

GSCCCA Update

Vol. 16, No. 3
August 2012

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

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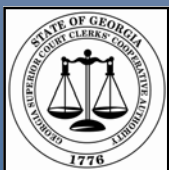
Clerk of Superior Court
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Authority ends FY 2012 solid

Linking the past, present and future, 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 is making life easier for those who need access to real estate records, financing statements, civil and criminal case data, and other legal documents.

With support from Georgia's Superior Court Clerks, the State Bar, the Georgia Realtors, and the Georgia Bankers Association, the state legislature created the GSCCCA in 1993. 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.

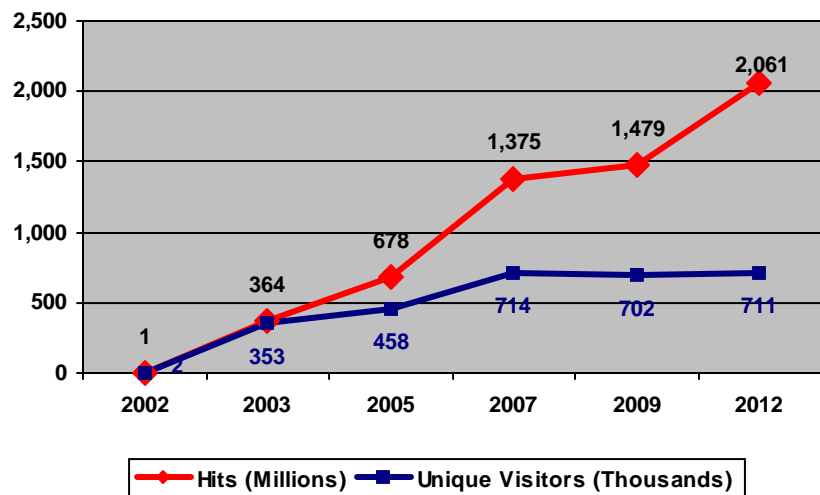
The Authority now oversees the following:

- Notary Division
- Fines & Fees Division

This article is the Executive Summary of the Authority's 2011-2012 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 18 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

General Business

The minutes of the April 27 scheduled board meeting and the June 28 called board meeting were approved. Greg Morgan, with the Authority's accounting firm Mauldin & Jenkins, presented the Accountant's Review of the Financials. He com-



Pictured left to right: Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes, Liberty Co. Superior Court Clerk; Authority Executive Director David Williams; Greg Morgan, Mauldin & Jenkins; Judge Brenda Weaver; and Connie Cheatham, McDuffie Co. Superior Court Clerk.

pared financials from FY 2011 and May 2012 and noted the following: receivables have increased approximately \$104K which is an encouraging sign; fixed assets are down approximately \$65K; and the equipment reserve is unchanged from the previous year. Morgan stated that the financial picture for the Authority is stable but these trends need to continue. A motion to accept the Accountant's Report as presented was approved.

UCC Project

It was reported that FY 2012 ended on an upward trend as approximately 210,000 UCCs were filed in Georgia for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. This is the second consecutive year of increased UCC filings. This is encouraging and could be an indicator of economic improvement. Certified Search requests continue to drop.

Training Update

It was reported that training efforts include webinars, one-on-one programs, and classroom options, and that response to the training has been very positive. Six webinars during FY 2012 attracted more than 200 attendees.

Fines & Fees Division:

An update was given on the Fines & Fees Division and it was reported that there has been a significant drop in collections for the Judicial Operations Fund Fee. More civil filings are being filed in Magistrate Court where the \$125 civil filing surcharge does not apply as it does in State and Superior Court. Additionally, the number of civil filings is generally down across all courts.

It was also reported that the current priority schedule is being altered by legislation including the following:

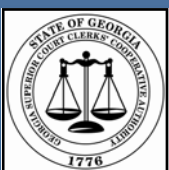
- HB 1048 (\$58 Process Server Fee) – The Authority is requesting advice from the Attorney General's office as to whether surcharges apply.
- SB 50 – This bill changes the priority schedule for partial payments for Superior Courts. The Authority Board adopted the same priority schedule for State Courts at its April 2012 board meeting.

Chairman Wilkes suggested that the Authority seek legal guidance from the Attorney General's office asking for assistance on how to apply the "old" and "new" priority lists. Executive Director David Williams emailed Assistant Attorney General Wright Banks seeking advice.

Historical Deed Project

It was reported that the Historical Deed Project remains suspended due to a lack of funds. Staff

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recommended that the project remain suspended at this time and shared the following percentages with the Board:

- 100% of historical deed data has been collected from all counties from January 1, 1993.
- 87% of historical deed data has been collected from 1992.
- 57% of historical deed data has been collected from 1990-1991.

