Scalar for Historians
A Series of Handouts Developed for Course Use by the [Department of History](#) at the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#)

Handout 4: How Do I Import a New Media Object?

One of Scalar's main attractions, for scholars, is its robust tools for incorporating and annotating media (video, audio, pictures) within online presentations. Yet that is not its only advantage. Scalar, by design, asks its users to think about how media is archived and curated, and also about the conditions and licenses under which it is being used. It does so by locating the media not within the page itself, but as a separate object. In many cases, this media is not stored within Scalar or its servers, but is called from another address (that of the original owner or source, quite often).

Here's how the [User's Guide](#) explains it (we've highlighted a few key passages):

How Scalar Works with Media
In most cases, the media you see in a Scalar book is not hosted within Scalar itself; instead, Scalar stores metadata —titles, descriptions, author and publisher information, URLs and more — about media which is hosted elsewhere, perhaps in a media archive, or a web service, or on a server you control. When we talk about "importing" media into Scalar, we're mostly talking about importing that metadata, not the actual media files. Further, once that metadata is imported into Scalar, you can modify or add to it as you see fit; these changes are completely local to Scalar and are never reconciled with the source archive. Conversely, if the source archive makes a change to its own metadata for a particular media file, that change will not be reflected in your Scalar book unless you reimport the media.

While it is possible to upload your own media to the Scalar server, individual files are limited to no larger than 2 MB in size. This approach has the advantage of making Scalar books very nimble, as they don't need to carry with them an extensive media infrastructure. However, it does impose certain limitations for which it is important to be aware.

Since Scalar books are hosted "in the cloud," a network connection is required to access them.

That is to say: you need a live connection to see the media in a Scalar book!

How do I Import Media, Then?

Now that you've begun to understand what 'importing media' means in Scalar terms, here's how you go about doing it.

1. Go to the drop-down menu on the left of the Scalar interface.
2. Select 'Import'
3. This will bring up a range of options—several menus containing various archives that either are conscious partners of Scalar (e.g. Critical Commons) or public web-based archives that Scalar can import from (e.g. You Tube). You can also upload information (up to 2 MB) from your local hard drive, although a better solution may sometimes be to find another place to archive it (e.g. Critical Commons or You Tube, etc.)
4. Once you have used these archives to find the object you want, upload it, following the instructions provided as you go along.

For a more detailed discussion of importing media into Scalar, see the User's Guide:

http://scalar.usc.edu/works/guide/working-with-media

Once you have media imported into your book, you can begin to incorporate it into your pages, using the editing tools for each page.