

GSCCCA Update

Vol. 20, No. 3
August 2016

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

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Oliver & Weidner, LLC
Clarksville



GSCCCA

1875 Century Blvd
Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30345
Tel: 404.327.9058
Tel: 800.304.5175
www.gsccca.org

Authority Strong in FY 2016

There is an old adage that says ... "*A pessimist complains about the winds, an optimist hopes they will improve, and a realist adjusts the sails.*"

Navigating through years of turbulent waters – legislative battles, technological challenges and economic adversity – the Authority has continually adjusted its sails and stayed on course, delivering solid results through excellent revenue management, tight cost controls

This article is the Executive Summary of the Authority's 2015-2016 Accomplishments & Year-end Report. For additional information or to see the full report, contact Mike Smith, GSCCCA Communications Director, at mike.smith@gsccca.org.

and outstanding innovation and productivity.

Adjusting our course throughout the journey has been critical, but our

success 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 this symbi-

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Interested in Real Estate eFile?

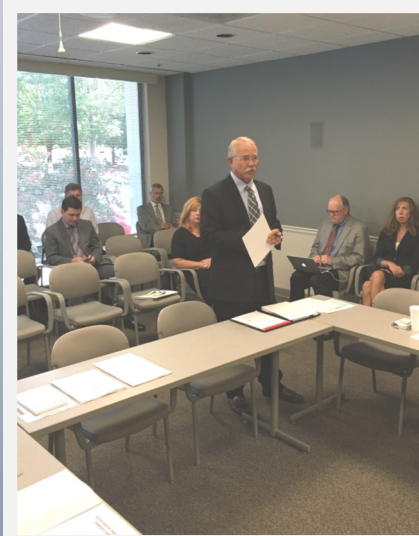
In 2011, the Authority launched its Real Estate eFiling portal, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, with deed satisfactions. Since then, the Authority has expanded to allow for all deed, lien, bulk lien and plat document types to be eFiled. Currently, 59 Superior Court clerk offices participate in Real Estate eFile through the Authority's portal with more to come online soon! The eFiling portal allows filers to submit documents on <https://efile.gsccca.org> or through value-added submitters. Value-added submitters are companies that integrated their systems with the portal to facilitate ease of filing. Approved value-added submitters are provided on <https://www.gsccca.org/learn/efiling-information/real-estate>. Additionally, the eFiling portal is designed to integrate with the clerk's real estate vendor system for processing. So whether the filing is submitted by an individual on <https://efile.gsccca.org> or by a value-added submitter, it is processed the same way. Participating vendors are Cott Systems, Icon, Mainstreet, Micropact and Xerox. If your vendor is interested in integrating with the Authority's portal, or if you are interested in participating, contact Rachel Rice at rachel.rice@gsccca.org.

July Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met on July 13 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

General Business

The minutes of the April 13 scheduled board meeting were approved. The Authority's financial statements were reviewed and revealed that the Authority's overall financial health is good. The Authority's cash position is positive; however, it was projected that the re-instatement of the Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project would offset some of the positive net position. The annual audit will begin in early August.



Renewal of Office Lease for UCC Operations:

It was reported that the new lease agreement for the UCC indexing facility office space (located at 3980 DeKalb Technology Parkway, Atlanta) has been executed with the Board's approval. The lease is effective through 2021.

Historical Image & Indexing Agreements:

The following motions were made:

Motion: A motion was made that the draft First Amendment Image Agreement (Non-Cash Consideration), as presented to the Board, be approved and adopted.

Motion: A motion was made that the draft 2017 Re-Indexing Agreement for 1991 - 1990 Historical Deeds, as presented to the Board, be approved and adopted.

Motion: A motion was made that all future Historical Indexing Agreements shall include requirements for Double Blind Key and Independent Verification of indexing data as provided below.

