



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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This will be my final report as Managing Editor of GAMEO. Bert Friesen, Abe Dueck and I remain from the earliest “Archives Committee” that began to seriously talk about a Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia in 1996. The fledgling site we created then has changed substantially and grown beyond our original vision in the past 15 years. Thanks are due to many people and organizations for the state we’ve reached. I’d specifically mention Conrad Grebel University College who provided computer support and free server space for many years, and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada that willingly supported the project financially from the beginning. Special thanks to all the volunteers who shepherded conversion of the print *Mennonite Encyclopedia* to GAMEO. I especially thank Richard Thiessen who spent countless late hours in Abbotsford working on this project.

Since our November 2010 meeting we have released a DVD version of GAMEO, and added the beginnings of a regional committee in Virginia. Richard Thiessen and I held significant conversations with John Roth and Joe Springer of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, and come with a recommendation to add the Institute as a partner. We have appointed 16 consulting editors to this point; we would like to appoint up to eight more from outside North America. A recent incident which saw GAMEO “hacked” underscores our belief that we need to explore a new software “platform” in the near future.

Some Statistics

Below is a table showing comparable figures beginning in 2002 when we were still part of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada website. (We became GAMEO in 2005.)

	Dec. 2002	Dec. 2004	Dec. 2006	Jan 2008	Nov. 2008	Nov. 2009	October 2010	Sept. 2011
Visitors per Day	734	1,356	895	1,233	1,793	2,196	2,412	2,345
Bandwidth (Per Month in GB)				9.06	10.58	15.52	17.88	18.23
Articles in GAMEO	2,304	2,458	5,578	9,162	12,501	14,504	14,739	14,880

A few additional details from the weblog report for September 2011. We continue to receive a significant number of visitors from outside North America – Germany, Netherlands, Australia, Switzerland, Poland, Italy, Mexico, France and Brazil in that order. 3.6% of the visits to our site were over 30 minutes; another 2.0% between 15 & 30 minutes; 80.5% were for less than 30 seconds (i.e. they didn't find what they were looking for).

The “top ten” articles for September 2011 were: 1) Louis XIV, King of France (1638-1715) (1636 views); 2) Germany (1540 views); 3) Netherlands (1453 views) ; 4) Calcutta (India) (747 views); 5) Puerto Rico (625 views); 6) Amish (607 views); 7) Menno Simons (1496-1561) (513 views); 8) Schleithem Confession (Anabaptist, 1527) (450 views); 9) Biblical Understandings Concerning Women and Men (Mennonite Church, 1975) (401 views); 10) Yugoslavia(365 views). I have no explanation for some of the high rankings. Louis XIV has been high for the past two years. I assume anomalies result from the functioning of the various search engines such as Google. “Biblical Understandings” has usually been high because the article includes the symbols for male and female.

New Content

The majority of the 140 new articles have still been written in Canada; most active have been B.C., Ontario, Manitoba (Susan Huebert) and Saskatchewan (Victor Wiebe). Writers from Eastern Pennsylvania, Lancaster and Virginia have also submitted articles. We have begun to add articles translated from [MennLex](#) (e.g. John Howard Yoder).

The article count does not reveal updated or replaced articles, or articles to which images have been added. If an article appeared in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, we include the original under “additional information” for the historical record. Richard Thiessen has continued to add current congregational tables to geographic and denominational articles. Richard has also updated country articles with information from the most recent Mennonite World Conference membership figures and from information included in MWC press releases.

Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

John Roth and I have had several conversations over the past couple of years about the Global Anabaptist Wiki (<http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/>) and its relationship to GAMEO. The Wiki is part of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism based at Goshen College, and centered in the Mennonite Historical Library. (The activities and staffing of the Institute can be seen at <http://www.goshen.edu/institutes/anabaptism/>).

On June 17, 2011 Richard Thiessen and I met with John Roth and Joe Springer at the College to brainstorm on ways GAMEO and the Wiki could collaborate in ways that are beneficial to both. The options ranged from continuing as fully distinct entities with cross-links where appropriate. The Wiki currently references GAMEO at many places. A second option would be to merge the two sites, with one site having both controlled content and uncontrolled wiki-style content. A third option, and the one favored by the discussants as an initial step, was to create a “shared” home page that would invite visitors to go either direction. This would be relatively simple to initiate, but is a step that would require affirmation by the Management Board. This step might also mean that one of the sites would assume responsibility for electronic versions of significant primary and published materials created by the world-wide Anabaptist communion. Both presently do some of this (GAMEO has its “Anabaptist Mennonite Ethereal Library” composed mostly of confessions of faith and denominational position statements, and the Global Anabaptist

Wiki has a “Sources” section that some non-English materials and some 16th century sources in translation.

The June discussion also led to the recommendation that circulated with the agenda that would invite the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism to become a partner in the GAMEO Management Board. Action on this recommendation will take place early our meetings.

At our meeting we will seek affirmation on moving to a shared front page.

