GAMEO Management Board

Goshen College
1700 S. Main St.
Goshen, Indiana
2013 November 9

Minutes

Present: Jon Isaak (Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission), Bert Friesen (Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, chair), John D. Roth (Mennonite World Conference; Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism), Ken Sensenig (Mennonite Central Committee), Colleen McFarland (Mennonite Church USA), Richard Thiessen (Managing Editor), Sam Steiner (Associate Managing Editor, recording secretary).
Guest: Eric Bradley (Brethren Digital Archives) at 1:00 p.m.

1) Opening and introductions

Bert Friesen read part of the Noah story from Genesis 8. He said this was an iconic event; an astonishing story. It tells us that God is in control of all of life. Sometimes the GAMEO project seems overwhelming. It is somewhat surprising it has persisted this long (since the mid-1990s). We too have a story to tell. Bert closed with prayer. After everyone was present, we had a round of introductions.

Bert Friesen reviewed the agenda; it was accepted as circulated.

2) Minutes of January 16-17, 2013

Sam Steiner reviewed the minutes of January 16-17, 2013.

Moved/Seconded/Carried (Sam Steiner/Jon Isaak). To approve the minutes of January 16-17, 2013 as circulated.

3) Business arising from the minutes

Consensus 1: John Roth and Richard Thiessen will pick up several of the items not covered in today's agenda, i.e. a formal memo of understanding between GAMEO and the Global Anabaptist Wiki and the question of a joint or separate "preface" that briefly explains introduces Mennonites and Anabaptists.

4) Managing Editor Report

Richard Thiessen reviewed the Managing Editor's report circulated prior to the meeting. He said the highlight was the launch of GAMEO on a MediaWiki platform on September 3, 2013. There have been a few minor issues but generally he's been very pleased. This was also GAMEO's first year with Mennonite World Conference (MWC) as our primary institutional link; this has also worked very well. Richard receives a monthly financial report from Len Rempel, MWC's Director of Finance and Administration. MWC's yearend is December, so we will need to approve our financials early next year.

Richard also reviewed user statistics available from Google Analytics. It's not clear we're comparing apples and apples with the previous analysis tool. GAMEO lost its PageRank when it shifted to the new platform. This has resulted in substantially lower user statistics. We'll have to see how things work out when we are better reestablished on Google. Richard reviewed a number of statistics. Our "top articles" are much different than last year.

He said GAMEO added 610 articles in the last year; 436 of them were Hutterite "stubs" created by Bert Friesen; 69 were Polish/Prussian villages added by Richard. The rest came from a variety of sources.

Nearly all of the former "ethereal library" articles (confessions of faith, conference resolutions) have been moved to the Global Anabaptist Wiki, and the internal article links have been updated.

Richard then reviewed the regional editorial committee reports. The Canadian Editorial Committee continues to devote time to development and refinement of subject templates. One is currently being developed on interdisciplinary topics ("Mennonites and ...."). Richard is hoping to establish a regional group in the Pacific Northwest, and to broaden the work in Saskatchewan. Major locations needing editorial committees are Ohio. Indiana/Michigan and Kansas.

He also reported Johannes Dyck (Germany) has been added as a Consulting Editor.

Discussion:
- Colleen McFarland: The meetings of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite World Conference in 2015 will be a prime opportunity for GAMEO engagement.
- Bert Friesen: GAMEO's greatest challenge is increasing the flow of content, especially non-English content. The younger generation does not appear to be as volunteer oriented.
- Colleen McFarland: The GAMEO website is opaque in articulating its openness to volunteer writers. Can this be better addressed?
- Richard Thiessen: Regional editorial success appear to rely on the enthusiasm of one or two people.
- Colleen McFarland: Can GAMEO accommodates video and audio? Those are important to the younger demographic. Sam Steiner: GAMEO includes some audio (mp3); it's thought video would be provided via YouTube.
- Someone said GAMEO needs to better communicate its desire to partner with local historical societies and local volunteers.
- Ken Sensenig: Are conservative Mennonite groups comfortable in working with this technology? Sam Steiner: Many are willing to help actively, others are more passive. Generally there has been some level of cooperation.

5) GAMEO Content Projects

a) Hutterite Brethren

Bert Friesen said his creation of the stubs for each Hutterite colony had two benefits. One was the discipline of working on the project one hour each day. The second was the contact with the Hutterite colonies and the cooperation he received from all three Leuts. One article has been submitted by a Hutterite writer. A draft template created by the Hutterites has been circulating with little response.

