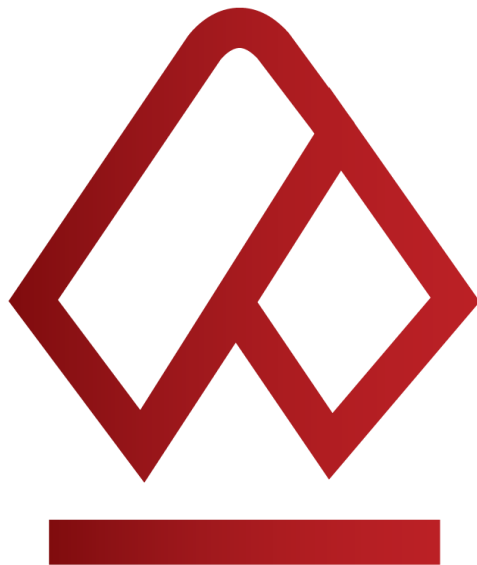


Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority



2022-2023 Accomplishments & Year-end Report

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Background.....	7
Accomplishments — Highlights from FY 2023	8
Program Statistics — Highlights from FY 2023	12
Conclusion.....	13
Information on www.gsccca.org	15
Website Statistics for FY 2023.....	15
Website Subscribers for FY 2023.....	16
Website Subscribers by Fiscal Year (bar graph)	16
Images Added to Website.....	16
FY 2023 Image Counts (table)	17
Images in GSCCCA Search System by Fiscal Year (bar graph).....	17
Website Reliability & Security.....	17
Financial Overview	19
FY 2022 Year-end Audit.....	19
Monthly Financial Information	19
Accounting Information	20
Notary & Authentications Division	21
Fines & Fees Division.....	24
UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) Project	27
Real Estate Projects	29
Real Estate Deed Project	29
Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project.....	31

County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project.....	31
Lien, Plat & Map Project.....	32
Historical Plat Image Project.....	32
Pending Lien Project	33
PT-61 Project.....	34
Electronic Filing (eFile) Projects	35
UCC eFile.....	35
Child Support eFile.....	35
Real Estate eFile	36
Other Projects.....	39
Premium Search Account	39
Clerks’ Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App).....	39
Protective Order Registry	40
Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System).....	40
eCertification Program	41
Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)	42
Carbon Sequestration Registry	44
Disaster Planning & Data Archive Initiatives	45
VaultTek Online Archive Program (formerly MyVault)	45
Number of Restore Requests by Fiscal Year (bar graph).....	48
Volume of Data Restored by Fiscal Year (bar graph)	48
VaultTek Mobile	49
Media Holdings Project	49
Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program	50
IT Department.....	53
Development Team	53
Website (www.gsccca.org).....	53
eFiling.....	54
eFile Registry.....	55
Filing Activity Notification System (FANS).....	56

Fines & Fees	56
Achieve (ACH).....	57
Protective Orders	57
Offender-Based Tracking System (OBTS).....	57
Other	57
Systems Team.....	58
Network Team	59
HelpDesk — Customer Support.....	60
HelpDesk Statistics.....	61
Top Requests for Help.....	61
Equipment & Software Outreach.....	62
Training Program	64
Online Courses	64
Webinars.....	66
In-Person Classes.....	66
Training for Other Constituencies	67
Outreach & Professional Development.....	68
Conclusion.....	70

Executive Summary

“Victory belongs to the most tenacious”

First attributed to Napoleon I, this quote was adopted by French aviation trailblazer and WWI war hero Roland Garros who made it his mantra by inscribing the words on his planes’ propellers. Garros developed the first single-seater fighter plane equipped with an on-board machine gun that fired through the propeller. It was revolutionary and shaped the future of air warfare.

Most, however, recognize Roland Garros’ name from the famed tennis center named in his honor that plays host to the French Open grand slam tennis tournament. If you follow tennis, you will have recently seen this inspirational quote — *Victory belongs to the most tenacious* — emblazoned on the centerpiece stadium during coverage of the 2023 tournament. Although not a tennis player, the stadium honors Roland Garros for his drive, intellect and courage ... qualities essential for victory in battle.

Whether through battles in a theatre of war or sports — or even under Gold Domes — these powerful words have been proven true throughout history and feel especially relevant as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the creation of the **Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority**. This paradigm-shifting event would not have been possible without the tenacious spirit of the Authority’s founders and Superior Court clerks who were willing to work together for the good of all clerks and the State of Georgia. As has been noted, many outsiders in the early 1990s did not believe it would be possible to get all 159 independently elected officials to agree on anything, much less using an unproven system like the one being proposed. But they underestimated the tenacity, courage, and unity of Superior Court clerks who simply refused to become the “dinosaurs of Georgia’s court system,” as many in the judiciary had projected. Galvanized by a common goal — and ultimately the ability to secure their future survival — they came together to fight for the Authority’s creation!

The quote — *Victory belongs to the most tenacious* — not only resonates with how the Authority came to be, but also captures the essence of the remarkable journey and numerous accomplishments that unfolded over the three decades that followed. Overcoming legislative battles, solving complex technological challenges, and navigating through economic uncertainty, the Authority was driven by a vision and commitment to continually improve services and develop and offer new ones for the benefit of Superior Court clerks and the citizens of Georgia. It didn’t come easy or without some out-of-the-box thinking, but that vision and commitment resulted in success after success ... developing the statewide real estate index, overseeing Georgia’s central database of notaries public, managing and bringing accountability to court fines and fees, leveraging technology to allow for the electronic filing of UCCs and real estate records, creating archival programs to store and protect clerks’ vital records ... and that commitment continues with the recent launch of the Authority’s Filing Activity Notification System to help protect Georgia citizens against house theft and other fraudulent activity! These successful projects — among

many more that will be mentioned throughout this report — exist today because of the collective vision, collaborative efforts, and fighting spirit of Superior Court clerks and Authority staff.

As described by long-time Authority consultant Gary Yates, who was part of the visionary clerk team that strategized and battled to create the Authority, it all comes down to a refusal to fail:

“Continuing to this day is the absolute determination by the clerks and Authority staff to successfully execute any project taken on. The number of projects implemented without a single failure is a tribute to the leadership and staff who work so hard on behalf of clerks and to the clerks themselves who make it all happen. The refusal to fail is what has made the clerks and Authority successful.”

Far from becoming a relic of the past as once predicted, clerks have fought to “make it all happen” since 1993 when they came together to create the Authority and, since, have revolutionized the office of Superior Court clerk by embracing technology and implementing project after project for the benefit of the court system and their constituents. Recognizing this as critical to the Authority’s success, GSCCCA Executive Director John Earle praised the clerks’ longstanding ability to adapt:

“Clerks are to be commended for their ongoing willingness to accept and embrace change in their daily office operations for the betterment of all including the citizens they serve. Realizing that change is not always easy, it’s impressive that 159 duly elected officials have continuously united around change.”

In addition to a forward-thinking, refuse-to-fail mindset that has been constant from the Authority’s founding, the importance of leveraging cutting-edge technology has, without a doubt, been essential to the success story. According to Authority IT Director Andy Wightwick:

“I think that a lot of the GSCCCA’s success over time has been driven by innovative people who could first identify and then apply emerging technologies to solve contemporary problems. The successful completion and operation of highly complex and technical projects helped the Authority become recognized as the de facto technology leader, and therefore a natural choice for guaranteeing success on future projects. The Authority has proven that it can anticipate, plan for, and ultimately accomplish even the most daunting technical task facing the clerks.”

The Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority was created by clerks, for clerks. It was born out of the recognition that a collaborative and unified effort was necessary to address the challenges faced by Superior Court clerks across the state. Today, as we close out another strong fiscal year, we celebrate this momentous anniversary and the remarkable journey in partnership with and service to Georgia’s Superior Court clerks. Our shared success is a testament to the power of unity, determination, innovation and what can be achieved when partners work together towards a shared goal and simply refuse to fail.

Background

From the beginning and rooted to its core, innovation, collaboration and vision have defined the Authority. Although the culture remains the same, the GSCCCA is a very different organization today than the one that opened its doors in 1995. Since its inception, the Authority has not only fulfilled its original purpose of establishing a statewide system for the indexing of UCC documents, but has successfully developed and implemented, at no cost to the state, a variety of other successful projects. Effective collaboration with other state agencies and numerous not-for-profit groups for the benefit of the State of Georgia and its citizens has become one of the hallmarks of the Authority's success and why it is respected both locally and nationally for its progressive, innovative and effective approach to problem solving.

For nearly three decades, the Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena and has led the State of Georgia to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has taken abstract ideas — often thought impossible — to the concrete world of implementation, and, in so doing, has changed the way many do business and made life easier for those accessing real estate records, financing statements, criminal case data, and other court documents.

Today the Clerks' Authority is a diverse entity that oversees the following:

- Notary & Authentications Division
- Fines & Fees Division
- UCC Project
- Real Estate Deed Project
- Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project
- County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project
- Lien, Plat & Map Project
- Historical Plat Image Project
- Pending Lien Project
- PT-61 Project
- UCC eFile
- Real Estate eFile
- Premium Search Account
- Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (mobile app)
- Protective Order Registry
- Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- eCertification Program
- Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)
- Carbon Sequestration Registry
- VaultTek Online Archive Program (formerly MyVault)

- VaultTek Mobile
- Media Holdings Project
- Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program
- Statewide Computer Replacement Project

In successfully developing and implementing these projects, the Authority helped modernize Superior Court clerk offices and created several one-of-a-kind systems that integrated and standardized information from each of Georgia's 159 counties on a central website, www.gsccca.org. The Authority databases provide accountability, uniformity, efficiencies and cost-savings by affording:

- Unprecedented access to valuable information — free access through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- Approximately \$119 million in additional funding and 32,000 pieces of new equipment for clerks' offices since the Authority's inception.
- Information that allows lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.

Governed by a board of ten members whose meetings are open to the public, the GSCCCA was created, implemented, and continues to operate without receiving any funds through local, state, or federal taxes. The Authority has been continually praised for its wise use of available resources, and has proven to be a resounding success for offering unique services to Georgia counties and citizens.

Accomplishments – Highlights from FY 2023

Following are some of the highlights or major accomplishments from the past fiscal year:

- Compensated clerks' offices nearly \$5.5 million for prints off the Authority website and nearly \$767,000 for deed images, resulting in over **\$6.2 million in additional funding** for Georgia's Superior Court clerks' offices this fiscal year.
- Developed and launched **Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)** in January with the goal of providing Georgia citizens with a powerful tool in the fight against house theft and other potentially fraudulent activity. Provided as a free, voluntary and consumer-friendly service, FANS notifies property owners anytime filings are made related to their registered property, as well as notifies of filing activity related to UCCs (personal property), liens and plat filings. For years, the Authority has studied the issue of house theft in an effort to assist Superior Court clerks in supporting and protecting their constituents. While this system cannot prevent fraudulent documents from being filed, it can be used to send timely notifications to citizens upon the filing of a document that matches criteria which they define. To opt in, citizens must simply register at <https://fans.gsccca.org/> with an email address or telephone number. After submitting a name, the

user will receive an email and/or text notification whenever a filing related to that name is filed in the selected records. Individuals may also create notifications for an address and/or a document type. As of July 1, 8,584 people have registered on the FANS website to receive notifications and 9,126 alerts have been sent.

- Launched **new and improved CourtTRAX website** after completing the two-year project to streamline the fines and fees process. New features of the site include the ability for courts to remit Fines & Fees reports (Consolidated Monthly Remittance and Monthly Disbursement) and payment via ACH; the ability to remit Trust Fund Interest reports and payment via ACH; an updated Online Calculator; and user management of ACH account information. With an updated look and enhanced ease-of-use, the fully overhauled site continues to provide access to legal advice, legislative data, reports, forms, and more. Vendor integration is also an option for submitting required Fines & Fees reports. CourtTRAX continues to be a critical resource in providing accountability and uniformity to the reporting of fines and fees.
- Completed the **Historical Plat Image Project** making all historical plat images available for viewing on the Authority's search system. One of several priority initiatives identified by the Authority Board, the project included images of plats filed on or before December 31, 2003 in all counties statewide, with a \$3 allowance for counties per plat image. Sixty-five clerks were identified with plats to be imaged, adding 354,000 additional plat images to the system at a cost of over \$1.2 million paid by the Authority. Compensation agreements were sent to 116 clerks, covering approximately 900,000 images equaling almost \$2.7 million as a direct cash benefit to clerks' offices and counties.
- Advanced the **1989-1987 Historical Deed Project** in an effort to add additional deed records to the Authority's publicly searchable website and ultimately move the statewide "good-from" date further back. As with previous historical initiatives, the project is complex as the Authority requires the complete re-indexing of these older land records in conformance with current Indexing Standards to create a cohesive record with current data in the system. The 1989 segment of the project is well underway and the 1988-1987 segment commenced on July 1, 2023. The entire project has an anticipated completion date of June 30, 2025. The Authority has already provided for compensation to those clerks of Superior Court who have previously completed their 1989 deed instruments voluntarily and will further compensate those who have voluntarily completed 1988 and 1987 deed instruments.
- Advanced the **Statewide Network Upgrade Initiative**. Bandwidth needs in counties have increased with the rise of remote work and digital documentation handling. Recognizing this need, the Authority launched this initiative last spring to ensure continued support and security updates for network equipment and to prepare counties for bandwidth upgrades. After initial planning and obtaining quotes, the Authority began the process of upgrading existing equipment in all Superior Court clerk offices. Since September, Authority IT staff has traveled thousands of miles across

Georgia completing upgrades in 76 counties. To coincide with this effort, the Authority is moving to consolidate internet service providers (ISPs) to just 3 in order to ease management of the 161 circuits across the state. Additionally, staff is actively researching multiple options from leading hardware providers for upgraded networking equipment. Once the project is complete, with upgraded equipment installed and bandwidth upgrades in effect, clerks should see improved internet speeds and support staff will be able to more easily manage the statewide network.

- Launched a statewide roll-out of the **Pending Lien Project**. This initiative was designed to assist clerks' offices with the resolution and removal of Department of Revenue (DOR) liens dating back to 1,000 days or older. Involving 46 counties with 3,072 pending liens in total, the Authority worked directly with each respective clerk's office, training them on the pending lien search, providing support to research and identify the issue, and offering next steps for resolution. At present, 43 of 46 counties have completed the project. The remaining three counties are working with their vendors to resolve their pending liens. Over 2,700 liens have been corrected and removed from the Pending Search Aging Report, resulting in a 91% completion rate.
- Entered testing phase for **eFile System Certification**. The program was initiated last year to create a formal process for certifying vendor eFile systems utilized by clerks for deeds, liens, and plats for integrating with the GSCCCA eFile Portal. The Authority finalized the eFile System Certification program document, providing all documentation and instructions to vendors in September, and then completed development of system certification tests. The Authority's eAssist program was the first to complete the eFile System Certification review. Vendor system testing is currently underway and is expected to be completed this summer.
- Began development of **two new eLearn courses** to offer clerks and their staffs additional online training opportunities. The courses include "eCertification Portal," which is expected to launch by the end of the year, and "UCC eFile," which will hopefully launch in 2024. The Authority currently offers eight online training courses through its eLearn platform, and during FY 2023, nearly 36,000 people took advantage of this convenient training.
- Continued to grow **Real Estate eFile** with a 26% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. Since the launch of Real Estate eFile in 2011, nearly 6.9 million real estate documents have been electronically recorded with the vast majority of those in the last six years. In FY 2023, over 1.4 million real estate documents were electronically recorded through <https://efile.gsccca.org>, with almost 54% of those using the Authority's eFile API for submission. As of July 1, 2023, all 159 Georgia counties will be activated to accept all document types for electronic filing.
- Continued to grow **UCC eFile** with a 17% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. Nearly 260,000 UCCs were eFiled in FY 2023, and of all UCC documents accepted statewide, over 92% were filed electronically. Since the pilot project began in May 2009, over 1.7 million UCCs have been electronically filed. At present, 151 counties participate in the program, with 122 of those counties

mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. Just three years ago, only 43 counties mandated UCC eFiling, yet today 77% of Georgia counties only allow the electronic filing of UCC documents.

- Continued to promote and grow **eCertification Program**, an electronic certified document request and delivery system which allows the public to request and pay for certified documents electronically. Clerks' offices process the requests and deliver the certified documents to the user electronically. Payments are processed through the Authority and included in the Daily County Disbursement reports. Since statewide roll-out of the program began in January 2022, participation has increased rapidly. During FY 2023, 42 more counties began offering eCertification. At present, 79 counties are actively participating in the eCert Program; 12 counties are in the training and testing phase; and nearly 44,000 total requests have been submitted through the Authority's eCertification portal since the program launched.
- Restored 38 GBs of data back to county systems in response to 11 requests from clerks through the **VaultTek Online Archive Program**. Protecting the digital records of Georgia's Superior Court clerks since 2007, VaultTek is currently storing and protecting over 1.3 billion files totaling more than 283 TBs of live data, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. Since its inception, VaultTek has responded to 218 data loss requests and has restored over 4.4 TBs of data back to county systems. Usage of the program's mobile app, **VaultTek Mobile**, continues to grow as it provides convenient access to records stored through VaultTek allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand.
- Restored over 150,475 deed and lien images back to 5 clerk offices through the **Virtual Microfilm Program**. Through the VMF system, all deeds, liens and plats ever received by the Authority are directly available to clerks without the clerk having to make a records request or having to search the GSCCCA search system. The VMF image archive program not only provides an alternative to the traditional microfilm process, but provides clerks with easier access to their archived digital records and further protects them consistent with the law. Today, the system stores over 308 million images, across 536,465 books, totaling nearly 14.4 TBs of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the online portal.
- Added more than 500,000 additional instruments to www.gsccca.org through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project** for a total of over 5 million instruments in production since the program was implemented in 2013. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks' offices have access to additional resources through print image fees initiated through the Authority's website. During FY 2023, 6 additional counties began participating in the project for a total of 90 counties in the voluntary program.
- Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the **Fines & Fees Division**.