All re-indexing shall be keyed and verified using a Double Blind Key and Independent Verification

and Correction methodology as defined in this subparagraph. The process shall substantially be the following for each instrument:

- i) A minimum of three separate Certified Indexers shall be required for indexing and verification of each instrument;
- ii) All instruments shall be re-indexed by indexers using an image of the original instrument;
- iii) An instrument is indexed and keyed by a first Certified Indexer;
- iv) The same instrument is indexed and keyed by a second separate Certified Indexer. Such indexing shall be totally independent and separate from the indexing of the first indexer and without the knowledge or benefit of observing any data keyed by the first indexer;
- v) The index data generated by the two indexers in steps (iii) and (iv) is then electronically compared to identify discrepancies in the index data;
- vi) A third Certified Indexer reviews any data discrepancies identified for the instrument and corrects indexing and/or keying errors;
- vii) All index data shall be verified using this process prior to such data being transmitted to the Authority.
- viii) Each record submitted shall identify a minimum of the three Certified Indexers that indexed and verified the instrument per the Authority Guidelines plus any additional Certified Indexers involved with the initial index data or correction of it.

A motion to accept all three motions as presented was approved by the Board. Concerns were expressed that the 2017 Re-Indexing Agreement for 1991 - 1990 made no provision for clerks. Staff noted that the Agreement as presented to the Board was designed for and unique to a "vendor," but that if a clerk requested to do the historical deed re-indexing work for the 1991 - 1990 period, an Agreement could be executed, subject to legal signoff and Board approval, to allow for such an arrangement.

Fines & Fees Division:

Approximately \$87.3 million in court fees was collected and disbursed by the Fines & Fees Division for FY 2016. This is a slight decline from the



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Board Meeting Review — Cont. from Page 2

previous fiscal year. Compliance rates remain high with near 100% compliance.

Training & Outreach Update

The Authority continues to receive positive exposure through notary classes offered to the public through clerks' offices. More than 1,700 citizens have attended notary classes this year. Fifty-eight clerks and deputy clerks have successfully passed the certified indexing exam. Regularly scheduled webinars continue.

eFiling Project

The following eFile participation numbers were reported:

- ❖ Real Estate eFile – 56 counties
- ❖ UCC eFile – 97 counties
- ❖ Child Support eFile – 120 counties

UCC Project

FY 2016 saw the most UCCs filed statewide since 2008. This increase is primarily attributable to the improved economy pushing increased financial activity in the state.

Notary Division

A motion to allow the Authority to sell notary handbooks at a discounted rate to clerks' offices as determined by the executive director was approved by the Board.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects

The Authority is actively receiving docket surveys in anticipation of the January 1, 2017 commencement of the 1991 - 1990 Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project. Agreements approved earlier provide for requirements to re-index historical deed data. Staff anticipates data to begin arriving on January 2, 2017 and that all data from 1991 - 1990 will be reviewed and released by June 30, 2019. Future voluntary agreements will require double blind key verification for all parties.

Subscriber Services

It was reported that Premium accounts continue to grow and Regu-

lar accounts remain steady. A demo of a new instructional video explaining how to search records via mobile devices on the Authority's website was presented. The video has been published to the Authority website's homepage carousel.

2015-2016 Accomplishments & Year-end Report:

The Authority's 2015-2016 Accomplishments & Year-End Report was presented to the Board. The document provides an overview of the Authority and its numerous projects, and a more detailed review of the many accomplishments of the past fiscal year. The report is available on the Authority's website.

Chairman Wilkes made closing remarks encouraging staff and board members to remain diligent after his retirement at the end of 2016.

Civil Case Initiation Forms:

A report was given to the Board regarding a meeting with the AOC on civil case initiation forms. The AOC believes the forms are of no use and wants to eliminate them from statute. The Council of Superior Court Clerks proposed that they and the Judicial Council would jointly develop new forms. A decision was made to develop legislation to support this proposal.

Next Board Meeting

The next quarterly board meeting will be held on October 11-12, 2016 at the Authority office. ■

eFile Demonstrations to be offered at COAG Meeting

The Clerks' Authority will have a computer lab available at the COAG meeting to demonstrate Plat and Bulk Lien eFiling. We will continue our tradition of having before and after-hours sessions with eFile demonstrations and to answer any questions on getting started, system requirements, eRecording Standards and more. Watch for scheduled events as we approach November!



Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 1

otic relationship is paramount to building on our progress to date and achieving even greater results in the future. Below are a few recent comments from clerks about the Authority and its importance to their work:

“The [Authority] staff is absolutely wonderful. I am so thankful that all of you are

“The Authority was created by clerks for the benefit of clerks, and this symbiotic relationship is paramount to building on our progress to date and achieving even greater results in the future.”

there for us. I can’t imagine trying to do my job without you.” (Regina McIntyre, Barrow County Clerk of Superior Court)

“You are a lifesaver. You’ll never know how much I appreciate your work and I appreciate your help. You have made my day. It will be wonderful to have a complete index. Thank you again. (Patti Grimsley, Twiggs County Clerk of Superior Court)

“I really appreciate your help. Authority employees are the best. Thanks. (Charles Baker, Hall County Clerk of Superior Court)

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 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, 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. Read the comments below from one of the Authority’s partners:

“My work at the Department of Revenue allows me many opportunities to work with many different entities and agencies. No other party I interact with is better, faster, more accurate, or more efficient than the crew at GSCCCA. Top shelf folks and performance. It is literally inspiring.” (Tracy Thomas, Business Analyst, Georgia Department of Revenue)

For over two decades, the Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena and has led the State of Georgia to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has turned ideas that most thought were not possible into realities, and in so doing, has changed the way many do business and made life easier for those accessing real estate records, financing statements, civil and criminal case data, and other legal documents.

Today the Clerks’ Authority is a diverse entity that oversees the following divisions, projects, programs and registries:

- ❖ Notary Division
- ❖ Fines & Fees Division
- ❖ UCC Project
- ❖ Real Estate Deed Project
- ❖ Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ Lien, Plat & Map Project
- ❖ Historical Plat & Map Project
- ❖ PT-61 Project
- ❖ Premium Search Account
- ❖ Clerks’ Authority Map Search Application
- ❖ Data Archive Project (MyVault Online Archive Service)
- ❖ Microfilm Project
- ❖ eFile Project
- ❖ Civil Case Data Project
- ❖ Georgia Protective Order Registry
- ❖ Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based

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Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 4

- 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.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 clerk of Superior Court offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- ❖ Additional funding for clerks' offices.
- ❖ 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.

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.

Following are highlights from FY 2016:

- ❖ Began work on the **expansion of the Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project** to include all deed instruments filed with Superior Court clerks in the calendar years 1991 and 1990. The Authority began preparing a timeline and implementation schedule for the project, and it is expected that commencement will begin with the ability to transmit historical index data and images to the Authority on and after January 2, 2017. The Authority Board voted to compensate the offices of those clerks of Superior Court who have previously completed their 1991 and 1990 historical deed imaging indexing pursuant to a *Clerk-Funded Historical Indexing Agreement*. Throughout the year, the Authority administered the project to complete the deed indexing for all incomplete indexing and imaging for the year 1992 so as to move the inclusive range of deed data back to 1992 for all counties. In FY 2016, over 40,500 additional deed instruments were added to the system under this program.
- ❖ Added over 365,000 deed and 12,500 plat instruments through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project**, for a total of over 1.3 million additional 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

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Authority Now Offers Bulk Lien eFiling

The Authority has published a new eFiling procedure, known as "Bulk Lien eFiling," which allows multiple, one-page liens to be eFiled as a single electronic attachment. Bulk Lien eFiling will greatly streamline the process for large filers such as tax commissioners' offices. Filers will be able to submit hundreds or thousands of liens as a single attachment, and the clerk's office will receive these eFilings as they would any other lien eFiling. To participate in Bulk Lien eFiling, clerks' offices must also allow for Lien eFiling through the Authority's portal, <https://efile.gscca.org>, with participating vendors. A complete list of vendor participants is available at <https://www.gscca.org/learn/efiling-information/vendor-integration>. For more information or to sign up, please contact Rachel Rice at rachel.rice@gscca.org.



