



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County



Department of Information Technology Court Technology Model

COORDINATED COUNTY & COURTS

An organizational model for consistency, standardization and successful projects

Fairfax County, Virginia

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

The expansion of the Fairfax County Courthouse introduced the concept and the need to find more efficient and streamlined methods to support increasing public and judiciary demands during difficult economic conditions. While the courthouse expansion successfully located three separate courts including Circuit Court & Records (CCR), the General District Court (GDC), and the Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC), and affiliated offices (e.g., court services, Sheriff, Law Library, etc.) into a single facility, there was concern that multiple and independent court business units would introduce an uncoordinated and more costly process of implementing court technology systems that would hinder the ability to standardize and streamline the implementation of new court technologies.

Fairfax County judicial, legislative and executive management recognized the new courthouse facility introduced unique challenges prompting the need to resolve how to best integrate modern technologies into Fairfax County court and courtroom processes and operations in an effective and seamless manner, while meeting the ongoing budgetary and operational challenges. Thus, the Courtroom Technology Office (CrTO) was created in partnership between the three Fairfax County Courts along with other supporting county and state agencies.

The executive and strategic solution created a unique business model introducing a hybrid organizational structure. The centralized CrTO collaborates with existing court staff within a matrix team environment which facilitates staff sharing and creates resource opportunities necessary to research, develop and implement the best technology solutions to benefit the county and all three courts. This hybrid structure also recognized the need for certain court IT functions to remain independent and autonomous.

While the CrTO began as a courtroom only support function, management found the successful business model supported technology needs beyond the courtroom to include court-wide initiatives. The CrTO soon became an integral component of the Fairfax County Courthouse producing court-wide technology solutions including scanning & imaging projects, docket displays, digital recording, wireless applications, and data center management. The CrTO fully understands the unique requirements of the courts, and strategically aligns all projects to the originating principles and objectives: *To improve citizens' access to the courts, facilitate trials and hearings in the most effective and efficient means possible, allow for all three Courts to share common resources, and provide for flexibility and adaptability to incorporate future changes in technology and court proceedings.*



DEFINITION OF PROBLEM/CHALLENGE:

Located in Northern Virginia, the jurisdiction of Fairfax County is 400 square miles supporting a diverse population that exceeds 1 million residents. Fairfax County’s annual budget of \$6.5 billion is larger than the budgets of several states combined. The 19th Judicial Circuit and District Courts support Fairfax County. The three courts, Circuit Court & Records (CCR), General District Court (GDC), Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC), collectively support close to 400,000 cases per year, which brings an average of 1.5 million visitors to the courthouse each year. The Fairfax County Courthouse is the central hub for a number of disparate organizations supporting the core purpose of Fairfax County Government: *“To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods, and diverse communities of Fairfax County.”*

Fairfax County judicial, legislative and executive management recognized the new courthouse facility offered opportunity, yet presented unique challenges to introduce and resolve how to best integrate modern technologies into Fairfax County court and courtroom processes while meeting the ongoing fiscal and operational challenges. In order to support the increasing citizen and judicial needs, Fairfax County expanded the Fairfax County Courthouse from 325,000 square feet to 575,000 square feet to include 40 courtrooms for three courts, a law library, and offices for various county, state, and constitutional offices. The County recognized and truly understood the importance of having technology available in the courtrooms in order to support the growing judicial needs of the second largest county in the country.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

The executive and strategic solution was to create a unique “Coordinated Court” business model introducing a hybrid organizational structure to balance judicial and executive requirements and centralize technology that impacted multiple courts and county agencies. During courthouse construction, the Courtroom Technology Office (CrTO) was created in partnership between the three Fairfax County Courts — Circuit Court & Records (CCR), the General District Court (GDC), and the Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC) — along with other supporting county and state agencies.