Program Statistics — Highlights from FY 2023

In addition to the many enhancements and new features that were added over the last twelve months, the Authority continued to successfully manage its many existing programs. While numbers don't tell the full story, the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority and its importance to Superior Court clerk offices and other constituencies across the state and beyond.

Following are some of the highlights from the past fiscal year:

- Added **13.6 million** images to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **332 million** images accessible to the public through www.gsccca.org.
- Hosted nearly **2.2 million** unique visitors — 29% more than previous fiscal year — with **581 million** page views on www.gsccca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet **7.5 million times** from **221 countries** this past fiscal year.
- Ordered, processed and shipped **over 700 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. The Authority purchased nearly **\$430,000** of equipment for counties during FY 2023 to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties. The Authority has provided approximately **32,000 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.
- Provided training for nearly **39,000 people** through a combination of **8 online classes** and **176 training sessions** which were offered on a variety of topics using various formats including in-person classes, webinars, one-on-one sessions, and conference presentations.
- Indexed and added to the database nearly **264,000 UCCs** and conducted almost **9,700 Certified Searches**. From the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed nearly **7.5 million** UCCs — an average of 22,000 per month — and conducted over **302,000** Certified Searches.
- Increased participation in **Notary Online** by adding two new counties for a total of **152 counties** currently participating in the program. In FY 2023, **98%** of notary applications in Georgia were submitted electronically via the Authority's Notary Online application system.
- Continued to maintain the statewide notary database. A statewide total of **49,428 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.
- Processed over **18,000 apostille/authentication requests** with nearly **45,000 apostilles** issued, 26% more than the previous fiscal year.
- Collected and disbursed **\$80.1 million** in court fees and processed nearly **34,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Added over **83.9 million files** totaling more than **50 TBs of data** to the VaultTek remote servers for a fiscal year-end total of over **1.3 billion files** stored and protected in the online vault. The Authority upgraded archive appliances in **41** counties during FY 2023.

- Imported over **8.2 million** new deed images and over **1 million** new lien images into the VMF system for a fiscal year-end total of over **308 million images** totaling nearly **14.4 TBs** of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the VMF web interface.
- Electronically transmitted to GCIC over **273,000 records of criminal court dispositions** from various courts in Georgia for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- Electronically transmitted to GCIC nearly **53,000 Protective Orders** that were indexed by clerks.

Conclusion

With considerable challenges and significant triumphs along the way, 30 years have passed since the Authority was created. This significant milestone is one to celebrate but should also serve as an important reminder of what it took to get here. The spirit of the saying — *Victory belongs to the tenacious* — should not only resonate with our successful past but should also represent our future ... a future that continues to be defined by a tenacious and innovative spirit that is constantly striving for improvement and seeking creative solutions to new challenges ... a mindset that doesn't settle for the status quo but instead continues to push boundaries to optimize operations and services ... and a culture that continues to adapt to changing needs and embrace new opportunities.

In his comments on the Authority's creation, Gary Yates also provided his thoughts on ensuring success into the future:

“Moving forward, my advice is to continue to generate solutions by embracing frustration, engage the right people, refuse to fail, and remain vigilant. The clerks must work diligently to remain united for the common good. This is essential to protect the ongoing success for clerks. Do not allow interference to cause fractures that distract and weaken. With a united clerk body, the clerks and the Clerks' Authority will have a promising future.”

As the Authority closes another successful year, in continued partnership with and service to Georgia's Superior Court clerks, we must heed this advice. The success we celebrate today was made possible by the efforts of clerks nearly three decades ago and their understanding that moving forward together was their only means to success. The continuing support of today's Superior Court clerks empowers the important work of the Authority and has allowed for the numerous accomplishments of the past fiscal year detailed throughout this report.

With the same resolute commitment that our founders shared, the Authority remains focused on the overarching mission of supporting Georgia's Superior Court clerks, anticipating their changing needs and priorities, and advancing their resources and value by using technology to accelerate the scope and scale

of innovation. As we have for three decades, we will move forward together committed to building on our progress to date, and if victory does indeed belong to the most tenacious, then our future should be as bright as our past.

The following pages provide an overview of the Authority and its numerous projects, and a more detailed review of the many accomplishments of the past fiscal year.



Information on www.gscca.org

The Authority's website, www.gscca.org, allows centralized, online searches of data from Georgia's 159 counties giving the public unprecedented access to valuable information including UCC financing statements, real estate deeds, liens, plats, maps, PT-61s, and more. Free access to this information is available during regular business hours through public search terminals installed in each county's Superior Court clerk office. Convenient internet access is also available, by subscription, and provides users with 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.

The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet over 7.5 million times from 221 countries in FY 2023. Information that previously required in-person visits to county courthouses to retrieve can now be gained from the convenience of one's home or office through the Authority's website saving Georgia citizens and businesses an unquantifiable amount of time and money every year.

Website Statistics for FY 2023

- Images added to the GSCCCA search system: 13.6 million
- Total images in the GSCCCA search system: 332 million
- Sessions: 7.5 million (10% more than previous year)
- Unique visitors: 2.2 million (29% more than previous year)
- Data transferred/bandwidth: 18.76 TBs
- Page views: 581 million
- Average page views per visit: 21
- Average visit duration: 10:39 minutes
- Number of countries that visited: 221
- Top 4 countries: U.S., Canada, India, and the Philippines
- 70% of all visitors used Chrome; 17.5% used Safari; over 8% used Edge; nearly 3% used Firefox; and .5% used Internet Explorer
- 22% of users accessed website using a mobile device
- 71% of mobile users used iOS and 29% used Android

The Authority understands the importance of its data and prioritizes making its website accessible and organized. With the volume and diversity of information contained in the website and the variety of audiences that it serves, the Authority wants to ensure that each visitor is provided a user-centric experience that is tailored to his or her needs — whether the visitor is a Superior Court clerk, a real estate professional, a notary public, or a property lawyer.

As web users evolve and their needs and devices change, it is more important than ever for online services to grow and expand their online presence. And with nearly 2.2 million annual, distinct visitors to www.gscca.org, the Authority believes that it is critical for its site to be clear, responsive and easy-to-use, and will continue to look at ways to improve the user experience.

Website Subscribers for FY 2023

- Total (Regular + Premium Search) monthly subscribers as of 6/30/23: 21,740
 - Regular monthly subscribers as of 6/30/23: 14,498
 - Premium Search monthly subscribers as of 6/30/23: 7,242
 - Percentage increase in Premium Search accounts for FY 2023: 2%
- Single-use subscribers added during fiscal year: 36,520



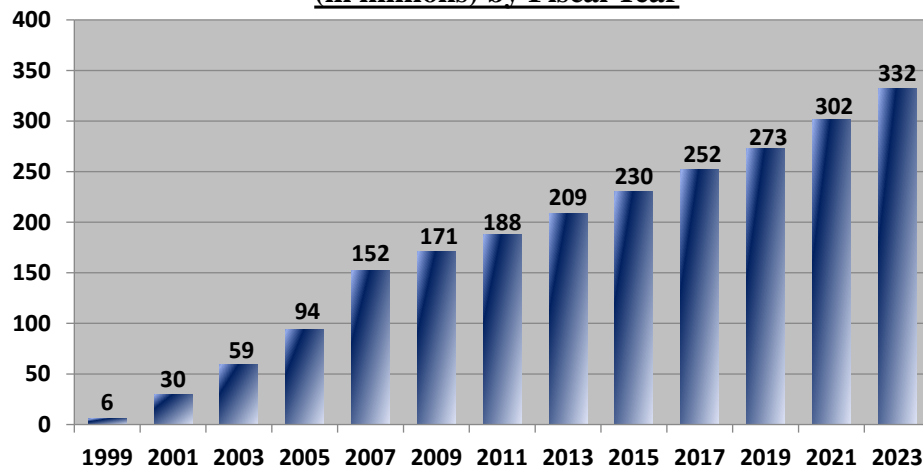
Since 1999, website subscriptions have increased dramatically, clear evidence of the Authority’s growth and the growing value of its statewide indexes. Beyond the numbers, though, the Authority gauges its success and relevance on the response and feedback from its customers and how integral the Authority’s website and databases have become to their businesses.

Images Added to Website

Each year, millions of images are added to www.gsccca.org making it an even more valuable resource to its users. During FY 2023, over **13.6 million** images were added to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **332 million images**. See the following chart and bar graph for more details.

	Images Added in FY 2023	Total Images FYE 6/30/23
Deeds	11,163,070	285,847,398
Liens	1,317,957	25,925,359
Plats	335,282	2,012,874
PT-61s	428,551	8,406,751
UCCs	359,180	9,980,223
Total	13,604,040	332,172,605

**Images in GSCCCA Search System
(in millions) by Fiscal Year**



Website Reliability & Security

The Authority places a high priority on providing its subscribers reliable, 24/7 service. Soon after opening, it was realized that any web-based reporting system had points where system failures could occur. In response, the Authority began distributing thousands of PCs, scanners and other equipment to Georgia’s 159 counties — approximately **32,000 pieces of new equipment** since 1995 — to ensure the quality of their equipment. The Authority systematically upgraded its network service and main data center, and continually takes preventive action to avoid service interruptions. Despite growth of 200 subscribers and 6 million images in 1999 to nearly **22,000 subscribers** and over **332 million images** today, the Authority has virtually eliminated downtime. Whether a user searches the records on Wednesday at noon or Saturday at midnight, the Authority’s database servers provide the search results in seconds.

The Authority is committed to the preservation of the data with which it has been entrusted and the public's access to it. To this end, the Authority established a fully redundant remote data center and brought it online in 2009. As a result, the public will be able to search the Authority's databases through www.gscca.org without interruption, even if the Authority's primary data center is destroyed in a disaster. In fact, the Authority routinely operates from its remote data center during scheduled maintenance in order to prevent users from experiencing downtime during necessary maintenance.

As important, the Authority takes the security of its websites very seriously and constantly evaluates its practices against current standards and industry best practices. As an example, the Authority conducts quarterly, independent security audits, the results of which are critical to maintaining its PCI (payment card industry) compliance — adherence to a set of specific security standards that were developed to protect card information during and after a financial transaction. If an issue is identified, the IT staff takes appropriate actions to resolve it immediately.

The Authority values its customers and recognizes that their input serves to make our systems cleaner and better. For example, the Authority added an image reporting function to the image viewers so customers can quickly and easily report issues with any image on the site. Whether it's suggesting an additional feature to a particular program or reporting a problem with an image, customer feedback — good or bad — is encouraged and valued. The Authority enhances its programs and upgrades its systems regularly, and proudly incorporates customer feedback and suggestions.

Financial Overview

The Authority receives no appropriated funds from the legislature of the State of Georgia. Its primary source of funding is through the real estate deed fee and the UCC filing fee. The Authority receives a \$5 fee for every deed filed and a \$12 fee for every UCC filed with a Superior Court clerk. The real estate deed fees and UCC fees, along with subscription fees for access to the Authority's statewide indexes, provide the majority of the funding to operate many of the Authority's programs.

Despite the decline in the economic environment nationally over the past 12 months, the financial condition of the Authority remained strong throughout FY 2023. The Authority is well positioned to meet its upcoming FY 2024 budgeted obligations and continues to aggressively manage project and administrative costs.

FY 2022 Year-end Audit Completed by Mauldin & Jenkins

- Received an unqualified "clean" opinion from Mauldin & Jenkins for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022 audit.
- No audit adjustments were proposed by the auditors.
- Coordinated all requests with auditors from Mauldin & Jenkins and Georgia Department of Audits.

Monthly Financial Information

- Provided accurate and timely monthly financial statements, along with an executive summary, to the Authority's executive director and board members helping facilitate informed decisions.
- Managed the financial transactions relating to GSCCCA Image Agreements and provided monthly statements to clerks. During FY 2023, the Authority compensated Superior Court clerk offices almost **\$5.5 million** for print monies generated and over **\$760,000** for deed images transmitted to the Authority by clerks' offices.
- Provided quarterly financial reviews at all board meetings.
- Completed monthly reconciliations and review of all general ledger accounts to ensure proper recording of financial data included in the monthly financial statements.
- Updated fixed asset database monthly for all asset additions and dispositions.
- Aggressively managed GSCCCA subscriber accounts to help boost a collection rate of 98%.
- Sent monthly past-due collection letters to help reduce the amount of bad debt write-offs.
- Ensured timely deactivation of past-due accounts to help reduce the charges incurred by delinquent subscribers.

Accounting Information

- Total active subscriber accounts as of June 30, 2023: **21,740**
 - Regular subscriber accounts: **14,498**
 - Premium Search subscriber accounts: **7,242**

- Average monthly direct access subscription revenue during FY 2023: **\$348,034**
- Single-use subscription revenue during FY 2023: **\$182,600**
- Number of monthly check payments processed during FY 2023: **10,102**
- Purchased **\$429,185** of equipment for counties during FY 2023 as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project.

- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for deed images:
 - During FY 2023: **\$766,968**
 - Since inception of project: **\$23.7 million**

- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website:
 - During FY 2023: **\$5,480,504**
 - Since inception of project: **\$95.3 million**

- FY 2023 break-down for print compensation:
 - Deeds: \$4,747,246
 - Liens: \$209,684
 - Plats: \$380,726
 - PT-61s: \$44,941
 - UCCs: \$97,907

Notary & Authentications Division

In 1997, the Authority was asked by the Georgia Secretary of State to begin maintaining the central database of notaries public. This project contains the following elements:

- Maintenance of a central database of all active notaries public (6/30/23 total: 195,381).
- Issuance of apostilles and notary certifications. (An apostille is an international certification of a public document for use in another Hague Convention country.)

In 2004, the Authority developed Notary Online with three goals:

- To make the processing of notary applications more efficient in clerks' offices,
- To allow counties immediate access to their notary filings and images, and
- To simplify the notary application process for the public.

Through the Authority website, the public has free access to search Georgia's notary database. An individual desiring to be a notary public in the State of Georgia can obtain an application from the clerk of Superior Court of the county in which he/she resides. 152 Georgia counties (96%) participate in Notary Online, providing web-based, notary applications using software developed by the Authority.

In addition to its responsibility for maintaining Georgia's notary database and supporting clerks in their notarial duties, the Authority also serves a vital role in international commerce by issuing apostilles, and was recognized in 1998 by the U.S. State Department as the only agency, outside of a Secretary of State office, to provide this critical service. The Apostille Treaty is an international treaty (of which the U.S. is a signatory member) that provides for a simplified method of authenticating documents for use in other countries. It certifies the origin (i.e. country) of the public document by authenticating the signature and seal of the issuing public official. Approximately 4 million apostilles are issued worldwide on an annual basis. The number of countries participating in the Apostille Treaty is currently 123 with three countries — Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Senegal — joining over the past fiscal year.

During FY 2023, the Authority issued 44,900 apostilles destined for 108 different countries and 10 foreign territories. These documents originated in 143 different Georgia counties. Types of documents include:

- Corporate documents such as company bylaws and articles of incorporation
- Powers of attorney
- Marriage certificates
- Birth certificates
- Diplomas
- Transcripts
- Letters relating to degrees, references and job certifications
- Home studies
- Deeds of assignments
- Distributorship agreements
- Papers for international adoption purposes

In addition to a mail-in option, the Authority allows Georgia citizens to visit the Authority office to resolve their apostille and authentication needs in person with the help of its customer-focused staff. Through this option, Authority staff services approximately 10,000 walk-in customers per year. Following the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, however, the Authority was forced to temporarily suspend its walk-in service. To fill this void, the Authority quickly established a drop box service to continue meeting the needs of the general public. This service allows people (or couriers) to place their documents in a drop box located just outside the Authority's suite. Authentications staff then processes and mails the documents back, often with a turn-around time of only one day. Even after the Authority re-opened its office to the public, the drop box service remains a convenient option for Georgia citizens to drop off their apostille and authentication requests during non-business hours.

