

# **Signatures as Identity Tool: Implications for name authority work in historical collections and beyond**

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**Abstract:** Name authority control allows for consistent identification, disambiguation and collocation of creators and their respective works, and as such, remains a crucial part of information work today. However, providing authority work on agents in historical collections can be challenging, particularly when the information in an authority file is sparse, agent names are commonplace, and there is little distinguishing information about the agent on the collection item (e.g., the manuscript, map, or historical record) under description. In these cases, it can be difficult to match the agent to an authority file—if one exists—with certainty.

Fortunately, another form of identifying information about the agent is often available in these contexts: the agent's handwritten signature. Because of their frequent occurrence on historical records, signatures can serve as relatively consistent and unique forms of identification and therefore have the potential to identify agents as well as to facilitate disambiguation of authority records of agents with similar names.

Drawing from the author's independent study project at University of Tennessee, this poster discusses the use of signatures to support name authority work in historical collections. It further explores how making signatures available online can aid authority work as well as other research endeavors.

## **About the Author:**

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