

Ancestral Records/Genealogy Committee 2022 Annual Report

Members: Wayne Bonner, Mike Brown, Bill Doos, Sheri Ertle, Russ Gunther, Marlene Michel, Harold Penner, Dodie Rotherham (Chair), Kevin Rupp (Co-Chair), Fabian Zubia Schultheis, Philipp Stuckert

The Ancestral Records Committee had a busy year beginning with the expansion of the current library. The wall, which divided the library and the Board of Directors room, was removed, which expanded and doubled the library stack area for our organization. A generous space remains for board meetings and the Flegel Library was relocated to the newly expanded area. Additionally, we received, from the same foundation, a grant to begin digitizing the microfilm in our library. This is obviously a great step for our society and is part of our plan to digitize all our resources.

We welcomed new part time Librarian Ellen Vorderstrasse to our staff and have hired an Archivist, the first for our society, who will join our team in late June.

With our new website, our goal is to bring many of our products to our membership who cannot make it to Lincoln. Members will, in the future, be able to view many of our records on the new web site. We started this process this past year by placing the “passports to freedom” names online in flipbook format. We also placed the 1811 census records, of approximately 34 villages, on the web site in flipbook format for searching.

Treffen Tuesday is the new highlight of our committee bringing interesting programs from around the world to your home via ZOOM. These programs are presented on the last Tuesday of the month. Invitations are sent out to all members, every Tuesday, to register and join these fascinating programs. All sessions are free.

The small publishing group continues to purchase and translate records from Russia and make them available to members. To date, our group has published 79 printed documents of various vital statistics from a wide variety of villages. We continue to obtain records with the funding that is available for records. The records can be very costly, especially when we must pay for translations. Some of the villages in translation now: Engels, Graf, Urbach, Dietel, Balzer, and Anton to name a few.

Various other projects:

- ❖ EWZ Records – more information to be available for members later in 2023.
- ❖ Aussiedler Project – translation and transcription of cassettes of interviews of Germans from Russia will be available to our membership via our website as tapes are prepared.
- ❖ Letters From Hell (1920-1921 Completed) translated and printed in chronological order. The letters will be released as formatting is completed.
- ❖ Deportation Records – being prepared for member viewing – late 2023 or early 2024
- ❖ Village Coordinators – new guidelines will be presented this year
- ❖ German Origins - working to update for our website.
- ❖ Clues for 2024 – to be prepared for digital publication

Please be sure to read the AHSGR Newsletter for releases on new items as they become available. Please contact the Committee Chair and or Co-Chair for additional information

Convention Management Committee Year End Report 2022

Committee Members: Susan Nakaji, Chair, Anna Bartkowski, Nancy Borrell, Bill Dellos, Cheryl Glanz, LaDonna Hunt, Kevin Rupp, Jerry Siebert, Shirley Wilcoxon. Adjunct members: Dodie Rotherham, Bob Ahlbrandt, Karen Soeken, Sheri Ertl, Sue Casseday, Claire Landolt, Jonathan Rowe, Deb Arenz and Ellen Vorderstrasse.

It takes many volunteers to host a Convention and I'd like to thank the Board members that have stepped up to help organize this convention. I would also like to thank the Headquarters staff for all the support and help provided. None of them have even been to a Convention and they have been real troopers in support of the Convention planning. Weekly Zoom meetings have been held since January.

All convention attendees are welcome to volunteer at the Convention. Check with the registration desk to sign up.

Three tours are planned for Tuesday of this Convention, 1 full day tour to the Homestead Monument and Friend, NE and two ½ day tours: North and South Bottoms and the International Quilt museum. Three cooking classes are offered again this year: Sausage, Kuchen and Grebbel.

International speakers include Peter Hilkes from Germany, Fabian Zubia from Argentina and Lena Wolf from London all via Zoom. I hope in the future travel will be an option again. Over 25 in-person presentations are planned along with 9 Zoom presentations. Chapter Leaders and Village Coordinators will be invited to Zoom into those sessions if unable to attend in person.

Thursday has evening activities planned including German Russian card games, Village gatherings for the two largest Kantons: Frank and Norka; and the Research room will be open that evening.

Favorite activities such as the Quilt raffle, Kuchen break, Silent Auction, Bookstore and Research room are being planned.

