Quality of the Electronic Court Record
Since the conversion of the official court record from paper to electronic in Maricopa County on January 1, 2007, there has been much interest in the process of maintaining an electronic court record (ECR). Approximately 426 new adult cases are initiated at the Clerk's Office in the Superior Court for Maricopa County each business day. A top priority for the Clerk's Office is to maintain the integrity of the ECR with over 237,000 documents filed each month.

Quality control plays a major part to ensure documents filed with the Clerk are properly safeguarded and accessible to all users of the ECR. The Clerk's Office developed a series of quality control steps based on best practices and industry standards related to imaging. There are five basic steps or safeguards to ensure images are associated with the correct cases in the ECR.

Immediately after scanning, staff view the document file stamp, case number, and image clarity of each scanned page. Each document is then audited a second time by reviewing the barcode used in the scanning process to the first page of the document to ensure there are no missing first pages. Scanned images are located in a software product called OnBase, and those images can be accessed through the integrated court information system (iCIS). iCIS is the Superior Court's case management system and is the product a participating governmental customer sees when viewing documents from their PC, or what a public customer sees at the public access terminals located at Clerk's Offices throughout the Valley. A third quality control check is performed by validating that the image in OnBase is associated with the correct case number in iCIS. Additional independent audits further bolster the accuracy of the ECR.

Two independent audits help identify any missing or incomplete information in the ECR. The case management system (iCIS) generates a bi-monthly report to ensure that a docket entry has an icon which links to its corresponding image in the ECR. Finally, staff in the electronic document management department review each person's scanning work by conducting a monthly audit. These two processes, combined with built-in quality control procedures for scanning, improve the accuracy of the ECR.

Consistent quality control measures resulted in a 99.9% accuracy rate of the ECR in the Clerk's Office for the last half of 2006 (July – December). For Clerk's Offices maintaining a paper record, the national standard for accuracy is 99.5%. Any process is subject to human error, and while the Clerk's Office is pleased with its high accuracy rate, the volume of filings received leads the Office to continue developing better ways to manage the court record to further improve accuracy.

While an electronic court record is still relatively new technology, years of testing and piloting the system indicate it is more reliable and secure for carrying out the court's business than the long-institutionalized paper system. What has not been discussed here

is the integrity of the ECR itself. An entire system of checks, balances, technical standards, testing, security protocols and requirements are carried out to ensure the electronic court record is accurate, available, and accessible for day-to-day use, and durable enough to meet archival and records retention demands. The Clerk's Office looks forward to continuing benefits and efficiencies from the ECR as Maricopa County continues its seemingly endless population growth.