

SAGA Annual Report 2004 – 5

Valerie Raoul, SAGA Director

(from Annual Report May 2004 –June 2005 –Centre for Research in Women's and Gender Relations)

Infrastructure: overview and update

SAGA has a dual mandate, to preserve a legacy of auto/bio/graphical materials relating to women's lives (initially in BC) which might otherwise be lost, and to solicit new materials (such as oral histories) through research projects. The space on the main floor of the Koerner Library (with 15 workstations) is available for use by researchers, and has been used regularly over the past two years by a large number of visiting scholars, faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, research assistants, and graduate students. It has already brought together researchers who are interested in making future applications for funding for innovative, collaborative, interdisciplinary projects using the facility, and this will be a priority in the coming year. We have received some offers of archival materials (diaries etc.), and are currently investigating what we should welcome, how to assess and classify the materials proposed, and what can be converted to electronic form. With the assistance of staff from UBC Archives, a pilot project will be completed, with text scanned, tagged, and made available on-line to researchers.

All equipment has now been delivered, though some still has to be installed. We have acquired new digital recording and transcribing equipment and voice recognition software, a second printer and a computer for recording its use, a card access photocopier, a high level scanner, a video camera and video editing software, and a portable computer, power point projector, and screen for presentations. Software has been selected for the data-base and data analysis. Our hope is to make SAGA a place where scholars from here and elsewhere can access the means to facilitate their research on written, oral or visual auto/bio/graphy and gender across the lifespan.

Training and communications

So far, SAGA has provided employment and training for several RAs associated with the CRWSGR's graduate programme, all of whom have made valuable contributions. In our first year of operation Bianca Rus began cataloguing the book collection, and Sara Koopman set up the web-page (incorporating information from the PWIAS project on Narratives of Disease, Disability, and Trauma from which SAGA grew) and established a communications network. We now have two listserves, one for those interested in auto/bio/graphy related events in the Vancouver area, and one for those engaged in relevant research who want to be involved in SAGA. Sedi Minachi prepared a database of community groups and organizations in the Lower Mainland interested in collaborating on future SAGA projects, such as collective oral history. Xin Huang and Hui-ling Lin were the RAs for Summer 2004 and Hui-ling continued as RA for the 2004-5 academic year. Our thanks go to Jenéa Tallentire (Department of History) for her assistance in finding out about new methods of archival research and liaising with UBC Archives for us, as well as preparing a pilot project. Work on the database pilot project will begin in Summer 2005. We have already welcomed a number of international visiting scholars from Asia and Europe, and hope these contacts will contribute to forming an international network of feminist researchers working on the stories of women's lives, told through various media and analysed from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

Administration (SAGA is affiliated with the CRWSGR)

The Advisory Committee is currently in flux and additional members need to be appointed. Current on-going members are Sneja Gunew (ex-officio as Director of CRWSGR and also representing English/ autobiography studies); Carla Paterson (History of Medicine/ Foundations/ Wall project: has assisted in data-base development); Connie Canam (Nursing/Wall project/ narrative analysis in Qualitative Research/community involvement with a health-care focus). In the Fall, Anne Martin Matthews (Social Work/Aging) stepped down, as she became Director of the CIHR College focused on Aging. We expected Gabi Helms (English/autobiography, a

member of the Wall project) to be going on maternity leave in January, and were very sad when she unexpectedly died of breast cancer at the end of December. A third member, Jean Barman (Educational Studies), has now retired. New members (who have already been asked and agreed) are Diane Newell (History/ biography/First Nations in BC/ archives and use of data-base: currently Director of Peter Wall Inst.) and Vera Rosenbluth (local expert on oral life history: author of two books and broadcasts on this topic; MA Anthropology [ethnography], will assist with community liaison and grant applications.

Next year we will be concentrating on future plans, and ways to ensure on-going operating funding for SAGA. The CFI/BCKDF funds (allocated for infrastructure and equipment only) had to be spent by the end of December 2004. The only money left for ongoing funding is what remains in the Wall project. This will cover Valerie Raoul's release as Director until she retires in December 2006 and half RA position (500/mth) for the same period. The CRWSSR External Review Committee has recommended that UBC increase the CRWSSR operating budget by at least \$20,000 p.a., to cover on-going expenses for staffing and maintaining SAGA. The Committee will oversee the search and procedures for appointing a new Director for September or January 2007.

SAGA Activities and Events

Several SAGA Associates had the pleasure of attending a workshop on Memory and Place in November 2004, organized by Brian Elliott (AnSoc) on behalf of the Memory and Narrative publication series (associated with the Oral History and Life Stories Network), whose editorial board (including members from the UK and Holland) were meeting in Vancouver. On March 11th 2005 we organized a very successful one-day workshop on oral history entitled "Getting Our Lives Together," held in the Graduate Student Centre Penthouse and attended by 40 people from UBC and elsewhere. It was unusual in bringing different generations together, as a Brock House life history group of seniors was well represented thanks to Sid Butler (a retired UBC Professor and SAGA Associate who publishes their work). The sessions included: "Working in and with the local community," with local oral historian and broadcaster Vera Rosenbluth and Ed Wickberg (UBC Professor Emeritus, History). A panel on "Oral Life Stories in Qualitative Research" was chaired by Dawn Currie (Sociology), with presentations from Cynthia Andruske (Educational Studies), Dianne Newell (History), and SAGA Visiting Scholar Rathi Menon (Oral History in Kerala). Hamed Shahidian (CRWSSR Visiting Scholar), Richard Ingram, and Jim Overboe made presentations about their incorporation of their own life stories into research on exile, disability, and psychiatric treatment respectively. The day ended with discussion of the arts as auto-bio-graphics, with video and slide presentations from Gu Xiong (UBC Fine Arts) and Susan Shantz (CRWSSR Visiting Scholar). This workshop inspired a good deal of enthusiasm, and requests for more events related to oral history and methodology. On March 22nd, 2005 we also welcomed Michael Riordon, author of *An Unauthorized Biography of the World* (2004) and several other relevant works, who gave a lecture on ethical issues in collecting contemporary life histories.

Another workshop for graduate students will be held on June 7th, 2005, with a focus on the technicalities of interviewing, recording, editing and analysing oral materials. Presenters will be Isabel Dyck (Women's Studies/ Rehab. Sciences); Marg Dorazio (Centre for Applied Ethics and a member of the Wall project); Neelu Kang (Visiting Scholar from India); and Marilou Carillo (WMST doctoral student working with the life histories of Filipino women activists). Training sessions for use of the video camera and video editing equipment will be held in Fall 2005. Over the coming months, Hui-Ling Lin will complete the editing of a volume of interviews with feminist faculty at UBC, which we hope to make available online, and Sara Koopman will up-date the web-site. Xin Huang and Rupa Bagga will also assist with the staffing of SAGA over the summer. We have benefited from the presence of a number of visiting scholars at SAGA in 2004-5, especially two who have been with us all year: Rathi Menon from India (who may still be with us next year), and Sofia Trilivas, from Crete, who will be going home in June.

We greatly appreciate the support of the administrative staff at the CRWSGR, FoGS IT services, and staff members at the Koerner Library and UBC Archives. Our thanks go to the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies for allowing us to use part of the Wall grant for SAGA operations, and also to our Advisory Committee members and Visiting Scholars who have contributed a great deal to bringing SAGA to life.