Locations for the 2023 Convention are being reviewed and a 5-year plan for future Conventions is in the process of development.

Susan Nakaji

Editorial & Publications Annual Report 2022

Members: Anna Bartkowski, Mike Brown, Marlene Michel, Sue Nakaji, Kevin Rupp (Chair), Fabian Zubia Schulteis, Jerry Siebert, Delores Tippet

This past year we continue to collect articles for the Journal from various authors, but with the recent war in the Ukraine this has put some of our regular contributors on hold this past spring. We continue to translate and publish articles on the various villages as prepared by Olga Litzenberger in her recent books and translated by Alexander Herzog, please see the back issue of the Journal for these articles.

We continue to look for books that might be of interest to our membership and make them available in our bookstore. These include: Historisches Ortslexikon Der Wolgadeutschen, Band I:A-B by Olga Litzenberger, Eingekapitel Aus Der Geschichte Des Kolonisationsprojekts von Katharina II, 1763-1775m by George Rauschenbach, Letters from Hell, Book 1: Years 1920-1921, Savage Volga and a reprint of Wir Wollen Deutschen Bleiben as well as

two cookbooks, Family Recipes from German Traditions and Maggie's Farm to Table: Authentic German Recipes. Translation of the Kazakhstan Gedankebuch by Alexander Herzog has been completed and is now in the editing process while a new monograph on Siberia should be available in the AHSGR on-line bookstore at this time. We continue to publish a quarterly issue of the AHSGR Journal/Newsletter.
Kevin Rupp, Chair

Facilities Committee Annual Report 2022

Committee: Nancy Borrell, Sue Casseday, Harold Penner (Chair), Philipp Stuckert

At the Fall Board meeting, the committee toured the campus in Lincoln (as required by the Bylaws) and photographed areas that needed attention. The committee also worked on setting priorities and the method of obtaining bids to do the work.

At the Spring Board meeting, discussions and work sessions dealt with an internal fire-rated door that warped due to a door stop being added to it. Options were sought from the local Fire Marshal. Bids are being sought for a storage shed to replace the one that rotted away. The new shed will be placed on campus property that does not intrude on City easements. A new pest control contract has been awarded.

Efforts continue on other areas that need attention.

Harold Penner, Chair

Membership Committee Annual Report 2021-2022

Members: Sue Cassadey, LaDonna Hunt, Duane Stabler, Sheri Ertl (Chair)

This year, one of our goals was to determine just how many members AHSGR has. When we switched to the new website, Bob Ahlbrandt pointed out many discrepancies and inconsistencies. With his help and the committee's ongoing efforts to clean up the membership list, we are confident that as of May 16, 2022, Membership report says 2,467 members. This number includes all types of memberships: Standard (1083), Sustaining (208), Life (1080), Organization (76), Student (18), and Youth (2). In the future, we will be able to use this number as a base for determining membership goals.

One of the focuses of the committee was to determine the status of chapters. The first step was to update the chapter leaders' list. Then a survey was developed and sent out to chapters with 9 chapters returning them. Ongoing efforts are being made to reach out to individual chapter leaders to encourage participation. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that lack of submission always equates to lack of activity, but we don't think that is necessarily the case.

To help retain membership, the Committee launched the quarterly AHSGR Book Club. We also send out a recipe each month that encourages conversation and outreach.

The Committee helped the Northeast Kansas Chapter (Topeka) participate in the Heartland Family History Conference in Topeka by setting up a booth there and running an ad in their conference booklet. The chapter leaders and the committee chair talked to many people and established a presence with the Topeka genealogy community and elsewhere.

The committee also answered inquiries about a former chapter re-incorporating; and a possible new chapter.

With the help of Claire Landolt, the life membership certificate and chapter anniversary certificate were redesigned with an updated look consistent with the new branding.

Marketing And Public Affairs Committee Annual Report 2022

Committee members: Shirley Wilcoxon-Chairperson, Bob Ahlbrandt, Anna Bartkowski, Bill Dellos, Russ Gunther, Michael Heil, and Delores Tippett

The function of the Marketing and Public Affairs committee is to assist the society, all AHSGR chapters, members, committees, headquarters, and the website in promoting our news, activities, and events. The goal is to increase awareness of AHSGR resulting in increased membership. Please contact the marketing and public affairs 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. Branding guidelines and a form will be provided for you to use.

