

WEB REVIEW: *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO)* <http://gameo.org>

by Jennifer Ulrich

The stated mission of the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) is to provide “reliable, freely-available English-language information on Anabaptist-related congregations, denominations, conferences, institutions and significant individuals, as well as historical and theological topics. Secular subject articles from an Anabaptist perspective and full-text source documents are also included.”

The core of GAMEO is the full-text of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* was originally published in four volumes by Herald Press (1955-1959) and a supplemental fifth volume was published in 1990. GAMEO also adds new content both from North America and around the world. There are now over 15,000 articles in GAMEO. GAMEO also works with editors of non-English Mennonite encyclopedias to make their content available in English. These encyclopedias include the *Lexikon der Mennoniten* in Paraguay and the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (MennLex) in Germany. There is some non-English content and more will be added. GAMEO is a volunteer organization; it receives support from a variety of sources including many Mennonite historical societies, colleges and universities, and their libraries. This work began as a project of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada in 1996. GAMEO now has other partners including the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite World Conference, and the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism.

Articles in GAMEO are assigned and then editorially reviewed before they are uploaded. The author of each article is provided along with the date the article was written. Similarly, if an article has been updated, either by the 1990 Supplement or more recently, the author and date are indicated. Articles from the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* are clearly marked with the logo of Herald Press and a statement that indicates it is being used with the permission of Herald Press. GAMEO provides a “Cite This Article” option in both MLA and APA styles. Often articles contain bibliographies and links to websites and additional resources on the web.

GAMEO provides a search feature as well as browsing capabilities. Words, phrases, or names that have articles in GAMEO are hyperlinked for quick access. The search option is keyword based, turning up all records that include the search terms. If the search term is the title of an article it typically is the first result. One can browse alphabetically from the main page as by clicking on the first letter of the term one wants to find.

GAMEO supplies good background information about Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups and related topics. However, due to the nature of GAMEO, the articles tend to reflect a more historical perspective. Articles about current subjects that are generating conversation in the Mennonite Church appear in limited scope or are more historical in nature. For example, information about the inclusion of LGBT persons as members in Mennonite congregations is difficult to assess from GAMEO. Homosexuality is only referenced in the context of other articles. There is no single comprehensive article dedicated to the issue. Bibliographies often are not current, but reflect publications available at the time the articles were written or most recently updated. Some articles have links providing access to resources on the web.

Biographies of people no longer living are included in GAMEO. These tend to be early church leaders and martyrs from the beginnings of the Anabaptist Movement, as well as ministers, church leaders, mission workers, educators, and others who held some leadership position. There are very few biographies of women or minorities due in large part to their absence from leadership positions during the time period of the print work. Biographies of some well-known persons

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who have died since the 1990 Supplement have been written by authors particularly interested in the person's life, or because that person made a significant contribution to Mennonite/Anabaptist life and thought. For example, there is a 2011 article written by Mark Thiessen Nation on the well-known Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, who died in 1997.

Information about Mennonite congregations that were represented by very brief articles in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* have been expanded or updated in GAMEO. Congregations not listed previously have added content as well, with information typically supplied by the congregation. Entries commonly include a list of pastors or leaders as well as contact information. There is often a link to the church's website along with a link to the church's location using Google Maps. Links to denominational affiliations for each congregation are also provided.

As an avenue for providing online access to the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, GAMEO does a good job. However, even the 1990 Supplement is becoming dated at this point. As the only English-language encyclopedia to focus specifically on Mennonites, Anabaptists, and Mennonite/Anabaptist life and thought, GAMEO fulfills its mission, if primarily from an historical context. Although it is good to see some articles with more up-to-date content and bibliographies, I'd like to see more. Researchers should use GAMEO critically, recognizing its limitations by noting dates of the articles and items listed in bibliographies.