METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR IDENTITY RECOGNITION

Technical Field

The invention relates generally to the field of computer and network security. More particularly, the invention relates to exchanging user-controlled identity information between disparate computer systems.

Background of the Invention

It is often desired to share a computer's resources with users across a network that do not have any representation on the computer from which resources are to be shared. For example, a corporation, university, or other organization may have one or more servers connected to some type of network for use by employees, students, or other individuals. Various entities, including individuals, share information or resources across the Internet or other networks. Wired and wireless networks are becoming more popular for use in homes and a wide range of devices, from personal computers to household appliances are or will be connected to and accessible through these networks. As easier access to a wider variety of resources becomes available, the secure sharing of and collaboration between these resources becomes more important.

One obstacle to the secure sharing of and collaboration between these resources relates to recognizing and authenticating various entities that attempt to access the resources provided. In other words, care must be taken to ascertain and ensure that an entity attempting to access a resource on a computer is the entity it claims to be and has the authorization needed to access those resources. Various methods of recognizing an entity and granting authorization have been used.

One method of recognizing and granting authorization to an entity involves a system of accounts and passwords set up to define a security domain. For example, a corporation may wish to generate a security domain for a server or network where the security domain consists of every full-time employee of the corporation. Those running the security domain, such as system administrators, give each employee an account, typically including a user name and password, and set up policies controlling access to the resources through these accounts. Once a security domain

is in place, domain members can be given access to the resources while those without accounts are excluded.

However, a security domain based on a system of accounts requiring users to remember various user names and passwords can be cumbersome. Further, a security domain based on a system of accounts is not a good model for individuals wishing to share information or resources across a network such as the Internet. Additionally, for various business reasons, there may be a need to extend or even replace the traditional closed security domain with individuals chosen from across the Internet. For example, there may be a need to set up a project where employees, outside contractors, and other individuals or entities can be part of a virtual team, accessing shared documents, communications, and other resources.

While it is relatively easy to assume that anyone using an account with a valid username and password for accessing resources is the owner of that account, it has been very difficult to recognize identities which are not a part of a traditional closed security domain. Public key infrastructures have been used as a way to identify and authenticate entities. Public key infrastructures are based on trust relationships between certifying or recommending authorities and the users of these systems. However, these infrastructures are complex to understand, bootstrap, and manage. Therefore, public key infrastructures have not become a mainstream technology for recognizing computer users since they do not provide a simple, easy to use identity recognition system applicable to various types of entities. It is with respect to these considerations and others that the present invention has been made.

Summary of the Invention

The above and other problems are solved by a system and method for identity recognition of a sender by a recepient and for exchange of identity information utilizing identity information signed by the sender. Selected identity information regarding a principal is included in an identity information document that can be exchanged between computer systems and used for recognition of the principal. Identity recognition does not include authorization. In the invention authentication of a sender, i.e. identity recognition, and authorization of a sender to access a resource of recipient are separated.

In accordance with still other aspects, the present invention relates to a method of sending an identity information document comprising selecting identity information from a self-identity information store for inclusion in the identity information document. The selected identity information is read from a self-identity information store and the identity information document is generated to include the selected identity information and at least a first key such as a public key. The identity information document has a digital signature signed by the sender using a second key, such as a private key, associated with the first key included in the identity information document. The identity information document is then sent to a recipient. According to another aspect of the present invention, a method of receiving an identity information document comprises receiving a signed identity information document from an originator or sender. A determination is made as to whether identity information conveyed in the identity information document is reliable. The identity information is saved into a recognized identity information store if the identity information is determined to be reliable. The recognized identity information store is used for future recognition, and authentication, of the originator when the originator attempts to again connect to the recipient computer system.

In accordance with yet other aspects, the present invention relates to a system for sending an identity information document. The system comprises a processor, a communication channel connected with the processor, and a memory coupled with and readable by the processor. The memory contains a series of instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to select identity information from a self-identity information store for inclusion in the identity information document. The selected identity information is read from a self-identity information store, and the identity information document is generated to include the selected identity information and at least a first key. The identity information document has a digital signature signed using a second key that pairs with the first key included in the identity information document. The identity information document is then sent to a recipient connected to the communication channel.

