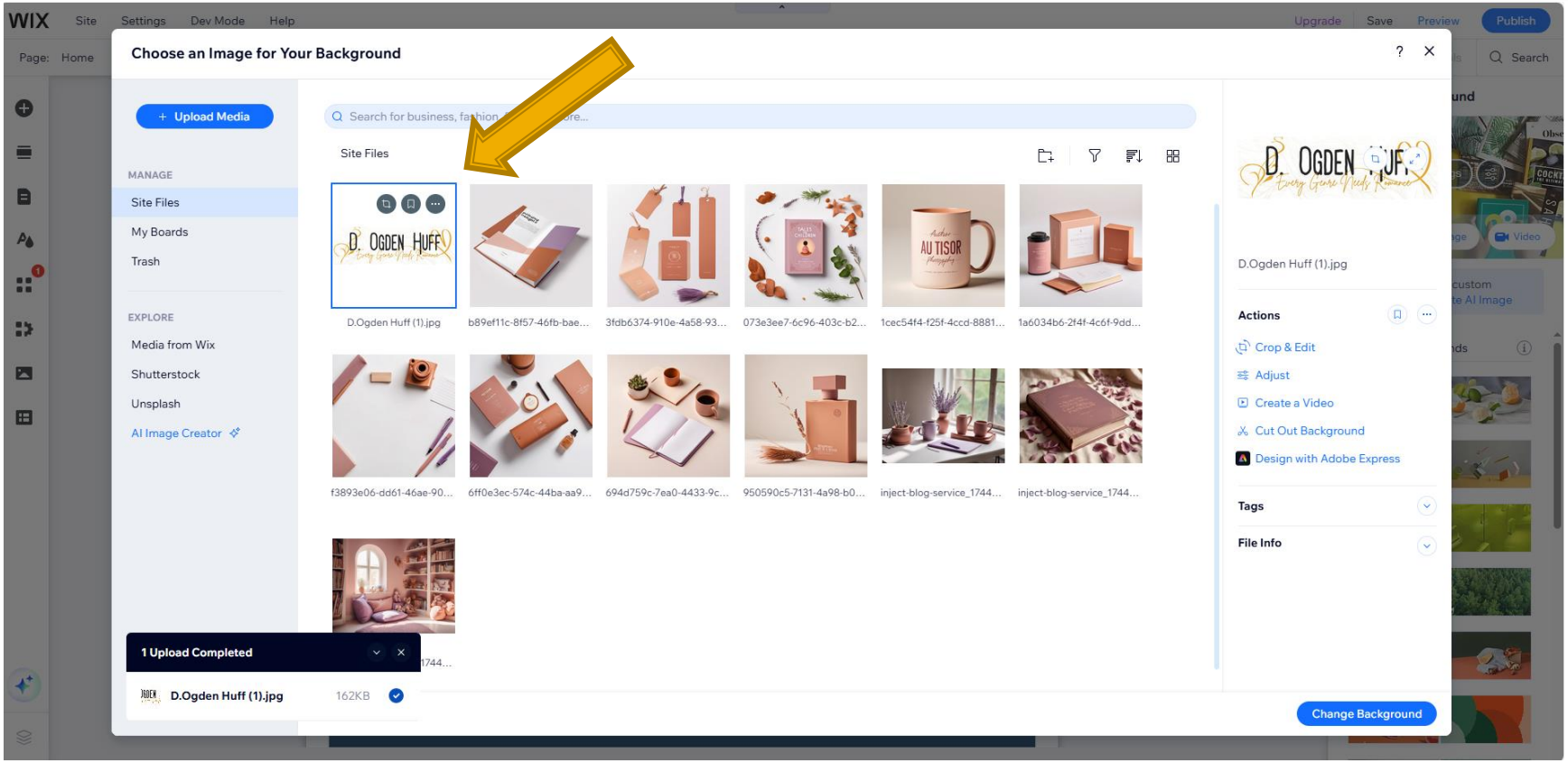


The template theme you choose comes with some images. To upload your own, click Upload Media.

I created my own banners on Canva

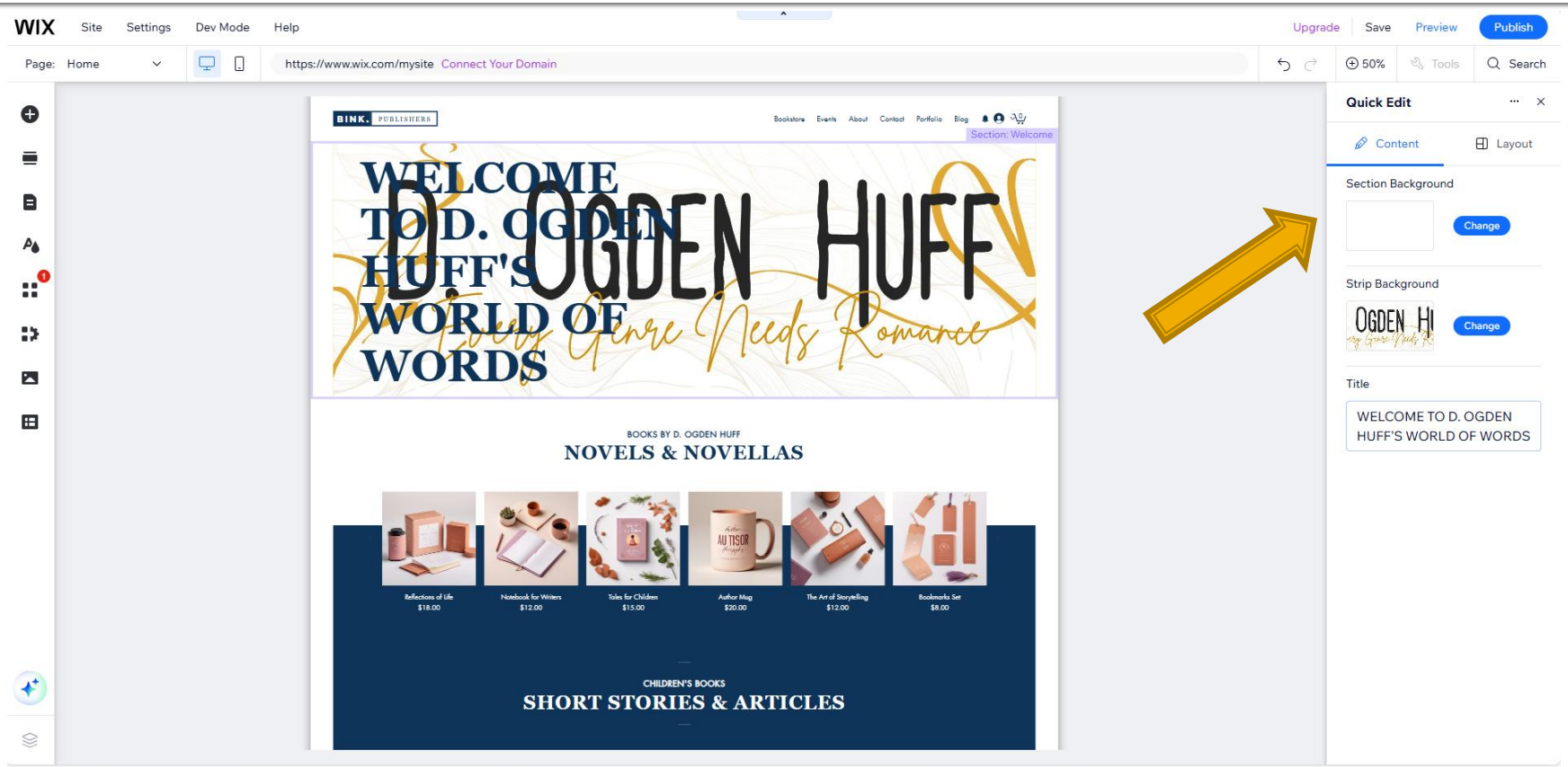


Choose your image



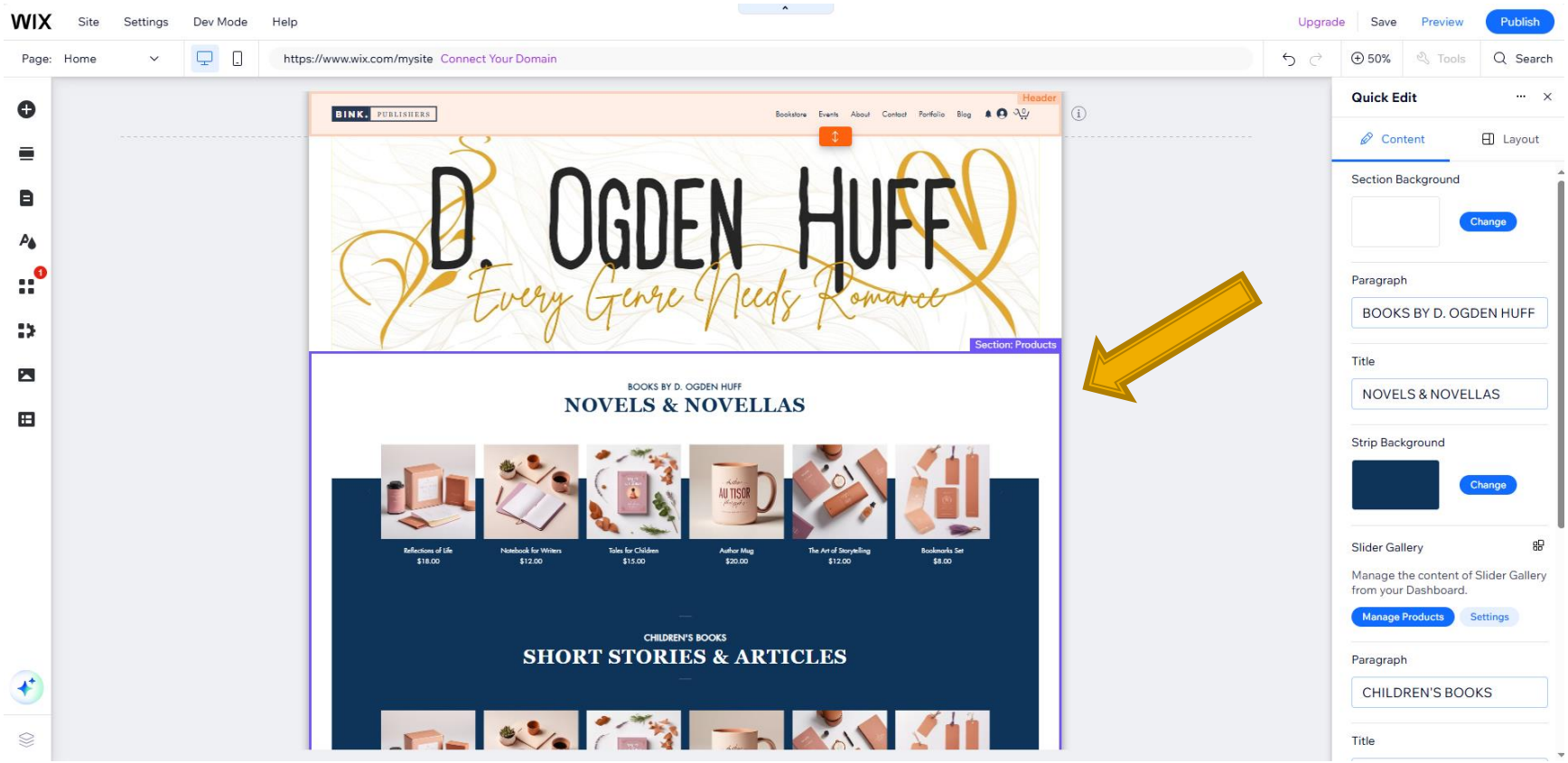
Once you select your image, click Change Background.