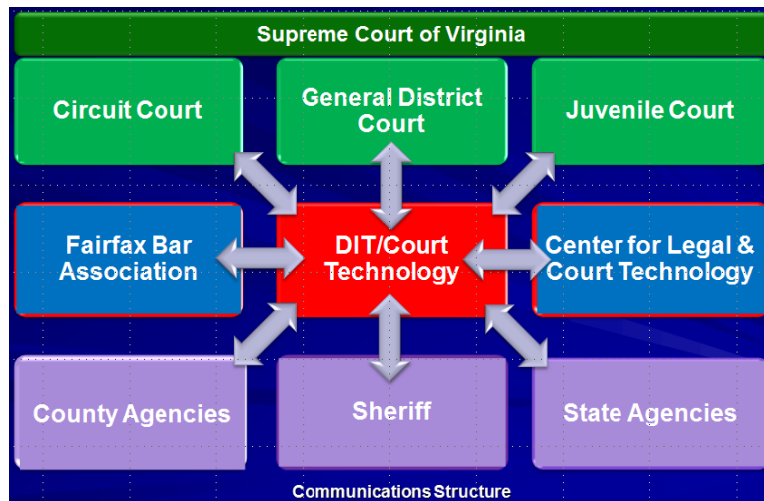
The centralized CrTO collaborates with existing court staff within a matrix team environment which facilitates staff sharing and creates resource opportunities necessary to research, develop and implement the best technology solutions to benefit the county and all three courts. This hybrid structure also recognized the need for certain court IT



functions to remain independent and autonomous. The existing judicial and fiscal challenges required the CrTO staff to develop an innovative and cost effective approach to developing, coordinating, implementing, and maintaining courtroom technology and automated information systems to improve and streamline management and technology operations for 40 operational courtrooms and related support offices. The centralized model identified consistent and standardized technology management included collaborating with multiple courts, facilitating conflicting needs and schedules, and maintaining a consistent, flexible, adaptable, and scalable technical foundation.

The CrTO's primary objectives were at creation and remain today to:

- ❖ Improve citizens' access to the Courts,
- ❖ Facilitate trials and hearings in the most effective and efficient means possible,
- ❖ Allow for all three Courts to share common resources, and
- ❖ Provide for consistency, flexibility, adaptability, and scalability to incorporate future changes in technology and court proceedings.



The CrTO coordinates research, and facilitates the communication of automation and technological enhancements throughout the Fairfax County court system to include the Circuit Court & Records (CCR), General District Court (GDC), Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC), Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, Office of the Sheriff, various county and state agencies, and the Bar Association. Substantial opportunities existed by centralizing courtroom technology between the three courts, and sharing resources and infrastructure.



SOLUTION:

The CrTO is supported by the county Department of Information Technology and provides full-time, dedicated staff to the judiciary in a centralized and cooperative technical and organizational support structure to facilitate clear and concise communication, and maintain a consistent and standard approach to implementing technology. Managed by a Courtroom Technology Officer, the CrTO is chartered through an Executive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under the purview of the Chief Judges, the Clerk of the Courts, and Fairfax County's Chief Technology Officer (CTO). The creation of this hybrid CrTO approach between the courts and the county has proven, by the implementation of 17 new and renovated high-tech courtrooms, a state-of-the-art integrated Courtroom Technology Management System and other new technology projects, how a modern management and organizational approach can be applied to a very institutionalized business model to benefit the business function and the citizens.

The CrTO developed the Courtroom Technology Management System (CTMS), a state-of-the-art courtroom management and control system developed to integrate modern technologies into traditional courtroom activities. The custom built CTMS allows all high-tech courtrooms to share a common infrastructure through a centralized Master Control Room (MCR). The distributed environment provides consistency, standardization, and scalability between the three courts, and is designed to meet future growth and changes in technology. The CTMS provides the capability for:

- ❖ Integrated electronic evidence presentation
- ❖ Laptop audio/video interfaces in multiple locations
- ❖ Video conferencing for arraignments, remote witness, remote judge and secluded witness
- ❖ Electronic court recording, integrated assistive listening and interpretive systems
- ❖ Judges or Clerks control of the technologies from the bench
- ❖ Overflow capacity to observe courtroom activity from another courtroom

All CTMS courtrooms include multiple flat-screen displays allowing the judge, jury and gallery to view unobstructed presentations of evidence with the ability to pause, enhance, annotate and print. The courtrooms contain touch-screen panels for the judge, clerk and users (i.e., attorneys) to manage multiple microphones and video displays located at the judges' bench, clerks' station, court recorder station, attorney tables and podium, jury box and spectator gallery. Prisoner arraignments are conducted on a daily basis both locally and remotely from any of the high-



tech courtrooms saving significant staff and travel time. The evidence presentation system provides for various electronic evidence sources including CD/DVD/VCR, document camera, enhanced x-ray, computer video and multi-audio interface with annotation and printing capabilities.