In accordance with still other aspects, the present invention relates to a system for receiving an identity information document. The system comprises a processor, a communication channel connected with the processor, and a memory coupled with and readable by the processor. The memory containing a series of

instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to receive a signed identity information document from an originator or sender. A determination is made as to whether identity information conveyed in the identity information document is reliable. The identity information is saved in a recognized identity information store if the identity information is determined to be reliable. The recognized identity information store is used for future recognition, and authentication, of the originator when the originator attempts to connect to the recipient computer system.

The invention may be implemented as a computer process, a computing system or as an article of manufacture such as a computer program product or computer readable media. The computer readable media may be a computer storage media readable by a computer system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process. The computer readable media may also be a propagated signal on a carrier readable by a computing system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process.

These and various other features as well as advantages, which characterize the present invention, will be apparent from a reading of the following detailed description and a review of the associated drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 illustrates at a conceptual level a system for identity recognition according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates an example of a suitable computing system environment on which embodiments of the invention may be implemented.

FIG. 3 illustrates exemplary software components of a system for identity recognition according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart illustrating initiating an exchange of identity information according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a flowchart illustrating receiving identity information according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 illustrates an exemplary format for an identity information document according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Before describing various embodiments of the present invention, some terms that will be used throughout this description will be defined.

"Identity information" is a collection of information about a principal in an identity information system through which the principal or its agent is capable of controlling what information is conveyed to a receiving device, and of indicating the intended uses of this information.

An "identity information document" is a subset of identity information for a principal transmitted from one device to another so as to allow the receiving device to represent the originator of the identity information document and subsequently recognize digital events the originator has initiated or responded to.

A "principal" is any entity capable of acting digitally. Principals include individual people, groups or sets of people meaning individuals, households, organizations, explicit groups, and people in common roles, or who share attributes of some kind as well as various electronic devices through which these individuals act.

FIG. 1 illustrates at a conceptual level a system for identity recognition according to one embodiment of the present invention. This example illustrates an initiating system **101** and a receiving system **106** connected via a network **111** or other channel. As will become apparent, most devices can function as both an initiating system **101** and a receiving system **106** at various times. However, for simplicity, these functions are illustrated separately here. Additionally, network **111** may be any type of network including the Internet or may be some other type of channel suitable for establishing communication between the initiating system **101** and the receiving system **106**.

The initiating system **101** maintains a set of self-identity information **102**. The self-identity information **102** may include a variety of information about the principal represented by or using the initiating system **101**. This information, for example, may include a name, email address, website URL, and other personal information as well as a usage policy describing how this information may be used. These different, identifying elements are referred to herein as identity claims.

An identity information document **105** containing some or all of the self-identity information **102** is created. In one embodiment, the identity information

document **105** is created in response to a request from the receiving system **106**. Therefore, when a principal represented by or using the initiating system **101** wants to send identity information to another system such as the receiving system **106** the user selects the information to send from self-identity information **102**. In other words, the principal has the ability to control disclosure of information from the self-identity information **102** when producing an identity information document **105**. Therefore, the principal may selectively disclose different subsets of identity data to different recipients, and express their intent as to how the disclosed information may be used. Further, this allows "progressive disclosure", where a principal could send a first identity information document containing little information, divulging more information at some later point when there is reason to do so.

In one particular embodiment, the full identity information document is signed with the a digital signature using the private key of the principal originating the identity information document when the identity information document is generated. Therefore, the identity information document is referred to as being self-signed. In another embodiment, the full identity information document has a digital signature signed with the private key of the organization that has issued the identity claims for the principal originating the identity information document when the identity information document is generated. In this case, the identity information document is referred to as being signed by the organization. Similarly, updates to an already shared identity information document or progressive disclosures will be signed using the private key that was used to sign the originally shared identity information. Public keys paired with the signing private key may be distributed in a variety of manners including as part of an identity information document. Alternatively, key arrangements other than the public/private key system may be used. For example, sets of private keys may be used.

The initiating system **101** produces from the self-identity information **102**, the signed identity information document **105** and sends it to the receiving system via network **111**. According to one embodiment, the identity information may comprise an eXtensible Mark-up Language (XML) file or a text file that can be sent using any channel to the receiving system **106**. Details of one possible format for the identity information document **105** will be discussed below with reference to FIG. 6. However, generally speaking, the identity information **105** may be in a

format suitable for transferring information between disparate systems across various types of channels. As mentioned above, the channel used to transfer the identity information document **105** from the initiating system **101** to the receiving system **106** can be any of a variety of possible media. For example, email, instant messaging, beaming, private line and many other mechanisms may be used as channels. Further, the channel may or may not be secure.

