

An update on the activities of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority

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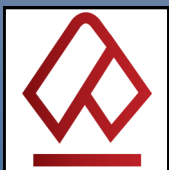
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Authority solid in FY 2013

Henry Ford once said, **“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”** These simple words describe the journey that Georgia’s Superior Court Clerks have experienced through their Authority for the past two decades.

In 1993, Superior Court Clerks were galvanized by a common goal and came together in an overwhelming and proactive force to convince the Georgia General Assembly and other stakeholders to entrust them to create and operate the nation’s first centralized, statewide UCC filing system run by an agency other than the Secretary of State. Political obstacles were overcome and, on July 1, 1993, the **Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority was officially established.** Hundreds and hundreds of hours were then devoted to honing the framework for the statewide UCC system, and at 10:42 a.m. on January 3, 1995, the first UCC fax rolled in from Bleckley County. As current Author-

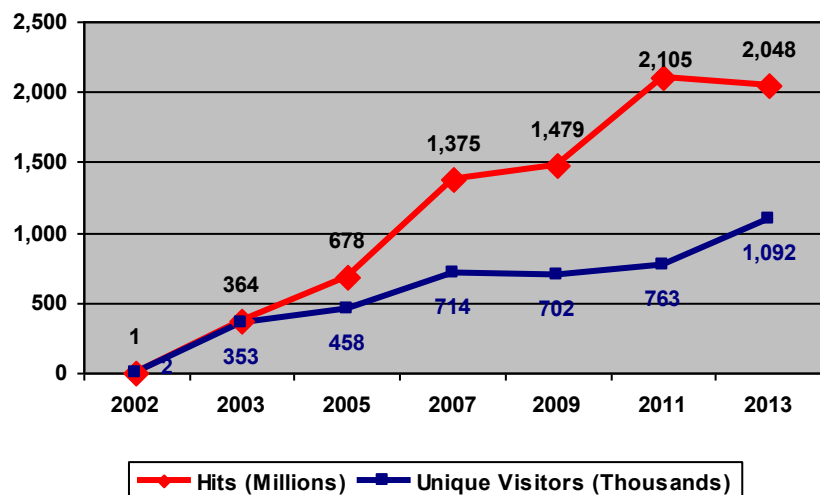
ity Chairman Barry Wilkes would later write, “The first fax was symbolic of ... persistence. It was the culmination of half-a-decade of planning and hard work. It was a moment to be treasured, for it belonged to every Superior Court Clerk in Georgia.”

Rather than becoming the “dinosaurs of Georgia’s court system,” as many in the judiciary had projected, Georgia’s Clerks of Superior Court came together in 1993, stayed together through all the challenges and uphill battles, and worked together to create the success story we know today ... a paradigm for how government can

This article is the Executive Summary of the Authority’s 2012-2013 Accomplishments & Year-end Report. For additional information, contact Mike Smith, GSCCCA Communications Director, at mike.smith@gsccca.org.

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Website Hits & Unique Visitors



July Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met on July 10 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

Special Recognition

Chairman Barry Wilkes publically thanked Executive Director David Williams and expressed appreciation on behalf of the board for David's many years of work and dedication to the Authority and Georgia's Clerks of Superior Court. He commended David for being the bedrock of the Authority and for assembling a talented staff capable of performing the tasks and meeting the challenges set before them.

General Business

The minutes of the April 10 scheduled board meeting were approved. Greg Morgan, with the Authority's accounting firm Mauldin & Jenkins, presented the Accountant's Review of the Financials. He reported the following: the cash account is up which is good news; restricted cash is down; real estate revenue is slowly recovering; fixed assets have increased; and, compared to the prior year, total assets are down, which is another good sign. The balance sheet reveals that the Authority is on sound financial ground and is now on the upswing.

UCC Project

An update was given on the UCC Project and it was reported that almost 219,000 UCCs were filed statewide in FY 2013, a 4.3% increase. As expected, the number of certified search requests continues to fall compared to historical numbers.

