

## **GAMEO Management Board**

**Conrad Grebel University College & Zoom**

**2022 May 15 – 11:00 am**

**Present:** Jon Isaak (Chair, Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission), Laureen Harder-Gissing (Mennonite Historical Society of Canada), John D. Roth (General Editor, Mennonite World Conference; Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism), Ken Sensenig (Mennonite Central Committee), Jason Kauffman (Mennonite Church USA), Aileen Friesen (D. H. Plett Historical Research Foundation), Sam Steiner (Associate Editor), Bert Friesen (Associate Editor)  
**Regrets:** Alf Redekopp (Associate Editor)

### **1) Opening and introductions**

Jon Isaak welcomed us to this hybrid meeting, especially welcoming Aileen Friesen representing GAMEO's newest partner, the D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation. He also thanked Laureen Harder-Gissing for all her work with the Indigenous-Mennonite Encounters in Time and Place conference held just before this meeting at Conrad Grebel University College. John Roth expressed thanks for the conference on behalf of those who participated by Zoom.

Laureen Harder-Gissing acknowledged that our meeting is on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our meeting is also on the Haldimand Tract granted in 1784 to the Six Nations, which includes 10 kilometers on each side of the Grand River.

After additional words of welcome, Jon Isaak invited a round of introductions that included reflections on our maternal and paternal ancestry.

### **2) Review of Chair's Report and Agenda**

Jon Isaak noted his written report. He said our discussion would focus on content, technology, and Management Board structure because John Roth was retiring from the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA).

**CONSENSUS 1: To accept the agenda as circulated.**

### **3) Minutes of May 22, 2021**

Jon Isaak reviewed the minutes of May 22, 2021, and we each reported on our assignments from that meeting.

- Laureen Harder-Gissing said she continues to work on Indigenous issues in GAMEO articles; this goes beyond simple term replacement.

- John Roth said the Indonesia article has not been updated. He's written a book on Indonesian Mennonites, but he did not get a volunteer to write an encyclopedia article.
- Ken Sensenig has submitted four "stub" articles on newer conservative Mennonite groups.
- Jason Kauffman did not get articles written on Mennonite leaders in Indiana and Michigan.
- Bert Friesen still hopes to get a Schmiedeleut Hutterite writing group functioning, even to the point of becoming a GAMEO partner. They would want to construct their own template for biographies. Bert needs to work slowly to get both "keepers" and more hesitant leaders to participate.
- Sam Steiner said he is slowly working on the Mennonite Church USA database, updating tables and adding stubs of newer congregations. He completed MC Canada a couple of years ago.
- Jon Isaak said that Richard Thiessen is working on Mennonite Brethren statistics from Canada and the United States.

**CONSENSUS 2: To accept the minutes of May 21, 2021, as circulated and reviewed.**

#### **4) Reports circulated before the meeting**

##### **a) General Editor (John Roth)**

John Roth noted his written report. He emphasized the need for a decision on his role as General Editor because he has retired from Goshen College and the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA). However, he is happy to continue as the Mennonite World Conference representative to GAMEO. John is pleased that Goshen College has committed to ISGA funding into the future. Goshen has not yet announced John's replacement.

Several comments affirmed John's continuing representation from Mennonite World Conference and encouraged him to continue as Interim General Editor until the ISGA appointment is clarified.

**CONSENSUS 3: To accept John Roth's resignation as General Editor, with the understanding he will continue to serve as Interim General Editor until the wishes of the new ISGA Director are known.**

Aileen Friesen volunteered to write the news release arising from today's Management Board meeting.

**CONSENSUS 4: Aileen Friesen will write a GAMEO news release following this meeting.**

We had an extended discussion on the issues raised in John's report by Anicka Fast, the MCC representative in Burkina Faso. She works with the African Dictionary of Christian Biography. Anicka feels GAMEO's biographical template does not fit the African context

regarding length limitations, narrative style, and who qualifies for inclusion. Conversion stories and miraculous events are important in her context.

We discussed whether to create alternative templates for the Global Church and/or the Hutterites or whether to add a footnote to the current template that would acknowledge the need for exceptions to the template on a case-by-case basis.

We agreed on the need to make exceptions to the “Western” approach to encyclopedias. We wondered if consultation with John A. Lapp and Arnold Snyder, who edited the five-volume Global Mennonite History project, would be beneficial.

**CONSENSUS 5: To add a note to the current biography template, in consultation with Anicka Fast and others as necessary. Jon Isaak will work on a draft note.**

We then discussed our approach to correcting/rewriting current articles, especially concerning the Benjamin H. Unruh article that does not address his links to National Socialism.

**CONSENSUS 6: John Roth will ask Arnold Neufeld Fast to write a new B. H. Unruh article in the 800-1000 word range. We will not retain the present and original *Mennonite Encyclopedia* articles.**

**CONSENSUS 7: John Roth will propose a modest edit to correct the Melchior Rinck article.**

We discussed whether GAMEO should preserve the original *Mennonite Encyclopedia* articles. The preponderance of discussion said they should not be kept if replaced. Instead, it might be better to maintain an electronic copy of the print version on the Internet in consultation with Herald Press.

