

Vallie Bowman-English, Clerk of Toledo Municipal Court

20 Years of Court Technology



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Public Access

Restitution – 2023

Restitution



In December 2023, the Clerk's office began accepting restitution payments. Prior to this, defendants had to pay restitution to the probation office. While accepting payment doesn't seem like an advance in technology, people could only pay their restitution by cash or check until the Clerk's office took over. They also couldn't look up how much they still owed in restitution. If someone called the Clerk's office and asked how much they owed to the court, they would only get the balance of fines, costs and fees owed.

Today, a defendant can see the entire amount they owe, including restitution, on the Clerk's website. They can pay online, over the phone or in person. They have the option to pay their restitution in cash, by check or by credit card. Making it easier to pay and know how much a person owes is better for both the defendant and for the victim who is owed restitution.

e-filing – 2015



In 2015, the Clerk's office began accepting electronic filings from attorneys and the public. In 2017, the Clerk was awarded the Court Technology Grant from the Ohio Supreme Court to upgrade the Clerk's electronic filing system to integrate the current e-filing system into the Clerk's case management system. At the time the e-filing system was merely a delivery tool which allows for safe document submission and secure electronic payment. The grant allowed us to grow our civil case management system to automatically push information between the systems without the need for redundant data entry.

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Public Wi-Fi – 2013



The clerk installed public Wi-Fi on the first floor and the basement of the courthouse in 2013 so that the public could access court records and case payment information on their mobile device while in the building. Today, public Wi-Fi is available everywhere in the Courthouse.

Online Case Payments – 2012



The online case payment portal was redesigned in 2012 to give users specific information on the amount of money they owe the court. Users are able to see a total amount owed by case and a total amount due to the court. The user can either pay the full amount or make a partial payment.

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Electronic Docket Monitors – 2011



The Clerk's office also replaced the paper appearance list with electronic dockets. This docket is displayed on fourteen (14) LCD screens in the lobby of the courthouse and on each floor of the courthouse. A list of all civil, criminal and traffic cases scheduled for the day are listed in alphabetical order by party name. This system is more efficient for the public as people no longer need to stand in line to view the appearance list. It also saves the office 155,000 sheets of paper per year which costs approximately \$2,300.

Imaging of Case Documents – 2007



In 2007, the Clerk's office began imaging individual case documents to make them available digitally. Each document is reviewed by a clerk and confidential information is redacted from the image of the document.

The public can view redacted versions of case documents on the Clerk's website. Court personnel are able to view unredacted versions of the document images.

Online Case Information – 2006



In 2006, the Clerk increased the public's access to case records by placing Toledo Municipal Court case information online on the Clerk of Court's website. Prior to this, the public had to call or come to the Clerk's office to inquire about case information. This meant spending time on hold or driving downtown to find out an answer to a simple question. This enhancement allowed anyone to go online to review court proceedings.

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Electronic Notices and Return of Service

Electronic Civil Notices to Attorneys- 2021



In 2021, the clerk began serving attorneys civil notices electronically in accordance with the Ohio Rules of Civil Procedure. Attorneys receive notices much faster than regular mail, processing time is decreased and over \$56,000 has been saved in postage.

Year	Civil notices sent
2021	27,653
2022	29,524
2023	36,350
Total	93,527

e-subpoenas to TPD officers - 2017



In 2017, the Clerk's Office launched an e-subpoena program for Toledo Police Officers. Officers now receive subpoenas via email instead of receiving a paper copy in the mail. Officers receive the information on when they are to appear in court faster and the Court receives a return when the officer opens the subpoena. This has also resulted in over \$15,000 of postage savings to date.

