

Tech-ing Your Website to the Next Level

Yes, you read that pun correctly. 😂

Ashley E. Mullan - Journal Club - September 16, 2026

Follow along!



The Main Points

- Why Websites Matter
- Getting Set Up
- The Website Skeleton
- Adding Some Pizzazz
- From Local to Live



Why Websites Matter

It's worth the time, I promise!

- Yes, it takes **time** and **effort** to launch your website. It's an **investment**!
- Your website might be the **first impression** you make on a **potential employer or collaborator**.
- Building a website **showcases** your **current work**, your **technical savvy**, and your personal **style**.
- Keeping records is hard, and a website can help you **remember your accomplishments** when you need them!

Getting Set Up

First, a disclaimer.

(in other words, a big thank you)

- Many of the following resources and examples are adapted from materials by Jenny Bryan and Marvin Schmitt.
- Their websites are full of helpful advice and tutorials, and I definitely **recommend** giving them a look!



Everything's gotta talk to each other!

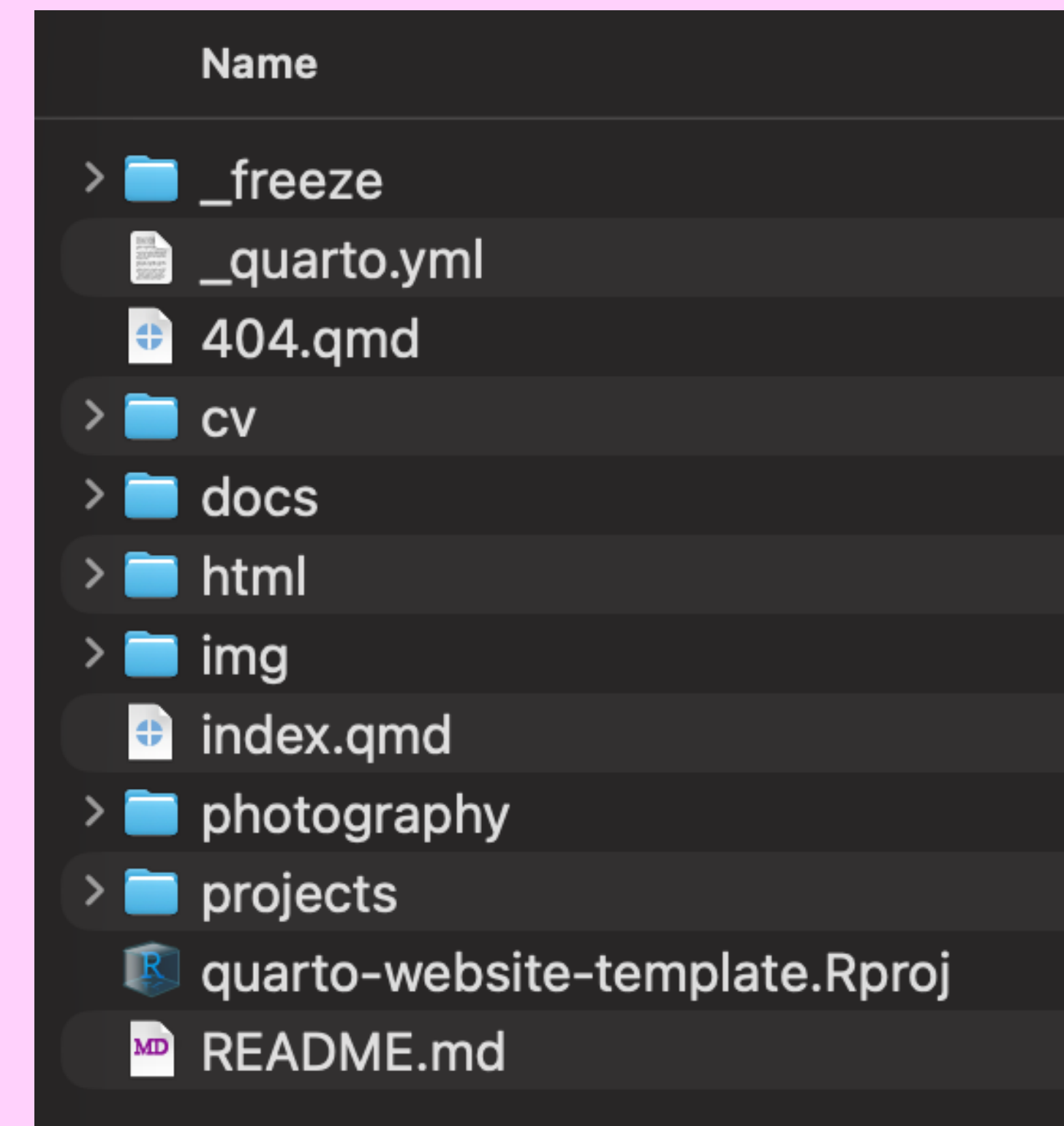
- I **assume** that you have RStudio, Quarto, Git, and GitHub all working on your local machine, and that you can **access** Git and GitHub through your installation of RStudio.
- If you don't, check out **Jenny Bryan's guide** to make that happen! *(You may want to do this later and follow along with the provided example for now.)*
- All other tools and tricks we mention can be **handled within the Quarto** files you use to make your website!

