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### GSCCCA

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

## Authority ends fiscal year strong

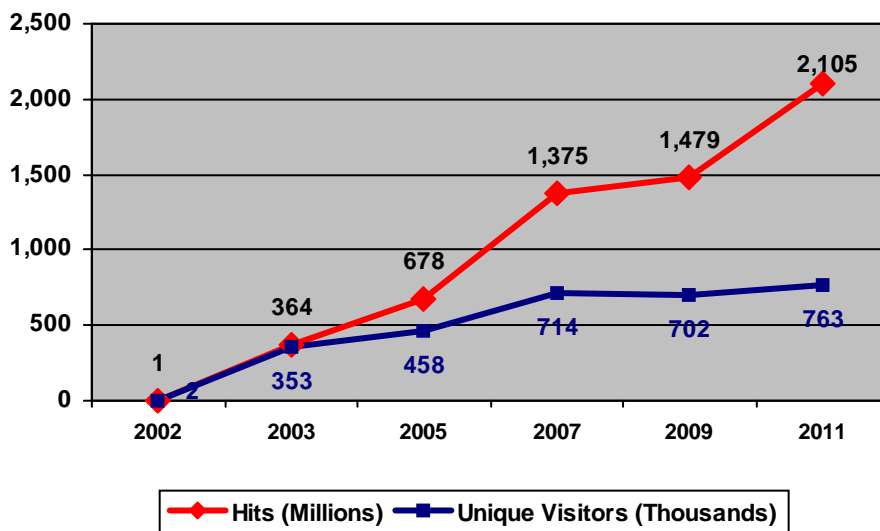
Different year ... same story. Twelve months have passed, yet the summary we present today is remarkably similar to last year's report. The details and bullets may have changed but the critical point remains the same: **Amid the continuing challenge of the most difficult economic environment in decades, the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority completed FY 2011 financially strong and operationally solid.** The resilience of our results is a testament to the quality of our products, our dedication to unmatched customer service, and our continued focus on managing costs.

Today, the Authority is a very different organization than the one that opened its doors in 1995. Initially tasked with establishing a statewide UCC index, 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 projects:

- ⇒ UCC Project
- ⇒ Real Estate Deed Project
- ⇒ Historical Deed Project
- ⇒ Plat & Lien Project
- ⇒ PT-61 Project
- ⇒ Civil Case Filing Project
- ⇒ Offender Based Tracking Project
- ⇒ Notary Division
- ⇒ Fines & Fees Division
- ⇒ Georgia Protective Order Registry
- ⇒ Carbon Sequestration Registry

### Website Hits & Unique Visitors



*Continued on Page 4*

# 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 27, 2011 board meeting were approved unanimously by the Board. The "Accountant's Review of the Financials" was presented and it was reported that each project appears to be paying for itself and that the Authority's financial situation is stable and appears to be remaining stable, good news in the current, unstable economic environment. It was also reported that the Authority has reduced its costs to match the change in the economy but has maintained its services.

## UCC Project:

It was reported that there has been an increase in the number of UCC filings with 9,000 more UCCs filed this fiscal year than last year. This is the first time in a number of years where the number of filings has increased. Similarly, the number of Certified Searches is also up.

## Training Update:

An update on training efforts was given and it was reported that the Authority currently has over 13,000 users registered on its online training site. Approximately 600 users have registered since the last board meeting. Classroom training classes also continue and the Authority continues to receive positive feedback and appreciates clerks hosting these classes.

## Fines & Fees Division:

An update was given on the Fines & Fees Division. On average, the division is down 3% in FY 2010-11 from FY 2009-10. JOF was broken out in the comparison. The original projection for JOF was \$50.4 million, but collections for JOF are \$31 million. Compliance rates continue to be close to 100%. Cost to fund the project this past year was \$414,000 which is well below the \$500,000 allowance by statute. It was stated that the project was originally projected by the legislature to have a staff of 10-12 people, yet the Authority is able to run the project with just four people.

## Microfilm RFQ Report:

An update was given on the Microfilm Project and it was reported that the project is on schedule and moving along as anticipated. The vendor has met with the State Archives to coordinate delivery and

transfer of microfilm. It was reported that assistance will be needed from the clerks where each clerk will need to execute a certification form in order to provide the vendor an image of this to enclose in the rolls of film. It was suggested during the Board work session to contact the district chairs to help assist in the collection of these signatures. The Board asked if this could be done online, and staff responded that the Authority is working on details to potentially set up a site where clerks can log in and sign electronically.

