

2020-2021 Committee Reports

Ancestral & Genealogical Records Committee

2020 Annual Report

Dodie Rotherham & Kevin Rupp, Chairs

The AHSGR Ancestral Records and Genealogy met numerous times throughout the board year to carry out the work of the organization.

The committee members are:

Dodie Rotherham (Co-Chair), Kevin Rupp (Co-chair), Robert Ahlbrandt, Michael Brown, Bill Dellos, Bill Doos, Sheri Ertl, Gary Fuchs, Marlene Michel, Harold Penner, David Ralston, Gerald Sieb, Pam Wurst, non-board member

Our goal for 2020 was to review past projects and determine what remained to be completed. The following is a very small list of the committees accomplishments during 2020-2021 board year:

1. Gedenkbuch Kasachstan or Kazakhstan Memorial Book. Alex Herzog has completed the translation. Currently we are adding the many tables of names and Photos, formatting and raising money for printing..
2. Die Welt Post, Letters from Hell 1920-1922 have been translated and formatted. The publication will be available late this summer. Each book will be devoted to one year of letters. We are grateful to Eric Schmaltz for the preparation of the preface. .
3. Deportation Lists of Stalingrad Area by Nina Vaschkau is 2021-21 projects
4. Shcherbakovka Project – We are seeking resources, including funding, to translate all the materials that we have purchased for this village.
5. Our Small publishing group, a subcommittee of the Archives/Genealogy committee, has completed and published more than 50 records during the past 3 board cycles. A list of the completed records can be found in the online store at AHSGR.org.
6. **Museum** - Our museum continues to be an integral and important asset to the society and as such we will continue the preservation and documentation of the artifacts and maintain the historical campus. This board year we will work with the web design projects to improve the web presence of the museum. Our committee goal is to attract additional funding and assistance for the numerous projects. All donations to the committee be held in a restricted account for the designated purpose.
7. **Library** - New shelving and rearrain the library is underway. Library expansion into the board room will continue in an effort to make room for the ever-increasing resources for research and reference. Research projects have been numerous this year with requests from Europe and South America.

The complete list of all records purchased and published, along with new library resources are published at ahsgr.org

Dodie Rotherham & Kevin Rupp, Co-chairs, Ancestral Records and Genealogy Committee
July 2021

Convention Management Committee

Year End Report 2021

Committee Members: Susan Nakaji, Chairperson, Nancy Borrell, Bill Dellos, Sheri Ertl, Harvey Fries, Robyn Morales, Kevin Rupp, Jerry Siebert, Karen Soeken, Shirley Wilcoxon. Alexis Kuzmiak, Leonard Welch, Rob Miller.

Ex officio members: Mike Heil, Dodie Rotherham, Sue Casseday, Cheryl Glanz, Dennis Zitterkopf, Nathaniel Harris, Jonathan Rowe, Sara Roberts, Allison Hunter-Frederick.

SMART Goals:

1. AHSGR will host a Virtual Convention on July 13-15.
2. The Conference will earn a profit of \$15,000.
3. The Virtual Conference will solicit Company Sponsorships and individual donations.
4. The Virtual Conference will present a varied program inclusive of multiple areas of settlements of the Germans from Russia.
5. The Virtual Conference will include Genealogical, Historical, Folklore and Religions of the Germans from Russia.
6. The Convention Management committee will develop a Five Year plan for future Conventions.

Theme for the 51st Annual Convention and 1st Virtual Conference: Connections: Keeping our German Russian Heritage Alive.

The Committee met bi-weekly via Zoom meetings to plan the Virtual Conference. Karen Soeken contacted the potential speakers. Harvey Fries contacted potential Corporate sponsors and Genealogical companies for donations. Robyn Morales worked with Jonathan Rowe to select an online ticket sales provider and set up our Registration process. Nathaniel Harris set up the Zoom connections for the Conference. Sue Nakaji developed the program schedule.

International Speakers this year include: Dr. Mila Koretnikov, Dr. Reinhold Nachtigal and Dr. Jorge Fabian Zubia-Schultheis.

