Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority
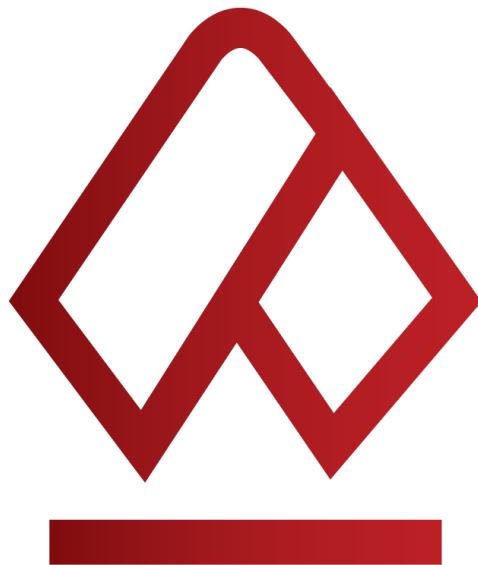
2018-2019 Accomplishments & Year-end Report

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy stood before an assembly of civic leaders and citizens in Frankfort, Germany, and articulated his philosophy on progress:

> *"For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future."*

JFK's profound words are as applicable today as they were when delivered over a half century ago. Change is inevitable and one of the few constants in today's environment. Change can also be disruptive, but is often necessary for progress. In fact, the term "disruptor" has become prevalent not just in the business world but in modern culture as well. Consider some of the most famous disruptors of today: Amazon, Netflix and Uber; these companies looked to the future, transformed their industries, and changed how we live and do business.

The term "disruptive innovation" was coined in 1995, the same year the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority opened its doors. And though it is unlikely that our founders used this language, their vision was progressive and paradox-changing and, with the support of Georgia's 159 Superior Court clerks, the Authority did change or disrupt the way business was done.

A single project in 1995 – the UCC Project – started it all; initially disruptive and with many doubters, this project forever changed how a financing statement would be filed in the state of Georgia, and, in so doing, provided secured parties with greater protection while saving them both time and money. Now, 24 years later, the Authority has played the disrupter role many more times and closes its fiscal year as a successful, diverse entity overseeing 20+ projects including an invaluable website that currently holds over 273 million images and was accessed 5.2 million times this past year by 1.1 million people across the world.

The Authority's existence and success would not be possible without the continued support and collaboration of Georgia's Superior Court clerks. The Authority was created by clerks for the benefit of clerks, and since establishment, has provided to clerks $79 million in additional funding and over 27,000 pieces of new equipment. This symbiotic relationship is a critical element in the Authority's success to date and its ability to achieve even greater results in the future.

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 additional 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 over two 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, that many believed were not possible, 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 legal 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 and Plat Re-Indexing Project
- ➢ eFile Project
- ➢ Lien, Plat & Map Project
- ➢ State Tax Lien eFiling Project
- ➢ PT-61 Project
- ➢ Premium Search Account
- ➢ Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App)
- ➢ Protective Order Registry
- ➢ Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- ➢ Carbon Sequestration Registry
- ➢ MyVault Online Archive Program
- ➢ Georgia Archives Initiative
- ➢ Notary Scanning Project
- ➢ Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program

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.
- Additional funding and new equipment for clerks' offices – $79 million and 27,000 pieces of new equipment in total.
- Information that allows lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.
- Critical and timely crime data to protect the safety of the public and law enforcement officers throughout Georgia.

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 for Georgia counties and citizens.

Accomplishments – Highlights from FY 2019

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

- **Compensated clerks' offices** over $6 million this fiscal year for prints off the Authority website ($62 million for prints since the Authority was established), and nearly $1.15 million this fiscal year for deed images ($17 million for deed images since inception of the project).
- Continued to grow and enhance the **Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program** by adding the ability to support the import of liens, plats and historical documents. Replacing the traditional microfilming services offered previously to Superior Court clerks, the VMF Program streamlines the microfilm process and provides an enhanced method for quickly browsing, searching, printing and downloading microfilm content using a PC, laptop or mobile device. Over 73 million deed images within more than 104,000 deed books have been loaded into the VMF system resulting in over 3 terabytes of data stored since the project's launch in November 2017. Every month, more images are being imported into the system and are available for viewing through the online portal at https://vmf.gsccca.org.
- Launched the **Georgia Archives Initiative**. In an ongoing effort to promote the importance of disaster planning, Authority staff broadened its outreach by offering all clerks the opportunity to obtain a full list of their media holdings at the Georgia Archives. By reviewing and analyzing what records are stored at the Archives, there is a longer-term opportunity to compare that against what is stored in the GSCCCA imaging system and what is protected in the GSCCCA MyVault. In doing so, the Authority plans 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. This information will allow clerks to make informed decisions about how best to protect their records. One hundred and twenty-five counties participated in this initiative.
- Conducted personalized **MyVault account audits** for all 155 counties participating in the data archive program. Every clerk enrolled in MyVault was contacted by Authority staff to personally

review and discuss their archive account details. Job items were verified and disaster planning reminders communicated, including SB 135 requirements. Over 71 million files totaling more than 25 TB of data were added to the vault in FY 2019 bringing the current storage total to more than 825 million files and 127 TB of live data protected through MyVault.

➢ Continued to advance the **1991-90 Historical Project** with 90 counties currently participating. Since inception of the project, the Authority has added over 709,000 deed records to its publicly searchable website, and is reviewing another 6,000 records currently in quarantine.

➢ Added additional instruments to our website through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project** for a total of over 1.6 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. Fifty-five counties are now participating in the program.

➢ Launched a new **Learning Management System**, https://eLearn.gsccca.org, which is now available to all users. With *eLearn*, the Authority offers an up-to-date system for clerks and the public to use, while also giving the Authority the flexibility to create and add additional training courses beneficial to clerks' offices in a timely manner. Since its launch, over 7,100 users have accessed the new site nearly 22,000 times. Additionally, all online training courses were reviewed, updated or rewritten as part of the launch of the new system.

➢ Continued to grow the **eFile Project** both in terms of participating counties and filers:
  o **UCC eFile** – 23 new counties were activated this fiscal year for a current total of 131 participating counties. As of June 30, 10 of those counties only allow the electronic filing of UCCs. Since the launch of UCC eFile in 2009, over 717,000 UCCs have been electronically filed with nearly 138,000 of those eFiled in FY 2019 and a record number of 14,255 eFiled in June 2019.
  o **Child Support eFile** – 13 new counties were activated this fiscal year for a current total of 138 participating counties. Since the launch of Child Support eFile in 2010, nearly 608,000 filings have been accepted, with approximately 86,000 of those during FY 2019.
  o **Real Estate eRecording** – All 159 counties participate to some degree, with 110 counties accepting all document types, 13 more than last fiscal year. Since the launch of Real Estate eRecord in 2011, over 1.2 million real estate documents have been electronically filed with nearly 566,000 of those during FY 2019.

➢ Launched **new eFiling feature** where the estimated eFiling fees of any real estate (deed, lien or plat) package filed on the Authority's eFile portal may be transmitted to the clerk's office as additional information. 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.

➢ Increased **Premium Search accounts** by over 7.5% for a fiscal year-end total of 4,486 accounts. Launched in 2012, the Premium account includes the Clerks' Authority Map Search Application and allows users to search by property address as well as land lot making it attractive to realtors, bankers, attorneys, surveyors, appraisers, and other members of the business community.

- Initiated the **Notary Scanning Project**, a short-term project that involves the digital scanning of notary certificates. The purpose is to ensure that these paper records are securely stored in a digital form for added long-term protection. When completed, over 260,000 notary certificates will be loaded into the Virtual Microfilm system.
- Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the **Fines & Fees Division**.
- Added **Live Chat** to our website. In addition to calling or emailing the Authority's HelpDesk, our clerks and website customers now also have access to this convenient technology to receive real-time support from our experienced team of customer service representatives.
- Improved Quality Assurance efficiency by developing new **Quality Control & Compliance website and reports**. Previously it took two to three weeks to conduct a quality review, but the new capabilities have reduced the process to as little as three days.
- Completed rewrite of **Customer Management Module** (CMM). In addition to providing an enhanced web-based interface, this project included improving invoices, based on customer feedback, to make them easier to read and understand. Invoices are now provided in a PDF format and include an improved account summary, an improved current month activity section, and a new section reflecting total current charges for each user and sub-account. Additionally, by logging into Account Management, customers can now download a CSV file of their current month's charges for use in their local system.
- Initiated a project to develop a **UCC API eFiling solution**. Once complete, this will allow national and local filers to integrate with the Authority's eFiling portal so that filings can be transmitted in bulk, thereby improving the eFiling process for large-volume filers. In addition to filers, Superior Court clerks will also benefit as they will be able to utilize new APIs to retrieve and accept UCCs programmatically as well.
- Implemented **new fiber optic switches** to replace aging infrastructure. The fiber switches handle almost all data that is generated at the Authority and are a critical component of the Authority's high-speed storage solution. The new hardware also reduces data latency giving all the servers faster runtime.
- Enhanced **training of customer support team** by sending all members to Orlando to attend the Disney Institute, a concentrated one-day course called "Disney's Approach to Quality Service." The goal was to provide all members of the customer service staff, who interface directly with the public, the opportunity to learn the key elements of the "Disney way." Recognizing that ongoing training is necessary for maintaining top-notch quality service, the Authority believes this training experience reinforces the role and value of the customer interface, builds confidence and conviction of purpose in its staff, and ultimately pays dividends in the form of improved customer satisfaction and good-will.

