In a Changing World, Maintaining Business Continuity Requires Leadership

This article originally appeared in the Fall 2020 issue of ArcNews magazine and is used with permission from Esri.

On March 9, 2020, the public became aware of Ohio's first three confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and not two weeks later, the state recorded its first death from the virus. That set off a chain of events that quickly changed how society in Ohio—let alone the rest of the world—functions, and it altered the way I would lead as manager of Cuyahoga County, Ohio's GIS department.

On March 13, the county ordered all equipped, nonessential employees to work from home. Nonessential county employees without proper equipment were permitted to take up to two weeks of paid leave starting March 16. On March 18, the Cuyahoga County executive ordered all county buildings closed to the public. And on March 22, following the lead of several other states, Ohio governor Mike DeWine issued a statewide stay-at-home order.

As a leader, I knew I needed to communicate to my staff how fluid the situation was and that I empathized with their feelings of uncertainty. I gave them reassurance that we would get through this together. And then I had to quickly adapt to managing a team of GIS professionals working from home, spread across northeastern Ohio.

Many companies and organizations had not prepared for business continuity in the event of a pandemic. Many did not have plans for decentralizing staff to stop the spread of a highly contagious virus. The new work-from-home reality was a culture shift. It took some getting used to and trial and error. The added stress of living through a global pandemic and the uncertainty of what each new day would bring did not make this transition any easier. So at Cuyahoga County, we took it one day at a time, made incremental progress, and have so far gotten through it and even begun to thrive in this new paradigm.

Having regular video conferences can help employees feel like they are still part of a team and working toward a shared vision. To ensure a successful transition to working from home, I made sure that my staff had the hardware, software, and equipment they needed to be effective. I coordinated with my IT department to obtain a computer system and virtual private network (VPN) connection for each of my team members so we could access our GIS licensing, infrastructure, and data. I also made sure everyone on the team had credentials and could work within the security parameters set forth by the county's chief security officer.

I then set out to establish effective rules for communicating. In a typical office environment, I got to see my employees every day. I was able to check in with them to see how their weekends went, if they needed my assistance, and how they were progressing on work assignments. Communication in the office was personal and seamless. But working in different locations? That did not afford them nor me that comfort, so we had to come up with a...
communication plan. What platforms were we going to use? What expectations would we have for communication? How frequently were we going to meet?

For our instant communication needs, we decided to use our Slack account. To stay organized, we set up specific channels for segmenting our communication by topic. Channels proved extremely helpful when the whole team attended the 2020 Esri User Conference. Slack allowed us to have one-on-one chat channels for personal communication, too. Setting up a video conferencing platform was not as straightforward, however. In the beginning, we only had Cisco Webex, so we used that. As time went on, we gained access to Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Slack video conferencing. We have test-driven each video app, but none of them meet all our needs, so we remain flexible while using Teams for most of our meetings.

In evaluating what everyone’s expectations were for communication, I knew that I did not want to micromanage my staff. We have built trust working together in the office, and I always want to empower my team members to act professionally. I understand that, when working from home, staff need flexibility to walk the dog, greet the plumber, or care for children. All I expect is that everyone knows each team member’s schedule and availability. We post our schedules in our Time and Attendance channel on Slack, and we keep notes of our hours and work completed.

In terms of meeting frequency, I felt that having predictable video conferences would help my employees feel like they were still part of a team and working toward a shared vision. We continued to hold a staff meeting and a strategic planning session once a week. We also introduced Breakfast with CEGIS (Cuyahoga Enterprise GIS), a two-hour meeting that takes place once a week wherein a team member educates the rest of the group on county GIS processes, procedures, or best practices. By sharing knowledge like this, we are no longer dependent on one person in a crisis; we have more business continuity.

Once I made sure everyone had the tools they needed to work from home and we had a communication plan in place, I followed five basic principles to manage my team effectively.

- **Encourage setting parameters, such as a dedicated work space, and seeking work-life balance.** I have a desk in my basement, where I set up my workstation. I now call this my office. My wife and two sons know that when I am in the basement, I am at work. I recommend establishing a dedicated space for work only—even if it is a desk in the corner of the living room or bedroom. This helps separate work life from home life, which, I have found, is the key to finding clarity of purpose while working from home.