The Board was presented with revised UCC Administrative Procedures. According to 11-9-526, the Authority Board must adopt rules which are in harmony with the statute and national model rules. It was noted that the revised procedures only vary from the model rules where they reflect the variance in Georgia statute. A motion to adopt the revised UCC Administrative Procedures was approved.

Training Update

During the training update, it was reported that over 25,000 users have signed up for one of the Authority's online training courses. Of this total, over 23,000 are public users accessing the Notary Public Training course. The Authority continues to con-

duct classroom training courses and webinars and has had 460 people attend this year.

Fines & Fees Division:

A report was given on the Fines & Fees Division, and it was reported that approximately \$100M was collected and dispersed during FY 2013. This was approximately \$7M less than FY 2012 but was expected and within the projected amount.

Historical Deed Project

During a report on the Historical Deed Project, the following information was provided:

- From January 1, 1993, all historical deed data has been collected from all counties.
- From 1992, 87% of all deed data has been collected.
- From 1990-1991, 57% of all deed data has been collected.

Historical deed data must be re-indexed to meet current indexing standards. The project has been suspended since April 2009 due to budgetary constraints. Authority staff recommended that the project be reopened for 1992 at an estimated cost of \$760,000 which is included in the 2013-2014 budget. A motion was approved to authorize the GSCCCA staff to initiate and administer the completion of the 1992 Historical Deed Indexing Project based on the previous payment schedule of \$2.50 per instrument to the vendor performing the indexing, and for scanning to begin on or after October 1, 2013, with the inception to be determined by the Director.

County-Funded Historical Deed Program

The Board was updated on the County-Funded Historical Deed Program, and it was reported that 12 counties are participating in this voluntary program and 176,114 records have been indexed. Putnam Superior has indexed records back to 1986. Members questioned why counties may not be taking advantage of this program, and it was noted that counties would prefer to continue the Historical Deed Project rather than having to use their own funds in order to continue adding historical deeds to the statewide index.

Through the program, clerks' offices are allowed to index and submit historical deeds for inclusion

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in the statewide index so that revenue may be generated by print image fees initiated through the Clerks' Authority website. All print revenue is remitted to the Clerks' offices.

Any participating Clerk's office must complete a survey in order to reveal any unusual naming/ numbering of deed docket. This will identify potential conflicts so that when the data is submitted, the system will more readily accept it. Once data is indexed and transmitted, the data is then quarantined and checked for quality before being published to the website. This is a greater review than is given to daily transmissions.

The Authority's MyVault Archive Service was discussed and board members questioned why all 159 counties are not taking advantage of the free program. Currently, 111 counties participate. Reasons for not participating include: "haven't gotten around to it" or data sharing errors. Since the cost is incurred by the Authority, all counties are encouraged to participate.

The Authority's Microfilm Project provides an additional, redundant back-up of real estate documents at no cost to the clerk's office similar to the MyVault Archive Service. It was noted that the administration of the state archives has transitioned from the Secretary of State's office to the University of Georgia.

eFiling Project

During an update on the Authority's eFiling Project, the following was reported:

UCC eFile – 69 counties are participating. One additional county is trained, another is scheduled for training, and a third is signed up. Last month, over 4,900 UCCs were eFiled which is the highest monthly total since the project began. The Authority has completed and activated the automated ACH disbursement process which disburses the funds the next day. Two counties are currently participating. Rachel Rice is coordinating the activation, and any clerk wishing to participate should contact her.

Real Estate eFile – 8 counties are participating with Warren Superior scheduled for a 7/16/2013 activation date. Vendors and value-added submitters have been notified. Staff addressed the technical requirements that plats must satisfy in order to comply with the law and be received by a

Clerk of Superior Court. Staff also addressed the issue that many clerks have imaging systems that were built around the GSCCCA imaging specifications, which are different than those that describe the digital requirements of plat submission. The Authority has developed a program to convert plats from the submission standard to the GSCCCA standard in order to help clerks receive these files in cases where they would otherwise not have the ability to do so. It was expressed by some Board members that the legislation does not need to be changed since the official records reside at the county level.

Child Support eFile – An August meeting is scheduled with Marla Moore, CEO of AOC, to discuss on-going issues. Currently, 71 counties are participating with 2 more in the queue. For this calendar year, almost 28,000 cases have been accepted, and over 70,000 cases have been accepted since the inception of the Authority's participation.