## Historical Deed Project:

It was reported that the Historical Deed Project remains suspended due to a lack of funds. Staff reaffirmed the estimated cost of approximately \$4.1 million to re-start the project and complete the current historical year, and thus recommended that the project remain suspended. A motion to continue the suspension of the Historical Deed Project was approved unanimously by the Board.

The Executive Director reported to the Board that he met with a representative of a company that was considering challenging the Board's suspension of the Historical Deed Project, and reported that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved.

## eFiling Project:

A presentation on the eFiling Standards was given and it was reported that the committee has received feedback from the attorney general's office but none from vendors or clerks. After much discussion, a motion to call a meeting on August 10, 2011 to vote on the Real Estate eFiling Standards was approved by the Board. (See review on Page 3.)

For real estate, staff reported that the Authority will hold a series of webinars for clerks on the eFiling Standards, and will post the Standards and information about the webinars to the website. The Authority is working toward opening the website to additional filings in anticipation of the acceptance of the Standards.

Staff also reported that Child Support eFiling is up and running and has been very successful. Currently, 15 counties are filing electronically and, to date, more than 900 filings have been processed.

*Continued on Page 3*



**Other Business:**  
**2010-2011 GSCCCA Accomplishments & Year-end Report** — The Authority's executive director reviewed the document and highlighted bullets including the Authority returning \$4.7 million to counties in print revenue. He commended clerks for their work in all the success.

The Board questioned whether the increase in apostilles being issued (up 25%) was overwhelming staff. Staff responded that it can be at certain times and that the situation is being monitored and changes to the Notary office layout are being considered. Staff cautioned that this may be a temporary spike due to the passage of the immigration bill, HB 87. Last month, a record number 7,000 apostilles were issued. The previous monthly high was approximately 4,000.

The cost of an apostille was questioned and staff responded that the \$3 cost was statutorily mandated. Questions were raised about whether the Secretary of State would try to take the project back, but staff did not anticipate that happening because, at the time the Authority was asked to take over the project, the Secretary of State was losing money on it and was happy for the Authority to take over. The Authority was able to reduce costs in a number of ways including no longer issuing plastic cards and creating efficiencies through Notary Online. The Board encouraged staff to ensure that the upward trend in numbers would continue before making major changes.

**Next Board Meeting Date** – A motion to set the

next Board meeting for 10/19/11, with a Board work session on 10/18/11, was approved.

**Meeting with State Bar of Georgia** — Staff reported on the Authority's meeting with the State Bar of Georgia which included State Bar President Ken Shigley and two prior presidents. It was reported that the Bar showed substantial interest in civil eFile, and that the Authority communicated to the Bar that the Clerks' Council was the appropriate venue to pursue civil eFiling, and that the Authority would be a resource for the Council. The Bar's biggest fear is that courts will implement eFile one-by-one creating multiple systems and logins. Before the meeting, the Bar's definition of eFile was Pacer which is actually a document-retrieval program. The Bar now understands that eFile and document retrieval are two separate processes for clerks' offices. They also understand that the eFile process of filing civil documents is much closer than document retrieval. It is believed that the Bar now feels it would be wiser to move forward with a smaller goal and would be elated if they could eFile a single document type within the next year. The Bar was urged to put, in writing, what they would like for eFiling. The Clerks' Council would then respond to the document, and from there, they would jointly approach legislation for some level of funding.

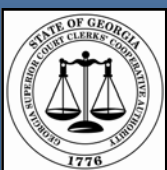
**Board Meeting Website** — It was reported that staff had created a Board meeting website to provide Board members with access to documents for current and past meetings online. ■

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## August Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met by conference call on August 10, 2011 to discuss and vote on the eRecording Standards. After a lengthy discussion regarding the filing date and time, the Board reached the consensus that filing date should be the submission date. The Board then discussed and made some minor changes to the language of the Standards and discussed several recommendations from the Authority staff.

A motion was then made to approve the eRecording Standards with the changes previously discussed, setting a compliance date of January 1, 2012, authorizing the Authority to create a registry for the purposes of assigning participant IDs 60 days prior to the effective date, and removing limitations on document types which may be filed. The motion was approved by the Board.



**Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 1**

- ⇒ MyVault Archive Service
- ⇒ eFiling Project

The Authority did not escape the recession completely as real estate fee income was dramatically reduced as a direct result of the economic environment. Consequently, the Authority Board reaffirmed its difficult, yet prudent, decision from FY 2009 to temporarily suspend the Historical Deed Project.

Despite reduced revenues (down more than 40% compared to FY 2007 and 2% compared to FY 2010), the Authority still managed to complete projects, grow existing programs and develop several new initiatives. During continued tough economics times, the Authority refused to rest on past successes and insisted on moving forward. 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 staff.

Another key element of our past success – and an important key to our future – is our emphasis on providing outstanding quality and su-

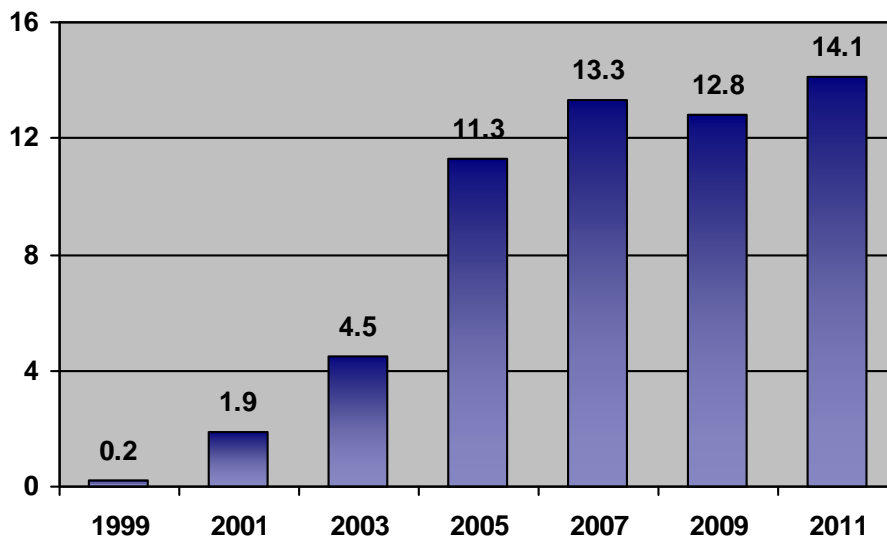
preme value to our customers. Moreover, we are committed to incorporating customer feedback into our product and technical decisions. The genesis for many of our FY 2011 accomplishments came from suggestions from our customers. Below are some of the highlights:

⇒ Advanced **UCC eFile** by activating **55 additional counties** to begin accepting electronically filed UCCs. As of September 15, 2011, **73 counties** had expressed interest, **61 counties** were activated and participating, and over **2,000 UCCs** had been electronically filed for FY 2012. Over **16,500 UCCs** have been electronically filed since the pilot project began in May of 2009.

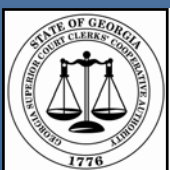
⇒ Launched **Real Estate eFiling Project** statewide. Clerks retain control of the process, and their participation is completely voluntary and at no charge. To date, the program has been extremely successful and **590 documents** have been filed. Four counties have signed up to participate. Prior to launching statewide, a pilot project was conducted in Fayette County that gave the IT staff an opportunity to check for and correct any issues and problems related to eFiling deeds, and to ensure that the system ran smoothly.

⇒ Launched **Child Support eFile** by developing a system that automatically interfaces with the eFiling system of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), so that clerks can receive child support cases initiated by the Department of Human

