

GAMEO Management Board

Wyse Hall, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

2017 May 19 – 9:00 am

Minutes

Present: Jon 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), Eric Kurtz (Mennonite Central Committee), Jason Kauffman (Mennonite Church USA), Richard Thiessen (Managing Editor), Sam Steiner (Associate Managing Editor, recording secretary).

Regrets: Ken Sensenig (Mennonite Central Committee)

1) Opening and introductions

Bert Friesen welcomed us to the meeting, especially Jason Kauffman who is representing Mennonite Church USA as Director of the Archives and Records Management. Bert noted that we have billed ourselves as a global project; is that evident in how we have operated? The “global” part of our vision has been a constant challenge. Bert read Isaiah 52: 4-10, and led in prayer.

2) Review of Agenda

We accepted the agenda, with the addition of an item to consider inclusion of the Brethren in Christ into GAMEO under item 7.

3) Minutes of September 6, 2016

CONSENSUS 1: That we accept the minutes of September 6, 2016 as circulated.

4) Reports

a) Managing Editor

Richard Thiessen highlighted his written report circulated earlier [and available on the GAMEO website at http://gameo.org/images/e/e6/Report_2017_05_15.pdf]. He noted the shift in visitor numbers between December 2012 and December 2013, when data gathering methods changed along with the change from the Plone platform to MediaWiki. At the time GAMEO moved to Google Analytics, a more sophisticated program than the one previously used.

Richard noted GAMEO’s usage by Hutterite schools, and the extraordinary number of visits to the M.J. Sharp article (over 10,000) in April after Sharp’s death in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Richard expressed his appreciation for serving as Managing Editor since his appointment

in October 2011. He has been involved with GAMEO for 20 years, finding it has combined his love for the Mennonite Church with his gifts of managing and organizing information. He believed it was time to focus more his energies on his position at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, as well as his family. As stated in a 25 April 2017 email message to the board, Richard has communicated his decision to resign as Managing Editor of GAMEO effective at the end these meetings. He is willing to continue as an Editor, with its more limited role.

CONSENSUS 2: That we accept Richard Thiessen’s resignation, and express the board’s great appreciation for Richard’s work as Managing Editor for the past 5 plus years, and for all the volunteer time he has given to the GAMEO project in the past 20 years.

We had an extended discussion on participation in GAMEO from outside North America. We remain North America-centric in participation, even though we want to maintain a global vision. Comments included:

- Is the problem language or culture?
- Some of it is language; in some Third World settings historical reflection is not a priority; those churches focus on growth and what is happening today and tomorrow. General admonitions for them to write GAMEO articles will not work.
- We need to see GAMEO as an English-language North American project; Richard Lougheed’s experience in Europe indicates they believe GAMEO is a North American project; they have their own online historical projects.
- We need to network with other projects, and not insist that others be part of our project.
- Have we worked with other language groups? Response: We have cooperative understandings with the German *MennLex V* project, and with the *Lexikon der Mennoniten* in Paraguay. GAMEO articles have been translated from both.
- What is the relationship of the Global Anabaptist Wiki and GAMEO? Response: They cooperate. The wiki explicitly invited groups to post material, but this never really grew. It has evolved to become an archive of electronic material created by a variety of Mennonite sources. A portal points to both sites. They provide two approaches to information – one is grassroots; the other is more formal and refereed. The wiki now has ecumenical documents, and a number of statements that originally lodged in GAMEO. The wiki also hosts the “Bearing Witness” site and the “Anabaptist Dictionary of the Bible.”

CONSENSUS 3: That we accept the Managing Editor’s report as circulated and presented.

b) **Regional reports**

GAMEO groups exist in British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Quebec and Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Groups in Franconia and Virginia are not functioning.

We discussed how to get more congregational articles into GAMEO. In some cases it might be easier find writers to create brief “stub” congregational articles. Might student grants be used to help pay for creation of stubs?

