

## Maricopa Lawyer

### Clerk's Corner

*By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court*

#### **Service Innovation**

“Service Innovation” is the title of our recently published annual report for the Clerk of the Court’s Office. It reflects the fast-paced year our Office experienced in 2006. As we look ahead to 2007, we expect things to move even faster. Through innovation, we have been able to meet the fast pace, provide highly-valued personal service, and implement technology that will transform court operations now and in the future.

The most notable event that occurred in 2006 was establishing a foundation for the Court to move from a predominantly paper system to an electronic process. While this is a significant accomplishment, we have been mindful not to call this “a transition to a paperless system.” The courts will likely have an ongoing need for paper at some level and in certain situations for several years to come.

Realizing that much of the court record is unnecessarily paper-based and a more efficient and secure electronic alternative is available, the move to an electronic system proves to be a wise decision. With continuing population growth in Maricopa County, the Clerk’s Office has seen a rise to over 750,000 pieces of paper into our electronic repository each month. The cost in both taxpayer dollars and physical labor of manually processing paper has steadily grown, while available storage space has continually been absorbed. While technology has contributed to the world around us expecting faster and faster results, the paper process has failed to deliver. Implementing an electronic court record in Maricopa County will immediately benefit the Clerk’s Office, as well as benefit the countless customers who interact with our Office each year.

One significant initiative implemented in 2006 was seen in August, when the Clerk’s Office, with support from the Superior Court, started filing unsigned minute entries electronically – from that point forward, electronically-generated original minute entries had no paper equivalent to be placed in paper hardcopy files. In November, another major step occurred when the Supreme Court issued an administrative order, (effective January 1, 2007) authorizing a pilot program in the Clerk’s Office in Maricopa County to dispose of certain original paper filings after the document has been scanned and imaged. The electronic image is stored in our digital repository and considered the original court record for purposes of court rule and statute. The administrative order makes the electronic image the official record for images in our depository, which includes images of papers filed in adult case types since 2002. However, the administrative order only authorizes the Clerk’s Office to dispose of certain papers filed on January 1, 2007 and after.

Other progress that was made occurred in the area of eFiling. eFiling greatly expanded during the year. The Clerk’s Office demonstrated the eFiling system to over 300 legal support staff, attorneys and the public through monthly presentations at the Clerk’s downtown Phoenix location. The eFiling system was presented to hundreds more

attorneys via State Bar-sanctioned CLE's and through presentations onsite at both public and private venues.

In 2007, the Clerk's Office looks forward to improving on the gains it made through innovative technology and serving our customers. Future improvements include expanding eFiling to more divisions and case types, growth of the electronic court record (which includes the expansion of remote party access that allows attorneys to view the complete public court record of documents filed in their cases), and the implementation of multiple vendors to accept and process eFilings.

The year 2007 promises to be another exciting year for the Clerk of the Superior Court in Maricopa County. To provide focus, a strategic plan for 2006-2008 was developed that details the short-term goals and milestones that will guide us as we move forward. More information on the Office's newly implemented 2006 – 2008 Strategic Plan is available by visiting the "Latest News" section on our website ([www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov](http://www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov)). You will find the Plan, updates, and the latest news from our Office as we achieve our goals toward continually improving service and innovation.