

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

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Fiscal year closes with much to celebrate

Following is the Executive Summary from the Authority's 2022-2023 Accomplishments & Year-end Report. Numbers within this article reflect fiscal year-end (June 30) totals unless otherwise stated, although other articles in this issue may reflect more updated information. Contact Communications Director & Compliance Officer Mike Smith at mike.smith@gsecca.org with questions.

"Victory belongs to the most tenacious"

First attributed to Napoleon I, this quote was adopted by French aviation trailblazer and WWI war hero Roland Garros who made it his mantra by inscribing the words on his planes' propellers. Garros developed the first single-seater fighter plane equipped with an on-board machine gun that fired through the propeller. It was revolutionary and shaped the future of air warfare.

Most, however, recognize Roland Garros' name from the famed tennis center named in his honor that plays host to the French Open grand slam tennis tournament. If you follow tennis, you will have recently seen this inspirational quote — *Victory belongs to the most tenacious* — emblazoned on the centerpiece stadium during coverage of the 2023 tournament. Although not a tennis player, the stadium honors Roland

Garros for his drive, intellect and courage ... qualities essential for victory in battle.

Whether through battles in a theatre of war or sports — or even under Gold Domes — these powerful words have been proven true throughout history and feel especially relevant as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the creation of the **Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority**. This paradigm-shifting event would not have been possible without the tenacious spirit of the Authority's founders and Superior Court clerks who were willing to work together for the good of all clerks and the State of Georgia. As has been noted, many outsiders in the

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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 12 scheduled Board meeting were approved.

Meredith Lipson, a partner with Mauldin & Jenkins, presented the financial reports for May 2023. She reported current assets to be just over \$31 million, including unrestricted cash of \$11.3 million. There is \$6.7 million of restricted cash for the Fines & Fees Division. Additionally, there is \$11.8 million restricted cash of the Authority which includes the Historical Deed Project. Capital assets decreased which indicated depreciation has exceeded purchasing of new assets. Net OPEB asset is the same as in the June 2023 audit. Pension & OPEB liabilities are determined by actuaries. Administrative expenses were \$1.316 million compared to the budgeted amount of \$1.29 million. Net real estate deed loss was not as much as originally anticipated and budgeted.

2022-2023 Accomplishments & Year-end Report

With the 70-page report presented to the Board, Superior Court clerks and Authority staff were thanked for their critical role in the many accomplishments from the past fiscal year. The theme of the report, "Victory belongs to the most tenacious," is in recognition of the Authority celebrating its 30th anniversary on July 1, 2023. To highlight the theme, quotes used in the report from Andy Wightwick and Gary Yates were highlighted that reflected on the Authority's past success and what the future holds.

Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)

The Filing Activity Notification System launched on January 15, 2023 and has since experienced strong and steady growth. FANS is designed to offer individuals the ability to receive a notification when certain real estate and personal property records are filed with a Superior Court clerk, indexed, and data is transmitted by clerks throughout the state of Georgia. As of July 10, 2023, FANS had approximately 8,900 registered users.

Statewide Network Upgrade Initiative

This initiative involves upgrading the internet speed in every county. Since the previous board meeting in April, the Authority has upgraded an additional 50 counties resulting in a 63% completion rate for the project. To date, 103 counties have been completed; 9 are slated for cutover in the next few weeks; 35 are scheduled for survey/line installation; and 23 are in the queue to be started. The goal is to finish before the end of 2023 assuming the Authority can maintain the current pace. However, staff anticipates the possibility of reaching 90% completion, but with a few large construction counties remaining that may take longer than expected.

Fines & Fees Division

The Fines and Fees Division processed approximately \$80.1 million in FY 2023 from all courts in the State of Georgia. This is about a \$3 million increase from the FY 2022 total and getting closer to pre-pandemic numbers. Collections are expected to be even higher in FY 2024 with the re-establishment of the Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF). There are approximately 1,100 courts operating across the state, and as of June 30, 2023, very few were non-compliant. This is defined as a court that has not reported its fines and fees collected in a timely manner as required by law.

