

Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO)  
Management Board  
Bethel College  
North Newton, KS  
8 November 2006 – 9:00 a.m.

Present: Bert Friesen (Chair, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada; Dale Schrag (Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee); Ken Reddig (Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission); John A. Lapp (Mennonite Central Committee; observer, Mennonite World Conference); Sam Steiner (Managing Editor); Richard Thiessen (Treasurer; Assistant Managing Editor)  
Guest: John Thiesen (minute 9 only)

**1) Opening**

We had a round of introductions; Dale Schrag, the local host, provided logistical information. Bert Friesen led in prayer.

**2) Minutes of 1 December 2005**

Sam Steiner highlighted the minutes of 1 December 2005.

**CONSENSUS 1: To approve the minutes of 1 December 2005 as presented.**

**3) Orientation**

- a) Sam reviewed the variety of information available within the GAMEO site
- b) Bert Friesen reviewed the history of the GAMEO project and infrastructure (management board, national editorial committees, and copy editors) that has evolved. He emphasized the need for GAMEO to consider paid staff time to facilitate networking, encouraging work on new articles and publicity for GAMEO. It is important for someone to do some traveling on behalf of GAMEO to regional and local societies. We need to get on to the agendas of conference historical committees and local societies. The role of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee in networking with regional and local historical societies in the U.S. is important.

**CONSENSUS 2: Sam Steiner will contact the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society about a presentation in that area.**

- c) Sam Steiner described how articles from volumes 1-5 of the print *Encyclopedia* are prepared and uploaded.

We had a lengthy discussion on the creation of new articles:

- GAMEO brings together local amateur and academic professional historians. The former will have interest in biography, local geography and congregations; the latter in major institutions and conceptual articles.
- The Global History project could be a resource for Global South content; similarly papers from academic conference (like the recent conscientious objector conference in Winnipeg) might be a good source.

- We have not yet begun to assign rewrites or new writing of conceptual articles; we may want to look at grants to help with this, though academics typically do this kind of writing for professional reasons, and not for remuneration.

Presently GAMEO has a centralized editorial process (after preliminary work at the local level, a central editorial team reviews the article before sending it to one of the Managing Editors for final review, creation of links and uploading). Would it be better to download the editorial process to the regional level?

- Is there the same interest at the local level?
- There will be greater variation in quality if editorial work is dispersed.
- As new content submissions increase, the editorial work can't be done centrally on a volunteer basis.
- It would be possible to identify regions that do follow the style sheet closely (e.g. in Canada this is the B.C., Manitoba and Ontario areas); these might get more editorial latitude.
- A centralized editorial group could still monitor the quality of what is added.

We discussed the need for a policy on eligibility for consideration as a GAMEO biography. We have said the individual must be deceased, and have influence beyond the local congregation. We have accepted articles of some persons who were local pioneers or served for long periods of time in large congregations.

We agreed that persons should be members of a Mennonite church or have made a profound influence on the Mennonite community. We did not believe that persons not part of the Mennonite community, but who had a "Mennonite" name should warrant a separate article, though they might be listed in a family name article, e.g. sports or entertainment figures.

We need to consider a conceptual article on the religious/ethnic aspects of Mennonite identity.

**CONSENSUS 3 – Richard Thiessen will draft a policy document on the criteria to be used in determining eligibility for a biographical article. He will circulate to the Management Board and the editorial committees. We will aim for mid-January.**

Our discussion agreed that GAMEO's first priority is completion of uploading volumes 1-5. In future we will talk about how conceptual articles are assigned. John Lapp suggested we page through the volumes and begin a list of conceptual articles that need to be updated. An advisory board from Mennonite post-secondary institutions would also be helpful in identifying articles to be updated. Some of the urgent articles mentioned in Sam Steiner's report will be identified at the U.S. and Canadian editorial committee meetings.