Change your mind☺



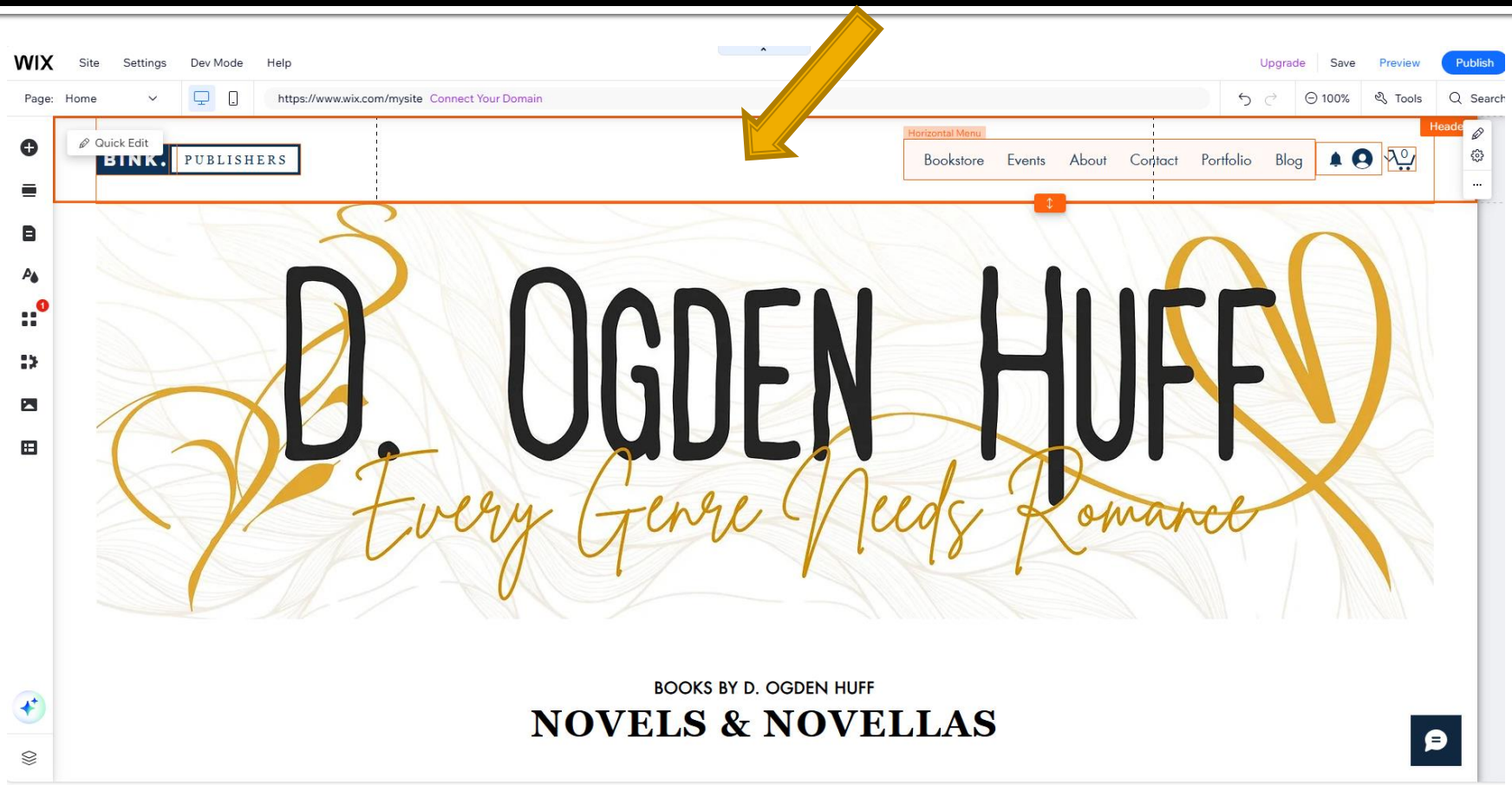
I didn't like how my image worked as a background. It truncated in Mobile view. So I made my background white and added my banner as an image. That worked better. Then I removed the template words.

Sometimes you remove whole template sections



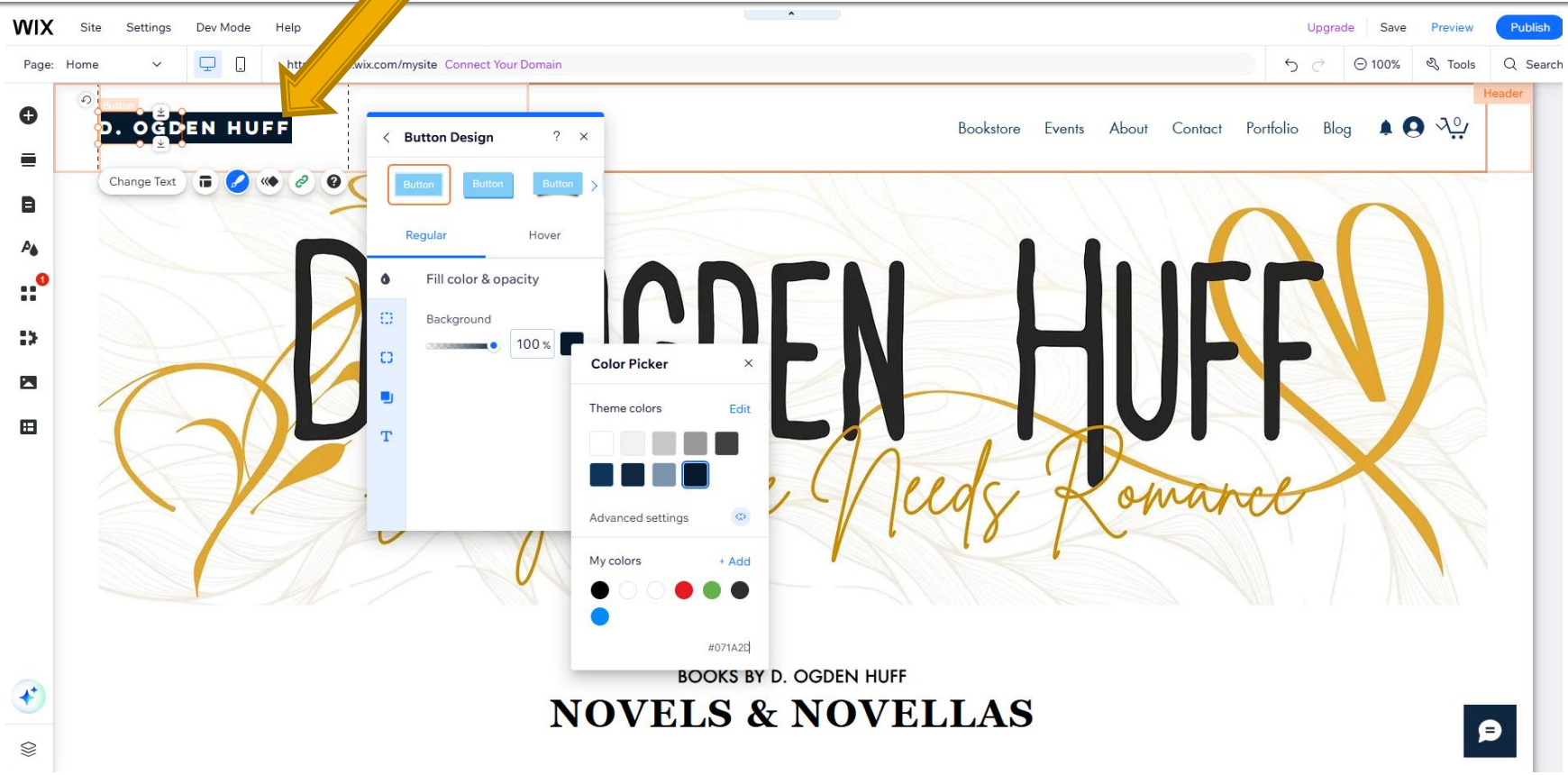
I messed with this section for way too long, trying to get it to display my books and be able to click them to go to Amazon. It never worked, so I ended up deleting this whole section and adding my own images and links.

Edit the header



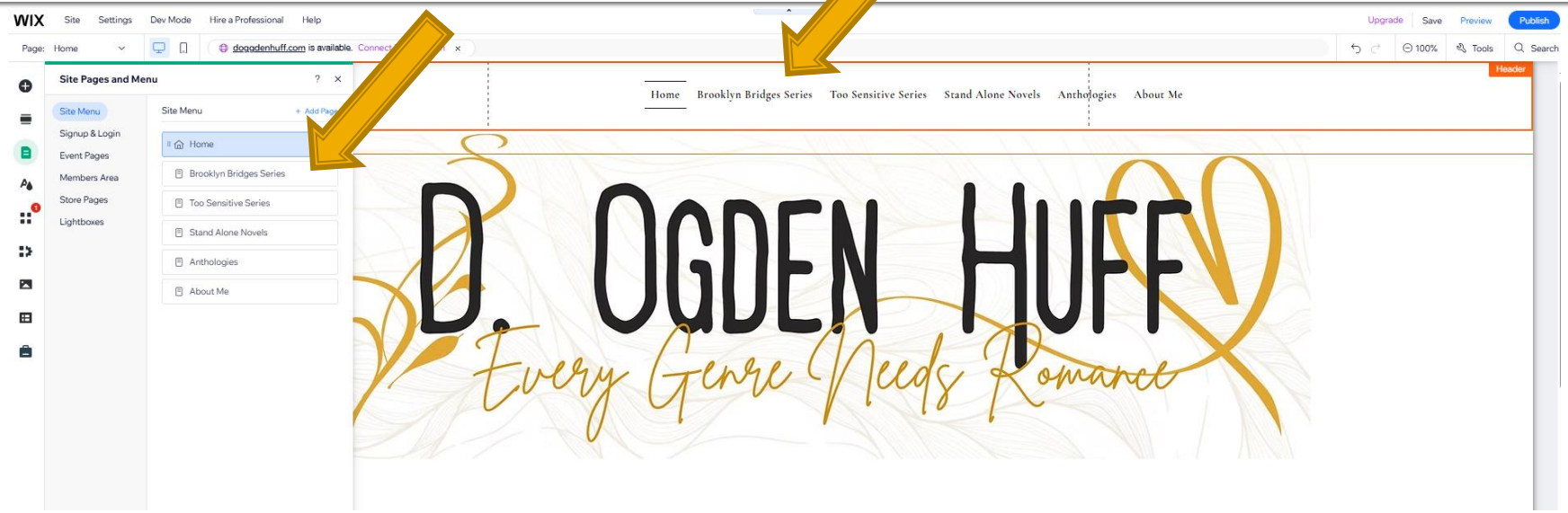
This header section will appear at the top of every page. I needed to change the image on the left and the menu on the right.