Training & Outreach

The Authority continues to develop training to meet the needs of Superior Court clerks, their staffs, and the public, and offers a variety of in-person and virtual options. The Authority's online training platform, eLearn, continues to experience heavy usage by clerks and the public. As of June 30, 2023, approximately 111,000 users had registered to use the site, and of those, 108,986 used the Notary Public course. On the real estate indexing side, 2,492 court personnel have availed themselves of the Authority's online deed indexing courses. To date, 73 current clerks and deputy clerks have successfully passed the Indexing Certification exam.

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eFiling Project

Superior Court clerks continue to leverage the eFiling initiatives offered by the Authority to better serve the public. Currently, 151 clerks participate in UCC eFiling, with 123 mandating eFiling as the only filing method. In FY 2023, approximately 20,000 UCCs were eFiled per month. Approximately 92% of all UCCs filed in FY 2023 were eFiled.

For Real Estate eFiling, all 159 clerks fully participate in accordance with statute by accepting all document types electronically. The online notary public application process has 152 clerks participating, with 50 clerks allowing Mail-in Renewals (MIR). A backlog of pending liens has been greatly reduced by the diligence of Authority staff working to resolve this backlog. Of the 46 counties with pending liens, 43 have been completely or partially resolved. Additionally, of the pending liens that were 1,000 days old or older, only nine remain unresolved.

eFile System Certification

The Authority launched the eFile System Certification Project in January 2022, and recently communicated updates to clerks regarding the mandatory process. As of the Board meeting, there were 4 systems fully certified, 5 systems in preliminary testing, and 1 system in final testing. Preliminary testing takes the majority of the time for the certification process. Additionally, of the 4 systems in preliminary testing, two were scheduled for final testing in July.

Electronic Document Certification Program

At present, 80 clerks are participating in the eCert Program. Additionally, there are 11 clerks' offices that have been trained and are in a testing phase. As of July 7, 2023, participating clerks have received 44,235 electronic certified document requests. The eCert Program allows individuals to electronically request certified copies of documents from a particular clerk's office, thereby avoiding the need to travel to the courthouse. Authority staff is not aware of any issues related to acceptance of electronic certifications.

1989-1987 Historical Deed Project

According to vendor reports as of July 6, 2023, the 1989-1987 Historical Project includes an estimated 3.6 million total instruments. The

budget for the three-year project is \$9 - \$10.8 million, with deed images from 1989 currently being collected and processed. The 1988 and 1987 segments of the project commenced on July 1, 2023.

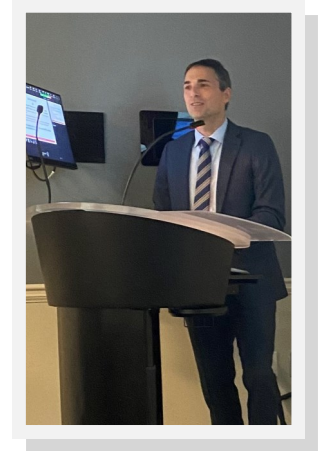
There has been \$6.07 million paid (or payable) to clerks for images and index data. It is estimated that there are 1.2 million instruments to be processed for 1989, with a budget of \$3 - \$3.6 million for that year. It was projected that the 1989 segment of the project would be completed by July 31, 2023. With a budget of \$4.6 million, the 1988 and 1987 segments are targeted to be completed by June 30, 2025.

Voluntary Historical Deed Project

At present, 91 counties are participating in the Voluntary Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project. More than 5.1 million instruments have been released to production with another 358,000 in quarantine for review. Of those, over 100,000 are part of one, decade-long project.

UCC Project

Approximately 9,700 requests for UCC Certified Searches were received by the Authority in FY 2023. UCC Certified Search requests are processed internally by Authority staff involving an exact-name search of the UCC database and results are then transmitted to the customer. In FY 2023, there were almost 264,000 UCCs filed reflecting the highest number of UCCs filed since FY 2002 (excluding pandemic years of FY 2022, FY 2021 and FY 2020). About 92% of UCCs were electronically filed.



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Notary & Authentications Division

The total number of persons commissioned as notaries public for FY 2023 was 49,428, which is a decrease of 5% when compared to FY 2022. The number of apostilles issued rose 25.7% for FY 2023 when compared to FY 2022 for a total of 44,900 apostilles issued. The most popular document types are foreign language, birth certificates, Spanish language, powers of attorney, and corporate documents. China is scheduled to join the Hague Treaty in November 2023, and Canada is scheduled to join in January 2024.