#### 4) Managing Editor's Report

Sam Steiner reviewed his report:

- a) Statistics and status of vols. 1-5 content  
It would be good to get more editors actively involved in the volumes 1-5 copy editing project.
- b) New content  
Many of the new articles (83) were funded by a D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation grant of \$6350.
- c) Editorial Issues (Acronyms & abbreviations, postal short forms, etc.)  
Given the global nature of GAMEO, Sam Steiner asked if it was still appropriate to use North American two-letter postal short forms in our articles, particularly in the titles. Should these short forms be retroactively converted?

Our discussion indicated it would also be good to add "Canada" or "USA" to geographic addresses to parallel our practice for non-Canadian and non-USA entries. Thus a title entry would be: Grace Community Church (Bad Axe, Michigan, USA).

**CONSENSUS 4: GAMEO will not use postal short forms in the titles of articles. Postal short forms will generally be used only in mailing addresses.**

**GAMEO will include country (Canada or USA) in the geographic qualifier of North American institutional, congregational and geographic entries; this will be incorporated retroactively.**

- d) New templates required (Conferences, Institutions)  
**CONSENSUS 5: Richard Thiessen and David Giesbrecht will continue work on a "template" for a variety of institutional articles; they will try to have this ready for the January 2007 meeting of the Canadian editorial committee for discussion.**

We discussed the need for an area/regional conference template. We noted the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches article might be a good model for such a template.

**CONSENSUS 6: Ken Reddig and Bert Friesen will review present area conference and denominational articles and will develop a template for denominational/conference articles.**

- e) Cartography issues  
Sam Steiner said GAMEO currently includes maps from the print encyclopedia, the CIA's World Factbook; the U.S. Census Bureau's TIGER/Line maps and a handful of other sources. It would be good to identify a basic map source that would be customizable for our needs. Some academic cartographers have offered assistance, but their examples have been highly complex and detailed. They likely would not find basic maps very challenging. Google maps would be good, but they require openness to advertising.

**CONSENSUS 7: Sam Steiner will check options available to us through MapQuest, as well as map sources used by publishers like Pandora Press,**

**and will continue conversations with the Community Map group affiliated with the University of Waterloo.**

f) Bibliography/Front Matter

**CONSENSUS 8: We wish to update the current bibliography. We believe it should be fairly short (two pages) providing an overview historically and theologically. The major historical series should be included. We will refer this back to John Thiesen and David Giesbrecht for further work.**

We discussed at some length the need for an “Introduction to the Mennonites” article that is linked to GAMEO’s front page. Options include taking over and updating the “Who are the Mennonites” portion of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada’s site, using the Third Way Café, or developing a fairly short introduction similar to those developed by various Mennonite denominations. It should be global in perspective and well illustrated. Of the sites we examined, the Mennonite Church Canada introduction “What makes a Mennonite” came closest to our vision.

**CONSENSUS 9: Ken Reddig and Bert Friesen will review our options and propose a direction by early spring.**

g) Anabaptist Ethereal Library

We discussed whether a policy should be written for this section of GAMEO. Should longer documents be added, e.g. Menno Simons *Complete Works*? Might we find a way to generate revenue through providing value-added products here?

**CONSENSUS 10: The Anabaptist Ethereal Library will continue with its core content of confessions of faith and denominational and inter-Mennonite statements, and will continue to add content of this type. We will continue to provide links to other Anabaptist-Mennonite full-text items on the Web. This decision may be reviewed in future.**

h) Other GAMEO partners

We noted the Hutterites, Brethren in Christ and (Evangelical) Missionary Church (formerly Mennonite Brethren in Christ) were part of volumes 1-4 of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, though the latter two groups were not included in volume 5.

**CONSENSUS 11: Sam Steiner will contact the Brethren in Christ to check their interest either as a GAMEO partner, and/or for inclusion in the editorial committees. Bert Friesen will continue his informal contact with the Hutterites.**

i) Management Board / Editorial Committee roles

We discussed the need to clarify in policy statements the roles of the management board and the editorial committees. The members of the Management Board are appointed by the partners. The partners pay travel costs of their appointees and share the travel costs of GAMEO “staff.” They also appoint the Managing Editor and other staff.