- **Have 360 degrees of accountability.** Understanding what everyone is working on and setting goals and deadlines helps my team be productive and stay on task. Just because I cannot see my team members doing the work does not mean they are not being productive. One of the special things about working in GIS is that it allows us to see progress in many ways, whether it is in data maintenance or the steady creation of a map or app. I trust my team’s professionalism, which is essential for accountability.

- **Invite flexible work schedules.** For my team, work hours are normally between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. But working from home has changed that. It has allowed my team to experiment with nontypical schedules, such as working four 10-hour days in a week or trying out four 9-hour days with a half-day Friday. This works because my team members and I communicate our plans with each other, especially any variations in our schedules.

- **Listen to team members and open sincere lines of communication.** Feeling socially isolated is legitimate when working from home. So when I talk to my staff, I check on their well-being. I need to know that they are having human contact, whether virtually or in person, while following social distancing regulations. My team also finds time to chat about non-work-related issues on Slack, and I often welcome tangents during video calls to add a sense of normalcy to work. As a manager, I also make myself available for one-on-one conversations, which is key to team building.

- **Celebrate successes.** Giving credit where credit is due is important. My team members deserve a tremendous amount of approbation for their flexibility and adaptability in transitioning from a traditional and institutional office environment to working from home. During these uncertain times, they have stayed positive and kept pressing forward. Without great employees, I would not have a highly successful GIS department. In this spirit, I would like to recognize senior analyst Dan Giersz, GIS analyst Jordan Abbott, GIS analyst Joe Milan, GIS technician Matt McGuire, and GIS technician Justin Haynes for continuing to provide excellent service to the residents of Cuyahoga County during this unprecedented time.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Thomas Fisher is the enterprise geospatial technologies administrator for Cuyahoga County, Ohio. He has more than 25 years of experience in public and private sector GIS and currently serves on the board of directors for the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA).

Since 2007, URISA leaders have been contributing a column to Esri’s ArcNews publication, focused on all aspects of GIS management. To read other articles in the Managing GIS series, click here. If you are interested in writing an upcoming URISA Managing GIS column, please contact Wendy Nelson.
How to be an Effective Moderator

Contributed by URISA's Professional Education Committee
Like so many others, do you find yourself on one teleconference after another these days? Are they moderated? Have you been asked to moderate a webinar, workshop, panel discussion, or presentation but aren’t sure where to start or how to be more effective? Here are some tips and tricks from the URISA Professional Education Committee to help you get started!

BEFORE OTHER ATTENDEES JOIN THE CALL
Remember to ask the presenter how much time they expect to present!
If the call is supposed to last one hour, some presenters will have 45 minutes of content leaving time for questions, others will have 20 minutes leaving time for discussion, and others will have 120 minutes of content, leaving the timekeeping to you! It’s best to clarify with your presenter before they get started, so you can give them a 5 minute warning when appropriate (and if they would like that warning over chat or through a quick audible interruption).

Remember to clarify the presenter’s preference about questions and attendee interaction!
Some presenters prefer to present without interruptions and then answer questions in the remaining time; others prefer to have an ongoing dialogue. When you clarify the expected length of the presentation, it’s good to also assess which style of interaction your speaker prefers. Ask before the other attendees join so you’re prepared.

Remember to check the pronunciation of the speaker’s name and any unfamiliar words in their bio!
Don’t presume you know how a name should be pronounced. It’s always best to ask and write down the pronunciation phonetically to help you remember. If the speaker provided a bio, read through it before the call starts to make sure you know how each word should be pronounced and ask the speaker for clarification (especially with acronyms or initialisms).

STARTING THE CALL
Remember to introduce yourself at the beginning and either have your camera on, or have a photo!
With reduced in-person interactions, visual association is still essential. By letting attendees associate your voice with your image, you will help them create a more lasting impression of you.

Remember to ask others to mute themselves, if appropriate, or to use meeting functions to mute attendees when needed!
Your role is to aid the speaker in truly having the floor, so reducing background noise is one of your jobs.