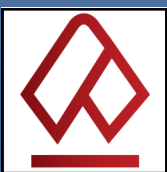
Other Business

➤ **2012-2013 GSCCCA Accomplishments & Year-end Report** – Mike Smith reviewed the report and noted that it will be distributed to all clerks' offices and published on the Authority's website. Mr. Smith closed his report by giving credit to Executive Direction David Williams, and noted that without his leadership, the Authority staff would not be able to accomplish the goals set before them. He stated that Mr. Williams "allows us to do our jobs and complete the work given to us." The Board commended the Authority staff for these accomplishments, and one member stated that the Clerks' Authority is "the best kept secret in state government." Chairman Wilkes recommended that staff share the year-end report with key legislators.

➤ **Next Scheduled Board Meeting** – October 22-23, 2013

➤ **Board Executive Session** – A motion to move to Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter was approved.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was approved. ■



Authority Solid — Cont. from Page 1

and ought to work. From the beginning, the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena, and in so doing, has led our state to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has made life easier for those who need access to real estate records, financing statements, and other legal documents.

Today, the GSCCCA is a very different organization than the one that opened its doors in 1995. Since its establishment, 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 a variety of additional projects at the request of the Georgia General Assembly and other state agencies. The Authority has grown into a diverse entity that is respected both locally and nationally for its progressive, innovative and effective approach to problem solving. For this reason, it has been sought by other government and not-for-profit groups to partner on a variety of issues.

The Authority now oversees the following:

- Notary Division
- Fines & Fees Division
- UCC Project
- Real Estate Deed Project
- Historical Deed Project
- County-Funded Historical Deed Program

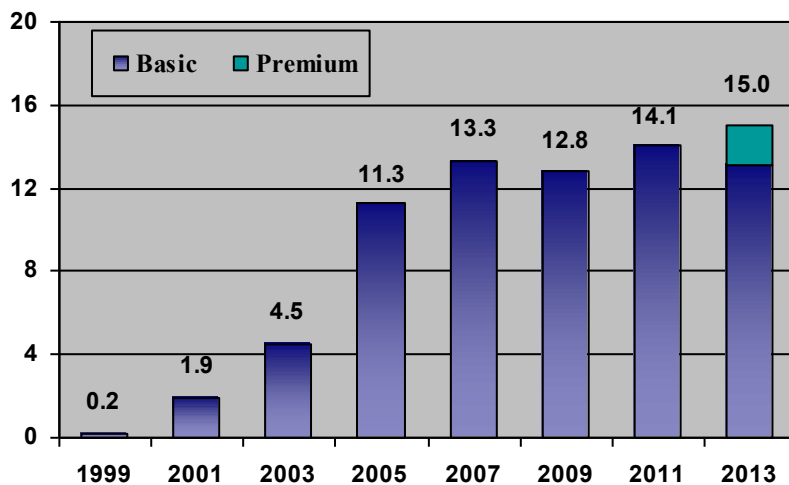
- Lien, Plat & Map Project
- Historical Plat & Map Project
- PT-61 Project
- Premium Search Account
- Data Archive Project (MyVault)
- Microfilm Project
- e-File Project
- Civil Case Data Project
- Georgia Protective Order Registry
- Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- Carbon Sequestration Registry

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

- Unprecedented access to valuable information ... free access through search terminals installed in all Clerk of Superior Court offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- Additional revenue for county governments.
- Information that allows lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.
- Timely crime data to protect the safety of the public and Georgia law enforcement officers.

