



Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online

A Joint Project of
Mennonite Historical Society of Canada
Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission
Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee
Mennonite Central Committee
Mennonite World Conference

<http://www.gameo.org/>

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The ten months since our last annual meeting have focused on completing inclusion of the print *Mennonite Encyclopedia* in GAMEO, exploring creation of a DVD “copy” of GAMEO that can be marketed, seeking quotes on adding languages (in addition to English) to the site, and beginning creation of regional editorial groups in the U.S.

Some Statistics

Below is a table showing comparable figures from when we began to keep web statistics in April 2000 for the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada website. The statistics during the past year have ranged fairly widely. It is not clear if some numbers are aberrations. For the month of June we averaged 2,163 visitors a day, viewing 8,100 pages. This dropped to 1,618 visitors a day in August, viewing 6,200 pages. We also know that search engines from outside North America are tracking GAMEO at this point – most particularly the yandex.ru engine in Russia.

	Dec. 2000	Dec. 2002	Dec. 2004	Oct 2005	Dec. 2006	Jan 2008	Oct.. 2008
Visitors per Day	524	734	1,356	1,389	895	1,233	1,692
Page Views per Day		3,072	6,454	8,281	8,034	8,014	distorted
Articles in GAMEO	2,216	2,304	2,458	2,726	5,578	9,162	12,501

The number of articles in GAMEO reflects a count of the files in the encyclopedia’s content folder. This number will become somewhat more meaningless in the next year as we add cross-reference entries (see article XXX) which will count as an article.

A few additional details from the weblog report for October 2008. We do get a significant number of hits from outside North America – Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Australia and Switzerland in that order. 3.9% of the visits to our site were over 30 minutes; another 2.4% between 15 & 30 minutes; 77% were for less than 30 seconds (i.e. they didn’t find what they were looking for).

The “top ten” articles for October 2008 were: 1) Biblical Understandings Concerning Women and Men (1700 views); 2) Amish (690 views); 3) Smucker, Barbara Claassen; 4) Ethridge, Tennessee, Old Order Amish Settlement; 5) Münster Anabaptists; 6) Cuauhtémoc (Chihuahua State, Mexico); 7) Argentina; 8) Anabaptism; 9) Grebel, Conrad; 10) Old Order Amish.

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Status of Volumes 1-5 inclusion in GAMEO

Pages included from Volumes 1-5 @ 1 October 2008	
Vol. 1	1-749 (complete)
Vol. 2	1-244, 278-335, 418-613, 741-886
Vol. 3	1-73, 99-930
Vol. 4	1-239, 376-377, 381-393, 396-837, 865-1077
Vol. 5	1-961 (complete)

As can be seen from the chart at left, we continue to make good progress on uploading articles from vols. 1-5.

We appreciate the work of everyone who has contributed to this project. These include

Richard Thiessen, David Giesbrecht, Victor Wiebe, J. J. Neufeld, Larry Kehler, Ammar Naseer, Adolf Ens, Abe Dueck, Susan Huebert, Ernie Braun, Alf Redekopp, Bert Friesen, Kevin Enns-Rempel, Peggy Goertzen, John D. Thiesen, Andrew Klager, Sam Steiner, and anonymous Columbia Bible College students. The goal remains to finish this part of the project by the end of 2008. It is possible to track our progress in a table similar to the above that can be found from the “Resources” page on GAMEO.

New Content

There has been limited number of newly written articles this year (I would guess less than 25). This will be easier to track once all of the “old” encyclopedia articles are uploaded. The number of rewritten articles is also hard to track, as changes in an article can vary from adding a link, to a complete rewrite.

Technical Issues

The formatting issues with the bibliographies of articles noted last year is no longer a concern. A move to a newer version of the editing software eliminated the issue. The “tinkering” with other features noted last January has also been completed – cutlines with photographs, and the ability to print or email from any article.

On recent issue that has come to light relates to Google maps that have been attached to some “geographic location” articles (some 200 had been done by the end of September). The maps “disappear” any time the article is edited. This requires “adding” the map again each time there is an edit. PeaceWorks has been asked to address this as soon as possible.

We have also asked PeaceWorks to modify some other language on our “contact” page (many people have been sending emails to the encyclopedia when they are actually trying to contact the subject of the article – most often this is a congregation. We have also asked for implementation of a “Table of Contents” feature in larger articles. The two largest projects we’ve obtained quotes for will be addressed below.