Jason Kauffman expressed interest in helping congregations tell their story through GAMEO. He gets many inquiries from congregations about dealing with their archival records. The MC USA Archives in Elkhart focuses on U.S. conferences and congregations east of the Mississippi. He would welcome opportunities to help promote regional GAMEO groups in Ohio and Indiana-Michigan. He might also be able to help create “stubs” for newer congregations.

CONSENSUS 4: That Sam Steiner create a template for brief congregational “stub” articles.

5) **Staffing**

In light of Richard’s resignation as Managing Editor, we reviewed staffing options. Sam Steiner said he would be willing to be the contact person with GAMEO’s ISP and software support firm, PeaceWorks Technology Solutions, based in Waterloo, Ontario. He was not willing to be engaged in fundraising. We agreed on the following:

CONSENSUS 5: That Sam Steiner, as an Associate Editor, be the GAMEO liaison with PeaceWorks Technology Solutions.

CONSENSUS 6: That Bert Friesen, as GAMEO board chair, with the assistance of Jon Isaak, prepare and send fundraising letters/invoices to GAMEO partners and the institutions that in the past have been sponsors of GAMEO.

We then discussed the need for a “public face” of GAMEO. We have talked for several years of the possibility of a “General Editor” to fill a leadership role in networking with the academic community and international church community, and in helping to shape the GAMEO vision, but with limited responsibilities related to the “nuts and bolts” of managing the website. We asked John Roth to reflect on this scenario, and how he might fit into it.

John Roth said he hoped GAMEO still envisioned its content to be as global in orientation as possible. He acknowledged the model may no longer include multiple languages, and maybe not even many active regional committees. Have we adequately used writers of content from Mennonite World Conference and other sources like the Global Mennonite History Series for articles? Response: We always wanted to do this, but found it difficult. We thought a General Editor might help this happen.

John Roth reviewed the issues he faced in considering the General Editor possibility. The Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) remains his primary focus. A role with GAMEO would need to be defined in a clear way. It would be a plus to have GAMEO as part of the ISGA project. He would not want to be involved in the technology or the details of posting articles; these tasks would remain with the Associate Editors. Finances should continue through Mennonite World Conference (because of its ability to receipt both in the USA and Canada). He might also be able to offer some assistance from an administrative assistant and occasional students in working with some “stub” projects. He would see the role as being an advocate for GAMEO, and would integrate GAMEO into his travels at a deeper level.

Our discussion suggested three reports would be prepared for Management Board meetings: 1) General Editor’s report; 2) Statistical and technical reports by an Associate Editor (initially Sam Steiner); and 3) Fundraising and financial reports by the GAMEO chair (Bert Friesen).

CONSENSUS 7: That we establish Jason Kauffman as a GAMEO Editor, with the intent to make him an Associate Editor next year.

CONSENSUS 8: That Sam Steiner ask Alf Redekopp, former archivist at Mennonite Heritage Centre (Winnipeg), and current GAMEO Editor, to consider accepting the role of Associate Editor.

CONSENSUS 9: That John Roth consider the role of General Editor, inviting him to compose a job description, and provide a response by tomorrow morning.

We discussed the role of consulting editors, but did not come to any decisions.

6) Lunch

Eric Kurtz joined the meeting after lunch.

7) GAMEO and global content and multi-language content

Partly to orient Eric, we described the nature of GAMEO’s content. Most came from the print *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. Very little was generated outside of North America; a few articles have been added from the German *MennLex V* project, and with the *Lexikon der Mennoniten* in Paraguay. The only non-English articles are a few congregational and biographical articles in French. GAMEO has not successfully invited participation from outside North America; language and worldview are issues.

8) Structure

The primary discussion on GAMEO’s operating structure took place in the morning. We did return to discussion on regional groups.

a) Regional Groups

We discussed getting brief congregational articles from Mennonite groups outside of North America. John Roth said that Mennonite World Conference’s April 2018 General

Council meeting will take place in Kenya. Up to 1000 people will be attendance at events related to the upcoming celebration of 500 years of Anabaptism. Kenyan Mennonites have published *Forward in Faith: A History of the Kenya Mennonite Church, 1942-2012* by Francis Ojwang. John has asked Francis about helping persons to write something for GAMEO. He responded enthusiastically, but was worried about the lack of education of most writers. John will see him again in October, and wondered about asking Francis himself to write brief congregational stub articles for GAMEO. Could we offer a small honorarium?

