

OBJECTIVES

Students and Faculty in the Archives (SAFA) is a three-year, FIPSE-funded project at the Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS).

In its effort to engage first-year undergraduates with primary sources, SAFA aims to meet the following goals:

Goal 1: Build a collaborative network consisting of three Brooklyn universities and BHS, aimed at enhancing first year student engagement and learning through archival research projects.

Goal 2: Develop and implement college humanities, art, and technology courses for first- and second-year students enriched by significant archival research projects.

Goal 3: Improve faculty ability to integrate archival research into first- and second-year humanities courses in support deeper and more engaged student learning experiences.

Goal 4: Improve student learning of key inquiry and archival literacy skills.

Goal 5: Improve student engagement for first-year college students, as measured by institutional data such as the NSSEE, data on course completion and course passing, and retention rates.

The SAFA project opens the BHS library to eighteen partner faculty from New York City College of Technology (City Tech), Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus (LIU Brooklyn), and St. Francis College (SFC). In the first six months of the grant period (January 2011 – June 2011), SAFA project staff have laid the project infrastructure (which will address Goals 1 – 5); fostered a collaborative network of local participating faculty (Goal 1); and enabled faculty to start developing courses in the academic year 2011 – 2012, which will use BHS archival material (Goals 2 and 3). Because no courses have commenced as of June 2011, we cannot yet chronicle student learning or engagement. In anticipation of the coming academic year, our Evaluator has defined the metrics, such as baseline data and rubrics, which will be used to evaluate Goals 4 and 5. See below, and see our Evaluator’s separate report.

Goals 1 – 5: Building Project Infrastructure

Staffing

We hired two full time SAFA project staff members, an **archivist** and a **historian**: Robin M. Katz, Outreach and Public Services Archivist, 100% of time; and Julie Golia, Public Historian, 100% of time. The two SAFA staff members began work at the initial February 25, 2011 SAFA meeting at BHS, where they met with the participating faculty. Another personnel change is that BHS’s Director of Library and Archives, Chela Scott Weber has taken a new position. She was co-director of

the project. As soon as Ms. Scott Weber's replacement is hired, we will send you the new person's resume, and ask that he/she be formally moved to co-director of the project, along with Deborah Schwartz, BHS President.

In May 2011, project staff hired a part-time **student technology consultant**: Aaron Kendall, Contract Educational Technologist who is a doctoral candidate in Anthropology with a focus on Archeology at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is also a participant in the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy doctoral certificate program. This represents a change from our grant narrative in which we planned to hire several students to provide technical support. We decided that hiring one Ph.D student would provide faculty with seamless support, require less supervision from BHS, and hopefully allow one person to stay for the duration of the grant. The Contract Educational Technologist has already collaborated with IT Consultant Joe Cordaro to install a network of WordPress sites (Multisite) on the subdomain <http://safa.brooklynhistory.org>; helped SAFA staff create wireframe and specs for the Course Websites; customized the *Atahualpa* WordPress theme design according to our specifications; researched and added plug-ins to meet our specific pedagogical needs; and provided an afternoon WordPress training session to SAFA faculty at the 2011 Summer Institute. The Contract Educational Technologist will continue to be available to faculty in a support capacity throughout the academic year. His role will be addressed further below when we discuss changes and developments in the project.

Needs Assessment and Systems Implementation

From March to April 2011, SAFA staff implemented the following systems needed to make SAFA function: drafted a project Timeline and Work Breakdown Structure; purchased Basecamp project management software; set up a Zotero database for research management purposes; and investigated communication solutions, such as a listserv or Google group, and decided to simply send emails to faculty for the time being.

Another change from the grant narrative is that we originally planned to hire a Digital Software Developer, but after careful analysis and work creating our websites for the project, have determined that this funding should be spent to stabilize BHS's hardware system so that our infrastructure can sustain and support the Wordpress web sites that we are building for the faculty. The funding allocated for the Digital Software Developer has been allocated to a company called NPower that will review and restructure our hardware and server configuration to provide a secure platform for the work we are doing with the faculty. The funding has also been used to set up a Basecamp account for communication with the staff and faculty, webhosting and an upgrade in Internet access.