Program Statistics – Highlights from FY 2019

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. Numbers don't tell the full story

but the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority, and are further evidence of our growth and success over the past 24 years.

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

- Added over **12 million** images to the system for a fiscal year-end total of over **273 million** images accessible to the public through www.gsccca.org.
- Had over **479 million** page views and over **1.1 million** unique visitors to www.gsccca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet over **5.2 million times** from **212 countries** this past fiscal year.
- Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **843 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. Of this total, the Authority deployed **797** pieces of new equipment (352 computers, 308 monitors and 137 scanners) to 50 Superior Court clerk offices to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties. The Authority has provided approximately **27,000** pieces of new equipment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.
- Supported Superior Court clerks and staff, website users and other customers by handling over **16,000 phone calls** and over **9,200 emails** to HelpDesk, the Authority's customer support team.
- Conducted **84** classroom training sessions, webinars and one-on-one programs on various subjects for nearly **1,700** participants at **29** different locations around the state. The Authority also trained nearly **14,000** people through its five online courses. Over **90,000 users** have benefitted from accessing the Authority's Learning Management System (LMS) since its inception in 2006.
- Indexed approximately **252,000 UCCs** and conducted approximately **9,000 Certified Searches** for FY 2019. Since the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed over **6.3 million** UCCs and conducted over **264,000** Certified Searches.
- Increased participation in **Notary Online** to **142 counties. 95%** of notary applications in Georgia were submitted electronically via the Authority's Notary Online application system.
- Maintained the statewide notary database (A statewide total of approximately **43,500 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.) and issued approximately **33,500 apostilles** this past fiscal year. In FY 2019, the Notary & Authentications Division served over **9,400 walk-in customers**, processed approximately **4,300 mail-in orders,** answered nearly **8,600 phone calls**, and sold approximately **1,300 Notary Handbooks**.
- Collected and disbursed approximately **$86.4 million** in court fees; performed annual court reviews on approximately **1,100 courts** to help ensure the accuracy of the data being reported to the Authority; and processed over **30,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Electronically transmitted to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), a division of the GBI, over **45,000 Protective Orders** indexed by clerks.
- Electronically transmitted to GCIC **319,000 records of criminal court dispositions** from various courts in Georgia for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- Upgraded **36** county connections and coordinated **21** county-based network moves, changes, or implementations.

- ➢ Backed up **832 TB** of data during FY 2019. If this data were transferred to Ultra HD 4K Blu-rays, it would require 8,520 disks, and the resulting stack would be over 33 feet tall.
- ➢ Processed **14 million** emails and blocked **6 million** pieces of spam and virus-laden emails.

Core Commitments

The Authority's success has been fueled by several core commitments … an obsessive attention to detail, a constant drive to anticipate and meet the evolving needs of its customers, a desire to constantly improve its products, and a commitment to provide unmatched customer service across the board. Below are a few recent comments from clerks about the Authority and its importance to their work:

> *"I have entered all the deed book/pages. Again, many thanks to Richard and Eric for all the help and assistance! Everyone already knows the Clerks' Authority is the BEST, but I just want to say it again – y'all are the BEST!"*
> *– Wendy Whitaker-Lee, Clerk*
> *Charlton County Superior Court*

> *"I recently contacted the Clerks' Authority in need of information regarding Colquitt County's archived records. Jonathan promptly replied to me by phone and email. After I made my request known, he generated my data and I received it the same day. Thank you, Jonathan, for being on top of your game! You are the Best!"*
> *– Lynn Purvis, Clerk*
> *Colquitt County Superior Court*

> *First email: "Eric got us going and was very helpful! I deeply appreciate you making this happen and happen so quickly!"*

> *Second email a few months later: "I had an emergency in Morgan yesterday and Andy was awesome! Thank you!"*
> *– Jody M. Higdon, Clerk*
> *Morgan County Superior Court*

As stated above, providing unmatched quality customer service is one of our core principles, and something our clerks have come to expect. But whether dealing with a Superior Court clerk or a member of the public, we want to be professional and efficient, as well as friendly and helpful, in all our interactions. Below are the transcribed comments from a recent voicemail to the Authority's executive director. These comments acknowledge the excellent customer service of one staff member but also represent the kind of service we want to provide and impression we want to leave on all our customers and other constituents with whom we interact:

"I was directed to your office for [some information], and after speaking with Justine, she pointed me in the right direction … name of the office, name of the person I'd speak to, phone number. I just wanted to let you know … she was very succinct, friendly, professional, and just top-notch. I believe in giving back to those who are very kind, friendly and helpful to me. [Justine] couldn't have done any better of a job."

Vision for the Future

For 24 years – through legislative battles, technological challenges and economic adversity – Superior Court clerks and Authority staff have worked together to create the amazing success story we know today. Throughout our history, we have continually scanned the horizon, strived to identify new and emerging trends, needs, and opportunities, and then focused on making the necessary investments and adjustments to navigate them successfully. The Authority works hard to not, in JFK's memorable words, "look only to the past or present," but rather to always look to the future and embrace our role as an innovator and leader in the public records arena.

To this end and with the continuing goal of being forward-thinking, the Authority recently held a two-day strategic planning session with its Board of Directors to formalize the process of prioritizing resources and planning for the future. In preparation for these meetings, the Authority solicited the input of Superior Court clerks through a formal survey to ensure all voices were included in this important planning process. Always mindful of the Authority's critical role of supporting clerks in the operation of their offices, the results of the survey, including the thoughtful and insightful comments provided, served as a roadmap for the two-day session and played a major role in the Board's considerations and ultimate decisions.

As part of the structured strategic planning process, the Board also spent significant time reviewing the history of the Authority including all projects initiated since inception and their associated costs. Additionally, the Board studied past and projected available funding, expenditures and anticipated resources with the goal of determining the direction and priority of Authority projects for the next ten years.

After careful consideration of the information provided and an informed discussion and debate, the Board determined five strategic goals for future implementation. The five initiatives in priority order include:

➢ Initiative for the improvement of current indexing data quality
➢ Initiative to add additional historical plat data to Authority's online system
➢ Initiative to provide for electronic certification of official records
➢ Initiative to implement optical character recognition
➢ Initiative to create a universal search on website to minimize user's effort and time

Staff research and consideration of each of these important initiatives is already underway with details and timelines to be refined and communicated in FY 2020.

The Authority cannot rest on its laurels if our future is to be as bright as our past. As we enter our 25th year of service, we are committed to remaining entrepreneurial and strategic, positioning the Authority for preeminence, not only for the short term but for the long run, and continuing our stellar record of innovation and success for decades to come.

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 about www.gsccca.org

The Authority's website, www.gsccca.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 and 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 5.2 million times from 212 countries in FY 2019. Information that previously required physical trips 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 2019

- Images added to the system: 12 million
- Total images in the system: 273.5 million
- Sessions: 5.2 million
- Data Transferred/Bandwidth: 12.65 TB
- Page views: 479 million
- Unique visitors: 1.1 million
- Percentage of users accessing website using mobile device: 22%
- Average page views per visit: 25
- Average visit duration: 12:46 minutes
- Number of countries that visited: 212
- Top 4 countries: U.S., India, Philippines and United Kingdom
- 47.41% of all visitors use Chrome; 24.24% of all visitors use internet Explorer; 15.03% use Safari; 5.98% use Firefox; and 5.73% use Edge.

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 over a million annual, distinct visitors to www.gsccca.org, the Authority believes that it is critical for its site to be clear, responsive and easy-to-use for its customers, and will continue to look at ways to improve the user experience.

Website Subscribers

- Total (Regular + Premium Search) monthly subscribers as of 6/30/19: **16,993**
- Regular monthly subscribers as of 6/30/19: **12,507**
- Premium Search monthly subscribers as of 6/30/19: **4,486**
- Percentage increase in Premium Search accounts for FY 2019: **7.5%**
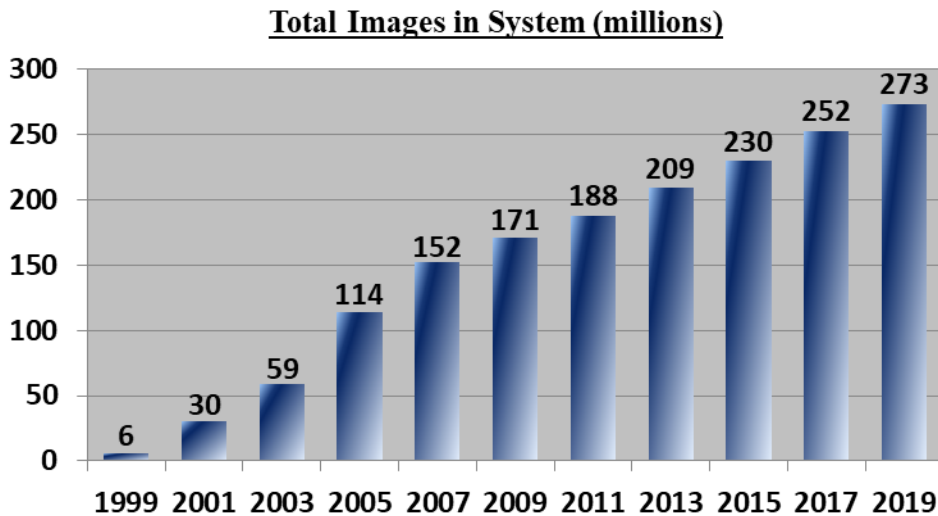- Single-use subscribers added during fiscal year: **26,147**

