



# 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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GAMEO went through a major technological transformation in November 2007. An “update” on this was written on 29 November 2007 and should be considered part of the annual report. I will provide further updating below, but will not repeat the information that was part of that document.

## 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 available since we went live with the new Plone software are meager since they only began functioning in late December at a time when universities and schools are at a low “research” ebb. Just prior to our conversion – in October 2007 – GAMEO was averaging a bit over 1400 visitors per day. The 2008 statistics below are from January 3; I will provide updated statistics at the time of our meeting.

|                    | Dec. 2000 | Dec. 2001 | Dec. 2002 | Dec. 2003 | Dec. 2004 | Oct 2005 | Dec. 2006 | Jan 2008 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Visitors per Day   | 524       | 657       | 734       | 1,026     | 1,356     | 1,389    | 895       | 1,233    |
| Page Views per Day |           | 2,215     | 3,072     | 4,030     | 6,454     | 8,281    | 8,034     | 8,014    |
| Articles in GAMEO  | 2,216     | 2,239     | 2,304     | 2,371     | 2,458     | 2,726    | 5,578     | 9,162    |

The number of articles in GAMEO reflects a count of the files in the encyclopedia’s content folder. This is slightly different than earlier years’ numbers which tried to reflect the actual number of articles. The difference is that “large articles” which contain multiple files now have each file counted. Although this exaggerates the number of articles slightly (perhaps 100 or so), the file count is a hard number that is easier to track.

A few additional details from the weblog report for early January 2008. We are getting a significant number of hits from Europe – Germany, Netherlands, France and Switzerland in that order. 5.0% of the visits to our site were over 30 minutes; 73% were for less than 30 seconds (i.e. they didn’t find what they were looking for).

The “top ten” articles for the first three days of January 2008 were: 1) Goshen College; 2) Amish; 3) Furniture and Woodworking; 4) Goshen (Indiana); 5) Indiana (State); 6) Old Order Amish; 7) Genealogy; 8) General Conference Mennonite Church; 9) Mennonite Church; 10) Hutterian Brethren. This list represents a small sample; I’m sure it will differ significantly by mid-January.

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## Status of Volumes 1-5 inclusion in GAMEO

| Pages included from<br>Volumes 1-5 @ 4 January 2008 |  |
|---|--|
| Vol. 1  | 1-611  |
| Vol. 2  | 1-61, 118-184, 429-506                           |
| Vol. 3  | 1-58, 99-205, 226-240, 251-278, 301-323, 400-930 |
| Vol. 4  | 1-151, 396-500, 679-795, 865-950, 1000-1055      |
| Vol. 5  | 1-961  |

As can be seen from the chart at left, we continue to made 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 that can be found linked from the "Tools" page on GAMEO. This page is accessible to all registered editors.

## New Content

There has been limited number of newly written articles this year (I would guess less than 25). We have received a grant from the D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation for additional biographies derived from the publication, *Perservings*. Although work is in process, these have not yet been added. Alf Redekopp of the Mennonite Heritage Centre is giving oversight to this project.

The editorial process for new content has changed from past years. The British Columbia and Ontario historical societies will look after their own editorial process; the Manitoba editors will look after editorial work from the prairie societies. As Quebec gets on board, they may choose the method they wish to follow. The U.S. editorial committee has not yet submitted new articles (with a couple of exceptions from John Thiesen), though an earlier decision had been to funnel new articles through David Rempel-Smucker and Rich Preheim.

## Technical Issues

The upgrade to the Plone content management system took place on November 16. PeaceWorks Computer Consulting of Waterloo, Ontario did the technical work and custom programming required. Fundraising for the project was successful in obtaining a bit over \$10,000. Development staff at Conrad Grebel helped us to raise \$1000 from Reimer Express Foundation, \$2000 from the Kroeker Foundation, and a \$2700 private donation from Lorna Bergey. We also received a \$4000 grant from the Mennonite Foundation of Canada Heritage Fund, and \$600 in additional private donations.

