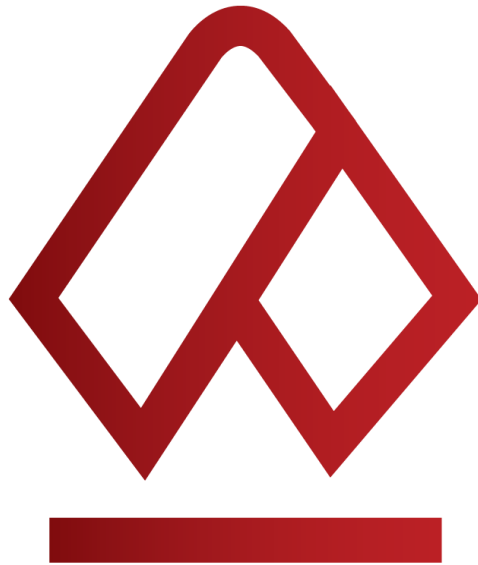


# **Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority**



## **2021-2022 Accomplishments & Year-end Report**

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## Executive Summary

The Māori — the indigenous people of New Zealand — have a centuries-old proverb: *Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, ēngari he toa takitini*. Translated, it means:

*Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many.*

This ancient proverb speaks to a critical part of the DNA of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority: **the power of community and collaboration**. It's been said many times before but always bears repeating ... the success of the Authority was only made possible by the willingness of 159 clerks of Superior Court to work together for the good of all clerks and the State of Georgia. The Authority was created by clerks for the benefit of clerks, and our symbiotic relationship is paramount to building on our progress to date and continuing to meet our goals in the future.

Despite the continuing challenges and uncertainty brought about by the pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and a mixed bag of economic conditions, **the Authority completed FY 2022 operationally intact and financially solid**. The resilience of our results is a testament to the quality of our products and a continued commitment to streamlining operations and managing costs. Our productivity and success are not an accident, but rather the result of the outstanding and prudent leadership of our Board of Directors, the effort, skill and dedication of our professional staff, and the commitment of Georgia's Superior Court clerks to remain united and collaborate for the good of all.

The Authority is constantly growing, changing, and evolving, but all priorities and momentum radiate from our primary role of supporting Superior Court clerks in the operation of their offices. Rather than yielding to the unprecedented challenges presented over the past several years, the Authority remained laser-focused on anticipating and meeting the evolving needs of Superior Court clerks and providing them with the tools to be successful. These recent challenges have only highlighted the importance of the 27-year partnership between the Authority and Superior Court clerks and the transformational successes we have achieved together.

As the Māori would say: our success is not the work of one, but the work of many. Simply put, our success has been and continues to be the result of the unity, collaboration and collective efforts of many. It's truly a testament to what can be achieved when partners work together towards a shared goal. For over a quarter of a century, the Authority and clerks have successfully worked together to adapt, innovate, and transform the office of Superior Court clerk to meet the technological demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **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 nearly three decades, the Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena and has led the State of Georgia to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has taken abstract ideas — often thought impossible — to the concrete world of implementation, and, in so doing, has changed the way many do business and made life easier for those accessing real estate records, financing statements, criminal case data, and other 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
- Real Estate eFile
- Premium Search Account
- Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App)
- Protective Order Registry
- Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- eCertification Program
- Carbon Sequestration Registry
- MyVault Online Archive Program
- VaultTek Mobile (the app for MyVault users)

- 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.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org). The Authority databases provide accountability, uniformity, efficiencies and cost-savings by affording:

- Unprecedented access to valuable information — free access through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- Approximately \$113 million in additional funding and 31,000 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 2022**

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

- **Compensated clerks’ offices** over \$8 million for prints off the Authority website and over \$1.1 million for deed images, resulting in over **\$9 million** in additional funding for Georgia’s Superior Court clerks this fiscal year.
- Launched the **1989-1987 Historical Deed Project** in a continuing effort to add additional deed records to the Authority’s publicly searchable website and ultimately move the statewide “good-from” date further back. As with previous historical initiatives, the project will be complex as the Authority requires the complete re-indexing of these older land records in conformance with current Indexing Standards to create a cohesive record with current data in the system. A proposed timeline and implementation schedule for the project are currently being completed and the Authority has already begun reimbursing those clerks of Superior Court who had voluntarily completed their 1989, 1988 and 1987 historical deed imaging and indexing.

- Developed and published a mobile application for MyVault users called **VaultTek Mobile**. The new app provides convenient, on-the-go access to records stored through MyVault allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand. Among others, its convenient features include the ability to view current MyVault backup status at-a-glance, monitor recent activity, and view, print or download files on demand. VaultTek Mobile can be downloaded from the Apple App and Google Play stores.
- Began statewide roll-out of **eCertification Program**, an electronic certified document request and delivery system which allows the public to request and pay for certified documents electronically. Clerks' offices process the requests and deliver the certified documents to the user electronically. Payments are processed through the Authority and included in the Daily County Disbursement reports. Following a beta-test phase, with Forsyth and Chatham counties going live in late 2021, the Authority began rolling out the product statewide. At present, 37 counties are actively participating, 30 counties have been trained and are actively testing, and over 2,000 documents have been successfully certified.
- Initiated program for **eFiling System Certification** to create a formal process for certifying vendor eFile systems utilized by clerks for deeds, liens, plats, and UCCs for integrating with the GSCCCA eFile Portal. The Authority communicated notice to vendors of the certification requirement in January and held two webinars to address questions and discuss feedback. Phase two of the certification program is underway and involves finalizing the Authority's eFile certification program document, developing system certification tests, and reviewing eAssist to make any necessary programmatic changes to facilitate successful passage of the eFile Certification tests. Once complete, vendor system testing will begin with a targeted completion date of July 1, 2023.
- Launched a **Statewide Network Upgrade/Outreach Initiative** to ensure continued support and security updates for network equipment, and to prepare counties for future bandwidth upgrades. Through this project, the Authority will upgrade existing equipment in clerks' offices over the next two years. Additionally, the Authority worked with internet service providers to negotiate internet bandwidth upgrades for nearly half the Superior Court clerk offices across the state. Once the project is complete, with upgraded equipment installed and bandwidth upgrades in effect, clerks should see improved internet speeds and support staff will be able to more easily manage the statewide network.
- Nearly completed two-year **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project** with imminent launch of fully overhauled [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org). With the goal of streamlining the fines and fees process, much thought and planning went into the rewrite plans which include a new and updated look for [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) providing both visual appeal and enhanced ease-of-use. As importantly, though, the Authority has incorporated into the new site the option to electronically submit the Consolidated Monthly Remittance reports, Monthly Disbursement reports, and Trust Fund Interest



reports through CourtTRAX along with an ACH payment. Once the new site is launched, there will no longer be a need for checks or manually printing forms. In preparation for this and many other changes, the Authority has provided multiple webinars to review the changes, highlight new features, and detail court requirements to utilize these features.

- Continued to grow **Real Estate eFile** with a 47% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. Since the launch of Real Estate eFile in 2011, 5.5 million real estate documents have been electronically recorded with the vast majority of those in the last five years. All counties participate in the program to some degree, with 140 accepting all document types. In FY 2022, nearly 1.8 million real estate documents were electronically recorded, an 11% increase from the previous fiscal year.
- Continued to grow **UCC eFile** with a 23% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. A record 282,509 UCCs were eFiled in FY 2022, with over 90% of accepted UCCs electronically filed. Since the pilot project began in May 2009, nearly **1.5 million UCCs** have been electronically filed. At present, **147** counties participate in the program, with **117** of those counties — **48** more than last year — mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. This means that **over 73%** of Georgia’s counties only allow UCCs to be eFiled.
- Advanced the **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. At present, compensation agreements have been sent to 117 clerks, covering approximately 912,000 images equaling \$2.7 million. Of the 117 agreements sent, 112 have been received by the Authority, and compensation to clerks’ offices thus far has been more than **\$2.6 million** as a direct cash benefit to the clerks’ offices and counties. The project is expected to be completed before the end of the year.
- Continued efforts on **Current Indexing Improvement Initiative** by launching a project to identify deed indexes in all 159 counties that do not have any associated image. Through this project, which is currently in beta phase, each clerk will receive a report of all books and pages in the deed database where the Authority has index data but no image associated with it. Additionally, the Authority developed a new webinar to address PT-61 transmission errors. Training to improve data quality also includes the Authority’s three-hour, in-person class and three online courses available through the eLearn platform on the Real Estate Indexing Standards, including one that specifically addresses common mistakes. All these efforts support the ongoing goal of improving current indexing data quality.
- Restored 392 GBs of data back to county systems in response to 22 requests from clerks through the **MyVault Online Archive Program**. Protecting the digital records of Georgia’s Superior Court clerks since 2007, MyVault is currently storing and protecting over 1.2 billion files totaling more than 231 TBs of live data, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. Since its

inception, MyVault has responded to 207 data loss requests and has restored over 4.3 TBs of data back to county systems.

- Restored over 29,220 deed and lien images back to 5 clerk offices through the **Virtual Microfilm Program**. Through the VMF system, all deeds, liens and plats ever received by the Authority are directly available to clerks without the clerk having to make a records request or having to search the GSCCCA search system. The VMF image archive program not only provides an alternative to the traditional microfilm process, but provides clerks with easier access to their archived digital records and further protects them consistent with the law. Today, the system stores over 299 million images, across 522,280 books, totaling nearly 14 terabytes of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the online portal.
- 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 57 counties have now been transcribed and will be queued for phase 3 analysis.
- Added 300,000 additional instruments to our website through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project** for a total of over 4.5 million instruments in production since the program was implemented in 2013. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks' offices have access to additional resources through print image fees initiated through the Authority's website. During FY 2022, 17 additional counties began participating in the project for a total of 84 counties in the voluntary program.
- Increased **Premium Search accounts** by nearly 16% adding 964 new accounts for a fiscal year-end total of 7,119 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.
- Configured and approved for distribution a new and improved **Lenovo workstation** for clerks' offices. Specifications were significantly improved in order to stay up-to-date and provide better performance. The new workstation has a higher capacity CPU, more memory and solid-state drives.
- Added the ability to **fund eFile escrow accounts** using wire transfers. The wire transfer process employs an automated self-serve approach that allows eFile customers to fund their account instantaneously at a lower cost. To date, 806 wire transfers have been accepted for a total of over \$2.3 million, saving eFile customers \$61,000 in credit card fees.

- Enhanced the **Notary Renewal Notification** service to allow clerks to customize the email sent to their constituents by including county-specific language with special instructions or requirements on how to renew the notary commission. As a service to clerks since 2010, the Authority sends email notifications to all notaries with an email address on file 30 days prior to expiration of their commission.
- 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 2022**

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 **20 million** images to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **321 million** images accessible to the public through [www.gsccca.org](http://www.gsccca.org).
- Hosted nearly **1.7 million** unique visitors — 13% more than the previous fiscal year — with **605 million** page views on [www.gsccca.org](http://www.gsccca.org). The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet nearly **6.9 million times** from **223 countries** this past fiscal year.
- Ordered, processed and shipped **977 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. The Authority purchased **\$503,553** of equipment for counties during FY 2022 to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties. The Authority has provided approximately **31,000 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.
- Trained more than **34,000 people** through 8 online classes, 69 webinars, 40 one-on-one virtual sessions, and multiple in-person training programs on a variety of important topics.
- Indexed and added to the database over **297,000 UCCs** — the second most in over 20 years — and conducted nearly **11,000 Certified Searches**, the most since 2008. From the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed over **7.2 million** UCCs — an average of 22,000 per month — and conducted nearly **293,000** Certified Searches.
- Increased participation in **Notary Online** by adding 2 new counties for a total of **150 counties** currently participating in the program. In FY 2022, **98%** of notary applications in Georgia were submitted electronically via the Authority's Notary Online application system.
- Continued to maintain the statewide notary database. A statewide total of nearly **52,000 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.
- Processed over **16,000 apostille/authentication requests** with nearly **36,000 apostilles** issued.

