

## **SAGA Annual Report 2005 - 6**

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*(from Annual Report 2005 –2006 –Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies)*



This has been the year in which SAGA has become well established. All the equipment and furnishings proposed in the original CFI/BCKDF application and furnishings proposed in the original CFI/BCKDF application (made in 2000) have now been purchased and installed, and the original funding from those two sources is fully spent. December 2005 officially marked the end of the development of the basic infrastructure project. However, we must still submit an annual report to the CFI for five more years, showing that the space and equipment are being used and are contributing to innovative, interdisciplinary research. Funding from the Peter Wall Institute, which has covered 3 credits of teaching release for the Director and \$10,000 for RA assistance throughout the year, will come to an end when the present Director retires in December 2006. One of the principal tasks ahead is to ensure that on-going core operating funds will be available to allow SAGA to fulfill its potential. As last year’s external Review of the Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies confirmed, the unique space and facilities provided by SAGA are an essential part of the graduate program’s success, as well as a resource that attracts distinguished visiting scholars, from Canada and abroad. There are now other comparable Centres becoming established in Canada (at Concordia and Wilfred Laurier University), but SAGA has been at the forefront in focusing on research related to collecting, preserving, and analysing women’s life-stories. As the range of projects represented by SAGA Associates demonstrates, these may be produced in various forms (written, oral, or visual), across the life-span, and reflect diverse cultural, historical, and political contexts.

### *Space and equipment*

All 16 workstations have been assigned throughout the year, some of them on a shared basis. Those using them include faculty members and their Research Assistants, Post-doctoral Fellows, Visiting Scholars, and graduate students. The SAGA Centre provides a quiet space in which they

can work and meet each other. Many benefit from SAGA's own modest collection of auto-biographical texts and works on theory and methods related to life-writing, which has now been catalogued. The location in the Koerner Library is valuable, as UBC library and archival resources can be readily consulted and assistance is available from library staff. Each station has internet access, and there is a designated one for using desk-top publishing/design and video-editing software. Other new software available includes Dragon Naturally Speaking (voice recognition), which should be of use to researchers with a disability in transcribing interview material. A number of SAGA Associates have taken advantage of new equipment for transcription of interviews (both traditional and digitalized), video-interviewing, and high grade photo-scanning. Photocopying and printing are available on site, on a cost-recovery basis.

Part of SAGA's mandate is to establish a digitalized archive of personal documents by women that can be consulted on line. A pilot project has now been completed, with the help of the UBC Archivist, Chris Hives. A total of 1806 pages and 1497 images have been scanned or transcribed, from diaries, memoirs or letters located in the UBC Archives, written by 4 BC women. The documents include material dating from as far back as 1879. Themes for tagging now need to be selected, so that this material can be searched. Other data to be kept on the SAGA server will include transcripts of interviews with over 20 women faculty members at UBC, and the responses to a questionnaire completed by community groups in the Lower Mainland interested in working with SAGA to record their collective histories.

Last year workshops were held on oral history methods and qualitative research interviewing. This year the focus has been on learning to use the new equipment. Our thanks go to Brian Charles for providing a very useful one-day hands-on training session in the Fall, showing us how to use the new state-of-the-art video camera and editing software.

#### *Networking and sharing our research*

SAGA has facilitated many contacts between researchers from different departments or disciplines on campus and visitors from many other places. We are particularly fortunate to have welcomed a number of Visiting Scholars this year who have presented lectures on relevant research and participated in collaborative discussion, particularly on methods of analysis of life-writing. Philip Holden, of the National University of Singapore, left us in December after a year of working at SAGA on a study of autobiographies by famous political leaders perceived as "fathers of the nation". His book manuscript shows how postcolonial nations have been imagined in profoundly gendered ways. Another visitor, Sreedevi Nair, presented her work on women's autobiographies written in Malayalam. Rathi Menon, an Indian specialist in autobiography studies, has been associated with SAGA for two years now. Hilary Hinds, of Lancaster University (UK), participated throughout this term in a bi-weekly working group on methods of analyzing auto-biographical texts. Thanks to Naomi Lloyd, a doctoral student in Women's Studies, for organizing this activity. We are also delighted that two international visitors from previous years have obtained funding to return to SAGA this summer to continue their research here: Rocio Davis, who works on graphic life-writing, has received a grant from her university in Spain, and Neelu Kang (from Delhi) will be funded by the Shastri Institute to continue her collection of life histories from South Asian women in BC.

Our congratulations go to Hui-ling Lin, our current SAGA RA, who has obtained a grant from the Green College Academic Fund to organize a series of autobiographical films next term. These will be accompanied by a student-led graduate seminar comparing European and Asian self-representations on film, and visits from several directors. Another doctoral student associated with SAGA, Marilou Carrillo, conducted a successful course at the Philippine Women's Centre, related to her research on Filipino women activists' lives in the Philippines and abroad. The SAGA Director, Sunera Thobani, and several graduate students associated with SAGA are currently involved in planning a one-day event to be held June 25<sup>th</sup> at UBC in collaboration with the World Peace Forum entitled "Root Causes of War: Feminist Analyses and Women's (Re)actions". It will bring together women from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, as well as First Nations women from Canada, to share their stories of life in conflict situations and women's

efforts to prevent or survive violence. Other activities to be undertaken this summer include updating of our Associates' list and web-site ([saga.ubc.ca](http://saga.ubc.ca)).

As my term as founding Director of SAGA draws to an end, I wish to thank all those who have made it possible: Sneja Gunew, the Director of CWAGS, and Jane Charles and Wynn Archibald for all their assistance; FoGS IT staff, especially Alan Tromba, for their support; and Chris Hives and other library staff for their collaboration. On June 14<sup>th</sup> at 2pm all those interested in SAGA are invited to a brain-storming session to discuss its future. All ideas are welcome!