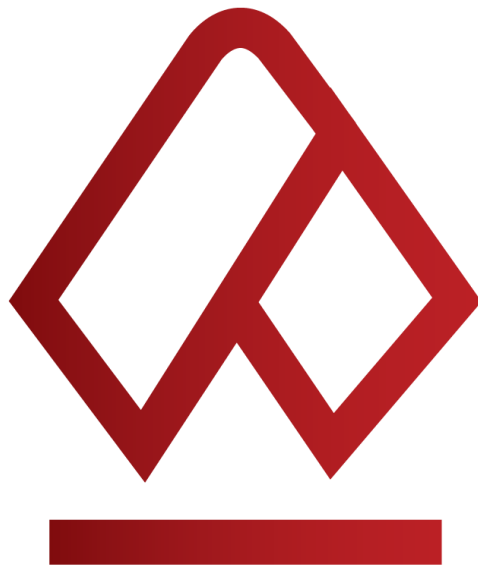


Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority



2020-2021 Accomplishments & Year-end Report

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Executive Summary

*“To reach a port, we must set sail —
Sail, not tie at anchor.
Sail, not drift.”*

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

Understanding the importance of leadership and action, especially during difficult and uncertain times, President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke these words in 1938 during one of his now-famous fireside chats when the United States was still struggling through the challenges of an economic and social recovery brought about by the Great Depression.

Similar in its adversity and uncertainty, this past year-plus has been among the most difficult in recent history, as Georgians, along with the rest of the world, have endured the unprecedented challenges and devastating effects of a once-in-a-century pandemic. As COVID-19 disrupted everything, it felt like time was standing still, yet also moving faster than ever.

As both a skilled sailor and astute leader, FDR knew that to anchor or drift amidst the storm was not an option. No stranger to sailing in choppy waters, the senior management team and board of directors of the **Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority** knew this as well. To survive the turbulent waters and navigate with purpose to the other side, it was not only necessary but critical to adjust our sails and take bold action. Through thoughtful, proactive leadership and an all-hands-on-deck approach, the Authority made decisions amid the ambiguity, reassessed regularly, and adapted swiftly to ensure we were meeting our primary goal of supporting Superior Court clerks in the operation of their offices.

Detailed last year and in this report, the Authority acted quickly and throughout the past 15 months to respond to the extraordinary and unprecedented situation in order to direct resources where they were most needed. To be specific, actions included deploying the tools and providing the support to allow for remote work — including the distribution of 130 laptops to Superior Court clerks and the creation of hundreds of VPN accounts for clerks and their staff, fielding thousands of questions and troubleshooting a myriad of problems to help counties and customers navigate the seismic disruption to normal business operations, scaling up eLearning opportunities across all subjects and departments to provide critical training, offering search site promo codes to allow for public access to the Authority’s databases when courthouses were closed, and providing a drop box service for apostille and authentication requests with an immediate turn-around option.

To implement solutions in uncharted territory, these actions along with hundreds of others — large and small decisions, pivots, enhancements and updates — were made using a purposeful approach on how best to support clerk offices and to continue offering much-needed services. Despite the volatility and disruption, including being forced to alter our own office operations, the Authority’s mission throughout this difficult year was to provide a seamless level of service to Superior Court clerks and all others that we serve. Feedback from clerks and other customers is inserted throughout this report including the following comments that speak directly to the importance and appreciation of the Authority’s support, especially its leadership in response to this year’s unprecedented challenges:

“I doubt there is any other agency in Georgia that goes above and beyond as the Authority does. We are so very fortunate for the foresight of those clerks many years ago and for the continued excellence of the staff and all those involved in keeping the Authority on mission. Thanks to you all.”

*– Connie Cheatham, Clerk
McDuffie County Superior Court*

“We are so blessed to have the Authority! I just don’t have the words to fully express how I feel about you & the organization you represent. Without the support of the Authority, we would not have been able to handle the challenges placed on us. You’ve supplied the tools & the knowledge we need in order to shine in a way that would not have been possible without you.

“Another thing that amazes me is the staff there. They are all so friendly, caring, respectful, humble, & willing to do whatever it takes to meet our needs. They’re always looking for ways to make things better for us & to prepare us for the future.

“I think back to the days of “Pre-Authority” & wonder how in the world Clerks did their jobs. I often wonder if those Clerks who brainstormed the Authority into existence had any idea just how great the Authority would be for us. I am so thankful for all involved. We are so blessed! Thank you for always being there for us!”

*– Regina B. McIntyre, Retired Clerk
Barrow County Superior Court
(Comments from two emails to the Authority
prior to Regina’s retirement)*

There was no roadmap for surviving the transformational challenges presented by COVID-19, but the past 15 months reinforced one important reality: nimble organizations are more resilient to adversity. For this reason, the Authority had an edge in adapting to the upheaval because we already had processes and structures available to us, in addition to a forward-thinking mindset open to change. In a fog of uncertainty and collective vulnerability, the Authority leaned on its muscle memory of continuous innovation and out-of-the-box thinking in order to effectively manage the crisis and provide holistic, much-needed support.

Challenging norms and pushing the needle has been a part of our DNA from the beginning as the Authority has long embraced technology, reinvented core processes, and adopted new collaborative tools to successfully develop and implement its many projects. That framework was built to keep Superior Court clerks relevant and ahead of the curve in meeting their constituents' needs. But because that framework was already in place, it allowed for a more seamless transition for both Authority staff and Superior Court clerks as we all navigated through turbulent, unknown waters brought about by the COVID storm. Rather than yield to the new challenges and limitations, as many were forced to do, we maintained business continuity with offices operating remotely and services continuing uninterrupted. Many examples will be highlighted throughout this report, but none are more telling than the staggering growth of the eFile Project over the last year. With the system successfully in place and technical barriers for counties to participate largely resolved, a spike in usage following the outbreak of COVID-19 — 66% growth for all documents and 75% for real estate instruments this past fiscal year — came as no surprise but was only possible because of the work done over the last two decades.

Using technology and data in new ways and accelerating the scope and scale of innovation is at the heart of what the Authority is all about, and the challenges of this past year have further highlighted the importance of the 26-year partnership between the Authority and Superior Court clerks and the profound and lasting impact of revolutionizing Superior Court clerks' offices by ushering in a new era of technology.

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 and half 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
- Current Indexing Improvement Initiative
- Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project
- County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project
- Lien, Plat & Map Project
- Historical Plat Image Project
- PT-61 Project
- UCC eFile
- Child Support eFile
- Real Estate eFile
- Premium Search Account
- Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App)
- Protective Order Registry
- Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- Carbon Sequestration Registry
- MyVault Online Archive Program
- Media Holdings Project (formerly known as the Georgia Archives Initiative)
- Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program
- Statewide Computer Replacement Project

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

- Unprecedented access to valuable information — free access through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- Over \$100 million in additional funding and over 30,000 pieces of new equipment for clerks' offices since the Authority's inception.

- 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 to Georgia counties and citizens.

Accomplishments – Highlights from FY 2021

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

- **Compensated clerks' offices** over \$7.6 million for prints off the Authority website and over \$1.1 million for deed images, resulting in over **\$8.7 million** in additional funding for Georgia's Superior Court clerks this fiscal year.
- Researched options, then acquired, configured, and deployed **130 Lenovo laptops**, along with docking stations, wireless keyboards, mice, and external monitors, to Superior Court clerks as part of a Laptop Initiative to support clerks' ability to work remotely. This initiative was born from a clerk leadership meeting last August, when the challenges of the pandemic, including working remotely, were discussed.
- Handled an **increase in support needs** from counties and website customers as everyone adjusted to the changes and challenges brought about by the pandemic. The entire Authority staff prioritized fielding questions and fixing problems to help clerks, their staff, and our other constituencies navigate the "new normal." HelpDesk, the Authority's customer support team, fielded over 24,000 phone calls, a 20% increase from last year, and handled over 18,000 emails, a huge 77% increase from the previous year. Over 90% of HelpDesk tickets were resolved during the initial contact. Along with site navigation, online training questions, and other issues, many requests for help involved the eFile Project as the pandemic brought a tremendous increase in usage. With the spike in electronic filing, Authority staff was available to walk clerks through the set-up, help new filers understand the system, and work out any other kinks that popped up along the way. Additionally, the Notary & Authentications Division experienced a 69% increase in phone calls fielding nearly 15,500 calls for the fiscal year.
- Continued to grow **Real Estate eFile**. Since the launch of Real Estate eFile in 2011, over 3.7 million real estate documents have been electronically recorded with the vast majority of those in the last four years. Legislative mandates resulted in all 159 counties participating in the program to some degree, with 137 counties accepting all document types, and an expected increase in eFilings. The pandemic, however, brought about a surge in growth that has seen a 75% increase in usage this year and a staggering 181% increase over the past two years. In FY 2021,

nearly 1.6 million real estate documents were electronically recorded. While some filers are returning to courthouses across Georgia to record instruments in person, it is likely that we will see a significant shift with many first-time eFilers from the past year continuing to electronically file in the future.

- Continued to grow **UCC eFile** with a record 274,000+ UCCs electronically filed for the fiscal year, a 29% increase from the previous fiscal year, and an incredible 99% growth in usage over the past two years. With the pandemic as a driving factor, nearly 90% of all UCCs filed in FY 2021 were electronically filed. Additionally, 3 new counties were activated for a total of 147 counties participating in the UCC eFile program. At fiscal year-end, 69 of those counties — 26 more than last year — mandated or only allowed the electronic filing of UCCs, another indicator of the continuing growth and popularity of the program.
- Responded to the increased need for remote learning by leveraging Zoom platform to offer a robust training schedule of **41 webinars** and by launching another online training course, **Notary Online**. With the addition of this new class, the Authority now offers a total of eight online courses through its eLearn site to Superior Court clerks, deputy clerks, vendors and other members of the public. Gaining in popularity over the last several years due to convenience and cost-savings, virtual learning became critical following the outbreak of COVID-19 as it allowed important training to continue when in-person educational programs were no longer an option. In FY 2021, the Authority trained over 24,000 people through its eight online courses, and likely thousands more through its webinars and other virtual training programs.
- Acquired and deployed **Microsoft Office** and **Adobe Acrobat** software packages to Superior Court clerk offices. Currently, software has been shipped to 96 clerk offices, with **789 individual software installations** complete and 29 installations scheduled or in progress. This initiative was born from the Authority's strategic planning efforts in 2019. Through that process, the Authority sought feedback from clerks which revealed the need for various pieces of productivity software that had become essential for doing business in the clerk's office.
- Launched **Historical Plat Image Project** with the goal of making all historical plat images available on the Authority's search system. One of several priority initiatives identified by the Authority Board, the project includes images of plats filed on or before December 31, 2003 in all counties statewide, with a \$3 allowance for counties per plat image. The physical size of plats and the various methods that clerks have used to preserve them over the years makes the project more complicated; however, the Authority is pursuing multiple paths to achieve its goal, and progress has been better than anticipated. Thus far, compensation to clerks' offices has been more than **\$2.5 million**. Completion of the project is expected in late FY 2022, with an estimated total cost of \$4.5 million.

- Launched **Current Indexing Improvement Initiative** by identifying critical errors found in each of the 159 counties and communicating this information to each clerk of Superior Court with the goal of providing individualized and specific training to those clerk offices that might need or request additional assistance in order to mitigate indexing errors. The need to improve current indexing data quality was prioritized by the Authority Board at their 2019 Strategic Planning Session.
- Celebrated important milestone in October 2020 by surpassing 1 billion files stored and protected through the Authority's statewide **MyVault Online Archive Program**, which protects the digital records of Georgia's Superior Court clerks. MyVault is currently storing and protecting over 1.08 billion files totaling more than 196 TBs of live data, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. Since 2007, MyVault has responded to 185 data loss requests and has restored over 3.9 TBs of data back to county systems. In FY 2021, the Authority received 32 requests to restore data, resulting in over 502 GBs of data successfully restored back to clerk offices.
- Restored over 600,000 deed and lien images back to 11 clerk offices through the **Virtual Microfilm Program**. Through the VMF system, all deeds, liens and plats ever received by the Authority are directly available to clerks without the clerk having to make a records request or having to search the GSCCCA search system. The VMF image archive program not only provides an alternative to the traditional microfilm process, but provides clerks with easier access to their archived digital records and further protects them consistent with the law. Today, the system stores over 289 million images, across 501,000+ books totaling over 13 terabytes of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the online portal. In FY 2021, 18 additional counties logged into the VMF website for the first time to view and access their online archival data. While all counties are participating in the program, a total of 88 counties have now actively accessed the VMF website.
- Advanced the **Media Holdings Project** (formerly the Georgia Archives Initiative). A total of **141 clerks** have elected to participate in this project to analyze the media holdings for their county with the goal of becoming better informed about how and where their data is protected. This analysis may also reveal any gaps in data protection that may exist. The media holdings of 31 counties have now been transcribed and will be queued for phase 3 analysis.
- Launched the **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project** to fully overhaul www.courttrax.org and streamline the fines and fees process. With the completion of a discovery document detailing all system requirements, future requirements, and system enhancements, in addition to a projected plan, the Authority's IT team has begun the active rewrite process. Much thought and planning has gone into the rewrite plans, which will include a new and updated look for www.courttrax.org providing both visual appeal and enhanced ease-of-use. As importantly, though, the Authority will incorporate into the new site the option to electronically submit the Monthly Remittance, Monthly Disbursement, and Trust Fund Interest reports through CourtTRAX or by utilizing an API. The new site is expected to launch in 2022.