The receiving system **106** reads the incoming identity information document **105** and accepts it or rejects it. In a typical scenario, the identity information document **105** originates from a known principal, and the receiving system **106** will be a very good judge of the authenticity of the identity information document **105**. However, if an identity information document **105** arrives from an unknown principal, or if there is a fear that impostors have sufficient motivation to open and modify or forge the identity information document **105**, the receiving system **106** may reject the identity information document **105** or seek further verification of its authenticity. Details of this verification will be discussed below with reference to FIGs. 3-6.

Once the identity information document is accepted, the information it contains is added to the recognized identity information **107** of the receiving system **106**. Once an identity information document **105** has been added to the list of recognized identity information **107**, the receiving system **106** can then use the information it contains to authenticate the initiating system **101** in the future and employ channels of interacting with that principal that may not otherwise be trusted. The principal represented by the identity information document **105** may then, for example, be given access to resources on the receiving system **106** such as a calendar or a document. Alternatively, the principal might be challenged and if the challenge is satisfied, then authorized for access to resources on the receiving system. Conversely, an unidentified principal represented by or using an unidentified system **110** that has not provided an identity information document that has been accepted by the receiving system **106** may be excluded from the resources of the receiving system **106**. Likewise, an identified principal represented by or using an identified system **110** that has provided an identity information document that has been

accepted by the receiving system **106** may be purposely excluded from the resources of the receiving system **106**.

Recognition of a principal through the use of an identity information document **105** and importing identity information into the recognized identity information list **107** does not automatically provide that principal any entitlements on or access to the receiving system **106**. It only provides a capability of the receiving system **106** to recognize and authenticate the principal in the future. Recognition or authentication does provide a possibility for authorization of file shares, sending of encrypted mail, automatic updates to previously shared identity information, etc. Anyone may be recognized. Recognition implies only that the receiving system **106** knows who it is dealing with, not that any access rights are given to the principal. Recognizing a principal does not imply giving them access to anything. They can be given access after authorization or when it is useful or safe to do so.

Identity recognition thus works in one direction. Therefore it is necessary to require a two-way exchange of identity information between an initiating system **101** and a receiving system **106** in order for identity recognition to work effectively in either direction. A one-way exchange of an identity information document **105** from the initiating system **101** to the receiving system **106** is sufficient for the receiving system **106** to identify the principal represented by or using the initiating system **101** and deal with that principal as appropriate.

Allowing access to the resources of the receiving system **106** based on the identity information document **105** and recognized identity list **107** does not compromise security if the identity of a principal can be recognized and access can be granted or denied as appropriate or if additional authorization processes can be required. Further, any unrecognized principal can be excluded.

FIG. 2 illustrates an example of a suitable computing system environment on which embodiments of the invention may be implemented. This system **200** is representative of one that may be used to serve as an initiating system and/or a receiving system as described above. In its most basic configuration, system **200** typically includes at least one processing unit **202** and memory **204**. Depending on the exact configuration and type of computing device, memory **204** may be volatile

(such as RAM), non-volatile (such as ROM, flash memory, etc.) or some combination of the two. This most basic configuration is illustrated in FIG. 2 by dashed line **206**. Additionally, system **200** may also have additional features/functionality. For example, device **200** may also include additional storage (removable and/or non-removable) including, but not limited to, magnetic or optical disks or tape. Such additional storage is illustrated in FIG. 2 by removable storage **208** and non-removable storage **210**. Computer storage media includes volatile and nonvolatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data. Memory **204**, removable storage **208** and non-removable storage **210** are all examples of computer storage media. Computer storage media includes, but is not limited to, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can accessed by system **200**. Any such computer storage media may be part of system **200**.

System **200** may also contain communications connection(s) **212** that allow the system to communicate with other devices. Communications connection(s) **212** is an example of communication media. Communication media typically embodies computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data in a modulated data signal such as a carrier wave or other transport mechanism and includes any information delivery media. The term "modulated data signal" means a signal that has one or more of its characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode information in the signal. By way of example, and not limitation, communication media includes wired media such as a wired network or direct-wired connection, and wireless media such as acoustic, RF, infrared and other wireless media. The term computer readable media as used herein includes both storage media and communication media.

System **200** may also have input device(s) **214** such as keyboard, mouse, pen, voice input device, touch input device, etc. Output device(s) **216** such as a display, speakers, printer, etc. may also be included. All these devices are well know in the art and need not be discussed at length here.

