



MAA MOVES TO DIGITAL SIGNATURES

Transition begins August 4, 2020

As its June, 2020 meeting, the MAA Council accepted the Practice Committee's recommendation and determined that, effective January 1, 2021: (a) manual architectural seals and/or corporation stamps will no longer be issued by the MAA; and (b) any and all members who are issuing documentation in electronic (pdf) format, will thereafter be required to use a digital signature authorized by the MAA (replacing the currently authorized electronic signature that can be applied) on electronic seals and stamps.

Specific transition details:

- MAA members that possess a physical seal/stamp issued by the MAA, will be permitted to continue to use same for a period of time - manually sealing, signing and dating hard copy printed documents that are issued solely in that format.
- As of January 1, 2021, a digital signature issued by the MAA, through Notarius, will be **mandatory** for all members when working in an electronic format – and **no other option, outside of the digital signature, will be permitted** for architects who wish to finalize documents in electronic format (ie. affixing an image of the physical seal on a document and/or transmitting pdf copies of documentation, etc.);
- Use of the electronic seal and digital signature will be mandatory for anyone that makes application after January 1, 2021, as manual seals will no longer be issued.

The MAA intends to determine the date on which the electronic seals and digital signatures will become mandatory for all (and use of manually applied physical seals and signatures will be eliminated). With this in mind, the MAA will be the sole issuer of the digital signature (and electronic seal) and this service will be provided in partnership with Notarius, a recognized certification authority throughout North America that is currently providing such service to 40 other professional organizations in Canada (and is in discussion with others). The MAA membership will be informed well in advance of the intended date on which the use of physical seals might be eliminated.

A move by the MAA towards this highest level of secure and reliable digital signatures, originated when the City of Winnipeg advised the MAA of its intentions to adopt an on-line submission system for permits. The assurance that is afforded through the Notarius system is consistent with the MAA's mandate for public protection, in making certain that all seals and signatures, when applied to or transmitted as pdf files, are from MAA members in good standing. Further, the information that forms part of the digital signature, includes a certified timestamp that may be useful for members in the context of potential litigation and copyright protection.

What Do Architects Need to Know About Digital Signatures?

Architects are increasingly using new technologies in their daily work. The documents they produce remain subject to high standards of reliability.

To produce legally reliable documents in accordance with the MAA's requirements, architects will use a digital signature(s) of the MAA, technically known as the " CertifiO for professionals - Digital Signature of the Manitoba Association of Architects".

Digital signatures should not be confused with a digital or scanned image of a physical seal.

What is a Digital Signature certificate?

A digital signature certificate is a computer artifact issued and cryptographically protected by a certification authority (i.e. Notarius) attesting to the veracity of the information. This information may include:

- Full name;
- Email address;
- Professional title;
- Membership number;
- Public key;
- Validity period and the serial number of their certificate.

What is a Digital Signature?

A digital signature involves the affixing of this certificate, which cryptographically secures an electronic file to prove the origin and authenticity of the signer, confirming the integrity of the document.

Features and benefits

By affixing the MAA Digital Signature(s) to a document, a MAA member:

- Guarantees the **identity** of the document – the origin of the document includes proof of the signer’s identity, their MAA professional affiliation (at the time of the signature) as well as the date and time of the document’s finalization;
- Ensures the **integrity** of the document (as well as its contents), so that the document has not been altered since its completion;
- Establishes the **authenticity** of the document – everything necessary to prove its origin and integrity is embedded in the document; and
- Ensures the **longevity** of the document providing the ability to open, read, authenticate and preserve the reliability of a document over time.

The MAA Digital Signature must remain under the sole control of its holder; it cannot be shared or delegated under any circumstances whatsoever.

The partnership between the MAA and Notarius

Notarius is partnering with the MAA to provide the technological framework and platform to issue a digital signature to its membership, without the expense and issues related to managing the technological infrastructure related to such complex solutions. In the same way that the MAA currently controls the issuance of any and all physical/manually applied seals, this partnership allows the MAA to be the exclusive issuer of the digital signature (i.e. any other version of an electronic signature **will no longer be permitted after January 1, 2021**).

Members should be assured that both the MAA office and Notarius are readily available to answer any questions and offer any assistance that might be required by members as this transition occurs.

How to obtain a MAA Digital Signature

To obtain your Digital Signature, please visit the MAA page on the Notarius’ website:

- <https://notarius.com/MAA>

For more information, please refer to the following links:

- Sign up information: <https://notarius.com/signup/certifioforprofessionals>
- CertifiO for Professional Product Brochure: <https://notarius.com/info/certifioforprofessionals>
- ConsignO Desktop Product Brochure: <https://notarius.com/info/consignodesktop>
- ConsignO Desktop Weekly Webinar Training: <https://notarius.com/webinars>
- Summary of Most Common Questions:
<http://notarius.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Common-Questions-About-Digital-Signatures.pdf>

Sign up discount

Please note that there will be a special sign-up discount for the first 90-days starting on August 4, 2020.

For technical assistance:

Contact Notarius Customer Support:

- Phone: 1-855-505-7272
- Email: support@notarius.com

Questions regarding the transition to digital signatures can be directed to:

Candace Fempel, Executive Assistant, MAA

- Phone: 204-925-4620
- Email: admin@mbarchitects.org

Note: When dealing with professional associations that use physical stamps, such as the MAA, NOTARIUS will often use the term ‘Digital Seal’, instead of the term ‘Digital Signature’, in an effort to echo the reality of MAA Members as the equivalent of using a physical stamp. However, *The Architects Act* in Manitoba clearly requires that members both seal, and sign and date, documentation issued from their office; and as such MAA members will be required to continue to apply an electronic seal (or stamp, in the case corporate entities practicing in MB), along with their digital signature; despite the fact that the digital signature includes an encrypted version of much, if not all of the information that is contained on the seal.