The Authority's Notary & Authentications Division had a busy and productive year with the following highlights for FY 2023:

- Maintained the statewide notary database. A statewide total of **49,428 notary commissions** was issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database. 98% of these notary commissions were processed through the Authority's web-based system, Notary Online.
- Continued promoting and improving **Notary Online**. Participation in the program, which was developed in 2004, increased to **152 counties** with 2 of those counties joining this fiscal year. The Authority provides one-on-one training for new counties.
- Continued to improve **Notary Tools application** in order to empower administrators with even more control to correct issues with notary applications and appointments.
- Assisted counties with training on the Authority's **Notary Online Mail-In Renewal (MIR)** program. This program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail in their renewal application and pay with a credit card, eliminating the need for a trip to the clerk's office. Currently, **50 counties** have been trained and participate in the MIR program, with one of those counties joining the program this past fiscal year.
- Continued offering the **Notary Renewal Notification** service. Started in 2010, the Authority sends email notification to all notaries with an email address on file 30 days prior to their commission expiring. The service has since been enhanced to allow clerks to customize the email sent to their constituents by including county-specific language with special instructions or requirements on how to renew their notary commission.
- Sold **2,465 Notary Handbooks**. The handbook includes forms and definitions and is an excellent reference for Georgia notary law, notary procedures and best practices. It was created in 1999 in conjunction with the American Society of Notaries. In addition to direct sales, the Authority continues to provide notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices with the goal of providing point-of-sale education materials to Georgia's notaries.
- Supported clerks in managing their notarial duties by offering two online training courses:
 - **Notary Online** – Designed for both new and existing Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks, the class covers submitting, processing and deleting applications; processing name and address changes; editing unscanned commissions; setting preferences; and reviewing notary files, forms, reports and Certificates of Authority.
 - **Notary Online – Mail-in Renewals** – Designed to help clerks remotely train their staff to participate in the MIR program. The program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail in their renewal application and pay with a credit card, thus foregoing

a trip to the clerk's office, a feature that became important when clerks' offices were forced to close during the pandemic.

- Provided training to the general public, free-of-charge, on the role and responsibilities of a notary public:
 - Continued to offer online course: **Notary Public Training**. During the past fiscal year, over 29,500 Georgians took advantage of the Authority's online class and, of those participants, over 22,000 took the Notary Public Final Exam with 96% passing the test. Some Superior Court clerks now require constituents to pass this exam to receive their notary commissions.
 - Conducted **16 Notary Public Training sessions** (12 webinars and 4 in-person classes) hosted by Superior Court clerks. Nearly 2,300 Georgians took advantage of this free training during FY 2023.
- Processed **18,181 apostille and authentication requests/orders**, with 55% of requests arriving in person, and 45% of requests submitted through the mail.
- Issued **44,900 apostilles** destined for 108 different countries and 10 foreign territories. These documents originated in 143 different Georgia counties. The most popular destination country for apostilles was South Korea, with Mexico, Colombia, Turkey, and the Russian Federation rounding out the top five. The number of apostilles issued rose 26% for FY 2023 when compared to FY 2022. The surge in requests is partially attributable to Turkish citizens seeking to regain their connection with Turkey because of forced migration by the Soviet Union in World War II through the 1950s.
- Issued **136 certificates of authority**, primarily for use in Puerto Rico.
- Handled nearly **10,000 phone calls**, with an average of **40 calls per day** answered to resolution.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual sessions on the **e-Apostille process** for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA).

As evidenced by these statistics, the Notary & Authentications staff handles a tremendous workload, but more importantly, they provide professional, efficient and helpful service to each and every one of their customers. Their outstanding work is critical to the continued success of the Authority, and is utilized and appreciated by thousands of people each year.

Fines & Fees Division

Legislation was passed in 2004 which established a new funding mechanism for indigent defense. The Authority was mandated to collect, account for, and disburse to the state treasury and/or beneficiary funds the new and existing fees being collected. Additionally, the Authority was mandated to develop data on the collection and disbursement of all court fees being collected by approximately 1,100 courts throughout the state. Court fines and fees had been added incrementally over many years and little accountability or standards for their collection existed.

To fulfill its new obligations, the Authority established a new division to handle the mandates of the legislation and promulgated rules and regulations to enable the collection of new and existing fees. Information now provided by the Authority's Fines & Fees Division allows policy makers to make more informed decisions as they formulate future legislation.

Since being entrusted to oversee court fines and fees, the Authority:

- Developed and maintains a website, www.courttrax.org, to support court compliance with the law.
- Created and maintains uniform reports.
- Created and maintains an online calculator to help courts properly calculate and assess fines and fees.
- Developed and maintains internal accounting systems to support the indexing and processing of these fees to ensure that collection data can be timely and accurately made available to the public.
- Provides ongoing training of court personnel.
- Issues guidance to all parties affected.

CourtTRAX was developed and launched in 2004 to support court compliance with the law and to provide accountability and uniformity to the reporting of fines and fees. Since that time, the rules and regulations have evolved as legislation each year has made changes to court compliance resulting in a piecemeal approach to the application of many CourtTRAX features. In an effort to streamline the fines and fees process, the Authority launched a **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project** two years ago to fully overhaul www.courttrax.org. The goal of the project was to produce a cohesive site that allows for future changes and enhancements, in addition to updating the programming language to a current platform that can be more easily supported both today and long-term.

After two years of extensive planning and programming, the Authority proudly launched its new and improved Fines & Fees website, www.CourtTRAX.org, on September 1, 2022. New features of the site include:

- the ability for courts to remit Fines & Fees reports (Consolidated Monthly Remittance and Monthly Disbursement) and payment via ACH;
- the ability to remit Trust Fund Interest reports and payment via ACH;
- an updated Online Calculator; and
- user management of ACH account information.

These new options eliminate the need for checks or manually printed forms, as form submissions are now visible on a user's dashboard and are available in the submission history page.

With an updated look and enhanced ease-of-use, the fully overhauled site continues to provide access to legal advice, legislative data, reports, forms, and more. Vendor integration is also an option for submitting required Fines & Fees reports. When the site launched, a courtesy notification was submitted to vendors regarding the Authority's API-based site with a link to the documentation needed to start integrating. Additionally, the Authority offered multiple webinars to review the changes, highlight new features, and detail court requirements to utilize the features.

The CourtTRAX site has been and continues to be a critical resource in supporting court compliance with the law, but the Authority recognized early on the need for educating court personnel on the many facets of the fines and fees system. With the goal of providing convenient and accessible training for all, the Authority developed and began offering an online course, now titled ***GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction***, in 2006 to help educate court personnel, private probation companies, clerks and their staff on the reporting of fines and fees and how to comply with the law. Updated to include legislative changes, the Authority's online course enables the different courts and others with an interest in the court fee system to train their personnel at a time of their choosing and save travel costs. The flexibility and accessibility of this online training was especially important over the last couple years with the challenges of in-person training resulting from the pandemic. In addition to the online course, the Authority also offers in-person classes and webinars, and partners with other groups to provide training.

In FY 2023, the Authority's Fines & Fees Division accomplished the following:

- Completed **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project** with the launch of a new www.courttrax.org on September 1, 2022. The site was completely overhauled to streamline and modernize the fines and fees process.
- Collected and disbursed **\$80.1 million** in court fees. This total is about \$3 million above last year's total collections, in spite of the repeal of the Driver Education and Training Fund, and getting closer to the pre-pandemic levels as courts continue processing a backlog of cases.
- Maintained a **compliance rate of close to 100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification system.
- Processed almost **34,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Continued to refine procedures to further ensure the accuracy of the indexed data in the Fines & Fees database.
- Continued to hold operational costs at or under the statutory limit of \$500,000 for 19th year in a row.
- Submitted monthly Fines & Fees results to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) fulfilling statutory reporting requirements for Local Victim Assistance Program funds. Automated monthly reporting provides the CJCC with additional requested data in CSV format for importing into their records. This past fiscal year, the Authority modified the email submission to meet CJCC's needs allowing them to auto-import the data into their system for their purposes.
- Communicated quarterly Fines & Fees results with external groups including the Legislative Budget Office, the Senate Budget Office, the Georgia Supreme Court, the Governor's Office, and the Georgia Public Defenders Council.
- Updated www.courttrax.org, contact information, documents, training materials, forms, rules and regulations, legal advice, the online calculator, and vendor programs to reflect current legislation.

- Published updated Consolidated Monthly Remittance Reports for all courts to www.courttrax.org. The new forms have an effective date of July 1, 2023 and were necessitated by the passage of HB 242 during the 2023 legislative session. The bill re-establishes the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF) and requires that a 3% surcharge be added to all applicable traffic offenses with an offense date on or after July 1, 2023.
- Fielded questions related to new legislation, HB 242, affecting Fines & Fees.
- Provided support to probation companies and other entities affiliated with the courts for the purpose of collecting and disbursing fines and fees.
- Educated court personnel, private probation companies, clerks and their staff on the reporting of fines and fees and how to comply with the law:
 - Continued to offer online training course: *GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction*. This training is available to all court personnel and vendors. This past fiscal year, 233 people took advantage of this free training.
 - Conducted 4 in-person classes and multiple webinars to educate court personnel on the many aspects of the Fines & Fees system.
 - Partnered with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at the University of Georgia to offer 2 Fines & Fees classes for new Municipal Court clerks.
 - Offered in-person training and information on the new Fines & Fees website at the 2022 COAG Fall Conference in Savannah, the 2022 Clerks’ Planning Meeting at Brasstown Valley, the 2023 Clerks’ Winter Training in Atlanta, the 2023 Clerks’ Spring Conference at St. Simons, and the 2023 COAG Summer Conference at Jekyll Island.
- Hired and trained additional staff members to support the Fines & Fees Division.

Through its efforts to provide accountability and uniformity to the collection of court fees, the Authority continues its leadership in providing timely and accurate court fee information to the public.

UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) Project

With the passage of legislation in 1993, the State of Georgia established a statewide system for the indexing of Uniform Commercial Code documents. When the Authority began operation on January 1, 1995, Georgia became the first state in the nation to privatize this traditional state function by outsourcing the indexing of the instruments to a third-party vendor.

A UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) Financing Statement is recorded to provide public notice that personal properties have outstanding liens against them. Under the Authority's system, a secured party need only file in one county to receive statewide notification of their lien position. When a filing is presented to a local clerk of Superior Court, the clerk has 24 hours in which to transmit the UCC document to the Authority, and the Authority then has 24 hours in which to add the filing to the statewide index. Before 1995, it was necessary to file in all 159 Georgia counties to receive statewide notification. The Authority's central index provides secured parties with greater protection while saving them both time and money.

In an effort to stay at the forefront of technology and meet the evolving needs of users, the Authority successfully launched its **UCC eFile** site to the public in 2010 and began accepting UCC documents for electronic filing. Since the pilot project began in May 2009, over **1.7 million UCCs** have been electronically filed. The program continues to expand with a 17% total lifetime increase this fiscal year and nearly **260,000** UCC documents electronically filed. At present, **151** counties participate in the program, with **122** of those counties mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. Just three years ago, only 43 counties mandated UCC eFiling, yet today **77%** of Georgia counties only allow UCCs to be electronically filed.

For the counties who mandate UCC eFiling, a new feature, **UCC auto-numbering**, was added in 2019 which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number. This allows a clerk's office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows those counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. At fiscal-year end, **104 counties** were taking advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature, with **7** of those counties activated this year.

To support the program, the Authority also published a **UCC eFile API** in 2019 to allow filers to submit and pay the Authority directly through their own proprietary software, increasing the efficiency of UCC submission. Additionally, county vendors can utilize the web API to accept and reject submitted UCCs, giving counties more flexibility in how they process UCCs.

During FY 2023, the Authority:

- Indexed and added to the database **263,786 UCCs**. Excluding the last three years, in which the pandemic caused a surge in filings, the FY 2023 total represents the highest number of UCCs filed since 2002.
- Conducted **9,658 Certified Searches**. UCC Certified Search requests are processed internally by Authority staff which involve an exact-name search of the UCC database. Search results are then transmitted to the customer.

- Continued to expand **UCC eFile** with over 92% of all accepted UCC documents filed electronically during FY 2023. Additionally, more counties are now mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. At present, **77%** of Georgia counties — 122 of 159 counties — only allow UCC documents to be eFiled.
- Communicated adoption of **revised UCC forms** with an effective date of July 1, 2023 and updated website to reflect changes. The revisions were precipitated by changes made to the previous versions by the International Association of Commercial Administrators. Clerks of Superior Court are authorized to accept the new forms as of July 1, 2023, with a grace period of 30 days in which the old and new versions will be accepted. On or after August 1, 2023, UCC forms with a revision date of July 1, 2023 should be the only revision accepted by filing offices/clerks of Superior Court.
- Created monthly **UCC bulk image electronic files** for clients throughout the year.
- Continued promoting and supporting **UCC online training class** available to Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks through the Authority's eLearn site.
- Conducted multiple **UCC webinars** for Superior Court clerk personnel, in addition to one-on-one training sessions for different constituencies.
- Fielded UCC inquiries from clerks' offices, the banking industry, private law offices, offices of the United States Attorneys, law enforcement, and the general public.

Since opening its doors in 1995, the Authority has indexed and added to its database nearly **7.5 million UCCs** (approximately 22,000 per month) and conducted over **302,000 Certified Searches**. The Authority provides free, statewide access to its valuable database through search terminals installed in all clerk of Superior Court offices. Additionally, the system allows internet access by subscription for parties desiring the convenience of searching the indexes from their office or home.

Real Estate Projects

Real Estate Deed Project

In 1996, legislation was passed in Georgia that required the Authority to develop a consolidated database of the official real and personal property records of all 159 clerks of Superior Court. With this mandate, the Authority created a one-of-a-kind system with no direct cost to the State of Georgia. When the system became operational on January 1, 1999, the public gained unprecedented free access to information within the office of the Superior Court clerk through search terminals installed by the Authority. Additionally, the business community gained 24/7 access to official land records through the Authority's website, www.gsccca.org (by subscription).

The Real Estate Deed Project contains the following elements:

- Computer access to real property deed indexes of all 159 counties
- Integration of all 159 counties into an online statewide system
- Implementation of standards for data files, fields, and index data
- Standardization of all printed indexes statewide

Following passage of the enabling legislation, the Authority developed and implemented the only statewide intranet network in state government at that time. The system started collecting data from all 159 clerks of Superior Court on January 1, 1999. This data includes the name of the seller and buyer of the property, the location of the property, the book and page where the actual deed or property record is filed in the county, and cross index information to other related records. Searches can be performed by name, book and page, property location, or instrument type, and can be done by county, region (i.e. a county plus all counties that border it) or statewide. Additionally, images of the corresponding records are constantly being added to the online system.

The Authority added over **11 million real estate deed images** to the system during FY 2023 to bring the total to nearly **286 million deed images** in its publicly searchable database. Clerks' offices have been compensated by the Authority a total of **\$23.7 million** since inception of the project. Additionally, print fees generated from the system are compensated to the clerk's office where the original document resides. During FY 2023, the Authority compensated clerks' offices in Georgia **\$767,000** for deed images added to the system and over **\$4.7 million** for deed prints made from www.gsccca.org, resulting in over **\$5.5 million** in additional funding for Georgia's Superior Court clerks.

In 2004, a new feature was added to the system: access to **Real Estate Transfer Tax forms (PT-61s)**. The Authority worked with the Department of Revenue, the Department of Audits, and the Real Property Section of the State Bar of Georgia to bring this project online. This feature has added even more valuable information to the real estate system: over **428,000 PT-61** images this fiscal year and over **8.4 million** images since the project began.

At the end of 2011, the Authority successfully launched **Real Estate eFile** statewide. Since the launch, nearly **6.9 million** real estate documents have been electronically recorded, with the vast majority in the

last six years. In FY 2023, over **1.4 million** real estate documents were electronically recorded through <https://efile.gsccca.org>, with almost 54% of those using the Authority's API for submission. As of July 1, 2023, all 159 Georgia counties will be activated to accept all document types for electronic filing. (See Pages 35-38 for more information on the eFile Project.)

Following is a summary of efforts during FY 2023 to support and enhance the Real Estate Deed Project:

- Continued processes that monitor incoming real estate data for completeness and accuracy. These processes help ensure incoming data stays synchronized with local courthouse data and create a complete record of real estate document filings.
- Continued using software and monitoring procedures to detect historical land record data that is not in conformance with the *Indexing Standards for Real and Personal Property Records for the State of Georgia*. This is intended to highlight possible errors in the index data for deed records thus extending the Authority's ability to check the accuracy and ensure the quality of existing and incoming historical deed records. Tens of thousands of real estate, lien and plat data records and images have been reviewed throughout the fiscal year through automated and manual processes.
- Continued the administration of the Authority's "Indexing Certification Exam" resulting in clerks, deputies, and private vendor personnel becoming certified by the Authority to index real and personal property records in accordance with the *Indexing Standards for Real and Personal Property Records for the State of Georgia*. Thus far, **73 currently serving clerks and deputies from 24 counties** have completed the Indexing Certification.
- Continued efforts to certify the land record recording computer systems of private vendors that are used by clerks for compatibility and compliance with the Authority's data collection system and the Indexing Standards. At present, **12 vendor systems** have achieved certification by the Authority for their land record recording system.
- Conducted **4 in-person classes** and **4 webinars** to train Superior Court clerks, their staff, and vendors on the Real Estate Indexing Standards. Webinar topics included:
 - Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
 - Pending Lien Search
 - PT-61 Transmission Errors
- Continued offering **3 online courses** to train Superior Court clerks, deputy clerks and vendors on the Real Estate Indexing Standards. Courses include:
 - GSCCCA Indexing Standards
 - GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
 - GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
- Provided continuous troubleshooting of issues relating to the deed, lien, and plat filings of all clerks of Superior Court and the transmitting and storage of the related index data to the Authority.
- Provided ongoing telephone and email assistance, available to all clerks of Superior Court, regarding the proper indexing of land records in accordance with the *Indexing Standards for Real and Personal Property Records for the State of Georgia*.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project

In 2002, the Authority launched the Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project with the goal of adding land records from Georgia's 159 counties that were filed before the central collection system was implemented to the Authority's online system. (Gwinnett County was the first county to accomplish this feat with a "good-from" date of 1871.) To support this project, the Authority developed further Indexing Standards guidance to help address the challenge of applying current indexing standards to real and personal property records that were locally recorded before the advent of statewide indexing standards.