Change button on the left



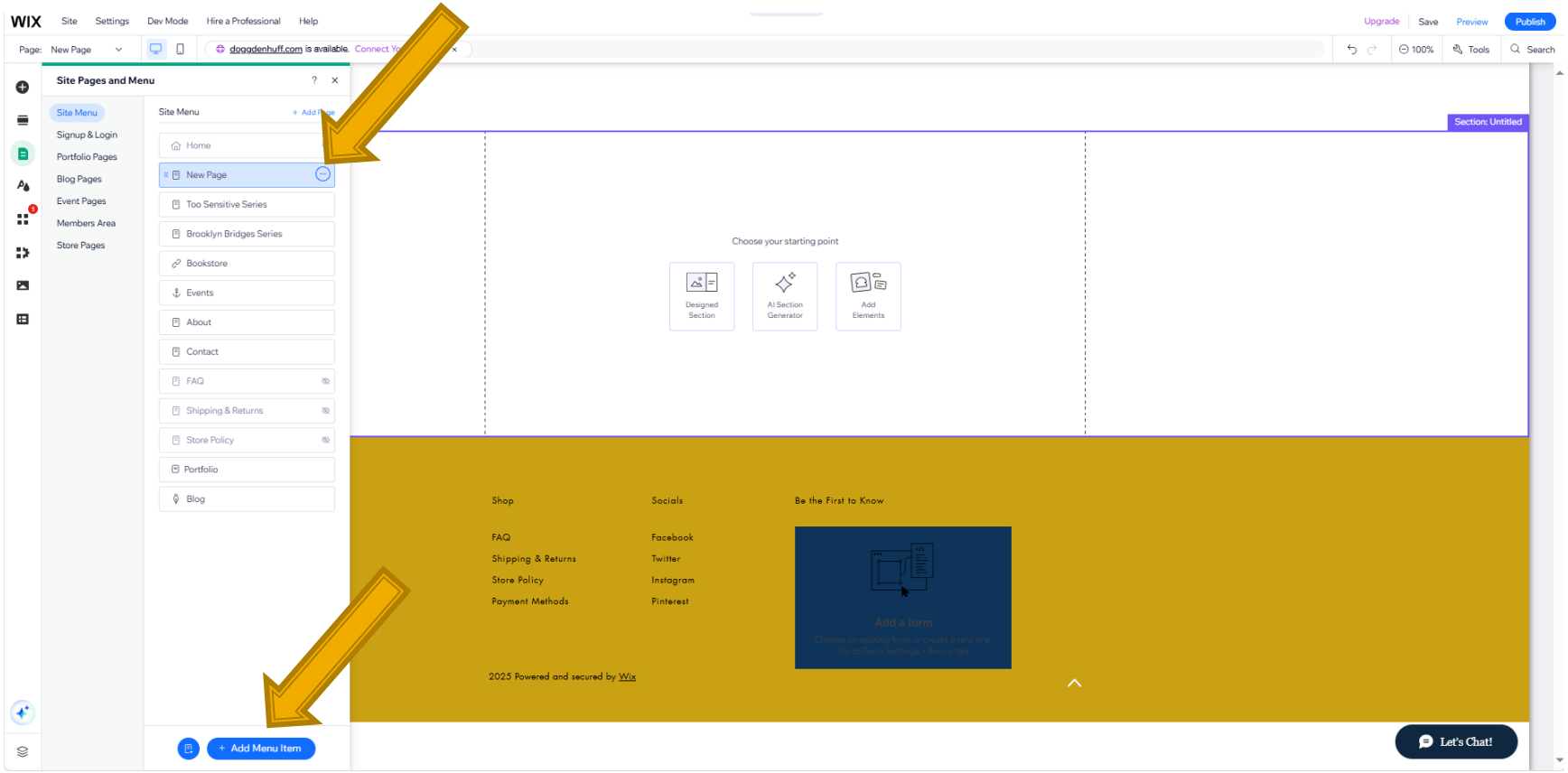
The image on the left was really a button. I played with several options before I finally found one I like (not pictured above).

Change menu on the right



The menu items are generated from the pages created. Once a page is created or the name changed, it will appear on the menu.

Add or remove pages here

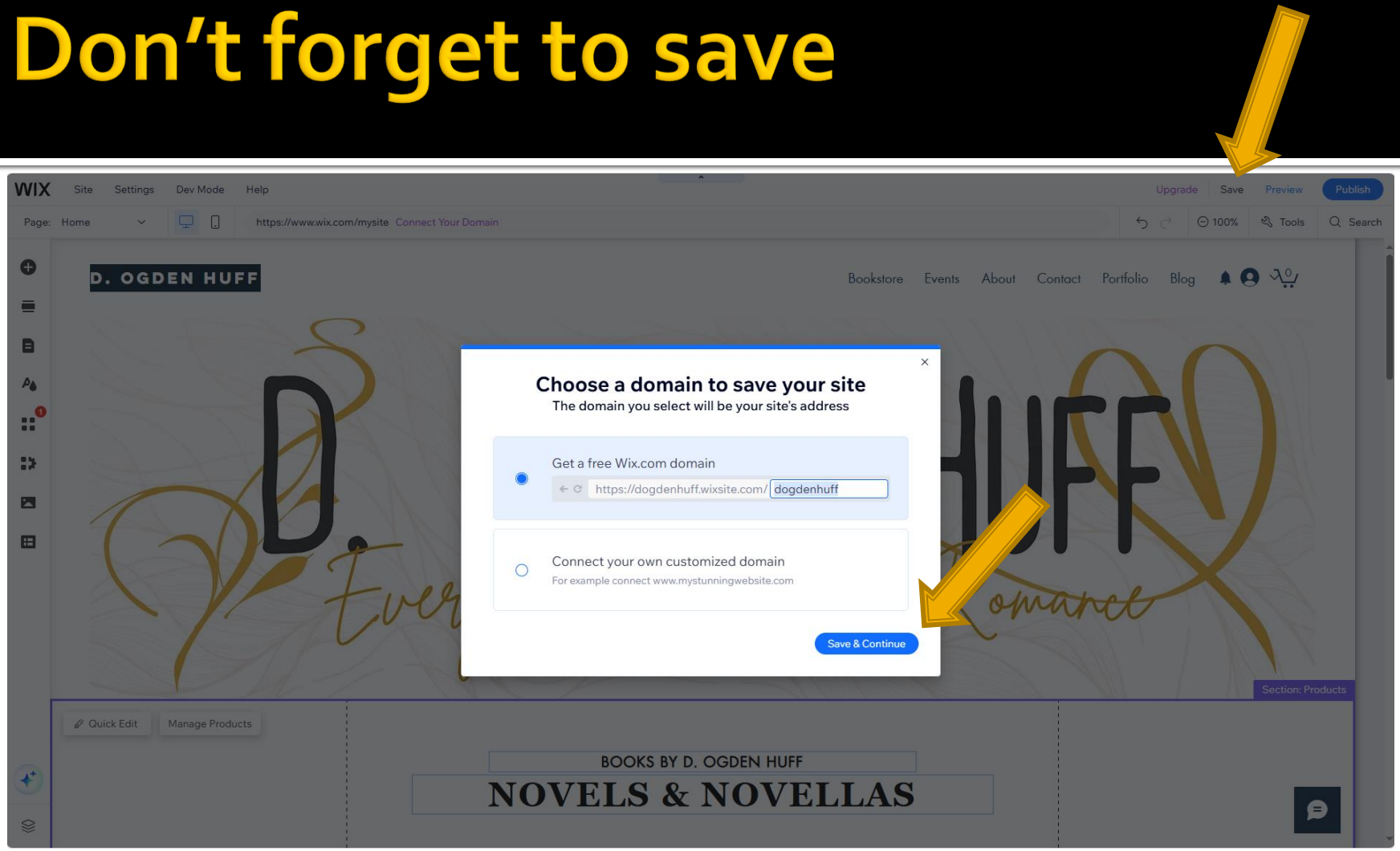


Click on Pages and Menus icon and Site Menu. To add a page, click blue Add Menu Item button on the bottom. To delete a page, click the blue menu icon to the right of the page name.

Change menu on the right

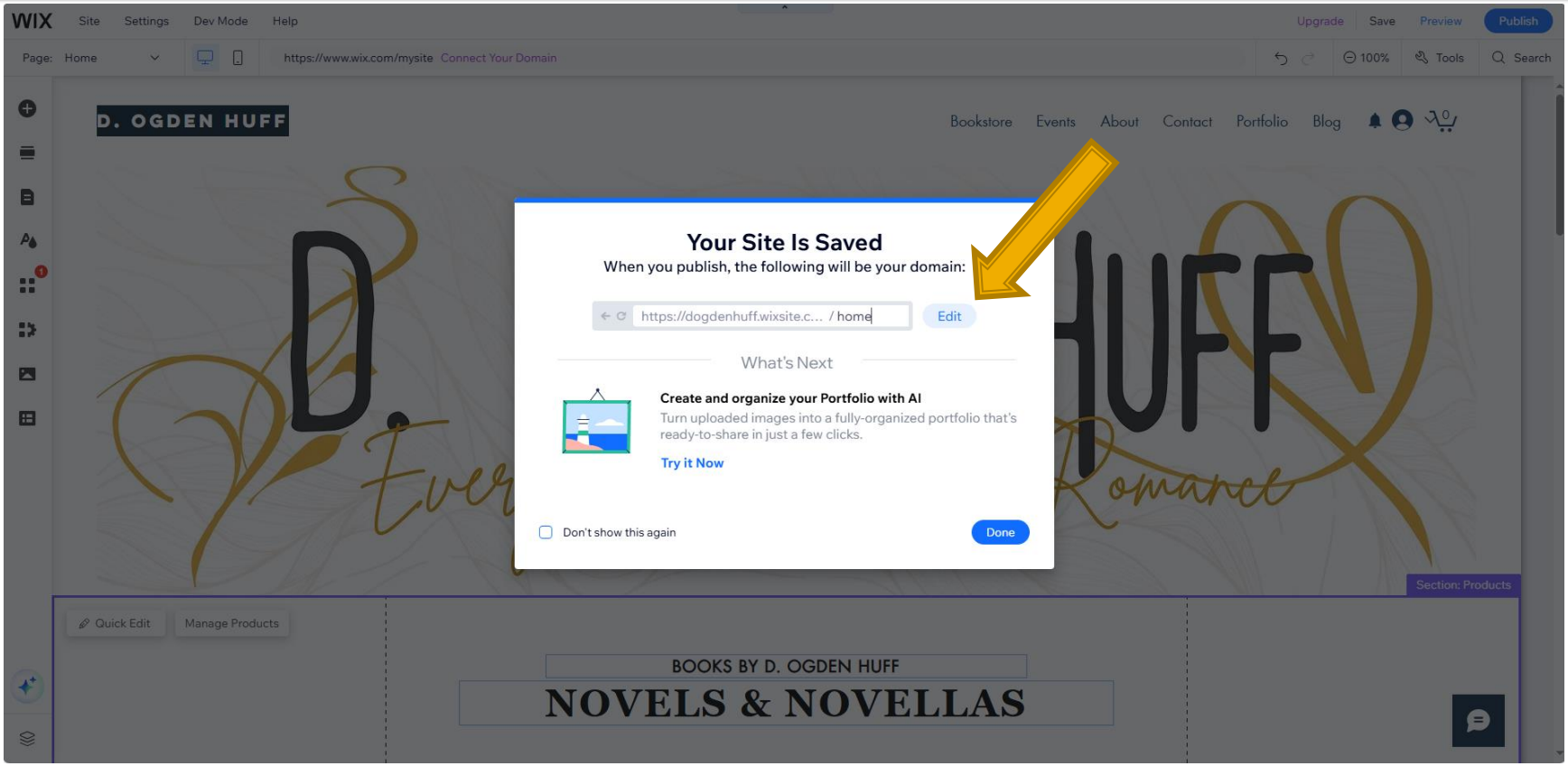
The style of the menu is controlled by clicking on the menu and choosing the pen (Design).