Remember to introduce the speaker and adjust their bio length, if needed, based on their expected presentation time!
If you just learned that the speaker has 59 minutes worth of presentation for a one hour slot, don’t read a four paragraph bio to introduce the speaker. Adjust the length of their bio, even down to their affiliation (title/company), to help accommodate their content. If they only expect to take 45 minutes of a one hour slot, be sure to read their entire bio (presuming it’s a reasonable length), as it’s what they want attendees to know about themselves and may help connect attendees to the content.

DURING THE CALL
Remember that folks can see you, even if you can’t see yourself, when you have your camera turned on!
While it’s easy to forget you’re on camera if you have the speaker pinned, others may have you pinned or all participants on their screen, so the usual on-camera advice applies while you have your camera turned on.

Be an active listener! Lean forward. Smile, if appropriate. Nod in agreement or disagreement.
Don’t groom yourself (ie, don’t touch your face or play with your hair).
Don’t make distracting movements (ie, don’t stretch or swivel in your chair). Don’t eat.
If you need to do any of these things, turn off your camera first to limit the distraction to attendees!
If it’s the nth call of the day and you’re tired, or your bandwidth is limited, turn off your camera when not speaking – it’s better to only been seen at your best than caught off guard.

Remember to mute yourself when not speaking!
Your sneeze, while uncontrollable, will still interrupt the speaker… and it’s just polite to reduce noise for whomever is speaking.

Remember to listen during the presentation to come up with one or two questions for the speaker, in case no attendees have any!

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A moderator hopes that attendees will have questions for the speaker, but sometimes, when you ask if there are any questions, there’s silence. That’s your cue to ask a question to get the conversation going… and it’s best when the question hasn’t been already answered during the presentation!

**WRAPPING UP**

*Remember to quickly summarize the speaker and title of talk once the presenter is finished!*

If attendees joined the presentation, meeting, or webinar after introductions were made, it’s polite to provide the speaker’s name and presentation title or quick, one-sentence overview of what was just presented before asking for questions. This helps with accessibility, as well.

*Remember to ask for questions and instruct attendees about the preferred method to pose them!*

Would you like attendees to unmute and ask their questions? Or would you like them to use the Q&A function? Maybe the Chat function? Clarify which method is preferred and quickly explain how to access the feature (i.e., “if you hover your mouse toward the bottom of the meeting window, the control menu will appear and you’ll see the Q&A button in the middle”). If you’re having attendees enter their questions into Chat or Q&A, read the question aloud to capture on the audio recording. If you’ve ever watched a recorded webinar, it can be hard to follow along if the question asked isn’t read for all listening.

*Remember to ask the speaker and the attendees!*

It’s the end of the call and you’re excited it went so well. Don’t forget to thank BOTH the speaker for an interesting presentation (always the safest word – if you use other descriptors, make sure they apply and aren’t just gratuitous) and the attendees for tuning in.

**AFTER THE CALL**

*Remember to send a thank you email to your speaker!*

Life is busy, as you know. Your speaker most likely spent a significant amount of time preparing for the call you just had. As a moderator, it’s polite to send a quick email thanking the speaker for their time and expressing your gratitude that they were willing to share their expertise!

If you have questions or would like to share your own tips and tricks, please post them in URISA Connect “GIS Leadership & Management” Community!

**About URISA’s Professional Education Committee:** PEC is constantly producing new educational products and is always seeking volunteers interested in furthering its goal to support the GIS profession. Do you enjoy content development, writing, material review, or presenting? If so, PEC wants to hear from you now; find us on URISA Connect!

**RFP Distribution**

URISA members, remember that URISA will distribute your RFP/RFQ announcements to our corporate and business members at no charge. Simply email your announcement to info@urisa.org (Subject: RFP Service) and we’ll send it right out for you!

**Remember to promote upcoming events, if applicable!**

At this point, if you’re not the host, you may turn the call back over to the host for any final words. If you’re serving in both roles, now’s a good time to remind attendees of what’s upcoming – the next meeting, the next workshop, the next webinar, etc.