- Collected and disbursed over **\$77.3 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 **246,000 records of criminal court dispositions** from various courts in Georgia for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- Added another **140 million files** totaling more than **35 TBs of data** to the **MyVault** remote servers for a fiscal year-end total of over **1.2 billion files** stored and protected in the online vault. The Authority upgraded archive appliances in **34** counties during FY 2022.
- Imported over **13.1 million** new deed images and over **1 million** new lien images into the VMF system for a fiscal year-end total of over **299 million images** totaling nearly **14 terabytes** of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the VMF web interface.
- Protected users' mailboxes via Mimecast by blocking over **3,200** distinct malicious, virus-containing messages and phishing attempts to @gsccca.org accounts, in addition to the millions of verified spam senders that are rejected automatically. During FY 2022, nearly **17.3 million messages** were sent and received through the GSCCCA email server.

As the Authority closes another successful year, through partnership with and service to Georgia's Superior Court clerks, the words of the Māori ring true. The success we celebrate today was made possible by the efforts of clerks nearly three decades ago and their understanding that moving forward together was their only means to success. The steadfast partnership forged and the continuing support of today's Superior Court clerks empowers the important work of the Authority and has allowed for the many successes throughout our history including the numerous accomplishments of the past fiscal year detailed throughout this report.

The past few years, however, have underscored one timeless principle: change is the only constant. And this principle reinforces the important reality that we must continue to adapt and re-evaluate business as usual. The uncertain economic environment will likely continue through at least part of FY 2023, but the Authority will continue to evolve and build new capabilities in order to help clerks address upcoming challenges and capitalize on future opportunities.

With the same resolute commitment since opening our doors in 1995, the Authority remains focused on our overarching mission of supporting Georgia's Superior Court clerks, anticipating their changing needs and priorities, and advancing their resources and value by using technology to accelerate the scope and scale of innovation. As we have for nearly three decades, we will move forward together committed to building on our progress to date and achieving even greater results in the future.

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



## Information on [www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org)

The Authority's website, [www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org), allows centralized, online searches of data from Georgia's 159 counties giving the public unprecedented access to valuable information including UCC financing statements, real estate deeds, liens, plats 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 nearly 6.9 million times from 223 countries in FY 2022. 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 the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, but the public still had access to important information through [www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org).

### **Website Statistics for FY 2022**

- Images added to the GSCCCA search system: 19.8 million
- Total images in the GSCCCA search system: 321 million
- Sessions: 6.9 million
- Data transferred/bandwidth: 18.31 TBs
- Page views: 605 million
- Unique visitors: 1.7 million
- Average page views per visit: 26
- Average visit duration: 13:57 minutes
- Number of countries that visited: 223
- Top 4 countries: U.S., India, Canada, and Philippines
- 62% of all visitors used Chrome; 21% used Safari; 9% used Edge; 3% used Firefox; and 3% used Internet Explorer
- 27% of users accessed website using mobile device
- 68% of mobile users used iOS and 31% used Android

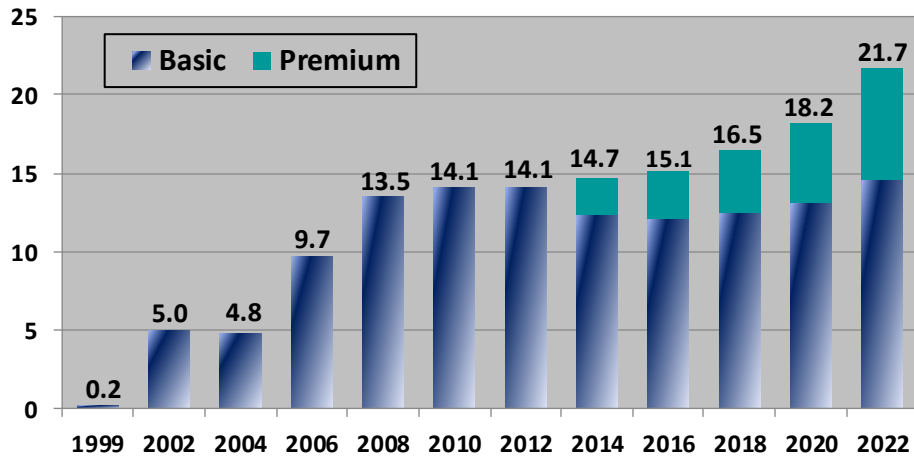
The Authority understands the importance of its data and prioritizes making its website accessible and organized. With the volume and diversity of information contained in the website and the variety of audiences that it serves, the Authority wants to ensure that each visitor is provided a user-centric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

As web users evolve and their needs and devices change, it is more important than ever for online services to grow and expand their online presence. And with 1.7 million annual, distinct visitors to [www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org), the Authority believes that it is critical for its site to be clear, responsive and easy-to-use, and will continue to look at ways to improve the user experience.

## Website Subscribers for FY 2022

- Total (Regular + Premium Search) monthly subscribers as of 6/30/22: 21,745
  - Regular monthly subscribers as of 6/30/22: 14,626
  - Premium Search monthly subscribers as of 6/30/22: 7,119
    - Percentage increase in Premium Search accounts for FY 2022: 16%
- Single-use subscribers added during fiscal year: 39,361

Website Subscribers (in thousands) by Fiscal Year



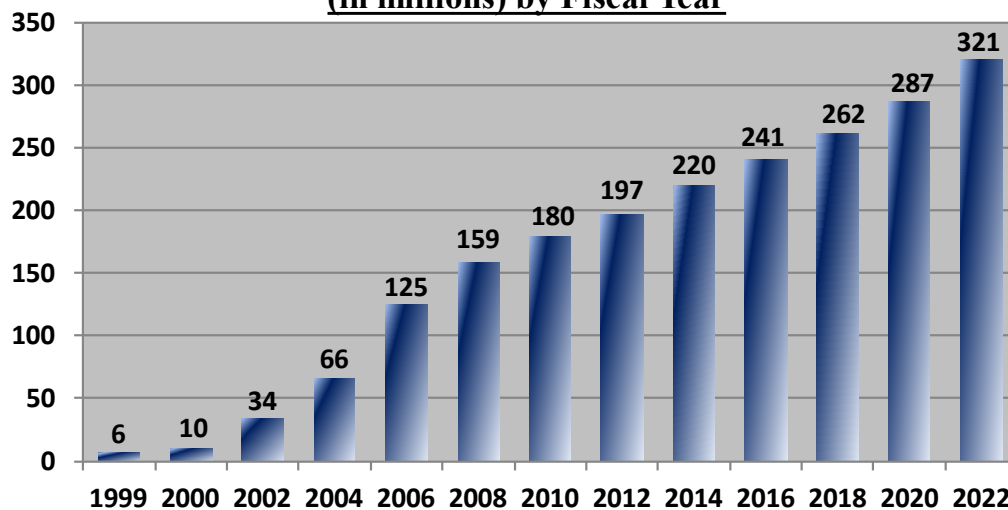
Since 1999, website subscriptions have increased dramatically, clear evidence of the Authority’s growth and the growing value of its statewide indexes. Beyond the numbers, though, the Authority gauges its success and relevance on the response and feedback from its customers and how integral the Authority’s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

## Images Added to Website

Each year, millions of images are added to [www.gsccca.org](http://www.gsccca.org) making it an even more valuable resource to our customers. During FY 2022, nearly **20 million** images were added to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **321 million images**. See the following chart and bar graph for more details.

	Images Added in FY 2022	Total Images FYE 6/30/22
Deeds	17,158,175	277,053,163
Liens	1,429,149	24,776,087
Plats	238,845	1,776,790
UCCs	392,598	9,622,213
PT-61s	550,256	8,013,332
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,769,023</b>	<b>321,241,585</b>

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



**Website Reliability & Security**

The Authority places a high priority on providing its subscribers reliable, 24/7 service. Soon after opening, it was realized that any web-based reporting system had points where system failures could occur. In response, the Authority began distributing thousands of PCs, scanners and other equipment to Georgia’s 159 counties — approximately **31,000 pieces of new equipment** since 1995 — to ensure the quality of their equipment. The Authority systematically upgraded its network service and main data center, and continually takes preventive action to avoid service interruptions. Despite growth of 200 subscribers and 6 million images in 1999 to nearly **22,00 subscribers** and over **321 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](http://www.gscca.org) without interruption, even if the Authority's primary data center is destroyed in a disaster. In fact, the Authority routinely operates from its remote data center during scheduled maintenance in order to prevent users from experiencing downtime during necessary maintenance.

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

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



## **Financial Overview**

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

Despite the fluctuating economic environment nationally over the past 12 months, the financial condition of the Authority remained strong throughout FY 2022 with revenues exceeding budget. This surplus is primarily a result of deed fee revenue received from the clerks' offices due to the continued 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 2023 budgeted obligations and continues to aggressively manage project and administrative costs.

### **FY 2021 Year-end Audit Completed by Mauldin & Jenkins**

- Received an unqualified "clean" opinion from Mauldin & Jenkins for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 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 2022, the Authority compensated Superior Court clerk offices over **\$8 million** for print monies generated and over **\$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 charges incurred by delinquent subscribers.

## Accounting Information

- Total active subscriber accounts as of June 30, 2022: **21,745**
  - Regular subscriber accounts: **14,626**
  - Premium Search subscriber accounts: **7,119**
  
- Average monthly direct access subscription revenue during FY 2022: **\$333,352**
- Single-use subscription revenue during FY 2022: **\$196,805**
- Number of monthly check payments processed during FY 2022: **10,401**
- Purchased **\$503,553** of equipment for counties during FY 2022 as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project.
  
- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for deed images:
  - During FY 2022: **\$1,104,148**
  - Since inception of project: **\$22.9 million**
  
- Amount compensated to clerks' offices for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website:
  - During FY 2022: **\$8,025,628**
  - Since inception of project: **\$89.8 million**
  
- FY 2022 break-down for print compensation:
  - Deeds: \$7,155,168
  - Liens: \$256,009
  - Plats: \$458,659
  - PT-61s: \$46,101
  - UCCs: \$109,691

## Notary & Authentications Division

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

- Maintenance of a central database of all active notaries public (6/30/22 total: 189,555).
- 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. 150 Georgia counties (94%) participate in Notary Online, providing web-based, notary applications using software developed by the Authority.

In addition to its responsibility for maintaining Georgia's notary database and supporting clerks in their notarial duties, the Authority also serves a vital role in international commerce by issuing apostilles, and was recognized in 1998 by the U.S. State Department as the only agency, outside of a Secretary of State office, to provide this critical service. The Apostille Treaty is an international treaty (of which the U.S. is a signatory member) that provides for a simplified method of authenticating documents for use in other countries. It certifies the origin (i.e. country) of the public document by authenticating the signature and seal of the issuing public official. Approximately 4 million apostilles are issued worldwide on an annual basis. The number of countries participating in the Apostille Treaty is currently 121 with three countries — Jamaica, Singapore, and Indonesia — joining over the past fiscal year.