- Added additional instruments to our website through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project** for a total of over 4.2 million instruments in production since the program was implemented in 2013. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks' offices have access to additional resources through print image fees initiated through the Authority's website. During the fiscal year, 12 additional counties began participating in the project for a total of 67 counties in the voluntary program.
- Improved the Authority's **eFile portal** by implementing payment enhancements including auto-retry of payment failures, detailed exception responses, and automatic detection and limiting of errant system use/abuse to protect clerk network bandwidth. This will empower clerks and their offices to reattempt payment collections increasing processing of real estate eFile instruments.
- Completed development of a high-performance **Imaging Web API** for transmission of deed, lien and plat images to the Authority. The new API adds flexibility in image processing to support current programs, including the Historical Plat Image Project, and planned future programs, as well as providing vendors with additional submission, retrieval and reporting features.
- Developed **Protective Order Exception report**, in collaboration with GCIC, to support clerks and help eliminate errors that occur as GCIC processes the transmitted orders into the Registry. The report will be sent to individual counties when exceptions are created as GCIC processes Protective Orders, and will help clerks' staff identify and correct common errors as well as have some assurance the orders are being accepted. In FY 2021, nearly **53,000 Protective Orders** were indexed by clerks, and then electronically transmitted by the Authority to GCIC.
- Increased **Premium Search accounts** by 22% adding over 1,100 new accounts for a fiscal year-end total of 6,155 accounts. Launched in 2012, the Premium Search 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.
- Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the **Fines & Fees Division**.

Program Statistics — Highlights from FY 2021

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

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

- Added nearly **19 million** images to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **305 million** images accessible to the public through www.gscca.org.
- Hosted nearly **1.5 million** unique visitors with **512 million** page views on www.gscca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet nearly **6.4 million times** from **219 countries** this past fiscal year.
- Ordered, processed and shipped **1,150 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. Of this total, the Authority purchased (at a cost of over **\$831,000**) and deployed **761 pieces of new equipment** (325 computers, 285 monitors and 151 scanners) to 75 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 over **30,000** pieces of new equipment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.
- Trained over **24,000** people through **8 online classes** and **41 webinars** on various important and much-requested topics, in addition to collaborating with other groups to offer both virtual and in-person training.
- Indexed and added to the database over **316,000 UCCs**, the highest fiscal year total since 2000, and conducted nearly **10,000 Certified Searches**, the most since 2011. From the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed over **6.9 million UCCs** — an average of 22,000 per month — and conducted approximately **282,000 Certified Searches**.
- Increased participation in **Notary Online** by adding 4 new counties for a total of **148 counties** currently participating in the program. **97%** 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 nearly **54,000 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.
- Processed over **14,000 apostille and authentication requests** with approximately **35,000 apostilles** issued, and sold **3,000 Notary Handbooks** (a 180% increase) during FY 2021.
- Collected and disbursed over **\$73 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 nearly **31,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Electronically transmitted to GCIC nearly **194,000 records of criminal court dispositions** from various courts in Georgia for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- Facilitated **43 county network moves/upgrades**. With the proliferation of eFiling and the recent increased need for remote access and VPN, network bandwidth demands continue to increase. With the rise of fiber availability, the Authority can work with any service provider necessary to facilitate the needs of the location.

- Protected users' mailboxes via Mimecast, the GSCCCA email security gateway, by blocking over **740,000** distinct malicious, virus-containing messages and phishing attempts to @gsccca.org accounts, in addition to the millions of verified spam senders that are simply rejected automatically.
- Added another **137 million files** totaling more than **39 TBs of data** to the **MyVault** remote servers for a fiscal year-end total of over **1.08 billion files** stored and protected in the online vault. MyVault managed **32 restore requests** for clerks, restoring over **502 GBs of data**, and upgraded archive appliances in **27** counties during FY 2021.

Building a New & Better Normal

In a year filled with unprecedented challenges, prioritizing resources became more critical. Yet even while diverting significant manpower and financial resources toward responding to the extraordinary situation, the Authority did not lose its forward-thinking mentality and advanced several important goals that had materialized at the Board's 2019 Strategic Planning session by launching the following initiatives:

- Current Indexing Improvement Initiative (More information on Page 32.)
- Historical Plat Image Project (More information on Pages 34-35.)
- Microsoft Office/Adobe Acrobat Software Initiative (More information on Page 59.)

Although supporting clerks through the COVID storm was priority number one, the Authority managed, through tireless efforts and a thoughtful approach, to continue pushing forward these important initiatives that were born from clerk feedback.

The Authority's success on all these fronts was — and will always be — only possible through the support of Georgia's Superior Court clerks. Fostering and embracing a symbiotic relationship for over a quarter century, the Authority and Superior Court clerks have successfully worked together to innovate, adapt, and continue to move the technology needle. It's truly a testament to what can be achieved when partners work together towards a shared goal.

We cannot rewrite the past year, but we can learn from it and continue to evolve. Adapting and innovating — whether by choice or necessity — is in our collective DNA, and now more than ever, we must encourage agile thinking, reassess needs and priorities, embrace ideas outside our comfort zone, and work together to make our new normal a better normal. Stability is good, no doubt, but volatile and uncertain environments create opportunity and provide a fertile space for innovation and creativity. We remain optimistic that the Authority is prepared and positioned to capitalize on future opportunities as the storm clouds begin to dissipate and we soon enter a post-COVID world.

With the intent of offering encouragement to the American people, FDR concluded his 1938 fireside chat by saying: “I believe we have been right in the course we have charted. To abandon our purpose ... would be to miss the tide and perhaps to miss the port.”

With the same resolute commitment since opening our doors in 1995, the Authority will not miss its port, but will remain steadfastly oriented to our North Star — our purpose, mission, and primary objective of supporting Georgia’s Superior Court clerks, meeting their changing needs and priorities, and advancing their technological resources. With the wind at our back, we will move forward together with a continuing shared sense of purpose that always keeps us on course.

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 of 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 6.4 million times from 219 countries in FY 2021. 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. Moreover, the Authority's website moved from "convenient" to "critical" when courthouses were closed to walk-in traffic following COVID-19, but the public still had access to important information through www.gsccca.org.

Website Statistics for FY 2021

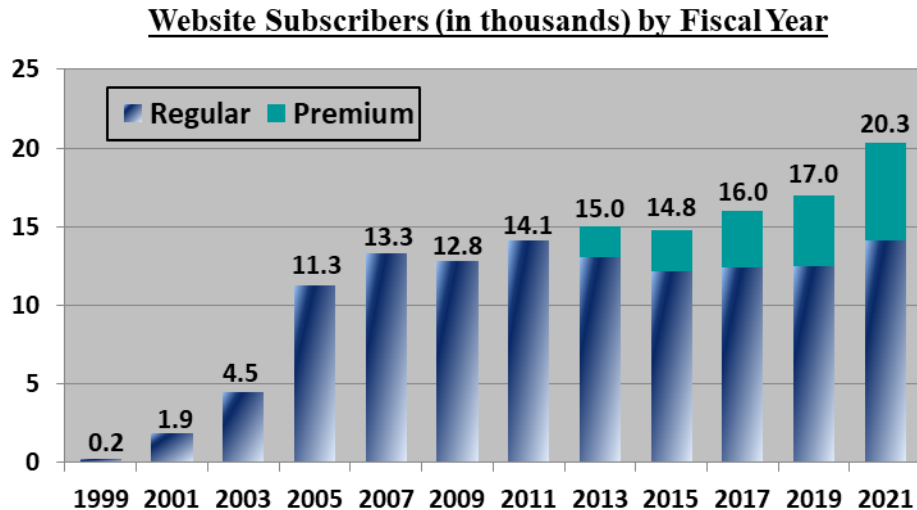
- Images added to the GSCCCA search system: 18.9 million
- Total images in the GSCCCA search system: 305 million
- Sessions: 6.4 million
- Data Transferred/Bandwidth: 15.6 TBs
- Page views: 512 million
- Unique visitors: 1.5 million
- Average page views per visit: 26
- Average visit duration: 14:17 minutes
- Number of countries that visited: 219
- Top 4 countries: U.S., India, Philippines and United Kingdom
- 56% of all visitors use Chrome; 21% use Safari; 9% use Internet Explorer; 8% use Edge; and 4% use Firefox
- 27% of users access website using mobile device
- 63% of mobile users use iOS and 34% use Android

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

As web users evolve and their needs and devices change, it is more important than ever for online services to grow and expand their online presence. And with 1.5 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 for FY 2021

- Total (Regular + Premium Search) monthly subscribers as of 6/30/21: **20,285**
- Regular monthly subscribers as of 6/30/21: **14,130**
- Premium Search monthly subscribers as of 6/30/21: **6,155**
- Percentage increase in Premium Search accounts for FY 2021: **22%**
- Single-use subscribers added during fiscal year: **37,148**



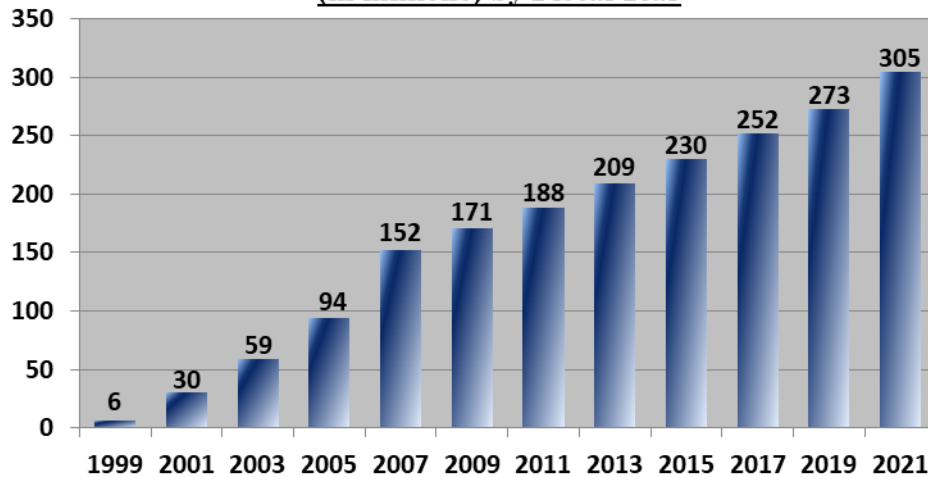
Since 1999, website subscriptions have increased dramatically, clear evidence of the Authority’s growth and the growing value of its statewide indexes. Beyond the numbers, though, the Authority gauges its success and relevance on the response and feedback from its customers and how integral the Authority’s 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 2021, nearly **19 million** images were added to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **305 million images**. See the following chart and bar graph for more details.

	Images Added in FY 2021	Total Images FYE 6/30/21
Deeds	16,151,850	263,252,023
Liens	1,359,293	23,555,883
Plats	446,705	1,592,335
UCCs	412,925	9,229,237
PT-61s	518,914	7,426,029
Total	18,889,687	305,055,507

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



Website Reliability & Security

The Authority places a high priority on providing its subscribers reliable, 24/7 service. Soon after opening, it was realized that any web-based reporting system had points where system failures could occur. In response, the Authority began distributing thousands of PCs, scanners and other equipment to Georgia’s 159 counties — over **30,000 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 and 6 million images in 1999 to over **20,000 subscribers** and **305 million images** today, the Authority has virtually eliminated downtime. Whether a user searches the records on Wednesday at noon or Saturday at midnight, the Authority’s database servers provide the search results in seconds.

