

GAMEO Management Board

Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

1310 Taylor Ave.

Winnipeg, Manitoba

2013 January 16

Minutes

Present: John 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), Peter Rempel (Mennonite Central Committee; for Ken Sensenig), Richard Thiessen (managing editor), Sam Steiner (associate managing editor, recording secretary).

Guest: Abe Dueck (Wednesday only)

Regrets: John Thiesen (Mennonite Church USA)

1) Opening and introductions

Bert Friesen read Isaiah 62:1-5 for an opening. The Anabaptists also have a record of God's goodness to us. GAMEO's mandate is to help record stories from the past for the benefit of future generations.

Bert welcomed Peter Rempel from MCC and Jon Isaak from the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission.

Richard Thiessen updated us on the structural changes at Mennonite Church USA, and the termination of the Historical Committee. Marty Lehman, Director of Churchwide Operations, is responsible for the Mennonite Church USA Archives and will be the contact to GAMEO in the near term. They will sort out their representation before our next meeting.

We discussed the possibility of virtual meetings (Skype, etc.), but also noted their limitations.

2) Agenda Review

Bert Friesen reviewed the agenda, and said this evening's meeting would primarily include reporting. The agenda was accepted.

3) Minutes of October 26-27, 2011

Sam Steiner reviewed the minutes of October 26-27, 2011.

Moved/Seconded/Carried (M/S/C)(John Roth/Abe Dueck). To approve the minutes of October 26-27, 2011 as circulated. [Abe Dueck was present at those meetings so we allowed him to second the motion]

4) Managing Editor Report

Richard Thiessen reviewed the managing editor's report; he included the reports from the regional groups in his report. He noted the statistics still indicated some growth in usage; especially during the months of the academic year.

The regional report from Quebec raised the issue of internal links in French language articles. There are presently only a few French articles, so most internal links are to English language articles. This creates additional maintenance work for the reviewers and editors if links need to be manually identified and changed from English to French links when additional French language articles are added. Richard Thiessen expressed a preference for a policy that would mandate that internal links go only to articles in the same language.

We looked at the Wikipedia approach (using the example of [Menno Simons](#)), which follows this policy, but also indicates when there are articles on the same topic in other languages.

CONSENSUS: For the next year GAMEO articles will link only to articles in the same language. A note at the end of the article can indicate the presence of relevant English language articles. We will revisit the issue at our next meeting.

Our discussion noted the regional groups could make greater use of biographies that have already been published, e.g. in the Tabor College history, the obituaries in the digital version of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, and some regional biographical collections like the one done in Alberta.

Richard Thiessen circulated a document prepared by Bruce Hiebert, a professor in the University of the Fraser Valley, who uses GAMEO as course text. Hiebert wonders if GAMEO could have some introductory articles that would be helpful to students.

Our discussion expressed caution about spending much effort on creating syllabi or teaching modules. There was more affirmation for a "Preface" that would provide very basic information about worldwide Mennonites and "how to use" the encyclopedia.

CONSENSUS: We'll look at the issue of an encyclopedia "preface" again after the shared front page between GAMEO and the Global Anabaptist Wiki is in place.

We noted donation information on the front page needs to be changed to Mennonite World Conference. [I've changed the front page and "about us" page-sjs]

5) GAMEO Content Projects

a) Regional Editorial Groups

A high priority is establishing more regional groups, e.g. Kansas, Indiana-Michigan, Oregon. But another priority is encouraging existing groups to be more active.

Our discussion suggested gentle nudges, like asking if articles have been considered on specific individuals. Richard recounted the approach he took with the California group that seemed to generate enthusiasm, i.e. showing them a table in GAMEO that showed many California congregations for which there was no article or only a 50-year-old article. We also suggested a periodic email to regional groups from the Managing Editor reporting on recent GAMEO activity. It would serve as a good contact and a soft reminder.