Don’t forget to save



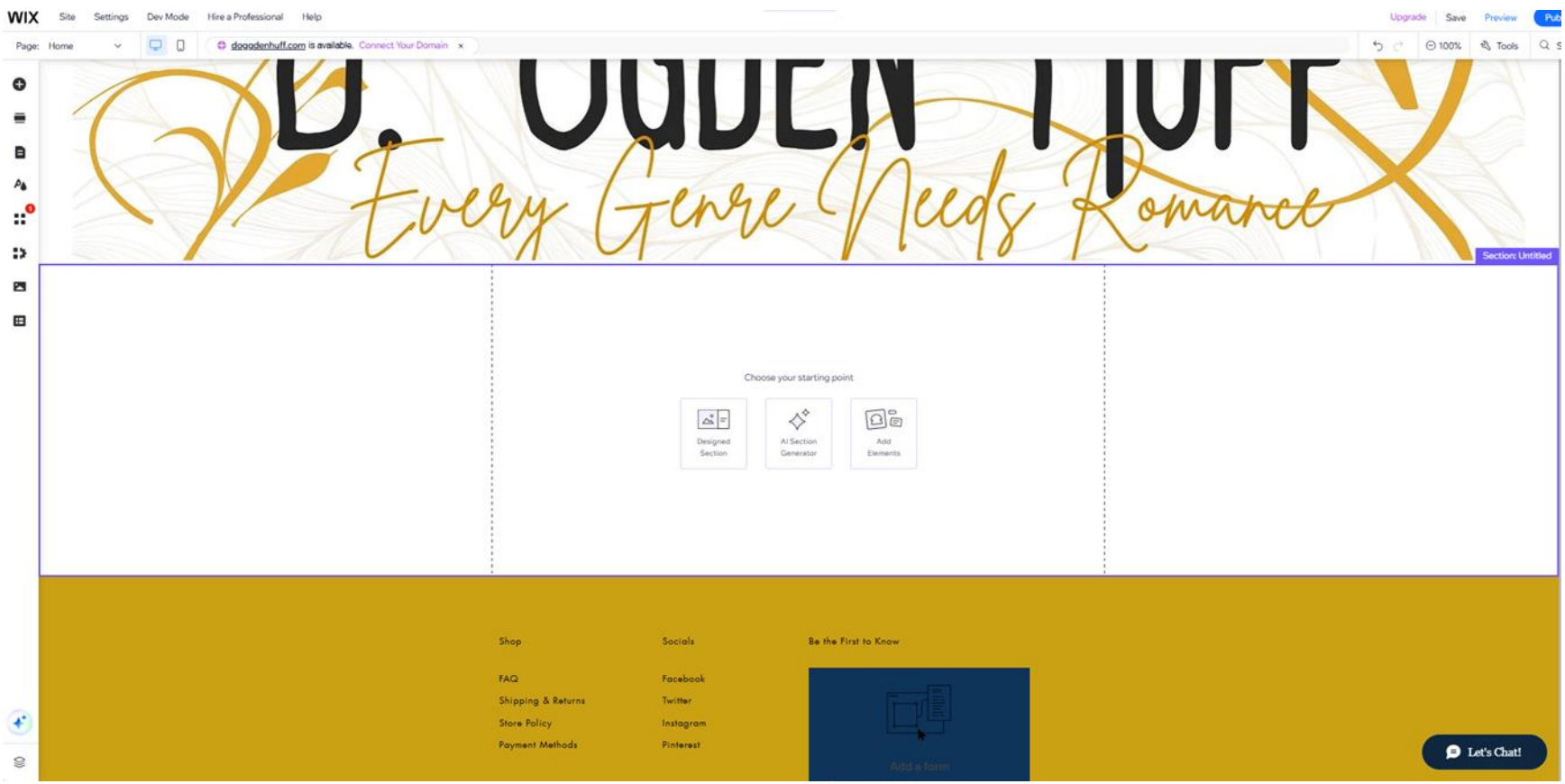
I saved a little too soon and created a URL for my home page that was longer than necessary.

But you can always change it



I changed the URL of my home page to "home."

I added a section

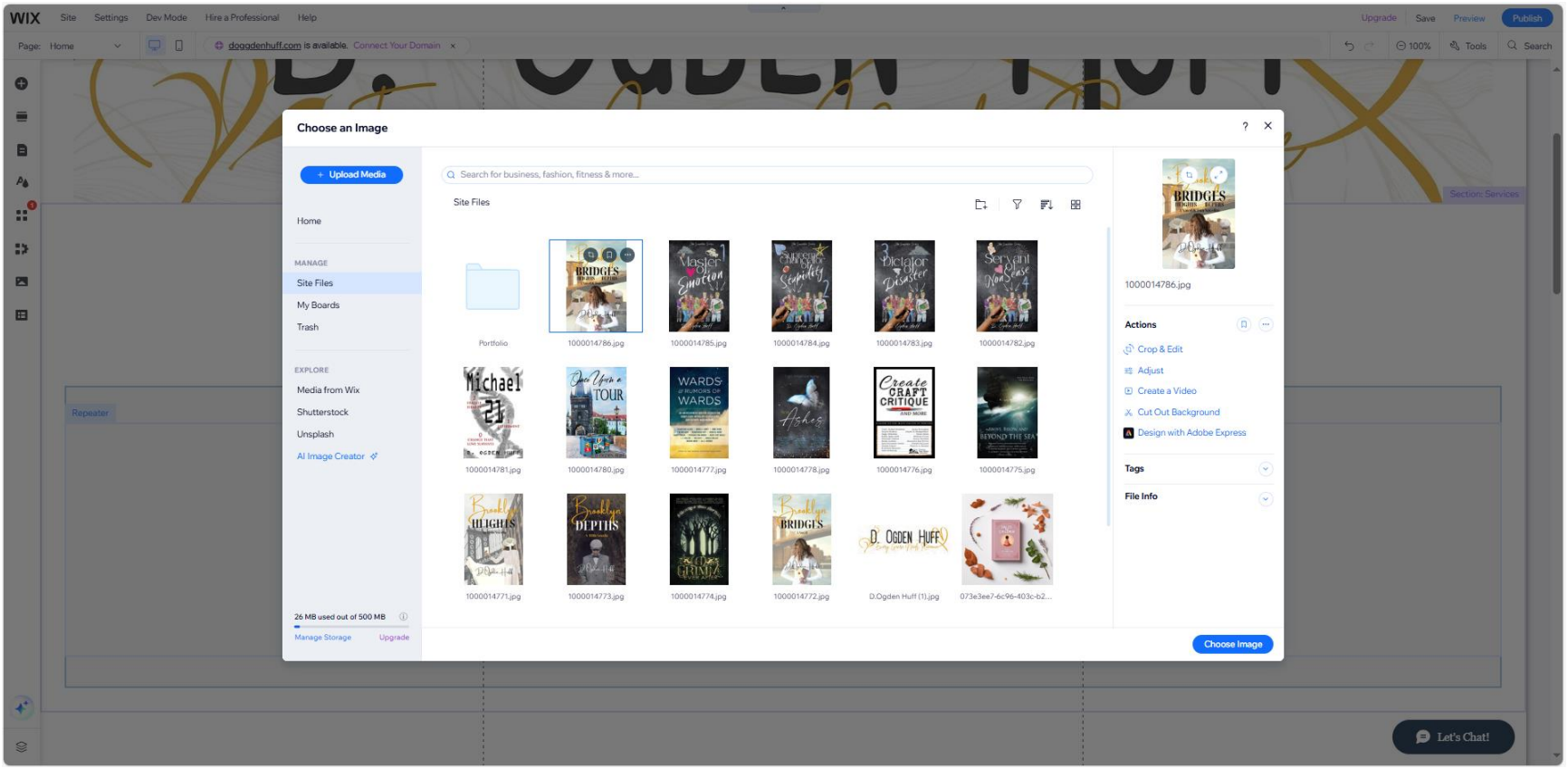


When you hover your cursor over the bottom center of a section, a purple "Add a Section" button pops up. I tried adding a designed section, but again, I messed with it for too long and ended up going back and adding a blank section.