#### **b) Associate Editor Statistical Report**

In addition to his written report, Sam Steiner mentioned several recent interactions with PeaceWorks Technology Solutions, our Internet Service Provider. First, several weekends ago, GAMEO experienced a server outage. Sam did not demand weekend PeaceWorks service because of the potential cost. Second, Google no longer supports the Analytics program GAMEO had been using for its statistics; PeaceWorks needed to install a newer version. Finally, Samuel Hoover, a conservative Mennonite vendor in the U.S., requested another “dump” of GAMEO files that he uses to make GAMEO DVDs for conservative Anabaptist groups who use computers but not the Internet. He gets a dump from GAMEO every two years; last year, Hoover sold 97 copies.

We then discussed Sam Steiner’s request to retire as an Associate Editor. He wishes to be released from responding to emails sent to the generic [admin@gameo.org](mailto:admin@gameo.org); interacting with PeaceWorks when issues arise in GAMEO, e.g. outages, indexing issues, upgrading to new MediaWiki software, etc.; and preparing the annual statistical reports based on

Google Analytics. He would like new writers of GAMEO articles to use other Associate Editors for uploading or editing articles; he is willing to continue uploading and editing articles for authors with whom he's worked in the past. He would no longer attend Management Board meetings and would like to be considered an "Editor." He would continue to work on the MC USA congregational articles.

Several persons asked clarification questions about the tasks in question and expressed appreciation for Sam's years of work with GAMEO.

**CONSENSUS 8: To accept the realignment of Sam Steiner's role in GAMEO. Jon Isaak will contact Alf Redekopp and Laureen Harder-Gissing to discuss how they might share the shifted duties.**

**CONSENSUS 9: Aileen Friesen will contact Richard Thiessen to ascertain his possible interest in again serving as an Associate Editor for GAMEO.**

## 5) Technical Issues

### a) Dedicated Server

Bert Friesen said GAMEO's dedicated server had worked well. PeaceWorks service with GAMEO has been good. Outages are infrequent. We will always need to update the MediaWiki software every several years. Staff turnover at PeaceWorks is sometimes an issue in support continuity.

## 6) GAMEO Priorities for 2020

### a) Regional Committees and New Initiatives

Laureen Harder-Gissing said the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada still has a GAMEO committee composed of Bert Friesen, Aileen Friesen, Richard Thiessen, and Laureen Harder Gissing. Aileen Friesen has suggested the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS) at the University of Winnipeg become an academic center for Canadian GAMEO research and writing. The Centre could help coordinate student projects and encourage academics to engage more in GAMEO since universities widely use GAMEO.

Although this did not require a Management Board action, Jon Isaak stated the Board's encouragement for CTMS and the Institute for Anabaptist Mennonite Studies (IAMS at Conrad Grebel) efforts to strengthen GAMEO.

### b) Translating Theological Articles

John Roth said he has a list of MennLex articles that deserved translation for GAMEO. He hopes to translate two or three articles per year.

### c) Addressing Older Terminology

Laureen Harder-Gissing said she may submit an article related to Mennonites and Indigenous education. She will continue to work on Indigenous questions in the next year and could be available to consult on Indigenous language issues.

**CONSENSUS 10: Jon Isaak will search for Indian and Native terminology in current GAMEO articles.**

**d) Other Tasks for the year**

Jason Kauffman said he would generate a list of Indiana-Michigan Mennonites deserving of a GAMEO biography. He is traveling to Mississippi and will try to get some basic information on congregations not yet listed in GAMEO.

Ken Sensenig said he would again build stubs for new conservative Mennonite groups.

Bert Friesen will continue his work with the Hutterites.

Using an earlier list created by Kerry Fast, Aileen Friesen will identify GAMEO articles that need to be updated or replaced.

**7) GAMEO Priorities for the Future**

**a) What should GAMEO look like in 10 years**

John Roth said that while he still affirms that encyclopedias would be curated with single authors, the Internet context allows some concerns like length to be more flexible

Sam Steiner said he expected more audio and video links. However, others cautioned that the links need to be judiciously utilized since many links die within a few years.

**8) Promotion**

**a) News release**

As noted in Consensus 4, Aileen Friesen will write the news release.

**9) Finances**

**a) Financial Report for FYE 2021**

Bert Friesen said he had not received an audited statement from Mennonite World Conference. We had more income than expenses; the income stream has been fairly constant. The primary expenses are web hosting and maintenance. He would like more clarity on the formula for MWC's management fees.

**CONSENSUS 11: To accept the financial report for FYE 2021.**

**b) Fundraising Update**

Jon Isaak said he sends invoices to about 20 schools and institutions. Ken Sensenig said he will provide Jon with information on Mennonite Life (formerly Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society).

c) **Finance Committee**

**CONSENSUS 12: That Jon Isaak and Bert Friesen serve as a Finance Committee for the GAMEO Management Board.**

d) **Budget for 2022**

Bert Friesen said he used numbers from last year.

**CONSENSUS 13: To approve the GAMEO budget for FYE2022.**

e) **Other Business**

**CONSENSUS 14: Next year, the Management Board will consider scanning the five-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia* for posting as a stand-alone document. This project will require consultation with Herald Press.**

John Roth said there would not be a GAMEO presence at Indonesia's Mennonite World Conference Assembly.

f) **Next meeting – May 2023**

**CONSENSUS 15: The Management Board will meet by Zoom on May 13, 2023.**

In 2024 there should be an in-person meeting in the Goshen-Elkhart area.

**10) Adjournment at 2:28 pm**

Recorded by Sam Steiner