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Year	Electronic subpoenas sent
2017	987
2018	1482
2019	4064
2020	6123
2021	5862
2022	3895
2023	4013
Total	26,426

Electronic returns of Service from Civil Bailiffs – 2015



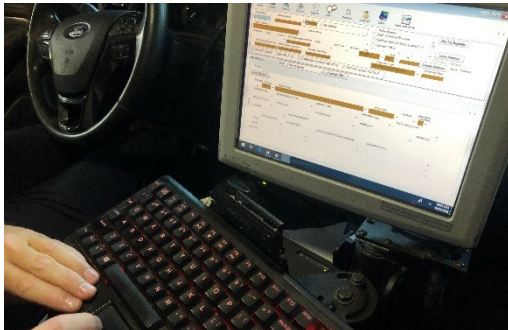
After a year of programming, the Clerk's office began accepting electronic returns of service from the Civil Bailiffs in 2015. When the Bailiff attempts service, the electronic return is filed with the clerk electronically. This information is available for public view by the end of each business day.

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Advances with Law Enforcement

E-citations – 2015 – 2017



In 2015, the Clerk updated the case management system to accept traffic citations electronically from the State Highway Patrol. The officer no longer needs to come to Toledo Municipal Court to file his or her traffic citations. Additionally, the Clerk's office is able to enter four times as many e-citations per hour as paper citations into the Clerk's case management system. This enhancement saves staff time and gives the public quicker access to the traffic citations. In 2016, the Clerk purchased the equipment for TPD and worked with them to implement the program. Ottawa Hills and the University of Toledo began submitting electronic traffic citations in 2017.

Electronic Dispositions to BCI&I - 2009



In 2009, the Clerk began to electronically report case dispositions to the Attorney General's Office's Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI). The Clerk is required by statute to report the final disposition of a charge to the Attorney General's Office when a defendant has been fingerprinted. Previously the reporting of dispositions was accomplished by manually sending fingerprint cards to BCI. This process was cumbersome, time consuming and inefficient. Over the past year, the Clerk of Court has automated this process. These reports are now sent electronically to the Attorney General's Office.

Protection Order System – 2006



In 2006, the Clerk replaced hand written protection orders with electronically produced forms. This helped streamline the protection order process in every courtroom and allow for instant transmission of necessary data to the Police Department for entry into the Statewide Computer System.

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Improved Financial Practices

Automated Teller Safe and Remote Check Scanners – 2017



In 2017, the Clerk's office made it a priority to institute financial practices that were more secure and would save staff time.

First, we installed remote check scanners so we would not need to go to the bank to physically deposit checks we receive.

Second, we installed an automated teller safe. Like most government agencies, our office utilized a traditional cash logistic chain. Our bookkeeper manually counted and assembled the cashiers' cash bags each day, cash was stored in a safe overnight and a Toledo Police Officer escorted a staff member to the bank each day to deposit our funds. This is a time intensive manual process with many possibilities for human error on both our end and the bank's end.

Once the teller safe was installed, each cashier was given a login to the safe and specific account access. They withdraw a starting bank each day from the safe. At the end of the day the cashier deposits the money and a receipt is printed with the amount he or she took in for the day. The cashier leaves the receipt for the bookkeeper to verify against the brinks online dashboard the next day. The safe has its own cellular internet modem and the amount of cash we collect is transmitted to the bank every night and credited to our account.

Brinks will come to the office once per week to take the cash to the bank.

Overall, the machine has increased the security of the funds we process and decreased our bank fees. There is an audit trail for every bank note that enters the system. Further we no longer need to use the Toledo Police Department's staff time to take us to the bank. It saves the Clerk's office approximately 85 hours of staff time per month. The cost of leasing the automated safe and the Brinks pickup is \$850 less monthly than the staff time it took us to do these tasks manually.

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Updating Clerk's Operations

Trusteeship Application – 2014



When Bowman-English became Clerk, Trusteeships were processed in an outdated MS-DOS based application. A new program was developed and integrated into the Clerk's case management program in 2014.

The financial transactions of the case are now more accessible.

In-Courtroom Data Entry – 2005 through 2012



The Clerk's case management system was redesigned to accommodate placing Deputy Clerk's in Courtrooms in order to record entries as the Judge or Magistrate is ruling on the case(s). This gave the office the ability to instantly journalize these entries results in immediate access to the information for other law enforcement, detention facilities and the public. In many instances, it also allows for further processing without having to wait for the case file to be delivered to locations within the court.

Cash Bond System – 2007



Prior to Bowman-English's tenure as Clerk, cash bonds were recorded in a book. This program was automated and added to the Clerk's case management system.