



# 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/>

## Management Board

**Bert Friesen** (Chair)  
[bfrie@mts.net](mailto:bfrie@mts.net)

**Abe Dueck**  
[ajdueck@mbconf.ca](mailto:ajdueck@mbconf.ca)

**Rich Preheim**  
[richp@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:richp@mennoniteusa.org)

**Kenneth L. Sensenig**  
[kls@mcc.org](mailto:kls@mcc.org)

**Sam Steiner**  
(Managing Editor)  
[samsteiner@gameo.org](mailto:samsteiner@gameo.org)

**Richard Thiessen**  
(Associate Managing Editor)  
[richard.thiessen@columbiabc.edu](mailto:richard.thiessen@columbiabc.edu)

**Pakisa Tshimika**  
[pakisatshimika@mwc-cmm.org](mailto:pakisatshimika@mwc-cmm.org)

The past year saw successful completion of GAMEO’s goal to include all of the print *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, unsuccessful efforts to obtain additional grants toward enabling GAMEO to include articles in multiple languages; retrenched work to create a DVD “copy” of GAMEO that can be marketed, and modest steps in launching regional editorial groups in the United States. There were also a few modest enhancements to the GAMEO site.

## Some Statistics

Below is a table showing comparable figures beginning in 2002 when we were still the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada website. (We became GAMEO in 2005.) Our busiest month is typically October; in 2009 we had 52,105 unique visitors in October using a bandwidth of 15.74 Megabytes. July, August and December are typically the slowest months; we are clearly used most heavily when school terms are in session.

	Dec. 2002	Dec. 2004	Oct 2005	Dec. 2006	Jan 2008	Nov. 2008	Nov. 2009
Visitors per Day	734	1,356	1,389	895	1,233	1,793	2,196
Bandwidth (Month in MB)					9.06	10.58	15.52
Articles in GAMEO	2,304	2,458	2,726	5,578	9,162	12,501	14,504

The number of articles in GAMEO reflects a count of the files in the encyclopedia’s content folder. This number now includes some cross-reference entries (see article XXX).

A few additional details from the weblog report for November 2009. We received a significant number of visitors from outside North America – Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Australia and Mexico in that order. 3.5% of the visits to our site were over 30 minutes; another 2.4% between 15 & 30 minutes; 77% were for less than 30 seconds (i.e. they didn’t find what they were looking for).

The “top ten” articles for November 2009 were: 1) Netherlands (2982 views); 2) Biblical Understandings Concerning Women and Men (2260 views); 3) Africa (673 views) ; 4) Amish (581 views); 5) Münster Anabaptists (552 views); 6) Zürich (Switzerland)(437 views); 7) Schleithem Confession (Anabaptist, 1527)(431 views); 8) Cuauhtémoc (Chihuahua State, Mexico)(375 views); 9) Menno Simons (1496-1561)(371 views); 10) Texas (USA)(314 views). If you have seen lists in earlier reports, you will note regular changes. “Biblical Understandings” is high because the articles includes the symbols for male and female. The prominence of some of the geographical place names is new.

## **Mennonite Encyclopedia Volumes 1-5**

We completed this project on February 20, 2009 when Richard Thiessen uploaded the 14,160<sup>th</sup> article to GAMEO. We appreciated 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.

Some ongoing cleanup continues. I am going through the articles one by one to ensure all have been included (we've found a few "missing in action", as well as inserting cross-references that we did not initially include. I have also added maps and updated some congregational names where this was evident. I'm currently at the beginning of the C's; this will be a long term project.

### **New Content**

Our current manner of counting articles (the number of files in the "Encyclopedia" folder of the database), does not distinguish between articles and "see reference" article stubs. However, I would estimate a couple of hundred new articles were added to GAMEO this year, in addition to completing uploading the print articles. The new articles have come from areas where there are active regional editorial committees. Some of the first new (and rewritten) articles have come from the new Lancaster committee. The number of rewritten or edited articles is almost impossible to track, as changes in an article can vary from adding a link or correcting a date to a complete rewrite.

We are very pleased and gratified with the offer of Helmut Huebert in Winnipeg to make available the content of his numerous well-researched books on the Mennonite experience in the Soviet Union available for adaptation to new GAMEO articles. His works include considerable village and biographical information and will be a rich source of content. His daughter, Susan Huebert, who has been a GAMEO editor for several years, has already begun to create new articles based on this material. Hopefully this donation will encourage other authors of biographical or village collections to offer us the privilege of adapting material.

### **Editorial Issue**

Richard Thiessen, the Associate Managing Editor, has encountered an issue in B.C. that likely GAMEO to more explicitly detail its "ownership" of the articles published within GAMEO. This involved a case in which a writer resisted any modifications to an article that the writer had submitted.