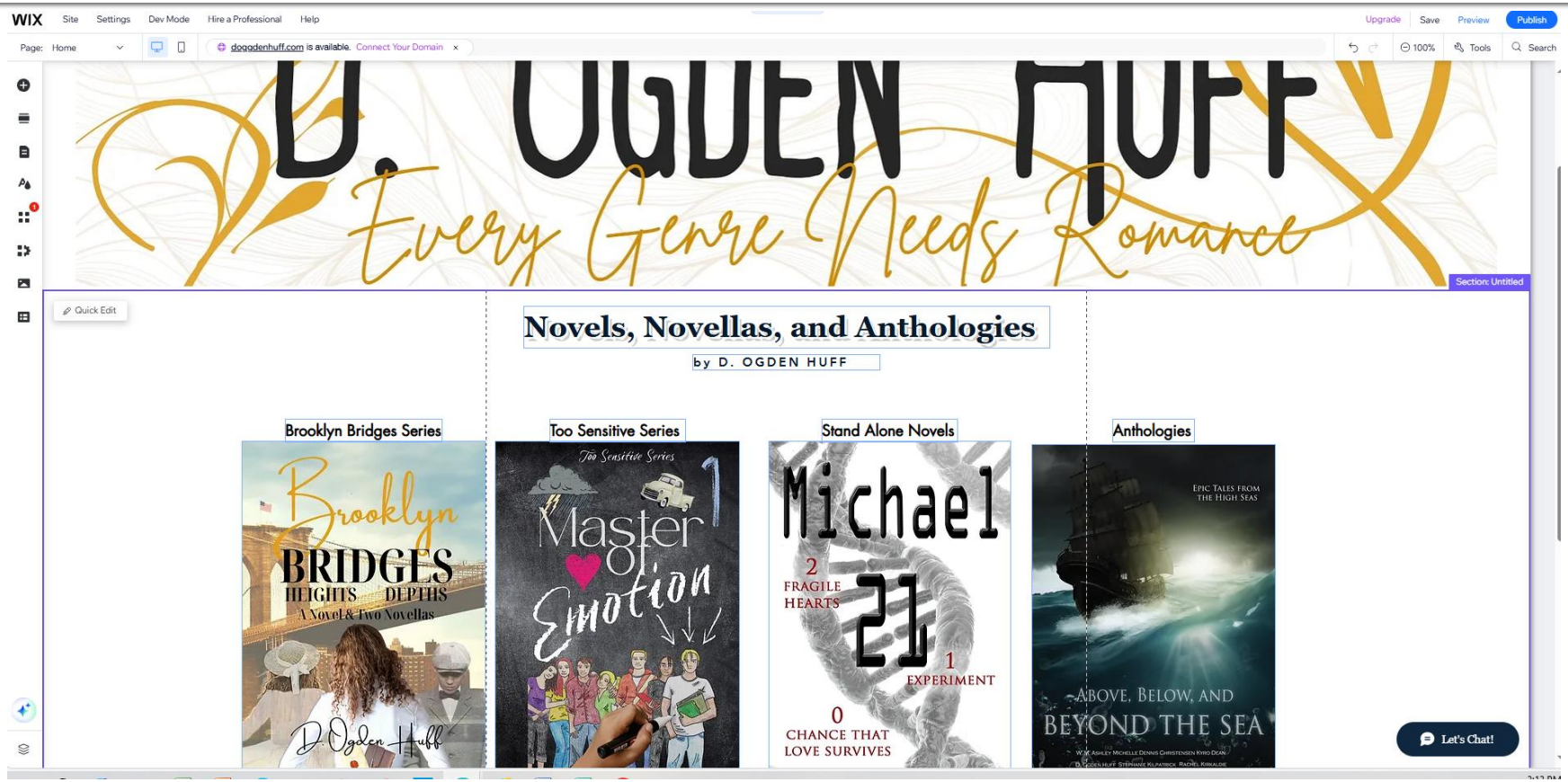
And added images to Media

I clicked on Elements and chose Image and Upload Images

I uploaded my book covers

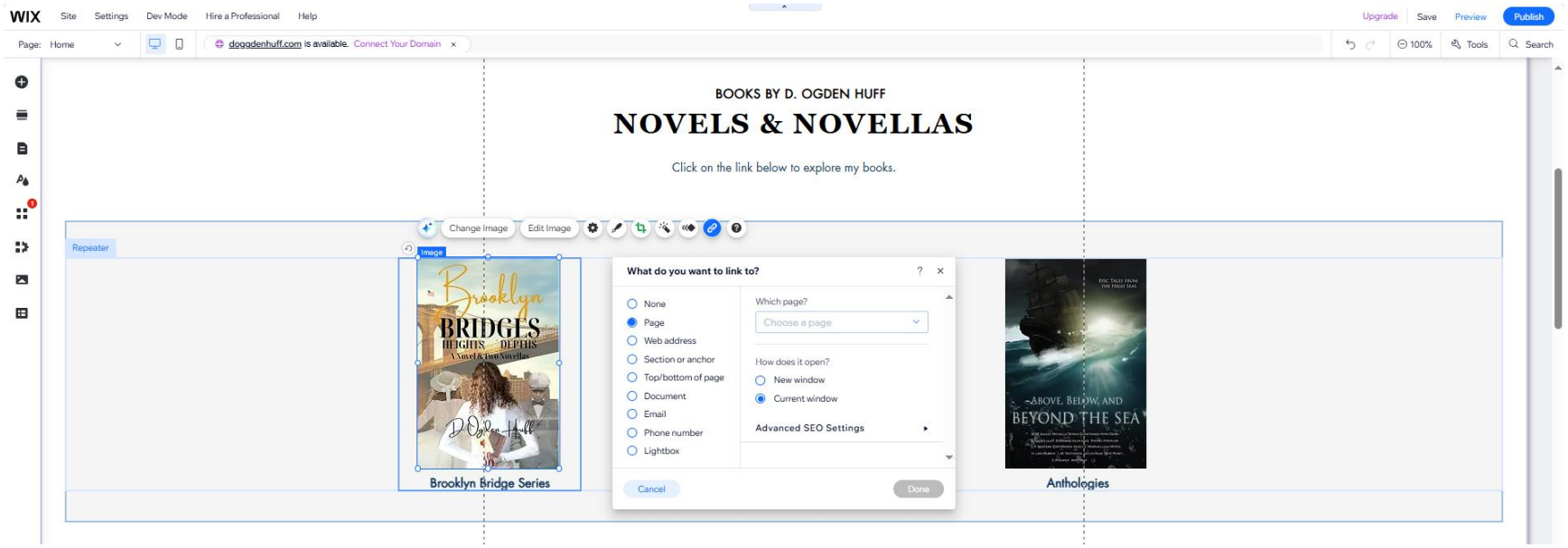


And added them to the section



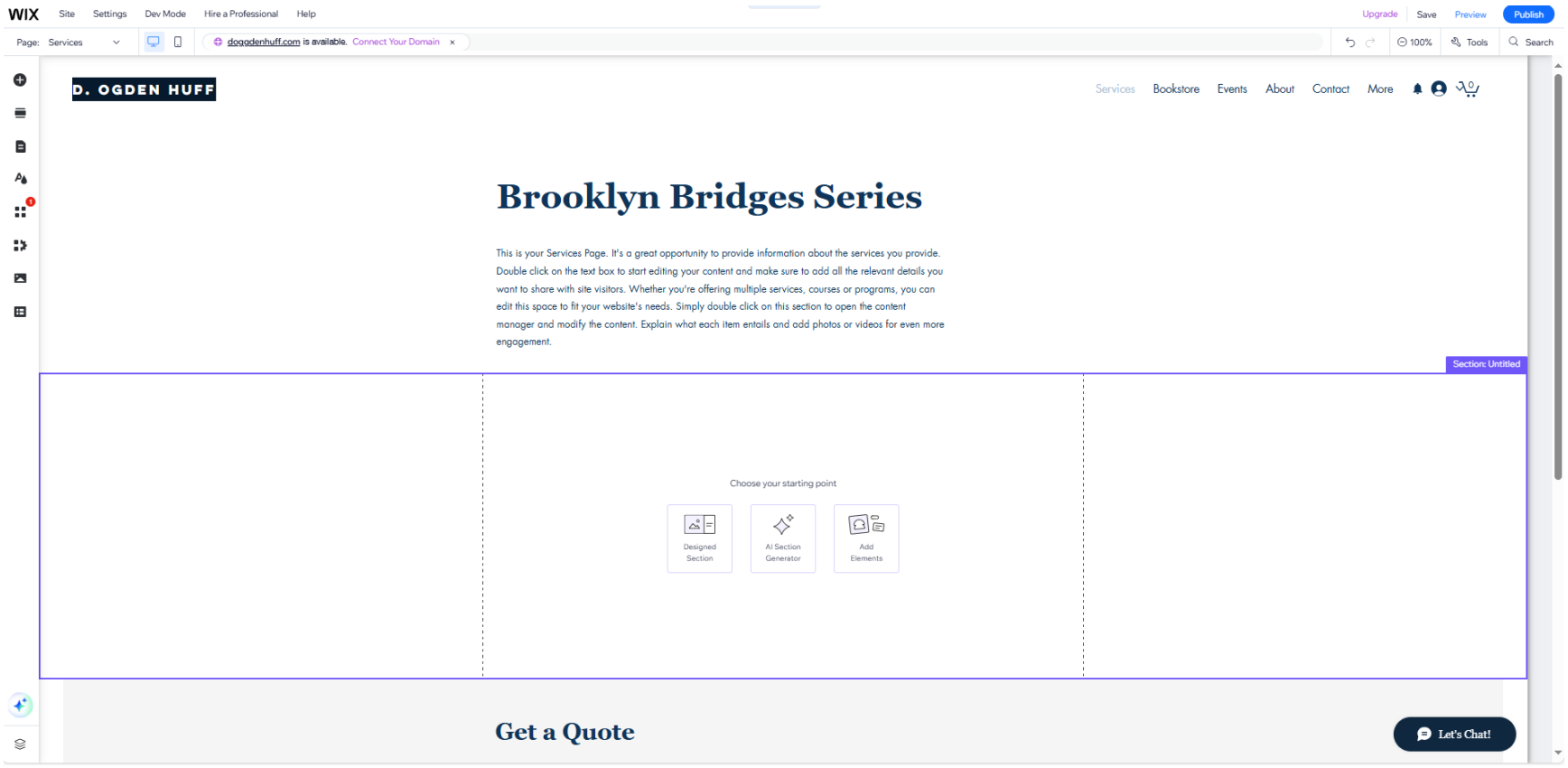
I added the images to this section and also added Text Box elements for description.

Linking images to other pages

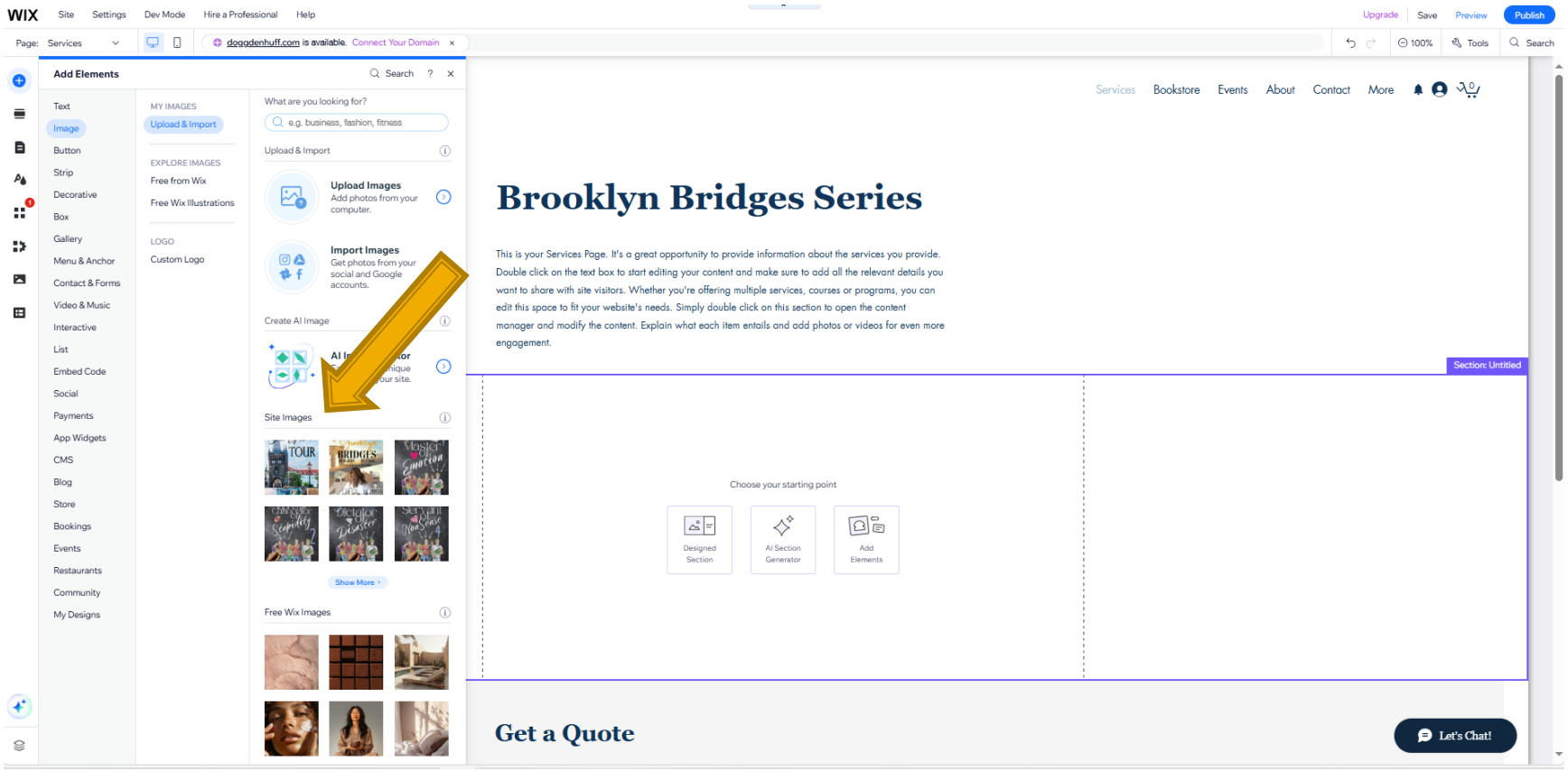


Then, I linked each of these images to a new page. These images lead to four different pages: two different series, stand alone novels, and anthologies. Wix allows you to toggle which page you choose or create a new page.