Discussion:

- How many congregations are involved. Response 125-150.
- Could we pay for up to 10 short congregational articles?

CONSENSUS 10: That we authorize John Roth to offer Francis Ojwang \$100 US for 10 brief congregational articles (i.e. \$10/article) based on the template to be created by Sam Steiner. This would be funded from the GAMEO budget.

b) Brethren in Christ contact

Sam Steiner reported an email exchange between Steve Ness of GAMEO's regional committee in Lancaster and the Brethren in Christ Historical Society based at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. The BIC print encyclopedia project has languished in recent years, and there could be potential interest in collaboration with GAMEO.

CONSENSUS 11: That Sam Steiner communicate with the Brethren in Christ Historical Society, indicating our openness to conversation on cooperation or collaboration between GAMEO and their encyclopedia project.

c) Church of the Brethren Encyclopedia

We wondered if the Church of the Brethren's *Brethren Encyclopedia* had contemplated an online presence, and whether there could cooperative synergies.

CONSENSUS 12: That John Roth informally contact Jeff Bach, Director of the Young Center at Elizabethtown College, to inquire about their online plans with the *Brethren Encyclopedia*.

9) Technical Issues

Sam Steiner said the MediaWiki software should probably be updated to a current version, primarily for security reasons.

CONSENSUS 13: That Sam Steiner ask PeaceWorks for a quote to update the Mediawiki software.

10) Priorities for 2017

a) Global content

Our initial focus will be on the Kenyan congregational articles.

We will consider other non-North American sources for biographies (translations or original) at a future meeting.

b) Updating country articles

We noted that most of the country articles from volume 5 of *Mennonite Encyclopedia* are now 30 years old. We wondered if Mennonite Central Committee's country reps might be in position to update or rewrite the survey country articles.

CONSENSUS 14: That Eric Kurtz ask MCC if country representatives could be asked to update or rewrite GAMEO's survey country articles. This could also include countries that were not in volume 5.

c) Education Institution articles

Some articles on individual educational institutions have been updated; most have not. Newer schools have not been included at all.

CONSENSUS 15: That Jon Isaak review the GAMEO articles of post-secondary schools that have been sponsors of GAMEO, and circulate a summary of their article statuses to the GAMEO board.

d) Mennonite Church USA article

No Mennonite Church USA article has been written; Rich Preheim originally accepted this assignment.

CONSENSUS 16: That Jason Kauffman contact Rich Preheim to see if he is still interested in writing the MC USA article. If Rich declines, we can ask Erv Stutzman, who is soon retiring, or Jim Schrag.

e) Regional Committees

We will initiate no more work on regional committees for the present.

f) About Page

John Roth encouraged a more prominent location for the "About GAMEO" page on the website.

g) General Editor

We are awaiting John Roth's response tomorrow morning.

11) Promotion

a) News release

We agreed a news release would be required after this meeting. If the restructuring

proceeds as discussed this morning, John Roth would write the release.

Richard Thiessen reported that Samuel Hoover, owner of Home Office Resources, located in Pennsylvania, makes available digital content to conservative Mennonite groups who utilize computers, but do not use the internet. This content includes GAMEO; he has sold several hundred copies.

b) **Donate button**

If GAMEO had more funds, we would use it for seed money to get articles from Third World countries, technical maintenance of the site, and possibly to partially compensate the General Editor.

CONSENSUS 17: That Jon Isaak and Bert Friesen ask Mennonite World Conference (Len Rempel) about locating a donation button on GAMEO main page. If the answer is positive, Sam Steiner will work with PeaceWorks on implementation.

12) **Finances**

a) **Fiscal Year Ending (FYE) December 31, 2016**

Richard Thiessen reviewed the Statement of Income and Expenses for the GAMEO Fund prepared by Mennonite World Conference.