A computing device, such as system **200**, typically includes at least some form of computer-readable media. Computer readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by the system **200**. By way of example, and not limitation, computer-readable media might comprise computer storage media and communication media.

FIG. 3 illustrates the main software components of a system for identity recognition according to one embodiment of the present invention. This example, similar to that illustrated in FIG. 1, illustrates an initiating system **301** and a receiving system **309** connected via a channel **306**. Also, as mentioned above, systems may function as both an initiating system **301** and a receiving system **309** at various times. However, for simplicity, these functions are illustrated separately here.

The initiating system **301** includes a self-identity information store **302**, a self-identity information control module **303**, an identity information processing unit **304**, and an Identity Recognition Number (IRN) processing module **305**. The self-identity information store **302** can store information that comprises a database, list, or other collection of information specific to the principal represented by or using the initiating system **301**. The self-identity information store **302** can store information such as the principal's name, email address, public keys and/or certificates, and other individualized information that can be used in an identity information document as will be described below.

The self-identity information control module **303** reads identity information from the self-identity information store **302**. When a principal wants to send identity information to another system he selects the information to send from the self-identity information store **302** through the self-identity information control module **303**. For example, when a principal wants to send an identity information document, a graphical user interface (GUI) may be presented by the self-identity information control module **303** through which the principal selects the information to send from their self-identity information store **302**.

The self-identity information control module **303** provides the principal with the ability to control disclosure of information from the self-identity information store **302** when producing an identity information document **307**. If presented

through a GUI, self-identity information may be presented in a variety of easy to read and easy to use formats. For example, a list of information may be presented for the user to checkmark, or otherwise select, to indicate inclusion in the identity information document. The self-identity information control module **303** therefore allows principals to selectively disclose different subsets of identity information to different receiving systems **309** and express their intent as to how the disclosed information may be used. Further, the self-identity information control module **303** allows "progressive disclosure", where a principal could send a first identity information containing little information, divulging more information at some later point when there is reason to do so.

The identity information processing unit **304** produces, from the information provided by the self-identity information control module **303**, an identity information document **307** and sends it to the receiving system **309** via channel **306**. According to one embodiment, the identity information document **307** may comprise an XML file or a text file that can be sent using any channel to the receiving system **309**. Details of one possible format for the identity information will be discussed below with reference to FIG. 6. However, generally speaking, the identity information **307** should be in a format suitable for transferring information between disparate systems.

The channel **306** used to transfer the identity information document **307** from the initiating system **301** to the receiving system **309** can be any of a variety of possible media. For example, email, instant messaging, beaming, private line and many other mechanisms may be used as channel **306**. The channel **306** may or may not be secure.

The receiving system **309** comprises an identity information processing unit **312**, a received identity information control module **311**, a recognized identity information store **310**, and an IRN processing module **314**. The identity information processing unit **312** of the receiving system **309** receives the incoming identity information **307** from the channel **306**. The identity information processing unit **312** passes the identity information from the identity information document **307** to the received identity information control module **311**.

The received identity information control module **311** determines whether to accept or reject the identity information document **307**. In some cases, this determination may be based on querying a user through a GUI as to whether to accept or reject the received information. If presented through a GUI, the identity information from the identity information document may be presented in a variety of easy to read formats. For example, the identity information may be presented in the form of a rolodex or "contacts" entries allowing for quick and easy review of the information.

If the identity information document **307** originated from a known principal, the receiving system **309** will be a very good judge of the authenticity of the identity information document **307**. However, if identity information originated from an unknown principal, or if there is a fear that impostors have sufficient motivation to open and modify mail, the receiving system **309** uses the Identity Recognition Number (IRN) processing module **314** to verify the identity information document **307**.

Identity information documents **307** can be exchanged over a variety of media. Some media are more susceptible to spoofing than others. When identity information documents **307** are exchanged over more susceptible media like email or when the identification information document **307** is otherwise questionable, it may be beneficial to perform out-of-band verification of the integrity of the identity information document **307** to ensure that it has not been subject to spoofing or man-in-the middle attacks. The degree to which out-of-band verification will be required varies based upon how the identity information is acquired and the sensitivity of the information intended to be shared with the sending party.

To support out-of-band verification of the binding of identification information document **307** to a principal, an Identity Recognition Number (IRN) may be used. The IRN is a hash of the principal's public key with a suitable transformation function to render it as a readable string that is included in the identification information document. The IRN, through this transformation function, may be indicated by an easily readable and memorable series of numbers. For example, the IRN may be similar to a phone number.