Let's jump to an example (or two)
to see what we'll be building.

The Website Skeleton

Step 0: Write (or download) the basic files.

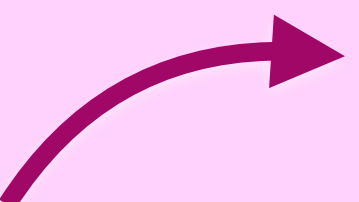
- If you want to start with a **template**, use Marvin's setup from the **example**.
- Notice the different **components** that correspond to different **parts of the website**.
- You don't need to touch anything in the **_freeze** or **docs** folders.
- The **_quarto.yml** and **index.qmd** files drive your landing page information!



Step 1: Set up your YAML.

_quarto.yml

- **Update** your personal information.
- The **sub-pages** will appear on the top left of the site in the **navigation bar**.
- Each sub-page will need at least a **sub-folder** with another file called **index.qmd**.
- You can **delete or add options** in the social media section.
- You may want to **change the footer** in the “don’t touch” section.



```
# website settings
website:
  title: "Ashley E. Mullan" # Your name
  description: "Ashley E. Mullan is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Biostatistics at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Her research interests include measurement error, missing data, and social determinants of health." # A brief slogan (optional)
  image: img/my_image.jpg

  favicon: img/favicon.png

# start of the navigation bar at the top of the website
navbar:
  pinned: true
  logo: /img/logo.png

# your sub-pages
left:
  - text: "Blog"
    href: blog/index.qmd
  - text: "Software"
    href: software/index.qmd
  - text: "Talks"
    href: talks/index.qmd
  - text: "Publications"
    href: papers/index.qmd
  - text: "CV"
    href: cv/index.qmd

# your social media handles
right:
  - icon: twitter
    href: "https://twitter.com/ashley__mullan"
  - text: "{{iconify ri:bluesky-fill}}"
    href: "https://bsky.app/profile/ashleymullan.bsky.social"
  - icon: github
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# Don't touch unless you know what you are doing :) -----
search:
  location: navbar
  type: textbox
page-footer:
  left: |
    <span class="faux-block">&#169; 2026 Ashley E. Mullan CC BY-SA 4.0</span>
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Step 2: Set up your homepage.

index.qmd (the original)

- The **about** block sets up everything above your welcome header.
- Similarly to your YAML setup, you can add any flavor of **contact info** below your headshot.
- This includes **icons**, **labels**, and **links**!
- If there's no easy icon available, you can always try out **iconify**!
- Once you've **defined** the block, you can directly call it by its **label**!

```
1 ---
2 about:
3   template: jolla
4   id: about-block
5   image: "img/my_image.jpg"
6   links:
7     - icon: twitter
8       text: Twitter
9       href: "https://twitter.com/ashley__mullan"
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25 ::: {#about-block}
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Step 3: Add some more pages.