Archival Services

At present, there are 1.3 billion files, totaling 300 terabytes of data, in the archival backup.

The data has grown by almost 16 terabytes in the past quarter. Four clerks' offices required data to be restored, which would not have been possible prior to VaultTek's implementation. Additionally, 1.2 million deed images and 160,000 lien images were added to storage through the Virtual Microfilm Program during the past quarter. At the Clerks' Spring Conference, the Authority participated in the recertification training for clerks which focused on disaster planning and records management. Authority staff provided an informative session on disaster plans, including how to get started and what to do in the face of a disaster. ■

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early 1990s did not believe it would be possible to get all 159 independently elected officials to agree on anything, much less using an unproven system like the one being proposed. But they underestimated the tenacity, courage, and unity of Superior Court clerks who simply refused to become the "dinosaurs of Georgia's court system," as many in the judiciary had projected. Galvanized by a common goal — and ultimately the ability to secure their future survival — they came together to fight for the Authority's creation!

The quote — *Victory belongs to the most tenacious* — not only resonates with how the Authority came to be, but also captures the essence of the remarkable journey and numerous accomplishments that unfolded over the three decades that followed. Overcoming legislative battles, solving complex technological challenges, and navigating through economic uncertainty, the Authority was driven by a vision and commitment to continually improve services and develop and offer new ones for the benefit of Superior Court clerks and the citizens of Georgia. It didn't come easy or without some out-of-the-box thinking, but that vision and commitment resulted in success after success ... developing the statewide real estate

index, overseeing Georgia's central database of notaries public, managing and bringing accountability to court fines and fees, leveraging technology to allow for the electronic filing of UCCs and real estate records, creating archival programs to store and protect clerks' vital records ... and that commitment continues with the recent launch of the Authority's Filing Activity Notification System to help protect Georgia citizens against house theft and other fraudulent activity! These successful projects — among many more that are mentioned throughout the year-end report — exist today because of the collective vision, collaborative efforts, and fighting spirit of Superior Court clerks and Authority staff.

As described by long-time Authority consultant Gary Yates, who was part of the visionary clerk team that strategized and battled to create the Authority, it all comes down to a refusal to fail:

"Continuing to this day is the absolute determination by the clerks and Authority staff to successfully execute any project taken on. The number of pro-

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“ Our shared success is a testament to the power of unity, determination, innovation and what can be achieved when partners work together towards a shared goal and simply refuse to fail.

jects implemented without a single failure is a tribute to the leadership and staff who work so hard on behalf of clerks and to the clerks themselves who make it all happen. The refusal to fail is

what has made the clerks and Authority successful.”

Far from becoming a relic of the past as once predicted, clerks have fought to “make it all happen” since 1993 when they came together to create the Authority and, since, have revolutionized the office of Superior Court clerk by embracing technology and implementing project after project for the benefit of the court system

and their constituents. Recognizing this as critical to the Authority’s success, GSCCCA Executive Director John Earle praised the clerks’ longstanding ability to adapt:

“Clerks are to be commended for their ongoing willingness to accept and embrace change in their daily office operations for the betterment of all including the citizens they serve. Realizing that change is not always easy, it’s impressive that 159 duly elected officials have continuously united around change.”

In addition to a forward-thinking, refuse-to-fail mindset that has been constant from the Au-

thority’s founding, the importance of leveraging cutting-edge technology has, without a doubt, been essential to the success story. According to Authority IT Director Andy Wightwick:

“I think that a lot of the GSCCCA’s success over time has been driven by innovative people who could first identify and then apply emerging technologies to solve contemporary problems. The successful completion and operation of highly complex and technical projects helped the Authority become recognized as the de facto technology leader, and therefore a natural choice for guaranteeing success on future projects. The Authority has proven that it can anticipate, plan for, and ultimately accomplish even the most daunting technical task facing the clerks.”

The Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority was created by clerks, for clerks. It was born out of the recognition that a collaborative and unified effort was necessary to address the challenges faced by Superior Court clerks across the state. Today, as we close out another strong fiscal year, we celebrate this momentous anniversary and the remarkable journey in partnership with and service to Georgia’s Superior Court clerks. Our shared success is a testament to the power of unity, determination, innovation and what can be achieved when partners work together towards a shared goal and simply refuse to fail.

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 other successful

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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 court 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
- ❖ Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ Lien, Plat & Map Project
- ❖ Historical Plat Image Project
- ❖ Pending Lien 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
- ❖ Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)

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eCopy to launch September 1

The Clerks' Authority is expanding its eCertification Portal, <https://ecert.gsccca.org>, to allow for electronic copies, eCopy! Effective September 1, 2023, the eCert Portal will allow clerks' offices to offer regular copies in addition to certified copies. Similar to eCertified copies, regular copies will be processed in the same manner, but with no cover page and different filing fees. This new feature is available at the clerk's option and can be set up with the check of a box!

In preparation for this change, the Authority is offering three, 30-minute webinars, titled "eCertification Portal – Regular Copy," to review the changes, show how to enable this feature, explain how to process regular copies, discuss filing fee options, and more! The webinars will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will be offered on the following dates:

- ❖ August 23
- ❖ August 28
- ❖ September 8

Attendance at one of these webinars is encouraged to learn more about this new service. To register, go to www.gsccca.org/training.

The Authority is excited to grow its eCertification Portal by offering eCopy and hopes clerks find value in this new feature! For more information, contact ecert@gsccca.org.



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- ❖ Carbon Sequestration Registry
- ❖ VaultTek Online Archive Program (formerly MyVault)
- ❖ VaultTek Mobile
- ❖ Media Holdings Project
- ❖ Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program
- ❖ Statewide Computer Replacement Project

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

- ❖ Unprecedented access to valuable information – free access through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- ❖ Approximately \$119 million in additional funding and 32,000 pieces of new equipment for clerks' offices since the Authority's inception.
- ❖ Information that allows lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.

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.

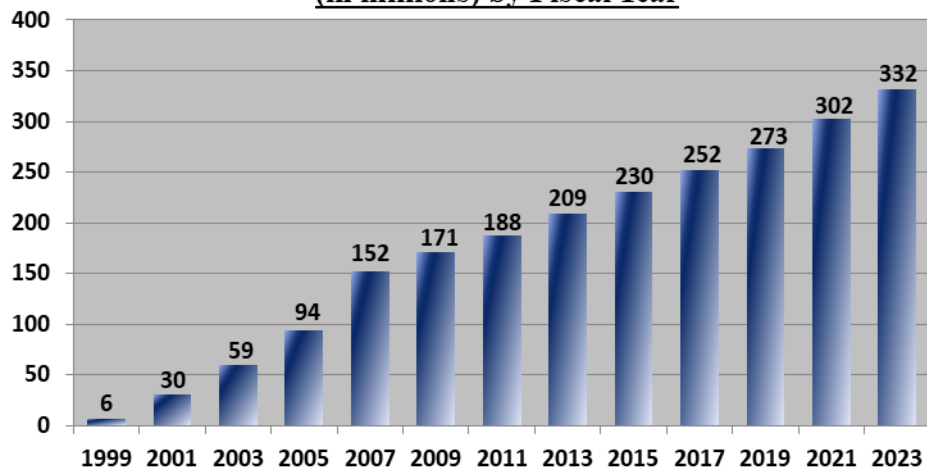
Accomplishments – Highlights from FY 2023