Feedback on any technical issues encountered by Management Board persons or Editorial Committee members is welcome.

New Initiatives

There have been three new initiatives this year:

- 1) **Regional Editorial Committees in the United States.** I met with a group of interested persons at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society on August 1 to explore establishing a regional editorial committee for the Lancaster area. There was agreement to proceed, and Paul Zehr, a retired professor and conference leader, agreed to give some leadership. Other members of the committee are Beth Grabill and Steve Ness of the Lancaster Mennonite

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Historical Society, Dan Wenger, Darvin Martin and John A. Lapp. A few more may be added. They had a second meeting on September 23 to start to divide areas of responsibility. I will be meeting with them again on December 13 to help address questions they are facing. Both the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society and the Lancaster Mennonite Conference are supportive of the GAMEO project. Once the Lancaster group is well under way I propose to try to establish similar groups in Virginia, Indiana, and the Franconia Conference area of Pennsylvania. All these areas have strong historical societies that could provide some organizational support.

Does the Management Board want to set priorities for establishing Regional Committees elsewhere, e.g. in Kansas or California? It might be best to involve the Assistant Managing Editor or other volunteers in setting these up.

- 2) **GAMEO Available on DVD.** We have asked PeaceWorks to modify some existing software to make it possible for us to create “copies” of GAMEO on a DVD. Primarily this would be a saleable product aimed primarily at more conservative groups that are uncomfortable with the Internet. It would be a simple copy, and if used on a computer linked to the Internet would still try to link to Internet sites for the Google maps, or to websites referenced in the article bibliographies. If we are fortunate, I will have a sample of this for our meeting.

We hope to be able to provide this more formally after we complete the upload of volumes 1-5. We could then create further “editions” once or twice a year. The overhead on the database in making such a copy is heavy (it slows the site down significantly) so we would not do this routinely.

The Management Board should identify a sale price and licensing conditions (if any), i.e. is it OK to make copies of our DVD? Only a certain number of copies? How “fancy” do we want to make the product?

- 3) **Provision of additional languages in GAMEO.** One of our Canadian editors from Quebec expressed interest in mounting French-language documents on GAMEO. We have received a quote from PeaceWorks in the area of \$15,000 to make GAMEO capable of handling multiple languages. This would mean that visitors to the GAMEO site could choose a language in which they would like to receive content, or they could choose to search all languages. This feature would not translate content, but would make it possible for a French editorial group to begin adding French-language content, a Spanish group to add Spanish-language content, German, Dutch, etc. These would become almost parallel projects to the English-language project, but contained within one website. Policies would need to be established to maintain some uniformity of style, to allow translation of articles into other languages and cross-use of images, maps, etc. It would be possible to encourage the Europeans to do with the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* what we have done with the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. (They have decided not to prepare an supplementary volume of the *Lexikon*, because of cost).

A multilingual GAMEO would be a significant step for the project, and would encourage developing links to, and incorporation into the Global Mennonite History project that Mennonite World Conference has sponsored. This raises the question of whether someone from GAMEO should attend Mennonite World Conference next summer in Paraguay, to link with that Global Mennonite History Project meeting to ascertain the interest of historians from outside North America in participating in GAMEO in their languages, e.g. French, Spanish, German and potentially Dutch.

Thus there are two related issues on this the Management Board should address in our meeting:

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- a. **Is the GAMEO Management Board willing to authorize proceeding with the technical changes to the GAMEO site that would allow provision of content in multiple languages? This will require fundraising, and approval of moving ahead will allow us to seek funding for such a project.**
- b. **If (a) is approved, will the Management Board approve sending a representative to the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay to meet with the Global History Project folks there to see if this initiative would find a likely home in an extension of that project. This would also require significant funding.**

This potentially raises the question of GAMEO's ongoing institutional base. Presently the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada is the "home" for the project.

Should we be actively exploring with Mennonite World Conference the possibility of using them for an umbrella for donations, tax receipting and lodging of our project budget?

Web Hosting

Hosting the GAMEO site has been moved to PeaceWorks. This has worked quite well. There was only one occasion when GAMEO was down for a period of time and PeaceWorks was not already working on the problem when I contacted them. We have had some issues with "slowness," and we are working with PeaceWorks to address this.

Policy Document(s)

A draft policy documented emerged from our November 2006 Management Board meeting. A revision was discussed in January 2008, and I was asked to expand the document to define the roles of the Management Board and Editorial Committees and to create job descriptions for the Managing Editor(s). Job descriptions were also created for other roles. Draft 4 of this document is provided as a separate document. What are your comments?