Editorial and Design Issues

We approved several editorial and design issues last November; I’d like to report the following activity:

- 1) The “content ownership document” we approved has been posted on the website under “Resources”
- 2) We have dropped the “Events” listing from our tabs, and moved “What’s New” from the front page to a tab. “News” still remains.
- 3) A GAMEO author had suggested we have a “Glossary” or “Introduction” page that would be aimed at visitors who are unfamiliar with Mennonites or Anabaptists. This was also discussed at the Canadian Editorial Committee meeting. That group expressed less interest in a glossary, and favored a basic introduction.

I reflected on this a bit and began to question again the usefulness of this. I did make links on the front page to the Anabaptist, Mennonite, Hutterite, Amish and Brethren in Christ articles. **This item could be picked up again.**

- 4) Because of the discussions with the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism the redesign of the front page did not happen.
- 5) John Thiesen made a few modest changes to the Bibliography.
- 6) We have received permission to translate articles from the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (<http://www.mennlex.de/>) and from the *Lexikon der Mennoniten in Paraguay* (<http://www.menonitica.org/lexikon/>). Some work has begun on this. The *Mennonitisches Lexikon* also has permission to translate our articles.

Technical Issues

Our continuing conversations with PeaceWorks about the Multi-Language project GAMEO underscored the desirability of changing our content management software. Although our current software (Plone) can handle the multi-language environment, PeaceWorks suggests that not much more cost would allow GAMEO to move to a platform that is easier to maintain and more flexible for future upgrades. They suggested two options that are widely used: Drupal and MediaWiki. PeaceWorks has more experience with Drupal.

On September 14 we learned the GAMEO site had been hacked, and spam inserted in the template that constructs all pages served by GAMEO’s web server. The spam was not visible to the user, but did show up in Google searches. (Do a Google search on “GAMEO Adobe Steiner” and look at the words following the hit.) It will likely be months before this disappears from the search engines. We learned that someone in recent months had been able to establish themselves as a GAMEO manager and inserted this spam template. We removed the rogue editor and PeaceWorks cleaned up the site within a day or so of our discovering this, but it did underscore the need for us to seriously consider a change. We are monitoring this closely as a similar hack took place again late September; it was again cleaned. It appears the source is in Russia. We may have more information at the time of our meeting.

We will review the platform discussion at our meeting.

Continuing Projects

Two projects continue to require attention.:

- 1) **GAMEO on DVD.** We created 250 copies of a GAMEO DVD with content through January 2011. They cost about \$6 each to produce – half was production of the master and half was printing the copies. These were intended for Anabaptist groups who use computers, but not the Internet, or for persons where Internet access is unavailable or limited, e.g. mission stations. Distribution was through individuals. We have provided them free to the target group; we've asked for a donation (suggested \$5) for persons who wish to support the project. I will bring about 85 copies to the meeting for distribution to persons from outside North America and mission agencies. I will have about 25 remaining.

In late September Herald Press raised a question about the copyright status of our DVD version. Richard and I are in conversation with them, and hope to have clarity by the time of our meeting.

If copyright is clear, should we create a new version in 2012? Wait until 2013?

- 2) **Multilanguage GAMEO.** Several years ago one of our Canadian editors from Quebec expressed interest in mounting French-language documents on GAMEO. We 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.

Our initial applications to three foundations in 2009 resulted in only one positive response – the Showalter Foundation based in Kansas provided a grant of \$3,500 U.S. After the January 2010 meeting I applied to the Good Foundation, based in Ontario for \$8,000, and received a positive response in an unrestricted amount of \$5,000. After our last meeting we received an additional \$1,000 from Merle & Phyllis Good. This means we have about \$9500 towards the multi-language project, along with up to \$5,000 from our operating reserves. With a change in software platform, our cost would now be estimated to be up to \$20,000-\$25,000.

If the multi-language project remains a priority for GAMEO, we need to identify some additional funding sources.

Consulting Editors

After the November Management Board meeting and prior to meeting with the Canadian Editorial group I drafted a consulting editor job description (included in Policy Document draft 6) and a list of the top 200 articles searched in GAMEO. Based on names brought forward in our meeting and in the Canadian meeting I began make contact with potential editors. North

Americans were more responsive. At the end of September 2011 the following had agreed to serve: Ervin Beck (United States); Marlene Epp (Canada); Kerry Fast (Canada); Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Germany); Alle G. Hoekema (Netherlands); Hanspeter Jecker (Switzerland); Karl Koop (Canada); Don Kraybill (United States); Juan Martinez (United States); Barbara Nkala (Zimbabwe); Gerhard Ratzlaff (Paraguay); Jaime Adrián Prieto Valladares (Costa Rica); John D. Roth (United States); Rebecca Slough (United States); Hildi Froese Tiessen (Canada); James Urry (New Zealand).

The Board may wish to speak both to the job description and the current list of editors.