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

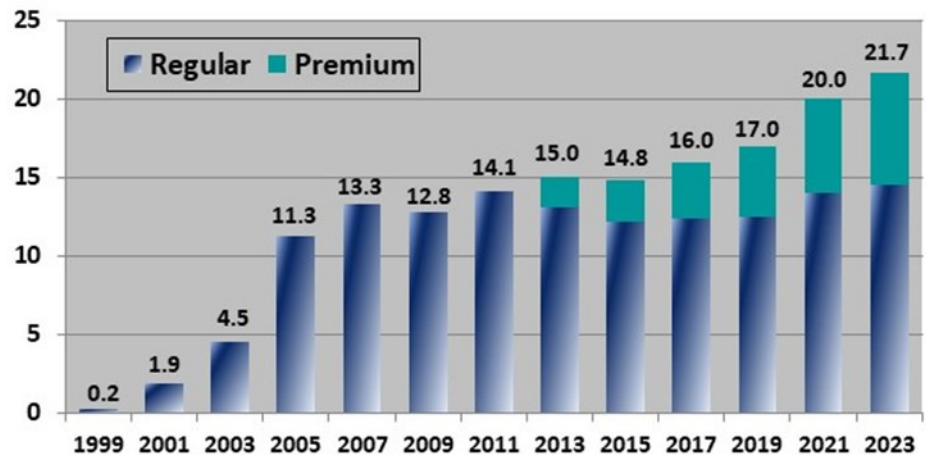
- ❖ Compensated clerks' offices nearly \$5.5 million for prints off the Authority website and nearly \$767,000 for deed images, resulting in over **\$6.2 million in additional funding** for Georgia's Superior Court clerks this fiscal year.
- ❖ Developed and launched **Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)** in January with the goal of providing Georgia citizens with a powerful tool in the fight against house theft and other potentially fraudulent

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



Website Subscribers (in thousands) by Fiscal Year



activity. Provided as a free, voluntary and consumer-friendly service, FANS notifies property owners anytime filings are made related to their registered property, as well as notifies of filing activity related to UCCs (personal property), liens and plat filings. For years, the Authority has studied the issue of house theft in an effort to assist Superior Court clerks in supporting and protecting their constituents. While this system cannot prevent fraudulent documents from being filed, it can be used to send timely notifications to citizens upon the filing of a document that matches criteria which they define. To opt in, citizens must simply register at <https://fans.gsccca.org/> with an email address or telephone number. After submitting a name, the user will receive an email and/or text notification whenever a filing related to that name is filed in the selected records. Individuals may also create notifications for an address and/or a document type. As of July 1, 8,584 people have registered on the FANS website to receive notifications and 9,126 notifications have been sent.

- ❖ Launched **new and improved CourtTRAX website** after completing the two-year project to streamline the fines and fees process. New features of the site include the ability for courts to remit Fines & Fees reports (Consolidated Monthly Remittance and Monthly Disbursement) and payment via

ACH; the ability to remit Trust Fund Interest reports and payment via ACH; an updated Online Calculator; and user management of ACH account information. With an updated look and enhanced ease-of-use, the fully overhauled site continues to provide access to legal advice, legislative data, reports, forms, and more. Vendor integration is also an option for submitting required Fines & Fees reports. CourtTRAX continues to be a critical resource in providing accountability and uniformity to the reporting of fines and fees.

- ❖ Completed the **Historical Plat Image Project** making all historical plat images available for viewing on the Authority's search system. One of several priority initiatives identified by the Authority Board, the project included images of plats filed on or before December 31, 2003 in all counties statewide, with a \$3 allowance for counties per plat image. Sixty-five clerks were identified with plats to be imaged, adding 354,000 additional plat images to the system at a cost of over \$1.2 million paid by the Authority. Compensation agreements were sent to 116 clerks, covering approximately

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900,000 images equaling almost \$2.7 million as a direct cash benefit to clerks' offices and counties.

- ❖ Advanced the **1989-1987 Historical Deed Project** in an 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 is 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. The 1989 segment of the project is well underway and the 1988-1987 segment commenced on July 1, 2023. The entire project has an anticipated completion date of June 30, 2025. The Authority has already provided for compensation to those clerks of Superior Court who have previously completed their 1989 deed instruments voluntarily and will further compensate those who have voluntarily completed 1988 and 1987 deed instruments.
- ❖ Advanced the **Statewide Network Upgrade Initiative**. Bandwidth needs in counties have increased with the rise of remote work and digital documentation handling. Recognizing this need, the Authority launched this initiative last spring to ensure continued support and security updates for network equipment and to prepare counties for bandwidth upgrades. After initial planning and obtaining quotes, the Authority began the process of upgrading existing equipment in all Superior Court clerk offices. Since September, Authority IT staff has traveled thousands of miles across Georgia completing upgrades in 76 counties. To coincide with this effort, the Authority is moving to consolidate internet service providers (ISPs) to just 3 in order to ease management of

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eFile fee enhancements coming soon

The Authority is always working to improve the eFile Portal, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, ensuring it runs efficiently, encourages commerce, and mitigates risk. With this goal in mind, the Authority will soon implement new features for filings when the returned filing fee is more than \$100 greater than or less than the estimated filing fee.