page-name/index.qmd

- The name of the page in the **navigation bar** comes from what you called it in the **YAML** in Step 1.
- The name at the **top** of the page comes from the **title**.
- Use **standard Markdown** tricks (headers, bolding, italics, and links) to construct a simple page.
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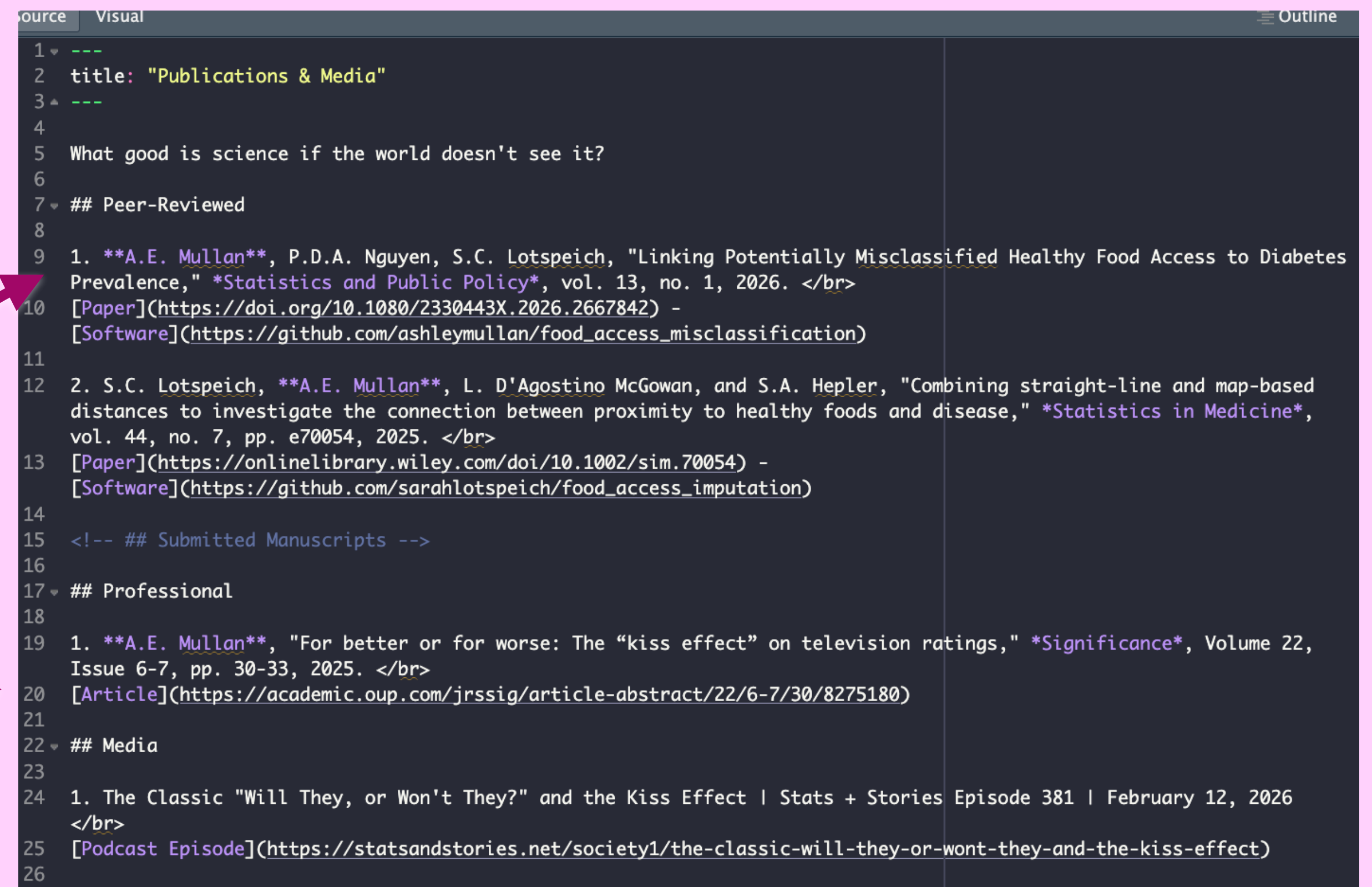


```
1 ---
2 title: "Publications & Media"
3 ---
4
5 What good is science if the world doesn't see it?
6
7 ## Peer-Reviewed
8
9 1. **A.E. Mullan**, P.D.A. Nguyen, S.C. Lotspeich, "Linking Potentially Misclassified Healthy Food Access to Diabetes
10 Prevalence," *Statistics and Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2026. </br>
11 [Paper](https://doi.org/10.1080/2330443X.2026.2667842) -
12 [Software](https://github.com/ashleymullan/food_access_misclassification)
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14 2. S.C. Lotspeich, **A.E. Mullan**, L. D'Agostino McGowan, and S.A. Hepler, "Combining straight-line and map-based
15 distances to investigate the connection between proximity to healthy foods and disease," *Statistics in Medicine*,
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20 <!-- ## Submitted Manuscripts -->