Other goals are 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 the promotion 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; and participate in conferences such as RootsTech, etc.

RootsTech Connect 2022 was the largest virtual three-day genealogical conference in the world attracting over a million attendees from 227+ countries. AHSGR was proud to be an exhibitor with a booth in the expo hall. We live-chatted with many attendees and other sponsors and exhibitors who visited our booth and learned about the history and heritage of Germans from Russia. We awarded four lucky entries with a one-year free membership and three \$25.00 shopping sprees in our online store. Several attendees joined AHSGR. Our welcome video highlighting all the benefits of AHSGR membership, museum tour video, three educational videos, searchable links to our website, five interesting downloadable documents, and society information are available for you to view at <https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/expohall/american-historical-society-of-germans-from-russia>.

We established goals to center around social media and promotion to other similar groups and pages; We have identified materials and speakers for outreach and networking with other like-minded historical societies, genealogical groups, and libraries; created website materials and established special landing pages to track our promotions; improved our branding, tracked our analytics, analyzed the effectiveness, and adjusted accordingly.

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. Since you are a member of the AHSGR team, we need your help. Please be an ambassador of AHSGR by sharing the social media posts with your chapter and other special interest groups. It is easy to do since we have created the content for you. It only takes three to five seconds to click on the share tab. Invite your friends and family to like and join our social media groups and pages.

Respectfully submitted,
Shirley Wilcoxon

Strategic Planning Committee Annual Report 2022

Members: Wilhelm Doos, Gary Fuchs (Chair), Cheryl Glanz, Mike Heil, Duane Stabler

1. Assign S&P Committee Member to support 2022 goals setting & progress against plans for three focus areas of the Strategic Plan: Financial, Outreach. Technological Innovation.
2. Determine SWOT framework for planning for next strategic planning process

FINANCIAL *Recognize and maintain consistent financial stability to support programs and priorities in addition to organizational obligations.*

Finance & Personnel Committee

- a. Establish annual operating budget
- b. Designate committee liaisons (bookstore, convention, membership, investments) to report quarterly on performance against plan

Strategic Planning Committee

- c. Collaborate with E&P, ARG & F&P to analyze and develop bookstore pricing strategy

Fundraising Committee

- d. Send out Holiday Fundraising letter
- e. Determine targeted foundation and develop letter template for solicitation

OUTREACH *Pursue opportunities to expand the Society's sphere of influence outside the organization and its membership to educate others about Germans from Russia.*

Membership Committee

1. Update the Life Membership contact list and review and revise Life Membership letter and certificate by December 31, 2021.
2. Member Retention & Outreach
 - a. Hold a Fall 2021 Membership Appreciation book drawing. Eight members chosen randomly during October and November received a book.
 - b. Distribute a membership email blast monthly with a short note and a graphic.
 - c. Send out handwritten notes to new members.
3. Member Recruitment
 - a. Continue to develop the multi-year educational program Discover Your Heritage.
4. Chapter activities
 - a. Develop chapter leadership job descriptions by November 30, 2021.
 - b. Update the Chapter leader contact information by November 30, 2021
 - c. Survey chapter leaders about their activity and needs by December 31, 2021.
 - d. Develop a plan for increasing communication and building better relationships between National and Chapters.
 - e. Host a Chapter presidents' Zoom meeting.

Convention Management Committee

1. Host an in-person Convention in Lincoln, NE on July 26-30, 2022, and host a Zoom component for those unable to attend in person
2. Solicit Company Sponsorships and individual donations for the convention.
3. Prepare a Convention program to reflect the many areas of Germanic settlement.

Ancestral Records & Genealogical Services

1. Publish a minimum of five village records (vital, military, family lists, communion records, etc.) to sell in AHSGR bookstore.
2. Sell a minimum of 3 years of the “Die Weltpost” famine letters 1920 – 1923.
3. Ongoing activities & research
 - a. Complete the formatting for the new publication of Kazakhstan Gedenkbuch.
 - b. Assess the materials in the vault to determine what needs to be done – digitizing, translating, archiving, etc.
 - c. Finalize the formatting of one aussiedler tape for posting on website.
 - d. Continue to translate and publish in the AHSGR journal the village essays written by Olga Litzenberger.
 - e. Work with contacts in Siberia and Kazakhstan to determine what is available from their historical archives and researchers.
 - f. Pursue ancestral record sites and repositories and, if possible, purchase for AHSGR collections.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION *Optimize the use of technology in supporting programs, the Society, and management of the organization.*

