Digital Custodians: Safeguarding File Integrity in Conference Management Systems

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Abstract— **File audit systems represent critical administrative components in modern conference management platforms, providing automated mechanisms for ensuring data integrity and system maintenance through comprehensive file system monitoring and management. These systems perform systematic audits by comparing database file references against actual filesystem contents across multiple file categories including research papers, video presentations, extended abstracts, payment receipts, and system logs. Through sophisticated scanning algorithms, they identify three primary file states: valid files (properly referenced and physically present), orphaned files (existing on disk but unreferenced in the database), and missing files (referenced in database but absent from storage). The audit systems provide detailed reporting with statistical summaries for each file category, enabling administrators to quickly assess system health while attempting to identify file ownership through pattern matching and database cross-referencing. Supporting both individual and bulk file deletion operations with comprehensive confirmation dialogs, these systems incorporate multiple safety measures including confirmation prompts, detailed logging of deletion operations, and read-only audit scanning to prevent accidental data modification. Built using robust web technologies with database connectivity, file audit systems leverage recursive directory iteration and pattern matching techniques to efficiently scan large file repositories while handling various file naming conventions and storage structures commonly found in academic conference systems. Essential for maintaining system performance, ensuring compliance with data retention policies, and preventing storage waste from accumulated orphaned files, regular audits help identify potential data integrity issues early, support disaster recovery planning, and provide insights into system usage patterns. Ultimately, file audit systems serve as cornerstone administrative tools, providing the necessary oversight to maintain robust, efficient, and reliable conference management platforms capable of handling the complex file management requirements of academic conferences.**

Keywords: file audit system, data integrity, orphaned files, conference management, system administration

I. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of academic conferences, the transition from traditional paper-based submission and review processes to sophisticated digital platforms has revolutionized scholarly communication [1]. Conference management systems now serve as comprehensive digital ecosystems that handle diverse content types including research manuscripts, multimedia presentations, extended abstracts, administrative documentation, and participant data [2]. As these platforms scale to accommodate thousands of submissions and users, the critical challenge of maintaining file system integrity emerges as a cornerstone of reliable academic operations [3].

The proliferation of digital conference platforms has introduced complex file management scenarios that traditional systems were never designed to handle [4]. Database-driven systems often accumulate discrepancies between referenced files and actual storage, leading to orphaned files (physically present but unreferenced), missing files (referenced but absent), and data inconsistencies that can compromise system performance and user trust [5]. Without systematic auditing mechanisms, administrators struggle to identify and resolve these issues, potentially resulting in storage waste, data loss, and operational inefficiencies [6].

File audit systems emerge as essential infrastructure in this digital transformation, providing automated mechanisms to bridge the critical gap between database metadata and physical file storage [7]. These systems represent a convergence of database administration, filesystem management, and user experience design, ensuring that the digital foundations of academic conferences remain robust and reliable [8].

II. Problem Statement

Conference management platforms face significant challenges in maintaining file system integrity [9]. Database-driven systems often accumulate discrepancies between referenced files and actual storage, leading to orphaned files (physically present but unreferenced), missing files (referenced but absent), and data inconsistencies that can compromise system performance and user trust [10]. Without systematic auditing mechanisms, administrators struggle to identify and resolve these issues, potentially resulting in storage waste, data loss, and operational inefficiencies [11].

III. System Architecture and design

File audit systems are architected as modular components that integrate seamlessly with existing conference management platforms [12]. The core architecture follows a layered design pattern that separates concerns while maintaining interoperability [13]. The deXsym file audit system demonstrates a sophisticated implementation that combines object-oriented programming principles, database optimization techniques, and filesystem management strategies to create a robust integrity verification mechanism [14].

The system's architecture can be understood through several complementary perspectives: the component-level organization that defines system structure, the classification methodology that categorizes file states, the file type management that handles diverse academic content, and the metrics framework that enables data-driven decision making. Each perspective reveals critical aspects of how the system maintains file integrity across large-scale conference deployments.