21
22 ## Professional
23
24 1. **A.E. Mullan**, "For better or for worse: The "kiss effect" on television ratings," *Significance*, Volume 22,
25 Issue 6-7, pp. 30-33, 2025. </br>
26 [Article](https://academic.oup.com/jrssig/article-abstract/22/6-7/30/8275180)
27
28 ## Media
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30 1. The Classic "Will They, or Won't They?" and the Kiss Effect | Stats + Stories Episode 381 | February 12, 2026
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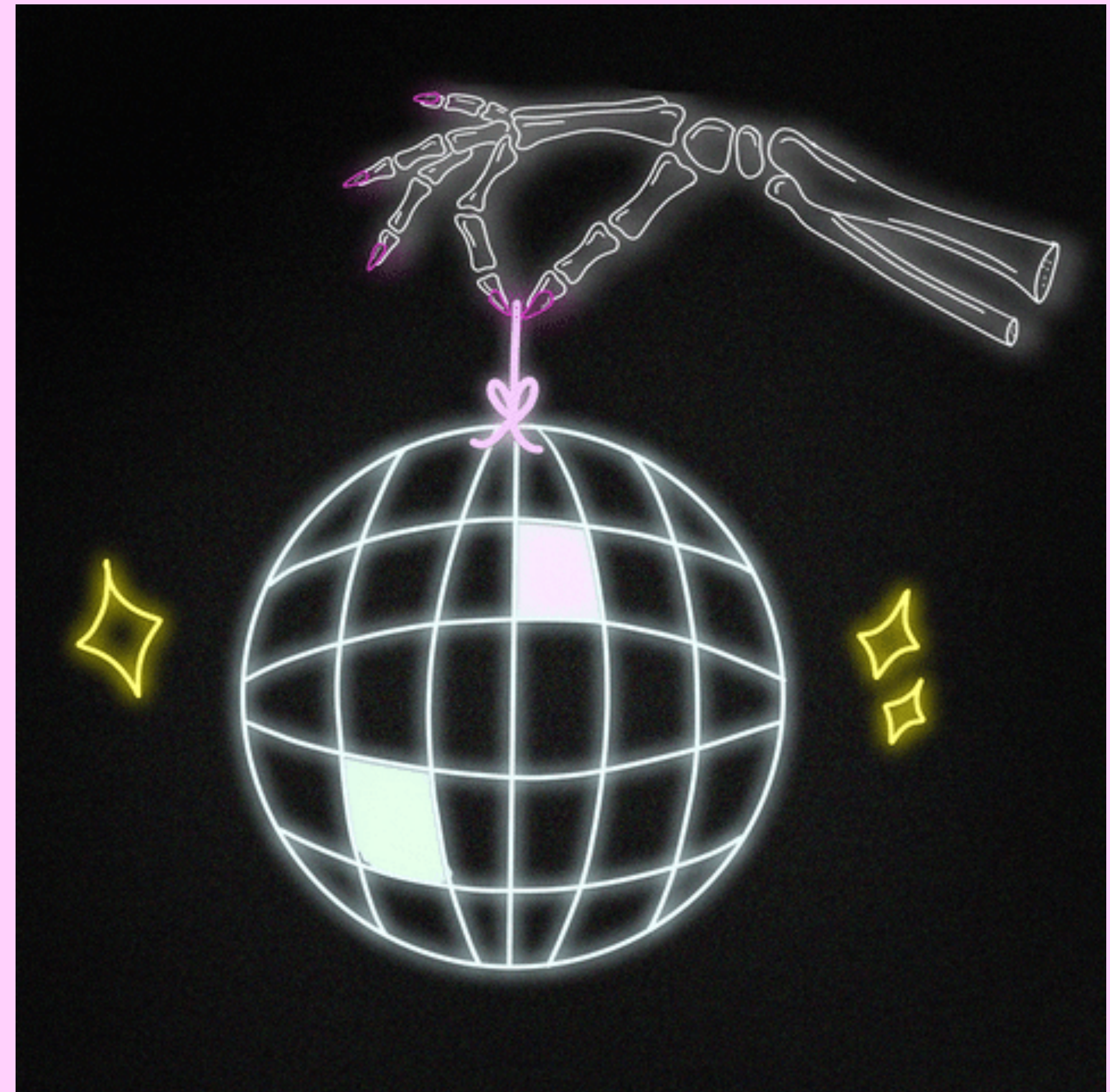
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Adding Some Pizzazz

Now that the skeleton works, add sparkle!



- Column and tab layouts
- Images and GIFs
- Pops of color
- Embedded documents
- Specialized fonts
- Fancy YAML options



Columns and Tabs

(it's just a class within Quarto 😊)

- Set up **classes** within your page to create specialized layouts!
- You'll recognize a class by its preceding **colons** and **curly bracket** label.
- If you **start a class** with 4 colons, you **close** it with 4 colons when you're done! Label with **#** signs.
- You can put classes (like **tabs**) inside of other classes (like **columns**)!