The project is complex and challenging as the Authority requires the complete re-indexing of these older land records in conformance with current Indexing Standards to create a cohesive record with current data in the system. All indexers performing this re-indexing must pass the "Indexing Certification Exam" developed by the Authority, and collected data is quarantined until quality checks are completed. After passing the quality control checks, the data is released to the Authority's website for public access. The cost to add each additional historical year to the database is approximately \$3.6 million.

The Authority completed the **1991-1990 Historical Project** in October of 2019 with 90 counties participating. The project concluded with the Authority adding over 820,000 deed records to its publicly searchable website, and moving the statewide "good-from" date to 1/1/1990.

In a continuing effort to add additional deed records to the Authority's website and ultimately move the statewide "good-from" date back even further, the Authority launched the **1989-1987 Historical Deed Project** in 2022. The 1989 segment of the project is well underway and the 1988-1987 segment commenced on July 1, 2023. The entire project has an anticipated completion date of June 30, 2025. The Authority has provided for compensation to those clerks of Superior Court who have previously completed their 1989 deed instruments voluntarily and will further compensate those who have voluntarily completed 1988 and 1987 deed instruments. The total project has an Authority budget of up to \$10.8 million with \$6.1 million of that sum being dedicated for return to clerks' offices as support for local priorities.

County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project

In 2013, the Authority developed and implemented a voluntary County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project allowing clerks on their own initiative and funding to image and re-index their property records for inclusion in the Authority's system. During the fiscal year, **6 additional counties** began participating for a total of **90 counties** in the program which allows additional index and image data for deeds, liens, and plats at the clerk's option. Participation is completely voluntary and at the election of the clerk of Superior Court. Highlights of the program include the documentation and comprehensive analysis of all county books and dockets along with the issuance of indexing guidance for the prevention of unintentional book naming conflicts. The result of the process provides an indexing roadmap for all future historical indexing for the clerk as well as awareness of the importance of consistency for current indexing.

Over **500,000 additional instruments** were added to the public system during FY 2023 for a total of **5 million instruments** in production since the program began. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks' offices have

the opportunity to generate additional funding through print image fees initiated through the Authority's website. Many more instruments are expected to be added in the future.

Lien, Plat & Map Project

When H.B. 1582 took effect in January of 2004, clerks of Superior Court began to transmit to the GSCCCA lien, plat and map indices and digital images. The Authority worked to certify all existing vendors, train clerks of Superior Court, and provide necessary equipment. New scanners and PCs were distributed to counties and bandwidth (both locally and at the Authority) was increased to accommodate this project.

Legislation was passed in 2016 that required all plats in Georgia to be electronically recorded beginning January 1, 2017. Through a cooperative effort with clerks and vendors, the Authority implemented the changes necessary to fulfill the requirements of this new law. Specifically, the Authority expanded its eFiling portal to accommodate the shift to mandatory plat eFiling, and all Superior Court clerks are able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eFiling mandate. Since inception of the mandate, nearly **177,000** plats have been electronically recorded, with nearly **30,000** of those during FY 2023. The process of electronically filing plats has resulted in a more efficient end-to-end process and higher fidelity recreation of printed plat copies.

The 2017 legislative session brought significant change to the lien project. Working closely with legislators, the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia, the legal community, the land title industry, and the Department of Revenue (DOR), the Authority helped forge a solution for the electronic filing of state tax liens resulting in the agreement of House Bill 337 which was signed into law.

From passage until its effective date of January 1, 2018, the Authority spent tremendous time and effort building the systems necessary for DOR to successfully eFile liens through the GSCCCA portal. The Authority also designed and developed a standard that can be used to electronically file state tax liens directly from the Department of Revenue to the GSCCCA, and subsequently to the counties. During the 2018 legislative session, however, the Georgia General Assembly passed another bill (HB 661) that substantially modified the 2017 Act. The Authority had again worked closely with legislators as well as all affected parties to bring about this revised solution.

Since the mandated start date of January 1, 2018, the Department of Revenue has eFiled over **476,000 state tax liens** with Superior Court clerks through the Authority's eFile portal, with nearly **49,000** of those eFiled this fiscal year. The Authority is continuing to develop tools for clerks to update, review and maintain the accuracy of the pending lien search, and has implemented a streamlined notification process which has reduced processing times.

Historical Plat Image Project

Using feedback from clerks at their 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting, the Authority Board set goals for future implementation including an initiative to add additional historical plat data to the Authority's online search system. After much staff research, planning, and coordination, the Authority completed the Historical Plat Image Project this year. The project included more than 1.2 million historical plat images

filed on or before December 31, 2003 covering plat books, plat cabinets, aperture cards, and other media used by the clerk's office to record the historical plats. The project did not include indexing or any plats that may be found in deed books.

The Authority began by collecting data on the numbers and types of source media from which the images were to be captured. Because of the physical size of plats and the various methods that clerks have used to preserve them over the years, the project has been complicated, and the Authority has pursued multiple paths to accomplish its goal of making all historical plat images statewide available online. One path was to collect and compensate clerks' offices for existing historical plat images that have been previously submitted to the GSCCCA system or those plats which have been scanned by the clerk and available locally but not yet transmitted to the Authority. An allowance of \$3.00 was provided for each of those historical plat images already received by the Authority and payments began in January 2021.

The second path was for the Authority to lend technical assistance to those counties who have historical plat images on hand which may be of doubtful quality or format to be suitable for the GSCCCA system. In these cases, the Authority's IT team acquired access to the images and if the images were determined to be usable, they were then processed to modify the formats as necessary for use on the Authority system. Such counties were then eligible for the compensation as noted above.

For those counties that had no historical plat images and for those that needed additional imaging, the Authority engaged the services of an imaging vendor to scan plats onsite in the clerks' offices. Once completed, the images were submitted to the Authority, with a copy of the new images presented to each clerk as well. Sixty-five clerks were identified with plats to be imaged, adding 354,000 additional plat images to the system at a cost of over \$1.2 million paid by the Authority.

Compensation agreements have been sent to 116 clerks, covering approximately 900,000 images equaling almost \$2.7 million as a direct cash benefit to clerks' offices and counties. As a result of this project, all plats statewide are now available for viewing on the Authority search system. Total cost to the Authority for the entire project has been in excess of \$3.8 million.

Pending Lien Project

During FY 2023, the Authority launched a statewide roll-out of its **Pending Lien Project**, an initiative to assist clerks' offices with the resolution and removal of Department of Revenue (DOR) liens dating back to 1,000 days or older. The project involved 46 counties with 3,072 pending liens in total. After generating a report containing liens in pending status, a spreadsheet was compiled with all of the necessary information needed to resolve/correct each lien. The Authority then worked directly with each respective clerk's office, training them on the pending lien search, providing support to research and identify the issue, and offering next steps for resolution.

Following a beta-test phase, with Troup and Calhoun counties completing the project in July 2022, the Authority began rolling out the project statewide. At present, 43 of 46 counties have completed the project. The remaining three counties are working with their vendors to resolve their pending liens. Over 2,700 liens have been corrected and removed from the Pending Search Aging Report, resulting in a 91% completion rate.

PT-61 Project

Launched in September of 2004, PT-61 eFiling is a collaborative program between the GSCCCA and the Department of Revenue (DOR) to provide a more efficient process for filing a Real Estate Transfer Tax form (PT-61 form). Rather than completing a multi-part paper form, the new system allows the filer to log onto www.gscca.org from his/her office and complete the form online. The program provides for the more efficient transfer of tax data to the DOR and local tax assessors via weekly electronic reports.

During FY 2023, the Authority:

- Added over 428,000 PT-61 filings to the statewide system for a total of over 8.4 million PT-61 records. These filings were accepted and activated by the counties and then sent to the Georgia Department of Revenue and Georgia Department of Audits.
- Compensated clerks' offices nearly \$45,000 for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website related to the PT-61 Project.
- Added over 166,000 properties during FY 2023 for a total of nearly 3.4 million searchable addresses.

Electronic Filing (eFile) Projects

In 2009, the Georgia legislature mandated that the Authority develop rules and regulations related to the electronic recording of real estate-related documents. Anticipating this need and with the continuing goal of keeping clerks' offices at the forefront of technology, the Authority spent years prior to this legislative mandate researching, planning, programming, and testing their eFiling program through an extensive pilot project. Essential to the project was developing a platform that was flexible enough for clerks, bankers, attorneys, and the general public to use. Following are more specifics on each project including history, program features, participation, and current status.

UCC eFile

In 2010, the Authority successfully launched **UCC eFile** to the public and began accepting UCC documents for electronic filing. In 2019, the Authority published a **UCC eFile API** which allows filers to submit and pay the Authority directly through their own proprietary software, increasing the efficiency of UCC submission. Additionally, county vendors can utilize the API to accept and reject submitted UCCs, giving counties more flexibility in how they process UCCs. Of the UCCs electronically filed this past fiscal year, 35% were submitted through the Authority's UCC eFile API.

UCC eFile continues to grow with a **17%** total lifetime increase this fiscal year. Since the pilot project began in May 2009, over **1.7 million UCCs** have been electronically filed. Nearly **260,000 UCCs** were eFiled in FY 2023, and of all UCC documents accepted statewide, over 92% were filed electronically. At present, **151 counties** participate in the program, with **122** of those counties mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. Just three years ago, only 43 counties mandated UCC eFiling, yet today **77%** of Georgia counties only allow the electronic filing of UCC documents.

For the counties who mandate UCC eFiling, a new feature, **UCC auto-numbering**, was added in 2019 which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number. This allows a clerk's office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows these counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. At fiscal-year end, **104 counties** were taking advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature, with **7** of those counties activated this year.

Child Support eFile

After a decade-plus of providing the program, the Authority removed its Child Support process from its eFile portal effective October 1, 2021. The Department of Human Services Child Support Division terminated its contract with AOC effective October 1, 2021. As a result, the AOC eFiling portal no longer functions to provide for Child Support eFilings, and therefore the Child Support eFiling system through the Authority is no longer available.

In 2010, as a service to Superior Court clerks who were seeking a trusted partner to help participate in a voluntary Child Support eFiling program, the Authority added Child Support eFile to its portal. Using the

GSCCCA portal, clerks were able to conveniently receive and process child support cases initiated by the Department of Human Services for over a decade. Over the life of the program, 137 counties took advantage of the service with nearly 693,000 cases submitted through the Authority system. As part of the portal deactivation process, the Authority will continue to archive and retain all previous portal filings and transactions should they be needed in the future.

Real Estate eFile

In 2011, the Authority built a real estate eFiling portal and successfully launched **Real Estate eFile** statewide. This portal initially allowed filers to use an approved vendor to submit real estate documents on their behalf. Two years later, the Authority extended Real Estate eFile by making it fully accessible to the public through a web interface, further streamlining the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. With this added, web-based application, users in Georgia, who are eligible to participate in the electronic recording of real estate documents, can access the Authority's website, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, to file directly with counties from the convenience of their home or office rather than having to travel to the county clerk's office. This convenience became a critical service when courthouses were closed to walk-in traffic due to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. All eFile programs are provided to clerks and the public free of charge. The Authority maintains an eFile User Manual, a guide to assist filers as they navigate within the site and to provide support for technical questions. Additionally, the Authority's customer support team, HelpDesk, is available Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to answer questions and provide technical support. Each year, HelpDesk fields about 3,000 requests for help related to the Real Estate eFile project.

To further support Real Estate eFile, the Authority developed and published the www.efileregistry.org website in 2011. This site was designed to facilitate the registration, maintenance and verification of real estate eFile participants. Working in cooperation with the State Bar of Georgia and the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Association, the Authority created the eFile registry to provide a secure location for housing approved participants in the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. In FY 2023, nearly **4,200 new participants** were added to the eFile Registry for a current total of over **25,000 active participants**.

Real Estate eFile has experienced tremendous growth over the past six years with a 25.7% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. This growth is due in large part to legislative mandates but is also one of the positive byproducts of the COVID pandemic which made it either impossible or more difficult to record real estate instruments in person. In FY 2023, over **1.4 million** real estate documents were electronically recorded through <https://efile.gsccca.org>, with almost 54% of those using the Authority's eFile API for submission. Additionally, **126 clerk offices** — 16 more than last fiscal year — have opted to receive **estimated filing fees** for any real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing submitted through the Authority's eFile portal. This opt-in feature allows clerks to see the amount of filing fees authorized by the filer while not precluding the clerk's office from assessing actual fees even if they differ from the estimate. This feature may be activated or deactivated at any time per a clerk's request.

As noted above, the increase in eFiling participation prior to COVID, was due in part to legislative mandates. In 2016, a bill passed that required all plats in Georgia to be electronically recorded beginning January 1, 2017. Through a cooperative effort with clerks and vendors, the Authority implemented the changes necessary to fulfill the requirements of the law. Specifically, the Authority expanded its eFiling

portal to accommodate the shift to **mandatory plat eFiling**, which allows all Superior Court clerks to be able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eFiling mandate. Since inception, nearly **177,000** plats have been eFiled, with nearly **30,000** of those during FY 2023. The Authority Board adopted plat eFiling rules and regulations which are posted under the eFiling information tab of www.gsccca.org/learn.

In 2017, legislation was passed by the Georgia General Assembly that **mandated the electronic filing of state tax liens**, but the Act was substantially modified by a second bill that was passed in 2018. During both sessions, the Authority worked with all interested stakeholders to reach a revised solution, and continued to work with these groups to help implement the new law. Since the mandatory effective date of January 1, 2018, the Department of Revenue (DOR) has successfully eFiled over **476,000 state tax liens** with Superior Court clerks by filing through the Authority's eFile portal; nearly **49,000** of those were eFiled during FY 2023.

Since inception of the project, Superior Court clerks have embraced the electronic filing of real estate documents for its obvious advantages — streamlining operations, enhancing efficiencies, and improving access — for both courts and the general public, and the vast majority of offices have allowed all document types to be electronically filed for years. However, a new Georgia law — HB 974 which passed during the 2022 legislative session — requires all Superior Court clerks to offer electronic filing for the recording of security deeds with an effective date of July 1, 2023. At the end of last fiscal year, 140 clerk offices allowed all document types to be eFiled. With the new mandate set to take effect, the Authority activated 15 more counties during FY 2023 to allow for all document types and scheduled the remaining 4 counties to be activated on July 1 to ensure compliance with the new law. Effective July 1, 2023, all 159 Georgia counties will allow all real estate documents to be electronically filed.

Since 2011 when the Authority launched Real Estate eFile, participants have electronically recorded nearly **6.9 million real estate documents**. These numbers are made more impressive when considering the fact that for the majority of the history of the eFiling system, participation was voluntary. With legislative changes mandating certain types of real estate documents be electronically recorded, each of the 159 Superior Court clerks have systems that directly interface with the GSCCCA eFiling portal, and effective July 1, 2023, all 159 offices have been activated to offer all document types. Considering the momentum of the existing eFiling systems, the Authority's successful track-record of implementing legislatively mandated programs, and the increased participation by clerks' offices and filers, it is expected that eFiling numbers will continue to rise in the coming years.

With increased usage and a commitment to strengthening quality control in its eFile Project, the Authority initiated an **eFile System Certification** program last year to create a formal process for certifying vendor eFile systems utilized by clerks for deeds, liens, and plats for integrating with the GSCCCA eFile portal. The program is similar to the process used to certify vendor systems that participate in the GSCCCA Consolidated Georgia Real Estate Indexes Project. After notice to vendors of the certification requirement and a proposed certification document in early 2022, Phase II began which involved developing system certification tests and using vendor input to finalize the GSCCCA eFile System Certification Program document. The system certification tests were also finalized determining required functionality, testing requirements, and recommended system functionality.

Additionally, the Authority reviewed eAssist (the GSCCCA eFiling program) to make necessary programmatic changes to facilitate successful passage of the eFile certification tests by vendors.

Subsequently, eAssist was the first program to complete the eFile System Certification program. Phase III of the program is underway and involves vendor documentation and testing. In September, the Authority provided vendors with the finalized GSCCCA eFile System Certification Program document, along with instructions on how to begin the certification process (including an application and sponsor contact form). Vendor system testing is currently underway and is expected to be completed this summer.