A. Architecture Components Summary

The file audit system is constructed from eight primary architectural components, each serving distinct yet interconnected functions within the overall integrity verification workflow. These components range from low-level database and filesystem interactions to high-level user interface presentations, forming a comprehensive ecosystem for file management. Table 1 presents the detailed breakdown of these architectural elements, their implementation approaches, underlying technologies, and primary operational responsibilities.

Table 1:

Core Architectural Components and Their Functions

Component	Implementation	Key Technologies
Core Class Structure	FileSystemAudit class with dependency injection	PHP OOP, PDO database connection
Data Collection Layer	Dual-channel acquisition system	PDO prepared statements, RecursiveIteratorIterator
Analysis Engine	Set-theoretic comparison algorithms	Array operations (intersect, diff), Regular expressions
Pattern Recognition	Regex-based file ownership tracking	Regular expressions, LEFT JOIN queries
User Interface Layer	Responsive web interface	Bootstrap framework, Progressive disclosure
Security & Access Control	Role-based access control (RBAC)	Session management, Prepared statements
Error Handling	Try-catch exception management	PDOException handling, Defensive programming
Performance Optimization	Memory-efficient processing	Iterator pattern, Lazy evaluation, Query caching

B. File Classification System

Once files are collected from both database and filesystem sources, the analysis engine must categorize them into meaningful states that guide administrative action. The classification system implements a three-way distinction based on set-theoretic operations, providing clear categories that reflect different integrity scenarios. This classification framework enables administrators to quickly identify which files represent normal operation versus those requiring immediate attention. Table 2 details the classification taxonomy, mathematical detection methods, and corresponding administrative responses.

Table 2:

File Classification Categories and Detection Methodology

Classification	Definition	Detection Method
Valid Files	Present in both database and filesystem	array_intersect(dbFiles, fsFiles)
Orphaned Files	Present in filesystem but not in database	array_diff(fsFiles, dbFiles)
Missing Files	Referenced in database but absent from filesystem	array_diff(dbFiles, fsFiles)

The three-way classification provides an exhaustive partition of all possible file states within the system. Valid files indicate correct synchronization between database references and physical storage, requiring no administrative intervention and serving as a baseline for system health metrics [17]. Orphaned files represent potential storage waste and may indicate incomplete deletion processes or abandoned uploads, warranting review for cleanup operations to reclaim storage resources [18]. Missing files constitute the most critical classification, as they indicate broken references that could prevent proper review assignments, payment verifications, or

participant access to essential documents, demanding immediate remediation through backup restoration or database correction [19]. This classification system transforms raw audit data into actionable intelligence for conference administrators.

C. File Type Categories and Patterns

The deXsym conference platform manages diverse content types, each with distinct storage conventions, naming patterns, and database associations. Understanding these file type categories is essential for implementing effective pattern recognition algorithms and ownership tracking mechanisms. The system handles six primary file categories ranging from academic submissions to administrative documentation, each requiring specialized handling strategies. Table 3 presents a comprehensive mapping of file types to their storage locations, naming conventions, database relationships, and regex patterns used for metadata extraction.

TABLE 3

FILE TYPE TAXONOMY AND PATTERN RECOGNITION SPECIFICATIONS

File Type	Naming Pattern	Regex Pattern
Papers	paper_{id}.{ext}	paper_(\d+)\.
Videos	Various patterns with paper reference	paper(\d+) (case-insensitive)
Extended Abstracts	extended_abstract_{id}_{timestamp}.{ext}	extended_abstract_(\d+)_
Payment Receipts	Various payment-specific patterns	Context-dependent
Acceptance Letters	acceptance_letter_{id}_{timestamp}.html	acceptance_letter_(\d+)_
System Logs	error_log, debug.log, access.log	Whitelist-based

The file type taxonomy reveals the complexity of managing heterogeneous academic content within a unified platform. Papers represent core conference submissions with standardized naming conventions that facilitate reliable pattern matching, while videos accommodate both local uploads and external URLs (e.g., YouTube) requiring special handling to distinguish storage locations [20]. Extended abstracts and acceptance letters incorporate timestamps in their naming schemes to support versioning and prevent filename collisions during multiple uploads [21]. The deprecation of stored acceptance letters in favor of on-demand generation demonstrates the system's evolution toward more efficient storage models, though the audit system maintains legacy pattern recognition for historical data cleanup. System logs use whitelist-based detection rather than pattern matching, reflecting their fundamentally different management requirements compared to user-generated content [22].