SMART Goals 3, 4, 5 were completed. Goals 1 & 2 are still ongoing. Goal 6 was not completed.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic the 2020 Convention in Pasco, Washington was cancelled.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Nakaji,
Convention Management Chairperson

2021 Editorial and Publications Committee Annual Report

The Editorial and Publications Committee is responsible to the Board of Directors for issues relating to publications. Publications have included the AHSGR Journal, AHSGR Newsletter, Ijugend Zeitung, and every three years *Clues*. In addition the publication of books and monographs occur as manuscripts are submitted, edited, and formatted. The

committee is assisted by a Publications Coordinator. During this past year a new Coordinator, Jonathan Rowe, was appointed to replace Alison Hunter_Frederick who resigned. The Journal is managed through an Editor, Dr. Michael Brown and assisted by an Editorial Board. This Board during the past year was expanded to include members with international backgrounds and experiences. The committee is also responsible for the purchase of books and materials made available to members through the AHSGR store. During this past year, copies of the *Kuhlberg List* were acquired through an arrangement with its publisher to replenish deleted stocks. Currently negotiations are being undertaken with the publisher of *Einwanderung in das Wolgagebiet* to replenish deleted stocks of this publication as well.

Facilities Committee

- The Facilities Committee has been active this year. Last fall was the normal shut down of the sprinkler system being told to wait until next year and they would look at the boggy spot by the chapel to see if there was a broken pipe. We had the light snow fall for November and December. Our emergency exit door on the west was fixed so that it would not stick when and if it needed to be used. All exit lights were changed over to LED bulbs so that we didn't have to replace them so often. We discussed the replacement of the outside night lighting, checking the difference of repairing or replacing. January came with a mighty rush two snow storms and the need for a new air exchanger/air conditioner for the first floor west end of the building. The existing unit was a 1971 ceiling model it was replaced with a floor model that sits in west book storage closet. Also at this time one of the ED office front windows was broken by the snow crew and needed to be replaced, this was paid for by the snow crew. The bathroom fixtures (toilets) all the flappers were replaced they were operating as they should. We had the first new library shelving installed, thank you Caleb and Kurt. March came in with a roar. We had winds here that topped 70 miles an hour. We lost the part of the roof to our storage shed outside. We moved most of the items that were still in there to the chapel furnace room mainly folding chairs and tools and things were moved the the main office storage area. We still have about two to three bundles of shingles that need to be moved so that this can be taken down. We need

to find storage for these. The windstorm also brought rain. I had assumed that we had a company coming at a standing time every year to clean gutters but I was wrong this will be resolved. We also had a large amount of rain with this storm and the northeast corner brought water to the basement where we had it before due to clogged gutters, that problem is resolved. With the windstorm also, came the now replacing the outside lights. We had to go back and check prices and order. They were ordered in May and the first of June we received notification that they are being shipped. Lou our handing man will be installing. As of June 8th they had not been received. The week before Memorial Day the summer kitchen door was taken down and Lou took it to his shop, repaired and rescreened it. Brought to my house and I painted it. Picked it up and it will be reinstalled when we work on the threshold. I will be painting that too. This should be done around June 14th week. We have more new shelving in the library installed. I have played phone tag with our lawn crew and finally last week, Josh and I connected. We will have the property hard edged every month instead of using the weed wacker to the edges. Also, property is to be cleaned and the weeds in the area behind the cow barn they will use a weed wacker to keep weeds at bay. They are to clean the large beds along the driveway, I got tired of waiting, so I spent eight hours and cleaned along the south side of the drive way in two mornings I got as far as the yew bushes that need attention. Yardworx sent out a young man to take care of the weeds in the cowbarn area and the small area that I had now gotten to. The cow barn area is done but the job on the small driveway area was not done to my standards and had him come back to finish it the right way. It still has weed in it. I will take care of those. Upon leaving the second time the young man, who was doing the weeding backed into the railing at the back door and broke it off. It was caught on camera. That should be fixed the 11th and paid for by Yardwokx. We are waiting for the spraying of the weeds in the cracks of the driveways and sidewalks. It is too hot now to take care of the clover in the yard we will have to be content with mowing the heads off until fall when they can spray again. The temp has to be under 60. After calling 19 businesses I finally found another person to

come out this coming week for an estimate and said that he could do the cleaning of the statue. He will use a product called Limestone Restoration. His name is Travis and he owns Capitol Restoration. He has GR background thru his grandmother. He has been to our museum. He can have it done by the 12th.

Pam Wurst, Chairman

Folklore Committee 2021 Annual Report

The Folklore Committee met twice this past year on Zoom. Many members were new to the committee. Bill Dellos was going to provide the members with a list of projects the Folklore Committee is working on.

The Storytelling Contest was not well promoted by the committee and only received 3 entries. Discussion was held on how to engage more members in the contest in the future and to also have a Story-writing lesson as a future Treffen Tuesday program.