During FY 2022, the Authority issued 35,717 apostilles destined for 103 different countries and 12 foreign territories. These documents originated in 140 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

Prior to the pandemic, Georgia citizens were able to visit the Authority office to resolve their apostille and authentication needs in person. Through this option, Authority staff serviced approximately 9,000 walk-in customers per year. When the outbreak of Covid-19 necessitated the suspension of its walk-in service, the Authority quickly established a drop box service to continue meeting the needs of the general public.

The drop box service allows people (or couriers) to place their documents in a drop box located just outside the Authority's suite. Authentications staff then processes and mails the documents back, often with a turn-around time of only one day. Additionally, the Authority incorporated a "compassionate service" option providing immediate turn-around for those under severe time constraints. This past fiscal year, approximately 34% of apostille and authentication requests arrived via the drop box and 66% arrived via mail.

The Authority regularly receives feedback from those who have requested apostilles that highlights its important role in helping everyday Georgians. Below are comments from two customers who recently emailed about their positive experience with Authority staff:

*"For the past few months, I have been reaching out to the GSCCCA Notary Division to get some important documentation apostilled. It is with great pleasure that I share with you my professional interaction with Mr. Peter Keesom of the GSCCCA Notary Division. Some of the documents that I submitted were not straightforward and, frankly, I may not have known 100 percent of what I was doing. Mr. Keesom was very patient and quickly educated me to the GSCCCA requirements and supported me throughout the process. In addition, he and the GSCCCA team reacted very quickly to the situation and got the job done to my complete satisfaction. Mr. Keesom's professional, courteous attitude made for a great experience and made me very proud of our State GSCCCA Team. He is a great asset to all of us."*

*– Al Dimassi, General Manager  
International Services, LLC*

*"Yesterday, Peter Keesom assisted me in the submission of a "Power of Attorney" apostille for my mother in Ukraine. Mr. Keesom was exceedingly helpful and made sure that my task was executed properly with my final goal in mind. Mr. Keesom was invested in the success of what I was trying to accomplish and I am grateful. To me, this was a daunting task which had been hanging over my head for far too long, and the complexity I was facing caused me to delay and delay. As a Georgian, it makes me proud to know that our state officials work so diligently on our behalf."*

*– Georgia citizen*

The Authority's Notary & Authentications Division had a busy and productive year with the following highlights for FY 2022:

- Maintained the statewide notary database. A statewide total of **51,981 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database. 98% of these notary commissions were processed through the Authority's web-based system, Notary Online.
- Continued promoting and improving **Notary Online**. Participation in the program, which was developed in 2004, increased to **150 counties** with 2 of those counties joining this fiscal year. The Authority provides one-on-one training for new counties.
- Created internal **Notary Tools application** with features that empower administrators with more control to correct issues with notary applications and appointments.
- Assisted counties with training on the Authority's **Notary Online Mail-In Renewal (MIR)** program. This program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail in their renewal application and pay with a credit card, thus foregoing a trip to the clerk's office. This feature became even more important when clerks' offices were forced to close due to the pandemic. Currently, **49 counties** have been trained and participate in the MIR program; 2 of those counties joined the program this past fiscal year.
- Enhanced the **Notary Renewal Notification** service to allow clerks to customize the email sent to their constituents by including county-specific language with special instructions or requirements on how to renew their notary commission. As a service to clerks since 2010, the Authority sends email notification to all notaries with an email address on file 30 days prior to their commission expiring.
- Sold **2,830 Notary Handbooks**. The handbook includes forms and definitions and is an excellent reference for Georgia notary law, notary procedures and best practices. It was created in 1999 in conjunction with the American Society of Notaries. In addition to direct sales, the Authority continues to provide notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices with the goal of providing point-of-sale education materials to Georgia's notaries. This past fiscal year, the Authority sold nearly triple the handbooks it sold two years ago.
- Supported clerks in managing their notarial duties by offering two online training courses:
  - **Notary Online** – Designed for both new and existing Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks, the class covers submitting, processing and deleting applications; processing name and address changes; editing unscanned commissions; setting preferences; and reviewing notary files, forms, reports and Certificates of Authority.
  - **Notary Online – Mail-in Renewals** – Designed to help clerks remotely train their staff to participate in the MIR program. The program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail in their renewal application and pay with a credit card, thus foregoing a trip to the clerk's office, a feature that became important when clerks' offices were forced to close during the pandemic.
- Provided training to the general public, free-of-charge, on the role and responsibilities of a notary public:
  - Continued to offer online course: **Notary Public Training**. During the past fiscal year, over 26,000 Georgians took advantage of the Authority's online class and, of those participants, over 18,000 took the Notary Public Final Exam. Some Superior Court clerks now require constituents to pass this exam to receive their notary commissions.

- Conducted **15 Notary Public Training webinars** which were hosted by Superior Court clerks. When the pandemic halted in-person classes in the spring of 2020, the Authority knew the need for training was still present and quickly pivoted to offering the Notary Public class as a webinar which allowed Superior Court clerks to continue meeting the needs of their constituents. Over 1,900 Georgians took advantage of this free training during FY 2022.
- 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 was defeated in committee during the 2022 legislative session.
- Processed **16,108 apostille and authentication requests/orders**, with 66% of requests submitted through the mail and 34% 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 **35,717 apostilles** destined for 103 different countries and 12 foreign territories. These documents originated in 140 different Georgia counties. The most popular destination country for apostilles was South Korea, with Mexico, the Russian Federation, Colombia, and Italy rounding out the top five.
- Issued **143 certificates of authority**, primarily for use in Puerto Rico.
- Handled over **14,000 phone calls**, with an average of **57 calls per day** answered to resolution. The Notary Division has seen a 59% increase in phone calls from two years ago.
- Served as part of the U.S. delegation to The Hague Special Commission meeting in October 2021. The Special Commission makes conclusions and recommendations regarding the issuance of apostilles globally. The Authority is designated, by treaty, as the issuing authority for the State of Georgia.
- Coordinated and moderated virtual sessions on the **e-Apostille process** for members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the Notary Public Administrators (NPA).

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

## Fines & Fees Division

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

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

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

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

In an effort to streamline the fines and fees process, the Authority launched a **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project** two years ago to fully overhaul [www.courttrax.org](http://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 rewrite will remedy that situation by producing a cohesive site that allows for future changes and enhancements, in addition to updating the programming language to a current platform that can be more easily supported both today and long-term.

After two years of extensive planning and programming, the Authority is nearing completion and will soon launch its new Fines & Fees site including an updated look for [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) providing both visual appeal and enhanced ease-of-use. As importantly, though, the Authority has incorporated into the new site the option to electronically submit the Consolidated Monthly Remittance reports, Monthly Disbursement reports, and Trust Fund Interest reports through CourtTRAX along with an ACH payment, eliminating the need for checks or manually printed forms. Form submissions will be visible on a user's dashboard and all court form submissions will be available in the submission history page. To prepare clerks and their staff for the new site, the Authority has offered multiple webinars to review the changes, highlight new features, and detail court requirements to utilize these features.



In addition to providing other Fines & Fees training over the years, the Authority developed and began offering an online course, now titled *GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction*, in 2006 to help educate court personnel, private probation companies, clerks and their staff on the reporting of fines and fees and how to comply with the law. Updated 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 couple years with the challenges of in-person training resulting from the pandemic.

In FY 2022, the Authority’s Fines & Fees Division:

- Neared completion of the **Fines & Fees Rewrite Project**. Final testing is underway before the Authority launches an overhauled [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) system meant to streamline and modernize the fines and fees process. The new site is scheduled to go live this summer.
- Collected and disbursed **\$77.3 million** in court fees. Collection of court fines and fees has improved compared to FY 2021 but still remains about \$9 million below pre-pandemic levels as courts work on processing a backlog of cases.
- 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 nearly **31,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- Continued to refine procedures to further ensure the accuracy of the indexed data in the Fines & Fees database.
- Continued to hold operational costs at or under the statutory limit of \$500,000 for 18<sup>th</sup> year in a row.
- Updated [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) following the adoption by the Authority Board of new Fines & Fees Rules & Regulations in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-21A-7. The updates included:
  - Adding the newly adopted Rules & Regulations to the website.
  - Updating all Fines & Fees forms to provide consistent nomenclature. Utilizing Georgia code, current acronyms, and current training, the Authority determined standardized naming for all fund names which are now consistently defined in the Rules & Regulations.
  - Adding City General Fund to priority schedule. While implied, the City General Fund was not expressly named in the most recently adopted priority schedule for non-Superior and State courts. This was remedied to provide uniformity and clarity.
  - Adding “unless otherwise mandated by law” to RR 7.4. This allows courts to follow the priority schedules as mandated by law and as promulgated by the Rules & Regulations. Specifically, this addresses the disbursement of monies as it relates to offenses which incur the GSIF (Georgia State Indemnification Fund), which mandates all surcharges and deductions are paid first, then GSIF, then the COUNTY/CITY.
- Submitted monthly Fines & Fees results to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) fulfilling statutory reporting requirements for Local Victim Assistance Program funds. Automated monthly reporting provides the CJCC with additional requested data in CSV format for importing into their records. This past fiscal year, the Authority modified the email submission to meet CJCC’s needs allowing them to auto-import the data into their system for their purposes.



- Communicated quarterly Fines & Fees results with external groups including the Legislative Budget Office, the Senate Budget Office, the Georgia Supreme Court, the Governor’s Office, and the Georgia Public Defenders Council.
- Updated [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org), contact information, documents, training materials, forms, rules and regulations, legal advice, the online calculator, and vendor programs to reflect current legislation.
- Amended the Trust Fund Interest Remittance Report for PCI compliance, uniformity and to be explicit in the required information. The new form became effective 05/01/2022.
- Fielded questions related to new legislation, HB 576 and SB 249, affecting Fines & Fees and the sunset of the Driver Education and Training Fund per O.C.G.A. § 15-21-179.
- 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, 221 people took advantage of this training.
  - Utilized Zoom platform to conduct webinars for court personnel on the new Fines & Fees site. The program covered creating an account, navigating [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org), submitting reports, as well as highlighting new features.
  - Partnered with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at the University of Georgia to offer Fines & Fees training. This past fiscal year, two training sessions were conducted for new Municipal Court clerks, one for new Municipal Court judges, and one for Juvenile Court clerks.
  - Conducted all-day Fines & Fees training session at the 2022 Clerks’ Winter Training.

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, nearly **1.5 million UCCs** have been electronically filed. The program continues to grow with a 23% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. A record **282,509 UCCs** were eFiled in FY 2022, with over **90%** of accepted UCCs electronically filed. At present, **147** counties participate in the program, with **117** of those counties — **48** more than last year — mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. That means **over 73%** of Georgia's 159 counties only allow UCCs to be eFiled.

For the counties who mandate UCC eFiling, a new feature, **UCC auto-numbering**, was added in 2019 which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number. This allows a clerk's office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows those counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. At fiscal-year end, **97 counties** were taking advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature, with **44** 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 2022, the Authority:

- Indexed and added to the database **297,006 UCCs**. Except for a record number in FY 2021, this is the highest fiscal year total since 2001.
- Conducted **10,944 Certified Searches**, the highest fiscal year total since 2008.