Can Draft 4 of the Policy Statements serve as a working document for the present? What changes should be made?

Managing Editor Appointment

My three-year term as Managing Editor ends in 2008. I am also retiring from my "day job" as Librarian/Archivist at Conrad Grebel University College in December 2008. I do have in place a post-retirement project that will take 2 plus years to complete – a narrative history of Mennonites in Ontario from 1786 to about 2000. This project is in association with the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. The nature of this writing project would seem to complement work with GAMEO.

I would be prepared to continue as volunteer Managing Editor for a final three-year term, again on a one to two day a week basis. This would require greater financial support than has been requested in the past. If appointed, I would request \$1300 toward the purchase of a new computer for my home office, since I am losing access to Conrad Grebel University College's "up-to-date" equipment. The Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario has approved a similar amount in support of my writing project.

The Management Board needs to consider how to move ahead in staff leadership both in the short term and in the longer term. The Board may want multi-lingual leadership to move its international character forward. It may want to give more time to publicity and promotion than is my gift.

Richard Thiessen's three-year appointment as Assistant Managing Editor has one more year to go. His work in fundraising, contributions to the editorial policies and templates, and suggestions of other potential initiatives in expanding GAMEO's reach need to be recognized by the Board.

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What is the Board's wish on this matter?

Editors

The number of editors who enter data directly into GAMEO is still quite limited. John D. Thiesen, Susan Hubert, Richard Lougheed, Alf Redekopp, Bert Friesen, and J.J. Neufeld are the only persons who have done this in addition to Richard Thiessen and myself. Others have continued to forward content to one of the Managing Editors for uploading. At this time Alf Redekopp is the only editor to also have "Reviewer" status, which allows him to "publish" articles for public viewing, and to add images and maps to GAMEO.

Hopefully this pool of online editors will continue to grow. I am prepared, and I'm sure Richard and perhaps others are prepared to teach persons to move ahead in this. I hope that in the next year several more persons can also be added as reviewers. The most delicate thing (from my point of view) is maintaining adherence to GAMEO style standards.

Publicity

The completion of uploading volumes 1-5 of *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, and the availability of a DVD version will give us opportunity to issue a press release.

I have not prepared the one-page handout to be used at church conferences, as requested at our January meeting.

Bert Friesen and Ken Reddig will report on any steps taken on a promotional 7-8 minute DVD that we asked to be explored last year.

Are there other initiatives that should be taken under this item?

Editorial Issues

1. A draft of a "template" for a variety of institutional articles is available on the GAMEO "Editors" page.

Can we finalize this document at our meeting?

2. The Board asked Ken Reddig and Bert Friesen to review present area conference and denominational articles and to develop a template for denominational/conference articles. We should hear an update on this at our meetings.

Front Matter / Bibliography

The brief bibliographical guide available from the Resources page has been completed by John D. Thiesen.

The "Who are the Mennonites" section that was created for the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada site in 1998 by Derek Suderman. It provided a good overview of Mennonite history and culture. There is not a similar "introductory" feature on our site. We asked Ken Reddig and Bert Friesen to review our options and to propose a direction on what GAMEO should do.

We should pick this up at our meeting.

Anabaptist Ethereal Library

The Anabaptist Ethereal Library continues with its core content of confessions of faith and denominational and inter-Mennonite statements, and will continue to add content of this type. Some

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suggestions on possible additions were made at our last meeting. No steps have been taken; this could be pursued after the current *Mennonite Encyclopedia* upload is complete.

Finances

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada maintains a separate fund for GAMEO. Richard Thiessen as MHSC Treasurer again managed the finances for GAMEO in the last year, and for this we are very grateful. He will report on GAMEO's financial activity at our meetings.

Richard Thiessen has sent funding donation requests to Mennonite-related post-secondary schools, as well as several university libraries. He has also sent requests this year to Mennonite-related secondary schools.

We are contemplating a request to the Showalter Foundation for the multi-lingual GAMEO project, approved. We discussed several other possibilities last year; I don't believe these have been pursued to this point.

Do we want to expand our target list of sponsors in the next year? Possible foundations like D. F. Plett? Organizations like MEDA? Individuals or corporations?

Budget

A draft budget will circulate separately prior to the meeting. Some expenses for the conversion will be in this budget year, as are some of the donations towards the conversion.

Sam Steiner,
Managing Editor