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There Is No Vaccine For Your Company Culture

4 “musts” for leading through times of change
by Jason V. Barger

There is no magic pill, button or wand that you wave that will quickly fix or treat the ails of your culture. We live in an instant gratification world where people/employees/leaders want things to change for the better immediately. They want the negativity, dysfunction and toxic elements of the organization to be eradicated overnight. But when it comes to your company culture there is no vaccine!

However, developing people and culture isn’t a drive-thru pharmacy. It takes time. It’s a process. It requires intentional rehab and development of how we show up as leaders and the culture we create with those around us. It takes commitment, discipline and focus.

Culture is dynamic which means it is being shaped moment by moment every single day by the way we Think, Act and Interact. Every member of your cultural ecosystem impacts the culture each moment and adds or detracts from the culture with their thoughts, actions and interactions. The best leaders and organizations realize that in a world that is changing quickly and where it is often easier to disengage, disconnect and become disillusioned or even disgruntled, they must have a proactive strategy to align the minds and hearts of their people.

The best team cultures don’t just magically happen, they are intentionally designed and led along the culture-shaping process. It’s not reactionary, it’s proactive. The best team cultures proactively teach, practice, rehab and work on developing the mindsets and behaviors throughout their ecosystem.

4 “musts” for leading your culture through times of change:
1. **Name It** — You must be able to name what is working and what isn’t working within your culture. Honestly. It’s not a time for blowing smoke or making excuses, the best teams have the ability to be honest with one another and name the very best of their culture and spot the areas that are troubling. Only after we are able to name the current state of our culture are we able to move the culture forward.

2. **Define It** — If you can’t describe the culture you are trying to create in the future than you can’t be surprised when it doesn’t exist. Language Drives Behavior. This is why the most successful and compelling teams and cultures have Values language that is clearly defined and linked to action and behavior. They have a vision for the future culture they want to create and clearly define the values they believe will guide them in that direction. Values become a compass for their journey not a poster on the wall.

3. **Plan It** — The word culture gets thrown around very loosely by many leaders and within some organizations and then only becomes talk. It becomes vague and the words do not line up with action. The best leaders and organizations realize they need a cultural strategy and plan of attack. Culture is not an “add on” to the work you do, it is everything. So what’s the plan?

4. **Anchor It** — Teams and organizations that lead significant culture change know they must anchor the values of their culture in everything they do. The vision they have for the future and the values that will guide them there become a living and breathing element for the ways in which they hire, onboard, develop emerging leaders, do performance evaluations, lead meetings and raise the bar on leadership throughout every level.

So, is your culture waiting for a magic vaccine or are you proactively rehabbing the culture you want?

The best cultures don’t just magically happen. They are grown, developed, cultivated and led with intentionality. The process for developing high-performing and engaged cultures never stops and the best leaders, teams and organizations are committed to the continuous journey of development, vision, communication, engagement, authenticity, and action. The best leaders invest in their cultures and realize the health of the organization is an ongoing process that never stops.

At your next visit to your Doctor you’re welcome to get the vaccine, but for your company culture, remember, there is no vaccine for that!

About the Author:

Jason V. Barger is the globally-celebrated author of Thermostat Cultures, ReMember and Step Back from the Baggage Claim as well as the host of The Thermostat podcast. As Founder of Step Back Leadership Consulting, he is a coveted keynote speaker, leadership coach and organizational consultant who is committed to engaging the minds and hearts of people and growing compelling cultures. Learn more at JasonVBarger.com
In this edition of the Committee Column we focus on the Community Resilience Committee.

The topic of community resilience grows each year, providing resources, data, and information to communities that support their resilience needs. As the information grows, the community’s ability to capture the necessary information they need becomes more difficult. Community resilience touches an array of topics including climate change, disasters, and social equity. Disasters, for example, affect communities and originate from a wide range of sources, including floods, fires, earthquakes or hurricanes; to cyber, nuclear or other forms of terrorism; to disease outbreaks; to political unrest and more. The ability for communities to be resilient is in large part dependent on having knowledge about the buildings, infrastructure, population and environment that makes up the community. While GIS professionals have long worked to develop resources, there remain many challenges that must be overcome to fully realize the potential GIS offers for improving community resilience.