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

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

The Authority values its customers and recognizes that their input serves to make our systems cleaner and better. For example, the Authority added an image reporting function to 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 encouraged and valued. The Authority enhances its programs and upgrades its systems regularly, and proudly incorporates customer feedback and suggestions.

Financial Overview

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

Despite the unprecedented circumstances resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19, the financial condition of the Authority remained strong throughout FY 2021, with revenues exceeding budget. This surplus is primarily a result of deed fee revenue received from the clerks' offices due to the strong real estate market during the fiscal year. Additionally, other projects also outpaced budgeted expectations. The Authority is well positioned to meet its upcoming FY 2022 budgeted obligations and continues to aggressively manage project and administrative costs.

FY 2020 Year-end Audit Completed by Mauldin & Jenkins

- Received an unqualified "clean" opinion from Mauldin & Jenkins for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 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 2021, the Authority compensated Superior Court clerk offices **\$7.6 million** for print monies generated and **\$1.1 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.

Accounting Information

- Total active subscriber accounts as of June 30, 2021: **20,285**
This includes **6,155** Premium Search accounts.
- Average monthly direct access subscription revenue during FY 2021: **\$315,824**
- Single-use subscription revenue during FY 2021: **\$186,087**
- Number of monthly check payments processed during FY 2021: **11,655**
- Purchased **\$831,585** of equipment for counties during FY 2021 as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project.
- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for deed images:
 - During FY 2021: **\$1,144,704**
 - Since inception of project: **\$21.8 million**
- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website:
 - During FY 2021: **\$7,621,012**
 - Since inception of project: **\$81.8 million**
- FY 2021 break-down for print compensation:
 - Deeds: \$6,818,788
 - Liens: \$251,082
 - Plats: \$405,985
 - PT-61s: \$42,098
 - UCCs: \$103,059

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 183,000).
- 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. 148 Georgia counties (93%) participate in Notary Online, providing web-based, notary applications using software developed by the Authority.

Incorporating feedback from clerks' offices, the Authority continually seeks ways to improve Notary Online. Recent IT enhancements to increase speed and improve efficiency have been well received as shown by the comments below from a member of the DeKalb County Superior Court clerk's office.

"We are so excited about the IT upgrade to Notary Online. First, it's lightning fast now and discarding applications is not a long chore. We noticed right away and wanted to let you all know that our processing time has decreased. Please, please express to your IT Team how much we appreciate the upgrade. Kudos to GSCCCA!!"

Additionally, the Authority completed a project in 2020 that involved the digital scanning of over 260,000 notary certificates. The images were then loaded into the Authority's Virtual Microfilm (VMF) system to allow for future viewing. The purpose of the project was to ensure that these paper records were securely stored in a digital form for added long-term protection.

In addition to its responsibility for maintaining Georgia's notary database and supporting clerks in their notarial duties, the Authority also serves a vital role in international commerce by issuing apostilles, and was recognized in 1998 by the U.S. State Department as the only agency, outside of a Secretary of State office, to provide this critical service. The Apostille Treaty is an international treaty (of which the U.S. is a signatory member) that provides for a simplified method of authenticating documents for use in other countries. It certifies the origin (i.e. country) of the public document by authenticating the signature and seal of the issuing public official. Approximately 4 million apostilles are issued worldwide on an annual basis. The number of countries participating in the Apostille Treaty is currently 118; however, Jamaica will join the treaty in July and Singapore will join in September.

During FY 2021, the Authority issued approximately 35,000 apostilles destined for 101 different countries and 11 foreign territories. These documents originated in 138 different Georgia counties. Types of documents include:

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

In addition to facilitating international commerce, the Authority regularly receives feedback regarding apostilles that highlights its role in helping everyday Georgians and the very real impact it has on people and lives. As an example, one customer recently emailed the following comments about his experience with the Authority staff and what their outstanding service meant for him:

“I wanted to let you know how incredibly good your team is. I had a really urgent issue: I needed documents with an apostille seal delivered by this Wednesday to a medical school I am going to internationally. Fulton County Schools had made so many mistakes that I had to keep resubmitting documents to them electronically, no drop boxes, had to mail documents back to me, no ability to have them overnighted, just a terrible comedy of mistakes and inefficiencies.

“However, it was all straightened out yesterday and the documents were put in the GSCCCA drop box with some additional handwritten instructions in case of problems or issues. I then called the office, spoke to Peter and apprised him of the situation, and he called a team member that was physically there, she sealed my documents and put them in a FedEx envelope last evening to be delivered today. That's one day before the deadline, and I did not think I would make the deadline going in, and would have to wait another year to start medical school.

“Your team rocked; I would not change a thing about the way your team works! Peter emailed me last evening with a copy of the processed order, and a quick note letting me know it would be delivered today. The GSCCCA team was a model of efficiency not normally seen in government. Please let your team know how great they are!”

As highlighted last year, following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Authority's Notary & Authentications Division worked hard to support clerks and to continue providing its services to the general public by doing the following:

- Assisted counties with training on the Authority’s **Notary Online Mail-In Renewal (MIR)** program. This program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail in their renewal application and pay with a credit card, thus foregoing a trip to the clerk’s office. This feature became even more important when clerks’ offices were forced to close last spring due to the pandemic. Currently, **47 counties** have been trained and participate in the MIR program.
- Provided **drop box service** for apostille and authentication requests. Due to the public health concern regarding COVID-19, the Authority suspended all walk-in service effective March 17, 2020. In an effort to provide an additional option to the public, besides its mail-in service, the Authority created a drop box service that allows people (or couriers) to place their documents in a drop box located just outside the Authority’s suite. Notary & Authentications staff then process and mail the documents back, often with a turn-around time of only one day. Additionally, the Authority incorporated a “compassionate service” option providing immediate turn-around for those under severe time constraints. This option allows a customer to call from their car when the documents have been placed in the drop box; staff immediately picks up and authenticates the documents while the customer waits outside. This past fiscal year, approximately **40%** of apostille and authentication requests have arrived via the drop box.

In addition to the services listed above, the Authority’s Notary & Authentications Division had a busy and productive year with the following highlights for FY 2021:

- Maintained the statewide notary database. A statewide total of approximately **53,700 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database. 97% of these notary commissions were processed through the Authority’s web-based system, Notary Online, and just 3% through traditional methods.
- Continued promoting **Notary Online**. Participation in the program, which was developed in 2004, increased to **148 counties** with 4 of those counties joining this fiscal year. The Authority provides one-on-one training for new counties.
- Processed **14,287 apostille and authentication requests/orders**, with 60% of requests submitted through the mail and 40% of requests arriving via the drop box. The Authority suspended all walk-in service effective March 17, 2020 due to public health concerns regarding COVID-19.
- Issued approximately **35,000 apostilles** this fiscal year destined for 101 different countries and 11 foreign territories. These documents originated in 138 different Georgia counties.
- Issued **220 certificates of authority**, primarily for use in Puerto Rico.
- Handled a record number of phone calls, nearly **15,500**, which is a 69% increase over the previous year. On average, **62** calls per day were answered to resolution.
- Sold **3,000 Notary Handbooks**, a 180% increase from FY 2020. 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, seven counties participated in the program with a total of **225** handbooks being sold at the local level. The handbook includes forms and definitions and is an excellent reference for Georgia notary law, notary procedures and best practices.

- Provided training to Superior Court clerks and their staff in support of their notarial duties by:
 - Offering online course: ***Notary Online – Mail-in Renewals***. This class was developed last year in direct response to the COVID-19 crisis to help clerks remotely train their staffs to participate in the MIR program. As mentioned above, the program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail in their renewal application and pay with a credit card, thus foregoing a trip to the clerk’s office, a feature that became important when clerks’ offices were forced to close.
 - Adding new online course: ***Notary Online***. Designed for both new and existing Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks, the class covers submitting, processing and deleting applications; processing name and address changes; editing unscanned commissions; setting preferences; and reviewing notary files, forms, reports and Certificates of Authority.
- Provided training to the general public, free-of-charge, on the role and responsibilities of a notary public by:
 - Offering online course: ***Notary Public***. During the past fiscal year, nearly 24,000 Georgians took advantage of the Authority’s online class and, of those participants, over 16,000 took the Notary Public Final Exam. Some Superior Court clerks now require constituents to pass this exam to receive their notary commissions.
 - Conducting **4 webinars** for notaries public with nearly 320 people attending. Hosted by Superior Court clerks, these classes provide tremendous exposure for clerks and a valuable service to their constituents.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual meeting sessions for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) regarding the **e-Appostille process**.
- Served in an advisory role in the formulation of **House Bill 334** which authorizes remote and electronic notarial acts in the state of Georgia. The bill is currently tabled in the Georgia Senate. Further action could be taken on the bill during the 2022 legislative session.

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 an online course, now titled *GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction*, to help educate court personnel, private probation companies, clerks and their staff on the reporting of fines and fees and how to comply with the law. Updated annually to include legislative changes, the Authority's online course enables the different courts and others with an interest in the court fee system to train their personnel at a time of their choosing and save travel costs. The flexibility and accessibility of this online training was especially important over the last year-plus with the challenges of in-person training resulting from the pandemic. This past fiscal year, **89** people took advantage of this training.

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 maintains an online calculator to help courts properly calculate and assess fines and fees.
- Developed and maintains internal accounting systems to support the indexing and processing of these fees to ensure that collection data can be timely and accurately made available to the public.

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

With the completion of a discovery document detailing all system requirements, future requirements, and system enhancements, in addition to a projected plan, the Authority's IT team has begun the active rewrite process. Much thought and planning has gone into the project with the rewrite including administrative

and account management features, in addition to an updated look for www.courttrax.org providing both visual appeal and enhanced ease-of-use. Equally importantly, the Authority will incorporate into the new site the option to electronically submit the Monthly Remittance, Monthly Disbursement, and Trust Fund Interest reports through CourtTRAX or by utilizing an API. The new site is expected to launch in 2022.

In FY 2021, the Authority's Fines & Fees Division:

- Launched **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project** to fully overhaul www.courttrax.org to streamline the fines and fees process. (More details above.)
- Collected and disbursed **\$73.4 million** in court fees. This amount is down from previous years by about \$6 million due to low collections because of COVID-19 court closings.
- 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 **30,788 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Continued to hold operational costs to at or under the statutory limit of \$500,000 for 17th year in a row.
- Submitted monthly Fines & Fees results to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council fulfilling statutory reporting requirements for Local Victim Assistance Program funds. Automated monthly reporting provides Criminal Justice Coordinating Council with additional requested data in CSV format for importing into their records.
- 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 576 and SB 249) affecting Fines & Fees.
- Continued to refine procedures to ensure the accuracy of the indexed data in the Fines & Fees database.
- Provided support to probation companies and other entities affiliated with the courts for the purpose of collecting and disbursing fines and fees.
- Educated court personnel, private probation companies, clerks and their staff on the reporting of fines and fees and how to comply with the law:
 - Offered online training course: *GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction*. This training is available to all court personnel and vendors. This past fiscal year, 89 people took advantage of this training.
 - Utilized Zoom platform to conduct 4 Fines & Fees webinars for court personnel across the state.
 - Partnered with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at the University of Georgia to offer Fines & Fees training. This past fiscal year, two webinars were conducted for new Municipal Court clerks, three webinars were conducted for new Municipal Court judges, and one in-person class was conducted for new Probate Court judges.
 - Conducted all-day classroom Fines & Fees training session at the 2020 Fall COAG meeting in Savannah.

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

UCC (Uniform Commercial Code) Project

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

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

In an effort to stay at the forefront of technology and meet the 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 **1.2 million UCCs** have been electronically filed. The past 15 months have seen tremendous growth — primarily due to court closings and social distancing measures brought about by COVID-19 — with a **29% increase** in usage compared to last fiscal year and a nearly **100% increase** from two years ago. Over **274,000 UCCs** were eFiled in FY 2021, a record number and almost 90% of all UCCs filed in Georgia during the fiscal year. Additionally, 3 new counties were activated for a current total of **147 participating counties**. At present, 69 of those counties — 26 more than last year — mandate or only allow the electronic filing of UCCs.

For the counties who mandate UCC eFiling, a new feature was added in 2019, **UCC auto-numbering**, which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number. This allows a clerk's office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows these counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. At fiscal-year end, 54 counties were taking advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature, with 34 of those counties activated this year.