- Continued to grow **UCC eFile** with over 90% of accepted UCCs electronically filed during FY 2022. Of the record 282,509 UCCs eFiled, 40% were submitted through the Authority’s eFile API which was published in 2019. Additionally, more counties are now mandating the electronic filing of UCCs — **48** more this fiscal year for a total of **117** or **73%** of Georgia’s counties who only allow UCCs to be eFiled.
- Created monthly **UCC bulk image electronic files** for clients throughout the year.
- Continued promoting and supporting **UCC online training class** available to Superior Court clerks and deputy clerks through the Authority’s eLearn site.
- Conducted multiple **UCC webinars** for Superior Court clerk personnel, in addition to one-on-one 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.
- 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 its doors in 1995, the Authority has indexed and added to its database over **7.2 million UCCs** (approximately 22,000 per month) and conducted nearly **293,000 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](http://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 **17 million real estate deed images** to the system during FY 2022 to bring the total to over **277 million deed images** in its publicly searchable database. Clerks' offices have been compensated by the Authority a total of **\$22.9 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 2022, the Authority compensated clerks' offices in Georgia over **\$1.1 million** for deed images added to the system and nearly **\$7.2 million** for deed prints made from [www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org), resulting in nearly **\$8.3 million** in additional funding for Georgia's Superior Court clerks.

In 2004, a new feature was added to the system: access to **Real Estate Transfer Tax forms (PT-61s)**. The Authority worked with the Department of Revenue, the Department of Audits, and the Real Property Section of the State Bar of Georgia to bring this project online. This feature has added even more valuable information to the real estate system: over **550,000 PT-61** images this fiscal year and nearly **8 million** images since the project began. (See Page 33 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 140 counties currently accepting all document types. Since the launch, **5.5 million** real estate documents have been electronically recorded, with the vast majority — 5.3

million — in the last five years. In FY 2022, nearly **1.8 million** real estate documents were electronically recorded. (See Pages 34-38 for more information on the eFile Project.)

Following is a summary of efforts during FY 2022 to support and enhance the Real Estate Deed Project:

- Continued efforts of **Current Indexing Improvement Initiative** by launching a project to identify deed indexes in all 159 counties that do not have any associated image. Through this project, which is currently in beta phase, each clerk will receive a report of all books and pages in the deed database where the Authority has index data but no image associated with it. (See Page 30 for more information on this initiative.)
- 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, **75 clerks and deputies** from **23 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 **2 in-person classes** and **3 webinars** to train Superior Court clerks, their staff, and vendors on the *Indexing Standards*. Webinars included:
  - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Overview*
  - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions*
  - *Real Estate Indexing Standards – Sample Index*
- 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 launched the Current Indexing Improvement Initiative in 2020 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.

More specifically, 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. 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. Authority staff reached out to specific counties to offer assistance and is available to all counties to assist in training, including individualized training, or correction efforts as may be requested by any clerk.

The Authority continued its data quality improvement efforts this past fiscal year by initiating a project to identify deed indexes in all 159 counties that do not have any associated image. Through this project, currently in beta phase, each clerk will receive a report of all books and pages in the deed database where the Authority has index data but no image associated with it. One county has been completed and the IT staff is currently reviewing the results. Not only does filling image gaps add value, but it is necessary to have the image in order to assess the quality of the indexing. Thus, improving the completeness of the images improves indexing quality.

Additionally, the Authority developed a new webinar for the 2022 training schedule to address PT-61 transmission errors. This 30-minute webinar covers critical and non-critical errors that may occur when transmitting PT-61 cross references in deed index data files, an API mechanism for eFiled instruments that can be used by land management systems to prevent the majority of non-critical errors, and how to research non-critical errors utilizing the PT-61 online correction module. Additional Authority training to improve data quality includes a three-hour, in-person class and three online courses on the Real Estate Indexing Standards, including one that specifically addresses common mistakes.

All these efforts support the Board's strategic goal of improving data quality throughout the state. The Current Indexing Improvement Initiative will be an ongoing effort with activities planned for the future including additional limited index data reviews.

## **Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project**

In 2002, the Authority launched the Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project with the goal of adding land records from Georgia's 159 counties that were filed before the central collection system was implemented to the Authority's online system. (Gwinnett County was the first county to accomplish this feat with a "good-from" date of 1871.) To support this project, the Authority developed further Indexing Standards

guidance to help address the challenge of applying current indexing standards to real and personal property records that were locally recorded before the advent of statewide indexing standards.

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

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

In a continuing effort to add additional deed records to the Authority’s website and ultimately move the statewide “good-from” date back even further, the Authority launched the **1989-1987 Historical Deed Project** following approval by the Board at its April 2022 meeting. A proposed timeline and implementation schedule for the project are currently being completed and the Authority has already begun reimbursing those clerks of Superior Court who had voluntarily completed their 1987, 1988 and 1989 historical deed imaging and indexing.

### **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, **17 additional counties** began participating for a total of **84 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 **300,000 additional instruments** were added to the public system during FY 2022 for a total of **4.5 million instruments** in production since the program began. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks’ offices have the opportunity to generate additional funding through print image fees initiated through the Authority’s website. Many more instruments are expected to be added in the future.

### **Lien, Plat & Map Project**

When H.B. 1582 took effect in January of 2004, clerks of Superior Court began to transmit to the GSCCCA lien, plat and map indices and digital images. The Authority worked to certify all existing vendors, train clerks of Superior Court, and provide necessary equipment. New scanners and PCs were



distributed to counties and bandwidth (both locally and at the Authority) was increased to accommodate this project.

Legislation was passed in 2016 that required all plats in Georgia to be electronically recorded beginning January 1, 2017. Through a cooperative effort with clerks and vendors, the Authority implemented the changes necessary to fulfill the requirements of this new law. Specifically, the Authority expanded its eFiling portal to accommodate the shift to mandatory plat eFiling, and all Superior Court clerks are able to electronically process plats that have been submitted to the GSCCCA portal in compliance with the eFiling mandate. Since inception of the mandate, over **147,000** plats have been electronically recorded, with nearly **31,000** of those during FY 2022. The process of electronically filing plats has resulted in a more efficient end-to-end process and higher fidelity recreation of printed plat copies.

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

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

Since the mandated start date of January 1, 2018, the Department of Revenue has eFiled nearly **428,000 state tax liens** with Superior Court clerks through the Authority's eFile portal, with over **72,000** 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 34-38 for more information on the eFile Project.)

### **Historical Plat Image Project**

Using feedback from clerks at their 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting, the Authority Board set 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 Authority began by collecting data on the numbers and types of source media from which the images were to be captured. Because of the physical size of plats and the various methods that clerks have used to preserve them over the years, the project has been complicated, and the Authority has pursued multiple paths to accomplish its goal of making all historical plat images statewide available online. One path was to collect and compensate clerks' offices for existing historical plat images that have been previously



submitted to the GSCCCA system or those plats which have been scanned by the clerk and available locally but not yet transmitted to the Authority. An allowance of \$3.00 was provided for each of those historical plat images already received by the Authority and payments began in January 2021.

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

For those counties that had no historical plat images and for those that needed additional imaging, the Authority engaged the services of an imaging vendor to scan plats onsite in the clerks' offices. Once complete, the images are submitted to the Authority, with a copy of the new images presented to the county as well. Currently, 73 counties have been identified with plats to be imaged, with imaging for 41 of those counties already completed. However, only 22 counties' plats have been transmitted to the Authority by the vendor for review. Due to the limited number of transmissions to date, it is likely the project will run past the anticipated end date of October 31, 2022.

At present, compensation agreements have been sent to 117 clerks, covering approximately 912,000 images equaling \$2.7 million. Of the 117 agreements sent, 112 have been received by the Authority, and compensation to clerks' offices thus far has been more than **\$2.6 million** as a direct cash benefit to clerks' offices and counties. When the project is complete later this year, all plats statewide will be available for viewing on the Authority search system.

### **PT-61 Project**

Launched in September of 2004, PT-61 eFiling is a collaborative program between the GSCCCA and the Department of Revenue (DOR) to provide a more efficient process for filing a Real Estate Transfer Tax form (PT-61 form). Rather than completing a multi-part paper form, the new system allows the filer to log onto [www.gsccca.org](http://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 2022, the Authority:

- Added over **550,000** PT-61 filings to the statewide system for a total of nearly **8 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 **\$46,000** for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website related to the PT-61 Project.
- Added nearly **191,000** properties during FY 2022 for a total of nearly **3.3 million** searchable addresses.

## Electronic Filing (eFile) Projects

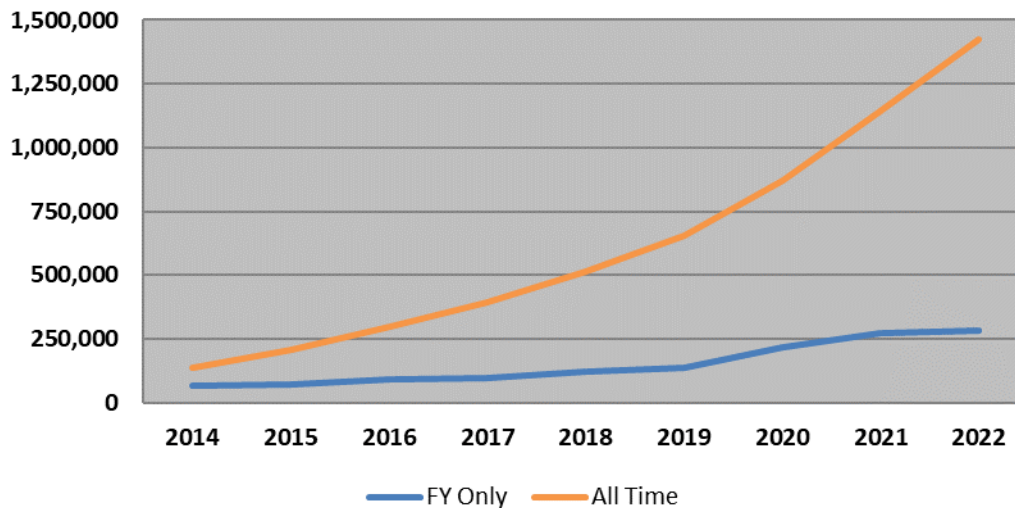
In 2009, the Georgia legislature mandated that the Authority develop rules and regulations related to the electronic recording of real estate-related documents. Anticipating this need and with the continuing goal of keeping clerks' offices at the forefront of technology, the Authority spent years prior 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. Of the UCCs eFiled this past fiscal year, 40% were submitted through the Authority's API.

UCC eFile continues to grow with a 23% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. A record 282,509 UCCs were eFiled in FY 2022, with over 90% of accepted UCCs electronically filed. Since the pilot project began in May 2009, nearly **1.5 million UCCs** have been electronically filed. At present, **147** counties participate in the program, with **117** of those counties — **48** more than last year — mandating the electronic filing of UCCs which means **over 73%** of Georgia's counties only allow UCCs to be eFiled.

### UCC eFilings



For the counties who mandate UCC eFiling, a new feature, **UCC auto-numbering**, was added in 2019 which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number. This allows a clerk's office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows these counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. At fiscal-year end, **97** counties were taking advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature, with **44** of those counties activated this year.

### **Child Support eFile**

After a decade-plus of providing the program, the Authority removed its Child Support process from its eFile portal effective October 1, 2021. As reported to clerks last year, the Authority received notification from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) that the Department of Human Services Child Support Division was terminating its contract with AOC effective October 1, 2021. As a result, the AOC eFiling portal no longer functions to provide for Child Support eFilings, and therefore the Child Support eFiling system through the Authority is no longer available.