Richard will bring draft language for a policy statement that would be included in all our templates, and that should be referenced in requests to authors for an article. By the very nature of the online environment we need to retain the right to make editorial changes and corrections to articles in GAMEO. In some cases articles may even be totally rewritten in future.

This could also become part of our Policy Document.

### **Canadian Editorial Committee**

The role of the Canadian Editorial Committee appointed by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada has been somewhat in limbo the past couple of years. The original vision was to have national committees both in Canada and the United States, but this did not come to fruition as the

U.S. Mennonites had no centralized historical body that could coordinate this. We then turned to regionally based committees.

Last year the Canadian Editorial Committee proposed that it continue to identify and assign national and denominational articles based in Canada, and that an International Editorial Advisory Committee be established that would be charged with assigning survey articles of theological & biblical nature and broader historical/sociological nature. This advisory committee would be responsible to the Management Board. The Canadian Committee has also been a reference point for testing new article “templates” that are developed for GAMEO.

**Does the Management Board agree to continue the Canadian Editorial Committee as an advisory body? Should we disband the U.S. Committee, or find another way to create it?**

**What is the Management Board’s view of an International Editorial Advisory Committee? Should it take steps to create such a body? A description of such a body is included in Draft 5 of the Policy Document.**

### **Regional Editorial Committees**

Presently there are five active 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 Joel Alderfer, Mary Jane Lederach Hershey, Ray Hacker, Rich Moyer. The group is loosely affiliated with the Mennonite Heritage Center at Harleysville, Pennsylvania and holds its meetings there. Forrest Moyer and Joel Alderfer are on staff there.

Richard Lougheed from Montreal has been a one-person committee in creating several new articles for GAMEO out of the Quebec context.

**Nurturing these committees and encouraging the start of new regional committees, both in the United States and Canada should continue to be a priority for GAMEO.**

### **GAMEO Management Partners**

Is it time to consider whether GAMEO should invite other agencies to become full management partners in the GAMEO project? Presently GAMEO are five partners, three of which have a distinctly historical focus in their mandate. Two partners are denominationally related; one of these is nationally based.

One area in which GAMEO might be strengthened is more explicitly academic linkages. This could increase GAMEO’s credibility, especially when larger theological articles are considered. Some possibilities for partners that would increase our academic profile would be the Institute of

Mennonite Studies (IMS; Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary); Mennonite Historical Society (MHS; publisher of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, based in Goshen College, AMBS and Bluffton University); and the Chair of Mennonite Studies (University of Winnipeg). Are there others that should be considered, e.g. Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies (Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania)?

**Does the Management Board wish to consider inviting additional full partners?**

### **GAMEO Sponsors**

There are 21 sponsors listed on GAMEO's "Sponsors" page. These are donors who have given \$250 of support in the past year. These are all educational institutions except for the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and the Mennonite Savings & Credit Union in Ontario. Two public university libraries are also included.

The sponsor program started with post-secondary schools; some Mennonite secondary schools have also joined. Richard Thiessen has been the primary contact person for the sponsorship program. This "subscription/sponsorship" approach has worked well for us in raising operating funds. Should this program be expanded with approaches to organizations like Mennonite Mutual Aid (U.S.), Mennonite Financial Credit Union (U.S), MEDA, and the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation? For them it would be a minimal form of advertising.

**Should the Sponsorship Program be expanded or modified?**

### **GAMEO's Institutional Base**

We discussed last year the desirability of a stronger linkage to Mennonite World Conference to add credence to the "Global" in our name. We had discussed raising this issue as the MWC's Global History Project came to an end. There are still some books to be published, so the "wrap up" meeting considered for 2010 will not take place. John A. Lapp has suggested the earliest possible date for such a meeting is late 2011.

**Are we satisfied with the current primary relationship to the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada? Is this an issue that should be pursued?**

### **Technical Issues**

Most of the issues noted last year have been addressed. Google maps no longer "disappear" in the editing process, and we can now create tables of contents in GAMEO articles. Some modest changes in language have been made, e.g. "Locations" now shows as "Map(s)".

New problems have arisen. The feature that allowed a visitor to email a link to a GAMEO article from within the article had to be removed. A spammer found us and exploited the feature to send spam about unrelated matters. The Plone architecture does not provide an easy fix for this. Because it is still possible within any browser to email a link of a web page, this has not been a priority for us to fix.

Hopefully by the time of our meeting two additional changes will update our "citation" information at the bottom of encyclopedia pages to meet current formatting standards. More significantly we hope to speed up the "on-the-fly" creation of the alphabetical indexes.