A motion to continue the suspension of the Historical Deed Project due to budgetary constraints was approved by the Board.

eFiling Project

An update was given on the eFiling Project and it was reported that there is increased participation across all eFiling platforms and projects. Additionally, the Department of Revenue has indicated that they are in a position to develop Lien eFiling by the end of 2012.

Plat eFiling was then discussed by the Board. According to HB 665, plats must be submitted in a TIFF format at a minimum of 200dpi to clerks' offices. Most plats are not filed by surveyors. Typically, plats are filed by the closing attorney

or property owner. Surveyors have requested that plats be filed electronically which would allow the plats to be pre-filed.

A motion authorizing staff to pursue development of a plat eFiling process with a completion date of December 31, 2012 was approved by the Board.

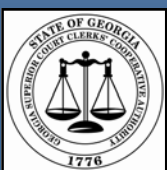
Other Business

- **eFiling Committee** – Chairman Wilkes appointed Board members Cindy Mason and Dan Massey to the eFiling Committee formed by the Supreme Court of Georgia.
- **Thomas C. Lawler Memorial Tribute** – A motion to defer the dedication to October 17, 2012 was made by Mr. Massey, seconded by Ms. Cheatham, and approved unanimously by the Board.
- **Year-end Report** – An overview of the Authority's 2011-2012 Accomplishments & Year-end Report was provided.
- **Next Board Meeting** – The next quarterly Board meeting is scheduled for October 16-17, 2012. ■

June Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met by conference call on June 28 for the purpose of formally adopting an official fee schedule in order for the Authority to meet its statutory obligation under O.C.G.A. 15-6-94. It was explained that by adopting the fee schedule, all future data sales by the Authority would be governed by the fee schedule including any request submitted by an outside party seeking to obtain data under the Georgia Open Records Act. Following an explanation of each fee contained in the schedule and its statutory establishment, a brief discussion was held with some members needing clarification on some elements of the fee schedule.

A motion to formally adopt the fee schedule as the official fee schedule of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority was then approved by the Board. A second motion to authorize Executive Director David Williams to take whatever steps necessary to ensure that the Authority is well-positioned for any data requests that may arise as the result of such action by the Authority Board in its adoption of the official fee schedule was also approved by the Board.



Authority Solid — Cont. from Page 1

- UCC Project
- Real Estate Deed Project
- Historical Deed Project
- Lien, Plat & Map Project
- Historical Plat & Map Project
- PT-61 Project
- Premium Search
- Data Archive Project (MyVault Archive Service)
- 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 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.
- Important data for lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.

- Critical and timely information for law enforcement officials to protect the public.

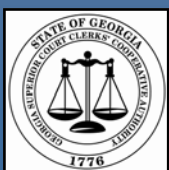
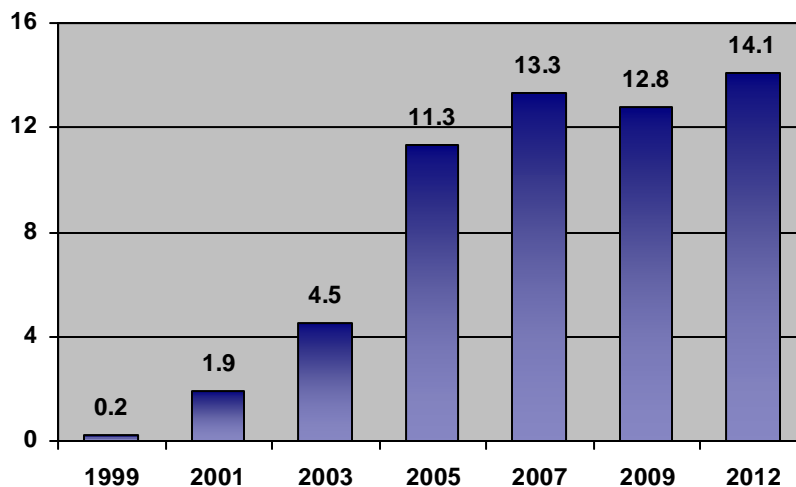
The GSCCCA is governed by a board of ten members. Its activities undergo constant legislative oversight and board meetings are open to the public. It was created, implemented and continues to operate without receiving any funds through local, state or federal taxes. The Authority has been continually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

Despite the unprecedented recession that continues to affect revenue (down 33% compared to our FY 2007, pre-recession numbers), **the Authority completed FY 2012 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.

Below are some of the highlights from the past fiscal year.