To perform out-of-band verification, the IRN processing module **314** of the receiving system **309** computes and displays the IRN for the identity information

document **307**. The receiving system or user thereof then contacts the originator by an alternate channel **308** such as calling the originator on the phone or through Instant Messaging (IM) and asks the originator to confirm his IRN. The IRN processing module **314** may then verify that the confirmed IRN matches what is computed at the recipient end based on the received identity information document **307**.

If a man-in-the-middle attack had tampered with the identity information document **307** received by the receiving system **309** by substituting the public key information to spoof the sender, then the computed IRN would not match the true sender's IRN which would become evident in the out-of-band verification process. Note that the IRN can be public information as it is computed from the public key and, hence, is suitable for inclusion in such things as business cards as an attestation to a person's identity.

Once the identity information document **307** is accepted, the information it contains is added to the recognized identity information store **107**. The principal originating the identification information document **307** can then be given access to resources on the receiving system **309**. In the future, if the principal tries to access that resource, his or her computer will be challenged to demonstrate knowledge of the private key associated with the public key in the identity information document **307**. If the principal is authentic, the computer can provide this proof of knowledge, resulting in recognition and admission to the resource.

Alternatively, even rejected identity information may be placed into the recognized identity information store **107**. For example, even though a given set of identity information is rejected, it might be stored for future reference and marked as being unreliable. This recognized but unreliable identity information may be marked as such by being stored in a special portion of the recognized identity information store or by being tagged or flagged in some manner. Such information may be useful in future identification of unreliable identity information.

Additionally, identity information in the recognized identity information store **107** may be made accessible, perhaps through a GUI, for review by a user of the receiving system. If presented through a GUI, the identity information from the recognized identity information store **107** may be presented in a variety of easy to read formats. For example, the identity information may be presented in the form of

a rolodex or "contacts" entries allowing for quick and easy review of the information.

Using the system illustrated in FIG. 3, exchanging identity information documents that contain confidential information about its subject can be securely accomplished by utilizing a process of progressive disclosure of identity information. In this process, the originator and the recipient first exchange public keys which may be encapsulated in certificates such as X509v3 certificates, for example, and the minimal necessary identity claims through identity information documents. The parties then exchange the full set of remaining disclosed attributes encrypted with the public key of the recipient of the information. This ensures that the confidential data can only be seen by the intended recipient and nobody else. Of course, it is not mandatory that an exchange of identity information documents be required in order to use the progressive disclosure method. Progressive disclosure can be used for a one-way sharing as well. The progressive disclosure exchanges can occur asynchronously in a stateless fashion, and are not required to be wrapped by a session nor bound to a specific protocol.

The logical operations of the various embodiments of the present invention are implemented (1) as a sequence of computer implemented acts or program modules running on a computing system and/or (2) as interconnected machine logic circuits or circuit modules within the computing system. The implementation is a matter of choice dependent on the performance requirements of the computing system implementing the invention. Accordingly, the logical operations making up the embodiments of the present invention described herein are referred to variously as operations, structural devices, acts or modules. It will be recognized by one skilled in the art that these operations, structural devices, acts and modules may be implemented in software, in firmware, in special purpose digital logic, and any combination thereof without deviating from the spirit and scope of the present invention as recited within the claims attached hereto.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart illustrating initiating an exchange of identity information according to one embodiment of the present invention. Here processing begins with select operation **405**. Select operation **405** comprises selecting identity information from the self-identity information store to be included in the identity information document. Select operation selects identity information for inclusion in

the identity information document based on user input through a GUI or automatically where pre-selected sets of identity information have been identified for certain situations. Control then passes to read operation **410**.

Read operation **410** comprises reading the selected identity information from the self-identity information store. The read operation locates the selected identity information and retrieves the information from the self-identity information store. Control then passes to generate operation **415**.

Generate operation **415** comprises generating the identity information document including the information selected and read from the self-identity information store. The generate operation **415** builds the identity information document from the selected information. As will be described below, the identity information document may comprise an XML file. Alternatively, the identity information document may be in any form suitable for transferring information to disparate systems across various media. Additionally, the identity information document includes at least a first key such as one or more public keys, possibly encapsulated in certificates. The identity information document may be signed with a digital signature using a second key such as private key paired with one of the public keys included in the identity information document. Control then passes to send operation **420**.