Monthly Subscribers (thousands)
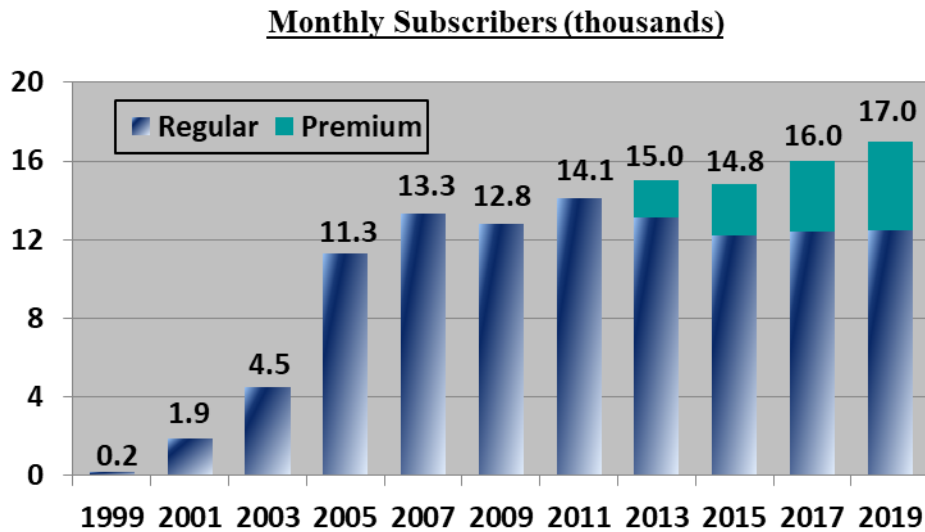
Since 1999, website subscriptions have increased dramatically, clear evidence of the Authority's growth and the growing value of its statewide indexes. Beyond the numbers, though, the Authority gauges its success and relevance on the response and feedback from its customers and how integral the Authority's 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 our customers. During FY 2019, over **12 million** images were added to the system for a fiscal year-end total of over **273 million images**. See the following chart and bar graph for more details.

	Images Added in FY 2019	Total Images as of 6/30/19
Deeds	9,736,823	236,187,942
Liens	1,419,757	21,117,530
Plats	107,464	1,204,532
UCCs	326,049	8,477,742
PT-61s	418,193	6,478,716
Total	**12,008,286**	**273,466,462**

Total Images in System (millions)

Bar chart showing total images in system by year: 1999: 6, 2001: 30, 2003: 59, 2005: 114, 2007: 152, 2009: 171, 2011: 188, 2013: 209, 2015: 230, 2017: 252, 2019: 273.

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 – over **27,000 pieces of new equipment** since opening its doors in 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 in 1999 to nearly **17,000 subscribers** today, over **479 million page views** in FY 2019, and over **273 million images** online, the Authority has virtually eliminated downtime. Whether a user searches the records on Tuesday morning 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.gsccca.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 our image viewers so customers can quickly and easily report issues with any image on our 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 valued and encouraged. 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. (The Authority receives a $5 fee for every deed filed with a Superior Court clerk.) These fees, in addition to subscription fees for access to the Authority's statewide indexes, provide the majority of the funding to operate many of the Authority's programs.

The financial condition of the Authority remained healthy throughout FY 2019, even though overall revenues did not meet budget. While deed fee revenue was below forecast, other projects performed slightly ahead of expectations. The Authority is well positioned to meet its upcoming FY 2020 budgeted obligations.

FY 2018 Year-end Audit Completed by Mauldin & Jenkins

- ➢ Received an unqualified "clean" opinion from Mauldin & Jenkins for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018 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 2019, the Authority compensated Superior Court clerk offices over $6 million for print monies generated and nearly $1.15 million 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 amount of charges that can be incurred by delinquent subscribers.
- Implemented input from customers to improve invoices making them easier to read and understand. Invoices are now provided in a PDF format and include an improved account summary, an improved current month activity section, and a new section reflecting total current charges for each user and sub-account. Additionally, by logging into Account Management, customers can now download a CSV file of their current month's charges for use in their local system.

Accounting Information

- Total active subscriber accounts as of June 30, 2019: **16,993**
  This includes **4,486** Premium Search accounts.
- Average monthly direct access subscription revenue during FY 2019: **$253,857**
- Single-use subscription revenue during FY 2019: **$130,735**
- Number of monthly check payments processed during FY 2019: **11,216**
- Purchased **$416,391** of equipment for counties during FY 2019 as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project.
- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for deed images:
  - During FY 2019: **$1,149,364**
  - Since inception of project: **$17 million**
- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for prints ($.50 per print) off the Authority website:
  - During FY 2019: **$6,001,364**
  - Since inception of project: **$62 million**
- FY 2019 break-down for print compensation:
  - Deeds: $5,253,781
  - Liens: $274,479
  - Plats: $269,410
  - PT-61s: $52,851
  - UCCs: $150,843

Divisions

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 (approximately 182,000).
➢ 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. 142 Georgia counties (89%) participate in Notary Online, providing web-based, notary applications using software developed by the Authority.

Serving a vital role in international commerce, the Authority was recognized in 1998 by the U.S. State Department as the only agency, outside of a Secretary of State office, to issue apostilles. 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. Currently, 117 countries participate in the Apostille Treaty, and approximately 4 million apostilles are issued worldwide on an annual basis.

During FY 2019, the Authority's Notary & Authentications Division:

➢ Maintained the statewide notary database. A statewide total of approximately **43,500 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database. 95% of these notary commissions were processed through the Authority's web-based system, Notary Online, and 5% through traditional methods.
➢ Issued approximately **33,500 apostilles** this fiscal year destined for 104 different countries. These documents originated in 134 different Georgia counties. Two additional countries joined the Apostille Treaty: Guyana and the Philippines.
➢ Issued **200 certificates of authority**, primarily for use in Puerto Rico.
➢ Provided service to over **9,400 walk-in customers**; processed approximately **4,300 mail-in requests**; and answered nearly **8,600 phone calls.**
➢ Continued promoting Notary Online, now in its 16th year. Participation in the program increased to **142 counties** with 6 of those counties joining this fiscal year. The Authority provides one-on-one training for new counties.
➢ Initiated the **Notary Scanning Project**, a short-term project that involves the digital scanning of notary certificates. The purpose is to ensure that these paper records are securely stored in a digital

form for added long-term protection. When completed, over 270,000 notary certificates will be loaded into the Virtual Microfilm (VMF) system.
- Sold **1,300 Notary Handbooks**. In addition to direct sales, the Authority continues to provide notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices. The goal is to provide point of sale education materials to Georgia notaries public. This year, five counties participated in the program with a total of **350** handbooks being sold at the local level.
- Conducted **27 training classes** for notaries public at 14 locations around the state with nearly 1,400 people attending. Hosted by clerks of Superior Court, these classes provide tremendous exposure for clerks and a valuable service to their constituents. Additionally, two notary classes were taught for Century Bank & Trust.
- Reviewed, updated and rewrote **Notary Public Online Training** course as part of the launch of the new Learning Management System, https://eLearn.gsccca.org. Over 13,000 people participated in this online training and nearly 8,000 of those took the Notary Public Final Exam.

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.

In 2006, the Authority developed and began offering a Fines & Fees Online Training course 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. The 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 course is updated annually to include legislative changes.

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.
- Provides statewide training.
- Issues guidance to all parties affected.
- Created and continues to maintain 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.

In FY 2019, the Authority's Fines & Fees Division:

- Collected and disbursed approximately **$86.4 million** in court fees.
- Maintained a **compliance rate of close to 100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification system.
- Performed annual court reviews on approximately **1,100 courts** to help ensure the accuracy of the data being reported to the Authority.
- Processed over **30,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Continued to hold operational costs to under the statutory limit of $500,000.
- Submitted monthly Fines & Fees results to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council fulfilling statutory reporting requirements for Local Victim Assistance program funds.
- Collaborated with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to automate reporting to their organization.
- 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.
- Fielded questions related to new legislation (HB 226, HB 239, HB 288, SB 73 and SB 158) affecting Fines & Fees.
- Continued to refine procedures to ensure the accuracy of the indexed data in the Fines & Fees database.
- Reviewed, updated and rewrote Fines & Fees Online Training course as part of the launch of the new Learning Management System, https://eLearn.gsccca.org.
- Continued partnering with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at the University of Georgia to offer Fines & Fees training to various courts and other groups, in addition to offering training classes around the state, and utilizing remote training by offering webinars on the subject.

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.

Projects

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 changing 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 **717,000 UCCs** have been electronically filed. Twenty-three new counties were activated this fiscal year for a current total of **131** participating counties. As of June 30, 10 of those counties only allow the electronic filing of UCCs.