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

During FY 2021, the Authority:

- Indexed and added to the database approximately **316,372 UCCs**, the highest fiscal year total since 2000. Nearly **50,000 UCCs** were indexed and added to the database in July 2020, the most ever in a single month since the Authority's statewide system became operational in January 1995. The first quarter of FY 2021 saw more than 109,000 UCC filings, a record number and a continuation of a trend that began in the fourth quarter of FY 2020. This increase in filings has

been attributed to UCCs filed in relation to the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loans.

- Conducted **9,979 Certified Searches**, the highest fiscal year total since 2011.
- Continued to grow **UCC eFile** with a record 274,000+ UCCs electronically filed for the fiscal year. With the pandemic as a driving factor, nearly 90% of all UCCs filed in FY 2021 were electronically filed. Additionally, 3 new counties were activated for a total of 147 counties participating in the UCC eFile project. As of June 30, 69 of the participating counties — 26 more than last year — mandate or only allow the electronic filing of UCCs, another indicator of the continuing growth and popularity of the program.
- Continued promoting and supporting **UCC online training class** available to Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks through the Authority's eLearn site.
- Conducted multiple **UCC webinars** for Superior Court clerk personnel, in addition to one-on-one virtual training sessions for different constituencies.
- Conducted a virtual class for the University of Georgia School of Law "Secured Transactions" class on the UCC process and the Authority's role.
- Created monthly **UCC bulk image electronic files** for clients throughout the year.
- Fielded UCC inquiries from clerks' offices, the banking industry, private law offices, offices of the United States Attorneys, law enforcement, and the general public.
- Provided expert testimony at a trial for the US Department of Justice in its prosecution of an individual accused of filing false or harassment-type UCC documents against individuals employed by various federal agencies.

Since opening in 1995, the Authority has indexed and added to its database over **6.9 million UCCs** (approximately 22,000 per month) and conducted approximately **282,000 Certified Searches**. The Authority provides free, statewide access to its valuable database through search terminals installed in all clerk of Superior Court offices. Additionally, the system allows internet access by subscription for parties desiring the convenience of searching the indexes from their office or home.

Real Estate Projects

Real Estate Deed Project

In 1996, legislation was passed in Georgia that required the Authority to develop a consolidated database of the official real and personal property records of all 159 clerks of Superior Court. With this mandate, the Authority created a one-of-a-kind system with no direct cost to the State of Georgia. When the system became operational on January 1, 1999, the public gained unprecedented free access to information within the office of the Superior Court clerk through search terminals installed by the Authority. Additionally, the business community gained 24/7 access to official land records through the Authority's website, www.gscca.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 **16 million real estate deed images** to the system during FY 2021 to bring the total to over **263 million deed images** in its publicly searchable database. Clerks' offices have been compensated by the Authority a total of **\$21.8 million** since inception of the project. Additionally, print fees generated from the system are compensated to the clerk's office where the original document resides. During FY 2021, the Authority compensated clerks' offices in Georgia over **\$1.1 million** for deed images added to the system and over **\$6.8 million** for deed prints made from www.gscca.org, resulting in nearly **\$8 million** in additional funding for Georgia's Superior Court clerks.

In 2004, a new feature was added to the system: access to **Real Estate Transfer Tax forms (PT-61s)**. The Authority worked with the Department of Revenue, the Department of Audits, and the Real Property Section of the State Bar of Georgia to bring this project online. This feature has added even more valuable information to the real estate system: nearly **519,000 PT-61** images this fiscal year and over **7.4 million** images since the project began. (See Page 35 for more information on the PT-61 Project.)

At the end of 2011, the Authority successfully launched **Real Estate eFile** statewide. Clerks retain control of the process, and their participation is completely voluntary and at no charge. All 159 counties participate to some degree, with 137 counties currently accepting all document types. Since the launch, over **3.7 million** real estate documents have been electronically recorded, with the vast majority of those — 3.5 million — in the last four years. The program was experiencing tremendous growth prior to

COVID — largely due to legislative mandates — but when the pandemic made it either impossible or more difficult to record real estate instruments in person, eFiling surged with usage up **75%** over last year and **181%** from two years ago. In FY 2021, nearly **1.6 million** real estate documents were electronically recorded. While some filers are returning to courthouses across Georgia to record instruments in person, it is likely that we will see a significant shift with many first-time eFilers from the past year continuing to electronically file in the future. (See Pages 36-39 for more information on the eFile Project.)

Following is a summary of efforts during FY 2021 to support and enhance the Real Estate Deed Project:

- Launched Current Indexing Improvement Initiative to improve indexing data quality. (See Page 32 for more information on this initiative.)
- Completed development of a high-performance, Imaging Web API (application programming interface) for transmission of deed, lien and plat images to the Authority. The new API:
 - adds flexibility in image processing to support current projects, such as the Historical Plat Image Project (See Pages 34-35 for more information on this project.), as well as planned future programs; and
 - provides vendors with additional submission, retrieval and reporting features.
- 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, **69 clerks and deputies** from **21 counties** have completed the Indexing Certification.
- Continued efforts to certify the land record recording computer systems of private vendors that are used by clerks for compatibility and compliance with the Authority’s data collection system and the Indexing Standards. At present, **12 vendor systems** have achieved certification by the Authority for their land record recording system.
- Conducted **12 webinars** to train Superior Court clerks, their staff, and vendors on the *Indexing Standards*. Classes included:
 - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Introduction*
 - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Overview*
 - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions*
 - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Sample Index*
 - *Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam – Study Guide*
- Offered **3 online courses** to train Superior Court clerks, deputy clerks and vendors on the *Indexing Standards*. Courses include:
 - *GSCCCA Indexing Standards*
 - *GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended*
 - *GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes*

- Provided continuous troubleshooting of issues relating to the deed, lien, and plat filings of all clerks of Superior Court and the transmitting and storage of the related index data to the Authority.
- Provided ongoing telephone and email assistance, available to all clerks of Superior Court, regarding the proper indexing of land records in accordance with the *Indexing Standards for Real and Personal Property Records for the State of Georgia*.

Current Indexing Improvement Initiative

During their Strategic Planning Session in 2019, the Authority Board prioritized the need to improve the current indexing data quality based on feedback from Superior Court clerks. In an effort to address this strategic directive, the Authority recently launched the Current Indexing Improvement Initiative by identifying critical errors found in each of the 159 counties and communicating this information to each clerk of Superior Court with the goal of providing individualized and specific training to those clerk offices that might need or request additional assistance in order to mitigate indexing errors.

In the spring of 2020, Authority staff conducted extensive reviews of each county's deed indexing for instruments filed during a limited three-month period. The reviews were further limited to searches on ten key words which have been found to be troublesome to index. From this review, staff found that 47 counties had zero critical errors and a majority of counties statewide had less than five potential errors each, indicating a high level of compliance. However, 17 counties were found to have more than 100 critical errors.

Each county having noted indexing issues received a report from the Authority individually listing each potential indexing error for the clerk to review and consider. Where appropriate, clerks were encouraged to make needed corrections of clerk-confirmed errors or omissions. The Authority staff has reached out to specific counties to offer assistance and is available to all counties to assist in training or correction efforts as may be requested by any clerk, including individualized training. The Current Indexing Improvement Initiative will be an ongoing effort with additional limited index data reviews and activities planned for the future.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project

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

The project is complex and challenging as the Authority requires the complete re-indexing of these older land records in conformance with current Indexing Standards to create a cohesive record with current data in the system. All indexers performing this re-indexing must pass the "Indexing Certification Exam" developed by the Authority, and collected data is quarantined 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 completed the **1991-1990 Historical Project** in October of 2019 with 90 counties participating. The project concluded with the Authority adding over 820,000 deed records to its publicly searchable website, and moving the statewide “good-from” date to 1/1/1990.

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

In 2013, the Authority developed and implemented a voluntary County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project allowing clerks on their own initiative and funding to image and re-index their property records for inclusion in the Authority’s system. During the fiscal year, **12 additional counties** began participating for a total of **67 counties** in the program which allows additional index and image data for deeds, liens, and plats at the clerk’s option. Participation is completely voluntary and at the election of the clerk of Superior Court. Highlights of the program include the documentation and comprehensive analysis of all county books and dockets along with the issuance of indexing guidance for the prevention of unintentional book naming conflicts. The result of the process provides an indexing roadmap for all future historical indexing for the clerk as well as awareness of the importance of consistency for current indexing.

Over **4.2 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.

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 TBs to 71 TBs.

Legislation was passed in 2016 that required all plats in Georgia to be electronically recorded beginning January 1, 2017. Through a cooperative effort with clerks and vendors, the Authority implemented the changes necessary to fulfill the requirements of this new law. Specifically, the Authority expanded its eFiling portal to accommodate the shift to mandatory plat eFiling, and all Superior Court clerks are able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eFiling mandate. Since inception of the mandate, over **116,000** plats have been electronically recorded, with over **30,000** of those during FY 2021. The process of e plats has resulted in a more efficient end-to-end process and higher fidelity recreation of printed plat copies. (See Pages 36-39 for more information on the Authority’s eFile Projects.)

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

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

Since the mandated start date of January 1, 2018, the Department of Revenue has eFiled over **355,000 liens** with Superior Court clerks through the Authority's eFile portal, with nearly **24,000** 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. (See Pages 36-39 for more information on the Authority's eFile Projects.)

Historical Plat Image Project

Using feedback solicited from clerks for their 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting, the Authority Board determined five goals for future implementation including an initiative to add additional historical plat data to the Authority's online search system. After much staff research and planning, the Authority launched the Historical Plat Image Project in 2020.

The project includes historical plat images filed on or before December 31, 2003. (Plats filed after should already be on the Authority system.) Additionally, the project only covers plat books and plat cabinets, aperture cards or other media used by the clerk's office to record the historical plats. The project does not include indexing or any plats that may be found in deed books.

The project began in the fall with the collection of data on the numbers and types of source media from which the images were to be captured. Because of the physical size of plats and the various methods that clerks have used to preserve them over the years, the project is complicated, and the Authority is pursuing multiple paths to accomplish its goal of making all historical plat images statewide available online.

One path is to collect and compensate clerks' offices for existing historical plat images that have been previously submitted to the GSCCCA system or those plats which have been scanned by the clerk and available locally but not yet transmitted to the Authority. The Authority Board adopted a resolution at their October 2020 meeting that allows the Authority to provide an allowance of \$3.00 for each of those historical plat images already received by the Authority and authorized payments to begin in January 2021. Eligible clerks' offices have been presented with compensation agreements authorizing payments, and compensation to clerks' offices thus far has been more than **\$2.5 million** as a direct cash benefit to the clerks' offices and counties.

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

For those counties that have no historical plat images and for those that need additional imaging, the Authority has engaged the services of an imaging vendor to scan plats onsite in the clerks' offices. The images will be submitted to the Authority and each county will also be presented with a copy of the new images. Initial counts provide for this imaging service in more than 60 counties.

The Historical Plat Image Project has been well received and is progressing better than anticipated. When complete, all plats statewide will be available for viewing on the Authority search system. It is expected that the continuing efforts will result in a completion date in late FY 2022, with an estimated total cost of \$4.5 million for the project.

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 2021, the Authority:

- Added nearly **519,000** PT-61 filings to the statewide system for a total of over **7.4 million** PT-61 records. These filings were accepted and activated by the counties and then sent to the Georgia Department of Revenue and Georgia Department of Audits.
- Compensated clerks' offices over **\$42,000** for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website related to the PT-61 Project.
- Added over **202,000** properties during FY 2021 for a total of nearly **3.1 million** searchable addresses.