In 2010, as a service to Superior Court clerks who were seeking a trusted partner to help participate in a voluntary Child Support eFiling program, the Authority added Child Support eFile to its portal. Using the GSCCCA portal, clerks were able to conveniently receive and process child support cases initiated by the Department of Human Services for the last decade-plus. Over the life of the program, 137 counties took advantage of the service with nearly 693,000 cases submitted through the Authority system. As part of the portal deactivation process, the Authority will continue to archive and retain all previous portal filings and transactions should they be needed in the future.

### **Real Estate eFile**

In 2011, the Authority built a real estate eFiling portal and successfully launched **Real Estate eFile** statewide. This portal initially allowed filers to use an approved vendor to submit real estate documents on their behalf. Two years later, the Authority extended **Real Estate eFile** by making it fully accessible to the public through a web interface, further streamlining the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia. With this added, web-based application, users in Georgia, who are eligible to participate in the electronic recording of real estate documents, can access the Authority's website, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, to file directly with counties from the convenience of their home or office rather than having to travel to the county clerk's office. This convenience became a critical service when courthouses were closed to walk-in traffic due to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. 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](http://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 2022, nearly **4,400 new participants** were added to the eFile Registry for a current total of nearly **21,000 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 has experienced tremendous growth over the past five years with a **47%** total lifetime increase this fiscal year. This growth is due in large part to legislative mandates, which are discussed below, but is also one of the positive byproducts of the COVID pandemic which made it either impossible or more difficult to record real estate instruments in person. In FY 2022, nearly **1.8 million** real estate documents were electronically recorded, an **11%** increase from the previous fiscal year.

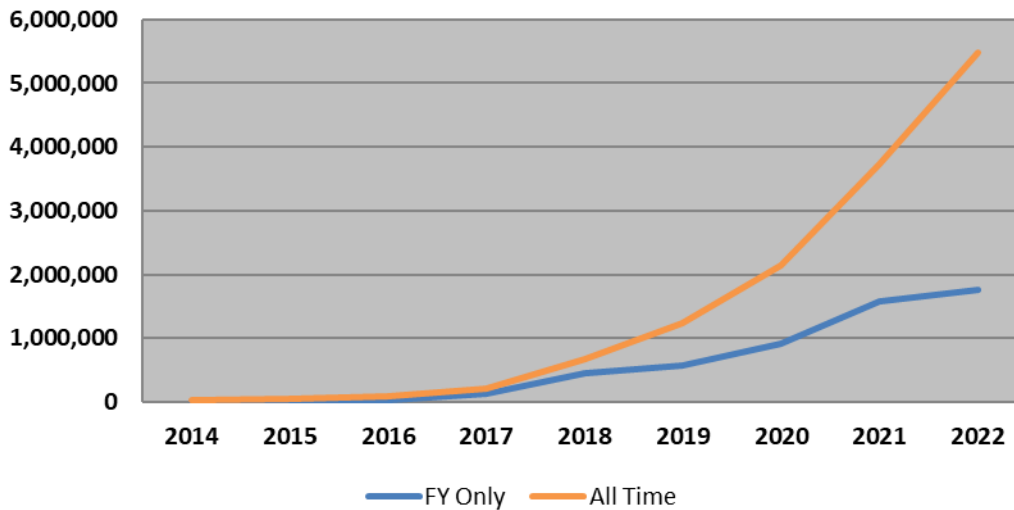
Today, all 159 clerk offices participate in the program to some degree:

- 140 offices accept all document types;
- 8 offices accept all document types except deeds;
- 10 offices accept plat and state tax lien document types;
- 1 office accepts plat, state tax lien, and a combination of deeds and/or lien document types.
- Additionally, 110 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 **147,000** plats have been eFiled, with nearly **31,000** of those during FY 2022. The Authority Board adopted plat eFiling rules and regulations which are posted under the eFiling information tab of [www.gscca.org/learn](http://www.gscca.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 nearly **428,000 state tax liens** with Superior Court clerks by filing through the Authority's eFile portal; over **72,000** of those were eFiled this fiscal year.

### Real Estate eFilings



Since 2011 when the Authority launched Real Estate eFile, participants have electronically recorded nearly **5.5 million real estate documents**. These numbers are made more impressive when considering the fact that for the majority of the history of the eFiling system, participation was voluntary. With legislative changes mandating certain types of real estate documents be electronically recorded, each of the 159 Superior Court clerks 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 in 2020 and resulting challenges to filing in person. Considering the momentum of the existing eFiling systems, the Authority's successful track-record of implementing legislatively mandated programs, and the increased participation by clerks' offices and filers, it is expected that eFiling numbers will continue to rise in the coming years.

With increased usage and a commitment to strengthening quality control in its eFile Project, the Authority recently initiated an **eFiling System Certification** program to create a formal process for certifying vendor eFile systems utilized by clerks for deeds, liens, plats, and UCCs for integrating with the GSCCCA eFile Portal. The program is similar to the process used to certify vendor systems that participate in the GSCCCA Consolidated Georgia Real Estate Indexes Project. Phase I commenced in January when the Authority sent notification of the certification requirement and a proposed GSCCCA System eFile Certification Program document to all vendors with a request for feedback. As part of the notification phase, the Authority hosted two webinars for vendors to address questions and discuss input from vendors regarding the certification program.

Phase II of the project has begun and involves developing system certification tests and using vendor input to finalize the GSCCCA System eFile Certification Program document. The system certification tests will include determining:

- Required functionality,
- Testing requirements, and
- Recommended system functionality.

Additionally, the Authority is reviewing eAssist (the GSCCCA eFiling program) to make any necessary programmatic changes to facilitate its successful passage of the certification tests. This will allow every clerk's office to have the option of using eAssist as a GSCCCA certified eFile system. Phase III of the program will involve vendor documentation and testing, and the Authority will provide vendors with the finalized GSCCCA System eFile Certification Program document and application to schedule tests. The target completion date for all testing is July 1, 2023.

From the beginning, the Authority's goal for its eFiling service has been to protect the autonomy of Superior Court clerks, improve the technology within their offices, streamline the document-filing process, and give the public access to convenient and effective tools — all at no cost to state or local government. And to add to these benefits, the Authority offers its eFiling service without imposing additional fees above the base filing fee.

Today, the Authority's electronic filing portal, [efile.gsccca.org](http://efile.gsccca.org), allows for the filing of UCCs, real estate deeds, liens, plats, and PT-61 documents, and the list will continue to grow. With well over **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 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 2022, the Authority added **964 new Premium Search accounts** for a fiscal year-end total of **7,119 accounts**. With a 16% 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.

Features of the Map Search app include:

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



The application is available on Android devices, iPhones and iPads, and is available free-of-charge to Premium Search account subscribers. To add more value, nearly **191,000 properties** were added during FY 2022 for a fiscal year-end total of nearly **3.3 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 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.

During the 2021 legislative session, House Bill 231 was passed which expanded protective orders to include dating relationships. In response, the Authority worked in conjunction with GCIC and the Council of Superior Court Judges to develop the following new protective order forms for dating violence:

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

The new forms were approved by the Georgia Supreme Court on January 27, 2022, and took effect on March 3, 2022. The Authority added the new forms to its website and to its protective order indexing system which equipped Superior Court Clerks with the tools needed to index and transmit these forms to GCIC.

In addition to its work on the new dating violence forms over the past fiscal year, the Authority also added additional validation to the system to improve indexing accuracy; added additional statistics to the nightly reports; added the ability to view images on previously indexed orders; and made improvements to PCO code indexing to allow for more intuitive indexing and greater flexibility with potential form revisions in the future.

The Protective Order Registry, which is accessed by law enforcement through GCIC terminals, displays all Protective Orders and related data. In FY 2022, nearly **51,000 Protective Orders** were indexed by clerks, and then electronically transmitted by the Authority to GCIC. Through the efforts of Superior Court clerks and the Authority, critical information for protecting the public continues to be easily accessible to law enforcement nationwide through the Protective Order Registry.



## **Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)**

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

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

In FY 2022, nearly **246,000 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.

## **eCertification Program**

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

After development of the eCert Program, the Authority partnered with Chatham and Forsyth counties as beta test sites to evaluate the portal's performance in the "real world" and work out any potential kinks. These counties provided valuable feedback to make the portal a more robust product and ensure its readiness for statewide distribution.

The new eCertification portal offers the following:

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

The corresponding county portal offers the following:

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

At present, 37 counties are actively participating in the eCert Program, 30 counties have been trained and are actively testing, and over 2,000 documents have been successfully certified.

### **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.

Launched in 2007, the MyVault Online Archive Program has provided the foundation of support and purpose from which all other archive initiatives have been conceived and implemented. Through a combination of hardware, software and technical support, the MyVault data protection and monitoring service has supported clerks for over 15 years, delivering assurance in records' protection and best practice guidance in disaster planning. Serving Superior Court clerks remains at the core of the program's mission, as shown by the recent launch of a mobile application for MyVault users called VaultTek Mobile. The new app provides convenient, on-the-go access to records stored through MyVault allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand. (See more information on Page 47.)

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

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

### **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 **157 counties**.

The benefits of the program to clerks include:

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

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

Since the program was launched in 2007, all participating clerks have had access to their vault data through an online dashboard using a password-protected login. The dashboard provides live statistics about the last backup and allows users to view and restore items from their vault as needed. To make access even more convenient, the Authority recently developed a mobile application for MyVault users called **VaultTek Mobile** which was successfully launched earlier this year. The new app provides convenient, on-the-go access to records stored through MyVault allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand. (See more information on the new app below.) 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, Audit Reports are distributed to all clerks enrolled in the MyVault Program. This customized report, which was further enhanced during FY 2022, contains details about the clerk's archive account, equipment, nightly job(s), including cloud-based backup jobs, and authorized users. The purpose is to encourage periodic review of the job details (content, data location and scheduling) and ensure that the archive jobs are accurate and reflect the clerk's expectations. Clerks are also encouraged to review the

report with their vendors and/or IT personnel to verify that all of the electronic records that the clerk wants protected are included in the job items noted. In addition to the annual review, Audit Reports can be generated at any time using the online dashboard, VaultTek Mobile app, or by making a request to the Authority.

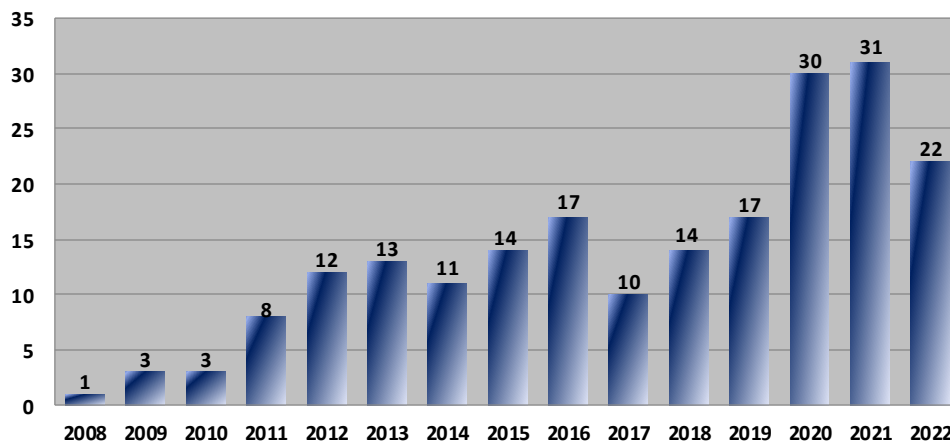
MyVault is currently storing and protecting over **1.2 billion files** totaling more than **231 TBs of live data**, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. The Authority performs proactive data auditing to reduce the amount of redundant data that must be stored. Even as the vault has grown 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 231 TBs of live data (current versions of files), the MyVault system maintains 30 days of previous file versions totaling 26 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, in recent years the number of requests has doubled. Since 2007, MyVault has responded to **207** data loss requests and has restored over **4.3 TBs** of data back to county systems. In FY 2022, the Authority received **22 requests** to restore data, resulting in over **392 GBs of data** successfully restored.