The programming cost for the basic implementation of the new site was \$6000. We also contributed \$1900 to Conrad Grebel University College for work required on the College's web server to manage the new software. The two major problems that occurred during the conversion were 1) formatting issues in article bibliographies that only appear when the article is edited (we are addressing these as we edit articles); and 2) some articles are missing the Herald Press logo and volume and page information from the print *Encyclopedia*. We are also addressing these on a case-by-case basis. Attempting a universal "fix" did not appear to be worth the risk of creating more problems.

We have contracted with PeaceWorks to do some additional work that will include adding standard text to couple of display pages, trying to correct some anomalies that occur with words that include diacritics, add "print this/send this" to all article pages, implement history/versioning on article pages, and add a "style" to the text under photographs to improve appearance.

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

## **Web Hosting**

One additional technical matter should be considered carefully by the Management Board – Conrad Grebel University College has hosted the encyclopedia site on its web server since 1996. They have not charged for “serving” but had asked for reimbursement on hardware and software expenses related to the site. Since the conversion there have been a variety of “outages” of the site that lead me to wonder if it is time for GAMEO to move to an independent Internet Service Provider at the cost of probably \$35/\$40 month. I have two reasons for recommending a change:

1. I will be retiring at the end of 2008, thus eliminating a direct connection to support staff at the College.
2. Perhaps more importantly, when an outage occurs presently there are up to four “players” involved in getting a resolution – Conrad Grebel, the University of Waterloo systems people, PeaceWorks and myself. A breakdown in communication with any of these results in delays. There have been more outages than I would like in recent months. If hosting was with PeaceWorks, there would only be one contact for me (or my successor) to make. It also simplifies maintenance of the Plone software if PeaceWorks is also the host.

**Should GAMEO have its web hosting moved to PeaceWorks? We should come to a decision on this if possible.**

## **Policy Document**

A draft policy documented emerged from our November 2006 Management Board meeting. This draft was briefly discussed at the January Management Board meeting, part of which was held by conference call. The changes in our editorial workflow also mandated some changes. A revised draft is attached for further discussion.

**Can the reviewed Policy Statements serve as a working document for the present? What changes should be made?**

## **Staffing Post-2008**

As noted above, my retirement from Conrad Grebel University College takes place in December 2008. In addition, my appointment as a volunteer Managing Editor ends at the same time. The Management Board needs to consider how to move ahead in the next number of years. 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.

I would be prepared to continue as a volunteer, perhaps for a two-year term, if that would be the Board’s wish. In light of other projects, I would see the time available for GAMEO to be between 1 and 2 days a week. It would be necessary to establish an expense fund for some activities that have been subsidized by Conrad Grebel University College through my professional development funds. These would include software and hardware upgrades, as well as some travel costs. These might be up to \$1500 annually.

## **Editors**

It is now possible for everyone on the Canadian and U.S. editorial committees (and others) to directly add content to the Encyclopedia. All members of the Canadian committee will receive an invitation to set up a password on the site before our meetings. Some U.S. members will also receive this invitation. Several other volunteers have already received this.

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Technically in the current system invitations to editorial status must be initiated by one of the Managing Editors (Sam Steiner or Richard Thiessen), but potential editors can be recommended by any historical society or institution related to the GAMEO project. These should be persons who are comfortable working with web-based programs, and who are willing to follow the editorial guidelines that have been established.

GAMEO's workflow does not allow editors to "publish" articles to public view, but editors do prepare "finished" articles ready for review by GAMEO "Reviewers." Presently only Richard Thiessen and Sam Steiner have this status; "Review" status will be expanded to other editors from the national editorial committees as more persons become familiar with the process.

Also attached to this report is a current copy of "Guidelines for Editors" – also available from the "Tools" page of GAMEO. The workshop at the Thursday evening session of the GAMEO Management Board will demonstrate the article-creation process.