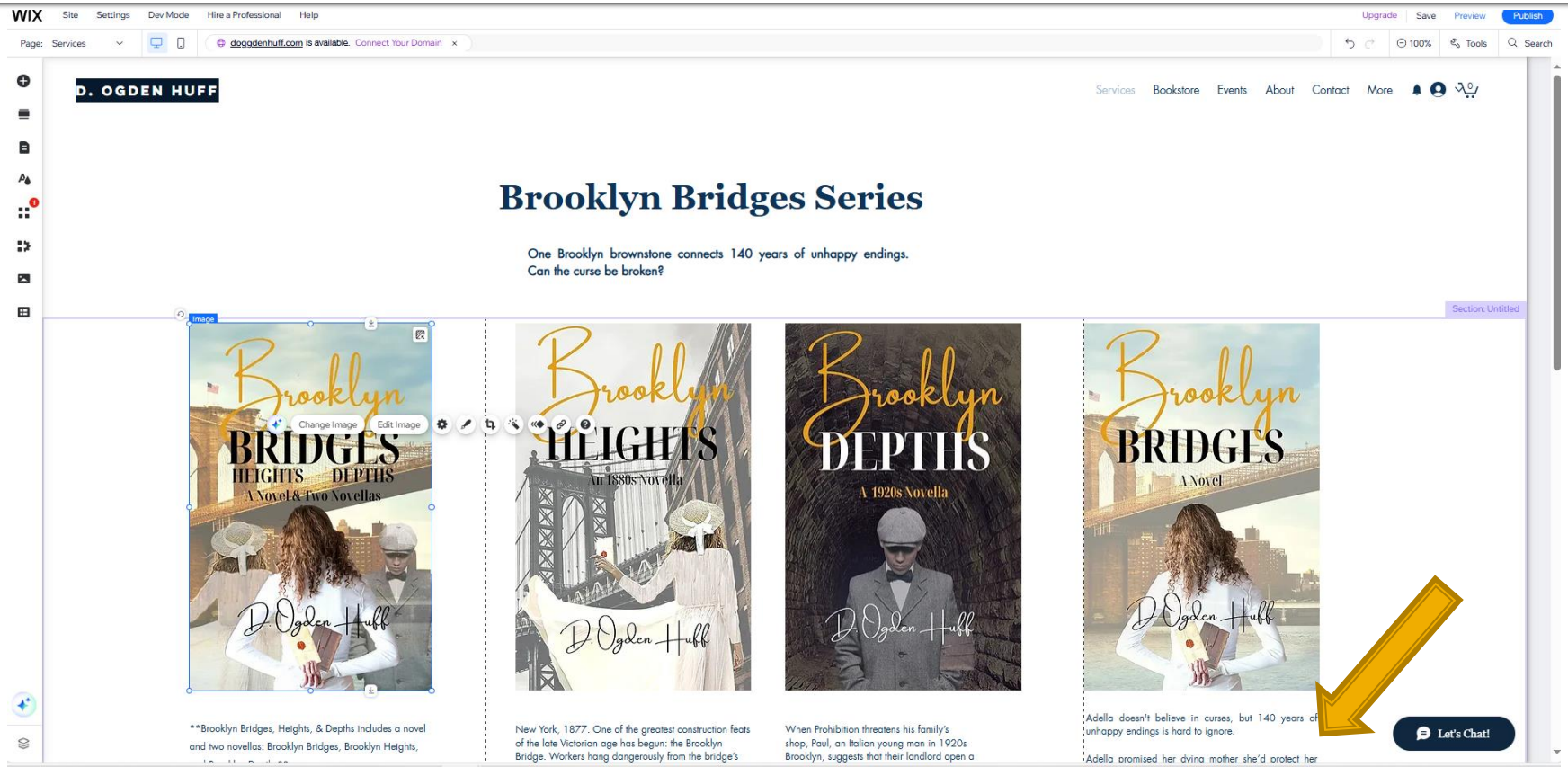
Here’s the new page I created



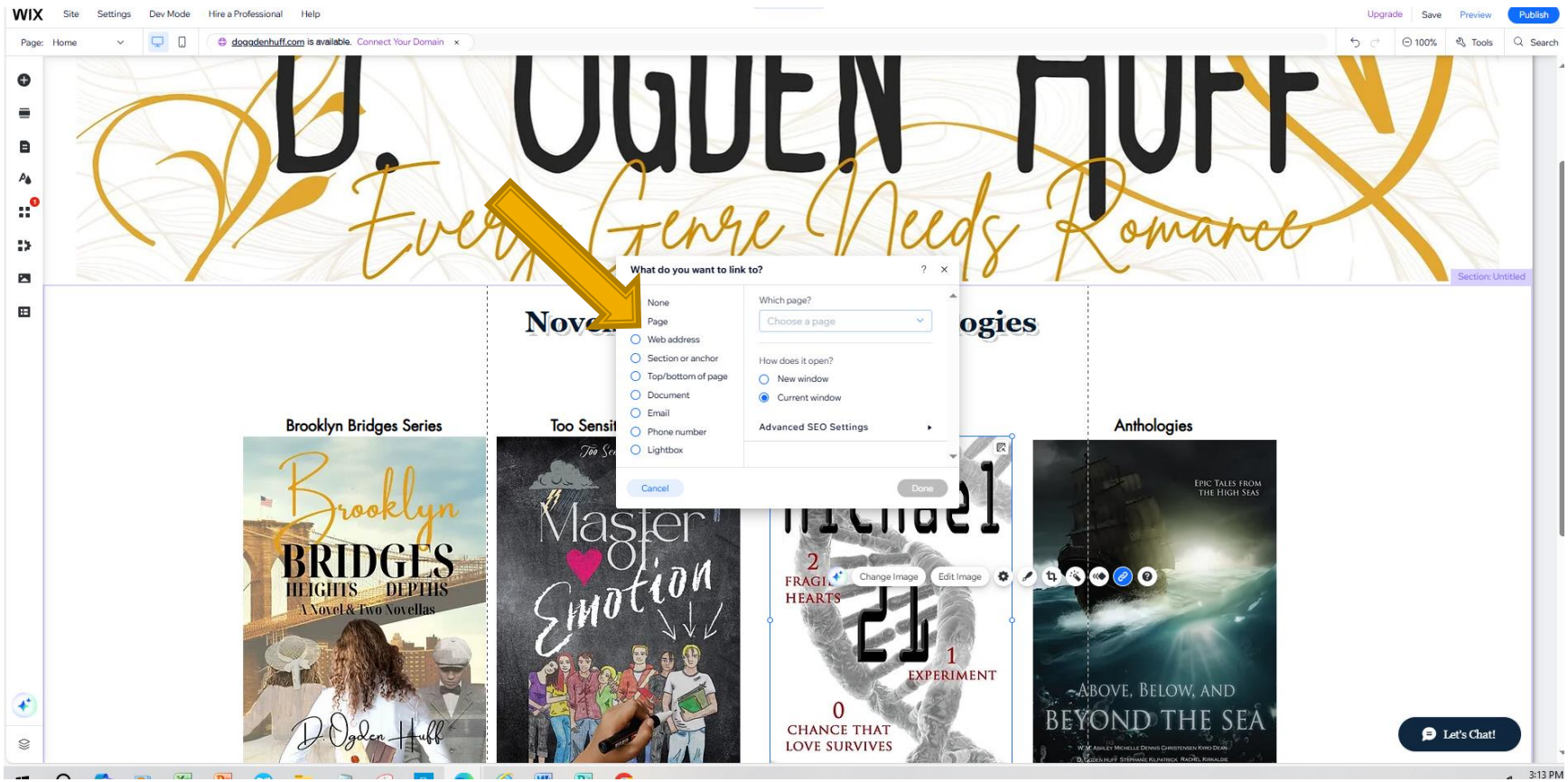
I chose from the uploaded images



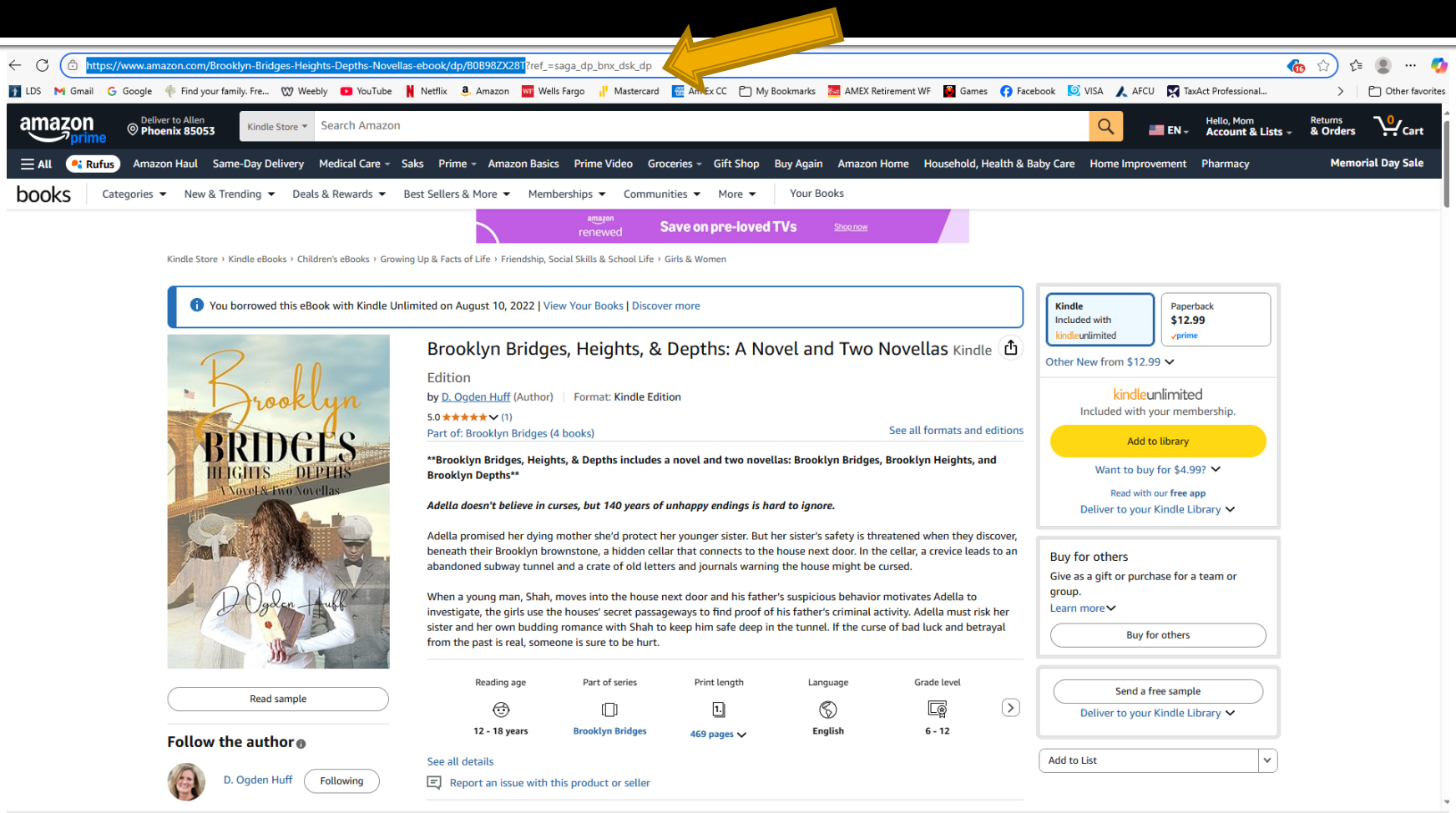
And added text



I linked these images to a web address