Electronic Filing (eFile) Projects

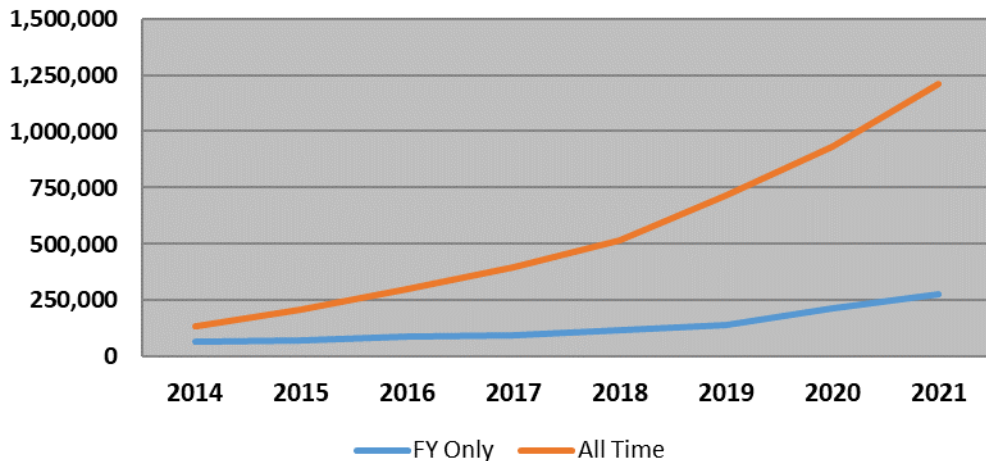
In 2009, the Georgia legislature mandated that the Authority develop rules and regulations related to the electronic recording of real estate-related documents. Anticipating this need and with the continuing goal of keeping clerks' offices at the forefront of technology, the Authority spent years prior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

UCC eFile

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

UCC eFile continues to grow — at record pace since last spring, in large part due to the coronavirus — with usage up **29%** from the previous fiscal year and an incredible **99%** in the last two years. Since the launch of the UCC eFile pilot project in May 2009, over **1.2 million** UCCs have been electronically filed. In FY 2021, over **274,000** UCCs — nearly **90%** of all UCCs filed — were electronically filed. Additionally, 3 new counties were activated for a total of **147** counties participating in the program. Of that total, **69** counties — **26** more than last year — mandate (or only allow) the electronic filing of UCCs, another indicator of the continuing growth of the program.

UCC eFilings



For the counties who mandate UCC eFiling, a new feature was added in 2019, **UCC auto-numbering**, which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number. This allows a clerk's office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows these counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. At fiscal-year end, **54** counties were taking advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature, with **34** of those counties activated this year.

Child Support eFile

As a service to Superior Court clerks who were seeking a trusted partner to help participate in a voluntary Child Support eFiling program, the Authority added **Child Support eFile** to its portal 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. Using the GSCCCA portal, clerks can conveniently receive and process child support cases initiated by DHS, and since January 1, 2010, approximately **708,000** filings have been submitted to the portal.

Over the past few years, however, Child Support eFile has seen a reduction in the number of clerks utilizing the Authority eFiling portal as many clerks have incorporated child support eFiling with civil eFiling and directed filings through their chosen civil eFiling vendor. Currently, 57 counties participate in the Authority's Child Support eFiling program, and approximately **24,000** filings were submitted to the portal during FY 2021.

Real Estate eFile

In 2011, the Authority built a real estate eFiling portal and successfully launched **Real Estate eFile** statewide. This portal initially allowed filers to use an approved vendor to submit real estate documents on their behalf. Two years later, the Authority extended **Real Estate eFile** by making it fully accessible to the public through a web interface, further streamlining the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. With this added web-based application, users in Georgia, who are eligible to participate in the electronic recording of real estate documents, can access the Authority's website, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, to file directly with counties from the convenience of their home or office rather than having to travel to the county clerk's office. This convenience became a critical service when courthouses were closed to walk-in traffic following COVID-19. 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 eFile, the Authority developed and published the www.efileregistry.org website in 2011. This site was designed to facilitate the registration, maintenance and verification of real estate eFile participants. Working in cooperation with the State Bar of Georgia and the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Association, the Authority created the eFile registry to provide a secure location for housing approved participants in the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. In FY 2021, over **5,000 new participants** were added to the eFile Registry for a current total of **16,489 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.

Real Estate eFile was experiencing tremendous growth prior to COVID — due, in part, to legislative mandates discussed below — but when the pandemic made it either impossible or more difficult to record real estate instruments in person, electronic filing surged with usage up **75%** over last year and **181%** from two years ago. In FY 2021, nearly **1.6 million** real estate documents were electronically recorded.

Today, all 159 clerk offices participate in the program to some degree:

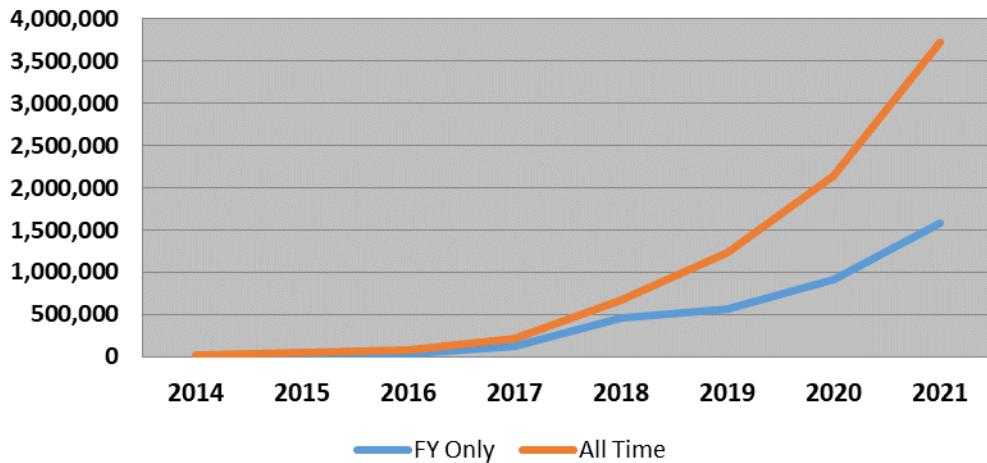
- 137 offices accept all document types;
- 9 offices accept all document types except deeds;
- 11 offices accept plat and state tax lien document types;
- 2 offices accept plat, state tax lien, and a combination of deeds and/or lien document types.
- Additionally, 108 clerk offices have opted to receive estimated filing fees for any real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing submitted through the Authority’s eFile portal where the Authority collects filing fees.

As mentioned above, the increase in eFiling participation prior to COVID, was due, in part, to legislation that had 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 eFiling**, which allows all Superior Court clerks to be able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eFiling mandate. Since inception, over **116,000** plats have been eFiled, with over **30,000** of those during FY 2021. 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 **355,000 state tax liens** with Superior Court clerks by filing through the Authority’s eFile portal; nearly **24,000** of those were eFiled this fiscal year.

Since 2011 when the Authority launched Real Estate eFile, participants have electronically recorded over **3.7 million real estate documents**. These numbers are made more impressive when considering the fact that for the majority of the history of the eFiling system, participation was voluntary. With recent legislative changes mandating certain types of real estate documents be electronically recorded, each of the 159 Superior Court clerks now have systems that directly interface with the GSCCCA eFiling portal. Because the technical barriers for clerks to participate had largely been overcome, it allowed the spike in usage following the outbreak of COVID-19 and ensuing court closures. Considering the momentum of the existing eFiling systems, our successful track-record of implementing legislatively mandated programs, and the increased participation by clerks’ offices and filers as a result of the coronavirus, it is expected that eFiling numbers will continue to rise in the coming years.

Real Estate eFilings



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.gscca.org, allows for the filing of UCC, real estate, lien, plat, PT-61, and child support documents, and the list will continue to grow. **With nearly 2 million documents now being eFiled annually**, the Authority will continue to assess, improve, and streamline the user experience in an ongoing effort to stay ahead of the curve and provide state-of-the-art services.

Other Projects

Premium Search Account

In 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 2021, the Authority added over **1,100 new Premium Search accounts** for a fiscal year-end total of **6,155 accounts**. With a 22% growth in accounts over the last 12 months, it is expected usage will continue to grow as more and more members of the business community recognize the benefits of the Premium Search account's enhanced options for accessing the Authority's valuable statewide indexes.

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. The application continues to receive 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 application works as designed with the latest versions of the respective operating systems. To add more value, over **202,000 properties** were added for a fiscal year-end total of over **3 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 2021, nearly **53,000 Protective Orders** were indexed by clerks, and then electronically transmitted by the Authority to GCIC.

Working with GCIC, the Authority developed a Protective Order Exception report during FY 2021 to support clerks and help eliminate errors that occur as GCIC processes the transmitted orders into the Registry. The Authority is already receiving positive feedback on the new report and how it will be a valuable tool for all clerks:

*“Just wanted to say **thank-you** for including Camden in this trial. We can't correct errors we are unaware of and acceptance is not something we can be assured of. In this instance, it was simply a typo that can be quickly corrected by our Sheriff's Department. The person who is responsible at the Sheriff's Office **is also appreciative** as he encounters issues during GCIC audits when information is not available or incorrect. Thankfully, we experience few “Exception” notifications. With the law change that requires us to transmit Bond Conditions that include “no contact” provisions, I think this will prove to be a valuable tool for all clerks. Our Magistrate Court delivers these Bond Orders, often with incomplete information. We gather what we can, enter the TPO and transmit accordingly. These notifications help us to pinpoint errors, allow staff to readily identify and correct common errors as well as providing some assurance that the orders are being accepted. Thanks again!”*

*– Joy Lynn Turner, Clerk
Camden County Superior Court*

Through the efforts of Superior Court clerks and the Authority, critical information for protecting the public continues to be easily accessible to law enforcement nationwide through the Protective Order Registry.

Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)

Launched in 2003, the Offender-Based Tracking System 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 2021, nearly **194,000 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.

The MyVault Online Archive Program provides the foundation of support and purpose from which all other archive initiatives have been conceived and implemented. Through a combination of hardware, software and technical support, the MyVault data protection and monitoring service has supported clerks for over 14 years, delivering assurance in records' protection and best practice guidance in disaster planning. Serving Superior Court clerks remains at the core of the program's mission.

The Virtual Microfilm Program (VMF) is a new technology and service offered to clerks with different benefits and limitations. Nonetheless, this program, like MyVault, is rooted in the goal of empowering clerks with tools and knowledge to improve their business operations and protect the records and resources for which they are statutorily responsible. The VMF program has proven its value beyond the clerk interface and provides a vital supporting role to MyVault in restoring records back to clerk offices routinely.

Throughout this past year, the disaster planning and archive initiatives have continued to seamlessly evolve with the changing needs of our clerks as a result of the pandemic. With the growing need for flexibility in delivering services and support to counties throughout the state, the archive department was prepared and positioned to easily adapt to the changing demands required in the work environment. The robust Authority network and integrated systems we all rely on fostered a smooth transition to a more remote working style with very minimal disruption. The use of virtual communication technologies allowed archive business operations to function normally. New and sometimes better technological solutions and methods for conducting business were also uncovered as a result. Hybrid training solutions were implemented this year so that meetings and training courses could be held as planned and include both in-person and remote attendees as needed. Rather than yield to the new challenges and limitations presented by the pandemic, the Authority effectively embraced the circumstances. Leaning on existing practices to help implement solutions for new challenges is exactly how the Authority has been successful in maintaining business continuity throughout this difficult period of time.

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

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 **156 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 options for the local backup appliance
- Exceptional customer service

The clerk, as custodian, has the sole authority to decide what should and should not be included in their archive job. However, it is recommended that any sensitive public records or court data that is critical to the operation of the clerk's office or otherwise considered essential should be included. The 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

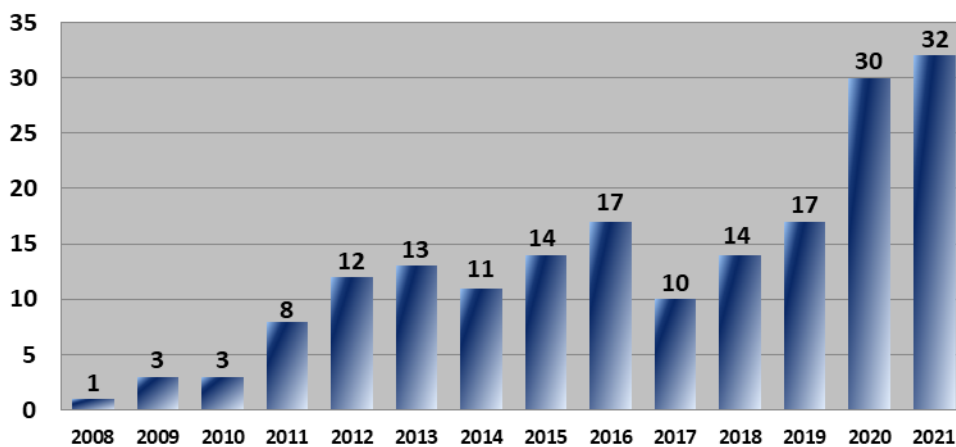
review the report with their vendors and/or IT personnel to verify that all of the electronic records that the clerk wants protected are included in the job items noted. In addition to the annual review, audit reports can be generated at any time using the online dashboard or by making a request to the Authority. MyVault is currently storing and protecting over **1.08 billion files** totaling more than **196 TBs of live data**, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. The Authority performs proactive data auditing to reduce the amount of redundant data that must be stored. Even as the vault has grown and more new data has been archived, the Authority has been able to proactively and effectively manage storage space and cost. In addition to the 196 TBs of live data (current versions of files), the MyVault system maintains 30 days of previous file versions totaling 24 TBs 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, 10-15 requests to restore data are made per year; however, this number has doubled the past two years. Since 2007, MyVault has responded to **185** data loss requests and has restored over **3.9 TBs** of data back to county systems. In FY 2021, the Authority received **32 requests** to restore data, resulting in over **502 GBs of data** successfully restored.