Regional Editorial Committees

There are six editorial committees related to GAMEO:

1. Manitoba—Chaired by Alf Redekopp; other members are Jim Suderman; Henry Fast; Ernest Braun and Bert Friesen. There is an informal relationship to the Manitoba society, with some discussion of making it more formal.
2. British Columbia—Chaired by David Giesbrecht; other members are Richard Thiessen and John J. Neufeld. It is not related to the provincial society.
3. Ontario – Chaired by Linda Huebert Hecht, other members are Sam Steiner, Fred Lichti, Peter Hamm and John Reimer. It is presently structured as a subcommittee of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario.
4. Lancaster – Chaired by Paul Zehr; other members are Darvin Martin, Dan Wenger, Steve Ness, John A. Lapp, Lois Ann Mast, Lloyd Weiler, Jonathan H. Martin, Steve Scott, Ray Hacker. Steve Ness serves as the formal link to the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society; meetings are held in their offices.
5. Eastern Pennsylvania (Harleysville)—Chaired by Forrest Moyer; other members are Ray Hacker and Rich Moyer. The group is loosely affiliated with the Mennonite Heritage Center at Harleysville, Pennsylvania and holds its meetings there. Forrest is on staff there.
6. Virginia – This group is still being structured. My contacts have been Elwood Yoder and Paul J. Yoder.

In addition there are individuals working in other areas, e.g. Victor Wiebe (Saskatchewan), Wes Berg (Alberta); Richard Loughheed (Québec). The Canadian Editorial Committee composed of Bert Friesen, Sam Steiner, Richard Thiessen, Richard Loughheed, Victor Wiebe, Alf Redekopp, Linda Huebert Hecht, Wesley Berg, and Richard Loughheed continues to provide counsel on editorial matters and has created a number of useful “templates.”

GAMEO’s Institutional Base

It is good to be part of the Global Mennonite History celebrations in Elkhart, Indiana. On Thursday morning (October 29) we will meet with conference guests to brainstorm about GAMEO’s possible relationships to the international Mennonite historical community. Most confirmations I’ve received have been from North Americans, but hopefully a number of international guests will also be able to join us for this 2-hour conversation. I hope this conversation will give us a clearer signal on GAMEO’s potential relationship with Mennonite World Conference.

César Garcia, the new MWC General Secretary, may arrive in time for part of that meeting. I have indicated to him that some of the Management Board would welcome spending a meal time with him during the conference.

We will want to clarify our agenda for the Thursday a.m. conversations.

GAMEO Sponsors

There continue to be 23 sponsors listed on GAMEO's "Sponsors" page. These are donors who have given \$250 or more of support in the past year. These are primarily educational institutions (including two high schools) except for the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and the Mennonite Savings & Credit Union in Ontario. Two public university libraries are also included.

Richard Thiessen has been the contact person for the sponsorship program. This "subscription/sponsorship" approach has worked well for us in raising operating funds. At our meeting he will be able to report on contacts made in this calendar year.

Can the Board help to identify additional financial institutions, foundations or heritage organizations that should be invited to participate? Should there be other changes to this program?

Policy Document

I have incorporated the "Consulting Editors" section into Policy Document "Draft 6" (attached). The Policy Document, all Management Board minutes, and all Managing Editor's reports since 1997/98 are posted on the GAMEO website on the "Editors" page (<http://www.gameo.org/tools-1>). This page is only accessible to those able to log on to the site. Any Management Board members who wish a user name and password may request one.

Associate Managing Editor Appointment

With the end of my term as Managing Editor, I would indicate my willingness to serve as an Associate Managing Editor if that is desired by the Board and Managing Editor. We have discussed the desirability of another Associate Managing Editor in the United States, but none of the current U.S.-based editors have sufficient long term experience with the software to take this step.

Editors

The number of editors who enter date directly into GAMEO is still quite limited. John D. Thiesen, Susan Hubert, Richard Lougheed, Alf Redekopp, Joe Springer and J.J. Neufeld are the only persons who create articles in addition to Richard Thiessen and myself. Several of have limited activity. This had not been a particular burden, since most writers forward new content to one of the Managing Editors for uploading. At this time Alf Redekopp, John Thiesen and Joe Springer are the only editors to also have "Reviewer" status, which allows them to "publish" articles for public viewing, and to add images and maps to GAMEO. Joe Springer, who is the curator of the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, has used his role primarily for correcting errors noticed in the text.

Publicity

We had a press release after last November's meeting announcing the DVD version and Richard Thiessen's appointment as Managing Editor.

How does the Management Board wish to address publicity this year?

Finances

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada maintains a separate fund for GAMEO. Richard Thiessen as MHSC Treasurer 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. As noted above he also sends out the requests related to the Sponsors program.

He will bring a 2012 budget to the meeting. Last year's budget included:

Income

Partners	\$1,250
Sponsors	\$5,000
Total	\$6,250

Expenses

PeaceWorks Hosting	\$1,000
PeaceWorks Software	\$4,000
Travel (Nov. 2010)	\$1,500
Travel (Oct. 2011)	\$1,500
Travel (editors)	\$1,500
GAMEO DVD	\$1,000
Contingency:	\$ 500
Total	\$11,000

Sam Steiner,
Managing Editor
1 October 2011