From the beginning, the Authority's goal for its eFiling service has been to protect the autonomy of Superior Court clerks, improve the technology within their offices, streamline the document-filing process, and give the public access to convenient and effective tools — all at no cost to state or local government. And to add to these benefits, the Authority offers its eFiling service without imposing additional fees above the base filing fee and banking fees. Today, the Authority's electronic filing portal, efile.gsccca.org, allows for the filing of UCCs, real estate deeds, liens, plats, and PT-61 documents, and the list will continue to grow. With millions of documents now being eFiled annually, the Authority will continue to assess, improve, and streamline the user experience in an ongoing effort to stay ahead of the curve and provide state-of-the-art services.

Other Projects

Premium Search Account

In 2012, the Authority launched a Premium Search account with new search and view options for the Authority's valuable statewide indexes. Based on suggestions from subscribers, the premium account allows users to:

- Pinpoint the property for which they are searching by simply entering the street address.
- Browse PT-61s for a specific day, week, or month.
- Search real estate by county and instrument type.
- View data in a variety of new options.
- Access data anytime and anywhere through a mobile application using GPS data. (See more information below on the Clerks' Authority Map Search Application.)

The Premium Search account, which includes the Clerks' Authority Map Search Application, is a valuable tool, and helps realtors, bankers, attorneys, surveyors, appraisers, and other members of the business community do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. The Premium account features are especially invaluable for searching sales in small counties where there is no MLS or listing of properties for sale.

During FY 2023, the Authority continued to add new Premium Search accounts and ended the fiscal year with **7,242 accounts**. It is expected usage will continue to grow as those accessing the Authority's valuable statewide indexes become aware of the enhanced options provided by the Premium Search account.

Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App)

Launched in 2012, the Clerks' Authority Map Search Application provides the most up-to-date and accurate real estate sales data in the state of Georgia, and is the only mobile app that provides real-time sales data on the official source of property transfer tax data in Georgia.

Features of the Map Search app include:

- Real-time sales information
- Sales history
- Official county records
- Deeds
- Liens
- Plats

The application is available on Android devices, iPhones and iPads, and is available free-of-charge to Premium Search account subscribers. This past fiscal year, the Authority updated its Android Map Search application to support newer Android devices and operating systems to ensure a positive user experience

on the newest devices. Additionally, over **166,000 properties** were added during FY 2023 for a fiscal year-end total of nearly **3.4 million searchable addresses** in the application.

Through the Authority's Map Search application, real estate professionals, and all other consumers, now have 24/7 access to the most comprehensive real estate information anywhere in Georgia right at their fingertips from their smartphones or tablets.

Protective Order Registry

The Protective Order Registry is an online service that stores all Protective Orders issued by Superior Courts of Georgia as authorized by the Family Violence statutes of the state. Clerks of Superior Court are responsible for indexing the required data for Orders filed in their courts, electronically scanning the Orders, and attaching the images of the Orders to the indexed data. Clerks transmit the indexed data and the Order images to the Authority. The Authority then verifies and forwards the transmissions to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) computer system.

Legislation passed in 2021 which expanded protective orders to include dating relationships. In response, the Authority worked in conjunction with GCIC and the Council of Superior Court Judges to develop the following new protective order forms for dating violence:

- Petition for Dating Violence Temporary Protective Order
- Dating Violence Ex Parte Protective Order
- Dating Violence Twelve Month Protective Order

The Authority added the new forms, which took effect on March 3, 2022, to its website and to its protective order indexing system which equipped Superior Court Clerks with the tools needed to index and transmit these forms to GCIC. During FY 2023, the Authority updated the dating violence forms and training material after new versions were released in January to address some issues.

The Protective Order Registry, which is accessed by law enforcement through GCIC terminals, displays all Protective Orders and related data. In FY 2023, nearly **53,000 Protective Orders** were indexed by clerks, and then electronically transmitted by the Authority to GCIC. Through the efforts of Superior Court clerks and the Authority, critical information for protecting the public continues to be easily accessible to law enforcement nationwide through the Protective Order Registry.

Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)

Launched in 2003, the Offender-Based Tracking System (OBTS) provides electronic transmission of criminal case disposition data from clerks of Superior Court. Legislation passed in 2001 mandated the electronic collection and reporting of final dispositions, and required that clerks of Superior Court provide electronic collection and transmission of disposition data to the Authority. The Authority then transmits the disposition data to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), a division of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), where it is used to populate the GBI's Computerized Criminal History Database. The Authority worked with the clerks of Superior Court case management system vendors to develop

transmission standards and protocols, and with counties and GCIC to ensure common understanding of OBTS transmission options and requirements.

Legislation — SB 441 in 2022 and SB 272 in 2023 — has passed that requires the transmission of criminal case data from clerks of Superior Court directly to GCIC in a form and format required by and consistent with uniform standards issued by the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia. Until such time as uniform standards are issued by the Council, the Authority will continue to transmit any criminal case disposition data, forwarded by clerks of Superior Court, to GCIC.

In FY 2023, over **273,000 records of criminal court dispositions** were electronically transmitted from the various criminal courts in Georgia to the GSCCCA and then forwarded to GCIC for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.

eCertification Program

Last year, the Authority launched a statewide roll-out of its eCertification Program (<https://ecert.gscca.org>), an electronic certified document request and delivery system. The eCert Program enables easier access to certified documents within the clerk's office by allowing the public to request and pay for certified documents electronically, thereby eliminating the need for an in-person visit to the clerk's office. Clerks' offices process the requests and deliver the certified documents to the user electronically. Payments are processed through the Authority and included in the Daily County Disbursement reports. Each clerk of Superior Court determines which documents are available for electronic certification.

After development and beta testing were completed, the Authority released the eCert Program to all counties wishing to participate. With feedback from the public and clerks' offices, the Authority continues to update the program where needed.

The eCertification portal offers the following:

- Allows Georgia citizens to request a digital version of certified documents from court systems across the state.
- Provides an online registry to verify certified document authenticity.
- Provides users with request history and search capabilities.

The corresponding county portal offers the following:

- Allows each county to customize the certification process to fit their needs including outgoing emails, document request forms, and cover sheets.
- Provides counties with funds collection, administration, and reporting functions.

During FY 2023, 42 more counties began offering eCertification. At present, **79 counties** are actively participating in the eCert Program; **12 counties** are in the training and testing phase; and nearly **44,000 total requests** have been submitted through the eCertification portal since the program launched.

Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)

The issue of “house theft” is one that continues to grow and has become a significant concern. For years, the Authority has studied the issue in an effort to assist Superior Court clerks in supporting and protecting their constituents. Discussions have involved what solutions are already available and if more could be done to help protect Georgians from this egregious type of fraud.

After much collaborative study with Superior Court clerks, the Authority developed and proudly launched its Filing Activity Notification System (FANS) in January with the goal of providing Georgia citizens with a powerful tool in the fight against house theft and other potentially fraudulent activity. Provided as a free service, FANS notifies property owners anytime filings are made related to their registered property, as well as notifies of filing activity related to UCCs (personal property), liens and plat filings. While this system cannot prevent fraudulent documents from being filed, it can be used to send timely notifications to citizens upon the filing of a document that matches criteria which they define.

The FANS system is voluntary, consumer-friendly, and open to anyone free-of-charge. To opt in, citizens must simply register at <https://fans.gsccca.org/> with an email address or telephone number. After submitting a name, the user will receive an email and/or text notification whenever a filing related to that name is filed in the selected records. Individuals may also create notifications for an address and/or a document type. As of July 1, **8,584 people** have registered for notifications, and **9,126 alerts** have been sent.

Broad notifications are powerful tools because the FANS system is not limited to filing activity relating only to deeds. The system can also notify users when other documents are unexpectedly filed such as UCC and lien documents, where the existence of the document is not anticipated and can be filed in any county in Georgia. Participants will need to apply discretion to assess the accuracy and applicability of any specific notification, but, generally, this is easily accomplished for most users. When a notification is triggered, it will contain sufficient information for the user to be able to quickly assess if the filing is relevant to their interests while also directing the user to other resources if further investigation is needed.

Apart from name-based notifications, users are able to define both document-based and address-based filing notifications. Document notifications are particularly useful to identify potentially adverse events against a property. When a deed document is filed, subsequent filings affecting the property typically reference the original document in order for it to stand up to professional scrutinization and the desired appearance of legitimacy. If a user knows their deed book and page number, they can use the FANS system to be notified anytime a document is filed that references their original deed filing. If a notification is received unexpectedly, it is a good indicator that urgent action may be needed to investigate the activity further.

Similar to document-based notifications, users can also set up a filing notification using their street address. Such notifications would be delivered anytime a specific street address was referenced on either a PT-61 transfer tax form or a UCC document. PT-61 documents are supposed to be filed whenever property is conveyed and may be a powerful vector in enabling timely notifications of potentially fraudulent activity.

Clerks of Superior Court have long been concerned about home theft and have actively sought out solutions to help protect their constituents from this type of fraudulent activity. The development of

FANS is a direct result of their proactive efforts, and its launch in January was met with an enthusiastic response. Below are some of the comments received after the FANS system went live in January:

“AWESOME! Can’t wait to announce this, I’ve had several property owners on me to do something about this. So glad the Authority heard the need and executed!”

— Trevor Addison (Putnam County)

“Wow now that is impressive. Thanks to all of you at the Authority who make our job so much easier and beneficial to the public and us Clerks. Love y’all.”

— Sara Clark (Lee County)

“I have already sent out a blast to county attorneys, Board of Commissioners, tax assessors, tax commissioner and am having it published in the paper next week. Another great service provided by the best people at the Clerks’ Authority!”

— Kye Gibson (Meriwether County)

“Oh thank god! I want this for FRANKLIN! I have already signed up and I will get the word out everywhere! Thank you!”

— Heather Hill (Franklin County)

“THIS IS WONDERFUL NEWS...My customers have been begging for this. Thanks a lot.”

— Janie Jones (Barrow County)

“I tried it, it worked perfectly. Thank you so much for all the Authority does for us!”

— Juanita Laidler (Macon County)

“Whoop! Whoop! In case you’ve forgotten – WE LOVE OUR CLERKS’ AUTHORITY! The team is ever vigilant in efforts to make vital information available to the public! Can’t thank you enough!! You’re always providing new ways to make clerks shine!!”

— Joy Lynn Turner (Camden County)

In addition to the overwhelmingly positive response from clerks, others praised the benefits of the new FANS system as well. The following was posted by a realtor in North Georgia after the system went live:

“Property owners – if you’re not using FANS, I STRONGLY suggest you consider monitoring your real property using this free service from the Clerks’ Authority. Regardless of whether or not you have title insurance, this is a great tool.”

It is the Authority’s hope and intent that its new FANS website will give Georgia citizens a powerful tool in the fight against house theft and other potentially fraudulent activity. As previously noted, even citizens who do not currently own property can benefit from the use of FANS due to its ability to send filing activity notifications for lien and UCC documents, both of which can affect credit-worthiness. While the system cannot directly prevent fraud, it can provide prompt notice of filing activity and empower citizens to take swift action when required.

Carbon Sequestration Registry

The Georgia legislature passed the “Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry Act” in 2004 to provide for a registry to promote offsetting reductions in greenhouse gases by sequestering carbon. The Authority worked with the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) to create the Carbon Sequestration Registry which has multiple objectives.

Its primary objective is to promote the establishment and protection/conservation of forests to mitigate the effects of harmful emissions worldwide. Beyond this, a second objective is to create a new medium of exchange and revenue stream for owners of the sequestered carbon. This is accomplished by creating “carbon credits” based on the amount of carbon sequestered. Such credits can be sold to industrial clients who have emission “deficits” because they are producing excessive harmful emissions. On one hand, emission violators can “buy” absolution in the form of credits, and, on the other hand, carbon owners profit from their good work in preserving forests or timberlands.

The registry documents and tracks the acreage of timberland that owners will agree to preserve. Periodic and partial re-inspections ensure that the quantities remain accurate in case of wildfires, storms or other destructive events. Independent inspectors are used to verify the original registration as well as to re-inspect the sequestered timber.

Disaster Planning & Data Archive Initiatives

Serving as custodian of their court's records is one of the most important roles of a Superior Court clerk. With this in mind, the Authority has made supporting clerks in their efforts to protect and preserve their records as a priority by offering multiple programs to this end.

Launched in 2007, the **VaultTek Online Archive Program** (formerly MyVault) has provided the foundation of support and purpose from which all other archive initiatives have been conceived and implemented. Through a combination of hardware, software and technical support, the VaultTek data protection and monitoring service has supported clerks for over 16 years, delivering assurance in records' protection and best practice guidance in disaster planning. Serving Superior Court clerks remains at the core of the program's mission, as shown by the launch last year of a mobile application for VaultTek users called **VaultTek Mobile**. The new app provides convenient, on-the-go access to records stored through VaultTek allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand.

With the launch of the VaultTek Mobile app last year, the Authority began the process of rebranding its MyVault Online Archive Program to reflect the new VaultTek naming. While continuing to remind users that they are one and the same product/service, Authority staff worked progressively to phase out the use of the familiar MyVault name associated with the online archive and replace it with the new VaultTek branding. Through newsletters, training events and other communication channels, clerks were informed of the new branding changes and rationale over the last year. With this context, the information presented in the FY 2023 year-end report now employs the use of VaultTek in lieu of MyVault when referencing the online archive program.

The Virtual Microfilm Program (VMF) was launched in 2017 as an alternative to traditional microfilm for digitally archiving clerk records. The VMF system provides additional benefits to clerks by providing convenient and familiar record access, since it is designed to function as a document management system in addition to a record archiving system. VMF is rooted in the goal of empowering clerks with the tools and knowledge to improve their business operations and protect the records and resources for which they are statutorily responsible. The VMF program has proven its value beyond the clerk interface and provides a vital supporting role to VaultTek in routinely restoring records back to clerk offices.

Following is a more detailed review of the Authority's disaster planning and data archive initiatives and the many accomplishments of the past fiscal year.

VaultTek Online Archive Program

In 2007, the Authority launched the VaultTek Online Archive Program, an enterprise-level data protection service that was created to provide convenience and security for clerks in protecting the irreplaceable public records maintained by their office. VaultTek was designed and implemented by the Authority in support of the clerks' ongoing business continuity planning efforts. The intent of the program is to serve as a second line of defense against a data loss event or larger disaster at the courthouse. Enrollment in the program allows clerks to securely protect their real and personal property records, court data, accounting and business records, and general-purpose documents, among others. Safeguarding these records ensures their long-term protection and provides a reliable method for restoring lost data if necessary.

VaultTek’s two-stage data protection solution offers the convenience of having a local copy stored on site combined with the security of having redundancy on GSCCCA servers at two offsite storage facilities. In addition, the nightly backups are securely managed and monitored daily to ensure that the jobs run smoothly and successfully. The program is designed to meet the needs of all counties of all sizes and with varying levels of IT support and complexity. The VaultTek program is currently protecting the electronic records of Georgia’s Superior Court clerks in **158 counties**.

The benefits of the program to clerks include:

- Automated and secure nightly backups
- Live daily monitoring of jobs and equipment health
- Customized jobs
- Local and remote data storage
- Flexible scheduling
- Encrypted data transmissions
- Personalized account management
- Convenient and quick data restores
- Secure access to account through online dashboard
- Convenient, on-the-go access to records through mobile application, VaultTek Mobile
- Storage on dedicated and redundant GSCCCA servers
- Desktop and rackmount options for the local backup appliance
- Exceptional customer service

The clerk, as custodian, has the sole authority to decide what should and should not be included in their archive job. However, it is recommended that any sensitive public records or court data that is critical to the operation of the clerk’s office or otherwise considered essential should be included. The VaultTek appliance can archive any electronic record, as long as it is accessible via the local network. The inclusion of all real estate records was initially required for participation in the archive program; however, the passing of SB 135 (Custodianship Bill) in 2015 defined new backup requirements for the protection of a clerk’s electronic records. Enacted as Code Section 15-6-62.1, the amended Act specifies what records must be protected by electronic backups, how the backups must be performed, the number of separate backups, and the frequency in which the backups must occur.

A majority of the data backed up through VaultTek is directly related to real estate records. The amount of real estate data backed up from participating counties actually exceeds the amount of real estate data in the GSCCCA search systems. Through VaultTek, all real estate data in participating counties can be archived and protected, regardless of filing date.

Since the program was launched in 2007, all participating clerks have had access to their vault data through an online dashboard using a password-protected login. The dashboard provides live statistics about the last backup and allows users to view and restore items from their vault as needed. To make access even more convenient, the Authority developed a mobile application for VaultTek users called **VaultTek Mobile** which was launched in 2022. The app provides convenient, on-the-go access to records stored through VaultTek allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand. (See more information on VaultTek Mobile on Page 49.) Clerks are also encouraged to contact

the Authority for assistance at any time, knowing that VaultTek is a managed service and jobs are monitored daily to ensure success.