Bill Dellos did contact members in the Utah area to work on a folklore video for presentation during the Virtual Conference.

Annual Report: Fund Raising Committee

There were two fund raising activities from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. The first took place during the Christmas holiday season in 2020; the second took place during June 2021. Unfortunately, the financial results of these two activities are not known due to a lack of financial reporting from the accounting firm for AHSGR, Bryant. It is assumed that they were successful.

MARKETING AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Committee members: Shirley Wilcoxon-Chairperson, Bill Dellos, Robyn Morales, Harold Penner, Alexis Kuzmick, David Ralston, Christina Zahn

This is a new committee. Like anything new, there is a period of brainstorming, exploring options, learning new methods, testing, experimenting, delays, failures, and successes, and positive attitudes.

We established short term goals to center around social media and promotion to other similar groups and pages; identify materials and speakers for outreach and networking with other like-minded historical societies, genealogical groups, and libraries; create website materials and establish special landing pages to track our promotions; improve our branding, track our analytics, analyze the effectiveness, and adjust accordingly.

Other goals have been to create public value and awareness; increase our sphere of influence outside of AHSGR; educate the public about the history, culture, heritage, and genealogy of AHSGR; establish new and dynamic means to improve awareness of AHSGR, sell the benefits of being a member; expand social media on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and other sources; do paid and free social media advertising; interact with other social media groups and pages; create specialty social media groups; participate in conferences such as RootsTech, etc. FYI: RootsTech was put on hold until we have our new website published. We plan to participate in the 2022 RootsTech conference.

We have had a very aggressive social media campaign designed to create brand awareness, promote AHSGR to multiple groups and pages, and to attract new members. Various themed posts have been made daily. Analytics are checked regularly for effectiveness. Our most successful post resulted in over 54,000 views and engagements. The emphasis now has been to promote the July 13-15, 2021, virtual conference.

Personal individual messages were sent to over 2,000 people who requested to join our Facebook groups. The messages invited them to become members of AHSGR and included a link to our website. These people are being tracked to see whether they join AHSGR or not. There have been several people join after receiving the invitation. Many said that they did not know that AHSGR existed.

We are looking forward to the new website which will give us a tremendous opportunity to utilize social media funnels and to market and promote AHSGR even better.

The marketing and public affairs committee is here to assist all the other AHSGR committees, chapters, headquarters, and members. Please contact the committee when you have new publications, membership campaigns, activities, genealogical resources, village information, bookstore items, outreach activities, fundraising, or anything else you would like to have publicized.

Since we are a team, we also need your help. After posting to our Facebook page, we share some of the posts to 5-15 other groups and pages. At one point, we were able to share without limits. Facebook is constantly changing their rules and regulations. We are limited now. Please be an ambassador of AHSGR by sharing the posts with your chapter and other special interest groups. It only takes three to five seconds to click on the share tab. You do not even need to write anything. We especially need someone to post to Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and other social media platforms. It will be easy to do since we will create the content for you.

The marketing and public affairs committee welcomes feedback, suggestions, and constructive criticism. Tell us what you like and do not like. We are thick skinned Germans so we will not be offended. Danke!

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Wilcoxon

Membership Committee Annual Report

July 2021

Members: Sue Cassedy, Wilhelm Doos, Sheri Ertl, Maury Johnson (non-board member), David Ralston, Gerald Sieb, Karen Soeken (Chair)

As of 06 June 2021, our Total Membership numbered 2644: Life 1151, Annual (Standard and Sustaining) 1450, Youth and Student 21, and Organizational 22. This is an increase of 82 memberships over the previous year. During the year we added 404 new members, consistent with the 406 new members the previous year. One goal of the committee was to increase the number of annual members from 1405 to 1450 by June 2021; the goal was accomplished.

Of particular interest is the retention rate, that is, the percentage of annual members who renew their membership. Our goal was to increase the retention rate from 67% during 2019-2020 to 75% by 20 June 2021; the rate increased to 74% over the period July 2020 through April 2021. Unfortunately, 50% of those who did not renew their memberships were first time members although it was a decrease from 55% the previous year.

- In an effort to better understand member satisfaction of new members, in January 2021 we distributed a survey to those who joined AHSGR July through November 2020. Members indicated they joined primarily to learn more about their German-Russian background and connect with others based on ancestral village and/or surname. Given the importance of connections, we started connecting with new members by sending handwritten notes in addition to the new member packet and we encouraged chapter leaders and Village Coordinators who receive monthly new member reports to reach out to new members. The majority of comments about what new members thought would improve membership in AHSGR concerned the website, availability of information online, and virtual learning opportunities. In addition to the notes, we also sent small gifts to new members after 2-3 months. In April and May we randomly selected two new members to receive a free conference registration and two new members in June to receive a bookstore item.

