

# Measuring Impact and Return on Investment for Digital Collections and Digital Humanities Projects

“There are project directors who have figured the costs of equipment and staff for the act of digitization. What hasn't been calculated yet, as far as I know, is the value of the benefits we might hope to gain from these projects. [...] This appears to be an obvious new technological direction although we can't seem to articulate what services will result, much less what they will be worth. [...] It would be highly desirable to have at least an hypothesis of the benefits we seek to obtain and some method of measuring those benefits.” (Coyle)

## Purpose, or “What do you do with a million books?”

Academic libraries have conducted digitization projects and digital collection development targeted to both library and scholarly needs. For optimal return on investment and impact, libraries must leverage successful digital collection projects for new initiatives, including open access and institutional repository development. In doing so, libraries can create new services and new methods for increasing impact, including support for public scholarship.

Public scholarship is scholarly or academic work that moves beyond a particular scholarly field to engage with the public. In doing so, it serves the public. It also serves academia by showing the return on investment (ROI) of scholarship. It broadens the impact of scholarship, benefitting the public and academia. Because of the immense value of public scholarship, some form of it is required for NSF, NEH, and other grants under the rubric of “broader impacts”.

Faculty members are experts in their fields, but do not always know or have the means to communicate their research and teaching to a more general forum. For their work to have maximum impact, they need to be empowered to be public scholars. In order for this role to be as meaningful as possible, the concept of the “public” needs to be understood broadly as a worldwide public. The connecting bridge from specialized research and teaching to public engagement is best built through technology and specifically through digital scholarship resources.

Public scholarship also integrates exactly within libraries' goals for open access, building digital collections, integrating new and emerging technologies into the Libraries and academic faculty services, and increased collaboration and connection with academic faculty. Because academic faculty are interested in and require support for public scholarship, libraries have the opportunity to be a collaborative partner in the overall process in a way that supports both the goals of both libraries and academic faculty.

## Presenters

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## Resources

- *Measuring Impact and Return on Investment for Digital Collections and Digital Humanities Projects*, poster and handout (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00005030>)
- *Splashes and Ripples: Synthesizing the Evidence on the Impact of Digital Resources* ([http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1846535](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1846535))
- *Toolkit for the Impact of Digitised Scholarly Resources (TIDSR)* (<http://microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/>)
- “Technology and the Return on Investment” (<http://kcoyle.net/jal-32-5.html>)
- “What Do You Do with a Million Books?” (<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/march06/crane/03crane.html>)