Each year, Audit Reports are distributed to all clerks enrolled in the VaultTek Program. This customized report, which was further enhanced last year, contains details about the clerk's archive account, equipment, nightly job(s), including cloud-based backup jobs, and authorized users. The purpose is to encourage a periodic review of the job details (content, data location and scheduling) and ensure that the archive jobs are accurate and reflect the clerk's expectations. Clerks are also encouraged to review the report with their vendors and/or IT personnel to verify that all of the electronic records that the clerk wants protected are included in the job items noted. In addition to the annual review, Audit Reports can be generated at any time using the online dashboard, VaultTek Mobile app, or by making a request to the Authority.

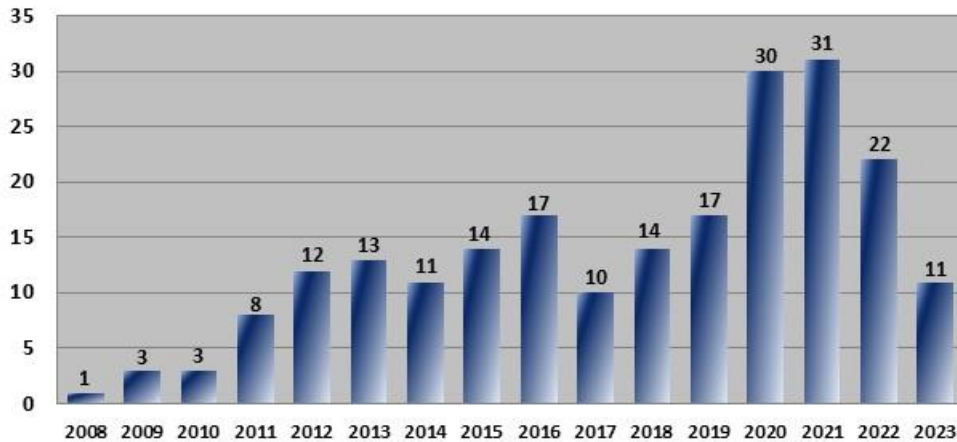
VaultTek is currently storing and protecting over **1.3 billion files** totaling more than **283 TBs of live data**, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. The Authority performs proactive data auditing to reduce the amount of redundant data that must be stored. Even as the vault has grown and more new data has been archived, the Authority has been able to proactively and effectively manage storage space and cost. In addition to the 283 TBs of live data (current versions of files), the VaultTek system maintains 30 days of previous file versions totaling 41 TBs of additional data stored in the vault.

Through VaultTek, the Authority has been able to help counties successfully protect their critical records and resources and safely restore files to an operational state. On average, 10-15 requests to restore data are made per year; however, in recent years the number of requests has doubled. Since 2007, VaultTek has responded to **218** data loss requests and has restored over **4.4 TBs** of data back to county systems. In FY 2023, the Authority received **11 requests** to restore data, resulting in over **38 GBs of data** successfully restored.

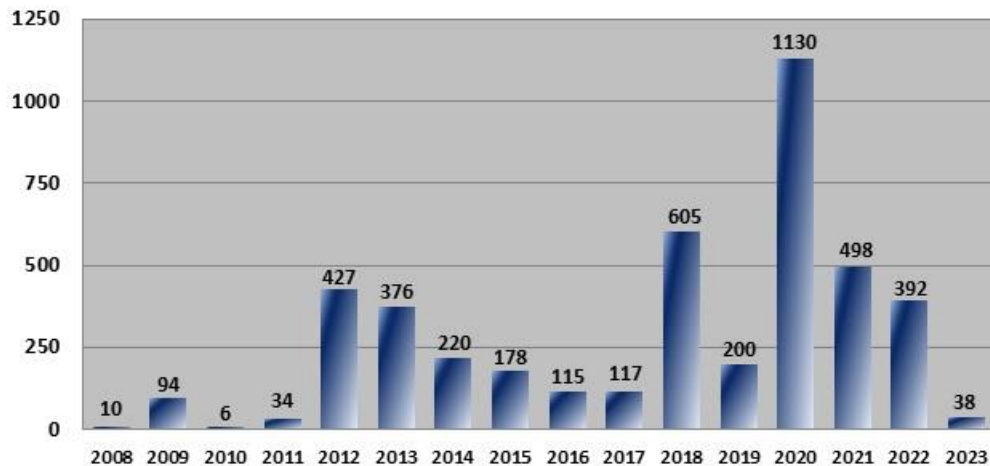
Restores are typically performed directly from the local appliance, which is normally the quickest method. A restore job is initiated and any requested data is restored back to a location on the county network. Small restores can also be performed by the clerk or an authorized user through the online dashboard at <https://vault.gsccca.org>. As required or in cases of larger volume requests, data can also be restored from the remote vault site(s) and delivered to the county via external media.

Having multiple backups is the best data protection strategy to ensure a good outcome following a data loss event. VaultTek provides that second line of defense against a disaster and ensures that a clerk's records are protected on the local archive appliance and on servers in two remote locations in Atlanta and Colorado. By maintaining multiple backups in geographically unique locations, a county can lower its risk of having a catastrophic data loss event due to equipment failure, human error, data corruption, ransomware attacks, or natural disasters.

Number of Restore Requests by Fiscal Year



Volume of Data Restored (in GBs) by Fiscal Year



Following are some of the accomplishments of the VaultTek Program during FY 2023:

- Added over 83.9 million files totaling more than 50 TBs of data to the vault.
- Managed, stored, and protected the growing number of clerks' digital records, which now exceed 1.3 billion files and 283 TBs of live data in the vault.
- Managed 11 restore requests and restored over 38 GBs of data back to clerks and/or their vendors.
- Upgraded archive equipment for 41 counties.
- Promoted the ongoing initiative to fully integrate the new VaultTek brand and remind clerks that VaultTek and MyVault are synonymous.
 - Redesigned documentation to reflect the new VaultTek brand.
 - Added VaultTek branding to the archive hardware including new branded lids for the desktop appliances and other accessory labeling.

- Provided disaster planning training to clerks during the 2022 COAG Fall Conference and the 2023 Clerks' Spring Conference.
- Enhanced service by adding a product specialist to the archive team to provide support for all archive programs and activities, including the VaultTek Online Archive Program, the VMF Program, and other disaster planning and data protection initiatives.

VaultTek Mobile Application

After extensive planning and programming, the Authority proudly announced the launch of its new VaultTek Mobile application in February 2022. Developing new technologies that make records' protection more convenient and accessible to clerks is an Authority priority, and the VaultTek Mobile app is an achievement that reflects this purpose. VaultTek users have always had web access to their vault through an online dashboard at <https://vault.gsccca.org>. Now, VaultTek users have the freedom to access their data on-the-go and easily connect to their vault account using their mobile device.

VaultTek Mobile's many helpful and convenient features include the ability to:

- View current VaultTek backup status at-a-glance
- Monitor recent activity
- Review and download custom reports
- Securely access VaultTek statistics and content
- Search and retrieve with ease a file stored through VaultTek
- Filter through folders to locate specific file types
- View, print, or download files on demand
- Easily share information with others
- Conveniently contact VaultTek customer support
- Receive notifications regarding VaultTek backup success

VaultTek Mobile can be downloaded from the Apple App and Google Play stores.

Media Holdings Project

In September 2018, the Authority's archive staff broadened its outreach to clerks as part of an ongoing effort to promote the importance of disaster planning. A fundamental concern is that a clerk may not be fully aware of what digital records are protected for their office. In addition, there may not be an understanding of where that data is protected or how to access it if needed. Realizing this vulnerability, the Authority quickly made it a goal to offer support to those clerks and create a process for analyzing the media holdings for interested counties. Originally referred to as the Georgia Archives Initiative, this project started as an inquiry into what the Georgia Archives was storing for Superior Court clerks. Realizing the former name was somewhat ambiguous, the Authority adopted a new name, *Media Holdings Project*, which better reflects the purpose of the initiative. The overall objective is to provide each clerk with important information about where and how their records are stored so that they can make informed decisions about how best to protect those records. All clerks are encouraged to participate in this initiative and are welcome to do so at any time.

Phase one of this initiative was to survey the clerks' interest in obtaining more information about what they have stored at the Georgia Archives and to help in coordinating that effort. To date, **141 counties** have elected to receive a media holdings list from the Georgia Archives, and these lists have been obtained and delivered back to all participating clerks.

Phase two of this initiative is underway and involves a more extensive review of the media holdings reported. A combination of manual and automated processes is being used to standardize the reported information into a file for each county. Currently, a total of **57 counties** have been transcribed in this phase. This data will be imported into a database for further analysis as part of the third and final phase. By reviewing and analyzing what records are stored at the Archives, there is a longer-term opportunity to compare that against a) what is stored in the GSCCCA imaging system, and b) what is protected in the GSCCCA vault. In doing so, the goal is to provide each clerk with a comparison report that identifies what (if anything) may not be protected, or may only be protected by the Georgia Archives but not electronically by the GSCCCA. Equipped with this information, clerks can begin to make more informed decisions about how best to protect those records in the future.

Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program

The Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program is another Authority initiative for archiving the digital records of Superior Court clerks and was conceived as an alternative to the traditional microfilm creation process previously provided by the Authority. The VMF Program streamlines the microfilm process and provides an enhanced method for quickly browsing, searching, printing, and downloading microfilm content right on a clerk's PC.

In July 2017, the Authority Board of Directors adopted a resolution to implement a new Image Archive Program upon learning that the statutory requirements for clerks of Superior Court to store deeds and other real estate records had been changed by the legislature. Code Section 36-9-5 previously required that such records be kept in fireproof safes or vaults, in fireproof cabinets, on microfilm, or offsite storage within 100 miles of the county. The legislative change authorized a new option to store these documents by electronic means in lieu of microfilm. With an opportunity to advance the technology and provide clerks with a valuable hands-on tool that is consistent with the legislative requirements, the new VMF system was designed and implemented.

The VMF online system provides a more efficient means for accessing archived records in a way that is both practical and meaningful to the clerk. The goal in offering the service is to continue providing clerks more control over the records for which they are custodians, including how they are permanently archived as required by law. This enhanced alternative to traditional microfilm benefits the clerks by providing back-up for important public records in the event of a disaster. Additionally, virtual microfilm technology produces better image quality for viewing and printing while saving time and resources previously spent recalling film/boxes from storage. The VMF system also provides a paperless option for those seeking more environment-friendly business solutions.

Advantages of converting to virtual microfilm are numerous and include:

- Prevention of record loss
- Enhanced image quality
- Easier access to information
- Greater ability to distribute documents over the internet or by email
- Reduction in storage space
- Ability to respond more quickly to customer requests

The initial import of deed images was completed in November 2017, totaling more than 44 million deed images across 67,000 deed books. From 2018 to 2019, another 28 million deed images were imported into the VMF system. As enhancements were made to the VMF application process, liens, plats and historical documents were progressively imported into the system, and, in October 2019, the program reached a significant milestone: ALL real estate records ever received by the Authority were loaded and available for viewing in the VMF system. Today, the system stores over **308 million images**, across **536,420 books** totaling nearly **14.4 TBs** of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the web interface.

All VMF records are securely stored and protected in two geographically diverse, high-security data centers in Georgia and Colorado. Stored digital content cannot be viewed without proper user credentials/authorization. Each clerk has their own secure login for their individual county, which makes it easy for them to access and verify. All counties are automatically enrolled in the VMF Program, and each clerk has an account that gives them access to their VMF records through an online dashboard. The dashboard serves as the interface between the clerk and the virtual microfilm content for their county.

Through the VMF online portal, the clerk is empowered, as custodian of the records, to access and view archived records on a self-serve basis. The VMF portal allows the clerk's desktop PC, laptop, or mobile device to become a high-performance microfilm reader/printer. To help clerks better understand the program and its benefits, VMF webinars are offered periodically to demonstrate how to access the VMF website and use its built-in tools. All 159 counties are able and encouraged to participate in this free program offered by the Authority.

Website functionality continues to be refined with new features being added over time. Search functionality is easy to use and allows the clerk to search for a specific document right down to the page number. Link-sharing is also a useful feature and allows the clerk to quickly collaborate with customers and staff, minimizing cost, time and effort in sharing information. Other features and improvements are ongoing to enhance the user experience.

More clerks and vendors are discovering the benefits of using the VMF system to search and locate images on demand. The discovery of missing images on a clerk server is a common reason for a restore request through VaultTek. However, the VMF system is another resource available to clerks for locating missing images. In FY 2023, the VMF system was used to restore over **150,475 images** back to clerk offices in **5 counties**. The biggest advantage to using the VMF system for this purpose is that the images in the system can be easily viewed and downloaded on demand if needed. This free tool is available to all clerks through the VMF portal at <https://vmf.gsccca.org>.

Following are VMF imaging totals as of June 30, 2023:

➤ Deed Books:	473,630
➤ Deed Images:	281,999,671
➤ Deed VMF:	56,146
➤ Deed Data Stored:	13.46 TBs
➤ Lien Books:	50,677
➤ Lien Images:	25,297,964
➤ Lien VMF:	5,731
➤ Lien Data Stored:	829.93 GBs
➤ Plat Books:	12,113
➤ Plat Images:	1,167,281
➤ Plat VMF:	272
➤ Plat Data Stored:	211.12 GBs

VMF accomplishments for FY 2023 include:

- Restored over 150,475 images back to 5 clerk offices using the VMF system.
- Imported over 8.2 million new deed images and over 1 million new lien images into the VMF system.
- Imported, on average, nearly 689,000 new deed images into the VMF system each month.
- Educated new and existing clerks on the history and benefits of the VMF program and offered guidance on accessing the online tools.

IT Department

Responsible for monitoring, maintaining, updating and protecting GSCCCA computer systems, networks, and statewide databases, the IT Department is truly the backbone of the Authority ... turning legislative mandates and project “dreams” into technological realities. For nearly three decades, the Authority’s IT staff has developed and implemented cutting-edge programs that offer unique services to Georgia’s counties and citizens often saving time and money and enhancing productivity. Always retooling and innovating for the world of tomorrow, the IT staff’s work was even more critical over the past several years as the pandemic pushed many to turn to technology, not just as a matter of convenience, but as a matter of survival.

As always, the staff is committed to the preservation of the data with which the Authority has been entrusted and ensuring that it is available to the public at all times. Important enhancements and upgrades are made each year to fulfill this commitment. Additionally, the Authority continually seeks ways to increase the speed and improve the efficiency, flexibility, reliability and usability of its systems while also reducing cost. The staff values user/customer feedback and is committed to incorporating it into the Authority’s products and technical decisions.

While large accomplishments by the Authority’s IT Department — like the recent launch of the new and improved CourtTRAX site — may have a more visible and transformative impact, the hundreds of smaller or less-visible IT jobs and actions that take place each year also play a crucial role in improving user experience and ensuring the smooth operation, security, and optimization of IT systems on a day-to-day basis. Together, they form a comprehensive approach to managing and improving infrastructure, as well as enhancing products and services, and enable the Authority to meet its goals and grow and innovate in a constantly evolving environment.

The following is a summary of the many accomplishments — including some of the less-visible ones — and statistics of the Authority’s IT Department for FY 2023.

Development Team – Website (www.gsccca.org)

With nearly 2.2 million unique visitors to www.gsccca.org this past fiscal year, the Authority believes that it is critical for the site to be clear, responsive and easy-to-use, and continues to look at ways to improve the user experience. Following are some of the statistics and enhancements made during FY 2023:

- Implemented ongoing security improvements by continually assessing and remediating the security of the www.gsccca.org website.
- Improved billing and account management for single-use accounts by implementing options for settling account balances on existing accounts before setting up new accounts.
- Implemented new printing page sizes for plats through the HTML5 image viewer so they can be printed on larger paper.
- Retired legacy Java Applet image viewer. HTML5 image viewer is now the only supported viewer and is supported by every modern web browser and device.
- Updated Android Map Search application to support newer Android devices and operating systems to ensure a positive user experience on the newest devices.

Development Team – eFiling

With substantial growth in electronic filing participation and usage over the past six years, the Authority continually updates its eFile site in order to incorporate customer feedback, improve the user experience, implement new features, and enhance performance, efficiency and reliability. (See Pages 35-38 for more information on the history of the Authority’s eFile Project.)

