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# Indexing Data Points (# 1, 2/21/2024)

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## Executive Summary

This paper examines the role of indexing in managing and accessing public records efficiently going beyond the standard grantor/grantee, e.g., document type, document number, book and page, file date, legal description, and related documents. As the need for available data evolves, effective indexing methods are indispensable for organizing information, enabling easy retrieval, and enhancing accessibility.

The benefits and hurdles of indexing are addressed based on data points gathered during the recording process. Decisions on indexing specific data points will vary based on the needs of each recording jurisdiction.

Standardizing indexing practices facilitates interoperability across other government databases and platforms.

## Indexing Data Points – Parcel Identification Number (PIN)

Benefits	Hurdles
Offers alternate way for the public to search land records.	Requires relevant county offices' data to be shared if it isn't already integrated.
Adds value and offers innovative services to stakeholders, e.g., new ways to search for, locate and purchase documents.	Adds data entry redundancy if PIN was not previously entered into the Land Records Management Systems (LRMS).
Improves data quality, in linked systems, through multiple validation sources, e.g., assessor's office, GIS, title industry.	Presents a likelihood of errors when PINs are added by multiple offices in separate land records management system, versus a linked system.
Combines and shares data in an enterprise-wide environment where the data connects jurisdictional offices.	Presents a likelihood that when integration is not available, each jurisdictional office uses its own data sets in a siloed system.
Modernizes engagement with the public resulting in reduced foot traffic and fewer phone calls.	Leads to incorrect or incomplete data if PINs are reused for both an historic parcel and a new parcel.

## Indexing Data Points – Notary Information

Benefits	Hurdles
Assists law enforcement with fraud cases by identifying the notary on the document.	Returns large amounts of search results which the LRMS may have difficulty handling.
Assists authorities in identifying fraudulent notaries.	Allows for creation of a fraudulent notary stamp.
Identifies notaries whose commissions have expired.	Presents opportunity for human error.
Provides a deterrent to fraudulent notaries if this information is searchable.	Enables a notary registered with a property recording alert system to receive notifications for each document they notarize, which could lead to a significant influx of notifications.
Allows a notary enrolled in a property recording alert system, to receive a notification for every document they notarize.	

## Indexing Data Points – Secondary Water Rights Number

Benefits	Hurdles
Makes it easier to locate the water rights that have been severed from the land.	Requires special addendum to the document or the state won't recognize the change in the water rights title.

## Indexing Data Points – Non-land Property

Benefits	Hurdles
Traces ownership of a structure on real property.	Requires consistent indexing to conduct a search on the structure.

## Indexing Data Points – Court Information

Benefits	Hurdles
Provides potential references to case information found in court systems.	Hinders the removal of documents which have previously been purchased in bulk, after the document has been expunged in the courts.
Allows searching for judgments that may affect title.	Takes up additional space on the server.
Eliminates the need to pull court files to provide copies.	Requires the LRMS to create a separate index and numbering system for court documents.

## Indexing Data Points – Address

Benefits	Hurdles
Makes it easier for the public to find their own property because people know their address.	Hinders locating addresses changed by government updates.
Provides information for emergency (911) access.	Requires a consistent indexing protocol so address is searchable, e.g., Ave. vs. Avenue (USPS).
	Relies on the address appearing on the deed.
	Requires rural property to have a street address.
	Makes it easier for fraudsters to locate property.

	Requires oversight to ensure duplicate addresses do not occur.
	Requires address match with other government systems.
	Harms protected populations.

## Indexing Data Points – Life Estate

### Benefits

### Hurdles

Makes it easier for a searcher to find a life estate.	None identified.
Assists the taxing authority in maintaining accurate tax rolls.	

## Indexing Data Points – Consideration (cost)

### Benefits

### Hurdles

Helps determine sales ratios for taxing authorities.	Lacks accurate sales cost.
Helps appraisers collect aggregate data on real estate.	Limits legislative consideration availability.

## Indexing Data Points – Document Execution Date

### Benefits

### Hurdles

Allows assessing correct property tax charges for the purchaser.	Presents challenges interpreting document execution date.
Links a mortgage discharge to an original mortgage.	

## Indexing Data Points – Return To

### Benefits

### Hurdles

Determines to whom the document was returned if customer doesn't receive.	None identified.
Justifies address to which documents were returned.	

## Conclusion

Robust indexing practices optimize public records management, foster transparency, and empower stakeholders with timely, accurate, and accessible information critical for decision-making across governmental, legal, and public service domains.

Indexing additional data points provides a tool for searching key information beyond grantor-grantee. Some data points are statutorily required while others are based on jurisdictional practices. Additional indexing may increase staff time, depending on current jurisdictional practices. Recording jurisdictions should evaluate their current and future needs to determine which data points will provide value to their stakeholders.