

# Digital Authenticity in Response to User Needs

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**Abstract:** The purpose of my presentation poster will be to explore the ways in which user needs can affect the authentication process in digital records. As efforts in the archival community to define authenticity and incorporate it into archive management continues, it is important to establish practical ways in which authenticity can be implemented into processing. It is impractical to authenticate every item in every collection to a complete degree. Therefore, the archival community must develop a way in which authentication can be accomplished in a reasonable manner.

One way to do this is to accept that different record users need a variety of levels of authentication depending on their intended use of the record. The nature of the record should also be considered when authentication is implemented during processing. For example, a student looking for information from a digitally scanned diary may be less concerned about the verification of certain aspects of the diary's authenticity than a professor looking at a digital scan of a painting may be. By establishing standards detailing levels to which certain records should be authenticated, archives can reduce the amount of work during processing devoted to authenticating records by pursuing in-depth authentication only when the record type and expected user needs warrant it.

This can be especially useful for authenticating digital records, which, for a variety of reasons, are more difficult to authenticate than analog records. By determining user needs prior to processing through user surveys and other research methods, the level to which digital records should be authenticated can be determined.

## About the author:

*Shaun Hayes* is an assistant archivist at the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center in Laramie, Wyoming, where he does reference and processing. In 2008, he graduated with a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Pittsburgh, with a specialization in archival studies. While a student at the University of Pittsburgh, Shaun worked as an archivist at the University of Pittsburgh's Archive Service Center.

Shaun's research interests include archival authenticity, privacy issues, and minimal processing. He is currently the Board Member at Large for the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists.

Shaun lives in Laramie, Wyoming, with his wife, Erin, and his kitten, Juliet.