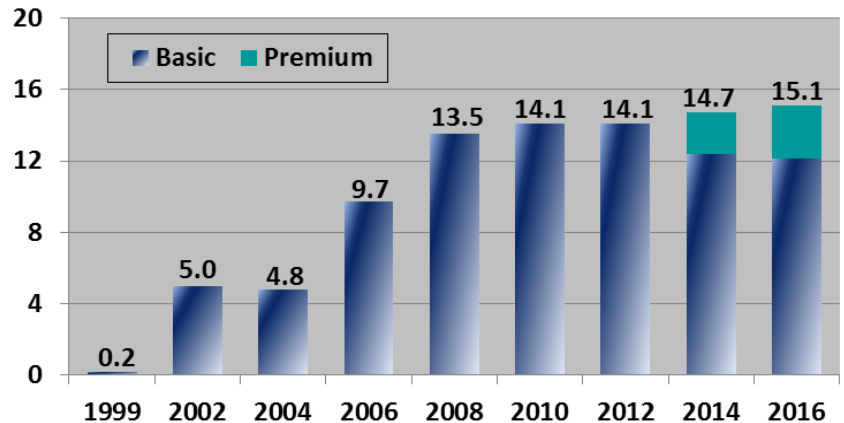
Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 5

to additional resources through print image fees initiated through the Authority’s website. Forty-one counties participate in the program.

- ❖ Managed the financial transactions relating to **GSCCCA Image Agreements**. During FY 2016, the Authority compensated Superior Court clerk offices over **\$5 million** for print monies generated and over **\$801,000** for deed images transmitted to the Authority by clerks’ offices.
- ❖ Added **“Lien” and “Bulk Lien” eFiling capability** to GSCCCA eFile portal for convenient online filing of county and state tax liens.
- ❖ Renegotiated **office leases** for primary Authority management location (located at 1875 Century Boulevard, Atlanta) and for UCC operations (located at 3980 DeKalb Technology Parkway, Atlanta). Through the execution of these new lease agreements, several months of free rent were negotiated by Authority management providing administrative cost savings.
- ❖ Upgraded the website for **MyVault Online Archive Service** with major enhancements to reporting features and administrative functionality. An online dashboard serves as the portal through which clerks have access to their vault information. The dashboard provides live statistics about the last backup and allows users to view and restore items from their vault. In addition to the website, appliance software was also upgraded to improve software functionality, reporting features and other administrative functions.
- ❖ Increased the number of **Premium Search accounts** by 15% for a fiscal year-end total of **3,036 accounts**. Launched in 2012, this premium account includes the Clerks’ Authority Map Search Application and allows users to search by property address as well as land lot making it attractive to realtors, bankers, attorneys, surveyors, appraisers, and other members of the business community.

- ❖ Published **Android Tablet Map Search application** completing our iOS and Android app lineup. Full functionality is now available on all iOS and Android devices providing 24/7 access to valuable real estate information through multiple devices. The Authority also increased addresses searchable in the Clerks’ Authority Map Search application by over 183,000 properties for a fiscal year-end total

Monthly Subscribers (thousands)



of nearly **2.2 million** searchable addresses.

- ❖ Implemented a **new backup system** that will centralize all backups into one platform and replace an aging tape library system. The new environment will greatly ease the recovery of data when a loss occurs, narrow backup windows for increased system availability, and simplify administration.
- ❖ Set up an **alternate server and software infrastructure** in response to SB 135, the Clerk Custodianship Bill, which mandates that all clerks back up their electronic records locally as well as online to the GSCCCA. Prior to the bill passing, the Authority already offered the MyVault backup and archival system to all clerks in order to facilitate voluntary, free online backup of clerk data to the GSCCCA. Since passage of the bill, the Authority has engineered a variety of other online backup methodologies for those counties that have either elected not to participate in the MyVault program, or have been unable to participate due to technological or policy barriers.
- ❖ Performed **31 network line upgrades**, including physical office moves for 5 counties.



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These upgrades resulted in a 1400% overall increase in bandwidth and provided a major improvement in staff's ability to administer, troubleshoot and diagnose network issues.

- ❖ Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by Fines & Fees Division.