Consensus 2: Bert Friesen will draft and circulate a template for individual Hutterite colony articles in the next year.

b) MennLex

Richard Thiessen said *Mennonitisches Lexikon* V (MennLex) remains entirely web-based, though there remains a hope for print publication. GAMEO has a cooperative arrangement with MennLex that acknowledges them when an original article was created for them and a translation made for GAMEO.

c) Paraguayan Lexikon

Richard Thiessen said the *Lexikon der Mennoniten in Paraguay* originally appeared in print, with the hope for also creating a Spanish edition. The *Lekikon*'s website is fairly static. GAMEO has permission to translate any articles we wish; he has a volunteer in Abbotsford working on a few articles.

Our discussion suggested it would be appropriate to approach the Paraguayan folks to explore how we could make their content more available, e.g. importing Spanish articles that may have been created but never posted or even importing their German content into GAMEO. GAMEO does need to demonstrate it can handle multiple languages well, including articles translated into multiple languages. Perhaps a small sample from the Paraguayan encyclopedia could provide a good test.

Our discussion also raised the question of multiple articles about one subject in different languages. Is an encyclopedia article authoritative if variant articles are present within it? GAMEO currently has only one article on a subject in a particular language, but an article in non-English languages may vary in content and authorship from the English article. Our present policies do indicate when an article is a translation from another language, while also providing a link to the original. Colleen McFarland strongly advocated developing a policy on multiple articles about the same subject.

Consensus 3: The Managing Editor will consider creation of a policy that addresses multiple articles on the same subject, as well as how the cross-referencing between such articles is handled.

Consensus 4: Richard Thiessen and John Roth are encouraged to contact persons associated with the *Lexikon der Mennoniten in Paraguay* to explore possible inclusion of

their content in GAMEO, initially as part of a test.

6) **GAMEO and the Global Anabaptist Wiki**

John Roth provided a quick tour of the Global Anabaptist Wiki site. He said most work in the past year focused on the "Bearing Witness" project which will soon have its own website.

Richard Thiessen then reviewed our decision for a common portal that would allow a visitor to proceed to the site that best addressed their needs. He showed several examples of a new GAMEO logo and a common portal page developed by designer, Jeremy Penner. The portal page featured a large graphic of the Dirk Willems, thus providing a "hero image."

Our discussion affirmed the general look of the logo. We liked the sense of movement in the logo, the dove and world images included within it. We thought the GAMEO and Wiki logos should be slightly different, either in sharper color differences or in backgrounds that more clearly reflected each site.

We again discussed the need for a "preface" to Anabaptism that could be linked off this page. The preface would not need to be text, but could be a short video. The Dirk Willems image on the portal page should link to the GAMEO article on Dirk Willems. The preface discussion remains with Richard Thiessen and John Roth.

We continued the logo discussion again late in the meeting.

7) **Lunch Break**

We had a delightful lunch at John and Ruth Roth's home.

8) **Brethren Digital Collection presentation**

Eric Bradley, a Reference and Instruction Librarian at Goshen College gave a half-hour presentation on the Brethren Digital Archives for which he was Project Coordinator. Their project focused on periodicals and worked in close cooperation with Brethren-related publishers. The collection is available on Internet Archive.

9) **GAMEO Multilanguage Content**

John Roth said the Mennonite World Conference Faith and Life Commission sees GAMEO as an asset in bringing global history interests together. In India I. P. Asheervadam is working on gathering original source material. There are many local and congregational histories that are included in this collection. How can GAMEO help to make this material accessible? Richard Thiessen said there is a similar situation in Ethiopia; he will contact the Meserete Kristos College.

We asked if MCC country representatives could be helpful in making contacts. Ken Sensenig said MCC country reps feel tugged in many directions; some would pick up this initiative, others wouldn't. Ideally we would have locally written articles coming from India, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and other countries with large Mennonite populations.

Consensus 5: Ken Sensenig will request MCC to help GAMEO in making contact with local persons interested in gathering and making accessible historical material.

Discussion:
- Jon Isaak cautioned that GAMEO's contact needed to be made with the appropriate point person in denominational organizations for such approaches to succeed.
- Ken Sensenig wondered if GAMEO could develop a census of all Mennonite groups in all countries in which MCC and/or MWC operates. This would include the number of congregations and members in each group.
- John Roth reported a Global Anabaptist Profile (a study by the Institute for Global Anabaptism that is MWC supported) is being conducted. It includes 25 groups in 18 countries, and will study how MWC's "Shared Convictions" are finding expression in the various groups. Extensive research reports will be prepared that should feed back into GAMEO
- Richard Thiessen said that GAMEO has at least a "stub" for every country with an Anabaptist presence listed on the MWC website.