```
8
9 :::: {.columns}
10
11 ::: {.column width="78%"}
12
13 ## Coming Soon to Theaters
14
15 1. Invited Talk: Seize the Data: Around the World of Statistics in Five Days </br>
16 Women in Statistics and Data Science Conference - October 2026 </br>
17 <span style="color:#cc00cc;"> Slides </span>
18
19 ## Highlight Reel
20
21 ::: {.panel-tabset}
22
23 ### 2026
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Images and GIFs

(a picture is worth 1,000 words)

- The basic **format**: `![caption](location)`

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7 ![legally blonde joke caption](legally-blonde.gif)
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- You can **download** images to the website files or use **URLs**.

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- You can use HTML to make your images or GIFs **clickable**!
- You can **customize settings** like height, width, positioning, and caption styling after specifying the photo location.

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140 ::: {.column width="20%"}
141
142 ### GIFs Galore!
143
144 <a href="materials/day-of-disc.pdf">
145   
146 </a>
147
148 <a href="materials/cornell2.pdf">
149   
150 </a>
```

```
21 ![Photo taken by Peg Duthie!](figs/sept-2-2026-meeting.png){width=100%}
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```
21 ![Photo taken by Peg Duthie!](figs/sept-2-2026-meeting.png){width=100%}
```

Channel your inner Bob Ross! 🎨

(your website isn't like other websites)

- Site-wide color choices live in your **styles.scss** file, and you can also name specific colors in there by their **hex codes**.
- You can change things like the **navigation bar, background, and link color!**
- One-time color changes can be done via **HTML styling**, similarly to **bolding** or **line breaks**.



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$blue:    #2780e3 !default;
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$purple:  #9b7cbb !default;
$lavender: #d3d3ff !default;
$darkpink: #cc00cc !default;
$pink:    #A52C60 !default;
$red:     #CF4446 !default;
$orange:  #EE6A24 !default;
$light-orange: #FB9E07 !default;
$yellow:  #F6D645 !default;
$green:   #118230 !default;
$teal:    #068194 !default;
$cyan:    #3093CF !default;

$primary: $purple!default;
$secondary: $lavender!default;
$success:  $green !default;
$info:     $cyan !default;
$warning:  $orange !default;
$danger:   $red !default;
$light:    $gray-400 !default;
$dark:     $black !default;
```



```
// Links
$link-color: $darkpink !default;
$link-decoration: none !default;
$link-hover-color: $red !default;
$link-hover-decoration: underline !default;

// Footer
$footer-bg: $gray-900 !default;
$footer-fg: $gray-300 !default;

// Inline code
$code-bg: $gray-200 !default;
$code-color: $gray-900 !default;

// TOC
$toc-color: $orange;
$toc-font-size: 1em;

// Body Color
$body-bg: lavender;
```

```
17 <span style="color:#cc00cc;"> Slides </span>
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$toc-color: $orange;
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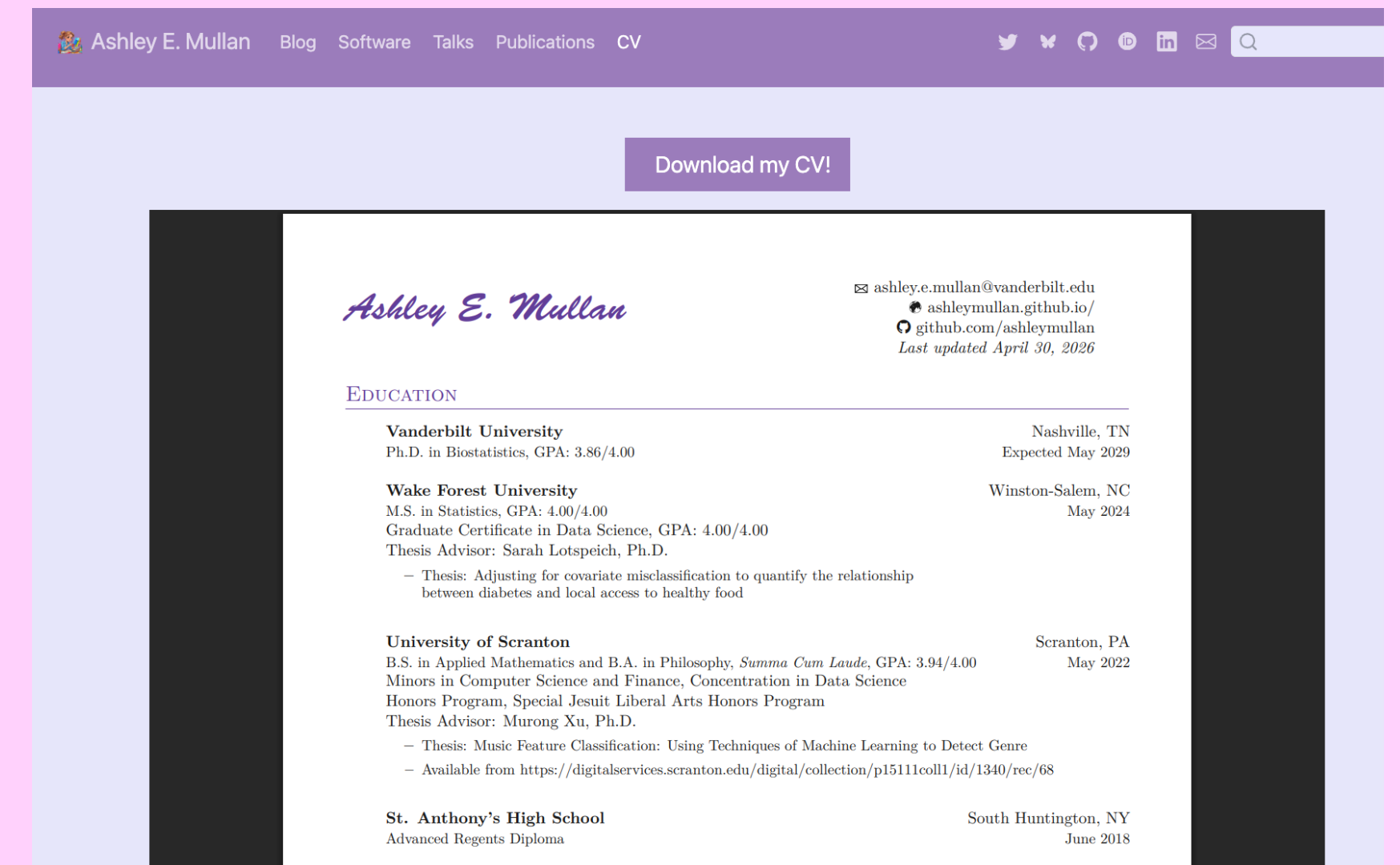
// Body Color
$body-bg: lavender;
```