Following is data and other information from FY 2023:

- UCC eFile –
 - County participation in UCC eFile:
 - 151 of Georgia’s 159 counties currently participate in UCC eFile.
 - 122 of the 151 participating counties mandate the electronic filing of UCCs, 5 more counties than the previous fiscal year and 77% of all Georgia counties.
 - 104 of the 122 counties who mandate UCC eFiling take advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature. 7 of those counties were activated this fiscal year. This feature, only available to counties that mandate UCC eFiling, mitigates duplicate file numbers and allows multiple users to process UCC eFilings simultaneously increasing productivity.
 - 1,750,681 UCCs have been eFiled through the Authority since its inception in 2009, with 330,476 of those filings submitted through the Authority’s UCC eFile API, which was published in 2019.
 - 259,801 UCCs were eFiled this fiscal year with 89,937 (35%) of those filings submitted through the UCC eFile API.
 - UCC eFile lifetime usage has increased by 17.4% since last fiscal year.
 - Over 92% of accepted UCCs were electronically filed during FY 2023.
- Real Estate eFile –
 - As of July 1, 2023, all 159 Georgia counties will be activated to accept all document types for electronic filing. The Authority activated 15 counties during FY 2023 to allow for all document types and scheduled the remaining 4 counties to be activated on July 1 to ensure compliance with HB 974, legislation passed during the 2022 legislative session.
 - 126 clerks’ offices have opted to receive estimated filing fees for any real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing submitted through the Authority’s eFile portal where the Authority collects filing fees. This feature also allows integrated submitters to send estimated filing fees. Value-added submitters send estimated fees in the XML per the clerk’s request.
 - 6,898,696 total real estate documents have been eFiled since the program’s inception; 4,175,787 (60.5%) of those filings have been eFiled using the Authority’s eFile API.
 - 5,041,513 total deeds have been eFiled since inception in 2010.
 - 1,203,934 total liens have been eFiled since inception in 2015.
 - 176,987 total plats have been eFiled since inception in 2016.
 - 476,262 total state tax liens have been eFiled since inception in 2018.
 - 1,409,137 total real estate documents were eFiled this fiscal year; 755,358 (53.6%) of those filings were eFiled using the Authority’s eFile API.
 - 1,060,816 total deeds were eFiled this fiscal year.
 - 270,105 total liens were eFiled this fiscal year.
 - 29,555 total plats were eFiled this fiscal year.
 - 48,661 total state tax liens were eFiled this fiscal year.

- Real Estate eFile lifetime usage has increased by 25.7% since last fiscal year.
- Worked closely with business teams to create and implement the eFile System Certification of county vendor systems integrating with the eFile Real Estate API. Developed systems and processes used during the certification process. Vendor system testing is currently underway and is expected to be completed this summer.
- Completed eAssist eFile Certification. The Authority's eAssist program was the first to complete the eFile System Certification review.
- Expanded code-sharing initiative through Authority's GitHub repository to include code for use with Authority UCC API integration. The Authority uses this modern code-sharing platform to encourage collaboration on development projects that provide common functionality when interfacing with Authority systems. Code sharing allows software vendors, as well as the broader development community, to collaborate on projects by contributing new code, reporting bugs, and proposing features.
- Continued improvements to API documentation for both filers and vendors.
- Introduced additional Penalty and Interest filing fee data fields, mitigating potential issues caused by their previous inclusion in the Intangible Tax filing fee data field. This enhancement provides clearer and more accurate fee indications ensuring improved fee management for filers and counties.
- Enhanced administrative task logging for improved accountability and transparency.
- Strengthened administrative functions to improve the Authority administrative staff's data access and efficiency.
- Improved error handling with additional information provided to the user so that any potential issues can be addressed more quickly by HelpDesk staff.
- Continuously improved eFile Real Estate and UCC API validation rules in order to increase the effectiveness of responses to users.
- Optimized caching protocols in real estate filing submission.
- Improved filing warning responses to be more relevant to user needs.
- Continued to support eFile escrow accounts using wire transfers. The wire transfer process employs an automated self-serve approach that allows eFile customers to fund their accounts instantaneously at a low cost.
 - 277 wire transfers have been processed since inception for a total of over \$7.4M.
 - 197 wire transfers were processed this fiscal year for a total of just over \$5M.
 - Wire transfer customers have saved over \$181K in fees as compared to using credit cards, the Authority's other instantaneous funding option. Customers have saved \$121K in fees this fiscal year alone.
 - Internal reporting was developed for Authority staff.

Development Team – eFile Registry

The eFile Registry was developed by the Authority in 2011 to facilitate the registration, maintenance and verification of Real Estate eFile participants. The site provides a secure location for housing approved participants in the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. Following is data and other information from FY 2023.

- Added 4,181 participants to the registry for a total of 25,017 registered participants which includes:
 - 17,069 Self Filers (3,193 added this fiscal year)

- 1,760 Submitters (333 added this fiscal year)
- 6,188 Trusted Users (655 added this fiscal year)
- Continued to provide the capability for third-party systems to automatically verify the validity of participant ID numbers in real time.
 - 7.1 million queries processed this fiscal year.
 - 29.8 million queries processed since the eFile Registry opened in 2011.

Development Team – Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)

Following years of study, the Authority developed and launched its Filing Activity Notification System (FANS) in January with the goal of providing Georgia citizens with a powerful tool in the fight against house theft and other potentially fraudulent activity. Provided as a voluntary, consumer-friendly, and free service, FANS notifies property owners anytime filings are made related to their registered property, as well as notifies of filing activity related to UCCs (personal property), liens and plat filings. As of July 1, 8,584 people have registered on the FANS website to receive notifications and 9,126 alerts have been sent. (See Pages 42-44 for more information on FANS.)

- Developed messaging API for use by FANS and future Authority projects.
- Developed an admin section for GSCCCA employees to administer and retrieve reports. The admin section is integrated with the Authority’s existing identity system.
- Implemented “direct links” feature allowing Filing Activity Notification System (FANS) results to link directly to www.gsccca.org index data.
- Launched new reports to monitor user and usage growth.
- Developed service to unregister disabled phone numbers by processing a daily list provided by our messaging provider.
- Launched the first update including notification batching and account merging.

Development Team – Fines & Fees

- Launched new Fines & Fees system. The completely overhauled www.courttrax.org site streamlines and modernizes the Authority’s Fines and Fees Division. Development highlights include:
 - Creation of a robust website that allows court users to fully remit collections online via ACH.
 - Creation of a new web-based scanning agent to assist staff with scanning needs.
 - Creation of a modern REST-based web API that allows vendors to integrate local systems directly to the Authority’s Fines & Fees Division.
 - Improved calculator design backed by a separate REST-based web API which allows vendors to integrate their software to use the Authority’s API for calculations to ensure consistent results.
 - An innovative new method of scanning monthly forms. This method allows GSCCCA employees to scan documents interactively and directly to the website.
- Updated the new Fines & Fees site to accommodate new versions of the Consolidated Monthly Remittance Reports in response to legislation that affects the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF).
- Updated the new Fines & Fees calculator on www.courttrax.org to include legislated changes to the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF).

- Added the ability to create corrective entries for incorrectly filed forms in prior months ensuring accurate yearly reporting.
- Improved Fines & Fees reporting capability by implementing a new “Fund Report by County” that lists funds remitted or reported for each court within a county.

Development Team – Achieve (ACH)

- Improved efficiency and convenience by enabling two new options for counties to receive their disbursements via ACH.
 - The first new disbursement option allows deed, lien, plat, PT-61, and UCC image print payments to be disbursed to counties via ACH.
 - The second new option allows current deed image payments for eInvoicing and County Direct to be disbursed to counties via ACH.
- Improved ACH eFile disbursement reports to include pertinent filer contact information.

Development Team – Protective Orders

- Verified and electronically transmitted 52,580 Protective Orders, indexed by clerks, to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) computer system.
- Added additional validation to the indexing system to reduce processing exceptions when the orders are transmitted to GCIC.
- Added additional checks to the GCIC transmission process to look for potential issues proactively.
- Updated Dating Violence forms and training material after new versions were released in January to address some issues.

Development Team – Offender Based Tracking System (OBTS)

- Electronically transmitted 273,124 records of criminal court dispositions to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- Completed OBTS server and software upgrade project to improve the performance, stability, and security of the OBTS code and operating environment.
- Improved security by working with GCIC to install and test new SSL certificates.

Development Team – Other

- Managed the “Change Control” document which is used by senior management and IT staff to track change requests and thoughtfully prioritize development efforts to determine the best use of resources. 48 tracked projects were completed this past fiscal year.
- Continued development and support for eCertification Program (<https://ecert.gsccca.org>), an electronic certified document request and delivery system that was launched statewide in 2022. At present, 79 counties are actively participating in the eCert Program (42 of those counties were added in FY 2023); 12 counties are in the training and testing phase; and 43,574 total requests have been submitted through the eCertification Portal since the program launched.
- Updated internal Notary Division website to take advantage of new modern features. Changes include supporting all modern web browsers and updating to HTML5 image viewer.
- Continued to improve Notary Tools giving administrators even more control in correcting issues with notary applications and appointments.

- Implemented hardware-based code signing. This measure significantly enhances application security and provides users with increased confidence in the authenticity of Authority software.
- Signed Authority ScanSend and eAssist installers with new signing key and updated them with the latest version to prevent having to update after the initial installation.
- Made updates to central identity hub including the addition of a Client Management administration section. This will allow GSCCCA developers to more efficiently integrate new projects into the Identity Server in the future. At present, four projects are integrated with the Identity Server: eCertification, FANS, Fines & Fees, and the Image API.
- Maintained continuity of GSCCCA credit card processing services by updating CyberSource security keys.
- Made Image API enhancements targeted to improve the submission process.
- Improved State Lien validation logic to allow for configurable control/rev number settings that can be updated at runtime without requiring code modification.
- Upgraded both the Lien Index Data validation platform and Plat Index Data validation platform to use modern hardware and a current operating system.
- Worked with the Quality Control and Compliance team to review and remove unwanted data from the Index Data staging (quarantine) database.
- Upgraded the Real Estate Index Data validation platform to use modern hardware and a current operating system.
- Processed 245 Real Estate images using the On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed 137 of those images.
- Implemented UCC improvements to ensure accurate billing.
- Processed 9,273 UCC images using the On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed all 9,273 of those images.
- Improved internal communication between teams by documenting recurring scheduled processes/jobs on the GSCCCA wiki.

Systems Team

- Installed all software updates to our SQL database environment. These updates improve database performance, reliability, and security. SQL Server is a relational database management system responsible for storing and retrieving data as requested by other software applications.
- Executed performance analysis on several core databases including eFiling, Fines and Fees, UCC Indexing, and others, in order to significantly improve query processing times. This effort ultimately resulted in overall improved system speeds.
- Upgraded the operating system on VMWare ESXi platform, allowing multiple servers to run on a shared hardware platform. The effect is that on 12 physical servers, the Authority runs 142 virtualized servers. This allows the Authority to maximize utilization of physical server resources decreasing server hardware costs.
- Upgraded the software that runs backup system. The centralized backup system greatly eases the recovery of data when a loss occurs, narrows backup windows for increased system availability, and simplifies administration.
- Continued migrating a variety of internal applications to Windows Server 2019 platform which offers the latest in security, performance, and reliability enhancements.
- Upgraded the software on the WhatsUp and VeeamOne server to better monitor servers and applications. These IT tools specialize in server and application monitoring and improving server availability through detailed reporting and analytics.

- Performed routine mock data restores to test the GSCCCA data backups in the event of an actual data loss. The scale of such tests ranged from individual user files to complete sets of interdependent servers.
- Finished replacing all county search terminals to Windows 10 ensuring that PCs that are accessed by the public are safe and secure.
- Created a new Windows 11 install that is used in all Authority computers to ensure reliability and ease-of-use for customers.
- Began migrating all participating counties to a new authentication platform in order to provide higher security for OBTS transmissions. To date, 24 counties have been migrated.
- Performed an audit of local Administrator accounts to ensure that there were no weak or duplicate passwords in use. Account security is a vital first line of defense in protecting the organization from malicious actors.
- Regularly updated Fines & Fees reports at county requests to keep subscriber lists current. These reports are sent to the counties for daily and month-end disbursement distribution.
- Managed the audio, video, and Zoom components of the Clerks' Winter Conference. Over 40 participants were active over the two-day Zoom session with questions fielded to the presenters in real-time.
- Migrated the Sage Fixed Asset, Depreciation, and Accounting software to its own server for centralized management and to ensure continued support and compatibility for the Inventory and Accounting staffs.
- Updated our internal knowledgebase with hundreds of contributions documenting policies, procedures, solutions to common problems, and troubleshooting guides.

Network Team

- Made significant progress in initiative to upgrade bandwidth in all counties. Bandwidth needs in counties have increased with the rise of remote work and digital documentation handling. In an effort to address this reality, the Authority launched its Statewide Network Upgrade Initiative last spring to ensure continued support and security updates for network equipment and to prepare counties for bandwidth upgrades. After initial planning and obtaining quotes, the Authority began the process of upgrading existing equipment in all Superior Court clerk offices in September. Since then, Authority IT staff has traveled thousands of miles across Georgia completing upgrades in 76 counties to date. To coincide with this effort, the Authority is moving to consolidate internet service providers (ISPs) to just 3 in order to ease management of the 161 circuits across the state.
- Actively researching multiple options from leading hardware providers for upgraded networking equipment as part of the Statewide Network Upgrade Initiative. The new hardware will be faster, more secure, and more easily managed. Once the entire project is complete, with upgraded equipment installed and bandwidth upgrades in effect, clerks should see improved internet speeds and support staff will be able to more easily manage the statewide network.
- Migrated to a new external load balancer platform in primary and fail-over datacenters. The load balancers direct and balance network traffic to redundant servers. This results in stable access to GSCCCA websites, e-mail, and other online services.
- Performed site visits to counties working with clerks, staff and local IT to resolve issues ranging from network hardware replacements, network consolidation, and internet bandwidth upgrades.
- Acted as a HelpDesk escalation partner to complete network-related tickets resolving technical issues for clerks' offices resulting in more uptime and productivity.

HelpDesk – Customer Support

HelpDesk is the Authority’s customer support team which provides technical support for Superior Court clerks, their staff, and website customers. This team of CSRs responds to thousands of calls and emails annually, providing support from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. throughout the work week. Their outstanding work is critical to the continued success of the Authority, and is utilized and appreciated daily by clerks and website customers, including eFile and eLearn users. In addition to providing specialized service, the Authority prioritizes the ease and convenience of support to customers by offering three ways of communicating with its experienced team of customer service representatives: by phone, email or using “Live Chat” for real-time support.

Below are recent comments from a variety of constituencies all receiving the same stellar service from the HelpDesk team.

“I just wanted to take a few minutes and tell you how much I appreciate all you do. The staff there is always pleasant when my staff has issues. Offering the FANS and eCERT programs have been a valuable asset to my office.”

*– Stacie Baines, Clerk
Polk County Superior Court*

“I wish to take the time to express the high praise that Brittany deserves for assisting me with printing a copy of my deed (for Estate Planning purposes). I had ZERO knowledge on how to use and/or navigate the Clerks’ Authority website. Brittany stayed on the phone with me the WHOLE TIME I created an account and requested (and printed) the deed copy. She also answered questions which were not directly related to the deed itself. Brittany is truly an asset to your agency and I hope that this email allows for her to receive the recognition she so richly deserves!”

– Authority customer

“I always like to give credit where credit is due. Yesterday I was trying to find a Warranty Deed on your website. I wasn't having much luck when I saw a phone number to call for help. I called and got a gentleman named Trevin. Trevin guided me through the process of setting up an account, looking up property (including several combinations of name and middle initial, first name only, and my big mistake last name first), and finally printing the Warranty Deed. In my opinion, Customer Service is practically a misnomer these days. Customer disservice is generally more like it. Trevin is the exception. I'm not the most computer literate person (I'm over 70) but Trevin was very patient while guiding me through page after page. He was extremely knowledgeable about the procedure. He was very soft spoken which immediately negated any frustration on my side. In the end, I had my warranty deed and was on my way to taking care of my property issues.”

– Authority customer

“Just want to compliment and thank one of your help desk employees, Andy Ejigu. He walked me through your website (on the phone) in order to make sure my deed was listed correctly. He went above and beyond helping me to register and locate the needed information. Andy E. is truly an asset to your organization. His friendliness, knowledge and professionalism were exceptional and a rarity in today's customer service environment.”

– Authority customer

“I had the privilege of being assisted by Brittany today. She is an incredible asset to your organization. She went above and beyond to help me. She is professional, informative, patient and very kind. She is a jewel in your treasure box! Thank you.”

– Authority customer

“Thank you so much! This is a phenomenal program. You and your team are such a pleasure to work with.”

– IRS senior attorney

HelpDesk Statistics

The following annual statistics speak to the volume of work the Authority's customer support team handled this past year and the efficiency of their performance.

- Total Calls: 23,686
- Average Speed of Answer: 45 seconds
- Percent Overflowed to Voicemail: 1%
- Average Talk Time: 3 minutes 1 second
- Total Email Requests: 23,650+ (11% increase from previous year)
- Total Chat Sessions: 640 (214% increase from previous year)
- Total Hardware/Repair Requests: 480 (164% increase from previous year)
- Tickets Received: 20,828
- Tickets Resolved During Initial Contact: 86%

Top Requests for Help

- GSCCCA Website: Site Navigation Assistance (4,058)
- eFile Real Estate: Customer Filing Question (2,892)
- GSCCCA Website: Username/Password Request (1,829)
- Notary Project: Online Training General Q/A (1,381)
- eFile UCC: Customer Filing Question (675)
- GSCCCA Website: General Information/Non-Tech Q/A (562)
- Outlook: Email Setup Request (414)
- Notary Online: Application Assistance (383)
- Account Management: New Account Request (335)
- eCert: Username/Password Request (327)

Equipment & Software Outreach

In order to successfully implement its many legislatively mandated projects, the Authority helped modernize Georgia's Superior Court clerk offices by providing computers, printers, scanners, servers and other equipment — approximately 32,000 pieces of new equipment to date. For many clerk offices, this meant automating for the first time when the UCC project began in 1995.