ACTION 1: Moved/Seconded Carried (Richard Thiessen/Jon Isaak): To approve the financial statements for FYE December 31, 2016.

b) **Fundraising**

We have a potential income of \$4000-\$5000 from GAMEO's partners and the educational and historical society sponsors; this would meet our usual expenses. Additional funds could be used as seed money for writing articles or in technical updates.

John Roth asked the newest members of the GAMEO management board what their impressions were this far. Eric Kurtz commented on the phenomenal effort of volunteers in this niche project. He wasn't sure how we best could live into the global part of our vision.

Jason Kauffman thought it was good to look at the picture, but to also have specific goals, like the Kenyan congregational history project.

John Roth commented on the Young Anabaptist Historians blog (<https://anabaptisthistorians.org/>), and wondered if Jason Kauffman might write a blog about GAMEO, inviting those voices to weigh in on the future of GAMEO.

CONSENSUS 18: That Jason Kauffman discuss blog possibilities with Joel Nofziger, coordinator of the group.

c) Budget for FYE December 31, 2017

Based on 2016 expenditures, Richard Thiessen estimated a total budget of \$4000 (including hosting/software support by PeaceWorks, travel expenses to a 2017 Management Board meeting, honorarium for Kenyan articles). The cost of updating the MediaWiki software would be in addition to this amount.

ACTION 2: Moved/Seconded/Carried (Jon Isaak/John Roth) To approve a 2017 budget of \$4000 as stated, with possible additional expense of MediaWiki upgrade based on quote received.

13) Next year's meeting

CONSENSUS 19: The GAMEO Management Board will meet either May 11-12 or 18-19, 2018 in Waterloo, Ontario.

We will check these dates with Ken Sensenig.

14) Break at 4:40 pm

15) Reconvene at the MC USA Archives, Elkhart, Indiana at 9:30 am on May 20

16) General Editor position

The background for our discussion was John Roth's email written to the board on the morning of May 20. He expressed willingness to proceed on the basis of yesterday's discussion. He outlined questions and assumptions on two matters: 1) the relationship between GAMEO and the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA); and 2) the role of General Editor. He confirmed that ISGA is the home for his work; GAMEO would be part of that work.

After review of John's email we developed the following understandings:

a) Relationship of GAMEO and ISGA

- i) The six partners in GAMEO retain ownership of GAMEO content and carry ultimate responsibility for GAMEO's ongoing success.
- ii) ISGA assumes administrative oversight of GAMEO's program.
- iii) ISGA will promote GAMEO in its news releases, newsletter, and elsewhere as an integral part of ISGA's mission.
- iv) The GAMEO Management Board will continue to oversee operational details and provide strategic oversight of content development.
- v) The Management Board will appoint and oversee Associate Editors.
- vi) Financial operations (receipts and payment of invoices) will continue to be managed by Mennonite World Conference; the board chair will have primary responsibility for fundraising, and will provide financial reporting.
- vii) PeaceWorks Technology Solutions will continue to host the GAMEO site and provide software support; the Associate Editors will be the liaison with PeaceWorks.

viii) The ISGA director will serve as GAMEO's General Editor as long as mutually agreeable.

b) GAMEO General Editor role

- i) Serves as the "public face" of GAMEO, by promoting its visibility through press releases and other promotional materials, through presentations at regional historical meetings, and through networking as part of his travels
- ii) In consultation with the Management Board sets strategic priorities for content development.
- iii) Reviews submitted articles as requested by the Associate Editors.
- iv) Provides an annual report to the Management Board, including content priorities.
- v) Creates the Management Board agenda in consultation with the board chair and Associate Editors.
- vi) Nurtures, along with the Associate Editors, regional and national GAMEO editorial committees.

Our discussion agreed that we could make this decision without going back to our partner organizations, since there are no financial implications in this change.

CONSENSUS 20: That we approve an agreement with ISGA, as outlined in a) and b) above, with the understanding the agreement will be reviewed next year.

John Roth said he would prepare in the next few days a draft release to be shared as a Google.doc.

17) Adjournment

We adjourned at 10:45 am.

Recorded by Sam Steiner