

## **Editorial Committee Meeting Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online MINUTES**

**Mennonite Heritage Centre  
Winnipeg  
2001 May 4-5; Friday, Saturday**

Present: Abe Dueck, Bert Friesen (Chair), David Giesbrecht, Alf Redekopp,  
Ted Regehr, Sam Steiner, Richard Thiessen, Victor Wiebe (Recording),  
Regrets: Linda Huebert Hecht

1. Opening remarks: Bert Friesen opened with prayer.
2. Review of minutes of previous meeting of 29 - 30 November 2000: Accepted as circulated.
3. Review of agenda: Two new items were added to Agenda item 4; item, 4.1 on the XML coding and 4.2 on the text of "Who are the Mennonite?" .
4. Review of web site design and related issues to the site: Sam Distributed a report WEBTRENDS: Default Report: Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (2 May 2001, 10pp.) This report gives statistics on visits to the web site for the 14 month period 3 April 2000 to 2 May 2001. It shows significant and continued growth in the number of visitors. On average there are 603 visitors per day and these visits are 15 minutes in length. The highest number of hits in one day was in March 2001 with over 10,000. Sam speculated that this was probably a visit from a robot indexer. The most requested articles are Conestoga Wagon Amish Dress. Again Sam speculated that school children working on projects are possible the most frequent visitor type. Just over 115,000 unique visitors consulted the site in the reporting period.

Bert reported on the consultation process on web development. The first two rounds resulted in 100% response from the Editorial Committee but in the third round a number did not participate. Bert's conclusion is that the consultation process works well if it is not too long. The new web design is in place and this met with universal approval. All the resources, like the Style Sheet, are accessible from the Web site and through the Site Map. Printed copies of the Style Sheet should also be available for distribution to anyone asking. Sam asked: "Should the search page be simple as it is now or should other features, like 'What's new' also be there?" Ted suggested that we keep it simple. Victor raised the issue of the picture on the home page of our site separating the phrases "Welcome to the" and "Mennonite Historical Society of Canada" since the last phrase is often pushed to the next screen. Sam will look into this. Sam has prepared a nice selection of illustrations but captions for the pictures would be worthwhile. Sam explained the problem of using a random pick of encyclopedia article illustration disconnected from the articles and that captions are just not easy to incorporate. One suggestion was to include a caption in the image scanning process.

4.1 XML coding. The document Draft: XML Description (2 pp.) prepared by Bert, Richard and Sam was distributed. Considerable discussion followed. Bert explained that XML coding is a more sophisticated form of HTML and is now used extensively by web developers. XML converts plain text of encyclopedia articles into a database because XML tags data strings with information on the kind of data presented, for example the number 1878 could be codes as a date or the number of immigrants. Very much improved web search tools are starting to emerge from programmers which will make full use of XML coding. The reason to consider this change is that we are on the verge of adding a lot of new information articles and we need to plan for changes and improvements that may occur in the near future.

Group Three is to look at the tools for XML tagging and report back at the next meeting. They will look at the John R. Dyck biography entry to see how it could be tagged and what tags to define.

4.2 Who are the Mennonites? A previously distributed, revised text, suggested by Victor, for opening part of the feature "Who are the Mennonites?" was discussed. Ted suggested that if characteristics of Mennonites were to be listed then the idea of "Lordship of Christ" in a life of radical discipleship must also be included. A number of members indicated the complex nature of trying to define exactly who is a Mennonite and who is not. In addition any description may have problems with religious jargon. Abe , David and Victor were asked to prepare a draft for discussion at the next meeting.

5. Review of each provincial subgroup: formation/members, agenda, assignments undertaken as it relates to content: Bert specifically asked for Provincial information about: list of people for biographies, representation across Mennonite groups, and institutional assignments.

David reported on B.C. They are developing an extensive list of people for biographies. They are quite representative across different Mennonite groups but B.C. is lagging a bit behind their goals of institutional articles.

Ted reported on Alberta. Contact has been made with writers of institutional articles. Some effort to get more M.B. participation may yet be needed. There are a few problems to get a balanced list of people for biographies. Ted is well on the way in preparing biographies for the leaders of the North West Conference but raised the issue of people who have been termed "New Mennonites" but who may indeed not be Mennonites at all.

Victor reported on Saskatchewan. An lengthy list of people for biographies has been prepared. This list includes almost all ordained pastors, and some others as well. We have some coverage of most Saskatchewan groups but need more. Ted suggested Menno Martins who could help with the M.B. connections. We are lagging behind working on institutional articles.

Abe reported on Manitoba. The Manitoba group has concentrated on the project of developing a fund raising strategy and will work on biographies a bit later. They have completed a number of institutional articles and have reasonably good representation across different Mennonite groups.

Sam reported on Ontario. They have not yet had a formal meeting but already have developed a very large number of names for biographical entries. Ontario has a lot of church historians who are working on different topics and there is a lot of information readily available. Sam expects to do a lot of writing starting in the summer of 2002 when he gets a sabbatical.

Bert suggested that we work on developing our provincial sub-groups. Further, that we formalize their membership, follow up on assignments of institutional articles and start to assign biographical topics. David raised the issues of Quebec and Maritime Mennonites. Some group should be looking at these areas. Sam indicated that the Ontario group could cover Quebec since the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada already included Quebec in the Mennonite Church but M.B. participation and the Maritimes still needs some consideration.

Some discussion focused on the issue of who is worthy to include and should non-Mennonites who impacted Mennonites be also included. This will require some further analysis but the general feeling was to be inclusive for now. If we get a good well written biography it should be added to the encyclopedia.