When a real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing fee is returned from the clerk's office with a filing fee that is more than **\$100 greater** than the *estimated fee* for an instrument, the eFile portal will return an exception response. The clerk's office will then need to either revisit the assessed filing fee or reject the instrument as the filer did not provide an accurate estimated filing fee. Similarly, when a real estate (deed, lien or plat) filing fee is returned from the clerk's office with a filing fee that is more than **\$100 less** than the *estimated fee* for an instrument, the eFile portal will return a warning. This will alert the clerk's office that the filer estimated a higher filing fee than was assessed by the clerk's office. The clerk may revisit the assessed fee, and if an error is discovered, contact the Clerks' Authority for assistance.

Both of these features are meant to help mitigate extreme over assessments and immediately alert clerks' offices to potential under assessments, which can facilitate immediate resolution. To receive estimated fees for real estate eFilings, email the Authority's customer support team at help@gsccca.org.



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the 161 circuits across the state. Additionally, staff is actively researching multiple options from leading hardware providers for upgraded networking equipment. 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.

- ❖ Launched a statewide roll-out of the **Pending Lien Project**. This initiative was de-

signed to assist clerks' offices with the resolution and removal of Department of Revenue (DOR) liens dating back to 1,000 days or older. Involving 46 counties with 3,072 pending liens in total, the Authority worked directly with each respective clerk's office, training them on the pending lien search, providing support to research and identify the issue, and offering next steps for resolution. At present, 43 of 46 counties have complet-

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eLearn news...

UCC Training updated & new online course on eCertification Portal to launch September 1

With the new UCC forms taking effect on 7/1/2023, the Clerks' Authority has updated **UCC Training**, its online UCC training course on the eLearn platform, <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>. The course provides an overview of the forms, reviews the codified grounds for refusal, and gives users a better overall understanding of UCCs and their purpose. Superior Court clerks and staff responsible for UCCs are encouraged to visit this free UCC training course available on the Authority's eLearn platform 24/7!

Along with updating UCC Training, the Authority is excited to launch a new eLearn training course, **eCertification Portal**, on September 1 for Superior Court clerks and their staff. This online course will provide step-by-step instructions on how to register, set up document types, process requests, and more! The training is comprised of eleven lessons which review the multiple facets of the eCertification Portal, <https://ecert.gsccca.org>. The training was designed for courts interested in learning more about eCertification and for those who are ready to sign up but need training. Like all eLearn training courses, the eCertification Portal training will be available 24/7 from the convenience of one's home or office or wherever internet connection is available. As of September 1, courses will include the following:

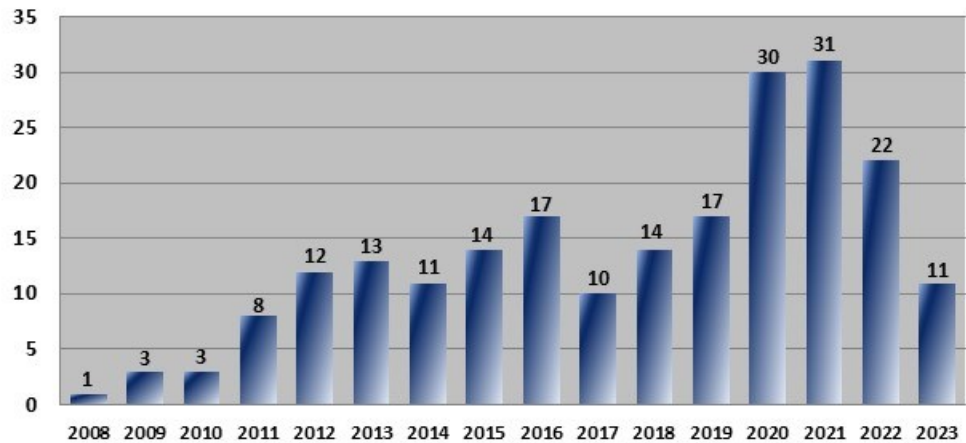
- ❖ eCertification Portal
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Fines & Fees
- ❖ Notary Online
- ❖ Notary Online – Mail-In Renewal
- ❖ Notary Public Training
- ❖ Notary Public Final Exam
- ❖ UCC Training

Learn more about the Authority's online training options on <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>! With questions, email training@gsccca.org.