BENEFITS/SUCCESS:

The success of CTMS validated the implementation of the County's *Coordinated Court's* model and provided the organizational foundation necessary for other courthouse and courtroom projects. During 2011, the CrTO made significant progress with several court-wide projects ready for implementation. In 2012, the CrTO will be extremely busy supporting and maintaining existing high-tech courtrooms, executing and managing a multitude of existing and new projects, in addition to simultaneously rolling out the following critical court-wide projects:

- 1) **Juvenile & Domestic Imaging System (JDIS)** – The JDIS System is a case imaging system for the scanning, retention, and electronic viewing of court documents. JDIS is a custom built Supreme Court of Virginia solution utilizing off-the-shelf software modified to include built-in interfaces with the existing Supreme Court of Virginia (SCV) Case Management System (CMS), and other requirements unique to Fairfax County. Through coordination with the CrTO, Fairfax County will be the first juvenile court in Virginia to implement the system. Following JDRDC, efforts are on-going to implement the application for Fairfax County's General District Court (GDC) and potentially interface with the Circuit Court & Records (CCR) independent case management system.
- 2) **Courtroom Digital Audio Recording (CDAR)** – The CDAR Pilot project utilizes professional-level audio equipment, and specialized hardware and software to record courtroom proceedings. The project established the viability of an enterprise-class solution offering centralized recording, monitoring and system management supporting high-tech courtrooms. The pilot began and continues to successfully record court proceedings in selected pilot courtrooms. During a recent conference, the CDAR project successfully demonstrated recording in a courtroom, and pioneered a new digital court reporting process by utilizing cloud services to provide accurate, same-day transcription services.
- 3) **Enhanced Court Interpreting (ECI)** – The ECI Pilot project utilizes professional-level equipment, hardware and software to improve and enhance the current interpreting infrastructure in selected high-tech courtrooms while providing opportunities to streamline existing business processes. The project will establish the



viability of an enterprise-class interpreting solution supporting the high-tech courtrooms. The project team will address non-tech courtroom in the next phase of this project. The pilot will begin in early 2012.

- 4) **Electronic Docket Displays & Wayfinding** –Collaboration with the Supreme Court led to a shared electronic docket display solutions for the county’s district courts with real-time interfaces and presentation capabilities. Currently a centralized /server based Wayfinding and Self-Help Kiosk system is under review that will allow for reduction of staff efforts required on a daily basis. A managed solution will “broadcast” to electronic wayfinder displays and self-help kiosks information tailored to that location. A centralized solution would be able to provide access from remote locations for management of the information content.
- 5) **Courtroom Renovations** – Courtroom renovations are necessary to modernize obsolete non-tech courtrooms and integrate with the Courtroom Technology Management System (CTMS) to offer integrated evidence presentation, laptop interface, and video teleconference capabilities for hearings, trials and arraignments. Currently, 17 high-tech courtrooms (Circuit Court – 4, General District Court – 4, Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court – 9) are available within the 40 courtroom facility. The Coordinated Courts approach implements the same look and feel in all high-tech courtrooms and provides a consistend and standardized approach to courtroom operations for judges, clerks, attorneys and other users.
- 6) **Data Center Modernization** – A Data Center Modernization Plan is being created to address both long-term and short-term issues with the Courthouse Data Center. The Plan will initiate a comprehensive study via the County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process, and develop a Courthouse Data Center operational master plan. The Courthouse Data Center is shared by multiple courts and county agencies, and provides the necessary physical and mechanical infrastructure to support all business and judicial operations within and around the courthouse. The core components include electrical power and generation, cooling, data storage, control systems and require dedicated management, maintenance and support. These core components do not currently meet the needs of all courthouse stakeholders, and do not provide the necessary redundancy and back-up necessary during emergency situations. Significant upgrades and enhancements are needed to address these concerns.



- 7) **2012 Court Affiliates Conference** – The Fairfax Courts were selected to host the Center for Legal and Court Technologies (CLCT) 2012 Court Affiliates’ Conference in May 2012. Fairfax was selected to share the organizational and technological successes implemented by CTMS and many other technology projects.

All technology projects and initiatives meet the primary objectives to improve citizens’ access to the Courts, facilitate trials and hearings in the most effective and efficient means possible, allow for all three Courts to share common resources, and provide for flexibility and adaptability to incorporate future changes in technology and court proceedings.