CONSENSUS: For the Managing Editor to initiate periodic emails to the regional committees reporting on recent GAMEO activity.

b) Hutterite Brethren

Bert Friesen has maintained contact with the Manitoba Hutterites, but gets very limited response to his communication unless he shows up in person, but with no followup.

CONSENSUS: To provide more incentive by creating article stubs (name of colony, leader of colony, date founded, mother colony, population) that are easily derived from their directories.

We encouraged Bert to communicate to the Hutterite Brethren that we would begin this approach in about six months, and would welcome their help in filling out the articles with more detail and history, making use of the template they have developed. Bert will create the “stub” articles from resources he has available.

c) MennLex

Richard Thiessen reported that [MennLex](#) is currently working on theological articles; it is uncertain whether they still plan to produce a print version.

d) Paraguay Lexikon

Richard Thiessen said the [Lexikon der Mennoniten in Paraguay](#) is online, but no new content is being added. He wonders if any articles were translated into Spanish for the edition that was not completed due to poor sales of the German version.

John Roth said he has contacts in Paraguay that could address the Spanish language question.

CONSENSUS: After GAMEO's transition to the MediaWiki platform, we will approach both MennLex and the Paraguayan Lexikon about the possible incorporation of their German (and Spanish) content into GAMEO.

Richard clarified if the German were imported, the German article titles would be used. There could be “see” references from the English title. GAMEO has tried to use the institutional/conference title in the original language, but volumes 1-4 of the print encyclopedia did not. This has resulted in some inconsistency.

e) **Other**

We affirmed our desire that local people write the articles on local entities like congregations, church districts, Hutterite colonies, etc. stories.

6) **Adjournment until January 17 at 9:00 am**

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

Richard Thiessen reported on meetings he held with John Roth in June 2012. The [Global Anabaptist Wiki](#) is taking over GAMEO’s “Anabaptist Mennonite Ethereal Library.” He had hoped a common home page would be in place; the plan is to develop this later in the year. The common page will be <http://globalanabaptist.org/> (it currently redirects to the Wiki). The page will provide the option to go two directions—GAMEO or the Wiki.

John Roth described several recent contributions on the Wiki.

Our discussion wondered if the Global Anabaptist Wiki should also have a formal relationship with Mennonite World Conference, and whether there should be a formal memo of understanding between GAMEO and the Global Anabaptist Wiki.

CONSENSUS: That Richard Thiessen and John Roth consider creating a formal memo of understanding between GAMEO and the Wiki.

Our discussion also clarified that John Roth should be the initial contact for technical questions that PeaceWorks may have for the Wiki as they develop GAMEO’s new MediaWiki platform.

8) **GAMEO Multilanguage Content**

Richard Thiessen said GAMEO has not been able to work at multi-language content beyond the few French articles from Quebec. We did meet international historians at the time of our last meeting in Elkhart, Indiana, and these contacts should be moved forward. He said some interest has been expressed in translating GAMEO articles into Spanish.

John Roth said MWC General Secretary César Garcia is enthusiastic about the potential of GAMEO in fostering connections between historically-minded Mennonites around the world. With the Global History Project concluding, can GAMEO extract content from those volumes? Might GAMEO host a gather of historians at the 2016 MWC assembly?

9) **GAMEO Structure**

a) **MWC Relationship**

Richard Thiessen reported GAMEO now has a formal status with Mennonite World Conference. Charitable receipts and invoices will come from the Kitchener office; Richard

will still approve invoices. The plan is for monthly financial reports. GAMEO relates to the Faith and Life Commission as a non-voting member. The Managing Editor is invited to some MWC gatherings, but at our expense. John Roth, as the MWC representative, will circulate our minutes to the Faith and Life Commission.

b) **Consulting Editors**

Richard Thiessen solicited our counsel on better utilization of this group. There are many theological / historical articles that need to be replaced / updated. How much leadership should come from the Managing Editor; how much should be left to the consulting editors. We want this to begin “on the right foot.”