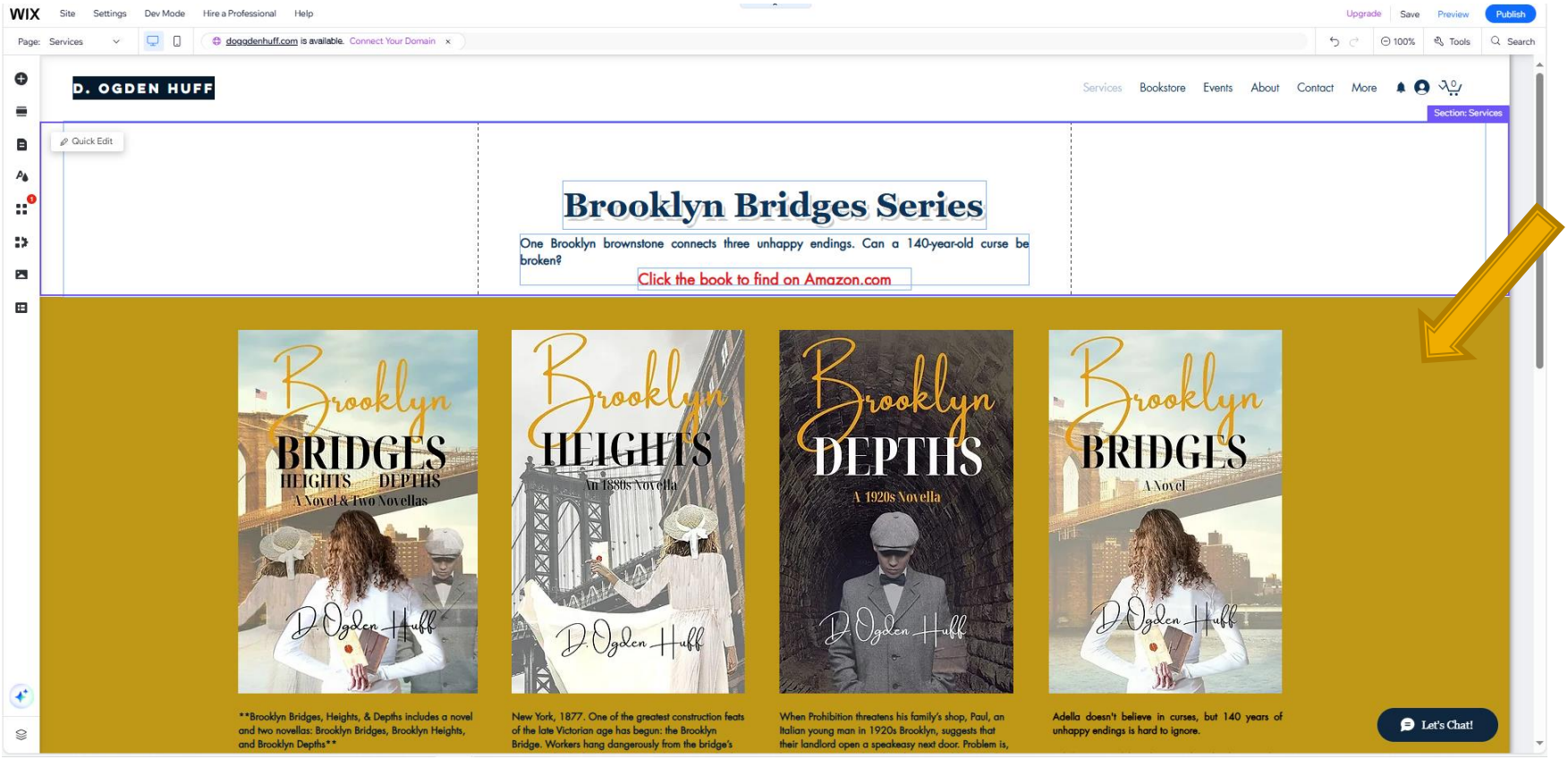


I linked these books to Amazon

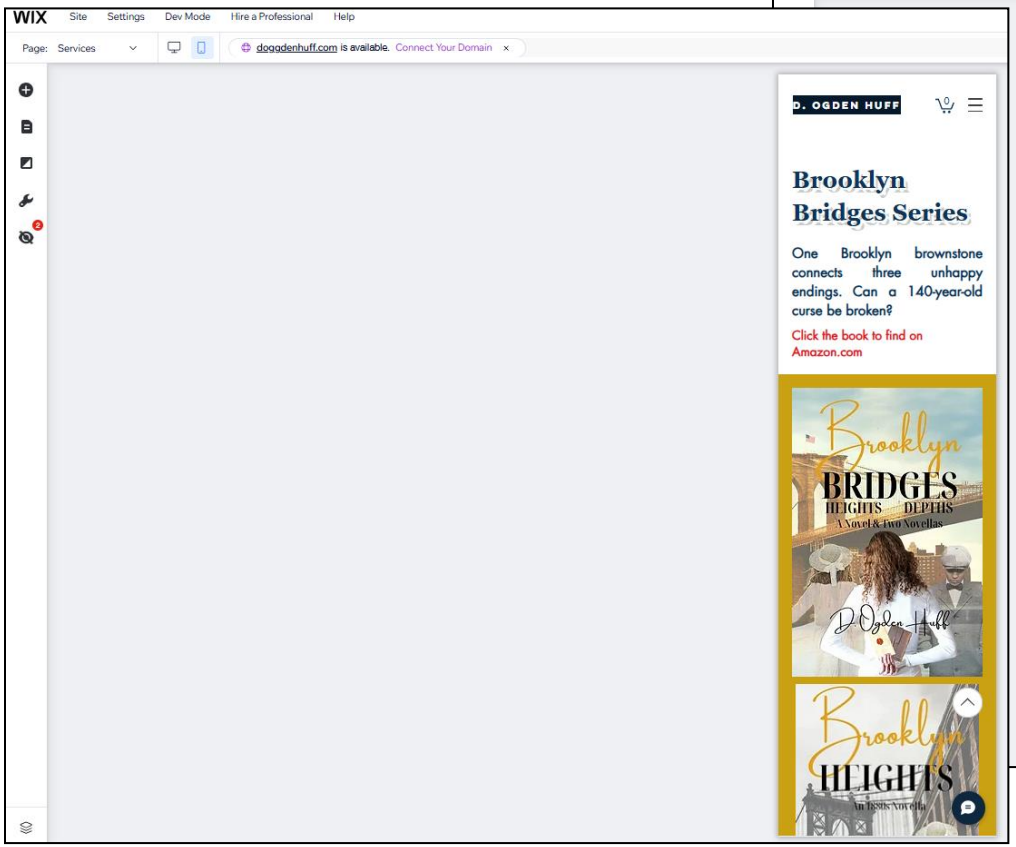


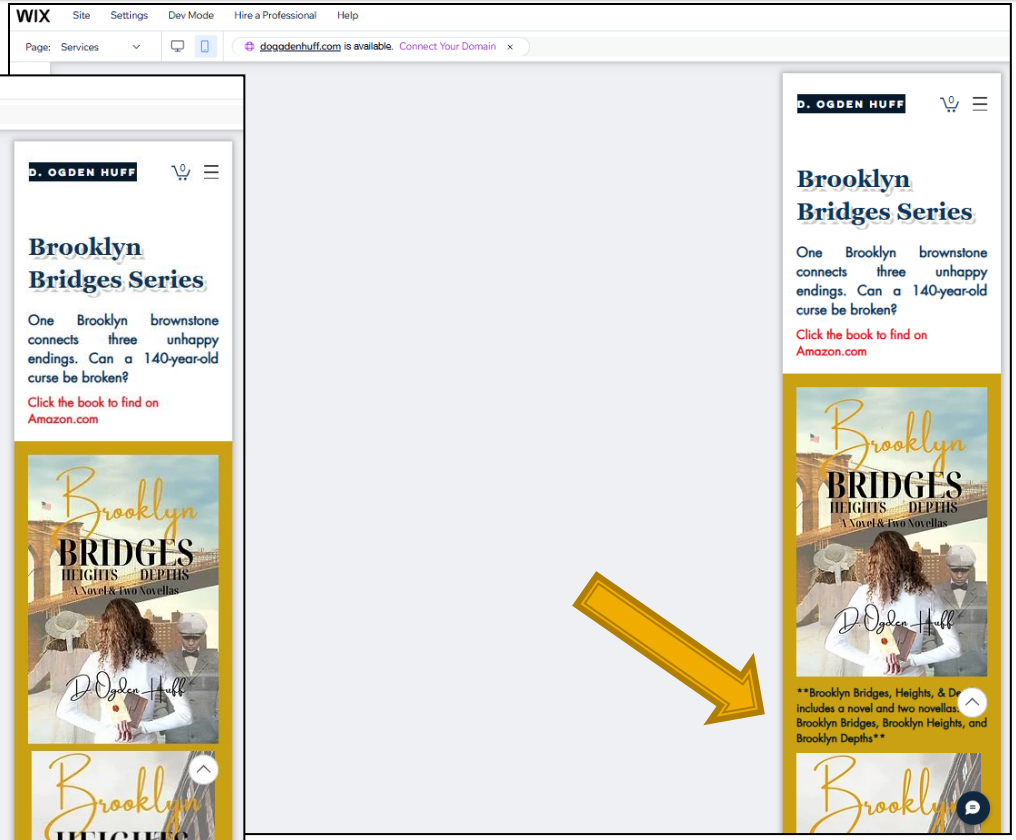
Make sure to use the shortened Amazon URL (remove everything after the book number.)