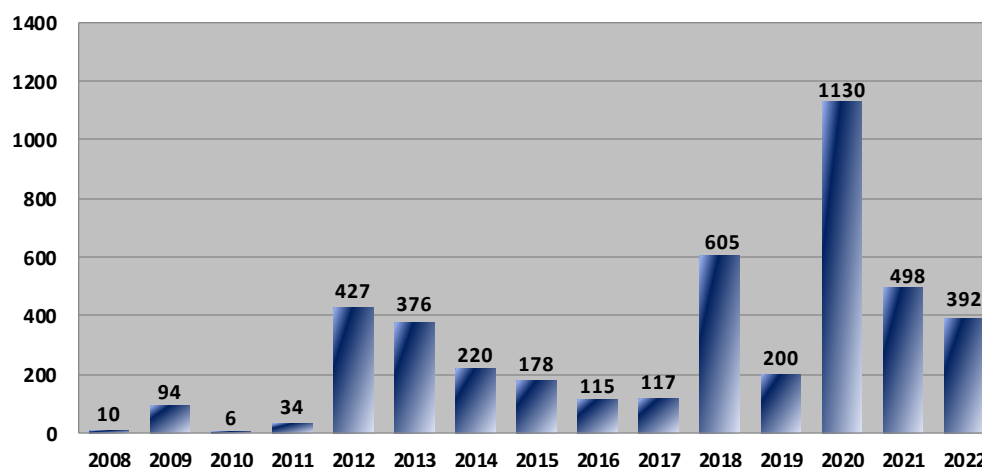
Restores are typically performed directly from the local appliance, which is normally the quickest method. A restore job is initiated and any requested data is restored back to a location on the county network. Small restores can also be performed by the clerk or an authorized user through the online 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 2022:

- Added over 140 million files totaling more than 35 TBs of data to the vault.
- Managed, stored and protected the growing number of clerks' digital records, which now exceed 1.2 billion files and 231.3 TBs of live data in the vault.
- Managed 22 restore requests and restored over 392 TBs of data back to clerks and/or their vendors.
- Upgraded archive equipment for 34 counties.
- Enhanced the look and content of the annual Audit Report which is issued 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 meets SB 135 requirements. Updates to the Audit Report include:
  - Listing authorized users to provide transparency, awareness and an opportunity for the clerk to verify the accuracy of this information.
  - Listing cloud-based backup jobs. A growing number of counties utilize vendor-hosted services for the management of their real estate and/or case management records. These unique jobs and schedules can now be reported and differentiated from the local server-based backups that we report on routinely.
  - Aligning visual design features with the VaultTek Mobile app branding to ensure consistency across the board.
- Educated new and existing clerks on the history and purpose of the Authority's data archive initiatives at the Winter Training held in February 2022.

## **VaultTek Mobile Application**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program**

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

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

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

Advantages of converting to virtual microfilm are numerous and include:

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



The initial import of deed images was completed in November 2017, totaling more than 44 million deed images across 67,000 deed books. From 2018 to 2019, another 28 million deed images were imported into the VMF system. As enhancements were made to the VMF application process, liens, plats and historical documents were progressively imported into the system, and, in October 2019, the program reached a significant milestone: ALL real estate records ever received by the Authority were loaded and available for viewing in the VMF system. Today, the system stores over **299 million images**, across **522,280 books** totaling nearly **14 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 and encouraged to participate in this free program offered by the Authority.

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

More clerks and vendors are discovering the benefits of using the VMF system to search and locate images on demand. The discovery of missing images on a clerk server is a common reason for a restore request through MyVault. However, the VMF system is another resource available to clerks for locating missing images. In FY 2022, the VMF system was used to restore over **29,220 images** back to clerk offices in **5 counties**. The biggest advantage to using the VMF system for this purpose is that the images in the system can be easily viewed and downloaded on demand if needed. This free tool is available to all clerks through the VMF portal at <https://vmf.gsccca.org>.

Following are VMF imaging totals for FY 2022:

➤ Deed Books:	461,540
➤ Deed Images:	273,734,821
➤ Deed VMF:	53,805
➤ Deed Data Stored:	12.85 TBs
➤ Lien Books:	48,627
➤ Lien Images:	24,235,365
➤ Lien VMF:	5,327
➤ Lien Data Stored:	783.33 GBs

- Plat Books: 12,113
- Plat Images: 1,167,281
- Plat VMF: 272
- Plat Data Stored: 211.12 GBs

VMF accomplishments for FY 2022 include:

- Restored over 29,220 images back to 5 clerk offices using the VMF system.
- Imported over 13.1 million new deed images and over 1 million new lien images into the VMF system.
- Imported, on average, over 1 million new deed images into the VMF system each month.
- Educated new and existing clerks on the history and benefits of the VMF program and offered guidance on accessing the online tools.
- Streamlined the image export/import process which expedites the uploading of new images for viewing.
- Continued 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 to Georgia’s counties and citizens often saving time and money and enhancing productivity. Always retooling and innovating for the world of tomorrow, the IT staff’s work was even more critical over the past several years as the pandemic pushed many to turn to technology, not just as a matter of convenience, but as a matter of survival.

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

Following is a summary of the many actions and accomplishments of the Authority’s IT Department for FY 2022. Whether large or small, these activities enable us to meet our goals and grow and innovate in a constantly changing environment.

### **Development Team – Website ([www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org))**

With nearly 1.7 million unique visitors to [www.gscca.org](http://www.gscca.org) this past fiscal year, the Authority believes that it is critical for the site to be clear, responsive and easy-to-use, and continues to look at ways to improve the user experience. Following are some of the statistics and enhancements made during FY 2022:

- Hosted 6.85 million sessions with nearly 605 million page views.
- Increased total monthly subscribers to 21,745 (over 7% increase from previous fiscal year).
- Increased Premium Search subscribers to 7,119 (nearly 16% increase from previous fiscal year).
- Improved stability and security of subscriber registration, activation, cancellation, and reactivation features.
- Implemented improved navigation and ease-of-use features.
- Implemented newly required security measures to maintain PCI compliance.

### **Development Team – eFiling**

With substantial growth in electronic filing participation and usage over the last five years, 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 34-38 for more information on the history of the Authority’s eFile Project.)

Following is data and other information from FY 2022:

- UCC eFile –
  - County participation in UCC eFile:
    - 147 of Georgia’s 159 counties currently participate in UCC eFile.
    - 117 of the participating counties mandate the electronic filing of UCCs — 48 more than last year. This means that 73% of Georgia’s counties only allow UCCs to be eFiled.
    - 97 of the 117 counties who mandate UCC eFiling take advantage of the UCC auto-numbering feature. 44 of those counties were activated this fiscal year.
  - 1,490,884 UCCs have been eFiled through the Authority since its inception in 2009, with 240,539 of those filings submitted through the Authority’s UCC eFile API, which was published in 2019.
  - 282,509 UCCs were eFiled this fiscal year with 101,553 (40%) of those filings submitted through the UCC eFile API.
  - Lifetime usage has increased by 23.4% since last fiscal year.
  - Over 90% of accepted UCCs were electronically filed.
- Real Estate eFile –
  - All 159 clerks’ offices participate in the program to some degree:
    - 140 offices accept all document types;
    - 8 offices accept all document types except deeds;
    - 10 offices accept plat and state tax lien document types;
    - 1 office accepts plat, state tax lien, and a combination of deeds and/or lien document types.
    - Additionally, 110 clerks’ offices have opted to receive estimated filing fees for any real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing submitted through the Authority’s eFile portal where the Authority collects filing fees.
  - 5,489,569 total real estate documents have been eFiled since the program’s inception; 2,537,586 of those filings have been eFiled using the Authority’s eFile Portal.
    - 3,980,699 total deeds have been eFiled since inception in 2010.
    - 933,835 total liens have been eFiled since inception in 2015.
    - 147,433 total plats have been eFiled since inception in 2016.
    - 427,601 total state tax liens have been eFiled since inception in 2018.
  - 1,763,663 total real estate documents were eFiled this fiscal year; 848,960 (48%) of those filings were eFiled using the Authority’s eFile portal.
    - 1,411,199 total deeds were eFiled this fiscal year.
    - 249,001 total liens were eFiled this fiscal year.
    - 30,971 total plats were eFiled this fiscal year.
    - 72,491 total state tax liens were eFiled this fiscal year.
  - Real estate eFiling lifetime usage has increased by 47.3% since last fiscal year, and has grown by 11.1% this year compared to the previous fiscal year.
- Added the ability to fund eFile escrow accounts using wire transfers. The wire transfer process employs an automated self-serve approach that allows eFile customers to fund their account instantaneously at a lower cost. To date, 80 wire transfers have been accepted for a total of over \$2.3 million, saving eFile customers \$61,000 in credit card fees.

- Launched a new code-sharing initiative through GitHub page. The Authority intends to use this modern code-sharing platform to encourage collaboration on development projects that provide common functionality when interfacing with Authority systems. Code sharing allows software vendors, as well as the broader development community, to collaborate on projects by contributing new code, reporting bugs, and proposing features. Pull requests can be submitted by contributors to allow the Authority to consider incorporating proposed changes. Additionally, users will easily be able to track changes across versions and download current and previous releases directly from the site. The Authority initially made two repositories available through our GitHub site, both of which are licensed under the MIT software use license.
- Optimized system to improve concurrent use of eFile systems by a large number of users. This was effectuated by enabling database features to allow increased usage and performance of the eFile website and all associated APIs.
- Optimized connections to allow eFile API users to call endpoints faster and more often, improving their ability to remain up-to-date in real time with the Authority system.
- Improved operation of the eFile real estate API by rate limiting certain calls as determined by performance benchmarking.
- Continuously improved eFile Real Estate and UCC API validation rules in order to increase effectiveness of responses to users.
- Improved workflow of integrated submitter functionality by adding unique eFile Real Estate API endpoints to support the growing needs of users.
- Created eFile API integrated submitter specific endpoints allowing users to quickly and efficiently query financial transactions programmatically.
- Added feature to eFile API call responses for both Real Estate and UCC services to be able to pass non-critical information back to the counties. For example, if a county sends in a deed with a duplicate book and page number of another deed, the county is alerted to this mistake in the response. These alerts or warnings are also sent to counties when deeds, liens and plats are received with duplicate book and page values, as well as UCCs with duplicate file numbers.
- Created a PRIA XML data definition guide to document maximum allowed values for Real Estate API users.
- Added pagination and various options for filtering to eAssist, the Authority's client application for counties utilizing the eFile Real Estate API.
- Moved the eFile website and supplemental applications to more recent releases of Windows Server as part of continued security and maintenance plans.
- Enhanced eFile portal by displaying the codified grounds for refusal of rejected UCCs when viewing details on the user's dashboard.
- Enabled two new options for counties to receive their eFile disbursements via ACH — Notary Online Mail-in Renewal and eCertification — and integrated these new ACH options into the Customer Management Module (CMM). These actions improve efficiency overall and provide additional conveniences for counties.

### **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 2022.

- Added 4,354 participants to the registry for a total of 20,837 registered participants which includes:
  - 13,854 Self Filers (3,208 added this fiscal year)
  - 1,456 Submitters (325 added this fiscal year)
  - 5,527 Trusted Users (821 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.
  - 8.2 million queries processed this fiscal year.
  - 22.6 million queries processed since the eFile Registry opened in 2011.