10) GAMEO Structure

a) Templates

Richard Thiessen said GAMEO's subject templates, our style sheet editorial guidelines needed to be translated into other languages.

Consensus 6: John Roth will arrange for translation of subject templates into Spanish. Richard Thiessen will approach Richard Lougheed (Quebec editor) for French, and try to find someone in Abbotsford to do German. He may also try to find someone in Ethiopia for Amharic.

b) Regional Editorial Committees

Richard Thiessen he has planned a visit to the Pacific Northwest Historical Society, and is in conversation with the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

We also discussed Ohio, Indiana/Michigan and Kansas as locations that should have committees. John Roth suggesting contacting Ervin Beck, new president of the Michiana Anabaptist Historians. In Ohio he suggested contact with Marcus Yoder, the new director of the Amish and Mennonite Heritage Center at Berlin, Ohio (*Behalt*).

Consensus 7: Richard Thiessen will contact Ervin Beck and Marcus Yoder in consultation with John Roth.

Possible contact persons for Kansas included Peggy Goertzen, John Thiesen, Dale Schrag, Jim Juhnke and persons listed in the Center for MB Studies (Tabor) advisory committee. Since the MC USA convention in 2015 is in Kansas City, it would be an important place for GAMEO to be present. We did not make a specific decision on initiatives in Kansas.

c) **Promotion of GAMEO**

Our discussion veered towards promotion of GAMEO. Previous initiatives like a GAMEO brochure and production of a DVD copy of GAMEO no longer seem to be appropriate. Our focus was primarily on presence at regional and denominational conventions and assemblies.

Discussion:
- Richard Thiessen: we could be more strategic on when and where we hold management board meetings
- Colleen McFarland: we could invite persons to write articles on their congregation during the conference meetings.
- Bert Friesen: a YouTube video could also be used outside North America.
- John Roth: It's one thing to get a short slot in a conference program to talk about GAMEO. We should not just talk about ourselves. It's perhaps better to say we sense a need for stronger attentiveness to our collective religious history and the need to tell our stories. GAMEO wants to be a catalyst to help make that happen. Perhaps we host workshops on how do tell a congregational history, or another workshop on biographies. GAMEO should offer a workshop at the MWC assembly in 2015.
- Jon Isaak: It could be a variation of Richard's presentation in California.
- Colleen McFarland: Wikipedia has instructions on how to do an edit-a-thon (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:How_to_run_an_edit-a-thon).
- Jon Isaak: GAMEO should be at the next Mennonite Brethren conventions in Canada and the U.S.

Consensus 8: GAMEO will try to create one or more short YouTube videos to tell its story using folks who have used GAMEO. We will set aside funds for this in the 2014 budget.

11) **GAMEO Staffing**
   a) **Managing Editor**

Bert Friesen said GAMEO has been run until now by volunteers who work for supportive institutions. However it will eventually be necessary to buy some staff time, especially as GAMEO become more global with multi-language input. When do we do this, and how do we raise funds for ongoing operations?

Discussion:
- Colleen McFarland: We could expand the membership model and increase fees. Perhaps the management board could be elected. This might increase the sense of connection to GAMEO.
- Ken Sensenig: How was the Global History Project financed? John Roth: Funding was disproportionately from Europe and North America at the cost of $400,000-$500,000. It had a lot of volunteer time from John A. Lapp and Arnold Snyder. The writers were paid. However that was a focused project; GAMEO is an ongoing program.

- Bert Friesen: Should we buy staffing time for the managing editor? Should it be an honorarium? Paid time might allow for more promotion of the site.
- Ken Sensenig: What does the managing editor do in his volunteer time? Richard Thiessen: Editing and entering data, and responding to correspondence.
- John Roth: Paying staff in this structure can be a challenge. How much should we pay the managing editor to raise money for his own salary?
- Colleen McFarland: The enhanced membership fee approach with representation at the table could help this. John Roth: The Mennonite Historical Library or Goshen College wouldn't want to be part of governing GAMEO; they see the support as charity.
- Bert Friesen: Is it possible to bump fees a bit? How much?
- Richard Thiessen: GAMEO's other income source has been sponsors. Most sponsors have been consistent in their support. We've widened the approach from educational institutions to include more historical societies. It takes time. To buy 10% of the managing editor's time would cost about $7,000.
- Ken Sensenig: We could approach more historical societies, and perhaps also individuals.
- Richard Thiessen: GAMEO has gone to foundation for specific projects, but not operations.
- Colleen McFarland: Does GAMEO have a mission statement and strategic plan? Both are necessary in fundraising. I'd be happy to help work on these.
- Ken Sensenig: Could each of us try to arrange for giving to GAMEO, either individuals or organizations?.