Technology Committee

1. Website Launch & Planned Enhancements
 - a. Support AHSGR members in accessing new ahsgr.org website.
 - b. Retire legacy YM system including archival of AHSGR data by January 31, 2022.
 - c. Complete initial batch of website enhancements including legacy membership data mapping issues, migrate membership processing to WooCommerce and Square, set-up MailChimp for member e-mail distribution, optimize export file for import of financial transactions to QuickBooks, add additional fields to Donations page and report, and add museum and intro videos.
2. Continue to enhance website to add content, improve data quality and make more user-friendly. Priority areas of focus include additional standard reports and ad hoc reporting capability, web-based convention registration, migration of donation processing to WooCommerce, add additional content, and improved site useability.
3. Support & Align with Committee Priorities
 - a. Support efforts of Ancestral Records/Genealogy Committee in digitizing records.
 - b. Partner with Ancestral Records/Genealogy Committee to define strategy for legacy PAF-based genealogy database used to store information from member’s Family Group Charts and Ancestral Charts.
 - c. Support efforts of Marketing Committee to deploy digital marketing methods
4. Ongoing technology innovation/best practices
 - a. Begin development of plan for future migration from AHSGR-owned server to cloud-based storage
 - b. Support HQ utilization of Microsoft tools for communication, information sharing and collaboration

Technology Committee

2022 Annual Report

Committee Members: Bob Ahlbrandt (Chair), Gary Fuchs, Lee Macklin, Marlene Michel, Duane Stabler, Philip Stuckert

The most significant achievement of the past year was the completion of the new website (<https://ahsgr.org>), culminating in go-live on December 8, 2021. This project was the result of the tremendous effort of a project team led by Lee Macklin, former Technology Committee chair Dennis Zitterkopf, and our web development service vendor, Lee Media Group. We successfully migrated our membership database, on-line store, publications, and research materials from the legacy website. It is a testament to our core values that this project was completed on time and on budget despite unanticipated challenges and complexity.

The new website provides a state-of-the-art platform that will accommodate ongoing addition of new content and enables direct contributions by content generators (e.g., Chapters). Several enhancements to the new website were completed after go-live. These enhancements improved the membership renewal interface and on-line payment process. Further enhancements are planned and will be released on an ongoing basis.

Members are encouraged to login to the website to access member-exclusive content. Please update your membership profile, including surnames and villages of interest. This will help other members connect with you. If you have difficulty logging in to the website, please contact AHSGR headquarters for assistance at help@ahsgr.org or (402) 474-3363.

In conjunction with the new website, a new Privacy Policy was released. This policy describes AHSGR's commitment to protect the personal information of users of AHSGR's services. This policy is posted on the AHSGR website at <https://ahsgr.org/privacy-policy/>.

We supported implementation of a new Library Management System, moving from ResourceMate to Apollo Biblionix software. This is an industry-standard hosted solution accessible from our website (<https://ahsgr.biblionix.com/catalog/>). As part of this change, the AHSGR library holdings are being barcoded.

Microsoft Teams is now being utilized to support headquarters, Board of Directors, and Committee activities.

We made several updates to the technology infrastructure supporting headquarters: a new phone system from Allo Communications, new Wi-Fi access points, and a new uninterruptible power supply for the server. We purchased equipment to support new staff positions as well as the regular equipment replacement program: 4 laptop computers/docking stations, 1 desktop computer, 5 monitors, 3 printers and 1 scanner. The service contract was renewed with Bizco Technologies for technology support of headquarters.

Submitted by Bob Ahlbrandt, Technology Committee chair

Finance & Personnel Committee

Annual Report 2022

Members: Nancy Borrell, Sue Casseday (Chair), Gary Fuchs, Russ Gunther, Dodie Rotherham, Jerry Siebert

The year 2021 was a challenging year. Going forward, Executive Director Deb Arenz along with our capable Office Coordinator Claire Landolt has resume responsibility of working with our accounting firm. The 2022-2023 budget was approved and adjusted at our April Board of Directors meeting. The year-end financial statement and auditor's report are included elsewhere in the Convention Manual. If anyone has questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.