### **Development Team – Fines & Fees**

- Neared completion of Fines & Fees Rewrite Project. Final testing is underway before the Authority launches an overhauled [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) system meant to streamline and modernize the fines and fees process. The new site is scheduled to go live this summer. Development highlights include:
  - Creation of a robust website that will allow court users to fully remit collections online via ACH.
  - Creation of a new web-based scanning agent to assist staff with scanning needs.
  - Creation of a modern REST-based web API to allow vendors to integrate local systems directly to the Authority's Fines & Fees Division.
  - Improved calculator design backed by a separate REST-based web API which will allow vendors to integrate their software to use the Authority's API for calculations to ensure consistent results.
- Updated [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) following the adoption by the Authority Board of new Fines & Fees Rules & Regulations in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-21A-7. The updates included adding the newly adopted Rules & Regulations to the website and updating all Fines & Fees forms to provide consistent nomenclature as defined in the new Rules & Regulations.
- Amended the Trust Fund Interest Remittance Report for PCI compliance, uniformity and to be explicit in the required information. The new form became effective 5/1/2022.
- Updated the online calculator on [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) to no longer calculate the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF) surcharge when the offense date is on or after 7/1/2022. The DETF surcharge created under O.C.G.A. § 15-21-179 was repealed effective 6/30/2022.

### **Development Team – eCertification**

The Authority created, beta tested, and recently launched a statewide roll-out of its eCertification Program (<https://ecert.gsccca.org>), an electronic certified document request and delivery system. The eCert Program enables easier access to certified documents within the clerk's office by allowing the public to request and pay for certified documents electronically. Each clerk of Superior Court determines which documents are available for electronic certification.

Features and current statistics of the eCert program include:

- Allows Georgia citizens to request a digital version of certified documents from court systems across the state. Clerks' offices process the requests and deliver the certified documents to the

user electronically. Payments are processed through the Authority and included in the Daily County Disbursement reports.

- Provides an online registry to verify certified document authenticity.
- Provides users with request history and search capabilities.
- Allows each county (through the corresponding county portal) to customize the certification process to fit their needs including outgoing emails, document request forms, and cover sheets.
- Provides counties (through the corresponding county portal) with funds collection, administration, and reporting functions.
- 37 counties are actively participating in the eCert Program.
- 30 counties have been trained in the program and are actively testing.
- 2,034 documents have been successfully certified.

### **Development Team – Protective Orders**

- Verified and electronically transmitted 50,872 Protective Orders, indexed by clerks, to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) computer system.
- Worked in conjunction with GCIC and the Council of Superior Court Judges to develop new dating violence forms following passage of HB 231 during the 2021 legislative session which expanded protective orders to include dating relationships. Effective 3/3/2022, the new forms include:
  - Petition for Dating Violence Temporary Protective Order
  - Dating Violence Ex Parte Protective Order
  - Dating Violence Twelve Month Protective Order
- Added new dating violence forms to website and protective order indexing system which equipped Superior Court Clerks with the tools needed to index and transmit the forms to GCIC.
- Added additional validation to the system to improve indexing accuracy.
- Added additional statistics to the nightly reports.
- Added the ability to view images on previously indexed orders.
- Made improvements to PCO code indexing to allow for more intuitive indexing and greater flexibility with potential form revisions in the future.
- Updated indexing options for Family Violence and Stalking order types to match the current set of official orders as issued by the Council of Superior Court Judges, listed on the Georgia Supreme Court website and approved by GCIC, the GSCCCA, and the Georgia Supreme Court as required by Georgia Code. The flexibility created with the PCO code indexing improvements allow previous form variants to be indexed as the official order types.

### **Development Team – Offender Based Tracking System (OBTS)**

- Electronically transmitted 245,841 records of criminal court dispositions to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- Initiated OBTS server and software upgrade project to improve the performance, stability, and security of the OBTS code and operating environment. This project is ongoing.
- Improved security of system by working with GCIC to install and test new SSL certificates.
- Worked with counties and GCIC to ensure common understanding of OBTS transmission options and requirements.



## **Development Team – Other**

- Launched a new central identity hub that enhances security and will serve as a single sign-on for all future GSCCCA projects as well as a central point for user administration. Currently, the new identity hub is being used for eCertification and the upcoming Fines & Fees site.
- 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. 58 tracked projects were completed this past fiscal year.
- Enhanced the Notary Renewal Notification service to allow clerks to customize the email sent to their constituents by including county-specific language with special instructions or requirements on how to renew the notary commission.
- Created internal Notary Tools application with features that empower administrators with more control to correct issues with notary applications and appointments.
- Maintained continuity of GSCCCA credit card processing services by updating CyberSource security keys, and reduced costs to customers by implementing lowered credit card and ACH processing fees.
- Improved eInvoicing to increase speed and improve efficiency when submitting invoices.
- Implemented efficiency and performance improvements to QA (Quality Assurance) system.
- Processed 211 Real Estate images using On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed 105 of those images.
- Processed 8,924 UCC images using On Demand Fast Pass Redaction process and manually reviewed all 8,924 images.
- Completed rewrite of internal reporting service to a modern code architecture. Updating this reporting service, which is used for administrative purposes, allowed for further important revisions that were not possible before the rewrite.

## **Systems Team**

- Installed, configured and migrated production and disaster recovery data/servers to an all-flash storage array. The new equipment is more efficient with faster reads and writes as the disks involved do not have moving parts making them more reliable.
- Continued migrating a variety of internal applications to a more current Windows server platform which offers the latest in security, performance, and reliability enhancements.
- Upgraded the software on the WhatsUp and VeeamOne server to better monitor our servers and applications. These IT tools specialize in server and application monitoring and improving 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.
- Regularly tested backup system to ensure that data could be restored in the event of a data loss. These tests cover entire servers, SQL databases, and individual files.



- Created a new, more secure environment to ensure continued PCI Compliance which is critical for protecting our customers' card data and reducing the risk of data breaches overall.
- Conducted performance analysis on several core databases including Vault, eFile, and our main Core search database to significantly improve query processing times. This effort ultimately resulted in overall improved system speeds and greater utilization.
- Installed all software updates to our SQL database environment. These updates improve database performance, reliability, and security. SQL Server is a relational database management system responsible for storing and retrieving data as requested by other software applications.
- Configured and approved for distribution a new and improved Lenovo workstation for clerks' offices. Specifications were significantly improved in order to stay up-to-date and provide better performance. The new workstation has a higher capacity CPU, more memory and solid-state drives.
- Updated the Windows install that is used in all Authority 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 out to the 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.
- Upgraded and migrated all five remote data center SQL Servers to a more current version. The completion of this project ensures that we have a reliable database failover option in case of service disruption at our primary site.
- Assisted the Development Team with the completion of implementing snapshot isolation on the eFile production SQL server. Snapshot isolation ensures that we have continued availability with the increase of transactional activity in the eFile application and database.
- Created the "Notary Commissions Processed by Application Type" SSRS report. This report was created to support the Authority's Notary Division and to assist clerks' offices with budget preparations.

Systems Team Statistics (excludes data from MyVault program):

- Protected users' mailboxes via Mimecast, the GSCCCA email security gateway, by blocking over **3,200** 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. During FY 2022, nearly **17.3 million messages** were sent and received through the GSCCCA email server.
- Have a total array storage of **165 TBs** all-flash array. Storage capacity was reduced from 180 TBs in FY 2021 due to utilizing the newer technology's more efficient deduplication ratio, creating the opportunity to store more data on less raw disk hardware.
- Currently have **888 TBs** of backup data available to us. This is comparable to 1.3+ million CDs.
- Currently have **481 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's backup data, along with spare space for continued growth, is currently on 190 tapes. If the tapes were stretched out end-to-end, they would stretch from our office in Atlanta to Augusta.

## **Network Team**

- Launched a Statewide Network Upgrade/Outreach Initiative to ensure continued support and security updates for network equipment, and to prepare counties for future bandwidth upgrades. Through this project, the Authority will upgrade existing equipment in clerks' offices over the next two years.
- Worked with internet service providers to negotiate internet bandwidth upgrades for 44% of Superior Court clerk offices (70 counties). The upgrades, which will start in the next few months, will increase the speed and bandwidth of these offices' internet connections and are critical for Superior Court clerks to handle the increasing number of digital documents.
- Performed site visits to 31 counties working with clerks, staff and local IT in order to resolve issues ranging from network hardware replacements, network consolidation, and internet bandwidth upgrades.
- Vetted multiple options from leading hardware providers for upgraded networking equipment and have begun the process of migrating to the new platform in the coming months. The new hardware is faster, more secure, and more easily managed. Once installed, clerks will see improved internet speeds and support staff will be able to more easily manage the statewide network.
- Replaced the Primary Data Center's internal firewalls resulting in added redundancy, improved performance, and better security for the Authority's entire network.
- Migrated to a new load balancer platform in our Development, Staging, and Fail-over Datacenter. The load balancers direct and balance network traffic to redundant servers. This results in stable access to Authority websites, email, and other online services.
- Performed security updates as necessary for PCI Compliance initiatives creating a more secure environment for clerks' financial transactions and protecting our customers' financial data.
- Acted as a HelpDesk escalation partner to complete over 150 network-related tickets resolving technical issues for clerks' offices resulting in more uptime and productivity.
- Standardized troubleshooting and process workflow for the HelpDesk and Network Team which resulted in faster issue resolution through improved communication between teams.

## HelpDesk – Customer Support

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

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

*“I wanted to take a moment to thank the tech staff. Heck, let me thank all of y’all. Y’all know I’m a tiny county with no IT support. No matter how big or small the issue, y’all take care of things for my office in such a diligent manner. I’m super thankful for everything that you all do so that my office can function in a smooth and professional manner. Forever thankful for you all.”*

*– Nora Rogers, Clerk  
Echols Co. Superior Court*

*“I wanted to let you know what a wonderful customer support experience I had with André. I had an issue where I could print from everywhere except the Authority’s website. André remoted into my computer and was so patient assisting me. He tried multiple things until he was able to resolve the issue after discovering the connection to our website had been corrupted. I cannot speak more highly of the service he provided and just wanted to ensure that he received the credit due.”*

*– Title attorney*

*“Sorry for all the emails but thank you to everyone who helped make this happen. I know the Authority has always spoken of customer service as a priority, and, based on my experience, it’s not just an empty pledge. Everyone who helped was knowledgeable, professional, responsive and friendly. I know top-notch quality service doesn’t happen by accident; it starts with a commitment from the top, and then is reinforced through all levels day in and day out. Kudos to the Authority staff for this much-appreciated commitment, and many thanks for such a positive experience!”*

*– Authority customer*

*“Thank you so kindly for your detailed and prompt response. Your help desk easily ranks among the best I have encountered. Thank you for your due diligence and for doing a fantastic job at answering my question.”*

*– eFile user*

*“I just wanted to let you know that André is amazing. Anytime I call with a question he has the answer and is willing to assist in anyway. I hope you guys recognized him today and every other day as well.”*

*– Authority customer*

*“Thank you for all of your help. I really appreciate the high level of service that you have provided.”*

*– eFile user*

## **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: 23,093
- Average Speed of Answer: 46 seconds
- Percent Overflowed to Voicemail: 1%
- Average Talk Time: 5 minutes 55 seconds
- Total Email Requests: 21,300+ (17% increase from last year & 107% increase from 2 years ago)
- Total Chat Sessions: 204
- Total Hardware/Repair Requests: 182
- Tickets Received: 20,157
- Tickets Resolved During Initial Contact: 17,423 (86%)

## **Top Requests for Help**

- GSCCCA Website: Site Navigation Assistance (3,705)
- eFile Real Estate: Customer Filing Question (3,656)
- GSCCCA Website: Username/Password Request (2,038)
- Notary Project: Online Training General Q/A (1,240)
- eFile UCC: Customer Filing Question (685)
- GSCCCA Website: General Information/Non-Tech Q/A (559)
- Notary Online: Application Assistance (442)
- Account Management: New Account Request (428)
- Outlook: Email Setup Request (407)
- PT-61 Form: General Information/Non-Tech Q/A (333)

## Equipment & Software Outreach

In order to successfully implement its many legislatively mandated projects, the Authority helped modernize Georgia's Superior Court clerk offices by providing computers, printers, scanners, servers and other equipment — approximately 31,000 pieces of new equipment to date. For many clerk offices, this meant automating for the first time when the UCC project began in 1995.

