



# Introducing Concordance

**C**oncordance is software that's used for document management and retrieval. It's in a class of software that's used to manage sets of data that have individual objects containing large amounts of text: transcripts, books and bibliographic citations, or other files. This type of software is often referred to as a *full-text information retrieval system*. Document retrieval is facilitated by quick and accurate searches that identify data (text) that matches a user's search criteria. The system then presents to the user only the resulting database objects. If you've used a search engine such as Google or Yahoo! to locate information on the Web, you've used a full-text information retrieval system.

Before discussing how Concordance works in depth, I'll first talk about what *documents* are and how they can be gathered. Documents, which include physical paper and electronic files, can be repackaged from their original format in most circumstances, and loaded into Concordance as individual *document records*. If the original material represented by Concordance, either paper or electronic, contains text, it can be converted into a format that can be retrieved. In this way, Concordance can facilitate the organization, management, and mining of otherwise unwieldy amounts of text.

After collection, administrators of a full-text information retrieval system are often required to create digital representations of the harvested documents. These images are linked to the retrieval system, and are presented to end users in *image viewers*. Because image viewers can be an integral part of the administration of a full-text information retrieval system, I'll briefly discuss what the images are and how they're viewed.

The following brief treatment will present you with some concerns when collecting information that will eventually be loaded into a full-text information retrieval system such as Concordance. The considerations you must take into account when gathering data, particularly pursuant to a legal matter, are too numerous to cover in a single chapter, and individuals who are responsible for collecting documents are advised to research the issue thoroughly. To assist with this, some resources available to the litigation support professional are outlined at the end of the chapter.

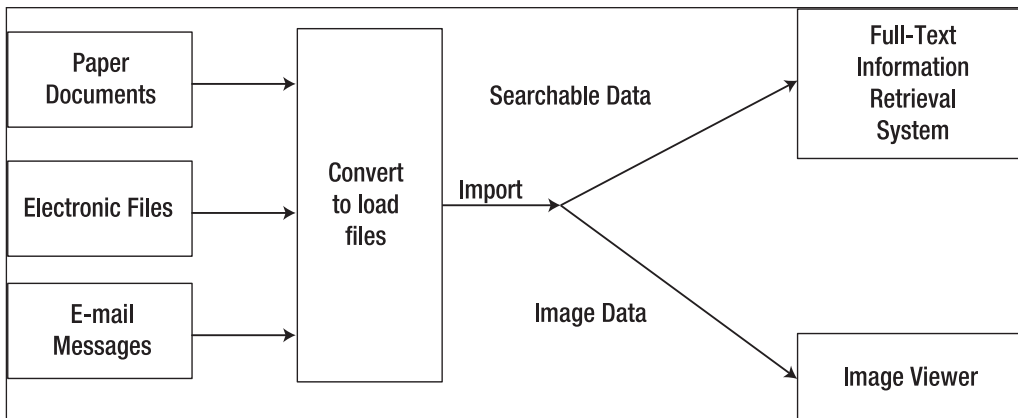
## Types of Data That Can Be Collected

During the course of a legal matter, legal staff collects various materials for review. Historically, the most common items collected were paper documents. Since the advent of the desktop workstation and computer networks, a new dimension has been added to document collection: files of a digital nature. In the past, before technology in the workplace became common, the amount of data accessible to a single employee might have consisted of documents stored

in a few filing cabinets. Collection of material relevant to a legal matter involved making copies of all the pages in the litigant's filing cabinets and carting them off for review. The process might have been demanding in terms of human resources, but the overall strategy of document collection was straightforward.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with computer technology becoming more efficient in terms of performance and cost, a litigant might have those same filing cabinets, but might also have gigabytes of electronic material—the virtual equivalent of dozens of filing cabinets packed into the space of a desktop workstation. Furthermore, if the litigant is just one of several litigants, and if they have access to a file-sharing network where work-related files are stored on powerful, high capacity servers, the material to be collected might be in the terabytes.

During the lifespan of a legal matter, a legal team might expect to collect all the types of material shown in Figure 1-1, in various stages. Although it's highly irregular that technology support staff will actually do the document collection itself, a litigation support professional can be expected to act as a consultant to legal staff, guiding them when necessary to ensure that material is harvested appropriately. Ultimately, this material can be loaded into Concordance, which can act as a central repository for all data collected during the evolution of a litigation.



**Figure 1-1.** Document collection gathers documents (paper or electronic) that are converted into a format that can be loaded into a full-text information retrieval system. You can use an optional image viewer to view associated images that represent the documents stored in the system.

## Paper

A common type of evidentiary material is paper: letters, contracts, reference guides, notes of meetings, and so on. In this context, the term *document* refers to a collection of pages of paper. For example, a handwritten note on the back of a napkin is a *document* that has a single *page*. On the other hand, a reference manual is also a single document, but might have hundreds or thousands of pages.