Two larger projects that were mentioned last year are discussed below.

## New Initiatives

We continued work on two initiatives:

- 1) **GAMEO Available on DVD.** We worked occasionally on a prototype for this in the past year, but were not able to get an acceptable product that would load efficiently onto a computer (it took hours), nor did it work very efficiently off the DVD. We have asked PeaceWorks to take a further look this; they may have some proposals that will be available before the meeting.

The Management Board agreed the price should be cost-recovery only in North America, and that we would seek donors to cover costs for copies circulated outside of North America. Is this still the approach we wish to take?

- 2) **Provision of additional languages in GAMEO.** As you may recall, 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.

We applied for three grants to cover the cost of the project that we believed would likely end up closer to \$20,000 in total. The applications were to the Showalter Foundation (Kansas; prepared by Rich Preheim), the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation (Manitoba; prepared by Sam Steiner) and the Mennonite Savings & Credit Union (Ontario; prepared by Sam Steiner), each in the amount of \$7,000. Unfortunately, only the Showalter Foundation responded positively; they provided a grant of \$3,500 U.S. which has been forwarded to our treasurer. Although the two other granting bodies spoke positively about the project, they were not able to fund us at this time.

This setback does allow us to review to this project and assess if it is still a priority for us. There are an increasing number of “competitors” on the web that will make it more difficult to emphasize the unique potential of GAMEO. There is a Global Anabaptist Wiki launched by the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College this is envisioned be part of a larger Center (<http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/>). Another “wiki” type project is the Mennonite Heritage Portrait based in Waterloo, Ontario (<http://www.mennoniteheritageportrait.ca/>). More international Mennonites are also making content available, especially in Europe.

**If this does remain a priority, we need to consider other possible funding sources.**

## Web Hosting

The GAMEO site continues to be hosted by PeaceWorks. This has worked well; site has been down minimally if at all in the past year. We have also continued to use PeaceWorks for modifications to the design and functionality of the GAMEO database.

## **Policy Document(s)**

A draft policy documented emerged from our November 2006 Management Board meeting. There have been several revisions since that time. Also circulated prior to the meeting is a Policy Document dated January 2010 that reflects some of the issues raised last year. The Management Board's ongoing review of the document is welcome. When "Draft 5" is approved it will be posted on the GAMEO site.

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. (This would also allow Management Board members to draft articles for GAMEO!).

## **Associate Managing Editor Appointment**

Richard Thiessen's 3-year term as Associate Managing Editor is ending. He has been dedicated to GAMEO's vision and the work required keeping it running.

**I encourage the Management Board to re-appoint Richard Thiessen for another three-year term as Associate Managing Editor.**

## **Editors**

The number of editors who enter date directly into GAMEO is still quite limited. John D. Thiesen, Susan Hubert, Richard Lougheed, Alf Redekopp, Bert Friesen, Joe Springer and J.J. Neufeld are the only persons who have done this in addition to Richard Thiessen and myself. Others have continued to forward content to one of the Managing Editors for uploading. There does not seem to be ground-swell of writers who wish to upload articles directly. 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, is using his role primarily for correcting errors noticed in the text. John Thiesen has primarily done this as well.

Richard Thiessen and Sam Steiner are prepared to teach persons to move ahead in this. I hope that in the next year several more persons can also be added as reviewers. The most delicate thing (from my point of view) continues to be maintaining adherence to GAMEO style standards.

## **Publicity**

We had a press release after the completion of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* upload, and received good coverage in the Mennonite press. We had hoped the DVD edition of GAMEO would be another promotional tool. A specialized promotional DVD and one-page handout for conference meetings were not pursued this past year.

**Does the Management Board want to revisit the promotional DVD and one-page handout?**

## **Anabaptist Ethereal Library**

The Anabaptist Ethereal Library continues with its core content of confessions of faith and denominational and inter-Mennonite statements. New items have not been added. A number of "classic" Mennonite works are available through the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org/>), though these are mostly "out of copyright" items.

**Should GAMEO continue to add works to the Anabaptist Ethereal Library? What should be the priorities?**

**Finances**

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada maintains a separate fund for GAMEO. Richard Thiessen as MHSC Treasurer manages 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 2010 budget to the meeting. Last year's budget included:

PeaceWorks:	\$3,000
Travel:	\$2,500
Computer:	\$1,300
Software:	\$500
Contingency:	\$750
Promotional DVD:	get amount from Ken Reddig (offset with donations)
Multilingual Project:	\$20,000 (offset with donations)

Sam Steiner,  
Managing Editor  
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