Our discussion suggested the Managing Editor could ask consulting editors to review specific articles (either new or submissions or older, dated articles). For example, a recent article on “Atonement” could be sent to Karl Koop and Barbara Nkala for feedback.

We noted there are three levels of updating requiring—the simplest is updating numbers and bibliography; the next level is updating the historiography on a person or topic, e.g. Balthasar Hubmaier; the third level is essentially rewriting or replacing a current article.

CONSENSUS: Members of the Management Board will give 10-15 hours of volunteer time to identify articles that need attention. The Managing Editor will then ask consulting editors to review specific articles by providing comments, writing an addendum to cover the time period since Volume 5, or suggesting a writer who could best do the update/rewrite. Richard Thiessen will also ask several professors in Mennonite Studies which articles are most in need of updating/rewriting.

10) **GAMEO Staffing**

Bert Friesen reminded us that all GAMEO staff persons have been volunteers; is it time to consider some paid staff time? Richard Thiessen wondered about creating the position of “General Editor,” a person with an academic background to help guide how GAMEO grows. This person would be well-known and could provide an academic profile that the Managing Editor and Associate Managing Editor do not have. Someone like John A. Lapp—someone retired or semi-retired. A number of names were discussed.

The job description would include advocacy for GAMEO, connecting with consulting editors, provide leadership in direction, and the ability to read articles with historical/theological eyes.

CONSENSUS: That the Managing Editor develop a job description for a General Editor over the next months.

11) **Fundraising**

Bert Friesen returned to the issue of staff time, which led to a short discussion of fundraising.

The potential of establishing an endowment was suggested, using the interest income to

purchase staff time. This would require a minimum of \$1,000,000. Professional help would be needed to develop a presentation to accomplish this. This could be picked up at a future meeting.

12) Technical Issues

a) **MediaWiki**

Richard Thiessen said the project took longer to initiate than hoped, but now Richard and Sam are meeting biweekly with PeaceWorks on the new CMS. There is a staging site for testing things. He thinks summer might be the time for unveiling the new platform.

b) **Virtual Meetings**

We briefly discussed greater use of virtual meetings.

CONSENSUS: The Managing Editor is authorized to purchase a Premium Skype account (which allows visual meetings of up to 10 persons) unless the Google+ technology seems a better option.

13) GAMEO Priorities for 2013

- a) MediaWiki Project
- b) Common home page
- c) Consulting Editor activity
- d) Importing Articles from MennLex and Paraguay Encyclopedia
- e) General Editor consideration

14) Promotion

a) **GAMEO DVD**

Sam Steiner reported there are many copies of the January 2010 edition left; there is not a need for another edition.

b) **News Releases**

We agreed there are two releases that could be done:

- i) The new relationship between GAMEO and MWC
- ii) Launch of the new MediaWiki platform and relationship with Global Anabaptist Wiki

CONSENSUS: To produce these news releases that would presumably be circulated by the MWC offices.

15) Finances

a) **Financial Report for 2012**

Richard Thiessen reviewed the Statement of Operations and the Statement of Financial Position for 2012. The latter shows the transfer of over \$25,000 to Mennonite World Conference while it is kept in a restricted account.

CONSENSUS: To accept the financial reports for 2012.

b) **Budget for 2013**

Richard Thiessen presented the budget for 2013. The major expense is the upgrade to the MediaWiki platform.

In response to a question, Richard said the PeaceWorks quote was based on an hourly rate. We pay for the actual cost. Design issues are not part of the quote. .

M/S/C (John Roth/Peter Rempel): To approve the 2013 Budget

16) Recommendations

We encourage the Canadian editorial committee to discuss article linking issue related to language.

17) Next Meeting

Richard Thiessen said he wondered about a November meeting 2013 meeting in the United States. However he's not certain of MWC's fiscal year end, so he can't be definite about a date.

Richard will make further investigation and then make a proposal for our next meeting.

18) Adjournment 12:02 pm

Minutes recorded by Sam Steiner