During FY 2019, the Authority:

- Indexed and added to database approximately **252,000 UCCs**.
- Conducted approximately **9,000 Certified Searches**.
- Continued growing **UCC eFile** with **23** new counties activated and nearly **138,000 UCCs** electronically filed, approximately half of all UCCs filed. A record number of 14,255 was eFiled in June 2019.
- Initiated project to develop a **UCC API eFiling solution**. Once complete, this will allow national and local filers to integrate with the Authority's eFiling portal so that filings can be transmitted in bulk, thereby improving the eFiling process for large-volume filers. In addition to filers, Superior Court clerks will also benefit as they will be able to utilize new APIs to retrieve and accept UCCs programmatically as well.
- Created monthly **UCC bulk image DVDs** for clients throughout the year.
- Reviewed, updated and rewrote **UCC Online Training** course as part of the launch of the new Learning Management System, https://eLearn.gsccca.org.
- Conducted **UCC classroom training** and **webinars** for Superior Court clerk personnel, banks and the legal community.
- 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 in 1995, the Authority has indexed and added to its database over **6.3 million UCCs** (approximately 22,000 per month) and conducted over **264,000 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 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 **9.7 million real estate deed images** to the system during FY 2019 to bring the total to over **236 million deed images** in its publicly searchable database. Print fees generated from the system are compensated to the clerk's office where the original document resides. During FY 2019, the Authority compensated clerks' offices in Georgia nearly **$1.15 million** for deed images added to the system (**$17 million** since the project began) and over **$5.2 million** for deed prints made from www.gsccca.org.

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 **418,000** PT-61 images this fiscal year and nearly **6.5 million** images since the project began. (See the section on the PT-61 Project for more information.)

At the end of 2011, the Authority successfully launched **Real Estate eRecording** statewide. Clerks retain control of the process, and their participation is completely voluntary and at no charge. During FY 2019, nearly **566,000** real estate documents were eRecorded in Georgia's 159 counties; over **1.2 million** documents have been eRecorded since the inception of the program.

Following is a summary of efforts during FY 2019 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, 67 clerks and deputies from 22 counties have completed the Indexing Certification.
- ➢ Concluded 41 clerks' office docket surveys through FY 2019 resulting in the issuance of official historical indexing guidance to be followed when indexing historical deed, lien and plat instruments. The comprehensive surveys and guidance provide direction to indexers in order to avoid unintentional errors relating to the various book naming conventions and methodologies in use throughout the state. To date, 136 docket surveys have been submitted for staff review and analysis and a total of 132 sets of indexing directions have been issued.
- ➢ 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. One new vendor achieved certification for their land record recording system in FY 2019.
- ➢ Conducted training classes and webinars and continued to offer two online courses to train clerks and staff across Georgia on the *Indexing Standards for Real and Personal Property Records for the State of Georgia*. The online courses were reviewed, updated and rewritten as part of the launch of the new Learning Management System, https://eLearn.gsccca.org.
- ➢ 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 a Deed Indexing Certification Test developed by the Authority, and collected data is quarantined or held in a queue 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 dollars.

The Authority continues to advance the **1991-90 Historical Project** with 90 counties participating. Since inception of the project, the Authority has added over 709,000 deed records to its publicly searchable website, and is reviewing another 6,000 records currently in quarantine.

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

In 2013, the Authority developed and implemented a *County-Funded* Historical Deed, Lien and 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. Fifty-five counties are now participating in this 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 **1.6 million additional instruments** have been added to the public system 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.

eFile Project

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.

In 2010, the Authority successfully launched **UCC eFile** to the public and began accepting UCC documents for electronic filing. The project continues to grow with nearly 138,000 UCCs electronically filed in FY 2019, approximately half of all UCCs filed. A record number of 14,255 was eFiled in June 2019. Over **717,000 UCCs** have been electronically filed since May 2009 when the pilot project began. Twenty-three new counties were activated this fiscal year for a current total of **131 participating counties.** As of June 30, 10 of those counties only allow the electronic filing of UCCs.

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 eFiling** to its portal in 2010. This system provides an automated electronic interface to the Child Support eFiling system of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), allowing clerks to integrate directly with the GSCCCA eFiling system instead of a separate system hosted by AOC. The AOC previously contracted with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide a workflow and eFiling service for child support cases. Using the GSCCCA portal, clerks can conveniently receive and process child support cases initiated by DHS. Currently, **138 counties** are participating in Child Support eFile with **13** of those activated during FY 2019. Since January 1, 2010, approximately **608,000** filings have been accepted, with nearly **86,000** of those filings accepted during FY 2019.

In 2011, the Authority built a real estate eFiling portal and successfully launched **Real Estate eRecording** 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 eRecording** 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, **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. Clerks retain control of the process, and participation in many of the projects is completely voluntary. All eFile programs are provided to clerks and the public free of charge

To support Real Estate eRecording, 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 2019, over **2,500** new participants were added to the eFile Registry for a current total of **7,551 registered participants**. To further support eFile participants, 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.

During FY 2019, participation in Real Estate eRecording continued to grow with all 159 clerks' offices participating to some degree:

> ➢ 110 offices accept all document types;
> ➢ 28 offices accept all document types except deeds;
> ➢ 19 offices accept plats and state tax liens only; and
> ➢ 2 offices accept plats, state tax liens and a combination of deeds and/or liens.

The increase in eFiling participation is due, in part, to legislation that has passed over the last several years. 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 eRecording, 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 eRecording mandate. Since becoming legislatively mandated on January 1, 2017, nearly **61,000** plats have been accepted through the portal, over **24,000** of those during FY 2019. 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 **271,000 liens** with Superior Court clerks by filing through the Authority's eFile portal, with **138,000** of those eFiled this fiscal year.

Since 2011 when the Authority launched Real Estate eRecording, participants have eFiled over **1.2 million** real estate documents with nearly **566,000** of those eFiled in FY 2019. These numbers are made more impressive when considering the fact that for the majority of the history of the eRecording system,

participation has been purely voluntary. With recent legislative changes that have now mandated certain types of real estate documents to be electronically recorded, each of the 159 Superior Court clerks now have systems that directly interface with the GSCCCA eFiling portal. This newfound level of integration is expected to catapult overall participation into the future as the technical barriers for clerks to participate have now been largely overcome. Considering the momentum of the existing eFiling systems and a successful track-record of implementing legislatively mandated programs, it is expected that eFiling numbers will continue to rise significantly with the increased participation by clerks' offices.

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.

Today, the Authority's electronic filing portal, efile.gsccca.org, allows for the filing of UCC, real estate, lien, plat, PT-61, and child support documents, and the list will continue to grow. As thousands of documents are now being eFiled annually, the Authority continues to assess, improve, and streamline the user experience in its ongoing efforts to stay ahead of the curve and provide state-of-the-art services.

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. Due to the accelerated influx of document images along with other system growth demands, the Authority significantly increased the capacity of its core storage system in 2011 from 26 TB to 71 TB.

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 eRecording, and all Superior Court clerks are able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eRecording mandate. Since becoming legislatively mandated on January 1, 2017, nearly **61,000** plats have been accepted through the portal, over **24,000** of those during FY 2019. The process of electronically filing plats has resulted in a more efficient end-to-end process and higher fidelity recreation of printed plat copies.

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. See more details in the following section.

State Tax Lien eFiling Project

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 the 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 **271,000 liens** with Superior Court clerks through the Authority's eFile portal, with **138,000** 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.

PT-61 Project

Launched in September of 2004, PT-61 e-Filing 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.gsccca.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.

With the 2012 launch of the Authority's Premium Search account, users have additional search and view options related to PT-61 data. The Authority also integrated PT-61 form generation with the Real Estate eFiling process. By combining these two separate systems, eFilers save time and records are filed faster and more accurately.

During FY 2019, the Authority:

➢ Added over **418,000** PT-61 filings to the statewide system for a total of nearly **6.5 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 **$53,000** for prints ($.50 per print) off the Authority website related to the PT-61 Project.
➢ Added nearly **172,000** properties during FY 2019 for a total of **nearly 2.7 million** searchable addresses.
➢ Enhanced system to allow vendors to validate PT-61 data programmatically through the Authority's web services.
➢ Improved security of PT-61 system and maintained continuity of services by upgrading Geographic Information Systems (GIS) service to a new version of Windows Server.

Premium Search Account

In January of 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 2019, the Authority increased the number of Premium Search accounts by **7.5%** for a fiscal year-end total of **4,486 accounts**. This number will grow in the coming years as the Authority continues to market 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. Since launching, the application has received rave reviews from users, and is available free-of-charge to Premium Search account subscribers.

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 the Authority continuously improves the functionality on IOS and Android devices ensuring that the applications work as designed with the latest versions of the respective operating systems. To add more value, nearly **172,000 properties** were added for a fiscal year-end total of nearly **2.7 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 the 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.

The Protective Order Registry, accessed by law enforcement through GCIC terminals, displays all Protective Orders and related data. In FY 2019, over **45,000 Protective Orders** were indexed by clerks, and then electronically transmitted by the Authority to GCIC. Through the efforts of the Authority, critical information for protecting the public is now easily accessible to law enforcement nationwide.

Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)

Launched in 2003, the Offender-Based Tracking System 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.

In FY 2019, **319,000 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. This system provides critical and timely information to protect the safety of the public and law enforcement officers throughout Georgia.

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 a priority by offering multiple programs to this end. Following is more information about the Authority's disaster planning and data archive initiatives.

MyVault Online Archive Program

In 2007, the Authority launched the MyVault 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. MyVault 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.