The Community Resilience Committee leverages and expands on the work of other GIS stakeholder groups over recent years to address the following questions.

• What datasets need to be collected to inform aspects of community resilience that are currently not available? (e.g. data that informs social aspects of resilience)
• What are the current impediments to data collection and dissemination that support community resilience and what best practices could be implemented that address these issues?
• What mechanisms exist or can be developed to increase awareness and collaboration opportunities between resilience researchers and GIS practitioners?
• How can private GIS providers work effectively with public and non-profit entities to create communities that are more resilient?

The Community Resilience Committee presently has 4 Working Groups. The Partnerships and Communications Working Group focuses on demonstrating the role of geospatial data in public, private, academic, and non-profit partnerships in creating resilient communities, and providing communication techniques for local communities to consider within emergency preparedness and community resilience planning. The purpose of the Best Practices Working Group is to identify best practices to help stakeholders implement and operationalize community resilience approaches.

The committee recently created two new working groups. The Climate Change and Climate Equity Working Group promotes and enhances climate equity by empowering communities in applications of geospatial data and methods to improve understanding and inform policy and practice. Specifically, the working group focuses on social, cultural, racial and ecological aspects of climate justice and equity. Approaches include consideration of climate action mitigation and adaptation strategies which support the development of community capacity, sustainability, and resilience to climate change. Geospatial methods may proactively assess and promote policy and action essential in addressing these issues. As a leading association of geospatial professionals, URISA will work with like-minded organizations around the globe to support this mission.

The second working group recently formed, Community Resilience and Sectoral Dependencies, aims to identify and disseminate best practices to ensure resilience of communities and infrastructures. While resilience is not a new concept, best practices in place to make communities and infrastructures resilient rarely account for concurrent high risk/low probability events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and high risk/high probability events like the wildfires that have been raging across the United States’ west coast. The group will work with stakeholders to identify current state of infrastructure protection plans, limitations and advantages of these plans, and potential path forward for best practices based on existing plans and policies.

See https://www.urisa.org/communityresilience for more details on these working groups.
Committee membership is restricted to URISA members. However, the committee often solicits and welcomes the input of subject matter experts who are not URISA members. The Committee leadership meets on a monthly basis. Workgroups meet monthly or on an as needed basis depending on the tasks they are supporting. The Community Resilience Committee encourages the engagement of individuals who may be interested in supporting a short term, specific task or who wish to play an ongoing role by serving on a workgroup. Those wishing to become engaged with this committee should ideally have knowledge and skills related to the goals of the Committee so that they can actively contribute. Questions about the work of the Committee or becoming involved with the Committee should be directed to the Committee chair, Shane Hubbard, at sahubbard@wisc.edu.

Given the tremendous social and economic impacts that the COVID-19 has had/is having on our communities, it is more important now than ever before that the geospatial community is actively involved with helping communities become more resilient to disasters. URISA, through the activities conducted and knowledge produced by its Community Resilience Committee, GISCorps, COVID-19 Resource Page (https://www.urisa.org/coronavirus), along with the efforts of other individuals and organization in the geospatial community, are vital if we are to reach this critical goal.

The Compliance Officer of URISA is appointed by the Board to provide an avenue to help ensure compliance with the association’s Bylaws which require URISA “directors, officers, and employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities”. The Policy Manual notes that employees and representatives of URISA “must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling [their] responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations”. The Compliance Officer oversees the implementation of the organization’s Whistleblower Policy which is codified as Section 309 of the Bylaws.

The Compliance Officer must be a URISA member. There is no larger committee. There are no workgroups or subcommittees. There are no regularly scheduled meetings.

Any violations or suspected violations of policy or violations of the expected high standards of business and personal ethics in in the conduct of duties and responsibilities related to URISA should be reported. Employees are encouraged to report any directly to the Executive Director although they may instead be reported to the Compliance Officer. Any Director or officer should report any violations or possible violations to the Compliance Officer. The Compliance Officer “has specific and exclusive responsibility to investigate all reported concerns and complaints”.

