

# FAQ: SGEE website & mail changes

## So what's happening?

SGEE will move its website and related functions to a commercial cloud hosting service. This change also will affect the Ger-Poland-Volhynia mailing list and our email groups (such as [databases@sggee.org](mailto:databases@sggee.org)).

## Why are these changes being made?

The hosting is being moved to the cloud for two reasons:

- To increase the reliability and availability of the SGEE website. This will reduce the impact of local internet and electrical outages that currently can take the site offline.
- To reduce the cost of maintaining the site and the hardware owned by SGEE. We now host the site and its backups on aging hardware stored in a member's home. Moving to the cloud ensures redundancy and eliminates costs associated with owning and maintaining hardware.

## Is the website changing?

The website will remain the same. You will continue to use your username and password to view members-only areas of the site. The databases are the same. The web address will stay the same. Members will not be aware of the website move once it is completed.

## So what's the big deal then?

The biggest change you'll see is the Ger-Poland-Volhynia mailing list, which is being eliminated and replaced with a Google group. This is necessary because the mailing list also is hosted on local hardware that is going away.

## What's a Google group?

A Google group provides for the same function as the mailing list: You subscribe and then can submit and receive (via email) items posted to the group, either as they're posted or in a once-a-day "digest" mode. The new Ger-Poland-Volhynia group on Google allows members of SGEE and non-members to share information and ask questions as we do today.

## But I don't have a Google account; do I have to create one?

A Gmail account is NOT required to participate. You subscribe using your preferred email address and will receive posts in your own inbox, much as you do today.

## That's good! How does this Google group work then?

All subscribers get a welcome email with the necessary instructions; these are also included on each mail you receive when a new post or reply is made. From your inbox you can:

- Post to the group by sending email to the group address. You respond to a post by clicking "reply ALL" on the mail you receive.
- Unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it.

If you have a Gmail account, you can request access to the group by sending a message. To prevent delays, you must mention the email address you already use with the group so we have an idea of who

we're allowing. Once approved, you can view the group as a website by logging into the site using your Gmail credentials. Viewing the group site allows you to read all posts, going back in time, and act on them as desired. You can also start a new topic here, which will send an email to all subscribers.

**This web version is NOT available unless you have a Gmail account.** This means that non-Gmail account holders will no longer be able to see all posts in one place. You will work using email only.

The screen grab below gives you an idea of how the Google group website will look. Bear in mind that there will be no posts in the group when launched, at least until people start using it. (BTW, the archive of the current mail list will be preserved on the SGSEE website.)

The screenshot shows the Google Groups interface. At the top, there's a search bar labeled "Search for messages" and a "Groups" button. Below the search bar, there are buttons for "NEW TOPIC", "G", "Mark all as read", and "Filters". On the right side of the header are "Tags", "Members", and "About" links, along with user and settings icons.

The main content area shows a list of topics under the heading "ger-poland-volhynia Shared privately". It says "6 of 6 topics (1 unread) ★". Below this, a welcome message reads: "Welcome to SGSEE, the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe." It describes the list as being for anyone researching the genealogy of Germans whose migrations took them through Russian Poland and/or Volhynia (northwestern Ukraine, next to the border with Poland). It notes that fringe regions such as Posen, Podolia, Kiev, various parts of Prussia and others may also be included. Topics of discussion may also include related geography, history, religion and culture. This list will be of special interest to members of the Society for German Genealogy in Eastern Europe but you do not have to be a member to participate.

Below the welcome message, there's a note: "This list does not cover other German Russian regions such as the Volga River, Black Sea, or Bessarabia regions. However, postings about meetings, events, publications, and other general information regarding AHSGR, GRHS, GRHC, FEFHFS, or other similar East European or Russian genealogy groups, or related events, are welcome."

The list of topics includes:

- SGSEE BOD: action needed on new Google group (9) - By me - 9 posts - 0 views (Sep)
- Test sending from Yahoo - By Karl Krueger - 6 posts - 6 views (Aug)
- This is a test from the Gmail group (1) - By me - 1 post - 2 views (Aug)

At the bottom left, there are "Privacy - Terms of Service" links.

## Is anything else different using a Google group rather than our old mailing list?

The purpose is the same: the exchange of information about our ancestors in Poland and Volhynia.

The content of your posts must stay within the scope; the policies regarding the Ger-Poland-Volhynia group are not changing and may be read here: [https://sggee.org/communicate/mailing\\_list.html](https://sggee.org/communicate/mailing_list.html).

We will continue to monitor the Google group postings and address any violations of the guidelines, just as we do now.

Anyone who wishes to subscribe after the transition to the Google group will need to request membership and may be contacted privately to ensure all members are there for the same reason. If someone abuses the group, the admins are empowered to delete their membership.

**Attachments** can be blocked, but for the moment **we have opted to allow them**. Though Google provides some level of spam and anti-virus filtering to help minimize the threat, we urge you to exercise care when viewing attachments. General computing advice is to NOT open or click within suspicious attachments or those from unknown sources to avoid being attacked by computer malware. As currently configured, you can see the originating email address for all messages sent via the group to assist you in this decision.

As with the current system, it's possible that spammers could mistakenly be admitted to the group and then send spam to all subscribers. Similarly, if a member of the Google group is hacked, they could send unwanted email to the group. Again, general computing advice is to exercise care about opening email from unknown sources and when clicking on links within the body of a message. In a case like this,

SGGEE would either block or delete access for the offending email address, but only once the problem had occurred.

### **MOST IMPORTANTLY!**

All information you post is shared with hundreds of other subscribers and is maintained online in perpetuity. Using a genealogical mailing list is a delicate balance; **think twice about what personally identifying information (birth dates, etc.) you post, especially about people still living.** Do not forward private emails to the group; we have had cases where someone contacted a subscriber privately and then found their data shared online because the recipient simply forwarded the email.

Finally, read, understand, and follow the long-established **guidelines** for the Ger-Poland-Volhynia mailing list, which also apply to the Google group: [https://sggee.org/communicate/mailing\\_list.html](https://sggee.org/communicate/mailing_list.html).

### **When will this transition take place?**

The Ger-Poland-Volhynia mail list will be the first change, happening in early October. *All current mailing list subscribers will be notified automatically by email when they are made members of the new Google group.* See above for details on how to participate in the new group.

### **Email Contacts/Distribution Lists**

Our SGGEE email contacts (e.g. databases@sggee.org) will also be moved to Google groups. Again, if you are currently receiving mails sent to those specific addresses (such as convention, databases or membership), you will be made a member of a Google group and will be notified automatically via email when that happens.

In the case of the email addresses, you will also need to update your address book since the new format will be something like “databases.sggee@googlegroups.com.” The new addresses, once finalized, will be available on the website once they are active. We will also announce them on the new Google group.

Send any questions or comments to [webmaster@sggee.org](mailto:webmaster@sggee.org).