MyVault'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 MyVault program is currently protecting the electronic records of Georgia's Superior Court clerks in **155 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
 ➢ Storage on dedicated and redundant GSCCCA servers
 ➢ Desktop and rackmount model options
 ➢ Exceptional customer service
 ➢ No cost to counties with disaster plan on file

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 MyVault 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 MyVault 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 MyVault, all real estate data in participating counties can be archived and protected, regardless of filing date.

All participating clerks have access to their vault data through an online dashboard, available at https://vault.gsccca.org, using their 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. Clerks are also encouraged to contact the Authority for assistance at any time, knowing that MyVault is a managed service and jobs are monitored daily to ensure success.

Each year, annual audit reports are distributed to all clerks enrolled in the MyVault Program. These customized reports contain details about the clerk's archive account, equipment, and nightly job(s). The purpose is to encourage 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 or by making a request to the Authority.

MyVault is currently storing and protecting over **825 million files** totaling more than **127 TB 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 127 TB of live data (current versions of files), the MyVault system maintains 30 days of previous file versions totaling 20 TB of additional data stored in the vault.
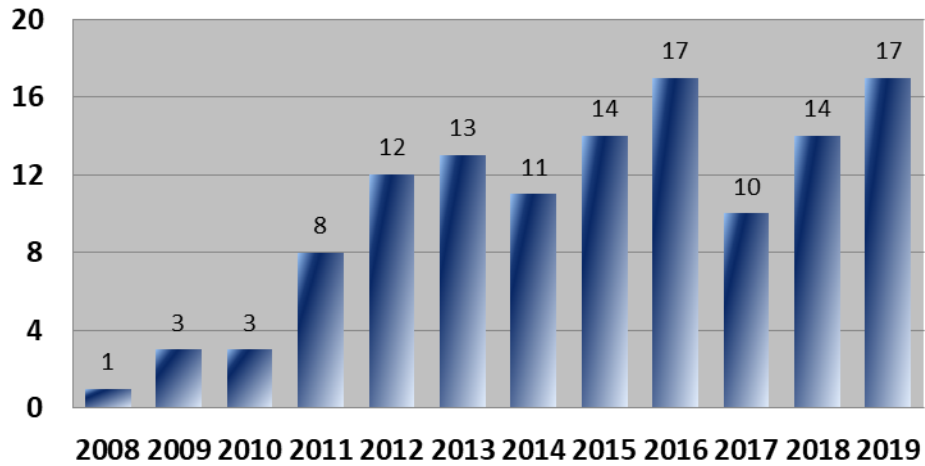
Through MyVault, the Authority has been able to help counties successfully protect their critical records and resources and safely restore files to an operational state. On average, 10 requests to restore data are made per year. Since 2007, MyVault has responded to **124** data loss requests and has restored over **2.4 TB** of data back to county systems. In FY 2019, the Authority received **17 requests** to restore data, resulting in over **200 GB 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 though 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.
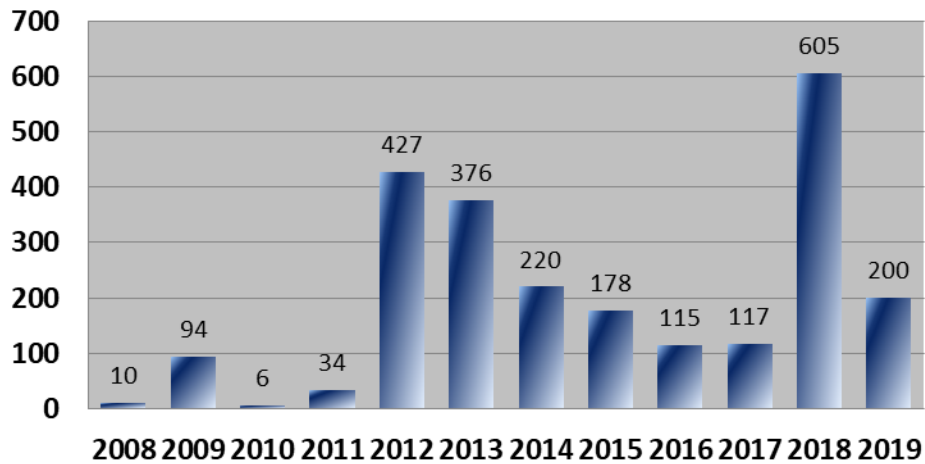
Having multiple backups is the best data protection strategy to ensure a good outcome following a data loss event. MyVault provides that second line of defense against a disaster and ensures that a clerk's

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.

Total Number of Restore Requests Received

Year	Value
2008	1
2009	3
2010	3
2011	8
2012	12
2013	13
2014	11
2015	14
2016	17
2017	10
2018	14
2019	17

Total Volume of Data Restored in GB

Year	Value
2008	10
2009	94
2010	6
2011	34
2012	427
2013	376
2014	220
2015	178
2016	115
2017	117
2018	605
2019	200

Following are some of the accomplishments of the MyVault Program during FY 2019:

- Restored over 200 GB of data for 17 counties.
- Added two more counties for a total of 155 counties participating in the program.
- Added additional storage arrays to accommodate growth of online vault. Over 71 million files totaling more than 25 TB of data were added to the vault in FY 2019 bringing the current storage total to more than 825 million files and 127 TB of live data protected through MyVault.
- Conducted personalized MyVault account audits. Every clerk enrolled in MyVault was contacted by Authority staff to personally review and discuss their archive account details. Job items were verified and disaster planning reminders communicated, including SB 135 requirements.
- Upgraded archive equipment for 38 counties in FY 2019.
- Produced MyVault FAQs document and disseminated to clerks at the 2019 Spring Conference.
- Produced Archive Newsletter addressing the topic of ransomware and prevention and disseminated to clerks at the 2019 Spring Conference.

Following is some of the praise the Authority has received regarding the MyVault program:

- *"GSCCCA MyVault is GREAT!"* – Vendor comment following a restore
- *"I don't know what we would do without the Authority!!! You are the Best Ever!!"* – Clerk comment in response to a restore request
- *"Y'all are an awesome & very helpful group of people and I'm glad you're there for us."* – Clerk comment in response to receiving information on using the MyVault dashboard
- *"Thank you so very much! You're awesome!"* – Clerk comment in response to MyVault monitoring

Georgia Archives Initiative

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. The goal was to survey the clerks' interest in obtaining more information about what they have stored at the Georgia Archives and to provide assistance in coordinating that effort. Every clerk was offered an opportunity to obtain a full list of their media holdings at the Georgia Archives. Clerks were asked to provide authorization for the Authority to reach out to the Georgia Archives to request this information on their behalf.

One hundred and twenty-five counties participated in this initiative and received a media holdings list from the Georgia Archives. The primary objective with this initiative was to better inform each clerk about what IS and IS NOT protected in their office while contributing to the broader disaster planning goals and efforts in each county. More specifically, the intent was to encourage a thorough review of the media holdings in order 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.

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, we hope 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.

Notary Scanning Project

The Authority's archive staff recently expanded its in-house services to include a short-term project that involves the digital scanning of notary certificates. The purpose is to ensure that these paper records are securely stored in a digital form for added long-term protection. When completed, over 260,000 notary certificates will be loaded into the VMF system.

Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program

The Virtual Microfilm Program (VMF) is another GSCCCA-sponsored initiative for archiving a Superior Court clerk's digital records 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 GSCCCA 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 VMF database currently stores all deeds previously filmed since 2011. In addition, all new deeds actively transmitted to the Authority daily are loaded into the system on a monthly basis and are available for viewing. This year, enhancements were made to the VMF application process to support the import of liens, plats, and historical documents into the system. In an ongoing effort, the Authority is uploading all deeds, liens and plats ever received by the GSCCCA.

The initial import of deed images was completed in November 2017, totaling more than 44 million deed images across 67,000 deed books. Since then, another 28 million deed images have been uploaded to the VMF system. To date, over **73 million deed images**, over **104,000 deed books** totaling over **3 terabytes** of data is stored, protected and accessible for viewing in the VMF system.

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 at https://vmf.gsccca.org. 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 Virtual Microfilm Program and its benefits, several VMF webinars were offered this past fiscal year to demonstrate how to access the VMF website and use its built-in tools along with highlighting the system's features. All 159 counties are able to participate in this free program offered by the Authority. Since the launch of the program, 57 clerks have activated their accounts.

Website functionality continues to be refined with new features being added over time. One feature includes an easy-to-use search bar where the clerk has the ability to search for a specific document right down to the page number. This allows the clerk to quickly collaborate with customers and staff, minimizing cost, time and effort for the clerk's office.

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 MyVault. However, the VMF system is another resource available to clerks for locating missing images. 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.

Current VMF Imaging Totals:

- Deed Books: 104,530
- Deed Images: 73,006,336
- Deed VMF: 11,338
- Deed Data Stored: 3.1 TB
- Lien Books: 19,802
- Lien Images: 10,304,822
- Lien VMF: 1,856
- Lien Data Stored: 317.7 GB
- Plat Books: 12,109
- Plat Images: 1,160,501
- Plat VMF: 272
- Plat Data Stored: 211.2 GB

- ➢ Historical Lien Books: 20,857
- ➢ Historical Lien Images: 9,863,030
- ➢ Historical Lien VMF: 1,651
- ➢ Historical Lien Data Stored: 299.5 GB
- ➢ Historical Deed Books: 48,171
- ➢ Historical Deed Images: 29,825,425
- ➢ Historical Deed VMF: 5,065
- ➢ Historical Deed Data Stored: 1.32 TB

VMF accomplishments for FY 2019 include:

- ➢ Increased participation in the VMF Program with activation of five additional VMF accounts by clerks for a total of 57 participating counties since the program's launch in November 2017.
- ➢ Enhanced the VMF application to support the import of liens, plats, and historical documents into the system for images created prior to June 2011.
- ➢ Successfully imported first batch of Plats to the VMF system.
- ➢ Successfully imported first batch of Liens to the VMF system. The dates for the first Lien Batch are 6/1/2011 to 12/31/2011.
- ➢ Successfully imported Historical Liens (01/01/1999 to 05/31/2011) to the VMF system.
- ➢ Successfully imported Historical Deeds (01/01/2011 to 05/31/2011) to the VMF system.
- ➢ Conducted multiple VMF webinars and offered a live demonstration on how to access the VMF website, use the built-in tools, and understand the features of the system.