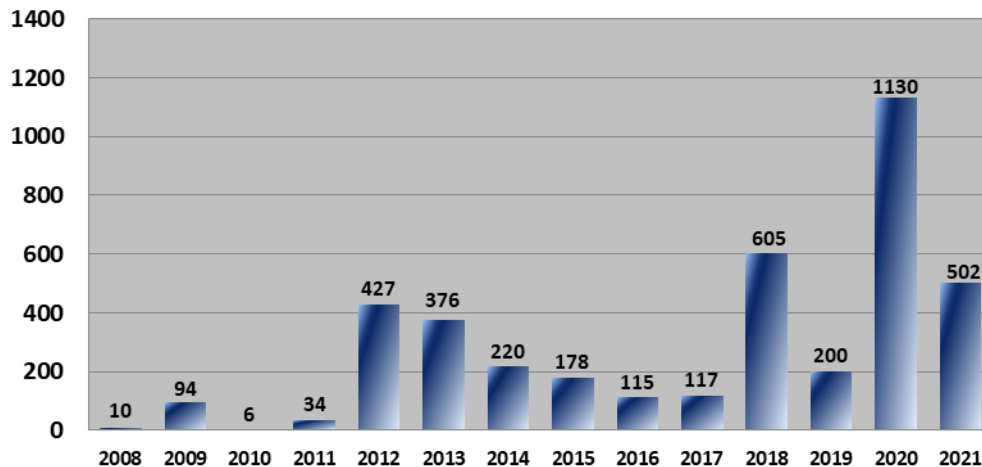
Restores are typically performed directly from the local appliance, which is normally the quickest method. A restore job is initiated and any requested data is restored back to a location on the county network. Small restores can also be performed by the clerk or an authorized user through the online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

Having multiple backups is the best data protection strategy to ensure a good outcome following a data loss event. 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.

Number of Restore Requests by Fiscal Year



Volume of Data Restored (in GBs) by Fiscal Year



Following are some of the accomplishments of the MyVault Program during FY 2021:

- Added over 137 million files totaling more than 39 TBs of data to the vault.
- Managed, stored and protected the growing number of clerks' digital records, which now exceed 1.08 billion files and 196 TBs of live data in the vault.
- Managed 32 restore requests and restored over 502 TBs of data back to clerks and/or their vendors.
- Issued annual audit reports to all clerks enrolled in the MyVault program. This report provides an opportunity to review job details at a glance. Clerks are encouraged to share the information with their IT staff and/or vendors in order to confirm the accuracy of what is being backed up and verify that the data included meet SB 135 requirements.
- Upgraded archive equipment for 27 counties.
- Produced archive initiatives newsletter in April 2021 entitled *MyVault and VMF Programs Empower Clerks*. This issue featured the importance and value in reviewing the MyVault Audit Report at least annually to ensure the accuracy of the job details and identify any gaps in protection. The newsletter also highlighted other benefits of the audit report as a tool for promoting communication, supporting accountability, and raising awareness.
- Educated new clerks on the history and purpose of the Authority's data archive initiatives at the New Clerk Training held in December 2020.
- Participated in the virtual *Disaster Recovery Certificate Training Program* for clerks in July 2020.
- Produced and delivered presentation to clerks via the Zoom platform that focused on disaster recovery planning and risk management strategies. This included guiding clerks through several practice exercises to identify potential threats, analyze the impact of those threats, and document ways to mitigate the risks. Best practice strategies and tools for success were presented.
- Reviewed MyVault account features and provided disaster planning guidance for clerks in Districts 4, 5 and 6.

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

"Thank you so much for your willingness to help always!!"

– Clerk comment in response to a successful restore

“Thanks for all you do.”

– Clerk comment in response to our proactive monitoring service and communication regarding issue management

“Thanks for keeping a sharp eye.”

– Clerk comment following communication regarding continuity of service

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

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

Phase two of this initiative is now underway and involves a more extensive review of the media holdings reported. A combination of manual and automated processes is being used to standardize the reported information into a file for each county. Currently, a total of 31 counties have been transcribed in this phase. This data will be imported into a database for further analysis as part of the third and final phase. By reviewing and analyzing what records are stored at the Archives, there is a longer-term opportunity to compare that against a) what is stored in the GSCCCA imaging system, and b) what is protected in the GSCCCA vault. In doing so, the goal is to provide each clerk with a comparison report that identifies what (if anything) may NOT be protected, or may ONLY be protected by the Georgia Archives but NOT electronically by the GSCCCA. Equipped with this information, clerks can begin to make more informed decisions about how best to protect those records in the future.

Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program

The Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program is another 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 initial import of deed images was completed in November 2017, totaling more than 44 million deed images across 67,000 deed books. From 2018 to 2019, another 28 million deed images were imported into the VMF system. As enhancements were made to the VMF application process, liens, plats and historical documents were progressively imported into the system, and, in October 2019, the program reached a significant milestone: ALL real estate records ever received by the Authority were loaded and available for viewing in the VMF system. Today, the system stores over **289 million images**, across **501,282 books** totaling over **13 terabytes** of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the web interface.

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

Through the VMF online portal, the clerk is empowered, as custodian of the records, to access and view archived records on a self-serve basis. The VMF portal allows the clerk's desktop PC, laptop or mobile device to become a high-performance microfilm reader/printer. To help clerks better understand the program and its benefits, VMF webinars are offered periodically to demonstrate how to access the VMF website and use its built-in tools. All 159 counties are able to participate in this free program offered by the Authority. Since the launch of the program, **88 clerks** have activated their accounts.

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

More clerks and vendors are discovering the benefits of using the VMF system to search and locate images on demand. The discovery of missing images on a clerk server is a common reason for a restore request through MyVault. However, the VMF system is another resource available to clerks for locating missing images. In FY 2021, the VMF system was used to restore over **600,000 images** back to clerk offices in **11 counties**. The biggest advantage to using the VMF system for this purpose is that the images in the system can be easily viewed and downloaded on demand if needed. This free tool is available to all clerks through the VMF portal at <https://vmf.gsccca.org>.

FY 2021 VMF Imaging Totals:

➤ Deed Books:	442,761
➤ Deed Images:	264,511,689
➤ Deed VMF:	49,313
➤ Deed Data Stored:	12.4 TBs
➤ Lien Books:	46,411
➤ Lien Images:	23,156,080
➤ Lien VMF:	4,714
➤ Lien Data Stored:	736.3 GBs
➤ Plat Books:	12,109
➤ Plat Images:	1,160,501
➤ Plat VMF:	272
➤ Plat Data Stored:	211.2 GBs

VMF accomplishments for FY 2021 include:

- Restored over 600,000 images back to 11 clerk offices using the VMF system.
- Imported over 16 million new deed images and over 1.2 million new lien images into the VMF system.
- Imported, on average, over 1 million new deed images into the VMF system each month.
- Increased user activity in the VMF Program. In FY 2021, 18 additional counties logged into the VMF website for the first time to view and access their online archival data. While all counties are participating in the program, a total of 88 counties have now actively accessed the VMF website.
- 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.
- Provided formal training on the VMF system as part of the *Disaster Recovery Certificate Training Program* offered to clerks in July 2020.
- Educated new clerks on the history and benefits of the VMF program and offered guidance on accessing the online tools during the New Clerk Training held in December 2020.
- Provided clerks with information and updates on the Media Holdings Project.
- Streamlined the image export/import process which expedites the uploading of new images for viewing.
- Began work to improve the VMF user interface with added functionality for viewing images.

IT Department

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

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

Following is a summary of the many actions and accomplishments of the Authority’s IT Department for FY 2021. Whether large or small, these activities enable us to meet our goals and grow and innovate in a constantly changing environment — including a global pandemic that necessitates navigating through uncharted territory.

Development Team – eFiling

With substantial growth in electronic filing participation and usage — particularly over the last 15 months due to COVID-19 — the Authority updates its eFile site each year in order to incorporate customer feedback, improve the user experience, implement new features, and enhance performance, efficiency and reliability. (See Pages 36-39 for more information on the history of the Authority’s eFile Projects.)

Following is data and other information from FY 2021:

- UCC eFile –
 - Usage has grown 29% this fiscal year and 99% from two years ago. Of all UCCs filed during FY 2021, nearly 90% were electronically filed.
 - County participation in UCC eFile has grown:
 - 3 new counties were activated for a total of 147 participating counties.
 - 69 of the participating counties – 26 more than last year – mandate or only allow the electronic filing of UCCs.
 - 54 of the counties who mandate UCC eFiling take advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature. 34 were activated this fiscal year.
 - 1,208,375 UCCs have been eFiled through the Authority since its inception in 2009, with 138,986 of these filings submitted through the Authority’s UCC eFile API, which was published in 2019.
 - 274,453 UCCs have been eFiled this fiscal year with 85,574 of these filings submitted through the UCC eFile API.

- Real Estate eFile –
 - Usage has grown by 75% compared to last fiscal year and 181% from two years ago.
 - All 159 clerks' offices participate in the program to some degree:
 - 137 offices accept all document types;
 - 9 offices accept all document types except deeds;
 - 11 offices accept plat and state tax lien document types;
 - 2 offices accept plat, state tax lien, and a combination of deeds and/or lien document types.
 - Additionally, 108 clerk offices have opted to receive estimated filing fees for any real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing submitted through the Authority's eFile portal where the Authority collects filing fees.
 - 3,725,921 total real estate documents have been eFiled since its inception; 1,685,282 of those filings have been eFiled using the Authority's eFile Portal.
 - 2,569,503 total deeds have been eFiled since inception in 2010.
 - 684,846 total liens have been eFiled since inception in 2015.
 - 116,462 total plats have been eFiled since inception in 2016.
 - 355,110 total state tax liens have been eFiled since inception in 2018.
 - 1,587,165 total real estate documents were eFiled this fiscal year; 645,346 of those filings were eFiled using the Authority's eFile portal.
 - 1,296,822 total deeds were eFiled this fiscal year.
 - 236,333 total liens were eFiled this fiscal year.
 - 30,226 total plats were eFiled this fiscal year.
 - 23,784 total state tax liens were eFiled this fiscal year.
- Launched a refreshed look for the eFile web page that reflects modern design practices.
- Published the Integrated Submitter API Project. This update allows vendors to integrate with the Authority's portal to submit filings like a value added submitter while enabling collection of payment by the Authority. The Integrated Submitter simplifies the payment process for clerks as payment now flows through a single portal instead of multiple payment paths as was the case previously.
- Published the eFile Payment Improvement Project. Enhancements include auto-retry of payment failures, detailed exception responses, and automatic detection and limiting of errant system use/abuse to protect clerk network bandwidth. These updates will empower clerks and their offices to reattempt payment collections increasing processing of real estate eFile instruments.
- Enhanced site to allow assignment fees to be estimated for eFile Deed Other instrument types.
- Added option to portal for county fee assessments to charge \$0.00 when accepting documents through the eFile Real Estate API.
- Improved eFile payment history page by making following enhancements:
 - Many new columns containing relevant information have been added.
 - The layout can be customized to meet the needs of the filer.
 - The history can be sorted and grouped.
 - The history can be exported to excel.
 - The history can be easily printed in an attractive report format.
- Created a new eFile Update History page which contains a history of features added as they become available.
- Added an identifier to eFile payment history that matches a customer's bank account statement.
- Added feature to allow county employees to now use the eFile website to perform a UCC final transmit without accessing the ScanSend application.

- Improved process for funding escrow accounts via ACH:
 - ACH holding times have been updated to more closely match actual banking delays. This has decreased the likelihood that the GSCCCA will incur an ACH-related loss.
 - The eFile website was updated to clearly communicate ACH holding times before a customer finalizes the transaction.
- Improved automated testing to reduce the likelihood of unexpected outcomes after changes are made to eFile.
- Added the intangible and transfer taxes to the filing stamp in eAssist.
- Implemented eFile portal improvements to extend the Integrated Submitter API role allowing filers to eFile and pay for Real Estate eFilings using the API.