Send operation **420** comprises sending the identity information document to the receiving system via a channel. The send operation transmits, communicates or sends the identity information document in an outgoing signal to the receiving system. As discussed above, the channel may or may not be secure. Examples of channels over which the identity information document may be sent include, but are not limited to, email, instant messaging, beaming, private line etc.

FIG. 5 is a flowchart illustrating receiving identity information according to one embodiment of the present invention. In this example processing begins with receive operation **505**. Receive operation **505** comprises receiving an identity information document from a channel such as described above. The receive operation processes the incoming signal from the initiating system to recover the identity information document from the incoming signal. Control then passes to query operation **510**.

Query operation **510** comprises determining whether the identity information received in the identity information document is reliable. The query operation tests the authenticity of the identity information based on a number of circumstances related to how the information was received. In some cases the determination of authenticity may simply rely on querying a user through a GUI as to whether to accept or reject the information. In other cases an algorithm of heuristics may be used to make the determination automatically based on the media used to transfer the information, the sensitivity of the information, and any number of other criteria. If the information is determined to be reliable, control passes to save operation **530** where the identity information received in the identity information document is saved in the recognized identity information store. After the save operation writes the identity information into the recognized identity information store, operation flow returns to the main program flow.

If, at query operation **510**, the identity information is not determined to be reliable, control passes to query operation **515**. Verify query operation **515** comprises determining whether to attempt to verify the identity information document. Verify query operation is deciding whether or not to perform a verification process. This determination may be made automatically by default, may be based on user input through a GUI, or may be based on a number of other criteria programmable by the user. If, at query operation **515** a determination is made to not verify the identity information, no further processing is performed and the operation flow returns to the main program flow. If, however, a determination is made to attempt to verify the identity information, control passes to retrieve operation **520**.

IRN Retrieve operation **520** comprises retrieving the IRN from the initiating system or originator. The retrieve operation commands the receiving system or prompts the user of the receiving system to contact the initiating system or originator by an alternate channel. For example the user might call the originator on the phone or send a message through IM (instant messaging) and ask the originator to confirm his IRN.

IRN generate operation 523 recreates the IRN at the receiving station based on the public key received in the identity information document. In order to compute the IRN at the IRN generate operation **523** hashes the public key

transmitted in the identity information document. Alternatively, the display name (FIG. 6) of the originator may combined with the public key and the combination is then hashed. The result of the hashing operation may then be subjected to a masking algorithm to produce an alphanumeric signature of the form AAA – AA – AA – AAA where 'A' indicates an alphanumeric characters. The IRN computed by IRN generate operation **523** might look like 732-AB-5H-XVQ. Then the two IRNs are compared by the IRN test operation 525.

IRN test operation **525** comprises determining whether the IRN is correct. IRN test operation **525** compares the computed IRN, generated at the receiving station, to the retrieved IRN retrieved from the initiating system. If a man-in-the-middle attack has tampered with the identity information received by the recipient by substituting the public key information to spoof the sender, then the computed IRN would not match the retrieved IRN from the originator or initiating system, i.e. the true sender.

If the IRN is determined to be correct, control passes to save operation **530**. Save operation **530** saves or stores the identity information received in the identity information document in the recognized identity information store. The operation flow then returns to the main control progam in the receiving system.

Alternatively, even rejected identity information may be placed into the recognized identity information store. For example, even though a given set of identity information is rejected, it might be stored for future reference and marked as being unreliable. This recognized but unreliable identity information may be marked as such by being stored in a special portion of the recognized identity information store or by being tagged or flagged in some manner. Such information may be useful in future identification of unreliable identity information.

FIG. 6 illustrates an exemplary format for identity information document according to one embodiment of the present invention. As a data structure, the identity information document **600** is a collection of identity claims and other attribute/property claims bound to a key and governed by an embedded use policy. XML will be used as the encoding language for the identity information. However, other formats are considered equally suitable. The elements of the identity information document **600** may also be optionally encrypted if it contains confidential information whose confidentiality must be maintained.

The data within the identity information document **600** can be divided into two categories. These categories include a set of logical components **601** and a set of attributes tags **608**. The identity information document has six principal logical components: 1) an identity information subject identifier **602**; 2) one or more identity claims of the subject **603**; 3) a display name and zero or more selectively disclosed attributes of the subject **604**; 4) one or more keys for the subject enveloped in any acceptable formats (for example, public keys in X509v3 certificates) **605**; 5) a use policy that expresses the subject's privacy requirements **606**; and 6) a digital signature over the entire content of the identity information that protects the integrity of the data and authenticates the sender in the case of identity information updates **607**. Each of these six logical components **601** will be discussed in turn.