The Compliance Officer may advise the Executive Director and/or President of URISA of any investigation, and also has direct access to the Executive Committee. In cases where a concern or complaint concerns accounting practices, internal controls, or auditing, the Compliance Officer is responsible for notifying the Finance Committee in writing of the complaint and working with the Finance Committee to resolve the matter. And, if the complaint involves a Geographic Information Systems Professional (GISP), the Compliance Officer is also to forward the information to the Ethics Officer of the GIS Certification Institute.

When a complaint is submitted, the Compliance Officer is responsible for acknowledging the receipt of the written complaint or concern within 5 business days. The Compliance Officer is also charged with performing a prompt investigation of any such complaint.

The Compliance Officer is responsible for report compliance activity to the Executive Committee on an annual basis.

Concerns and complaints may be submitted on a confidential basis or may be submitted anonymously. Complaints and subsequent investigations are kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

Anyone filing a complaint must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation has occurred.

In this edition of the Committee Column we focus on the URISA Compliance Officer.
“It is amazing that this is only the second virtual class that ya’ll have done. It looks like ya’ll have done virtual courses for many years. Great job.”

“Very beneficial for my role and development!”

“Wow! Lots of great information. I’m fried :-))”

“Honestly, this has been one of, if not the best, leadership course I have ever had.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the GLA! The instructors/speakers were professional and well spoken. Excellent material covered as well as challenges to being GIS leaders/ managers (or both)!“

Thanks to the participants and instructors for another positive experience. We have three in-person GLAs on the calendar in 2021 and have a feeling that each will be extremely well-attended:
- Minneapolis, Minnesota - June 7-11, 2021
- Portland, Oregon - August 16-20, 2021
- St. Petersburg, Florida - November 8-12, 2021

And because of the huge demand for more virtual GLAs, we will likely offer another in February. Stay tuned!
2021 GIS/Valuation Technologies Conference Update

Annual Conference for Professionals in Property Assessment, Tax Administration, Mapping and Information Technology

After we had to cancel this year’s GIS/ValTech Conference which was scheduled in Louisville in late March, we were hopeful that an in-person could happen in 2021.

Unfortunately, travel and social distancing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic are likely continuing through the first quarter of 2021. Further, the health and safety of our communities remains of utmost importance. In light of these circumstances, URISA and IAAO have made the decision to move forward with a virtual GIS/Valuation Conference in 2021. The 24th annual conference will take place in late March (specific dates forthcoming).

The conference planning committee, led by Dan Fasteen, PhD (Aumentum Technologies), Alex Hepp (Cyclomedia), and Kevin Keene (City of Philadelphia) have reached out to those individuals who were planning to present at the 2020 event in order to determine their willingness to do so during a virtual event (either the planned topic or a revised submission). We will solicit additional presentations from individuals to address some of the most important topics facing our professions during this time (i.e. equity, pandemic, economic).

Both URISA and IAAO have successfully hosted virtual conferences and training events during the past year and will build on our experiences and those of our participants and sponsors to create a valuable program. **Stay tuned for additional information, specific dates, and opportunities to participate.**

- 2021 Conference Chair: Dan Fasteen, Aumentum Technologies
- 2021 Program Chair: Alex Hepp, Cyclomedia
- 2021 Associate Program Chair: Kevin Keene, City of Philadelphia

Note that we are working closely with the Hilton Riverfront New Orleans to confirm new dates for an in-person 25th annual GIS/Valuation Technologies Conference in 2022, and plan to return to Louisville, the site of our 2020 conference which was cancelled, in 2023.

Are you on social media? URISA is (except for Instagram... does anyone want to volunteer to take that on?)

