

Minutes of the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online Meeting

Date: December 3, 2004

Venue: Conrad Grebel College

Call to Order: At 9:10, the Chair called the meeting to order

Members Present: Bert Friesen (chair) Abe Dueck, Alf Redekop, Richard Thiessen,
Linda Hubert Hecht, Peter Penner, Sam Steiner, Victor Wiebe,
David Giesbrecht (secretary)

Visitor: John Sharp – Historical Committee, Mennonite Church USA

1. Opening – The Chair welcomed members. John Sharp was introduced.

2. Review of Minutes – Minutes were reviewed. The Chair noted that a large volume of work was completed at our last meeting.

3. Minutes accepted as reviewed

4. Review of Agenda:

Note: The article, “Who are the Mennonites” is to be reviewed under Item # 14.

5. Review of Recording Secretaries:

- Alf Redekopp (2005)
- Victor Wiebe (2006)
- Linda Huebert Hecht (2007)
- Abe Dueck (2008)
- Peter Penner (2009)
- Richard Thiessen (2010)
- Sam Steiner (2011)

6. Managing Editor’s Report: (Sam Steiner)

Changes have been made to the first page of CMEO, including more options in the rotation of images. Presently there are 2,458 articles in the data base.

The report elicited a lengthy discussion. It was noted that CMEO formatting works on a variety of browsers. As before, the subject “Conestoga Wagons” and information on the Amish are among the most often searched items. The sharp increase in hits, now at 17,096 per day (up from 12,506 in 2003) was noted.

The Managing Editor receives about 3 or 4 email enquiries per day. He finds the

work manageable. When appropriate, he makes referrals.

It does not appear that the University server is being crowded, as no one has made an issue of it. However, CMEO will be billed for some of the expenses.

Appreciation was expressed to the Managing Editor. He was encouraged to share the load with other members where possible.

7. Report: Discussions with Mennonite Church USA:

Members were informed that on 16 October 2004 Sam Steiner and Bert Friesen met in Goshen, IN with the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church USA. In principle, those attending favoured joining CMEO in a future partnership.

Issues raised at this meeting included (a) the possibility of a user fee (b) expanding the scope of the entries (c) changing the biographical entry policy to include both living and deceased persons.

Following the report, CMEO members considered several merger implications. While geographical boundaries for all entries would be removed, entries to the encyclopedia should remain English language only. Otherwise content would include all groups within the Mennonite/Anabaptist family.

It was further deemed that organizationally, editorial functions would eventually need to be separated from administrative/fund raising functions.

Members noted that one of the advantages of expansion would be access to a much larger funding base, as there are some 70 local historical committees in the US.

Concern was expressed that such a partnership not diminish Canadian initiatives, given the large Mennonite membership in the US. However, it was also noted that the way in which CMEO links to provincial societies in Canada is a strength which has no parallel in the US.

Discussion now focused on various means of introducing the encyclopedia to Americans, including making a presentation to the 2005 Mennonite Church USA assembly in North Carolina. However, given costs to CMEO and the still uncertain future of our partnership, this matter was not pursued.

With respect to participation of Hutterites in the partnership, Bert Friesen will consult with Manitoba Hutterites.

It was agreed that funding implications, which are uncertain at this time, will have to be carefully tracked.

The Chair now summarized the discussion to this point, noting that the CMEO Committee appears to be agreement with expansion plans. As a next step we will recommend to the MHSC Board the expansion of CMEO to include a future partnership with MC USA and the MB Historical Commission. We will also devise a timeline, spell out common editorial policies, identify governance issues, devise a new domain name and clarify funding matters.

It is moved by Abe Dueck and seconded by Sam Steiner that the CMEO Editorial Committee recommends to the MHSC Board the expansion of CMEO to be an English language Mennonite Anabaptist encyclopedia, the content to be without geographical boundaries, and formally invite the MC USA Historical Committee and the MB Historical Commission to become official partners as a first step in this expansion process.” M/S/C

It was agreed that an addendum will be added to the motion at a later date which will define resulting editorial and administrative issues.

8. Web Issues:

It was moved by Victor Wiebe and seconded by Richard Thiessen that several new domain names be reserved for CMEO. MSC.

9. Format Issues:

9.1 Conversion to XML:

Richard Thiessen has contacted Shawn Neumann of Abbotsford to discuss implications of converting the CMEO database to XML code. Shawn confirms that XML would be a good choice, allowing much more specific retrieval capacity and easier global editorial changes. However, conversion could be complicated and quite expensive because not all CMEO data is in a consistent format. Separate entry fields would have to be created for all terms that were deemed to be searchable.

Shawn Neumann suggests that we would move to XML in several stages:

First Stage: Create an XML structure. (At this point all new entries would employ an XML structure)

Second Stage: Set up conversion software to transfer existing contents

Third Stage: Perform a manual check for errors.

It was emphasized that the issue for us is not one of **whether but when** to move towards XML formatting.

It was moved by Sam Steiner and seconded by Richard Thiessen that in the coming year Richard explore with Shawn Neumann of Domain 7 (in Abbotsford) to create a sample XML structure, allowing up to \$2000.00 for initial exploration.” MSC

9.2 Editorial Entry Changes:

It is proposed that we include with CMEO entries details regarding bibliographic citation protocols. The Committee authorizes Sam Steiner and Victor Wiebe to decide on a citation format, and begin implementation.

9.3 Generating Revenues for CMEO:

Richard Thiessen informs members that Google has a service which generates advertisement income. It was agreed that we proceed such postings on an experimental basis, subject to checking with the university. This matter is to be reviewed next year.