### **Saturday 5 May.**

Bert again opened the meeting with prayer.

6. Review of editorial process: revisions to Style Sheet for various types of content, submission process, checking process, etc. Bert pointed out that we are at a critical phased for all the old encyclopedia information has been added but now we are starting on the process of adding many new articles. We have to go through the editorial process in a timely fashion and need to be certain of the proper editorial process and editorial tools. Bert suggested that the local provincial sub-groups act as editorial guides in the preparation of new articles. In the first instance, the person who recruits an article writer should be a local resource and the first person in the line of the review process. This recruiter could help the writer with the first draft, with resources and deadlines, check facts, and see that the article complies with the Style Sheet. Next the local provincial sub-group could review the article for style and consistence and editorial review. Finally the article goes to the CMEO Editorial Committee. This process should be flexible and most likely it will need a reasonably large local sub-group. For the next meeting of this Editorial Committee we should discuss the people we have added to our local sub-groups.

Ted and Sam both suggested the need for paid professional editorial assistance. A skilled copy editor who is able to bring a consistent writing style to the articles would be a very

good investment. The Committee should seriously examine this need and suggest capable people and define the work needed to be done.

Bert suggested that each provincial sub-group should set some goals for completing articles in their area. He suggested trying for three institution articles per province by the November meeting.

7. Further content questions: biography essay, biographic listing, and assignments concerning this type of content, criteria for entries, format for entries, options of different levels of entries: Bert reported that some found the Style Sheet too intimidating. He suggested that we prepare a couple of sample institutional articles, a major and a minor one, for distribution to writers to assist their writing. Ted suggested a few points of clarification in the current Style Sheet. After a general discussion Sam will incorporate these suggested changes.

- Links in the CMEO should be coloured
- Dates should be: day, month, year and months should be in words and not abbreviated.
- Author's names in bibliographies should be: surname, comma and then given names.
- Titles of books, businesses, institutions etc. should have the first letter only of every significant word capitalized. Except that titles of German language works should follow the rules of German language capitalization.
- Italics should be used for titles of books and other works.
- If non-English titles and terminology are used in an article for now the translation to English is at the discretion of the provincial sub-group.
- Spelling and use of Ukranian / Russian names and the use of Julian vs Gregorian calender can pose problems.

Ted was asked to prepare a short style guide for writers of institutional articles. Richard will sketch out some guidelines for biographies differentiating between prominent and less prominent individuals.

Victor's draft guide How to Write a Biography, 4pp. was discussed. Several changes were suggested. The individual's name at the head of the biography should be: Family name, then given names, and then birth and death years in brackets. The person's name in the biography should then be: given names then last name. Again it was asserted that biographies should be only of deceased persons.

8. Fund raising strategy: Manitoba group report: Harry Olfert was invited to the meeting to present the report of: Harry Olfert Fundraising Consulting Services Inc. Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: Five-Year Development Proposal. (May 1, 2001, 7 pp.).

This is a report from a professional fund raiser with considerable experience in working with Mennonites, both donors and institutions. Harry reviewed "Factors essential for a successful Capital Campaign", Fund-raising philosophy, CMEO mission, content development, office staff and projected expenditures and also a giving chart. In the discussion that accompanied the report Harry gave some advice about raising funds for a project. These include:

- i. People are never insulted if you ask for more than they can give
- ii. You need a total budget that is high enough, in our case \$250,000 is the smallest unit to start with.
  - many donors do not consider a small project worth giving to.
  - sometimes it takes a large project to attract significant donors
  - big donors get something for their donation
  - Mennonites generally don't like attracting big donors
- iii. As a rule of thumb if the lead donor should give 10% to the project then there is a very good chance for a successful campaign.. If you don't get this you have problems!
- iv. The second set of big donors add a second 10%. Campaigns should start with the potential big donors.
- v. The campaign should start with the Committee members already having given 10% of the campaign.
- vi. Is there a payback for donors? advertising, a donor list, can it be shown to make an impression on the community for the donor?
- vii. A campaign needs to have a plan to know exactly where it is going but it needs to be flexible in getting there.
- viii. The campaign needs to communicate its vision and to connect this with the institution's Mission.
- ix. People give to people, they don't give to an organization.
- x. People give because a person has asked them.
- xi. Always give the impression that any donation will have an impact.
- xii. The nurture of donors is very very important.
- xiii. In a letter campaign a 3% response is very good.

The Committee generally thought that this was a good start at a fund raising campaign but that a small scale feasibility study (report page 5 item 3) still is to be done and Harry agreed to do this. Some members were surprised at the high dollar amount of the campaign. However, the explanation given by Harry seemed to be reasonable particularly since this is a five year project and it is becoming clear that some editorial tasks will need paid experienced staff to be completed. A number of sections of this report need clarification principally those dealing with defining CMEO: Mission, Content, Developmental Goals, Requirements, Staffing, and projected expenditures. The Manitoba group will continue to work with Harry to further develop fundraising plans.

As a follow up the provincial historical societies should be made aware of the fund raising process that we are planning. Further, these provincial historical societies should be encouraged to develop a donor list which they should be willing to share with our Committee. Ted pointed out that we are already asking many people to contribute their time and energy in writing articles we should be very careful about also asking to donate cash.

9. Other business: None.

10. Date of next meeting: The next Committee meeting starts on the afternoon of Wednesday 28 November and continue to Thursday 29th.

11. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at noon.