- Join our Facebook Group & Like/Follow the URISA Page
- Join our LinkedIn Group & Follow the URISA Page
- Follow URISA on Twitter

**URISA’s GISCOrps:**
- Join the Facebook Group & Like/Follow the URISA GISCOrps Page
- Follow the GISCOrps LinkedIn Page
- Follow GISCOrps on Twitter

**URISA’s Vanguard Cabinet:**
- Join the Facebook Group & Like/Follow the URISA Vanguard Cabinet Page
- Follow the VC LinkedIn Page
- Follow the Vanguard Cabinet on Twitter

And there are tons of URISA Chapters on Social Media. We'll start a laundry list soon, but if you search for “URISA” in any of the platforms, chapter accounts pop up.
Seasonal Reflections

I have looked forward eagerly to this time of the year for as long as I can remember. I enjoy the decorations and holiday lights that brighten the city. I am a big fan of holiday music – old and new. I relish the delicious food and wonderful holiday treats. I even love the changing weather—which in Indiana means a transition from beautiful fall leaves and comfortable temperatures to cold and heavy coats. Most of all I appreciate the fact that this time of year offers an opportunity to reflect on the things for which I should be thankful.

While decorations, music, great food, and winter weather are still a part of this season, these past months have often been defined by political turmoil, social injustice, and loss for so many people. In a year like 2020, finding things to be grateful and happy about is more important than ever. Many of us know people who have lost friends or relatives or who have suffered loss of a job due to COVID-19. All of us have been impacted by the pandemic, even if it is only by the inconvenience of having to wear a facemask when around others. While I am grateful to be in a position to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic through such as simple act, I still am amazed that I would ever experience a time in my life when facemasks would become more than a drab form designed more for functionality than for aesthetics. Now, you can purchase a facemask in a style suitable for nearly every occasion and hobby.

Even with the turmoil that this year has offered, there are many things for which I am grateful. I am blessed with a wonderful family, good health, and a job that I enjoy. I have friends and colleagues whom I have been able to talk with many times over the last few months. Sometimes those conversations have been about professional topics. Just as often they have been casual chats in which we have shared experiences and discussed common interests, as friends often do. Many of those relationships came about as a direct result of my being a member of URISA. Since joining URISA I have gotten to know dozens of people from communities across the globe. Many of these I met at one of URISA’s many social events. Others have served on committees such as the Core Docs Committee, Professional Education Committee, or Community Resilience Committee. In many instances, our conversations have led to ideas and products that benefit all URISA members as well as other professionals who apply information technologies to do good. I am also grateful to know that my experiences with making friends and finding new collaborators are not unique. I frequently hear stories like mine from other URISA members.

I want to share some information with you about what you can expect as a URISA member over the coming months. URISA’s leadership is committed to supporting its members, and this year we have a number of priorities toward that end. Among them is ensuring that all members are informed on a regular basis about what the Board as well as URISA’s committees are doing to support the membership. We also want to make sure that everyone is aware of the ongoing opportunities to get involved in the dozens of activities, both underway and planned, occurring within our organization. I encourage you to become involved in these activities. You will make new friends and you will make a difference, easily one of the greatest benefits of being a URISA member.

In the next few weeks, we will be implementing several new initiatives in line with these objectives. Be sure to remain current with URISA’s many resources, including its website, URISA Connect, and our newsletters, so that you can benefit from them as they are rolled out.

Best wishes for a pleasant holiday season. I look forward to working with you toward a successful and productive 2021.
URISA wishes you and yours a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season.

Looking forward to a better 2021 for all URISA members and friends!
PROVIDE
Mapping for recovery, rescue operations and development in underprivileged countries; analysis, cartography, app development, needs assessments, and technical workshops

RESPOND
Coordinating and mobilizing volunteer services to provide humanitarian, recovery and disaster relief assistance; hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, cyclones

CARE
Over 1500 volunteers, completing over 200 missions in 66 countries, contributing over 60,000 hours

FUND
Travel costs for volunteers
Recruitment of volunteers
Technology, communication and outreach
Emergency assistance fund

Your charitable donations today can help us continue our mission to assist impoverished communities and provide global disaster relief. GISCorps, a 501c3 Charitable Organization, is funded by donations and volunteers. Donate online www.giscorps.org
Welcome New URISA Members