Development Team – eFile Registry

The eFile Registry was developed by the Authority in 2011 to facilitate the registration, maintenance and verification of real estate eFile participants. The site provides a secure location for housing approved participants in the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. Following is data and other information from FY 2021.

- Improved features and functionality of registry for GSCCCA administrators including the addition of new search and sort options, new participant information fields, a loading progress indicator, and record locking features for better concurrent multi-user support.
- Improved the instructions provided to eFile customers on how to approve eFile Registry delegation requests.
- Added 5,028 participants to the registry for a total of 16,489 registered participants.
 - 10,627 Self Filers (3,614 added this fiscal year)
 - 1,160 Submitters (339 added this fiscal year)
 - 4,702 Trusted Users (1,075 added this fiscal year)
- Continued to provide the capability for third-party systems to automatically verify the validity of participant ID numbers in real time.
 - 7.3 million queries processed this fiscal year.
 - 14.5 million queries processed since the eFile Registry opened in 2011.

Development Team – Website (www.gsccca.org)

With nearly 1.5 million unique visitors to www.gsccca.org this past fiscal year, 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 2021:

- Migrated multiple websites — Protective Order Indexing, Notary Online, Index Certification and the QA Toolbox — to use the HTML 5 Image viewer allowing viewers to work with all browsers.
- Improved Premium Search to handle non-standard characters being displayed in search results.
- Modified Promotional Accounts to control access to image printing.
- Improved the Plat Index search by removing the one-year maximum date range limit when searching without a name.
- Developed processes and procedures in accordance with our privacy policies to further protect subscriber account information.
- Implemented increased security protocols and functionality improvements.

Development Team – Real Estate

- Completed development of a high-performance Imaging Web API (application programming interface) for transmission of deed, lien and plat images to the Authority. The new API:
 - adds flexibility in image processing to support current projects, such as the Historical Plat Image Project, as well as planned future programs; and
 - provides vendors with additional submission, retrieval and reporting features.Additionally, the new API is the Authority's first API based on REST principles; first to use Open API interactive documentation that allows testing and SDK (software development kit) generation; and first to incorporate rate limiting to protect GSCCCA resources.
- Improved performance to Lien index data validation by refactoring the state tax lien validation routines.
- Processed 190 real estate images using On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed 90 of those images.

Development Team – UCC

- Developed custom Image Migration tool to assist with migrating images from our eFile and Workflow systems into our website imaging systems.
- Processed 12,272 UCC images using On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed all 12,272 of those images.

Development Team – Fines & Fees

- Launched Fines & Fees Rewrite Project to completely overhaul www.courttrax.org in order to streamline the fines and fees process. With the completion of a discovery document detailing all system requirements, future requirements, and system enhancements, in addition to a projected plan, the Develop Team has begun the active rewrite process. The overhaul will modernize the technology used to enable the entire program, while adding additional features such as the ability for clerks to fully remit collections online via ACH. The new site is scheduled to launch in 2022.
- Implemented Encryption Web API feature and functionality improvements.
- Published new legislation (SB 249 and HB 576) to CourtTRAX homepage and legislation tab, and updated CourtTRAX calculator to reflect legislative changes.

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. 45 tracked projects were completed this past fiscal year.
- Developed Protective Order Exception report, in collaboration with GCIC, to support clerks and help eliminate errors that occur as GCIC processes the transmitted orders into the Registry. The report will be sent to individual counties when exceptions are created as GCIC processes Protective Orders, and will help clerks' staff identify and correct common errors as well as have some assurance the orders are being accepted.
- Improved security of Offender Based Tracking System by working with GCIC to install and test new SSL certificates.
- Implemented ongoing feature and functionality improvements to QA (Quality Assurance) system including HTML 5 Image viewer and other internal project requests.

- Updated both Protective Order and PT-61 transmit services.
- Completed Development Team migration to Azure DevOps for source control and build management utilizing new features which include build & release pipelines, artifacts, transformations, pull requests, and Wiki documentation.
- Migrated services and websites from legacy hardware and software to newer and more powerful software.
- Enhanced eInvoicing system by adding better account management features and improving invoice validation.
- Maintained continuity of credit card processing services by:
 - Developing payment transaction monitor to reduce the likelihood of incorrect charges;
 - Updating CyberSource security keys;
 - Adding JSON request logging for improved diagnostics and support; and
 - Implementing feature and functionality improvements.

Systems Team

- Evaluated options, then acquired, configured, and deployed 130 Lenovo laptops to Superior Court clerks as part of a Laptop Initiative to support clerks' ability to work remotely. (See more information about this initiative in the Equipment & Software Outreach section on Pages 59-60.)
- Created an additional 185 individual VPN accounts for clerks and their staff in the past 12 months, after the first initial push for widespread remote work last spring following the COVID outbreak.
- Upgraded and migrated all core SQL Servers to SQL Server 2017. SQL server is a relational database management system. As a database server, its primary function is to store and retrieve data as requested by other software applications. Covering development, stage and production servers, this upgrade included the eFile database server, the Fines and Fees report server, and the database servers that the GSCCCA website relies on for daily operation and up-to-date information. This upgrade brought the databases to a more current version, which is critical for support, and also provides access to additional features and functionality. The deployment required extensive database, application, and website testing and reconfiguration.
- 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 157 virtualized servers. This allows us to maximize utilization of the physical server resources, decreasing server hardware costs.
- Completely reengineered and upgraded the hardware and software that runs our backup system. These improvements greatly reduce the chances of malware infecting the backups and provides redundant backup servers. The centralized backup system greatly eases the recovery of data when a loss occurs, narrows backup windows for increased system availability, and simplifies administration.
- Migrated to a new antivirus server providing the most up-to-date antivirus technology available.
- Deployed a new Windows server 2019 platform to handle a variety of internal applications. The new server platform offers the latest in security, performance, and reliability enhancements.
- Reviewed publish scripts before production implementation. This work ensures that database changes are rolled out smoothly and reduces downtime in related applications, including eFile and the GSCCCA website.
- Facilitated the process of improving the eFile system performance through various methods of database optimizations, application and database monitoring and collaboration with the

development team. This has led to a better customer experience on the eFile website and less waste of server resources.

- Conducted performance analysis on several core databases including Vault, eFile, and others, in order to vastly improve query processing times. This effort ultimately resulted in overall improved system speeds.
- 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 software on the WhatsUp and VeeamOne servers to better monitor our servers and applications. WhatsUp and VeeamOne specialize in server and application monitoring and improve server availability through detailed reporting and analytics.
- Upgraded the Sage Fixed Asset and Depreciation software to its current version ensuring continued support and compatibility for the Inventory staff.
- Upgraded the Peachtree accounting software to its current version ensuring continued support and compatibility for the Accounting staff.
- Upgraded the Mitel application server which integrates with our phone system allowing better management of phone calls for improved customer satisfaction.
- Restored production database backups to ensure their reliability and to increase readiness in case of disaster/emergency. Also restored data to developers to prevent data loss in the production environment.
- Regularly tested backup system to ensure that data could be restored in the event of a data loss. These tests cover entire server farms, SQL databases, and individual files.
- Installed all software updates to our SQL database environment. These updates help to improve database performance, reliability, and security.
- Updated the Windows 10 install that is used in all GSCCCA computers to ensure reliability and ease-of-use for customers.
- Regularly updated Fines & Fees reports at county requests to keep subscriber lists current. These reports are sent to counties for daily and month-end disbursement distribution.
- Provided SQL database training and documentation to staff, increasing Database Administrator availability to meet increased production support and project demands.

Systems Team Statistics (excludes data from MyVault program):

- Protected users' mailboxes via Mimecast, the GSCCCA email security gateway, by blocking approximately **740,000** distinct malicious, virus-containing messages and phishing attempts to @gsccca.org accounts, in addition to the millions of verified spam senders that are simply rejected automatically. Mimecast was implemented in 2019 in a continuing effort to protect the Authority and Superior Court clerks against cyberattacks.
- Total hard drive array storage capacity: **180 TBs**.
- Currently have **639 TBs** of backup data available to us. That is comparable to 447.4 million floppy disks. There were approximately 5 billion floppy disks in circulation at the height of their popularity in 1995. To store our available backup data on floppy disks, the Authority would require 9% of the world's 1995 supply.
- Currently have **575 TBs** of backup data on tape. Each tape holds up to 6 TBs of data and each tape has 3,149 feet (.6 miles) of tape. The Authority has 140 tapes containing all of our backup data. If the tapes were stretched out end-to-end, they would stretch from our office in Atlanta to Macon.

Network Team

- Facilitated 43 county network move/upgrade requests:

- 5 moves completed
- 14 upgrades completed
- 24 upgrades in-progress

With the proliferation of eFiling and the recent increased need for remote VPN access, network bandwidth demands continue to increase. 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.

- Acted as a HelpDesk escalation partner to resolve 309 network-related tickets.
- Supported increased need for remote VPN access for Authority staff, county users, and vendors.
- Implemented team-based workflow for the site upgrade/change process.
- Leveraged new platform to consolidate and track county network moves and upgrades
- 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.
- Worked with other IT teams to ensure connectivity, security, and load-balancing of our self-hosted applications.
- Refined security risk scanning procedures and continued to leverage data gathered to improve our security postures and processes.
- Performed audit and re-evaluation of ISP and telecommunication vendor services and contracts.
- Consolidated legacy, current, and new ISP information into a platform that can be shared and analyzed by necessary users.
- Performed infrastructure upgrades necessary for compliance with current and upcoming PCI regulations. 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.
- Backfilled the open Network engineer position.
- 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 Superior Court clerks, their staff, and website customers. This team of CSRs responds to thousands of calls and emails annually, providing support from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. throughout the work week. Their outstanding work is critical to the continued success of the Authority, and is utilized and appreciated daily by clerks and website customers, including eFile customers and eLearn users. Below are recent comments from a variety of constituencies all receiving the same stellar service from the HelpDesk team.

“I have spent the better part of today working with Andre from your service desk! He has been so very patient and helpful installing computers on my local domain. You need to know that he did a great job representing you and the Authority. Thank you for providing such awesome service!”

*– Sheila Studdard, Clerk
Fayette Co. Superior Court*

“I just called into the GSCCCA help desk needing help getting registered to e-file a lien cancellation and to e-file the cancellation. I felt a bit overwhelmed with all of the different websites that I had to navigate, but a gentleman named Andre in your Help/Customer Service center was absolutely awesome. He was positive, helpful, and, most importantly, patient as he walked me through the entire process and my frustrations with technology. Usually experiences with customer service (particularly late in the day) are not good. My help desk call with Andre was outstanding. His kind and calm voice was just as important as the substantive help that he gave. I just wanted to pass this along, as most times people only leave feedback when it is negative.”

– Attorney & eFile user

“I have called multiple times for assistance with my eFile registration, filings and payment, and have spoken to several of your CSRs, including Mike, Fred and Charles. I’m so impressed that you have a team of representatives who are patient, knowledgeable, and committed to providing excellent customer service. Each person I spoke to went above and beyond to assist me. I wanted to make you aware of the outstanding service that I received.”

– First-time eFile user

“Thanks very much for the technical assistance provided to me relative to facilitating "online entrance" to eLearn.gsccca.org to complete the Notary Public test. Very appreciative of the patience and commitment to providing good customer service!”

– Notary & eLearn user

Over the last decade and a half, the scope of services provided by HelpDesk and the number of monthly subscribers to the Authority’s online databases has nearly doubled. 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 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. 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. Finally, two other CSRs have been designated account billing specialists and received additional training to support our website subscribers during peak billing cycles. 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.

In addition to providing specialized support, the Authority also prioritizes the ease and convenience of support to customers by offering three ways of communicating with its experienced team of customer service representatives: calling, emailing or using “Live Chat” for real-time support.

HelpDesk Stats

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

- Total Calls: 24,283 (a 20% increase from last year)
- Average Speed of Answer: 51 seconds
- Percent Overflowed to Voicemail: 2%
- Average Talk Time: 6 minutes 19 seconds
- Total Email Requests Received: 18,200+ (a 77% increase from last year)
- Total Chat Sessions: 312
- Total Hardware/Repair Requests: 347
- Tickets Received: 22,531 (a 36% increase from last year)
- Tickets Resolved During Initial Contact: 20,247 (90%)

Top Requests for Help

- eFile Real Estate: Customer Filing Question (3,997)
- GSCCCA Website: Site Navigation Assistance (3,230)
- GSCCCA Website: Username/Password Request (2,187)
- GSCCCA Website: General Information/Non-Tech Q/A (894)
- Notary Project: Online Training General Q/A (814)
- eFile UCC: Customer Filing Question (594)
- Outlook: Email Setup Request (479)
- Account Management: New Account Request (468)
- Notary Online: Application Assistance (440)

Equipment & Software Outreach

In order to successfully implement its many legislatively mandated projects, the Authority helped modernize Georgia's Superior Court clerk offices by providing computers, printers, scanners, servers and other equipment — over 30,000 pieces of new equipment to date. For many clerk offices, this meant automating for the first time when the UCC project began in 1995.