17 Slides

Embedding Files

(this might be where your CV lives)

- You can **embed a file** within a page on your website so it becomes **scrollable!**
- This trick requires defining the **container** with a **CSS block** in the **index.qmd** and specifying the file you want to embed in the index's **YAML**.
- Once you've defined the **container**, you write an **html** block to create it!



```
<div class="embed-container">
  <iframe src="`r rmarkdown::metadata$cv$pdf`#toolbar=0"
  style="border: 0.5px;width: 100%;"></iframe>
</div>
```



Fancy Fonts

(for when the built-ins just won't do the trick)

- If you want to incorporate a **custom font** family, you can add any **.ttf file** into the site files and call it on a specific piece of text!
- The easiest way to do this is to place the text within **square brackets** that are immediately followed by a **style** specification within **curly brackets**.
- You can often **download** fonts for free from sites like dafont or even create your own.

```
5 [Welcome to my blog, "Do it for the plot!" I've always got a side quest  
  (or two or three) going, whether the goal is to sneak a personal hobby  
  into the stats world, pick up a new skill, or pretend I'm handwriting  
  this introduction to add a little personal flair to the welcome. Below,  
  you'll find both cool resources I've come across and some of my favorite  
  projects. Check them out!]{style="font-family:  
  'ash-handwriting';font-size: 2rem;letter-spacing: -1px;line-height:  
  0.9;"}
```

6

Welcome to my blog, "Do it for the plot!" I've always got a side quest (or two or three) going, whether the goal is to sneak a personal hobby into the stats world, pick up a new skill, or pretend I'm handwriting this introduction to add a little personal flair to the welcome. Below, you'll find both cool resources I've come across and some of my favorite projects. Check them out!

More on YAML

(yet another way you can customize)