10 Provincial Reports:

10.1 Saskatchewan – Victor Wiebe (Report Attached)

It has been difficult to find people willing to write for CMEO. Victor has contacted Choice (an ALA service publication), to review our website.

The Committee encourages the Saskatchewan Society to continue exploring potential writers.

10.2 Alberta - Peter Penner (Report Attached)

Peter has tried to find a local committee. He notes the dearth of active writers in Alberta. Peter anticipates using more of Irene Klassen’s work. MHSA is now headquartered in the MCC building in Calgary.

10.2 BC – Richard Thiessen (Report Attached)

This year the BC group has forwarded several biographies and have contributed some institutional articles. The goal for the new year is to move towards writing more congregational histories.

10.3 Manitoba Report: Abe Dueck (Report Attached)

(Abe also distributes minutes of the 24 October 2004 Manitoba sub-group meeting.)

The Manitoba group has developed a template for short biographical entries. This template will be posted on the site map. In response to an assignment given the Manitoba group at the 2003 meeting, several sample poster designs were tabled. Quoted costs are:

For color posters:

- 100 - \$204
- 500 - \$226

For two-color brochures:

- 500 - \$284
- 1000 - \$301

A caution was noted: with pending changes to CMEO, the Committee must guard against overproduction of advertising materials.

(At this point Judith Rempel and Ken Reddig join the meeting)

It is moved by Richard Thiessen and seconded by Peter Penner that the matter of producing advertising materials be tabled to our next meeting. MSC

Question: The issue was raised as to what the status was of the graphic design work done to date. It was agreed that the Manitoba Group will continue developing a poster and brochure as well as recommendations regarding design and distribution to the 2005 meeting.

10.4 Ontario Report - Linda Hubert Hecht (Report Attached)

OMHS has created a CMEO subgroup as a standing committee. Some biographies have been written.

10.5 Other Matters:

(a) Provincial CMEO subgroups are asked to send copies of any meeting minutes to Bert Friesen.

(b) The Manitoba Group will develop and circulate a template for entry to CMEO articles previously published in Mennonite journals.

(c) Victor Wiebe raised the issue of how confusion can be avoided when a congregation changes its name. It was agreed that a link be placed from current use to the previous name. The BC Group will write a congregational entry where a name change has occurred and illustrate how linkage is to work.

11. Review of Editing Process:

Members were asked to respond regarding the effectiveness of present editorial process in adding new entries to CMEO. It was felt that generally the process is satisfactory. With the

templates we are achieving editorial consistency.

It was further emphasized that where appropriate, entries should include the location of private papers and that the date-order entry be consistent.

Question: Should the Committee develop a policy regarding the coordination of Julian calendar dates with contemporary Roman calendar use. It was felt that such conversion would be too labour intensive to warrant the changes.

12. Volunteer Time of Managing Editor:

Sam Steiner informed the Committee that as of January 2005 he will be reducing his work time at Conrad Grebel College to 80%. He wishes to volunteer approximately one day a week to CMEO editorial duties by following up with writers and focusing on format details. He will also use some of this time to create more links or “cross-references” and adding more photos.

It is moved by Abe Dueck and seconded by Victor Wiebe that we gratefully accept Sam’s offer and express our gratitude for the work he is doing. MSC

13. Revising Template for Biographical Entries:

It was proposed that several items be added to the template for biographies, namely: (a) full names of both persons of parents (b) maiden name of mother in parentheses (c) parents of spouse and maiden name of mother (d) birth and death dates for both parents.

The Committee concurred with these changes. Richard Thiessen will revise the template and send changes to Sam Steiner for posting.

14. “Who Are the Mennonites?” Article:

A sample article (based on Donald Kreybill’s book, *Who Are the Anabaptists*) is tabled. The article that Bruce Guenther wrote for the *Harper Collins Encyclopedia* is also noted.

It is suggested that owing to negative media stereotypes, a positive article (such as Levi Miller’s article on Russian Mennonites in a recent issue of *Mennonite Life*) would be helpful.

Further, it is urged that a short summary or definitional entry be posted, which could then be linked to other in-depth entries. Some redundancy of coverage for the sake of clarity would not be a problem.

15. Further Contact With Hutterites:

The Committee encouraged Bert Friesen to foster his contact with Manitoba Hutterites. It was also suggested that at our next meeting in Manitoba, a visit to a colony would be a welcome idea.

16. Financial Report:

16.1 Fund raising: It is affirmed that for the coming year we will experiment with Google advertising. Other fund raising considerations were deferred to next year.

16.2 CMEO grant applications were also deferred to next year.

Provincial societies are encouraged to seek grants with the view to having work done which would be of benefit to CMEO.

16.3 The treasurer reported that this past year the Committee only spent \$1,300.00 of its \$5000.00 budget

16.4 The financial needs for the forthcoming year are reviewed:

- (a) \$2000 for XLM
- (b) \$2000 this meeting
- © \$800 for a possible June meeting and other travel expenses
- (d) \$200 for brochure development

The Committee agreed to request \$6,000.00 from the MHSC Board for 2005.

17. Election of Chair:

It is MSC that Bert Friesen be chair of CMEO for the coming year.

18. Next Meeting – Date and Place:

The 2005 meeting will convene in Winnipeg at the new Center for MB Studies, with timing and date to be determined by the call of the Chair.

19. Adjournment:

The meeting is adjourned at 4:50 pm.