The subject identifier **602** represents the subject of the identity information as an entity that is identified by one of its identity claims expressed as a name identifier. The preferred name identifier or identity claim for the identity information subject is the email address if the subject type is a person.

Identity claims **603** include structured information that uniquely identifies the subject of the identity information document. An identity claim is a value assigned by an authority of a given type to identify a single principal during a given period of time. The identity claims in an identity information document identify the principal in various namespaces, and the display name and other disclosed information such as a physical mailing address supply further context for the principal once it has been identified.

The display name **604** can be used on the recipient's system during searches and operations. However, it need not be unique. Display name and other disclosed information (such as a physical mailing address) supply additional context for a principal once it has been identified via the identity information's Subject specification. Disclosed Information consists of descriptive information about the subject. This is expressed as a set of properties. Some properties may be standardized, and there may be an extension mechanism.

The keys **605** contains one or more keys, possibly encapsulated within a certificate format (for example, X509v3 certificates). The keys **605** can be public keys and can be included in the identity information as recognition information for

the subject of the identity information. If a certificate is used, it may be self-signed or issued by a certificate authority.

The use policy **606** conveys the originator's instructions to the recipient about the uses to which the contents of the identity information may be put. For example, it may indicate that the contents of the identity information should not be divulged to others. The recognized identity information store will store the use policy along with the rest of the information defining the principal, and if a user attempts, for example, to copy a principal which is not intended to be shared, the system will display a warning to the user indicating the originator's intentions.

The digital signature **607** provides signing data within the identity information document. XML signatures have three ways of relating a signature to a document: enveloping, enveloped, and detached. According to one embodiment of the present invention, the identity information document use XML enveloped signatures when signing the identity information content.

The identity information document **600** can carry six attributes tags **608** including: 1) an identity information ID **609**; 2) a major version **610**; 3) a minor version **611**; 4) a subject type **612**; 5) an information type **613**; and 6) an issue instant **614**. Each of these attribute tags **608** will be discussed below.

The identity information ID **609** is an identifier for this identity information document. It provides an identifier with which the identity information document can be referenced from other parts of the document such as the signature.

The major version **610** is the major version number of this identity information document. The minor version **611** is the minor version number of this identity information document.

The subject type **612** is the type of principal that is the subject of this identity information document. There can be various types of principals such as person, computer, organization etc.

The information type **613** is the type of this identity information. For example, a "New" identity information can be imported into the recognized identity information store to create a new principal, or an "Update" identity information can be used to improve an existing principal with more recent changes.

The issue instant attribute **614** is the time instant, expressed in UTC, when the identity information was issued or generated. This time stamp on an update

identity information can be used to determine if the existing representation of the identity information's subject is out-of-date or newer.

Although the invention has been described in language specific to computer structural features, methodological acts and by computer readable media, it is to be understood that the invention defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to the specific structures, acts or media described. As an example, different formats other than XML may be used to encode identification information. Therefore, the specific structural features, acts and mediums are disclosed as exemplary embodiments implementing the claimed invention.

The various embodiments described above are provided by way of illustration only and should not be construed to limit the invention. Those skilled in the art will readily recognize various modifications and changes that may be made to the present invention without following the example embodiments and applications illustrated and described herein, and without departing from the true spirit and scope of the present invention, which is set forth in the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of sending an identity information document comprising:
selecting identity information from a self-identity information store for inclusion in the identity information document;
reading the selected identity information from a self-identity information store;
generating the identity information document to include the selected identity information and at least a first key, the identity information document signed using a second key associated with the first key in the identity information document; and
sending the identity information document to a recipient.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting identity information comprises selecting a subset of identity information from the self-identity information store based on user input from a Graphical User Interface (GUI).

3. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting identity information comprises selecting a predetermined subset of information from the self-identity information store.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein generating an identity information document comprises encoding the selected identification information in an eXtensible Mark-up Language (XML) document.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the selected identity information comprises identity claims of a principal originating the identity information document.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the selected identity information comprises use policies for defining uses to which the contents of the identity information may be put.