- Won **repeal of the sunset provision** on the funding mechanism for the Clerks' Authority. HB 198 was originally written to extend the sunset; however, the Authority Board was unanimous in seeking that the sunset be repealed. The agreement was crafted with the cooperation of the Georgia Association of Realtors and the State Bar Real Property Section.
- Officially launched the **Premium Search account** website to provide more in-depth search options in response to customer requests. The account allows users to search by property address as well

Monthly Subscribers (thousands)



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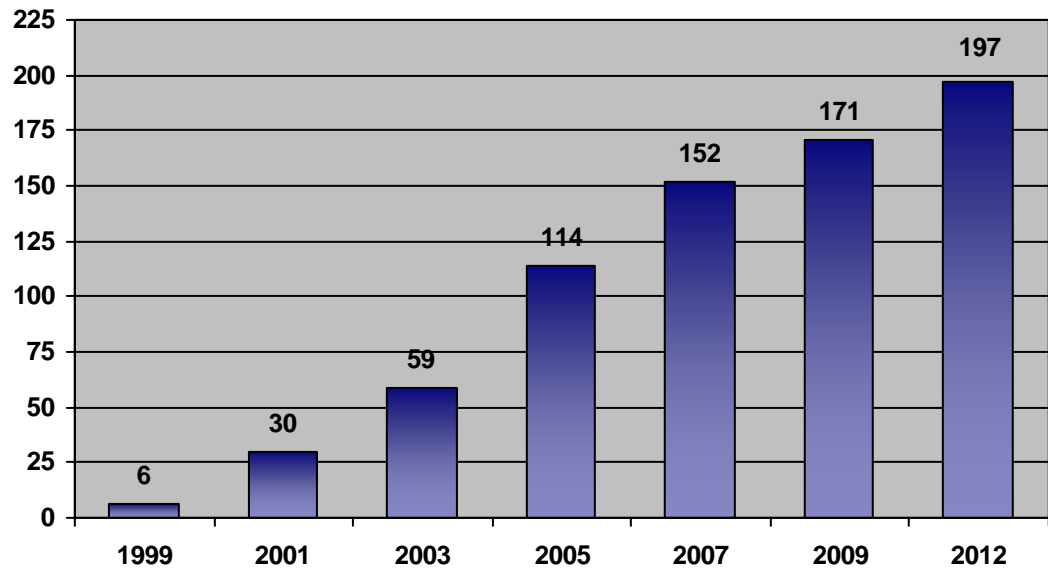
as land lot making it attractive to many groups including appraisers and realtors. Other features such as reporting and account management changes and new view options were also added. As of June 30, 2012, the Authority had added **1,047** Premium Search accounts.

- Developed beta version of a **GSCCCA mobile application** targeting IOS devices such as iPhones and Android devices. This mobile offering leverages location-based searching

State Bar of Georgia and Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Assn., the Authority created the eFile registry to provide a secure location for housing approved participants in the eFiling of real estate documents in Georgia.

- Developed a sophisticated functional prototype of a **Civil eFiling** system in order to demonstrate the clerks' understanding of eFiling processes and technical expertise.
- Enhanced the existing **Child Support eFiling** document standards to better accommodate participation from filers outside the Division of Child Support Services. The Au-

Total Images in System (millions)



and mobile document retrieval and builds on the new Premium Search account.

- Finalized and released an official version of the **“Real Estate Electronic Recording Standards for the State of Georgia,”** per legislative mandate. These Standards took effect January 3, 2012 and allow eFiling of real estate documents to be accomplished in Georgia. The GSCCCA eFiling portal conforms to these standards and, at fiscal year-end, had **7** participating counties in which **1,728** real estate documents had been eFiled.
- Developed and published the www.efileregistry.org website. This site was designed to facilitate the registration, maintenance and verification of Real Estate eFile participants. Working in cooperation with the

authority's system automatically interfaces with the eFiling system of the Administrative Office of the Courts, so that clerks can receive child support cases initiated by the Department of Human Services directly through the GSCCCA portal. At fiscal year-end, **41** counties were participating with **31** activated during FY 2012. Since January 1, 2010, over **22,000** filings have been accepted.

- Continued to grow **UCC eFile**. As of June 30, 2012, **62 counties** were participating and **11,040 UCCs** were electronically filed during FY 2012. Almost **26,000 UCCs** have been electronically filed since the pilot project began in May 2009.



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Authority Solid — Cont. from Page 5