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Number of VaultTek Restore Requests by Fiscal Year

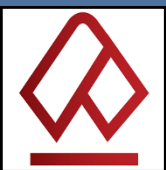


ed the project. The remaining three counties are working with their vendors to resolve their pending liens. Over 2,700 liens have been corrected and removed from the Pending Search Aging Report, resulting in a 91% completion rate.

- ❖ Entered testing phase for **eFile System Certification**. The program was initiated last year to create a formal process for certifying vendor eFile systems utilized by clerks for deeds, liens, and plats for integrating with the GSCCCA eFile Portal. The Authority finalized the eFile System Certification program document, providing all documentation and instructions to vendors in September, and then completed development of system certification tests. The Authority’s eAssist program was the first to complete the eFile System Certification review. Vendor system testing is currently underway and is expected to be completed this summer.
- ❖ Began development of **two new eLearn courses** to offer clerks and their staffs additional online training opportunities. The courses include “eCertification Portal,” which is expected to launch by the end of the year, and “UCC eFile,” which will hopefully launch in 2024. The Authority currently offers eight online training courses through its eLearn platform, and during FY 2023, nearly 36,000 people took advantage

of this convenient training.

- ❖ Continued to grow **Real Estate eFile** with a 26% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. Since the launch of Real Estate eFile in 2011, nearly 6.9 million real estate documents have been electronically recorded with the vast majority of those in the last six years. In FY 2023, over 1.4 million real estate documents were electronically recorded through <https://efile.gsccca.org>, with almost 54% of those using the Authority’s eFile API for submission. As of July 1, 2023, all 159 Georgia counties will be activated to accept all document types for electronic filing.
- ❖ Continued to grow **UCC eFile** with a 17% total lifetime increase this fiscal year. Nearly 260,000 UCCs were eFiled in FY 2023, and of all UCC documents accepted statewide, over 92% were filed electronically. Since the pilot project began in May 2009, over 1.7 million UCCs have been electronically filed. At present, 151 counties participate in the program, with 122 of those counties mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. Just three years ago, only 43 counties mandated UCC eFiling, yet today 77%



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of Georgia counties only allow the electronic filing of UCC documents.

- ❖ Continued to promote and grow **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. Since statewide roll-out of the program began in January 2022, participation has increased rapidly. During FY 2023, 42 more counties began offering eCertification. At present, 79 counties are actively participating in the eCert Program; 12 counties are in the training and testing phase; and nearly 44,000 total requests have been submitted through the Authority's eCertification portal since the program launched.
- ❖ Restored 38 GBs of data back to county systems in response to 11 requests from clerks through the **VaultTek Online Archive Program**. Protecting the digital records of Georgia's Superior Court clerks since 2007, VaultTek is currently storing and protecting over 1.3 billion files totaling more than 283 TBs of live data, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. Since its inception, VaultTek has responded to 218 data loss requests and has restored over 4.4 TBs of data back to county systems. Usage of the program's mobile app, **VaultTek Mobile**, continues to grow as it provides convenient access to records stored through VaultTek allowing users to view and retrieve files quickly and easily from the palm of their hand.
- ❖ Restored over 150,475

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 308 million images, across 536,465 books, totaling nearly 14.4 TBs of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the online portal.

- ❖ Added more than 500,000 additional instruments to www.gscca.org through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien & Plat Re-Indexing Project** for a total of over 5 million instruments in production since the program was implemented in 2013. As a result of this

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Remaining 2023 training

In-person Classes

Sept 13	Douglas	Real Estate Indexing Standards
Sept 19	Atlanta	Fines & Fees

Webinars

August 23	eCertification Portal – Regular Copy
August 25	Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
August 28	eCertification Portal – Regular Copy
August 29	Filing Activity Notification System (FANS)
Sept 8	eCertification Portal – Regular Copy
Sept 15	eFile Portal 101
Sept 20	UCC–Duties/Responsibilities of Filing Office
Oct 5	Fines & Fees 101
Oct 19	Real Estate Indexing Standards 101
Oct 24	Protective Orders



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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 2023, six additional counties began participating in the project for a total of 90 counties in the voluntary program.