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<th>URISA Educational Institution</th>
<th>URISA Government Agency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bienvenido Alonzo, GISP</td>
<td>Rick Engineering—San Diego, CA</td>
<td>City of Huntington Beach—Huntington Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Kevin Baker</td>
<td>Michael Baker International—Moon Twp, PA</td>
<td>City of Saint John—Saint John, NB Canada</td>
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<td>Samuel Ball</td>
<td>Columbia County Board of Commissioners—Evans, GA</td>
<td>Moulton Niguel Water District—Laguna Niguel, CA</td>
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<td>Tyler Behle</td>
<td>Louisiana Department of Health—Baton Rouge, LA</td>
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<td>Andrew Berens, GISP</td>
<td>DevOps.io—Durango, CO</td>
<td>Spotsylvania County—Spotsylvania, VA</td>
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<td>Robert Bergstrom, GISP</td>
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<td>Tanya Bilis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alison Blackstock, GISP</td>
<td>WorleyParsons Canada—Calgary, AB Canada</td>
<td>Coordinating and mobilizing volunteer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matthew Branagh</td>
<td>Cranbrook, BC Canada</td>
<td>Recruitment of volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Brown</td>
<td>Tulalip Tribes of Washington—Tulalip, WA</td>
<td>Travel costs for volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Cerqueira</td>
<td>Calgary, AB Canada</td>
<td>GIS Professionals Volunteering for a better world.</td>
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<td>Jonas Chanh</td>
<td>City of Clovis—Clovis, CA</td>
<td>Emergency assistance fund</td>
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<td>Drew Chritleton</td>
<td>Spotsylvania County—Spotsylvania, VA</td>
<td>Technology, communication</td>
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<td>Nancy Church</td>
<td>Volusia County—Deland, FL</td>
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<td>Zach Collier</td>
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<td>Alexander Dudas</td>
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<td>Jessica Echavarria</td>
<td>Estri—North Reading, MA</td>
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<td>Ulises Feliçiano Troche, GISP</td>
<td>Municipal Revenue Collection Center—Cayey, PR</td>
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<td>Donald Swanson</td>
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<td>Karl Terrey</td>
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</table>
Save the Date!
We are all hoping that we can meet in person in Baltimore this October for GIS-Pro 2021. Conference planning will begin soon with a Call for Presentation Proposals, so start thinking about what you might like to share. We know that anything can happen between now and then and that travel will likely still be a concern/issue. We will certainly incorporate some sort of virtual component to the conference next Fall. Stay safe!

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Missouri Dept of Conservation — Columbia MO

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Metro — Portland OR
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County of Maui Dept of Finance Real Property Assessment
Division — Kahului HI
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Cuyahoga County — Cleveland OH
Dorchester County — Saint George SC
Forsyth County — Cumming GA
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Prince William County — Prince William VA
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Skagit County — Mount Vernon WA
Spotsylvania County—Spotsylvania, VA
St. Johns County — Saint Augustine FL
Strathcona County — Sherwood Park AB Canada
Volasia County—Deland, FL
Wasco County — The Dalles OR
York County—York, SC

Municipal
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City of Bozeman — Bozeman MT
City of Brentwood — Brentwood TN
City of Burlington NC — Burlington NC
City of Cape Coral—Cape Coral, FL
City of Charleston—Charleston, SC
City of Clovis — Clovis CA
City of Hoover — Hoover AL
City of Huntington Beach—Huntington Beach, CA
City of Largo — Largo FL
City of Las Cruces—Las Cruces, NM
City of Lawrence — Lawrence KS
City of Leduc — Leduc AB Canada
City of Manteca — Manteca CA
City of Mobile — Mobile AL
City of Newport News — Newport News VA
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City of Saint John—Saint John, NB Canada
City of Suffolk, Virginia — Suffolk VA
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City of Victoria — Victoria TX
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City of Wilmington — Wilmington NC
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Town of Collierville — Collierville TN
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Town of Flower Mound — Flower Mound TX
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Town of York — York ME
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March, 2021
VIRTUAL GIS/Valuation Technologies Conference

June 7-11, 2021
URISA GIS Leadership Academy
Minneapolis, Minnesota

August 16-20, 2021
URISA GIS Leadership Academy
Portland, Oregon

November 8-12, 2021
URISA GIS Leadership Academy
St. Petersburg, Florida

October 3-6, 2021
GIS-Pro 2021
Baltimore, Maryland

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