The Editorial Committees work independently on solicitation and editing of new articles where the content is clearly located within one country. There will need to be a mechanism for assigning articles for persons, institutions, and conceptual topics that transcend national boundaries.

We assumed the Canadian committee will continue to be appointed by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, and that the Society would be responsible for the meeting costs of the Canadian committee. We also assumed that at least for the present the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission would share responsibility for appointment of the U.S. editorial committee and would share responsibility for costs of meetings, etc.

We will encourage the appointing bodies to consider denominational, geographic, gender and cultural background in their appointments. We suggest the length of appointment terms be on the order of three years, with staggered terms to guarantee continuity.

**CONSENSUS 12: Sam Steiner will draft policy statements based on our discussion for the Management Board and Editorial Committees prior to the January annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.**

#### **5) Virtual Meeting**

We discussed the possibility of holding some of our meetings by web conferences. We decided to explore this possibility in the next year.

**CONSENSUS 13: Ken Reddig and Bert Friesen will ascertain what software and hardware would be required to facilitate web-based conferencing.**

#### **6) Status of Partnerships**

- a) Mennonite Historical Society of Canada  
Ken Reddig said the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada sees GAMEO as one of its premier projects.
- b) Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA  
Dale Schrag said the Historical Committee was enthusiastic about GAMEO, but has little money for ongoing operations. He does believe GAMEO has the potential to give energy to the area conference historical committees.
- c) Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission  
Ken Reddig said the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission was supportive; Abe Dueck did a job of introducing GAMEO to Mennonite Brethren bodies. They are aware that some finances go to the project.
- d) Mennonite Central Committee  
John Lapp said the Mennonite Central Committee had been prepared to join as a partner on the basis of Sam Steiner's communication with the administrative offices.

Sam Steiner indicated two areas where MCC has not followed through on earlier commitments – GAMEO has not been mentioned in any MCC press release (to his knowledge), and a link from MCC's history page to GAMEO has not been established. John Lapp will check on this.

e) Mennonite World Conference

John Lapp reported Mennonite World Conference is not certain of their ability to be a GAMEO partner. MWC understands that GAMEO wishes their partnership in order to provide a Southern Hemisphere voice on the board, and is not certain MWC can afford the expense. John mentioned several historians from the South who could be considered. MWC also wonders how GAMEO will serve the global church. Will additional languages be available in GAMEO in the near term? MWC does not want the content to be too academic; it should serve folks with secondary school-level education.

Our discussion wondered if some cooperation with denominational bodies might make MWC's travel costs more affordable. We also wondered if there were individuals in North America that could represent MWC's concerns.

John Lapp said he will encourage MWC's participation.

f) Hutterian Brethren

Bert Friesen continues his contact with one part of the Hutterite Schmiedeleut colonies in Manitoba. They are interested in the project, but it may take some time to receive approval from colony leadership.

We encouraged Bert to ask John J. Friesen to assist in our contacts with the Hutterites; Friesen has established a strong reputation among the Hutterites because of his academic work and his work with colony school teachers.

g) Paraguay Encyclopedia Project

Our discussion encouraged the ongoing encyclopedia project in Paraguay. They want to have a finished print product in two languages by the time of Mennonite World Conference in 2009.

**CONSENSUS 14: Sam Steiner will contact the Paraguayan Mennonite Encyclopedia leadership, expressing our interest in and support for the project. We will not seek their active cooperation in GAMEO until their current project is complete.**

h) Others

We briefly discussed whether other historical bodies should be added as partners, e.g. the Mennonite Historical Society based in North Indiana that publishes *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. Our discussion leaned towards involving them at the advisory committee stage when conceptual article rewrites are being considered.

