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Salutations, WAML Colleagues,

What a year it's been and continues to be . . .

While we're all surely fatigued by how the pandemic continues to dominate our lives, I'm again compelled to report some numbers — they're staggering. At the time of writing (late November) recorded cases of COVID-19 have now surpassed 58,000,000 globally. (In my previous message, written in early July 2020, the number of cases globally had just surpassed 12,000,000.) Now the number of cases in the United States *alone* stands above that 12,000,000 mark. Global deaths are now above 1,380,000. (They were ~500,000 back in July.) In the US deaths have reached over 255,000.^[1] (They were at ~130,000 back then.) Let those figures sink in a bit . . .

But there may be good news on the public health horizon. Deployment of a potentially promising vaccine candidate now seems closer than ever.^[2] The vaccine committee of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will be meeting in early December to consider emergency approval of a candidate developed by US-based Pfizer and Germany-based BioNTech.^[3] Optimism should be tempered by still inconclusive evidence of the vaccine's full efficacy. Clinical trials are ongoing. But the eternal takeaway is that, yes, this too shall (one day) pass.

The [WAML 2020 conference](#), held in mid-October, was a pleasant distraction from the myriad stresses we're all under. It was the first official WAML event held entirely online and, despite some non-catastrophic technical hiccups, an overall success. Members of the ad-hoc conference committee — Bruce Godfrey, Susan Powell,



Louise Ratliff, Evan Thornberry, Phil White, Amy Work — forever have my gratitude for coordinating and executing the event. It was a truly collaborative team effort.

Be sure to visit the conference website (</conference/>) over the next few weeks to access the event's video recordings, including the keynote from our new friends at the [Mapping Black California Census Lab](#), and well as all the other expectation-exceeding sessions. Special thanks again go to WAML's valued partner-sponsors — [East View Geospatial](#) and [Historical Information Gatherers](#) — for supporting the 2020 instance of our annual conference. Among the many conference highlights was the scholarship showcase session, during which we were introduced to, and gained firsthand geo-cartographic insights from, this year's three scholarship recipients. They were all impressive and should inspire in the rest of us a shared optimism for the future of our profession as a whole and WAML in particular. That's the fundamental purpose of these scholarships, of course: to ensure that we're encouraging and empowering as many aspiring professionals as possible to enrich our organization and ensure its continued vitality.

On that note, I want to recognize and express my gratitude to Map Librarian Emeritus at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and WAML's founding president, Mr. Stanley Stevens. He recently made a significant contribution to the fund that supports the scholarship program. By doing so, Stan is fortifying WAML with new generations of the up-and-coming map and geospatial library professionals. If you find yourself in a privileged enough position to do so, please consider following Stan's example and donate to the WAML scholarship fund.

No doubt about it: 2020 has been, and will continue to be, a tough year. I'm reluctant to express too much optimism about 2021. But some promising developments do seem to be on the horizon. And, if we take the moment to appreciate things, we invariably find that there's brilliance, camaraderie, generosity, beauty, goodness, and love all around us.

Enjoy the season, everybody. Salutations.

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2020-2021 WAML President
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References

^[1] COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>. Accessed 22 November 2020.

^[2] Callaway, Ewen. (09 November 2020). What Pfizer's landmark COVID vaccine results mean for the pandemic. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-03166-8>. Accessed 22 November 2020.

^[3] FDA News Release (20 November 2020): Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Announces Advisory Committee Meeting to Discuss COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate. Accessed 22 November 2020. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-announces-advisory-committee-meeting-discuss-covid-19-vaccine>

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