## **Publicity**

On the U.S. side I had a good opportunity to demonstrate GAMEO to an April 14 meeting of the Eastern Mennonite Associated Libraries and Archives (EMALA) at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Persons present represented the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Eastern Mennonite University, the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania (Franconia Conference area), the Juniata Mennonite Historical Society, the Mifflin County Mennonite History Society, the Muddy Creek Historical Library (Old Order Mennonite), Casselman River Area Historians, and one Amishman. E. Morris Sider from the Brethren in Christ Historical Society was also present. David Rempel Smucker from the U.S. editorial board was present. There was good interest in GAMEO, but more direct contact is required to get these Societies more directly involved.

Richard Thiessen hosted a GAMEO workshop at the Mennonite Church Canada sessions in Abbotsford, B.C. Attendance was small, but some good contacts were made. The Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA also included GAMEO in its display at the Mennonite Church USA Assembly in San Jose, California.

**We need to discuss how to get the U.S. editorial committee more actively involved as a group. What are practical ways we can help get folks "launched"?**

## **Editorial Issues**

Richard Thiessen drafted a policy document on criteria to be used in determining eligibility for a person to have a biographical article. The first draft has gone through one round of discussion. **We should try to finalize this document at our meetings.**

The Management Board asked Richard Thiessen and David Giesbrecht to work on a "template" for a variety of institutional articles. A draft of this is available on the GAMEO "Tools" page. **Can we finalize this document at our meeting?**

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.

## **Cartography Issues**

We have implemented usage of Google maps in the new GAMEO platform. The map does not show with the article, but is found through a "Location" link from the article (see for example, Diamond Street Mennonite Church). In future we may try to develop a "map portlet" that would show a thumbnail of the map next to the article. This would be an enhancement that would have cost implications.

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## **Front Matter / Bibliography**

Two matters remain from earlier discussion. One is the bibliographical guide available from the Resources page. The two persons asked to carry this project have divergent views on the role of this bibliography. We asked that the bibliography be fairly short (two pages) providing an overview historically and theologically. The major historical series should be included.

### **Can we ask someone to provide a finished draft of this?**

Secondly is 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. I have had correspondence suggesting the need for such an introductory piece.

### **We should pick this up at the 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. Suggestions for additions are welcome.

## **Governance**

Several representatives from GAMEO’s partners are new this year. Turnover seems to be natural order of things. It does appear the number of partners in the project will be stable for the next year.

During the year I had several exchanges with E. Morris Sider on the possible involvement of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society with our project. The Brethren in Christ have had an encyclopedia project in place for a number of years. At this point the Brethren in Christ have not been able to come to a final decision on participation in our project. For now they will continue on their original path for a print encyclopedia.

Similarly the encyclopedia project in South America is moving ahead with a print version, as well as a project in Europe to update the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*.

We have also continued to maintain contact with the Hutterite community on their possible involvement in the project. Bert Friesen may have something to report on this at our meeting.

## **Publicity**

Rich Preheim issued a GAMEO press release in late May. It appeared in a number of our denominational papers.

We have not picked up the matter of a new GAMEO brochure. Last year we discussed a new brochure that utilized our biography and congregational templates. It would be directed towards the lay historian in the congregation and the local historical society, challenging them to add/update their congregational entry and to consider biographies that should be written. “Is your congregation in GAMEO?” It could be circulated to congregations and local/regional historical societies.

### **Should we still pursue this? Is there another direction that seems good?**

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## **Finances**

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada has established a separate fund for GAMEO. This will make tracking GAMEO donations and expenses easier. Richard Thiessen as MHSC Treasurer again managed the finances for GAMEO in the last year, and for this we are very grateful. He will be reporting on GAMEO's financial activity at our meetings.

Richard Thiessen sent thank-you letter to current sponsors in January 2007, and asked them to renew their sponsorship at the current \$250 level. We did receive several additional commitments of support. Presently these are all post-secondary institutions, historical societies or denominationally-related bodies.

**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