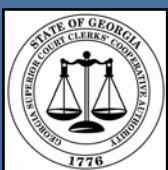
- Began implementing a website that enables individuals to file real estate filings electronically over the internet from the convenience of their home or office, rather than having to travel to the county clerk's office.
- Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated notification process by the Fines & Fees Div.
- Increased participation in the Notary Online program to **109 counties** and added 3 new Mail-In Renewal counties increasing the number to 14 counties.
- Restored over **400 GBs of data** for 4 counties in last 2 months of fiscal year through the Authority's **MyVault Archive Service**. (Restored over 500 GBs of total data for FY 2012.) Currently, **102 counties** participate in the program with 2 added this past year and 3 additional counties preparing to participate. The online vault protects over **295 million** files totaling more than **29 TBs** of data (3 times the printed collection of the U.S. Library of Congress).
- Deployed **200 new workstations and monitors** in Clerk of Superior Court offices as part of Statewide Computer Replacement Project.
- Developed 38 improvements to the existing automated **deed quality assurance service**. These improvements help to ensure the quality of the data that enters the GSCCCA system and is a critical process as we begin to accept additional historical records.
- Developed a geo-encoding process using the addresses in our PT-61 data to support the PT-61 Map Search. Almost **1.5 million addresses** have been encoded so far.
- Increased Internet connection speeds at our Primary Data Center from 15Mbps to 1Gbps and increased speeds for county connectivity to our data center from 6Mbps to 100Mbps while significantly reducing monthly costs.
- Designed and implemented a solution that facilitates the monthly export and delivery of electronic TIFF real estate deed docket images to The DRS Group for conversion to archival microfilm form. This is the technical implementation of the statewide **Microfilm Project** that allows the Authority to save over **\$700,000** annually in microfilm costs.
- Started project to completely refresh and enhance the GSCCCA website.
- Honored late GSCCCA Chairman Tom Lawler by creating a bronze memorial plaque recognizing Tom's contributions to the Authority. The plaque was unveiled at the Clerks' Spring Conference and will be permanently displayed in the Authority office.

In addition to the many enhancements and new

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Authority managers help lead IACA

The Authority values professional development and encourages staff to be involved in industry groups to further their own training and education. To this end, two managers have been integral in leading the International Association of Commercial Administrators this past year. IACA brings together UCC industry representatives from the private (filings parties) and public (filing offices) sectors. Authority Communications Director Mike Smith is serving as IACA 1st Vice-President. In this capacity, he chairs the Website Advisory Committee which is undertaking a redesign of the IACA site to better meet the needs of membership. IT Manager Andy Wightwick recently completed his term as IT Section Chair. During his term, he accomplished the goal of creating a working group that is resolved to modernize the IACA UCC XML standard and to provide support for domestic and international jurisdictions that may choose to adopt the standard. Pictured to the right are Wightwick and Smith addressing IACA members as part of a panel discussion on social media strategy during the IACA annual conference.



Authority Solid — Cont. from Page 6

features that were added during FY 2012, the Authority continued to successfully manage its many existing programs. Numbers don't tell the full story but the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority and are further evidence of our growth and success over the past year ... from the thousands of phone calls and email requests successfully handled, to the millions of dollars returned to Georgia's counties, to the billion-plus hits to our website.

“We are committed to remaining entrepreneurial and strategic and positioning the Authority for continued preeminence.”

Following are highlights from FY 2012:

- Added over **9.6 million** images to the system this fiscal year for a fiscal year-end total of over **197.2 million** images.
- Had almost **2.1 billion** hits and over **710,000** unique visitors to www.GSCCCA.org. The public accesses the Authority's invaluable data via the internet **over a million times a day**.
- Upgraded **760** regular subscriber accounts to Premium Search accounts for a total of **1,047** Premium Search accounts. The number of active monthly subscribers to GSCCCA.org was **14,109** as of June 30, 2012.
- Paid counties almost **\$715,000** for deed images this fiscal year and over **\$8.8 million** for deed images over the last eight years.
- Returned approximately **\$5.4 million** to counties for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website and over **\$21.8 million** for prints over the last eight years.
- Verified and electronically forwarded to GCIC **36K Protective Orders** indexed by Clerks.
- Electronically transmitted to GCIC over **287K records** of criminal history court cases received from various state criminal courts.
- Received over **5,500** email requests and over **16,200** calls to HelpDesk.
- Processed a total of **43,000 notary certificates**, a 28% increase.

- Issued **32,700 apostilles**, the second highest total ever produced, to 86 different countries.
- Received **15,300 phone calls** to the Notary Division answering about 50 calls per day.
- Backed up over **1,338 TBs** of data. A TB or *terabyte* is a measure of computer storage capacity and is approximately a thousand billion bytes. Backing up 1,338 TBs of data is the equivalent of backing up the printed collection of the U. S. Library of Congress ... about 134 times!
- Collected and disbursed approximately **\$108.7 million** in court fees, a high level of collections during a slow economic period.
- Conducted **45** 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 almost **1,100** pieces of new equipment to counties this fiscal year and over **12,100** pieces of new equipment over the last nine years.
- Indexed over **210,000** UCCs and conducted over **8,200** Certified Searches for FY 2012. Since opening in 1995, the Authority has indexed over **4.5 million** UCCs and conducted over **197,000** Certified Searches.

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 notary public registration and court fines and fees, the GSCCCA enables convenient access to invaluable information.

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. Going forward, 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. ■