7. A method of receiving an identity information document comprising:

receiving a signed identity information document from an originator;

determining whether identity information in the identity information document is reliable; and

saving the identity information in a recognized identity information store if the identity information is determined to be reliable.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

responsive to determining that the identity information is not reliable, determining whether to verify the identity information;

responsive to determining to verify the identity information, retrieving an Identification Recognition Number (IRN) from the originator of the identity information document, determining whether the IRN is correct and, responsive to the IRN being correct, saving the identity information in the recognized identity information store.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein determining whether the identity information is reliable is based on a user input through a graphical user interface.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein determining whether to verify the identity information is based on a user input through a graphical user interface.

11. A system to send an identity information document comprising:

a processor;

a communication channel connected with the processor; and

a memory coupled with and readable by the processor, the memory containing a series of instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to select identity information from a self-identity information store for inclusion in the identity information document, read the selected identity information from a self-identity information store, generate the identity information document to include the selected identity information and at least a first key, the identity information document signed using a second

key paired with the first key; and send the identity information document to a recipient connected to the communication channel.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein selecting identity information comprises selecting a subset of identity information from the self-identity information store based on user input from a Graphical User Interface (GUI).

13. The system of claim 11, wherein selecting identity information comprises selecting a predetermined subset of information from the self-identity information store.

14. The system of claim 11, wherein generating an identity information document comprises encoding the selected identification information in an eXtensible Mark-up Language (XML) document.

15. The system of claim 11, wherein the selected identity information comprises identity claims of a principal originating the identity information document.

16. The system of claim 11, wherein the selected identity information comprises use policies for defining uses to which the contents of the identity information may be put.

17. A system to receive an identity information document from an originator for use in future recognition of the originator comprising:

a processor;

a communication channel connected with the processor; and

a memory coupled with and readable by the processor, the memory containing a series of instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to receive a signed identity information document from an originator, determine whether identity information in the identity information document is reliable, and save the identity information in a recognized identity information store if the identity

information is determined to be reliable, the recognized identity information store being used for future recognition of the originator.

18. The system of claim 17, further comprising:

responsive to determining that the identity information is not reliable, determining whether to verify the identity information;

responsive to determining to verify the identity information, receiving an Identification Recognition Number (IRN) from the initiator of the identity information document, determining whether the IRN is correct and, responsive to the IRN being correct, saving the identity information in the recognized identity information store.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein determining whether the identity information is reliable is based on a user input through a graphical user interface.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein determining whether to verify the identity information is based on a user input through a graphical user interface.

21. A computer readable medium encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process for identity recognition, said computer process comprising:

selecting identity information from a self-identity information store for inclusion in the identity information document;

reading the selected identity information from a self-identity information store;

generating the identity information document to include the selected identity information and at least a first key, the identity information document signed with a second key associated with the first key in the identity information document; and

sending the identity information document to a recipient.

22. The computer readable medium of claim 21, wherein selecting identity information comprises selecting a subset of identity information from the self-identity information store based on user input from a Graphical User Interface (GUI).

23. The computer readable medium of claim 21, wherein selecting identity information comprises selecting a predetermined subset of information from the self-identity information store.

24. The computer readable medium of claim 21, wherein generating an identity information document comprises encoding the selected identification information in an eXtensible Mark-up Language (XML) document.

25. The computer readable medium of claim 21, wherein the selected identity information comprises identity claims of a principal originating the identity information document.

26. The computer readable medium of claim 21, wherein the selected identity information comprises use policies for defining uses to which the contents of the identity information may be put.

27. The computer readable medium of claim 21, further comprising:
receiving a signed identity information document from an originator;
determining whether identity information in the identity information document is reliable; and
saving the identity information in a recognized identity information store if the identity information is determined to be reliable, the recognized identity information store for future recognition of the originator.

28. The computer readable medium of claim 27, further comprising:
responsive to determining that the identity information is not reliable, determining whether to verify the identity information;

responsive to determining to verify the identity information, retrieving a retrieved Identification Recognition Number (IRN) from the initiating system of the identity information document, generating a computed IRN at the receiving system based in information in the identity information document, comparing the retrieved IRN with the computed IRN to determine whether the computed IRN is verified and, responsive to the computed IRN being verified, saving the identity information in the recognized identity information store.

29. The computer readable medium of claim 28, wherein determining whether the identity information is reliable is based on a user input through a graphical user interface.

30. The computer readable medium of claim 28, wherein determining whether to verify the identity information is based on a user input through a graphical user interface.