In addition to providing new equipment, the Authority's IT staff travels to all 159 counties to service equipment, which is eligible for replacement every three years. By continuing to provide equipment, in addition to technological assistance and high-speed communications, the Authority supports all counties in their efforts to comply with Authority programs. Acquiring this equipment for most counties would not have been possible without the Authority due to the significant tightening of county budgets.

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

The Software Initiative has its genesis from the Board's 2019 Strategic Planning Session. The Authority requested feedback and learned that clerks now routinely use various pieces of productivity software in their office that the GSCCCA was not providing. Specifically, the Authority received several requests for Microsoft Office and the full version of Adobe Acrobat (allowing a clerk to edit or modify PDF documents directly), as these pieces of software have become essential for doing business. With this need in mind, the Authority began an initiative to provide these two software packages to clerks. For a variety of reasons, including licensing issues, deployment of the software needed to be methodical necessitating that the Authority's customer support staff work one-on-one with clerk offices to solicit information about their software needs, and then schedule a plan to acquire and deploy the software packages.

Even with COVID-related challenges, the project has been a tremendous success. Currently, software has been shipped to **96 clerks' offices**, with **789 individual software installations** complete and 29 installations scheduled or in progress. Although the initiative to distribute this software to clerks started well before the pandemic, it's important to note that in the new eFiling world brought about by COVID shut-downs and courthouse closures, PDFs have taken center stage and the ability to manipulate them — allowed only in the full version of Adobe Acrobat — is more important than ever making this initiative and the timing of it even more critical to supporting clerks and the operation of their offices. Going forward, software will be installed on new computers before shipment to clerk offices.

The Laptop Initiative was born from a clerk leadership meeting last August, when the challenges of the pandemic, including working remotely, were discussed. Following this conversation, Authority staff researched the idea of providing all clerks of Superior Court with a laptop computer in an effort to further enable them with the tools to fulfill their duties even when working remotely. At its October meeting, the Authority Board voted to purchase and distribute a laptop computer to each elected clerk of Superior Court. The initiative has been well received by clerks, and, to date, the Authority has configured and shipped **130 Lenovo laptops**, along with docking stations, wireless keyboards, mice, and external monitors.

Equipment outreach to Superior Court clerks has been both a necessity and a priority for the Authority

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

Below is a summary of the Authority's equipment and software outreach efforts during FY 2021:

- Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **1,150 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. Of this total, the Authority:
 - Purchased (at a cost of over **\$831,000**) and deployed **761 pieces of new equipment** (325 computers, 285 monitors and 151 scanners) to 75 Superior Court clerk offices to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties.
 - Evaluated options, then acquired, configured, and deployed **130 Lenovo laptops** to Superior Court clerks as part of a Laptop Initiative to support clerks' ability to work remotely.
 - Shipped approximately **259** non-inventory items including switches, cables, keyboards and mice.
- Acquired and deployed **Microsoft Office** and **Adobe Acrobat** software packages to Superior Court clerk offices. Currently, software has been shipped to 96 clerks' offices, with 789 individual software installations complete and 29 installations scheduled or in progress. This initiative was born from the Authority's strategic planning efforts in 2019. Through that process, the Authority sought feedback from clerks which revealed the need for various pieces of productivity software that had become essential for doing business in the clerk's office.
- Handled **72** contracts from counties for additional equipment totaling over \$85,000.
- Handled **108** purchase orders totaling \$1.9 million 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 **400** 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.
- Transferred **550** 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 were 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 Program

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 Superior Court clerks, their staff, and other interested constituencies, while also prioritizing the convenience and accessibility of the training. The Authority's goal is to create learning opportunities that are flexible, personalized, and relevant, and, to this end, offers many types of training including online courses and webinars, in addition to in-person and virtual classes. Each year, the Authority's training program is utilized and appreciated by thousands.

In 2019, the Authority launched a new **Learning Management System**, eLearn.gsccca.org, which is 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. At present, eLearn boasts **50,000 active users** who benefit from training through the Authority's learning management system.

Prioritizing convenience — particularly through remote learning — has always been a key component of the Authority's training goals, but this became an even greater issue with social distancing requirements brought about by COVID-19. With eLearn successfully in place, the Authority was better positioned to quickly respond to the increased need for remote learning by launching yet another online class, **Notary Online**, its third new online class since the pandemic began last spring and its eighth class in total since launching online training in 2006.

In FY 2021, the Authority trained over **24,000 people** through its eight online courses. In addition to launching a new online class, the Authority also increased its remote learning opportunities by leveraging the Zoom platform to offer **41 webinars** on a variety of important and much-requested topics.

Following is more detailed information about the Authority's training efforts during FY 2021.

Online Courses

The Authority currently offers a total of eight online training opportunities after publishing a new course to eLearn this past fiscal year. Courses are offered free-of-charge and are available 24/7, making training affordable and flexible. Additionally, participants can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping or accelerating through concepts as they choose, with some research suggesting that online learning can be even more effective than in-person instruction.

Following are the online courses that the Authority offers and the number of Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks, other court personnel, vendors, and public users who took advantage of this training during FY 2021:

- *GSCCCA Indexing Standards*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors
 - 118 people participated in the course this year
 - 21 participants took the Indexing Certification Exam and, of those, 7 successfully passed the exam

- *GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors.
 - 72 people participated in the course this year.
- *GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors.
 - 66 people participated in the course this year.
- *GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction*
 - Training available to all court personnel (Superior, State, Probate, etc.) and vendors.
 - 89 people participated in the course this year.
- *Notary Online – New course*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
 - 63 people participated in the course this year.
- *Notary Online – Mail-in Renewals*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
 - 47 people participated in the course this year.
- *Notary Public*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and the general public. The course is designed for people who are interested in becoming notaries.
 - 23,933 people participated in the course this year.
 - 16,287 participants took the Notary Public Final Exam and, of those, 16,166 successfully passed the exam.
 - Some Superior Court clerks now require notary public applicants to pass the Notary Public Final Exam to receive their notary commissions.
- *UCC*
 - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
 - 45 people participated in the course this year.

Webinars

Growing in popularity over the last decade due to its flexibility and cost savings, remote learning became more than just convenient over the last year, but also necessary due to the challenges brought about by the pandemic. For this reason, the Authority utilized the Zoom platform to offer a robust schedule of webinars to Superior Court clerks and their staff to allow training to continue when offices were closed, and even when offices reopened but social distancing was still advised for the safety of all.

During FY 2021, the Authority utilized this training tool by offering **41 webinars** covering the following topics:

- Authority Email & Mimecast
- Clerk Resource Center & Program Status Report
- eFile – Common Questions (*New*)
- eFile Portal (*New*)
- eLearn 101 (*New*)
- Fines & Fees
- Notary Online Mail-in Renewal

- Pending Lien Search
- Protective Orders
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Introduction
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Overview
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Sample Index
- Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam – Study Guide
- UCC

In addition to offering webinars to Superior Court clerks and their staff and coordinating and moderating the Winter Clerk Training in Atlanta, the Authority provided instruction to various constituencies and continued to successfully partner with other groups to conduct important training. Rather than offer in-person instruction, however, the Authority conducted webinars or virtual classes this past fiscal year to provide the following requested training:

- Conducted 4 Notary Public webinars on the role and responsibilities of a notary public. These classes were hosted by Superior Court clerks and offered to members of the public free-of-charge. Almost 320 people participated in the webinars.
- Conducted 5 Fines & Fees webinars in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA – 2 for new Municipal Court clerks and 3 for new Municipal Court judges.
- Conducted a virtual class for the University of Georgia School of Law “Secured Transactions” class on the UCC process and the Authority’s role.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual meeting sessions for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) regarding the e-Appostille process.
- Conducted over 20 one-on-one virtual training sessions to different constituencies on a variety of topics including Adobe Captivate, eLearn, UCC eFile, Notary Online, Notary Online Mail-in Renewal, and the role of a notary public.

In-person Training

The Authority typically conducts around 30-35 in-person classes each year which are hosted by Superior Court clerks across Georgia. With social-distancing issues that resulted from the pandemic, the Authority converted most of these classes to remote learning opportunities. However, as Georgia began opening up, some in-person training was conducted including at the Fall COAG Meeting, the New Superior Court Clerks’ Training, the Clerks’ planning meeting at Brasstown Valley, and the Spring Clerks’ Conference. Additionally, Fines and Fees training classes were conducted in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for new Probate Court judges.

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 2021.

- Continually updated and added new information to the Clerk Resource Center. This password-protected website was designed by the Authority to support Superior Court clerks and their staffs. The site contains clerk-specific information including program status reports, conference materials, and links to Notary Online, PT-61 Online, and the Authority's Training Center. The site also provides a one-stop location for the Authority to post and for clerks to access updated information on legislative changes and other dynamic issues that will affect Superior Court clerk offices.
- Continued to produce quarterly newsletter for Superior Court clerks that is posted on the Authority website.
- Continued to strengthen the Authority's social media presence. By utilizing Facebook and Twitter, the Authority is able to communicate with its customers and reach out to potential subscribers while keeping clerks better informed.
- Handled and processed to resolution UCC, notary public, real estate, fines and fees, and training inquiries from clerks' offices, UCC filers, online users and the general public.
- Presented disaster planning tools and strategies to clerks during the *Disaster Recovery Certificate Training Program*.
- Produced archive newsletter featuring the importance and value of the Authority's archive initiatives including the MyVault Online Archive Program and the Virtual Microfilm Program.
- Educated new clerks on the Authority's history and the many projects, programs and services available to them, including the Authority's critical records management and data archive initiatives, at the New Clerk Training held in December 2020.
- Produced and delivered presentation to clerks via the Zoom platform that focused on disaster recovery planning and risk management strategies. This included guiding clerks through several practice exercises to identify potential threats, analyze the impact of those threats, and document ways to mitigate the risks. Best practice strategies and tools for success were presented.
- 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.
- Conducted Fines & Fees webinars in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for new Municipal Court clerks and new Municipal Court judges.

- Conducted Notary Public webinars on the role and responsibilities of a notary public. These classes were hosted by Superior Court clerks and offered to members of the public free-of-charge. Almost 320 people participated in the webinars.
- Conducted a virtual class for the University of Georgia School of Law “Secured Transactions” class on the UCC process and the Authority’s role.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual meeting sessions for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA) regarding the e-Appostille process.
- 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.
- Provided expert testimony at a trial for the US Department of Justice in its prosecution of an individual accused of filing false or harassment-type UCC documents against individuals employed by various federal agencies.
- Handled, in conjunction with the Attorney General’s office, open records requests from the public.
- Served in an advisory role in the formulation of House Bill 334 which authorizes remote and electronic notarial acts in the state of Georgia. The bill is currently tabled in the Georgia Senate. Further action could be taken on the bill during the 2022 legislative session.
- Benefited from having Authority staff involved in state and national industry groups:
 - Authority Communications Director is serving in sixth term as president of the board of the Notary Public Administrators (NPA). Comprised of state notary administrators, the NPA brings together public and private stakeholders in the notary industry. The Authority’s participation in NPA allows 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:
 - Represented the Clerks’ Authority at the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) 2021 Virtual Winter Conference where he reported on the activities and 2021 goals of NPA, a section of NASS.
 - Participated as a panelist for an industry-wide NASS webinar discussion examining the state of remote notarization among stakeholders. Approximately 400 attended the webinar.
 - Coordinated and hosted virtual meetings for NASS and NPA members regarding the e-Appostille process.
 - Authority Communications Director is 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.

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 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 challenges head-on.
- Streamline and add value to our programs, and strategically transform our operations for long-term efficiency.
- Provide superior customer service to all our constituencies.
- Foster existing relationships and partnerships and embrace new opportunities.
- Seek sustainable solutions to the financial issues with which we are faced.
- Achieve preeminence as an acknowledged leader in the public records arena.

The information contained in this report is respectfully presented to provide an overview of the 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.