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

Monthly Subscribers (thousands)



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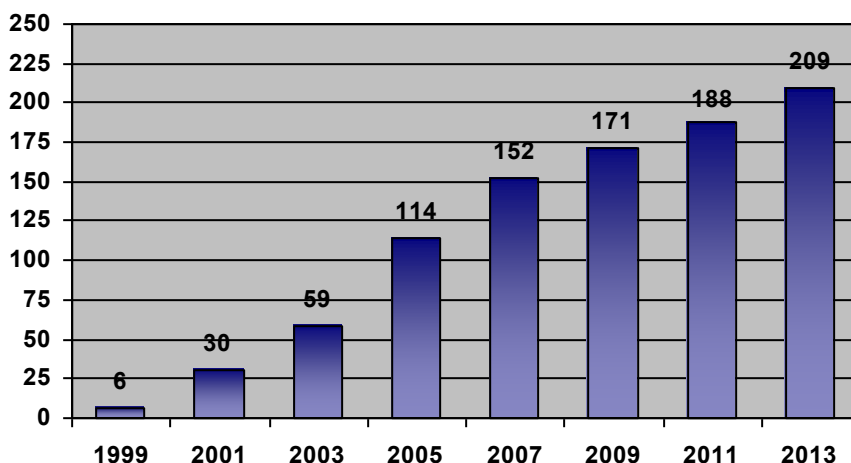
Despite the sluggish economy that continues to affect revenue, **the Authority completed FY 2013 financially sound and operationally intact.** The resilience of our results is a testament to the quality of our products and our continued focus on managing costs. As always, we empowered our people to be innovative, to rethink how we work, to listen to our customers, and to strategically transform our operations for long-term efficiency and sustainable growth. Our success reflects the outstanding and prudent leadership of our Board of Directors, and the effort, skill and dedication of our professional staff.

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

- Completely **redesigned the Authority’s website, www.gsccca.org**, and launched the newly designed version this past spring. The new design provides better access, clearer pathways, and improved navigation. Creating an intuitive and attractive design with consistent messaging that better reflects the Authority’s core values was also a critical element of the project. In a continuing commitment to incorporate customer feedback into our product and technical decisions, the Authority sent website surveys to over 40,000 users and used the more than 3,700 responses received to help shape the redesign strategy. The success of the new website is already being measured by increased subscribers, better organization of information, improved and easier user experience, positive clerk feedback, and decreased phone support.
- Rebranded the Authority by creating a **new logo** that is memorable, relevant, and more appealing.
- Released “**The Clerks’ Authority Map Search Application**” for Android devices leveraging location-based searching and mobile document retrieval. (The iPhone version

was previously released and the tablet versions will be available soon.) This mobile app provides the most up-to-date and accurate real estate sales data in the state of Georgia. Additionally, this is the **ONLY** mobile app that provides real-time sales data based on the official source of property transfer tax data in Georgia. Making the Map Search app even more valuable, the Authority increased the number of addresses searchable in the

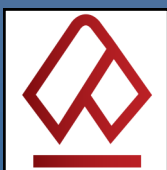
Total Images in System (millions)



application by **85%** for a fiscal year-end total of over **1.7 million** addresses. In an effort to market the Map Search application, the Authority created a video that showcases the features and applicability of the new app to help expand its user base and deliver this functionality to those professionals who might benefit from this valuable service but are not currently aware of its existence. The Map Search application is available to Premium Search subscribers for free.

- Increased the number of **Premium Search accounts** by **79%** for a fiscal year-end total of **1,871 accounts**. Launched last year, this premium account allows users to search by property address as well as land lot making it attractive to many groups including appraisers and realtors. The number of accounts is expected to grow as the Authority continues to market the Premium Search account and its new Map Search application.
- Restructured the entire **eFiling site** in order to improve the user experience, implement

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Authority Solid — Cont. from Page 5

new features, enhance performance, and generally make the site more scalable and robust. Some of the many changes include adding ACH, or eCheck, as a valid payment method, improving the reporting of financial transactions to filers on the website, adding the ability for filers to associate a “friendly name” for all filings, improving the look and functionality of the filer dashboard and various pages, and integrating the PT-61 creation page with Real Estate eFiling. By combining these two separate systems, eFilers save time and records are filed faster and more accurately.

