DUE DILIGENCE QUESTIONS TO ESTABLISH ARCHIVAL AUTHENTICITY

As AI-generated media becomes increasingly commonplace, it is more important than ever for archives to know and be assured of the provenance and authenticity of the records they take into their custody.* There are technological methods being developed to detect AI-generation or modification and to convey or disclose provenance information. However, these mechanisms may remain out of reach for many content producers and smaller archives– at least in the short-term– due to financial and personnel limitations. There is still a need for accessible approaches for examining provenance and verifying authenticity in the age of generative AI that do not require specialized tools. To this end, the Authenticity Working Group is developing a simple checklist of questions that archives can ask depositors as part of their due diligence in ascertaining the reliability of the records they accession. Archives can retain the answers to these questions for their records and develop their own systems to share this data with other institutions they work with.

Archival producers and media makers are similarly concerned about the authenticity of the media they obtain from archives for use in documentaries. The second section contains questions that producers can use when working with archives, or that archives can answer for themselves to attest to the authenticity of materials already in their collections.

Provenance refers to the origins, custody, and ownership history of a record. A record's provenance is key to its intelligibility and significance as documentary evidence. Authenticity, a closely related concept, refers to the record being genuine and free from tampering. A record's authenticity enables it to be relied upon as evidence or proof of what it documents.

QUESTIONS FOR ARCHIVES TO ASK DONORS TO HELP ESTABLISH AUTHENTICITY OF DONATED MATERIAL(S)

1. Are you the creator? If so, when were the materials created, and have the materials consistently been in your custody since they were created?

2. If you are not the creator, can you document the provenance of the material (the method of transfer; owner name and life dates; location of ownership; and date of transfer)?

3. What was the format (analog or digital) in which the material was created? If born digital, please be specific about hardware/software used.

4. Do other copies, or versions, of this material exist elsewhere?

5. Have you altered the original material in any way? If so, when, how and why?

6. Can you provide any additional descriptive or technical information?

7. To what degree of certainty can you attest to these assertions? (e.g. documentation attesting authenticity)

8. Were any of these materials created using generative AI? If so, which ones? Are they labeled? Can you describe what was done, what app/device and AI tool/model was used, and what source materials were involved (if any), what prompts were used? How was the generation documented?

CREATING ATTESTATIONS FOR ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ALREADY WITHIN YOUR COLLECTIONS

1. Whose custody has this been in? Has this been stored in-house or out-of house?

2. Is the original a physical object (e.g. film, tape) in the possession of the archive?

3. What year was the material acquired?

4. How has the material been accessed/altered within the archive for preservation purposes (e.g. digitization, processing, etc) and with what hardware and software? Has this been documented?

5. Is there an agreement with the donor/creator of materials showing proof of ownership and acquisition (physical and/or digital copies)?

6. If the material is a derivative of the original, how was it created? Using what tools?

7. If digital collections are stored using a cloud service, what service is used? Have there been any security breaches? Can the archive ascertain that the collection was not affected?

8. What digital integrity and preservation safeguards have been applied to the collection, and for how long?

9. Is there a plan to retain these and future attestations that is durable and extensible? How can the archive communicate this attestation to users of its collections?