Consensus 9: In the next year we'll explore the feasibility of purchasing up to 10% of the managing editor's staff time.

b) **General Editor**

Richard Thiessen expressed the need for a General Editor who could navigate discussions with academic writers, especially on the larger theological and historical articles. He provided an example from the past year in which an unsolicited article was submitted which he forwarded to a consulting editor for anonymous feedback. The consulting editor suggested a number of changes which the author resisted. Richard felt he was in awkward position communicating between academics. An academic editor would have been helpful.

Discussion:
- Bert Friesen: In one sense this is a call for a specialized consulting editor for theological and historical articles. Richard Thiessen: Should we identify two or three "senior" editors?
- Jon Isaak: It can be awkward for anyone, academic or not, depending on the personalities of the persons involved.
- John Roth: Unsolicited articles should always be a red flag. GAMEO needs to commission survey articles. The editors do have role in deciding who writes the

descriptive article, and shapes how that is carried out. GAMEO wants description, a neutral point of view.

- Sam Steiner: There can be multiple writers on articles if descriptions from various parts of the world would be best.

Consensus 10: The Management Board appoints Jon Isaak as a consulting editor, especially to assist with theological articles.

Richard Thiessen said he still thought a General Editor would be helpful in the future. Our discussion mentioned persons like John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder who had major connections to the Global History Project. We did not come to a conclusion on the issue.

12) Technical Issues

a) MediaWiki
Richard Thiessen said the managing editors are happy with MediaWiki. It has much potential for expansion, is more secure and has better search capabilities.

John Roth said good use of the "Category" feature in MediaWiki could be very helpful in creating useful clusters of articles.

b) Virtual Meetings
Bert Friesen asked if the management board was still interested in virtual meetings. Colleen McFarland said she could host them through the offices of MC USA. They often use a combination of teleconference and video. However we still felt an annual face-to-face meeting was preferable for now.

13) GAMEO Priorities for 2013
We were running out of time and did not spend a lot of time on the following items.

a) Increasing non-North American content in GAMEO
b) Identifying writers to update the country articles, hopefully with the assistance of MCC and MWC.
c) Identifying theological articles that need attention.

Consensus 11: Jon Isaak in his role as consulting editor will help to identify some that need updating.

John Roth said we should began to tag theological articles using category tags in MediaWiki.

d) Increasing the number of regional editorial committees.

Consensus 12: Richard Thiessen will create a Google document listing all countries and denominational bodies. We will all contribute names of possible contacts to that list.

Discussion:

- Bert Friesen: An article template for countries might be helpful.
- Jon Isaak: Could the authors of the Global Mennonite History be nationals who could help start this.

e) Updating the bibliographies of older articles, for example of Anabaptist leaders. Recent scholarship could be added.

f) Expanding the membership of the management board with international partners, though this probably shouldn't happen until non-North American content begins to flow.

14) Promotion

a) **News Releases**

Richard Thiessen said a new press release will cover launch of new GAMEO site, report on these management board meetings, and note the creation of a GAMEO Facebook.

15) Finances

a) **Financial Report for 2013**

Richard Thiessen reviewed the Statement of Operations and the Statement of Financial Position for 2013 through October 31. He said the amounts in Canadian dollars, and are estimates. Mennonite World Conference's yearend is at the end of December, so the final numbers won't be available until early next year.

Consensus 13: Richard Thiessen will send out final financial statements for approval in February 2014.

b) **Budget for 2013**

Richard Thiessen presented the budget for 2014. He said it was based on past experience.

Consensus 14: The Management Board will approve the 2014 budget in February 2014 after the financial statements have been received.

16) Logo discussion, continued

Our brief discussion suggested distinguishing colors on the logos would provide enough differentiation.

Consensus 15: Richard Thiessen and John Roth have authority to make the final decision on the logos for the portal page and the Global Anabaptist Wiki and GAMEO sites, keeping in mind the management board's discussion. They can then proceed to launch the portal page.

17) Next Meeting

Consensus 16: The next meeting of the Management Board will be held in October or November 2014 in Ontario, Canada.

18) Adjournment 5:10 pm

Minutes recorded by Sam Steiner