**7) Editorial Committee updates**

Our discussion focused on the Canadian editorial committee, as no one was present with experience within the U.S. committee. Bert Friesen reported the Canadian committee had focused on copy editing and uploading the print version of the *Encyclopedia*. Some 80 new articles came from the Plett grant; there are 15-20 articles waiting to be processed.

## 8) Publicity

### a) Brochure

Our discussion noted the present brochure is out of date because of numerous changes in board membership and the addition of Mennonite Central Committee as a partner. We were not certain an update at this time was appropriate.

We discussed a bulletin insert approach (similar to the *Profiles of Mennonite faith*) published by the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission. A good story could be utilized to highlight GAMEO. Negotiation with denominational bodies would be required to get the insert accepted.

We also discussed a 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.

**CONSENSUS 15: Ken Reddig will give direction to developing a brochure based on the biographical and congregational templates, with the help of design folks at the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. He will consult with Rich Preheim. We would try to find printers in both countries. We hope to have a draft by the end of March 2007.**

### b) Logo

Although it is appropriate to consider a change in our logo, this is not a present priority in view of other structural changes to the GAMEO site that are required.

### c) Press releases

Ideally GAMEO would produce four press releases a year.

**CONSENSUS 16: Ken Reddig will work with Rich Preheim on a GAMEO press release.**

Possible content includes the new MCC partnership in GAMEO, GAMEO's passing of 5000 articles; the inclusion of 83 articles on Kleine Gemeinde and Old Colony significant persons.

### d) GAMEO on CD

Sam Steiner commented on the Surf Offline (or similar) software that can be used to show GAMEO even when not connected to the web. This would be helpful for presentations when network connections are not available. The technology can also be used to distribute GAMEO on CD for minimal cost.

**CONSENSUS 17: Sam Steiner will circulate information on offline browsing options to the Management Board.**

### e) Networking

GAMEO will flourish only if there is successful networking with local historical

groups and congregations. The Management Board and the editorial committees need to be conscious of this at all times.

## 9) Website restructuring

John Thiesen joined us for this discussion.

### a) Frames to CSS layout

Sam Steiner reported that even if nothing else was done, our html “frames” technology was obsolete and needed to be replaced. They hinder indexing by the major search engines like Google. The simplest and cheapest approach would be a change to layout controlled by cascading style sheets (CSS), but this would not address the bottleneck created by the need for all articles to receive significant processing by either Richard Thiessen or himself.

### b) Content Management

A switch by GAMEO from simple html to a content management system (CMS) approach (recommended both by Domain7 (Abbotsford, BC) and PeaceWorks (Waterloo, ON)) is a more robust solution that would handle our technical needs well into the future. Some of GAMEO’s current indexing issues would also be addressed by this approach.

Richard Thiessen reviewed the proposal prepared by Domain7. The proposal included a fully CSS-based user interface, installation of a proprietary content management system, conversion of all current content to the new system and training for existing and potential editors. The quote totaled \$47,000 for all features. This was essentially a turn-key operation that would require minimal work by current volunteer staff. Columbia Bible College currently uses the Domain7 technology.

Sam Steiner reported on a brief submission by PeaceWorks that strongly encouraged GAMEO’s use of open-source content management software (at virtually no cost); their role would be to help with conversion of our content to the new system. They have done such a conversion with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank with a program called “Plone.” PeaceWorks cost would be on an hourly basis.

We discussed the proprietary vs. open source options, and the impact each would have on volunteer staff time. (Open source would likely require more time.) We also discussed obtaining a more formal quote from PeaceWorks, Mennonite.net and perhaps one other U.S. vendor.