IT Department

Responsible for the upkeep of our computer and data systems, the IT Department is also the backbone of the Authority … turning legislative mandates and project "dreams" into technological realities. For over two decades, the Authority's IT staff has developed and implemented cutting-edge programs that offer unique services to Georgia's counties and citizens. 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.

Following is a summary of the many accomplishments of the Authority's IT Department for FY 2019. Whether large or small, these activities enable us to meet our goals and grow and innovate in a constantly changing environment.

Development Team – eFiling & eRecording

Over the past fiscal year, the eFile Project has grown both in terms of filers and participating counties. (See Pages 22-24 for more details on the history and growth of this project.) Each year, the Authority

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tweaks its eFile site in order to incorporate customer feedback, improve the user experience, implement new features, and enhance performance, efficiency and reliability.

Following is data and other information from FY 2019:

- ➢ UCC eFile – Continued to grow with 23 new participating counties this fiscal year.
  - o 717,308 UCCs have been eFiled through the Authority since its inception in 2009.
  - o 137,935 UCCs have been eFiled this fiscal year.
  - o 131 counties now participate in UCC eFiling, up from 108 last fiscal year.
- ➢ Real Estate eRecord – Continued to grow with a significant increase in filings this fiscal year.
  - o 1,230,945 total real estate documents have been eRecorded since its inception; 692,932 of these filings have been eRecorded using the Authority's eFile portal.
    - ▪ 599,997 total deeds have been eRecorded since inception in 2010.
    - ▪ 271,484 total liens have been eRecorded since inception in 2015.
    - ▪ 60,761 total plats have been eRecorded since inception in 2016.
    - ▪ 298,695 total state tax liens have been eRecorded since inception in 2018.
  - o 565,655 total real estate documents have been eRecorded this fiscal year; 303,815 of these filings have been eRecorded using the Authority's eFile portal.
    - ▪ 302,012 total deeds have been eRecorded this fiscal year.
    - ▪ 137,987 total liens have been eRecorded this fiscal year.
    - ▪ 24,514 total plats have been eRecorded this fiscal year.
    - ▪ 101,140 total state tax liens have been eRecorded this fiscal year.
- ➢ Launched new eFiling feature where the estimated eFiling fees of any real estate (deed, lien or plat) package filed on the Authority's eFile portal, https://efile.gsccca.org, may be transmitted to the clerk's office as additional information. 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.
- ➢ Began project to create a UCC eFiling API (application programming interface) to facilitate bulk filing. Once complete, this will allow national and local filers to programmatically file UCCs instead of having to file them manually using our eFiling portal. In addition to filers, Superior Court clerk systems will be able to utilize new APIs to retrieve and accept UCCs programmatically as well.
- ➢ Improved performance and reliability of ACH eFile disbursements by offloading processing to the eFile Reporting database.
- ➢ Enhanced system to allow vendors to validate PT-61 data programmatically through the Authority's web services.
- ➢ Added Pending Lien Search QA values to our Program Status Report in addition to adding a Pending Search Aging Report to the Clerk Resource Center. These new tools help identify Pending Liens that may need to be removed from the general web search.
- ➢ Improved ability of eFile website to handle very large Plat filings.
- ➢ Adjusted system so county clerk stamps can now use special characters.
- ➢ Improved performance of eFiling APIs through asynchronous optimizations. By launching multiple operations at the same time, we greatly improved filing performance over synchronous processes.
- ➢ Expanded logging to capture more data during each step of the eFiling process. These changes improve filing support.

Development Team – eFile Registry

The eFile Registry was developed by the Authority 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. The eFile Registry has been up and running since November 2011.

Following is data and other information from FY 2019:

➢ Completed project to normalize Participant ID names. Based on user feedback, this enhancement improved the user experience of the Participant ID search function on the website.
➢ Added 2,538 participants to the registry for a total of 7,551 registered participants.
  o 4,550 Self Filers (1,584 added this fiscal year)
  o 588 Submitters (191 added this fiscal year)
  o 2,413 Trusted Users (763 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.
  o Nearly 1.7 million queries processed this fiscal year.
  o Over 3.5 million queries processed since the eFile Registry opened in 2011.

Development Team – Website (www.gsccca.org)

With over a million annual, distinct visitors to www.gsccca.org, the Authority believes that it is critical for its site to be clear, responsive and easy-to-use for its customers, and continues to look at ways to improve the user experience. Following are some of the enhancements made during FY 2019:

➢ Updated the main website's content management system to the latest version of Sitefinity.
➢ Added Live Chat to our website. In addition to calling or emailing the Authority's HelpDesk, our clerks and website customers now have access to this convenient technology to receive real-time support from our experienced team of customer service representatives.
➢ Upgraded Report Viewer control for Clerk Resource Center reporting. The new control adds enhancements and support for modern browsers.
➢ Updated the HTML 5 image viewer which the public uses to view our images. This update allows the image viewer to work with all browsers.
➢ Upgraded iOS Map Search to 64 bit to meet Apple's new app requirements.
➢ Filmed and edited five more "Featured Clerk" videos and published them to our website. Using a casual conversation/interview format highlights each clerk's personality and continues the Authority's goal of making the website more engaging for users while also promoting Superior Court clerks.

Development Team – QA (Quality Assurance)

QA is a quality assurance system created by the Authority to review historical deed, lien and plat transmissions to ensure the data and images conform to Authority requirements. Following are some of the QA improvements made during FY 2019:

- Improved QA efficiency by developing new Quality Control & Compliance website and reports. Previously it took two to three weeks to conduct a quality review, but the new capabilities have reduced the process to as little as three days.
- Maintained index data quality by flushing unwanted index data from Quarantine to Archive.
- Improved security and maintained continuity of services by upgrading QA services to a new version of Windows Server.

Development Team – Other

- Managed the "Change Control" document which is used by management and IT staff to track change requests and thoughtfully prioritize development efforts to determine the best use of resources. 37 tracked projects were completed this past fiscal year.
- Developed scope for Universal Search initiative to determine if Authority's website will benefit from the creation of this search.
- Completed rewrite of Customer Management Module (CMM). Highlights of this major project include:
    - New and improved web-based interface.
    - Integrated reporting directly in the CMM system.
    - Ability to export data directly into Peachtree Accounting.
    - Redesigned invoices, based on customer feedback, in order to make them easier to read and understand. Invoices are now provided in a PDF format and include an improved account summary, an improved current month activity section, and a new section reflecting total current charges for each user and sub-account. Additionally, by logging into Account Management, customers can now download a CSV file of their current month's charges for use in their local system.
- Assisted with upgrade to new training website:
    - Assisted with migration of GSCCCA, clerk, and vendor users from old to new training website.
    - Provided testing and support for credit card transaction features of new training website.
    - Created a service to import LMS payments into internal systems.
- Made enhancements to credit card processing:
    - Extended credit card and ACH capabilities by adding ability to void transactions.
    - Maintained credit card transaction processing security by upgrading CyberSource security keys.
- Made improvements to Fines & Fees site:
    - Collaborated with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to automate reporting to their organization.
    - Added Theoretical Fine to the CourtTrax Calculator.
    - Improved quality of Fine & Fees services by documenting the technical details of the existing Fines & Fees, CourtTrax, and related systems so that they can be upgraded as part of the upcoming Fines & Fees improvement project.
- Made improvements to microfilm export program:
    - Improved capabilities by adding support for Liens and Plats.
    - Improved performance by enabling multi-threaded processing.
    - Exported all current and historical Liens and Plats.
    - Exported all current and historical Deeds back to 2003.

- ➢ Improved Achieve (ACH) features:
  - o Improved quality of service by upgrading ACH reconciliation services to use new CyberSource RESTful APIs.
  - o Improved security and maintained continuity of services by upgrading ACH platform from Windows Server 2008 to 2016.
- ➢ Improved security of PT-61 system and maintained continuity of services by upgrading Geographic Information Systems (GIS) service to a new version of Windows Server.
- ➢ Added special character support to Notary Applications, Appointments and Certificates.
- ➢ Processed 41 Real Estate images using On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed 27 of those images.
- ➢ Processed 36,848 UCC images using On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed ALL of those images.