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

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

The Software Initiative had its genesis at the Board's 2019 Strategic Planning Session when the Authority learned that certain pieces of software — Microsoft Office and the full version of Adobe Acrobat which allows a user to edit or modify PDF documents directly — had become essential for the operation of a clerk's office. With this need in mind, the Authority undertook an initiative to provide these two pieces of software, and over the last couple years, has installed over 950 individual software packages in 127 clerks' offices. Beginning this fiscal year and going forward, software has been and will continue to be installed on new computers before shipment to clerks' offices.

The Laptop Initiative was born from the challenges of the pandemic, specifically the necessity of working remotely. To support clerks and further enable them with the tools to fulfill their duties whether working from the courthouse or offsite, the Authority offered a new laptop computer to each elected clerk of Superior Court. This initiative was well received and 130 Lenovo laptops were purchased, configured and distributed to Superior Court clerks, 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 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 2022:

- Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **977 pieces of new and upgraded equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners.
- Purchased **\$503,553** of equipment for counties during FY 2022 to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties.
- Acquired and deployed **85 Microsoft Office** and **80 Adobe Acrobat** software packages to 31 clerks' offices as a continuation of the Authority's Software Initiative which began in 2019.
- Handled **69** purchase orders totaling \$1.6 million for equipment and infrastructure purchases for counties and GSCCCA offices.
- Completed 3 additional contracts for counties totaling over \$17,500.
- Ordered and inventoried the equipment necessary for the network equipment upgrade pilot project. With upgraded equipment installed, clerks will see improved internet speeds and support staff will be able to more easily manage the statewide network.
- Transferred more than 721 pieces of equipment to the Georgia Department of Administrative Services for proper disposal per state guidelines.
- Processed multiple equipment repairs essential for daily operations within clerk offices including computers, flat-panel monitors and scanners. Tracked all repairs and ensured that items were returned in a timely manner.
- Continued to promote open communication with counties for the purpose of encouraging compliance with all Authority projects including UCC Project, Real Estate Deed Project, and Lien, Plat & Map Project.
- Maintained an inventory management tracking component helping to ensure that all county inquiries, problems and other issues were addressed promptly and accurately.
- Continued to streamline and simplify communication between counties and the Authority by providing real-time information on their inventory, GSCCCA equipment policies, and frequently asked questions.

## Training Program

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

In 2019, the Authority launched **eLearn.gsccca.org**, a new learning management system available to all users. With eLearn, the Authority offers an up-to-date system for clerks and the public to use, while also giving the Authority the flexibility to create and add additional training courses beneficial to clerks' offices in a timely manner. Since its launch, roughly **78,000** individuals have accessed the Authority's eLearn training platform over **282,000** times. During FY 2022, nearly **32,000** users accessed eLearn 108,000 times.

Since launching online training in 2006, the Authority has made convenience a key component of its training goals. With this at the forefront, more remote training options, including webinars, were introduced over the years. Already a popular format, webinars became an even more important training tool during the pandemic when in-person classes were suspended. The Authority was positioned to quickly respond to the increased need for remote learning by converting many of its in-person classes to the webinar format. Although the Authority was able to slowly begin offering in-person training again this year, the support for webinars has only grown confirming that this popular and convenient format will continue to be an important tool in the Authority's training program moving forward. During the past fiscal year, **2,200+** people were trained on a variety of important and much-requested topics through the **69 webinars** hosted by the Authority.

Following is more detailed information about the Authority's training efforts during FY 2022.

### Online Courses

The Authority currently offers eight online training opportunities through its eLearn platform, and during FY 2022, nearly 32,000 people took advantage of this convenient training. Courses are offered free-of-charge and are available 24/7, making training affordable and flexible. Additionally, participants can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping or accelerating through concepts as they choose, with some research suggesting that online learning can be even more effective than in-person instruction.

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 2022:

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



- 20 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.
  - 87 people participated in the course this year.
- GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
  - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and vendors.
  - 68 people participated in the course this year.
- GSCCCA Fines & Fees – Introduction
  - Training available to all court personnel (Superior, State, Probate, etc.) and vendors.
  - 221 people participated in the course this year.
- Notary Online
  - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
  - 35 people participated in the course this year.
- Notary Online – Mail-in Renewal
  - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
  - 37 people participated in the course this year.
- Notary Public Training
  - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks and the general public. The course is designed for people who are interested in becoming notaries.
  - 26,098 people participated in the course this year.
  - 18,079 participants took the Notary Public Final Exam and, of those, 17,810 successfully passed the exam.
  - Some Superior Court clerks now require notary public applicants to pass the Notary Public Final Exam to receive their notary commissions.
- UCC Training
  - Training available to Superior Court clerks/deputy clerks.
  - 72 people participated in the course this year.

## **Webinars**

Growing in popularity over the last decade due to its flexibility and cost savings, remote learning became critical during the pandemic and remains an important training tool for the Authority. During FY 2022, the Authority utilized the Zoom platform to offer a robust schedule of **69 webinars** covering the following topics:



- Authority ACH 101 (*New*)
- Authority Websites
- eCertification (*New*)
- eFile - Common Questions
- eFile Portal
- eLearn 101
- Fines & Fees
- Get to Know the Authority
- New Fines & Fees System (*New*)
- Pending Lien Search
- Protective Orders
- Protective Order Exception Report (*New*)
- Protective Order Indexing Changes
- PT-61 Transmission Errors (*New*)
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Overview
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions
- Real Estate Indexing Standards – Sample Index
- UCC

In addition to offering webinars to Superior Court clerks and their staff, the Authority provided instruction to various constituencies and continued to successfully partner with other groups to conduct important training. The Authority conducted webinars or virtual classes this past fiscal year to provide the following requested training:

- Conducted 15 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. When the pandemic halted in-person classes in the spring of 2020, the Authority knew the need for training was still present and quickly pivoted to offering the Notary Public class as a webinar which allowed Superior Court clerks to continue meeting the needs of their constituents. Over 1,900 Georgians took advantage of this free training during FY 2022.
- Conducted a Fines & Fees webinar in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for Juvenile Court clerks.
- 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-Apostille process.
- Conducted 40 one-on-one virtual training sessions to different constituencies on a variety of topics including eCertification, eFile Overview, UCC eFile, Bulk Lien eFiling, Fines & Fees, and Notary Online.

### **In-person Training**

The Authority typically conducts around 30-35 in-person classes each year which are hosted by Superior Court clerks across Georgia. When social-distancing became necessary because of the pandemic, the Authority converted most of its in-person classes to remote learning opportunities to continue supporting training needs. As Georgia began opening up over the last year, though, the Authority began adding in-person training options back to its schedule.

Classes were held for clerks in Augusta and Carrollton on the Real Estate Indexing Standards, while Fines & Fees classes were conducted in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA – two for new Municipal Court clerks and one for new Municipal Court judges. Additionally, the Authority conducted training at the Fall COAG Meeting, the Clerks' Winter Training in Atlanta, the Clerks' Planning Meeting at Brasstown Valley, and the Clerks' Spring Conference on St. Simons.

## 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 2022.

- Continued to provide free public access to the Authority's invaluable statewide indexes through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices.
- Continued to update and add new information to the Clerk Resource Center. This password-protected website was designed by the Authority to support Superior Court clerks and their staffs. The site contains clerk-specific information including program status reports, conference materials, and links to Notary Online, PT-61 Online, and the Authority's Training Center. The site also provides a one-stop location for the Authority to post and for clerks to access updated information on legislative changes and other dynamic issues that will affect Superior Court clerk offices.
- Continued to produce quarterly newsletter for Superior Court clerks that is posted on the Authority website.
- Continued to strengthen the Authority's social media presence. By utilizing Facebook and Twitter, the Authority is able to communicate with its customers and reach out to potential subscribers while keeping clerks better informed.
- Handled and processed to resolution UCC, notary public, real estate, fines and fees, and training inquiries from clerks' offices, UCC filers, online users and the general public.
- Communicated quarterly Fines & Fees results with external groups including the Legislative Budget Office, the Senate Budget Office, the Georgia Supreme Court, the Governor's Office, and the Georgia Public Defenders Council. Additionally, monthly Fines & Fees results were submitted to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council fulfilling statutory reporting requirements for Local Victim Assistance program funds.
- Provided support to probation companies and other entities affiliated with the courts for purposes of collecting and disbursing fines and fees.
- Sold 2,830 Notary Handbooks. The handbook includes forms and definitions and is an excellent reference for Georgia notary law, notary procedures and best practices. It was created in 1999 in conjunction with the American Society of Notaries. In addition to direct sales, the Authority continues to provide notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices with the goal of providing point-of-sale education materials to Georgia's notaries. This past fiscal year, the Authority sold nearly triple the handbooks it sold two years ago.
- Continued to provide courtesy email notification 30 days prior to a notary's commission expiring to all notaries with an email address on file. The Authority started this service in 2010, but added the feature this past fiscal year of allowing clerks to customize the message by including county-specific language with special instructions or requirements on how to renew the notary commission.

- Conducted 15 Notary Public Training 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. Over 1,900 people participated in the webinars.
- Conducted 3 Fines & Fees webinars in conjunction with the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education at UGA for Juvenile Court clerks, Municipal Court clerks and 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.
- Spoke at the American Bar Association’s 2022 spring conference in Atlanta on the UCC process in Georgia 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-Apostille 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 was defeated in committee during the 2022 legislative session.
- Served as part of the U.S. delegation to The Hague Special Commission meeting in October 2021. The Special Commission makes conclusions and recommendations regarding the issuance of apostilles globally. The Authority is designated, by treaty, as the issuing authority for the State of Georgia.
- Benefitted from Authority staff furthering their education and professional training:
  - Staff member renewed Project Management Professional (PMP) certification.
- Benefitted from Authority staff’s involvement and leadership in state and national industry groups:
  - Staff member continued 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. This leadership role had the following responsibilities:
    - Represented the Clerks’ Authority at the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) 2022 Virtual Winter Conference and reported on the activities and 2022 goals of NPA, a section of NASS.
    - Presented at the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA) 2022 Conference on the current state of the Remote Online Notary (RON) process across the country. The presentation included information on legislative and adoption efforts in U.S. states.

- Staff member served as past-president of the International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA), and in this leadership position, continued to participate in strategic planning meetings and promote the vital role that IACA plays in the UCC filing office. IACA brings together UCC industry representatives from the private (filing parties) and public (filing offices) sectors.

## Conclusion

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

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

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

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