**Monthly Subscribers (thousands)**



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Page 5*

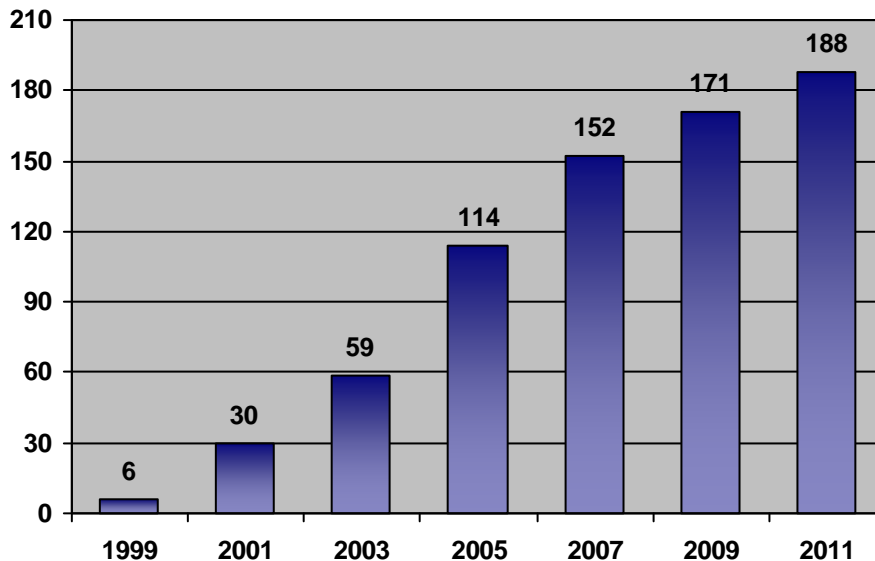


*Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 4*

Services (DHS) directly through the GSCCCA portal. The AOC has contracted with DHS to provide a workflow and eFiling service for child support cases. Currently, **16 counties** are participating and **over 4,300 child support cases** have been electronically filed.

ly **\$618,000** annually by selecting a sole vendor to provide microfilm services to all Clerks of Superior Court. During FY 2011, the Authority Board established a Microfilm Committee that examined the current process, determined efficiencies and opportunities for improvement and cost savings, and surveyed Clerks of Superior Court to gauge understanding and the need for the program. With that information,

**Total Images in System (millions)**



they then drafted and issued a RFQ (Request for Quotation) in order to select a sole vendor.

⇒ Implemented a very successful **credit card pre-payment voucher system**. This new system allows apostille/authentication customers to pay by credit card through our secure website when submitting documents via mail, FedEx, UPS or when having a third party hand-deliver the documents. Our corporate clients especially like the streamlined payment process, eliminating the need to write checks. Our far-flung international clients appreciate the added flexibility this system allows. Georgia is the only state in the country that offers a web-based payment system.

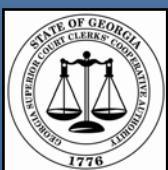
⇒ Designed and developed a standard that can be used to electronically file state tax liens directly from the Department of Revenue (DOR) to the GSCCCA, and subsequently to the counties. Have **Lien eFile** system set to “go live” in November 2011 with limited pilot testing prior to that date.

⇒ Developed website **Premium Subscriber Account** to provide more in-depth search options in response to customer requests. Rolled out as a free trial in April of 2011, the account allows users to search by property address as well as land lot making it attractive to many groups including appraisers and realtors. The account is expected to increase our subscriber base and revenue.

⇒ Implemented a new storage area network (SAN) for the IT data center and migrated **190 million** document images to it. This allowed us to upgrade the entire storage infrastructure while still reducing our annual support cost by **\$120,000**.

⇒ Reduced overall microfilm budget by near-

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**Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 5**