Add played with design too



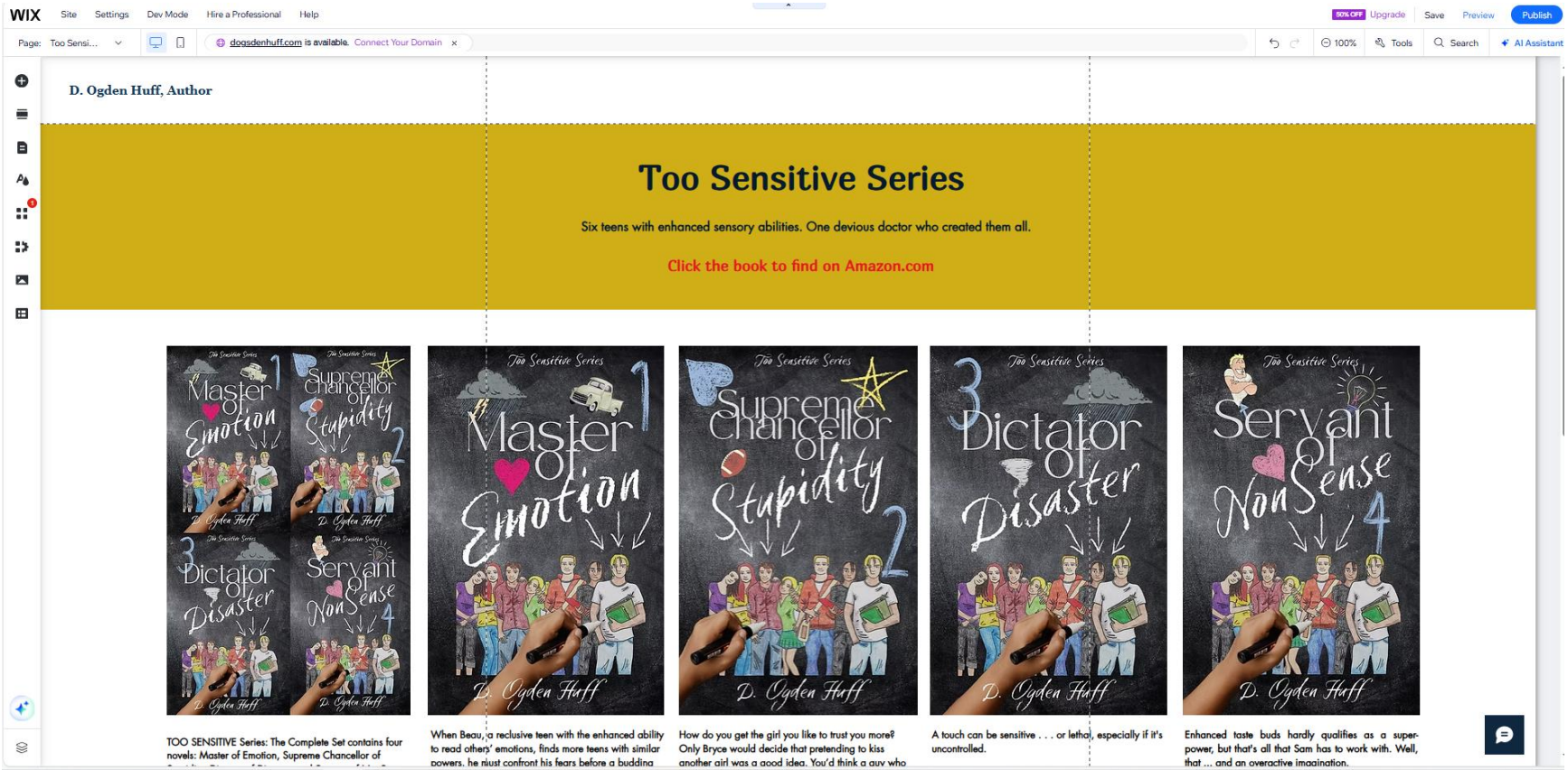
Then I checked Mobile View



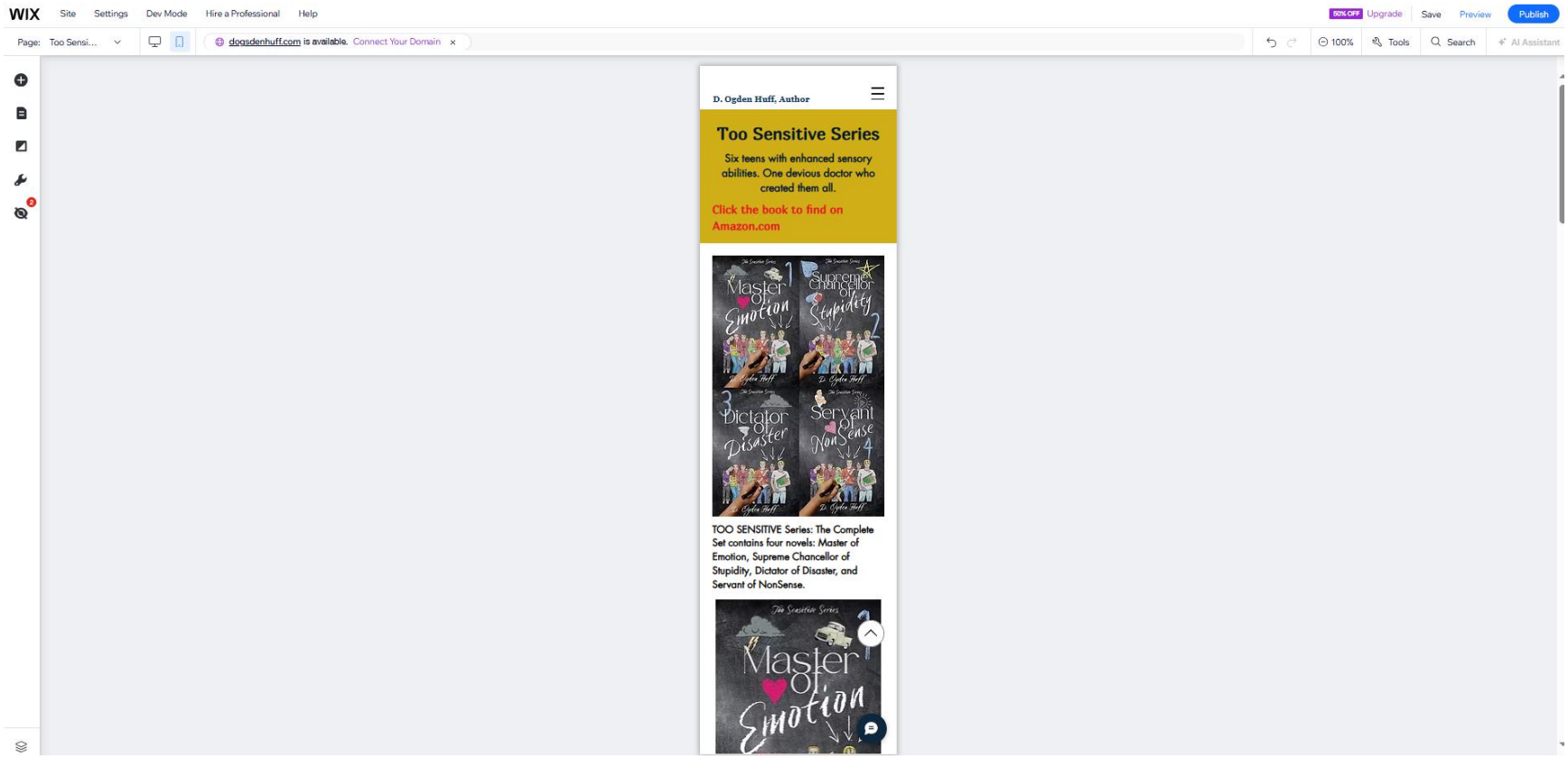


Some elements were out of order in Mobile View, so I dragged and dropped them where they belonged. Changing the order in Mobile View did NOT change element location in Computer View.

I added more pages



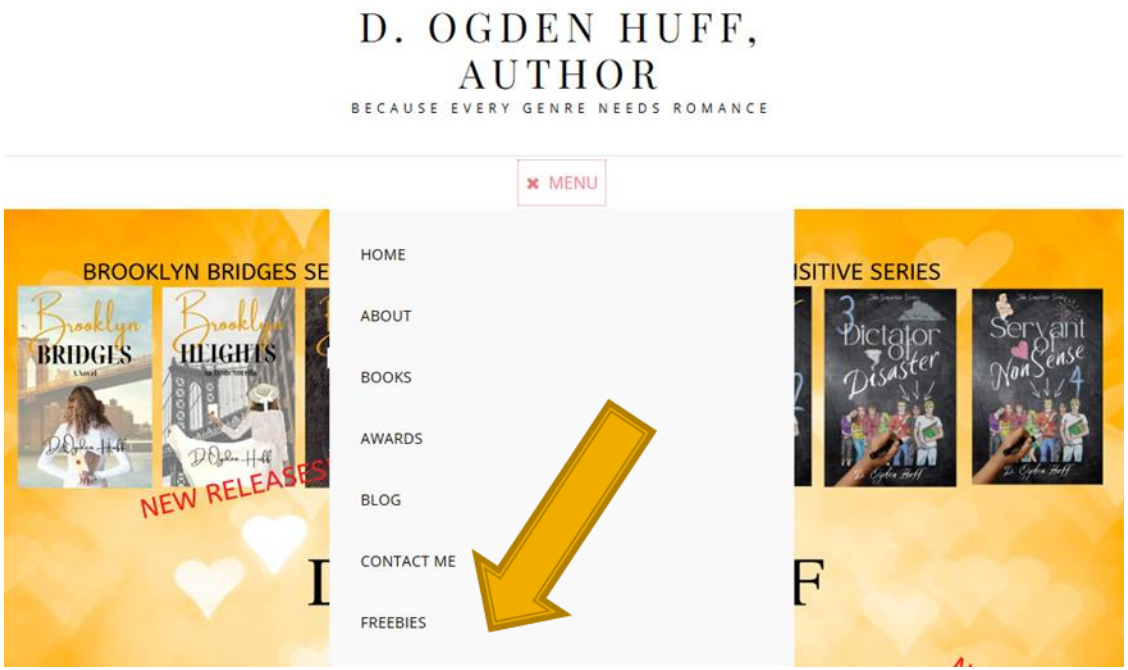
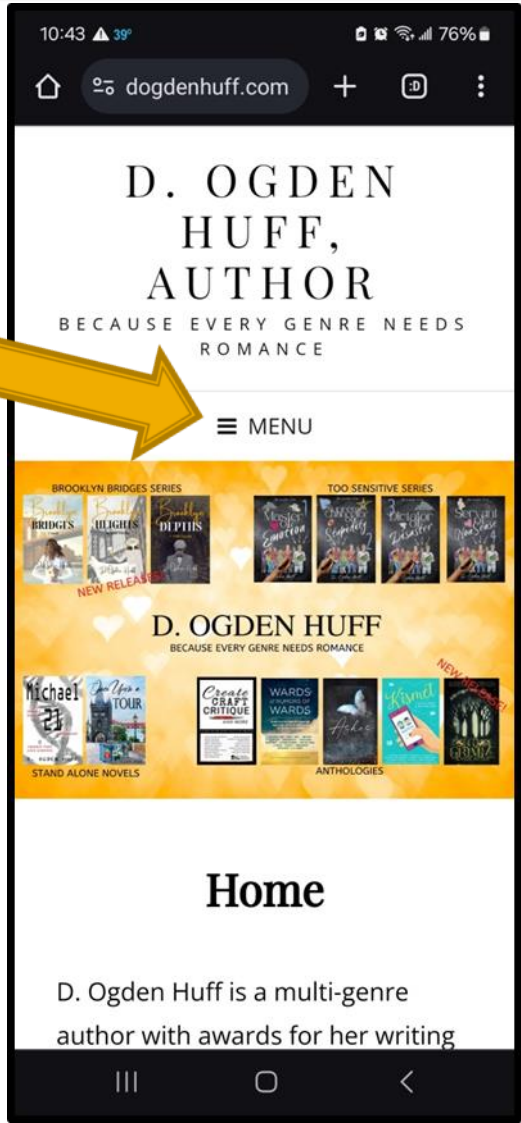
And checked the Mobile View of each page



Now, let's play some more…

- Live demonstration of page creation

- https://dogdenhuff.wixsite.com/home

My website and resources

- Find a .pdf of this presentation on my website:
- https://www.dogdenhuff.com/