In addition to the many enhancements and new features that were added over the last twelve months, the Authority continued to successfully manage its many existing programs. Numbers don't tell the full story but the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority and are further evidence of our growth and success over the past two decades. Following are some of the highlights from FY 2016:

- ❖ Added nearly **11.5 million** images to the system for a fiscal year-end total of nearly **241 million** images.
- ❖ Had nearly **364 million** page views and nearly **1.1 million** unique visitors to www.gsccca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the Internet over **4.8 million times** from 211 countries this past fiscal year.
- ❖ Compensated clerks' offices **\$801,000** for deed images this fiscal year and **\$13.8 million** for deed images since the inception of the project.
- ❖ Compensated clerks' office over **\$5 million** for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website and **\$46 million** for prints since the Authority was established.
- ❖ Restored over **90 GBs of data** for 14 counties through the Authority's **MyVault Online Archive Service** in FY 2016. Currently, **143 counties** participate in the program with 12 counties added this fiscal year. The statistics continue to stagger with the online vault storing and protecting over **550 million** files totaling more than **77 TBs** of live data.
- ❖ Ordered, processed and shipped a total of **899 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. The Authority has provided over **24,500** pieces of new equipment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.
- ❖ Deployed **551 pieces of new equipment** (388 computers, 107 monitors and 56 scanners) to 46 Superior Court clerk offices to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties.
- ❖ Electronically transmitted to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), a division of the

GBI, nearly **42,000 Protective Orders** indexed by clerks.

- ❖ Electronically transmitted to GCIC over **295,000 records** of criminal court dispositions from various courts in Georgia for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- ❖ Received over **17,000 calls** and over **7,600 email requests** to HelpDesk.
- ❖ Increased participation in **Notary Online** to **129 counties**.
- ❖ Maintained the **statewide notary database** (A statewide total of **46,250 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.) and issued **28,800 apostilles**. (Apostille documents originated in 131 Georgia counties to be used in 85 countries.) In FY 2016, the Notary Division served over **8,600 walk-in customers**, processed

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2016 Training Schedule

The Authority still has training opportunities available with a UCC webinar offered on August 25. This 1.5-hour webinar will provide an overview of Georgia's Uniform Commercial Code; a discussion on Revised Article 9 and how it relates to the processing and indexing of UCCs; information on UCC forms, administrative procedures and minimum filing requirements; and reasons for rejecting a filing. Sign up, ready to learn with questions in hand! To register for this or any other class, go to <http://apps.gsccca.org/training/> or contact Rachel Rice at rachel.rice@gsccca.org or 404-327-7322. See list of remaining training below.

Classroom Training on Real Estate Indexing Standards:

Sept. 13 Crisp Co. Sup. Ct., Cordele
Oct. 13 White Co. Sup. Ct., Cleveland

Webinars:

August 25 UCC Training
August 30 Advanced Indexing Standards
September 14 Get to Know the Authority
October 26 Windows 10



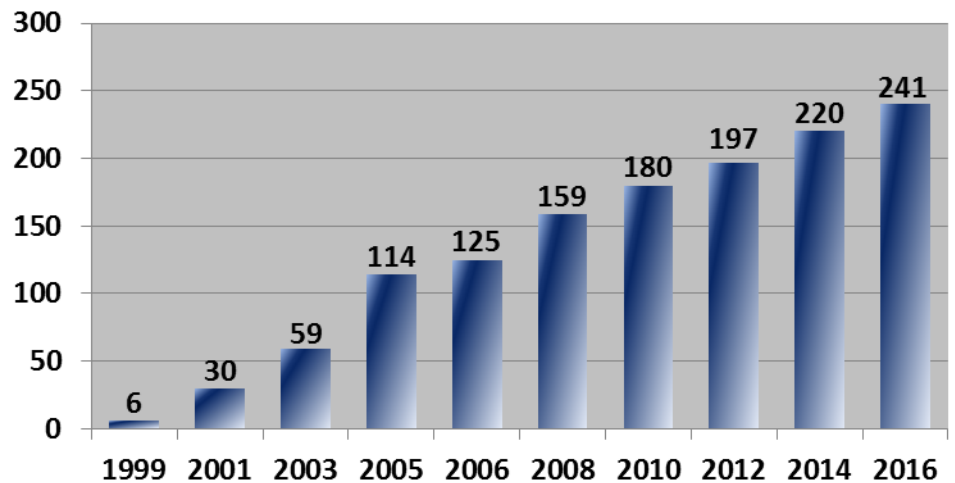
Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 7

3,400 mail-in orders, answered 8,000 phone calls, and sold 1,478 Notary Handbooks, a 28% increase from the previous year.