**CONSENSUS 18: We will seek additional quotes stating that GAMEO wishes to upgrade its site to current web technology. We wish either a content management system (not excluding “wiki” software) that allows multiple editors in a controlled environment. The web display environment should be CSS controlled; our frames technology must be replaced. We are interested in both proprietary and open source options. The quote should include separate figures for software, conversion of current data, training of editors, ongoing software maintenance and possible site hosting. Sam Steiner will check if Conrad Grebel University College remains open to host GAMEO with the new technology, and what costs might be involved.**



**CONSENSUS 19: A technology subcommittee composed of Bert Friesen, Sam Steiner, Richard Thiessen and John Thiesen will obtain quotes from PeaceWorks (Sam) and Mennonite.net (John). Richard will hold further conversation with Domain7 on the open source option. We will ask for quotes by December 15 that will then circulate to the full Management Board for possible decision by mid-January.**

If John Thiesen or others identify another U.S.-based firm in the East that might have interest in the project, we will also seek a quote from them.

John Thiesen left the meeting at this time.

## **10) Finances**

### **a) Financial report**

Richard Thiessen reviewed GAMEO's finances as part of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada financial report. GAMEO received designated donations in 2005/06 in the amount of \$11,427.51. Total GAMEO expenses were \$14,054.87. \$6,350 came from the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation; \$5,550 of this was forwarded to the Mennonite Heritage Centre for the project. The remaining expenses were from GAMEO software maintenance costs, travel costs, the GAMEO brochures, etc. The difference between income and expenses was covered by the MHSC budget.

Richard Thiessen asked if GAMEO should be established as a separate fund under MHSC. This would allow surpluses to be carried over from year to year, and would allow for a "cleaner" financial report. This would also ease a future move of GAMEO to a separate charter and charitable number.

**CONSENSUS 20: We ask the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada to establish GAMEO as a separate fund.**

Our discussion favored GAMEO finances remaining within the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada for some time; we are not strong enough to be on our own. We also discussed asking each partner to provide a base annual payment to cover the travel costs of GAMEO management staff. Covering these costs was agreed to by the partners, but this would formalize an annual expectation.

**CONSENSUS 21: Each GAMEO partner is asked to contribute \$250 annually toward the travel costs of GAMEO management staff. Partners continue to fund the travel costs of their representative to the Management Board.**

**CONSENSUS 22: We agree that Richard Thiessen should continue to attend Management Board meetings, both as treasurer for GAMEO activities, and as Assistant Managing Editor of GAMEO.**

### **b) 2006/07 Budget**

Our budget year necessarily follows that of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (November 1-October 31).

**CONSENSUS 23: We approve the following budget for 2006/07**

**Income**

<b>Post-Secondary Institutions</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>Secondary Schools</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Personal donations</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Manitoba Mennonite Historical Soc.</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>D.F. Plett Foundation</b>	<b>\$6,350</b>
<b>GAMEO Partners</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,350</b>

**Expenses**

<b>Software, computer consulting</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>Management staff travel</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Brochure</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>
<b>D.F. Plett Foundation Project</b>	<b>\$5,550</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,550</b>

- c) Sponsors  
Richard Thiessen will send a thank-you letter to current sponsors in January, and will ask them to renew their sponsorship at the current \$250 level.

**CONSENSUS 24: Bert Friesen will early in 2007 send a letter to Mennonite post-secondary schools that are not currently GAMEO sponsors, describing the GAMEO project and asking for annual support of \$250. He will also send a similar letter to Mennonite secondary schools asking for annual support in the amount of \$100.**

- d) Clarification with the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee  
Dale Schrag will confirm with the Historical Committee that GAMEO is an approved project of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, and can receive charitable donations on behalf of the project from U.S. donors.
- e) Capital Funding  
We will need to do fundraising in support of the move to content management. We discussed several possibilities for this; we will review this further when firmer numbers are available.
- f) Donations through the website  
We will revisit this issue after other priorities have been completed.

**11) Next Meeting**

**CONSENSUS 25: The next face-to-face meeting of the Management Board will be in Winnipeg, Manitoba in January 2008. If necessary we will arrange a conference call/web conference in relation to the content management transition.**

Minutes recorded by  
Sam Steiner

