Greek and Latin have played a vigorous role in the intellectual life of the West, but today this role seems to be in danger. One reason, among several, might lie in a certain immutability of the corpus of authors. In other words: how can Classics continue to play its traditional role if we persist in studying and teaching the same old anthology of authors and texts? And, in consequence, how we can avoid the risk of reducing research to a continuous debate with previous bibliography?

My paper suggests how the interaction between Classics and Digital Humanities can reverse this negative trend by a broadening of perspective. Starting from the case-study of the Digital Library of Late Antique Latin Texts (http://digiliblt.unipmn.it), I will explain how this kind of project, can have a social (A), pedagogical (B) and, of course, a scholarly (C) impact.

A.  
First, a digital library is certain to help the study of the Classics, because it provides scholars, teachers and students with free access to a wide range of material traditionally available only in highly specialized libraries (such as departmental collections and university libraries). This aspect could have a favourable impact on some of the social issues of our time, for example:

- Digital libraries can release scholars and students from real libraries, facilities not equally available all over the world. Departmental or university libraries, in fact, are not everywhere so close at hand; digital libraries, on the contrary, are far more accessible: all you need to open their doors is a PC and an internet connection. What is more, this ease of use can bridge the traditional economic gaps between students; even today, not few of them choose the subject of their thesis according to their means. Since not everyone can travel on a daily basis to highly specialized libraries, often those who are less well-off have to fall back on simpler research, using bibliography available in public libraries.

- In a similar way, tools such as DigilibLT can fulfil the requirements of those countries currently looking toward Classics as a way to rediscover their ancient roots (e.g., Brazil, where, according to an experimental project called Minimus, even some primary schools have started to offer classes in elementary Latin). Digital libraries provide countries destitute of specialized collections with the scientific material they need. For example DigilibLT offers not only the texts, all based on authoritative editions, but also a working environment in which scholars, students and teachers can find short entries on late-antique authors and works, bibliographies and monographs or out-of-copyright essays.

B.  
DigilibLT can also play a strong role, both at secondary school (1) and university level (2), in helping the development of the pedagogy of Latin and Greek,

1. Since digital natives are often more fascinated by science and technology than past generations, late antiquity, rich in scientific-technical texts, offers materials suitable to their interest. It also includes texts with a strong interactive potential, like the astronomical treatises, often full of diagrams or schemas. With tools such as DigilibLT a teacher can offer innovative Latin classes, new both in content and instruments. For
instance, it is possible to read an astronomical Latin text and, at the same time, show the original drawing on the IWB (Interactive Whiteboard). We are living in a world where the educational offering of the secondary schools is far less focused on humanities than in the past; but, even if the curricula on sciences and technologies are the majority, this should not imply (as has been done...) an automatic reduction (or cancellation...) in hours of Latin, in Italy now almost relegated to the sanctuary of the liceo classico. With tools such as DigilibLT we can adapt the teaching of Latin to the new generations of digital natives. In addition DigilibLT, providing texts that are not usually included in the traditional anthologies, allows the creation of personal sets of teaching units, geared to student’s abilities and interest and also releases teachers from textbooks, a traditional barrier that can shrink Latin classes.

2. At the university level DigilibLT shows that a digital approach can help to revive Classics programs, often avoided by students and families as offering a high risk of future unemployment. If we bring in undergraduates, graduates and Ph.D. students on large-scale projects, each according to age and experience, we can enrich the CV of a humanist graduate with significant technical competences (training in XML-TEI, editing softwares, etc.). Against a backdrop of deep economic crisis, with a dramatic youth unemployment rate, these new skills can make our graduates more attractive on the job market.

C. DigilibLT makes possible major achievements in ancient studies. For example, the creation of a digital library entailed a careful selection of the material to be included. As a result, a member of the project (Dr. Simona Musso) compiled a canon of late antique Latin literature, a catalogue that is going to fill an important gap. Moreover, the analysis entailed in the digitizing of the texts has also highlighted a wide range of linguistic usages peculiar to Late Latin. This precious material, which could contain new embryonic cells of the Romance languages, deserves deeper study in the future. Even the peculiar nature of late antique literature stimulates new research. In fact, it offers a mix of works of high literary value and technical and practical ones, not written for an audience of men of learning. As such, it opens up new questions for historical and sociological investigation: who were these authors? Who was the intended audience?