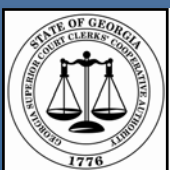
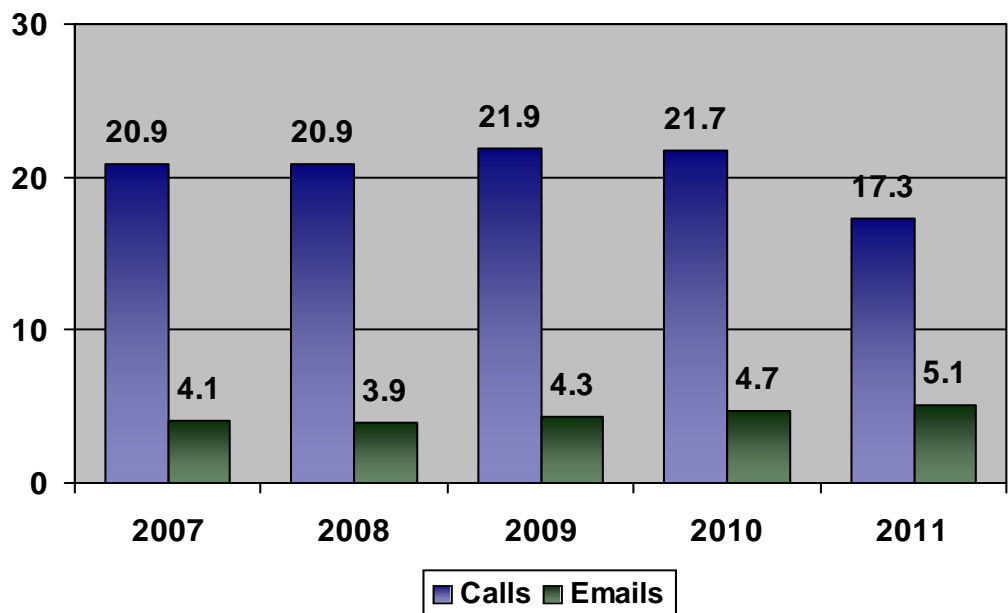
- ⇒ Restored data – ranging from a single folder to the entire volume of data – for three counties over the last six months through the Authority’s **MyVault Archive Service**. We currently have **100 counties** participating with 5 added during this past fiscal year. The statistics continue to stagger with the online vault containing over **213 million** files totaling more than **22TB** of data.
- ⇒ Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the Fines & Fees Division.
- ⇒ Rolled out enhanced error detection tools which proactively identify issues with subscriber accounts and correct them with minimum impact to our customers
- ⇒ Implemented the Barracuda Spam and Anti-virus Firewall, and now block almost **1 billion spam emails**. This represents 98% of all mail received, and clerks statewide have acknowledged a significant reduction in the spam email they now receive.
- ⇒ Upgraded our redaction program to a newer

version providing improved performance and maintainability. Redaction of social security numbers listed on UCCs continues in an effort to help prevent fraud.

- ⇒ Added Login and Logout links to every page on GSCCCA.org, a feature that was highly requested by our customers.
- ⇒ Developed a Notary order system to track online and walk-in orders for apostilles, certificates, and handbooks. This system automates our process, improves efficiency, and increases our ability to track orders for our customers.
- ⇒ Celebrated Notary Online’s eighth year of serving the notary needs of Georgia counties by making enhancements and adding new features to the application such as Mail-In Renewal. Currently **103 counties** participate in Notary Online.

In addition to the many enhancements and new features that were added during FY 2011, 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

**HelpDesk Calls & Emails (thousands)**



*Authority Strong — Cont. from Page 6*

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. Following are some of the highlights for FY 2011:

⇒ Added almost **9.6 million** images to the system this fiscal year for a year-end total of over **188 million** images.

⇒ Had over **2.1 billion** hits and over **760,000** unique visitors to GSCCCA.org.

⇒ Increased active monthly subscribers to GSCCCA.org to **14,086**.

⇒ Paid counties over **\$930,000** for deed images this fiscal year and over **\$8.1 million** for deed images over the last seven years.

⇒ Returned over **\$4.7 million** to counties for prints (\$.50 per print) off the Authority website and over **\$15.4 million** for prints over the last six years.

⇒ Received over **5,100** email requests and over **17,000** calls to HelpDesk.

⇒ Issued a record **38,500** apostilles to 69 countries, a **25%** increase.

⇒ Received over **15,500** phone calls to the Notary Division and fielded approximately **52** calls per day.

⇒ Backed up over **350 TBs** of data, an increase of **86 TBs** from last year. (*A terabyte* is a measure of computer storage capacity and is approx. a thousand billion bytes.)

⇒ Blocked almost **1 billion** spam emails!

⇒ Collected and disbursed approx. **\$116.4 million** in court fees, a high level during a slow economic period.

⇒ Conducted **63** training sessions across the state.

⇒ Ordered, processed and shipped over **700** pieces of new equipment to counties this year and over **11,000** pieces over the last eight years.

⇒ Indexed over **202,000** UCCs and conducted

over **10,300** Certified Searches for FY 2011, a 6% increase from FY 2010. Since opening in 1995, the Authority has indexed over **4.5 million** UCCs and conducted over **202,000** Certified Searches.

⇒ Conducted **1,033** Certified Searches in June 2011, the highest monthly total for FY 2011 and one of the highest monthly totals for the last four years.

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. Each day, we work hard to grow and improve our business, and operate more efficiently and effectively.

Going forward, we have confidence in our products, our plans, and our people. These strengths, coupled with solid relationships and a passion for customer service, are a powerful combination that will ensure our continued success into the future. ■

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