Systems Team

- ➢ Implemented new fiber optic switches to replace aging infrastructure. The fiber switches handle almost all data that is generated at the Authority and are a critical component of the Authority's high-speed storage solution. The new hardware also reduces data latency giving all the servers faster runtime.
- ➢ Installed two new UPS systems in the datacenter to replace an UPS system that was nearing its end of life. The UPS system is a very large battery backup providing up to two hours of run time for the datacenter infrastructure in the event of a power failure.
- ➢ Upgraded the operating system on our VMWare ESXi platform. These products allow us to run multiple servers on a shared hardware platform. The effect is that on 12 physical servers, we run 142 virtualized servers. This allows us to maximize utilization of the physical server resources decreasing server hardware costs.
- ➢ Upgraded Sitefinity, our content management system, which is used to publish and manage content to www.gsccca.org. The upgrade eased publish procedures and ensured support for future technology.
- ➢ Created and implemented infrastructure for the new Customer Management Module (CMM). The database publish scripts were reviewed for logical errors and for query performance analysis. CMM is used to manage all billing aspects for the GSCCCA.
- ➢ Deployed a new SQL Server 2016 Report Server that is the current home of the new CMM reports. This server provides an upgraded platform for SQL reports and will serve as the replacement of our current production SQL Server 2008 R2 report server for 180+ reports. These reports provide much-needed information to Superior Court clerks.
- ➢ Installed all software updates to our SQL database environment. These updates help to 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.
- ➢ Revamped the database refresh process to minimize downtime and ensure the integrity of the development environment. During the application development process, data from the production server is sometimes required for testing purposes. The database refresh imports the production data into the development environment, adjusts variables for the new environment, and sanitizes some data types.
- ➢ Developed entity relationship diagrams (ERD) for CMM and Fines & Fees re-write projects. An ERD is used as a detailed database diagram. This diagram is instrumental in showing the current database design so that the new applications can be developed.

- Created a monthly automated report for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to reflect Local Victim Assistance Program (LVAP) collections reported to the GSCCCA by various courts in Georgia.
- Developed and then enhanced the County Pending Search Aging Report to give clerks a way to self-manage their own pending search records. This report is used to identify old eFiles that have been accepted by the county but have not been received by the Authority.
- Updated reports regularly to keep the subscriber lists current at the counties' request. This Fines & Fees report is sent out to the counties for daily and month-end disbursement distribution.
- Produced a database archival solution for the production Workflow database. This process was created to improve execution speeds and experience for the UCC indexers but will also produce overall improvements in performance of Workflow database activity.
- Executed performance analysis on several core databases including Vault, eFiling, Fines & Fees, UCC Indexing, and others, in order to vastly improve query processing times. This effort ultimately resulted in overall improved system speeds.
- Upgraded our antivirus server, Trend Officescan, to a new version. This ensures maximum operating system support and migration.
- Provided SQL database training and documentation to staff, increasing Database Administrator availability to meet increased production support and project demands.
- Upgraded the software on the WhatsUp and VeeamOne server to better monitor our servers and applications. WhatsUp and VeeamOne specialize in server and application monitoring and improving server availability through detailed reporting and analytics.
- Upgraded the software that runs our 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.
- Upgraded the Mitel Application Server providing additional and improved functionality to the GSCCCA phone system, including optimized call routing, additional reporting, and an improved caller experience for clerks and internet subscribers.
- Upgraded the Data Replication Server to bolster the process that perfectly synchronizes GSCCCA data between the Primary and Failover Datacenters. Such data replication is critical to ensure that the Failover Datacenter can activate when there is an outage at the Primary Datacenter.
- Upgraded the Search Terminal Management Server. Search terminals are used in Superior Court clerk offices throughout Georgia as a way for the public to access the data at the GSCCCA free of charge. The Search Terminal Management Server restricts access to most functions and websites on the search terminals to ensure that they are only used for their intended purpose.
- Updated the firmware (operating system) on the GSCCCA email spam filtering appliance to ensure that the GSCCCA email system continues to be protected against the latest types of viruses and unwanted email into the future.
- Upgraded the Sage Fixed Asset and Depreciation software to ensure continued support and compatibility for the Inventory staff.
- Upgraded the Peachtree Accounting software to ensure continued support and compatibility for the Accounting staff.
- Updated the Windows 10 install that is used in all computers for the GSCCCA to ensure reliability and ease of use for our customers.
- 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.

Systems Team Statistics:

- ➢ Processed 14 million e-mails and blocked 6 million pieces of spam and virus laden e-mails.
- ➢ Total hard drive array storage capacity: 119 TB.
- ➢ Backed up 832 TB of data in the last year. If this data were transferred to Ultra HD 4K Blu-rays, it would require 8,520 disks, and the resulting stack of movies would be over 33 feet tall.
- ➢ Have 72 TB of backup data on disk. That is equal to 15,687 DVDs, which would span more than 20 football fields if lined up on the ground.
- ➢ Have 511.2 TB of backup data on tape. Each tape holds up to 6 TB of data and each tape has 3,149 feet (.6 miles) of tape. The Authority has 97 tapes containing all of our backup data. This equals 57.8 miles of tape.

Network Team

- ➢ Upgraded 36 county connections. With expanded eFiling efforts and increased use of cloud-based software platforms, locations are requiring more bandwidth and are becoming increasingly dependent on the reliability of these connections. The network team has been fortunate with the rise of fiber availability, and can work with any service provider necessary to facilitate the needs of the location.
- ➢ Engaged with 35 different internet service providers offering 8 different types of network access technologies in order to support the statewide network.
- ➢ Coordinated and helped manage 21 county-based network moves, changes, or implementations. A county-based network change is one where the network in question is actually managed by the county IT Department, but interfaces with the GSCCCA network in some way to enable the clerk access to both networks.
- ➢ Audited, reviewed, and implemented various new or modified access rules on all GSCCCA-wide area network devices to ensure the network is protected against malicious traffic.
- ➢ Acted as an escalation partner to solve 257 HelpDesk tickets.
- ➢ Implemented "next-generation" 40/100G high-speed switching backplane in the Primary Datacenter.
- ➢ Implemented new F5 load-balancer hardware, performed the migration of development environments, and currently working on production environment migration.
- ➢ Assisted other IT teams (Systems, Development, etc.) by imposing several network scenarios and configurations in order to help isolate and troubleshoot issues or test performance under distinct network conditions.
- ➢ Maintained a consolidated list of valid bills for the accounting department to reference. This has enabled us to more accurately track the cancellation of lines, and ensure that internet service providers are billing appropriately.
- ➢ Performed infrastructure upgrades necessary for compliance with current and upcoming PCI (Payment Card Industry) and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) requirements. The PCI certification guarantees customers that the security measures we provide on the GSCCCA websites are strong enough to protect their data and online transactions.
- ➢ Performed the required duties to remain a Cisco Certified Partner.

HelpDesk – Customer Support

HelpDesk is the Authority's customer support team which provides technical support for clerks and their staff, and website customers. This team of technical support reps 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. See a few recent comments from satisfied users:

> *"I was frustrated today with my real estate search. My screen kept locking up, the property was challenging to find, and my credentials weren't authenticating. Long story short – Shane helped me get exactly what I needed!! He was patient, thoughtful and amazing. So glad you hired such a great person!!"*

> *"The gentleman that helped me today was extremely kind, knowledgeable and patient. And your department answered the phone promptly. Kudos!"*

> *"I'm writing to say that your technical support people are excellent. The last person I talked to was Andre but all the tech people I've talked to have been great. I've called several times because I wasn't sure how to navigate before and after finding a property. Good job and thanks again."*

Over the last decade and a half, the scope of services provided by HelpDesk has more than doubled and the number of monthly subscribers to the Authority's online databases has more than tripled. With this considerable growth and a commitment to maintaining service excellence, the Authority expanded HelpDesk to ensure that clerks, members of their staff, and website customers continue to receive prompt, comprehensive service each and every time they call or email.

With a larger staff, the team also benefits from the added bonus of being able to specialize their support roles. As an example, one CSR has been designated as the eFiling specialist and received additional training to become a subject matter expert on eFiling. Another CSR now serves as an Inventory specialist and has received the training necessary to handle essential inventory functions such as shipping and receiving. This specialization allows for overall increased business continuity, and also allows for more streamlined support as many service calls involve the transfer of equipment through the Inventory Department. Finally, another CSR has become the Network specialist, acting as a precision, first responder to county-related network issues. Having this level of expertise allows problems to be identified and solved quickly, often without the need to escalate the issue to the Network Department. This enhanced, specialized support allows the Authority to more quickly and effectively provide all of its customers with the help and support they need and have come to expect.

As providing unmatched, quality customer service is one of its core principles, the Authority continues to look for ways to improve the quality and convenience of the service. To this end, the Authority added **Live Chat** to our website this past fiscal year. In addition to calling or emailing the Authority's HelpDesk, our clerks and website customers now have access to this convenient technology to receive real-time support from our experienced team of customer service representatives.

Additionally, the Authority enhanced the training of its customer support team by sending all members to the Disney Institute in Orlando, Florida. Disney is a premier customer service organization and offers a concentrated one-day course called "Disney's Approach to Quality Service" to share their process and methods with other companies. The goal was for all members of the customer service staff, who interface directly with the public, to have the opportunity to experience this course and learn the key elements of the "Disney way." Staff was trained in the classroom as well as taken into the parks for hands-on observation of Disney methods.

Recognizing that ongoing training of staff is necessary for maintaining top-notch quality service, the Authority believes this training experience reinforces the role and value of the customer interface, builds confidence and conviction of purpose in its staff, and ultimately will pay dividends in the form of improved customer satisfaction and good-will.