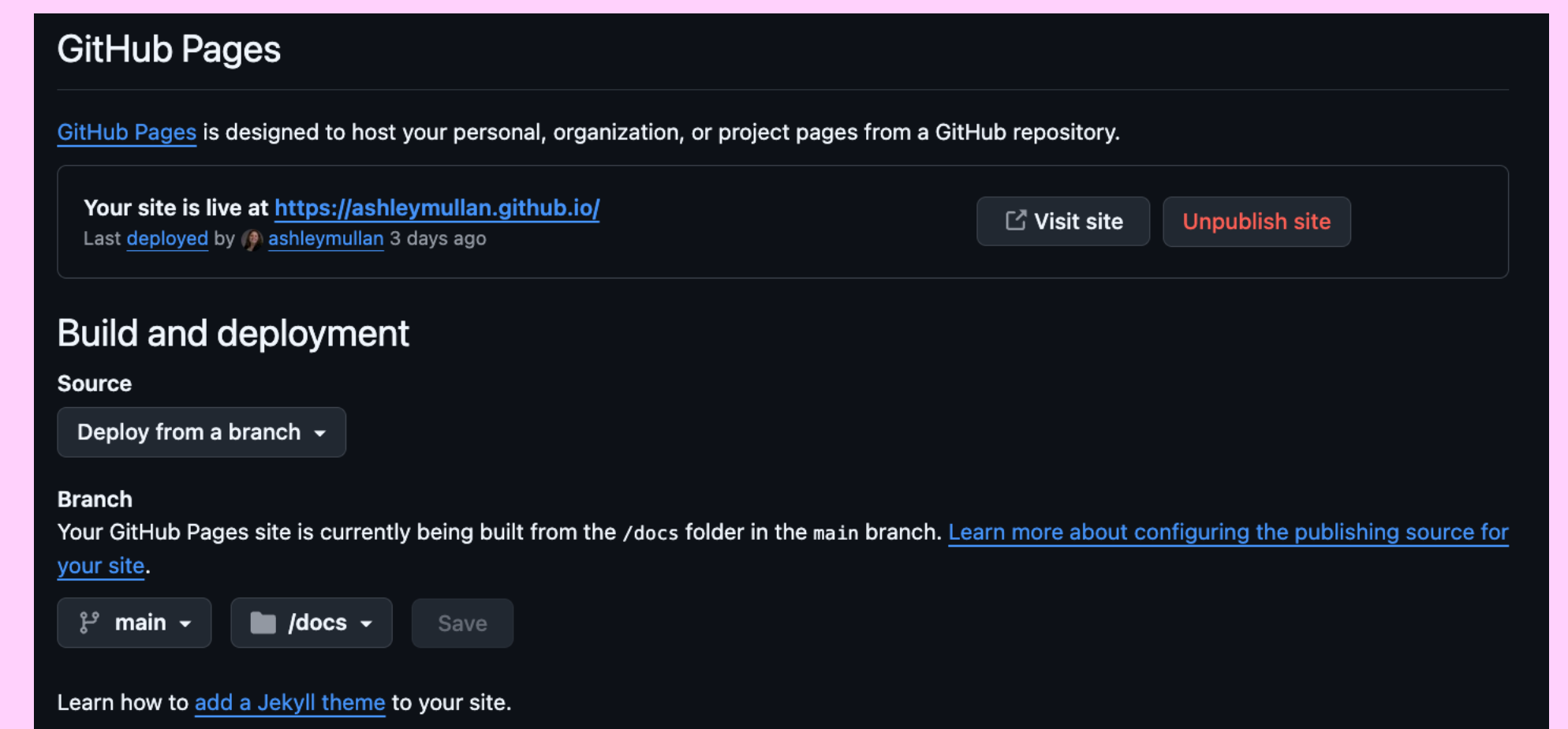
- An individual file's **YAML section** can hold many **extra settings** that further customize the page it builds.
- For pages you **update frequently**, you might want a “**date-modified**” option along with the “**date**” you first published the page.
- Within the “**execute**” option, you can control when a page **renders**.
- Within the “**resources**” option, you can explicitly **link** to other files.

From Local to Live

Rendering to Preview

(translating your human-readable files into site files)

- Hitting the “**render**” button in RStudio **converts** the Quarto source files into their **html output** and allows you to **preview** what your site will look like in the **browser**.
- If you **don't render** the files, your changes **won't be seen** on the website.
- In the **YAML file**, you can set it up so the render dumps the **html output** into a **specific subfolder**, like a “docs” folder.
- The folder with the html outputs is what **GitHub Pages** uses to **create the site files**!



```
project:
  type: website
  output-dir: docs

preview:
  port: 22222
  browser: true
  watch-inputs: true
  navigate: true

execute:
  freeze: true
```

Gitting It Out There

(committing and pushing changes)