Other activities during the year included the following:

- Revised/updated the Member Handbook and new member welcome letter and packet
- Revised the membership forms (not all desired changes could be made at this time)
- Updated the Chapter Procedural Manual
- Welcomed the Greater Kansas City Area chapter
- Started developing a continuing education process to encourage and recognize member participation in activities and educational opportunities related to Germans from Russia

Worked with the Website Task Force on items related to member

Nominating Committee Annual Report

The nominating committee met via zoom Board of Director's meetings to determine open board positions and confirm candidates for those positions.

Currently 5 positions remain open and are identified in the 2021 Board of Directors Nomination's list in this booklet.

All nominations, from the floor during the annual meeting, must have nominees agreement to serve. Appointments for 1 year for remaining open positions will be filled by board appointments. Members interested in filling open positions by appointment must submit a resume to the nominating committee.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Members: Robert Ahlbrandt, Wilhelm Doos, Gary Fuchs, Cheryl Glanz, Dodie Rotherham, Karen Soeken (Chair), Shirley Wilcoxon

The purpose of the Strategic Planning Committee during the year was to promote and monitor implementation of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. We encouraged the board committees to develop SMART (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-Bound) goals with action plans that related to and have the potential to impact the three focus areas of our plan: Financial, Outreach, and Technological Innovation. The *Financial* area involves consistent financial stability to support the Society programs and priorities in addition to our organizational obligations. *Outreach* is centered on opportunities to expand the Society's sphere of influence, both with our members and outside our membership. *Technological Innovation* emphasizes the use of technology in supporting programs, the Society, and management of the organization. While the goals of various committees addressed all three areas, the primary focus this year was Technological Innovation. A Website Task Force was appointed and led by Lee Macklin and included all programmatic areas with the goal to upgrade the AHSGR website and data management system by the end of 2021.

Throughout the year, we tracked the progress that committees reported on their short-term goals and updated the implementation plan as other goals were developed. Committees were encouraged to also develop goals that look beyond the 2020-2021 year. Consequently, our implementation plan takes us into the next two years. The Strategic Planning Committee will continue to promote, monitor, and track implementation of the plan.

Technology Committee Annual Report, Oct 2020 -> July 2021

Committee Members: Alexis Kuzmick; Cheryl Glanz; Harold Penner; Leonard Welch; Pam Wurst; Robert Ahlbrandt; Robyn Morales, Dennis Zitterkopf

Considerable effort and time has been applied during the year with multiple reviews and modifications of Policies and Procedures directly related to the Technology Committee. These changes have been implemented in the overall P&P Manual.

The Covid pandemic forced all Board meeting and committee work to be performed via Zoom meetings and email. While not ideal, all Board members and committee meetings had to find a way to continue to perform their tasks during the year. Everyone learned that simple and clear communication was the only way to accomplish what we needed to do – while not desired, we all learned the importance of how to clearly communicate with one another which will be an asset for all future committee work.

Members have been very involved with the definition of the new planned website, membership program, online store, online library, research assistance and digital marketing project beginning with selection of a design and developer company. Effort is now focused on detailing the design activity prior to an anticipated release of the project late 2021.

The contract was renewed with Bizco, our computer support technology company.

Additional resources were procured to reduce the Convention Bookstore checkout line delays customers have previously experienced.

A new policy titled Acceptable Information Technology (IT) Resource Usage was prepared and released. This affects and gives guidance to all staff and Board members for the acceptable use of AHSGR computer and software resources.

An additional security software program was added to the server that improves the ability of the server to detect and prevent hostile attacks to our server and computer network.

We continued the regular staff equipment and replacement program with the procurement of two desktop computers and improved monitors.

The existing online new membership application and membership renewal processes were improved by adding electronic payment capabilities instead of only using paper applications and checks. This simplifies, eliminates errors, reduces the effort by staff and makes it easier for members to join and renew their membership dues.

A member volunteered to work part time as our webmaster to help correct and update several errors and out of date material in the website. The minimal staff did not have time to complete their assigned tasks as well as well as provide support for website maintenance. This remains an ongoing issue and corrective action is being discussed for additional staff for this critical matter. We owe member Katheryn Smith a big Thank You for the time she was able to share with us while she could.

Submitted by Dennis Zitterkopf
Technology Committee chair