- Added **Real Estate eRecording** to web interface. Users in Georgia who are eligible to participate in the electronic recording of real estate documents can now access the Authority’s website, efile.gsccca.org, to file directly with counties from the convenience of their home or office rather than having to travel to the county clerk’s office.
- Deployed a new version of **ScanSend** in volunteer pilot counties. As of June 30, it was installed in 23 counties on 62 scan stations. The new version ensures a quicker installation for counties, an easy-to-use customer service portal, a new guided user experience, and compatibility with the Windows 7 operating system. Before installing, the Authority performed

extensive testing of the new program with existing systems. All systems are critical to the daily operations of Superior Court Clerks and their staff. Utilities include the ability to transmit UCC documents, Protective Orders, notary commissions, and civil filing forms when electronic transmission of case data is not available.

- Implemented an **Executive Document Management Imaging Program** providing for searchable electronic documents used by management on a recurring basis.
- Conducted an in-depth review of the details and implications of the revised **Open Records Act**. The legislation made substantial changes which affect Authority policies and practices. The review resulted in recommendations to management and the Authority board on issues surrounding the legislation so as to ensure compliance with the terms and provisions of the Act.
- Represented the Authority’s interests as well as Clerks of Superior Court in the revision of **UCC forms** to be adopted in conjunction with the enactment of 2010 Amendments to Article 9. The passage of SB 185, during the 2013 session of the Georgia General Assembly, ushered in new UCC filing requirements with a July 1, 2013 effective date. The Au-

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UCC Forms Notice

With an effective date of July 1, 2013, SB 185 has taken effect and Clerks of Superior Court are now required to accept new UCC forms (Rev. 04/20/11 or later). There was a thirty-day grace period, which began July 1, 2013 and ended July 31, 2013, whereby the filing of previously prescribed forms was accepted by the filing office. Beginning August 1, 2013, all other forms will be rejected and only the forms with a revision date of 04/20/11 or later will be accepted. The prescribed forms are available in fill-in-the-blank format located on the Clerks’ Authority’s website at: <https://www.gsccca.org/file/ucc-forms> Please contact Mike Smith at (404) 327-9753 or mike.smith@gsccca.org if you have any questions.



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thority has worked throughout the process to notify clerks of the changes and to provide training on the new forms and other filing requirements through a series of webinars.

- Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the Fines & Fees Division.
- Increased participation in Notary Online to **118 counties**.
- Restored over **380 GBs of data** for 13 counties through the Authority's **MyVault Archive Service**. As of June 30, **111 counties** were participating in the program with 9 added during this past fiscal year. The statistics continue to stagger with the online vault containing over **373 million** files totaling more than **37 TBs** of data.

- Dedicated a bronze memorial plaque in honor of former GSCCCA Chairman Tom Lawler. The plaque will be permanently displayed in the Authority office as a tribute to Tom's hard work and dedication to the Superior Court Clerk community and the Authority.

In addition to the many enhancements and new features that were added during FY 2013, the Authority continues to successfully manage its many existing programs. Numbers don't tell the full story but the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority and are further evidence of our growth and success over the past year ... from the thousands of phone calls and email requests successfully handled by Authority staff, to the millions of dollars returned to Georgia's counties, to the two billion-plus hits to our website.

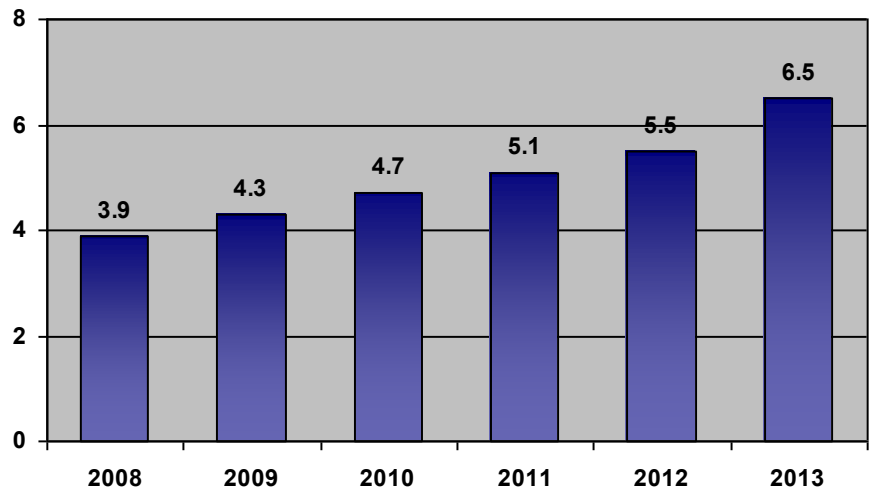
Following are some of the highlights from FY 2013:

- Added over **12.5 million** images to the system

this fiscal year for a June 30, 2013 total of over **209 million** images.