HelpDesk Stats

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

- Total Calls: 16,607
- Average Speed of Answer: 25 seconds
- Average Talk Time: 7 minutes 17 seconds
- Total Email Requests Received: 9,200+
- Total Hardware/Repair Requests: 236
- Tickets Received: 14,144
- Tickets Resolved During Initial Contact: 12,319

Top 10 Requests

- GSCCCA Website: Site Navigation Assistance (2,441)
- eFile Real Estate: Customer Filing Question (1,815)
- GSCCCA Website: Username/Password Requests (1,492)
- Account Management: New Account Requests (1,150)
- GSCCCA Website: General Information/Non-Tech Q/A (1,103)
- PT-61: Non-Tech Q/A (561)
- eFile Real Estate: Username/Password Requests (372)
- eFile UCC: Customer Filing Question (329)
- GSCCCA Website: Login Verification Code (324)
- Notary Project: Online Training General Q/A (281)

Equipment Outreach

In order to successfully implement its many legislatively mandated projects, the Authority has modernized all Superior Court clerk offices in the state by providing thousands of computers, printers, scanners, servers and other equipment. For many offices, this meant automating them for the first time when the UCC project began in 1995. In addition to providing equipment, the Authority's IT staff travels to all 159 counties to service equipment, which is eligible for replacement every three 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.

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 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 outreach efforts during FY 2019:

> ➢ Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **843 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. Of this total, the Authority deployed **797 pieces of new equipment** (352 computers, 308 monitors and 137 scanners) to 50 Superior Court clerk offices to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties. The Authority has provided approximately **27,000** pieces of new equipment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.
> ➢ Handled **144** Purchase Orders totaling **$1.67 million** for equipment purchases for counties and GSCCCA offices.
> ➢ Handled **100** contracts from counties for additional equipment totaling nearly **$183,000**.
> ➢ Obtained **213** quotes for equipment purchases for counties and GSCCCA offices.
> ➢ Handled multiple requests for Acquisition Assistance for county purchases.
> ➢ Performed detailed evaluation of all returned inventory sheets from counties and processed **558** county equipment returns.
> ➢ 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.
> ➢ Shipped approximately **55** non-inventory items including switches, cables, keyboards and mice.
> ➢ Transferred **514** pieces of equipment to the Georgia Department of Administrative Services for proper disposal per state guidelines.
> ➢ 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 are addressed promptly and accurately.
> ➢ Distributed inventory sheets, detailed memos and Q&A sheets to all counties for sustained inventory project success.

➢ 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

Since the UCC Project launched, 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 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 classroom, webinars, online, and one-on-one. Each year, the Authority's training program is utilized and appreciated by thousands. See comments below about a recent Notary Public class that was attended by over 100 people:

> *"Melba and I just wanted to say thank you so much! Last Thursday was absolutely great and with the turn-out, we think a wonderful success. I have spoken to quite a few people who took the class and all of the responses have been wonderful. Everyone has said how much they learned and the experience was well worth their time. Success indeed!*
> *– Lynne K. Gentry, Chief Deputy Clerk*
> *Bartow County Superior Court*

In February, the Authority launched a new **Learning Management System**, https://eLearn.gsccca.org, which is now available to all users. With *eLearn*, the Authority offers an up-to-date system for clerks and the public to use, while also giving the Authority the flexibility to create and add additional training courses beneficial to clerks' offices in a timely manner. Since its launch, over 7,100 users have accessed the new site nearly 22,000 times. Over 90,000 users have benefitted from accessing the Authority's original Learning Management System site, which opened in 2006, in addition to the new LMS site. As part of the launch of the new system, all online training courses were reviewed, updated and rewritten.

Following is more detailed information about the Authority's training efforts during FY 2019.

Classroom

Classroom training is usually hosted by a Superior Court clerk and offered free-of-charge. For FY 2019, the Authority conducted 53 programs at 29 locations across the state. The following topics were offered:

➢ Real Estate Indexing Standards
➢ Notary Public Training (nearly 1,400 people attended this training)
➢ Notary Online Training
➢ Fines & Fees
➢ UCC Training
➢ UCC eFile Training
➢ eFile Overview & eLearn Overview Training (for CSRs)

The Authority continues to successfully partner with other groups to conduct some of its training. For example, Fines & Fees training continues to be conducted in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for various courts and other groups. The Authority also provided training classes to a variety of groups in the real estate, banking, and legal communities.

Webinars

Webinars are remote training conducted via the internet and phone and allow a clerk to have as many staff members as they wish participate in training without the time and cost of travel. Updated software has streamlined the registration and web-based training process. During FY 2019, the Authority utilized this training tool by hosting 15 webinars covering the following topics:

➢ Authority Services How-to Guide
➢ Fines & Fees
➢ Pending Lien Search (new training)
➢ Protective Orders
➢ Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam: Study Guide
➢ Real Estate Indexing Standards: Clerk Questions
➢ UCC Training
➢ Virtual Microfilm

Online

The Authority continues to offer a variety of online training opportunities. Courses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, making training completely flexible. Following are the online courses that the Authority offers and the number of clerks, clerk employees, and other Georgia citizens who took advantage of this training during FY 2019:

➢ GSCCCA Indexing Standards Online Training
  o 220 people participated in the training
  o 81 users took the Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam and 49 successfully passed the exam
➢ Extended GSCCCA Indexing Standards Online Training
  o 158 people participated in the training
➢ Fines & Fees Online Training
  o 212 people participated in the training
➢ Notary Public Online Training
  o 13,030 people participated in the training
  o 7,951 took the Notary Public Final Exam
➢ UCC Online Training
  o 89 people participated in the training

Additionally, the Authority conducted 16 one-on-one training sessions for clerks, other courts, banks, and realtors. The Authority also presented a variety of training programs to different constituencies, and provided training at the Fall COAG Conference, the Clerks' Fall Meeting at Brasstown Valley, the Winter COAG Conference, the Spring Clerks' Conference, and Clerk Training in Atlanta and Athens.

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 2019.

➢ Continually 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.

➢ Filmed, edited and published five new "Featured Clerk" videos to website. Using the format of a casual conversation/interview, the videos highlight each clerk's personality and continue the Authority's goal of making the website more engaging for users while also promoting Superior Court clerks.

➢ 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.

➢ Provided a computer lab for the Fall COAG Conference and Spring Clerks' Conference. Conference materials were posted in the Authority's Clerk Resource Center.

➢ Visited with clerks of Superior Court across the state and participated in clerk district meetings to discuss joint projects and legislative issues and to promote the benefits of Authority projects including the Premium Search account and eFile Project.

➢ Conducted various presentations and training for clerks of Superior Court, other courts, and outside groups including members of the banking, real estate and legal communities.

➢ 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.

➢ Taught 27 Notary Public classes in 14 locations across the state. Nearly 1,400 members of the public attended these classes which were hosted by Superior Court clerks.

➢ Produced Archive Newsletter addressing the topic of ransomware and prevention and frequently-asked-questions document addressing common questions regarding the Authority's archive services and disseminated both documents to clerks at the Spring Conference.

➢ Maintained liaison roles with the State Bar, public users, title examiners, surveyors, GCIC, and courthouse vendors.

➢ 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.

➢ Fielded questions from law enforcement and offices of the United States Attorneys regarding the UCC filing process.

➢ Participated in an FBI work group addressing mortgage fraud. The Authority's database is viewed as a valuable tool in the research and discovery process for law enforcement.

➢ Handled, in conjunction with the Attorney General's office, open records requests from the public.

➢ Benefitted from Authority Communications Director serving as president of the board of the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) for 2018-2020. Comprised of state notary administrators, the NPA brings together public and private stakeholders in the notary industry. The Authority's participation in NPA allows us to monitor changes and trends in the area of notary law nationally that could affect the state of Georgia. In his role as president, Mike has had the following responsibilities:
  o Presented at the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA) 42nd Annual Conference on remote notarization legislative activity across the U.S.
  o Presented at the annual conference of the National Public Records Research Association on remote/online notarization.
  o Represented the Clerks' Authority at the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) 2019 Winter Conference where he reported on the activities and 2019 goals of NPA, a section of NASS.
  o Set conference agenda for NPA/NASS 2019 summer conference.

➢ Benefitted from Authority Communications Director serving as past-president of the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA). In this position, Mike represents the Clerks' Authority by promoting 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. As past president, Mike continues to participate in strategic planning meetings for IACA.

➢ Benefitted from staff members furthering education and training:
  o Congratulations to the Authority's IT director, Andy Wightwick, and development manager, Richard McPhaul, who maintained their PMP (Project Management Professional) certification. The certification requires passing an extensive test and then retaining credentials through continuing professional development and practice in the field. Richard recently completed all requirements and training to renew the credential for the next three years.
  o Congratulations to the Authority's VMF Coordinator, Jonathan Clark, who passed the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) A+ certification exam in May. A+ is the entry-level credential for IT professionals, and certifies that a person has the knowledge, proficiency and customer service skills necessary to perform basic technical support and IT operation services.

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 business community has new, innovative tools for making their work more efficient and effective.
- ➢ The State of Georgia benefits from more modernized clerk of Superior Court offices.
- ➢ Clerks' offices enjoy additional resources as budgets are stretched thin.
- ➢ Georgia lawmakers have access to data that allows them to more effectively set public policy.
- ➢ Law enforcement officials have access to critical and timely crime data to protect the public.

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

- ➢ Strengthen our relationship 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 them 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 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.