# What Is Digital Scholarship?*

American Council of Learned Societies Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Huma

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## 1 What Is Digital Scholarship?

In recent practice, "digital scholarship" has meant several related things:

1. Building a digital collection of information for further study and analysis
2. Creating appropriate tools for collection-building
3. Creating appropriate tools for the analysis and study of collections
4. Using digital collections and analytical tools to generate new intellectual products
5. Creating authoring tools for these new intellectual products, either in traditional forms or in digital form

It may seem odd to some that creating collections and the tools to use them should be counted as scholarship, but humanities and social science research has always required collections of appropriate information, and throughout history, scholars have often been the ones to assemble those collections, as part of their scholarship. Moreover, scholars have been building tools since the first index, the first concordance, the first scholarly edition. So, while it is reasonable to regard (d) as the core meaning and ultimate objective of "digital scholarship," it is also important to recognize that in the early digital era, leadership may well consist of collection-building or tool-building. In addition, tool-building is dependent on the existence of collections, and both collections and tools get better and more general as there is more use of digital information. If we hope to see new intellectual products, we should give high priority to building tools and collections. Finally, it is worth noting that although (a), (b), (c), and (e) require a great deal of cooperation, it is still imaginable that (d) can be the work of a single individual.

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