- Had over **2 billion** hits and over **1 million** unique visitors to www.gsccca.org. The public accesses the Authority's invaluable data via the Internet **more than 300,000 times a day**.
- Upgraded **740** regular subscriber accounts to Premium Search accounts for a total of **1,871** Premium Search accounts. The number of total active monthly subscribers to

HelpDesk Emails (thousands)



www.gsccca.org was **15,007** as of June 30, 2013.

- Paid counties almost **\$883,000** for deed images this fiscal year and over **\$11.5 million** for deed images since the beginning of the project.
- Returned approximately **\$5.7 million** to counties for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website and approximately **\$31 million** for prints since the Authority was established.
- Purchased over **\$878,000** in equipment this fiscal year for **55** counties as part of the Authority's statewide equipment replacement program.
- Verified and electronically forwarded to GCIC over **38,000 Protective Orders** indexed by Clerks.
- Electronically transmitted to GCIC over

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Authority Solid — Cont. from Page 7

255,000 records of criminal history court cases received from various criminal courts in Georgia.

- Received over **17,000 calls** and over **6,500 email requests** to HelpDesk.
- Processed a total of **43,000 notary certificates**.
- Issued **31,000 apostilles**. Documents originated in 135 different Georgia counties and were to be used in 82 different countries.

“... Georgia’s Clerks of Superior Court came together in 1993, stayed together through all the challenges and uphill battles, and worked together to create the success story we know today ... a paradigm for how government can and ought to work .”

- Serviced over **9,500 walk-in customers** and answered over **10,000 phone calls** to the Notary Division.
- Backed up over **764 TBs** of data, the equivalent of backing up the printed collection of the U. S. Library of Congress ... about 76 times! Despite having more total data in FY 2013, the Authority was able to improve and streamline its backup efficiency, reducing the amount of data backed up from 1,338 TBs last year to 764 TBs this year.
- Collected and disbursed approximately **\$101 million** in court fees.
- Conducted **66** classroom training sessions, webinars and one-on-one programs on various subjects across the state in addition to offering five online training courses.
- Ordered, processed and shipped **2,226** pieces

of new equipment to counties this fiscal year and over **21,000** pieces of new equipment since the Authority was established.

- Indexed over **221,000** UCCs and conducted over **6,700** Certified Searches for FY 2013. Since opening in 1995, the Authority has indexed over **4.9 million** UCCs and conducted almost **215,000** Certified Searches.
- Submitted almost **12,000** books and over **7 million** pages for microfilm. 156 counties participate in the Authority’s Microfilm Project, offered free of charge to Clerks of Superior Court.
- Blocked over **5.5 million** spam emails blocking 92% of all e-mail received.

Beyond the numbers, though, we gauge our success by the response and feedback we continue to receive from clerks, bankers, lawyers, realtors and other customers about our product and how integral it has become to their business. From real estate records and lending information to active notaries and court fines and fees, the GSCCCA enables convenient access to invaluable information helping everyday Georgians and giving the business community an innovative tool for making their work more efficient and effective.

Much has been accomplished since the Authority was created twenty years ago but the challenges of today’s business environment are real and the pace of change is accelerating. As we have in the past, we continue to respond to this environment through innovation in our projects and an aggressive approach when confronting tough problems. Each day, we work hard to grow and improve our business, and operate more efficiently and effectively. We are committed to remaining entrepreneurial and strategic and positioning the Authority for continued preeminence.

Thanks to our Board, to Clerks of Superior Court, and to our staff, our record of success and commitment to continuous innovation and improvement speaks for itself. The Authority will continue to incorporate customer feedback into our product and technical decisions as we grow existing programs and develop new initiatives based on the changing needs of our many constituencies. ■