- ❖ 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 2023

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 other constituencies across the state and beyond.

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

- ❖ Added **13.6 million** images to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **332 million** images accessible to the public through www.gsccca.org.
- ❖ Hosted nearly **2.2 million** unique visitors — 29% more than previous fiscal year — with **581 million** page views on www.gsccca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet **7.5 million times** from **221 countries** this past fiscal year.
- ❖ Ordered, processed and shipped **over 700 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. The Authority purchased nearly **\$430,000** of equipment for counties during FY 2023 to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties. The Authority has provided approximately **32,000 pieces of new equip-**

ment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.

- ❖ Provided training for nearly **39,000 people** through a combination of **8 online classes** and **176 training sessions** which were offered on a variety of topics using various formats including in-person classes, webinars, one-on-one sessions, and conference presentations.
- ❖ Indexed and added to the database nearly **264,000 UCCs** and conducted almost **9,700 Certified Searches**. From the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed nearly **7.5 million** UCCs — an average of 22,000 per month — and conducted over **302,000** Certified Searches.
- ❖ Increased participation in **Notary Online** by adding two new counties for a total of **152 counties** currently participating in the program. In FY 2023, **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 **49,428 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.
- ❖ Processed over **18,000 apostille/authentication requests** with nearly **45,000 apostilles** issued, 26% more than the previous fiscal year.
- ❖ Collected and disbursed **\$80.1 million** in court fees and processed nearly **34,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- ❖ Added over **83.9 million files** totaling more than **50 TBs of data** to the VaultTek remote servers for a fiscal year-end total of over **1.3 billion files** stored and protected in the online vault. The Authority upgraded archive appliances in **41** counties during FY 2023.



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- ❖ Imported **8.2 million** new deed images and over **1 million** new lien images into the VMF system for a fiscal year-end total of **308 million images** totaling nearly **14.4 TBs** of data that is protected and accessible for viewing through the VMF web interface.
- ❖ Electronically transmitted to GCIC over **273,000 records of criminal court dispositions** from Georgia courts for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- ❖ Electronically transmitted to GCIC nearly **53,000 Protective Orders** indexed by clerks.

Conclusion

With considerable challenges and significant triumphs along the way, 30 years have passed since the Authority was created. This significant milestone is one to celebrate but should also serve as an important reminder of what it took to get here. The spirit of the saying — *Victory belongs to the tenacious* — should not only resonate with our successful past but should also represent our future ... a future that continues to be defined by a tenacious and innovative spirit that is constantly striving for improvement and seeking creative solutions to new

challenges ... a mindset that doesn't settle for the status quo but instead continues to push boundaries to optimize operations and services ... and a culture that continues to adapt to changing needs and embrace new opportunities.

In his comments on the Authority's creation, Gary Yates also provided his thoughts on ensuring success into the future:

"Moving forward, my advice is to continue to generate solutions by embracing frustration, engage the right people, refuse to fail, and remain vigilant. The clerks must work diligently to remain united for the common good. This is essential to protect the ongoing success for clerks. Do not allow interference to cause fractures that distract and weaken. With a united clerk body, the clerks and the Clerks' Authority will have a promising future."

As the Authority closes another successful year, in continued partnership with and service to Georgia's Superior Court clerks, we must heed this advice. 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 continuing support of today's Superior Court clerks empowers the important work of the Authority and has allowed for the numerous accomplishments of the past fiscal year detailed throughout the year-end report.

With the same resolute commitment that our founders shared, the Authority remains focused on the 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 three decades, we will move forward together committed to building on our progress to date, and if victory does indeed belong to the most tenacious, then our future should be as bright as our past. ■

“ ... a future that continues to be defined by a tenacious and innovative spirit that is constantly striving for improvement and seeking solutions to new challenges ... ”