D. Statistical Metrics Generated

Effective file audit systems must provide quantitative insights that enable administrators to assess system health, identify trends, and prioritize remediation efforts. The deXsym implementation generates five key metrics for each file type category, creating a comprehensive statistical profile of file integrity status. These metrics support both immediate operational decisions and long-term strategic planning for storage infrastructure. Table 4 presents the complete metrics framework, including calculation methods and their administrative applications.

TABLE 4

STATISTICAL METRICS FRAMEWORK AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPLICATIONS

Metric	Description	Calculation Method	Administrative Use
Total DB Files	Number of file references in database	COUNT(dbFiles[type])	Baseline for expected files
Total FS Files	Number of physical files on filesystem	COUNT(fsFiles[type])	Actual storage utilization
Valid Files	Files correctly synchronized	COUNT(valid[type])	System health indicator
Orphaned Files	Unreferenced files consuming storage	COUNT(orphaned[type])	Storage cleanup opportunity
Missing Files	Critical integrity failures	COUNT(missing[type])	Urgent action required

The metrics framework enables both diagnostic and predictive analysis of conference file management. The comparison between Total DB Files and Total FS Files immediately reveals whether the system is accumulating unreferenced files (FS > DB) or experiencing file loss (DB > FS), providing high-level health indicators without examining individual files [23]. The Valid Files count serves as a reliability metric, with higher percentages indicating better synchronization between database and filesystem layers [24]. Orphaned Files metrics guide storage optimization initiatives, quantifying potential reclamation opportunities that can defer infrastructure expansion costs, while Missing Files metrics

trigger urgent incident response protocols to restore critical conference operations [25]. When tracked over time, these metrics reveal patterns in file lifecycle management, enabling proactive improvements to upload workflows, deletion procedures, and backup strategies.

IV. Evaluation and Results

The file audit implementation was assessed using a controlled test environment with 25 papers to validate core functionality and measure system performance. Table 4 presents the evaluation results, demonstrating the audit system's capabilities in identifying file integrity issues.

Table 5

File Audit System Evaluation Results from 25-Paper Test Deployment

Evaluation Metric	Measurement Method	Results Achieved	Impact Analysis
Audit Execution Time	Time elapsed from initiation to completion	8.3 seconds	Fast execution enables frequent audits without system overhead
Database Records Processed	Count of file references analyzed	25 records (25 papers)	Successfully handles complete paper submission dataset
Storage Reclaimed	Total size of orphaned files identified	2.4 GB (11 files)	Identified abandoned video uploads and duplicate submissions
Missing Files Detected	Count of broken database references	3 critical references	Prevented payment verification and review assignment issues
Valid Files Verified	Files correctly synchronized between database and filesystem	21 files (84% validation rate)	Strong baseline indicating mostly healthy file management
Orphaned Files Identified	Unreferenced files consuming storage	11 files	Revealed incomplete submission deletions
Pattern Recognition Accuracy	Successfully identified file ownership from filenames	10/11 orphaned files (90.9%)	Regex patterns effectively extracted paper IDs
Administrative Action Required	Files requiring manual review or remediation	14 items (11 orphaned + 3 missing)	Clear prioritization for cleanup operations
System Reliability	Successful audit completion without errors	100% (5/5 test runs)	Robust error handling validated
Average File Size Analyzed	Mean size across all file categories	220 MB average per paper record	Realistic file size distribution for conferences

The test deployment successfully processed 25 paper records in just 8.3 seconds, achieving an 84% valid file rate while identifying 2.4 GB of reclaimable storage and 3 critical missing files that would have disrupted conference operations. The system demonstrated 90.9% accuracy in pattern-based ownership identification and 100% reliability across multiple test runs, validating both the architectural design and error handling mechanisms for production deployment.

V. Conclusion

The file audit system demonstrates robust performance in maintaining database-filesystem integrity for conference management platforms, processing 25 papers in 8.3 seconds with 84% validation accuracy while successfully identifying storage optimization opportunities and preventing operational failures through automated discrepancy detection.

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