- Start from the **correct directory!** (try “cd”)
- The “git status” command displays a list of **changes** since your last commit.
- The “git add -A” command prepares all of your changes to be **saved** in your next commit.
- The “git commit -m your_message_here” command officially creates the **newest version** of your website.
- The “git push” **sends the commit** from your **local repo** to GitHub, and you can set your site up so this **cues the change** in the live site.

```
macbookpro:ashleymullan.github.io ashleymullan$ git status
On branch main
Your branch is up to date with 'origin/main'.

Changes not staged for commit:
  (use "git add <file>..." to update what will be committed)
  (use "git restore <file>..." to discard changes in working directory)
        modified:   docs/search.json
        modified:   docs/talks/index.html
        modified:   talks/index.qmd

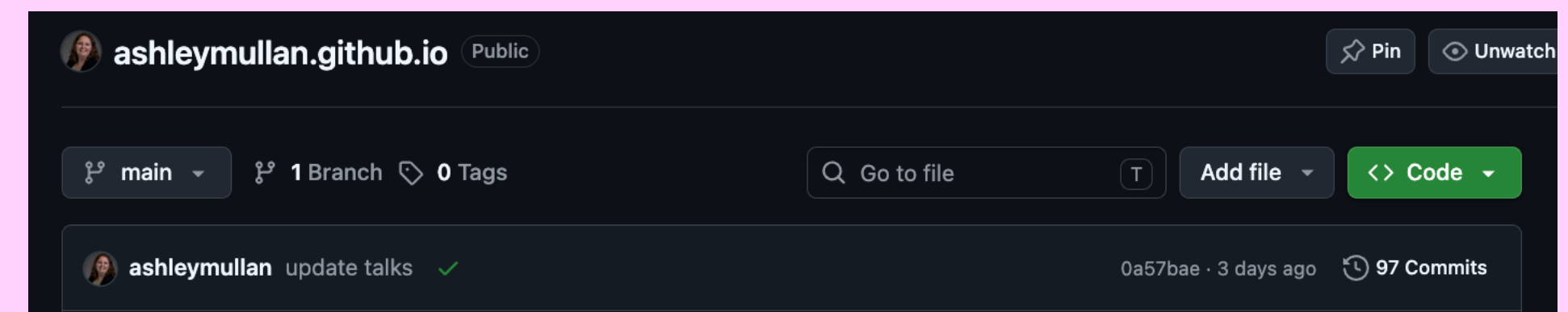
Untracked files:
  (use "git add <file>..." to include in what will be committed)
        docs/talks/materials/auburn-guest.gif
        talks/materials/auburn-guest.gif

no changes added to commit (use "git add" and/or "git commit -a")
macbookpro:ashleymullan.github.io ashleymullan$ git add -A
macbookpro:ashleymullan.github.io ashleymullan$ git commit -m "update talks"
[main 0a57bae] update talks
5 files changed, 23 insertions(+), 14 deletions(-)
create mode 100644 docs/talks/materials/auburn-guest.gif
create mode 100644 talks/materials/auburn-guest.gif
macbookpro:ashleymullan.github.io ashleymullan$ git push
Enumerating objects: 20, done.
Counting objects: 100% (20/20), done.
Delta compression using up to 8 threads
Compressing objects: 100% (11/11), done.
Writing objects: 100% (11/11), 588.65 KiB | 11.32 MiB/s, done.
Total 11 (delta 7), reused 0 (delta 0), pack-reused 0
remote: Resolving deltas: 100% (7/7), completed with 7 local objects.
To https://github.com/ashleymullan/ashleymullan.github.io.git
4285f46..0a57bae  main -> main
```

Hosting

(how the people can find you)

- Hosting on **GitHub Pages** is free if you are willing to accept something like `<github-username>.github.io` (with possible repo name suffix) as your **URL**.
- There are great **tutorials** linked within your **GitHub Pages settings** on how to enable **another domain name** if you happen to have one.
- If you don't have a paid GitHub account, the **repo** holding your website source files has to be **public**.
- The , , and  symbols at the top of your repo tell you if your **most recent edits** successfully made it to the public page.



Wrap-Up & Bonus Thoughts

Other Website Options

(if you choose to not go with this setup)

- There are various free or cheap website options out there.
- GitHub Pages can deploy static **site files** that weren't made by Quarto.
- **Templates** (free or paid) like **Jekyll** often have integration with GitHub Pages!
- Choose the setup that best **showcases** your work and personality.

Other Quarto Things

(a miscellaneous plug)

- **Typst** syntax for a **PDF output** is new and exciting!
- I recently figured out that you can **nest Quarto tabs** within each other, but the catch is that only your current tab is **searchable**.
- I have a **blog post** that I treat like my own personal dumping ground of **hacks** I've found for Quarto reporting or other **tech tricks**.
- A Quarto-built website is a great way to **showcase things** you're actively* working on, since you can always **write R code** directly into a Quarto file.

*if you choose to share works-in-progress

Thank you! Questions?