In addition to providing new equipment, the Authority's IT staff travels to all 159 counties to service equipment, which is eligible for replacement every three years. To ensure continued support and security updates for network equipment, and to prepare counties for future bandwidth upgrades, the Authority launched a **Statewide Network Upgrade/Outreach Initiative**. Through this project, the Authority is upgrading existing equipment in clerks' offices over the next two years. By continuing to provide equipment, in addition to technological assistance and high-speed communications, the Authority supports all counties in their efforts to comply with Authority programs. Acquiring this equipment for most counties would not have been possible without the Authority due to the significant tightening of county budgets.

Beyond its ongoing equipment outreach, the Authority continues to seek feedback from clerks and respond to their needs. This responsive mindset led to two important initiatives being executed over the past several years: the acquisition and deployment of Microsoft Office/Adobe Acrobat software and laptop computers to clerks of Superior Court.

The Software Initiative had its genesis at the Board's 2019 Strategic Planning Session when the Authority learned that certain pieces of software — Microsoft Office and the full version of Adobe Acrobat which allows a user to edit or modify PDF documents directly — had become essential for the operation of a clerk's office. With this need in mind, the Authority undertook an initiative to provide these two pieces of software, and over the last couple years has installed nearly 1,100 individual software packages in 127 clerks' offices. Since this initiative began and moving forward, this software is being installed on new computers before shipment to clerks' offices.

The Laptop Initiative was born from the challenges of the pandemic, specifically the necessity of working remotely. To support clerks and further enable them with the tools to fulfill their duties whether working from the courthouse or offsite, the Authority offered a new laptop computer to each elected clerk of Superior Court. This initiative was well received and 150 Lenovo laptops were purchased, configured and distributed to Superior Court clerks, along with docking stations, wireless keyboards, mouses, and external monitors.

Equipment outreach to Superior Court clerks has been both a necessity and a priority for the Authority since its founding, and the distribution of software and laptops is another tangible example of the seriousness to which the Authority sees its role of supporting clerks in the operation of their offices. In addition to providing cutting-edge programs that offer unique services to Georgia's counties and citizens, the Authority can take pride in the fact that Georgia's Superior Court clerk offices are now outfitted with the tools necessary to successfully fulfill their duties. Superior Court clerks have not only entered the 21st century, but have embraced its technology and, in many areas, lead their counterparts from around the country.

Below is a summary of the Authority's equipment and software outreach efforts during FY 2023:

- Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **703 pieces of new and upgraded equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners.
- Purchased **\$429,185** of equipment for counties during FY 2023 to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties.
- Acquired and deployed **65 Microsoft Office** and **50 Adobe Acrobat** software packages to 25 clerks' offices as a continuation of the Authority's Software Initiative which began in 2019.
- Handled **62** purchase orders totaling **\$747,000** for equipment and infrastructure purchases for counties and GSCCCA offices.
- Ordered and inventoried the equipment necessary for the network equipment upgrade pilot project. With upgraded equipment installed, clerks will see improved internet speeds and support staff will be able to more easily manage the statewide network.
- Transferred **335** pieces of equipment to the Georgia Department of Administrative Services for proper disposal per state guidelines.
- Processed multiple equipment repairs essential for daily operations within clerk offices including computers, flat-panel monitors and scanners. Tracked all repairs and ensured that items were returned in a timely manner.
- Continued to promote open communication with counties for the purpose of encouraging compliance with all Authority projects including UCC Project, Real Estate Deed Project, and Lien, Plat & Map Project.
- Maintained an inventory management tracking component helping to ensure that all county inquiries, problems and other issues were addressed promptly and accurately.
- Continued to streamline and simplify communication between counties and the Authority by providing real-time information on their inventory, GSCCCA equipment policies, and frequently asked questions.

Training Program

Since the UCC Project launched in 1995, training has become one of the Authority's core services, and each year this critical resource is developed even further. Through this department, the Authority provides the most accurate and current information to Superior Court clerks, their staff, and other interested constituencies, while also prioritizing the convenience and accessibility of the training. The Authority's goal is to create learning opportunities that are flexible, personalized, and relevant, and, to this end, offers many types of training including online courses and webinars, in addition to in-person and virtual classes. All training is open and free-of-charge to Superior Court clerks, their employees, and vendors, and is utilized by thousands each year.

With convenience and access as key components of its training goals from the beginning, the Authority began offering online training courses in 2006. With the intent of further developing this popular and widely utilized format and enhancing the experience for all users, the Authority launched **eLearn.gsccca.org** in 2019 as its new learning management system. With eLearn, the Authority provides clerks and the public with an up-to-date system, while also giving staff the flexibility to create and add additional training courses beneficial to clerks' offices in a timely manner. Since its launch, nearly **109,000** individuals — including clerks, deputy clerks, vendors, and notaries — have taken advantage of this free training by accessing the Authority's eLearn training platform nearly **403,000** times. At present, eLearn offers eight online courses, and during FY 2023 alone, almost **36,000** users accessed the training platform over **120,000** times.

In addition to its online courses, the Authority continues to offer training through traditional in-person classes as well as remote learning options, including webinars which were introduced early on. Already a popular format, webinars became an even more important training tool during the pandemic when in-person classes were suspended. The Authority was positioned to quickly respond to the increased need for remote learning by converting many of its in-person classes to the webinar format. Although the Authority has begun offering in-person training again, the support for webinars has only grown confirming that this popular and convenient format will continue to be utilized moving forward. During the past fiscal year, the Authority conducted **176 training sessions** using its varied formats — webinars, in-person classes, and one-on-one training — and through these sessions, approximately **3,000** people were trained on a variety of important and much-requested topics.

Following is more detailed information about the Authority's training efforts during FY 2023.

Online Courses

The Authority currently offers eight online training opportunities through its eLearn platform, and during FY 2023, nearly 36,000 people took advantage of this convenient training. Courses are offered free-of-charge and are available 24/7 making training affordable and flexible. Additionally, participants can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping or accelerating through concepts as they choose, with some research suggesting that online learning can be even more effective than in-person instruction. Two new eLearn courses are currently being developed to offer clerks and their staffs additional online training opportunities. The courses include "eCertification Portal," which is expected to launch in 2023, and "UCC eFile," which will hopefully launch in 2024.

Following are the online courses that the Authority currently offers and the number of Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks, other court personnel, vendors, and public users who took advantage of this training during FY 2023:

- GSCCCA Indexing Standards
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors.
 - 147 people participated in the course this year.
 - 34 participants took the Indexing Certification Exam and, of those, 21 successfully passed the exam.

- GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors.
 - 113 people participated in the course this year.

- GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors.
 - 88 people participated in the course this year.

- GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction
 - Training available to all court personnel (Superior, State, Probate, etc.) and vendors.
 - 233 people participated in the course this year.

- Notary Online
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
 - 61 people participated in the course this year.

- Notary Online – Mail-in Renewal
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
 - 50 people participated in the course this year.

- Notary Public Training
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and the general public. The course is designed for people who are interested in becoming notaries.
 - 29,578 people participated in the course this year.
 - 22,017 participants took the Notary Public Final Exam and, of those, 21,046 successfully passed the exam.
 - Some Superior Court clerks now require notary public applicants to pass the Notary Public Final Exam to receive their notary commissions.

- UCC Training
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
 - 69 people participated in the course this year.

Webinars

Growing in popularity over the last decade due to its flexibility and cost savings, remote learning became critical during the pandemic and remains an important training tool for the Authority. During FY 2023, the Authority utilized the Zoom platform to offer a robust schedule of **26 webinars** covering the following topics:

- Authority ACH 101
- Authority Websites
- eFile Portal 101
- Fines and Fees 101
- Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)
- Get to Know the Authority
- New Fines & Fees System
- New UCC Forms
- Pending Lien Search
- Protective Orders
- Protective Order Exception Report
- PT-61 Transmission Errors
- Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
- Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) – Duties and Responsibilities of the Filing Office

In-person Classes

Although webinars grew in popularity during the pandemic, in-person classes offer a human interaction component that is uniquely important no matter how sophisticated and convenient remote training technology can be. Many learners feel more comfortable in a traditional classroom setting convinced that face-to-face engagement is essential for greater clarity and understanding of the material. For this reason, in-person classes will continue to be an important tool in the Authority's training arsenal.

Pre-Covid, the Authority conducted around 30-35 in-person classes each year hosted by Superior Court clerks across Georgia. After suspending in-person training completely for over a year and a half, the Authority has been adding in-person training options back to its schedule as appropriate and as requested.

This past fiscal year, the Authority offered 10 in-person classes:

- 4 Real Estate Indexing Standards classes for Superior Court clerks
- 4 Fines & Fees classes for all courts
- 2 Fines & Fees classes conducted in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for Municipal Court clerks

Additionally, the Authority offered 124 one-on-one sessions on a variety of topics — with a majority on the eCertification Program — and conducted in-person training at the 2022 COAG Fall Conference in Savannah, the 2022 Clerks' Planning Meeting at Brasstown Valley, the 2023 Clerks' Winter Training in Atlanta, the 2023 Clerks' Spring Conference at St. Simons, and the 2023 COAG Summer Conference at Jekyll Island.

Training for Other Constituencies

In addition to providing training to Superior Court clerks and their staff, the Authority also offers instruction — both in-person and remote — to various additional constituencies and continues to successfully partner with other groups to conduct important training. Following are more details regarding these efforts during FY 2023:

- Conducted 16 Notary Public Training sessions — 12 webinars and 4 in-person classes — on the role and responsibilities of a notary public. These classes were hosted by Superior Court clerks and offered to members of the public free-of-charge. Almost 2,300 Georgians took advantage of this free training during FY 2023.
- Continued offering an online course — Notary Public Training — to provide another option for instruction on the role and responsibilities of a notary public. As mentioned above, this training is provided to members of the public free-of-charge. Following completion of the course, participants are offered a final exam that some Superior Court clerks are now requiring notary public applicants pass in order to receive their notary commissions. During the past fiscal year, over 29,500 Georgians took advantage of this free training, and, of the course participants, over 22,000 took the Notary Public Final Exam with 96% of those passing it.
- Conducted 2 in-person Fines & Fees classes, as mentioned above, in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for Municipal Court clerks.
- Conducted multiple in-person and remote one-on-one training sessions for different constituencies — including other courts, tax commissioners and the general public — on a variety of topics including Bulk Lien eFiling, eCertification, eFile Overview, Filing Activity Notification System (FANS), Fines & Fees, Fines & Fees Rewrite, Image Initiative, Notary Online, Pending Lien Search, and UCC eFile.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual meeting sessions for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) regarding the e-Apostille process.

Outreach & Professional Development

The Authority recognizes and values its symbiotic relationship with Superior Court clerks, and in this vein, works hard to provide support to clerks and their staff in many ways. The Authority also seeks and takes advantage of opportunities to reach the public and provide education on who we are and what we do. Additionally, the Authority recognizes the value of professional development and encourages staff to be involved in industry groups and work toward furthering their own training and education.

Below is a summary of the Authority's outreach and professional development activities for FY 2023.

- Continued to provide free public access to the Authority's invaluable statewide indexes through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices.
- Continued to update and add new information to the Clerk Resource Center. This password-protected website was designed by the Authority to support Superior Court clerks and their staffs. The site contains clerk-specific information including program status reports, conference materials, and links to Notary Online, PT-61 Online, and the Authority's Training Center. The site also provides a one-stop location for the Authority to post and for clerks to access updated information on legislative changes and other dynamic issues that will affect Superior Court clerk offices.
- Continued to produce quarterly newsletter for Superior Court clerks that is posted on the Authority website.
- Continued to strengthen the Authority's social media presence. By utilizing Facebook and Twitter, the Authority is able to communicate with its customers and reach out to potential subscribers while keeping clerks better informed.
- Handled and processed to resolution UCC, notary public, real estate, fines and fees, and training inquiries from clerks' offices, UCC filers, online users and the general public.
- Communicated quarterly Fines & Fees results with external groups including the Legislative Budget Office, the Senate Budget Office, the Georgia Supreme Court, the Governor's Office, and the Georgia Public Defenders Council. Additionally, monthly Fines & Fees results were submitted to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council fulfilling statutory reporting requirements for Local Victim Assistance program funds.
- Provided support to probation companies and other entities affiliated with the courts for purposes of collecting and disbursing fines and fees.
- Developed and launched Filing Activity Notification System (FANS) in 2023 to provide Georgia citizens with a powerful tool in the fight against house theft and other potentially fraudulent activity. Provided as a free, voluntary and consumer-friendly service, FANS notifies property owners anytime filings are made related to their registered property, as well as notifies of filing activity related to UCCs (personal property), liens and plat filings. As of July 1, 8,584 people have registered on the FANS website to receive notifications and 9,126 alerts have been sent.
- Sold 2,465 Notary Handbooks. The handbook includes forms and definitions and is an excellent reference for Georgia notary law, notary procedures and best practices. It was created in 1999 in conjunction with the American Society of Notaries. In addition to direct sales, the Authority continues to provide notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices with the goal of providing point-of-sale education materials to Georgia's notaries. This past fiscal year, the Authority sold nearly triple the handbooks it sold two years ago.

- Continued to provide courtesy email notification 30 days prior to a notary's commission expiring to all notaries with an email address on file. The Authority started this service in 2010, but recently added a feature that allows clerks to customize the email by including county-specific language with special instructions or requirements on how to renew the notary commission.
- Conducted 16 Notary Public Training sessions (12 webinars and 4 in-person classes) on the role and responsibilities of a notary public. These classes were hosted by Superior Court clerks and offered to members of the public free-of-charge. Nearly 2,300 Georgians took advantage of this free training during FY 2023.
- Conducted 2 Fines & Fees in-person classes in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for new Municipal Court clerks.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual meeting sessions for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) regarding the e-Apostille process.
- Maintained liaison roles with the State Bar, public users, title examiners, surveyors, GCIC, and courthouse vendors.
- Fielded questions from law enforcement and offices of the United States Attorneys regarding the UCC filing process.
- Communicated with the FBI's Domestic Terrorism Unit regarding sovereign citizen issues. The Authority serves in a liaison capacity between the FBI and Superior Court clerks.
- Handled, in conjunction with the Attorney General's office, open records requests from the public.
- Benefited from Authority staff's involvement and leadership in state and national industry groups:
 - Staff member continued seventh term as president of the board of the Notary Public Administrators (NPA). Comprised of state notary administrators, the NPA brings together public and private stakeholders in the notary industry. The Authority's participation in NPA allows senior management to monitor changes and trends in the area of notary law nationally that could affect the state of Georgia. This leadership role had the following responsibilities:
 - Represented the Clerks' Authority at the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) 2023 Winter Conference and reported on the activities and 2023 goals of NPA, a section of NASS.
 - Presented at the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA) 2023 Conference where the Clerks' Authority was recognized for innovation with the introduction of the Filing Activity Notification System (FANS). The presentation on FANS generated many positive comments and inquiries from other states regarding the system's development.
 - Staff member served as past-president of the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA), and in this leadership position, continued to participate in strategic planning meetings and promote the vital role that IACA plays in the UCC filing office. IACA brings together UCC industry representatives from the private (filing parties) and public (filing offices) sectors.

Conclusion

Since opening its doors in 1995, the Authority has seen tremendous growth and strategic innovation, and through its many programs, the following has become a reality without any funding from local, state or federal taxes:

- The public has unprecedented access to valuable information in the Superior Court clerk's office.
- The State of Georgia benefits from more modernized clerk of Superior Court offices.
- Clerks' offices enjoy additional resources as budgets are stretched thin.
- The business community has new, innovative tools for making work more efficient and effective.
- Georgia lawmakers have access to data that allows them to more effectively set public policy.

Although much has been accomplished, our goals remain ambitious and unchanged. We will continue to:

- Strengthen our critical partnership with clerks of Superior Court and ensure they have the resources they need for success.
- Sustain our robust culture of innovation by remaining flexible, rethinking how we work, listening to our customers, anticipating shifts in the business environment, and meeting challenges head-on.
- Streamline and add value to our programs, and strategically transform our operations for long-term efficiency.
- Provide superior customer service to all our constituencies.
- Foster existing relationships and partnerships and embrace new opportunities.
- Seek sustainable solutions to the financial issues with which we are faced.
- Achieve preeminence as an acknowledged leader in the public records arena.

The information contained in this report is respectfully presented to provide an overview of the history and projects of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority and a more detailed review of the many accomplishments of the past fiscal year. These achievements would not have been possible without the support and tremendous contributions of Georgia's Superior Court clerks, the vision and leadership of the Authority Board of Directors, and the outstanding abilities and tireless efforts of our dedicated professional staff.

For additional information on any of the programs listed or the content of this report, please contact Mike Smith, GSCCCA communications director & compliance officer, at mike.smith@gsccca.org.