- ❖ Backed up over **1,076 TBs** of GSCCCA operational data, the equivalent of backing up the printed collection of the U.S. Library of Congress about 107 times!
- ❖ Collected and disbursed approximately **\$87.4 million** in court fees.
- ❖ Conducted **102** classroom training sessions, webinars and one-on-one programs on various subjects for over **4,000** participants at **40** different locations around the state. The Authority also trained over 10,000 people through its five online courses.
- ❖ Indexed over **238,000** UCCs and conducted over **7,300** Certified Searches for FY 2016. Since the project's inception, the Authority has indexed over **5.6 million** UCCs and conducted over **238,000** Certified Searches.
- ❖ Submitted 13,222 real estate deed books and 8,867,677 images for the production and delivery of archival-quality microfilm to the State Archives Center for long-term security. **156** counties participate in the Authority's Microfilm Project, offered free-of-charge to clerks of Superior Court.
- ❖ Blocked **17 million** pieces of spam and virus-laden emails. This amounts to over 96% of all incoming email.

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 how integral our products have become to their business. In addition to the comments included earlier, below are some of the

Total Images in System (millions)



recent kudos we have received from clerks and website customers:

"I really appreciate all the Authority does for me and my office."

"Thanks again for all you do for us clerks."

"Oh yes, this will make me so happy! We will improve our operations, backup capability, virus protection, everything. I can't thank you enough."

"I always enjoy reading your newsletters. They are always so informative and constantly remind me of how much you and your staff do for us. It is just amazing."

"Thank you for all your help! Your staff is wonderful! Please continue to be there for us!"

"Thanks so much for your help – appreciate it. I upgraded our account to monthly premium account."

"I really appreciate you taking the time to explain what happened with my account and for your help in clearing up the charge. I really appreciate the customer service."

In addition to supporting Superior Court clerks,

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the Authority enables convenient access to invaluable information – from real estate records and lending information to active notaries and court fines and fees. The Authority’s statewide indexes and other programs help everyday Georgians and give the business community innovative tools for making their work more efficient and effective.

Our productivity and success are no accident, but rather the result of the outstanding and prudent leadership of our actively engaged Board who informs and strengthens our business, the effort, skill and dedication of our professional staff who remain vested and fully engaged in our organization’s mission, and the continuing support of 159 clerks of Superior Court and their willingness to work to-

gether for the good of all clerks and the State of Georgia.

As we enter our 22nd year of service, we should not expect the waters to be any calmer than the ones we have already sailed through. In fact, there are signs that the winds may pick up. The pace of change is accelerating, creating new opportunities, new challenges, and new uncertainties. In this environment, we will have to be more nimble and more adept, continuously reevaluate and reimagine every aspect of our business, and out-innovate today, so that we can outperform tomorrow. We are committed to remaining entrepreneurial and strategic, and positioning the Authority for continued preeminence. The Authority is poised to sail through any rough waters ahead and continue our stellar record of innovation and success for decades to come. ■

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

UCC Filings: When to Accept or Refuse

“The collateral doesn’t look right to me.” “I’m sure the debtor doesn’t live in my county.” “Why would someone from another state file in my county?”

These are a few comments and questions we hear from clerk of Superior Court offices regarding UCC filings. And while it is good to be vigilant, clerks’ offices may be making the process of accepting UCC filings more difficult than necessary. In the UCC world, there are specific codified reasons to refuse a filing. By adhering to these reasons for refusal (O.C.G.A. 11-9-516), clerks’ offices will meet their statutory obligation and not make extra work for themselves. In other words, don’t make things more difficult than need be by “over-thinking” the acceptance or refusal of UCC filings. As long as an initial UCC financing statement (UCC-1) contains a debtor name, secured party name, some type of collateral description and the required filing fee, the UCC should be accepted for filing. Don’t get caught up in non-essential information on the form. A good example is when information is listed in the optional Box 10. Box 10 should not be considered when determining whether a filing should be accepted or rejected.

In keeping with our ongoing effort to provide clerks and their staffs with the most current and useful information, a UCC webinar will be held Thursday, August 25, at 10:00am. All facets of the UCC filing process will be covered in this 90-minute session. To register, simply do so online at <http://apps.gsecca.org/training/>.