Goals 1, 2 and 3: Project Accomplishments to Date

On February 25, 2011, BHS staff met with participating SAFA faculty. At this meeting, Independent Evaluator William J. Tally, Ph.D presented assessment plans for SAFA; faculty participated in a sample Document Analysis exercise by examining materials from the BHS archives; and participating instructors completed a Faculty Questionnaire about their initial ideas for 2011-2012 SAFA course(s). In March and April 2011, SAFA staff reviewed the Faculty Questionnaires, corresponded with SAFA faculty, familiarized themselves with BHS collections, and then matched faculty interests to archival collections. SAFA staff distributed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to faculty in April 2011. The MOU stated requirements for SAFA faculty, which included: participating in the Summer Institute; incorporating at least one visit to the BHS archives; and committing to producing a course website. The MOU also laid out terms of financial compensation for participating faculty.

In May 2011, SAFA staff set up individual meetings with each faculty member to elaborate on project details (including the Faculty MOU); to explain more about BHS's Library and Archives (including the collection's strengths, weaknesses, and accessibility); to discuss their course(s) for the coming academic year; and to present relevant archival collections. SAFA staff presented each faculty member with a customized Research Guide (averaging 12 pages) and gave faculty a hands-on look at highlights from the recommended collections. The individual meetings helped faculty better understand which course topics BHS's collections could or could not support. This first experience interacting with BHS archival materials inspired SAFA faculty to narrow their initial course plans, to create more focused topics and assignments, to choose specific collections on which to focus, and to start thinking about the specifics of pedagogical design. Based on staff presentations, faculty were able to choose which BHS collections they would like to research further at the 2011 Summer Institute. Prior to the Institute, faculty completed online call slips requesting archival material for used during scheduled Individual Research Time in the library.

In May and June 2011, SAFA staff planned the first SAFA Summer Institute, an intensive week of professional development, research time, collaboration, and project communication for the eighteen faculty participating in SAFA during the 2011-2012 academic year. The two main goals for the week were for participants to foster a collegial, collaborative, interdisciplinary network, and for each faculty member to be equipped to produce a draft Course Plan by the last day. The Summer Institute

was held at BHS from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 13 - Friday, June 17, with the exception of one session held in the networked Library Learning Center at LIU Brooklyn. As much time as possible was dedicated to individual work: faculty were given 7.5 hours for individual research time with archival collections and 7 hours of dedicated time for faculty to complete the Course Plan. We facilitated group brainstorming discussions and provided downtime for casual conversation over meals and snacks. We were particularly pleased that faculty took every opportunity to interact with each other in the archive and in all of the sessions. By the end of the week, the group had developed a camaraderie that will doubtless serve as the foundation for a fruitful, collaborative network of teachers and scholars.

To access the Summer Institute schedule, Course Plan and other related materials, please go to the following website:

<http://safa.brooklynhistory.org/for-faculty/summer-institute-2011/>. (It is a restricted site, and the password is “courseplan”.)

In the draft course plan, we asked faculty to begin detailed plans for the following aspects of their participation in SAFA: course objectives and their relationship to SAFA objectives, class visits, assignment, course website, independent student research, context and student evaluation. Because SAFA faculty represent a wide range of disciplines, we wanted to provide a common historical narrative of Brooklyn to all participants. Two sessions at the Summer Institute supported this goal: a model class visit to the archives and a walking tour. At Monday’s “Brooklyn History in Documents” session, faculty were given a timeline, bibliography, and presentation by the BHS Public Historian. On Friday, the group went on a walking tour led by the Public Historian. Several faculty also contributed the tour based on their research in the BHS archives during the week. We also wanted to model ways in which students can interact with primary sources during a class visit to BHS. During “Brooklyn History in Documents,” small groups of faculty were presented with different documents. Faculty groups completed 40-minute model assignments based on their documents and then presented their experience to the group. Afterwards, SAFA staff facilitated a conversation on the pedagogical design choices available to professors. We also invited MIT Professor of History Craig Wilder to share his experiences teaching college students with primary sources and curating an exhibit with high school students in a BHS after-school program.

On Wednesday afternoon, we used a Media Lab in the Library Learning Center at LIU Brooklyn to conduct a Course Website Workshop. For the first part of the afternoon, SAFA staff presented the course website goals, guidelines, and requirements. Staff presented three sample websites that modeled different class assignments. In the second half of the workshop, the Contract Educational Technologist led a training session on specific skills using the WordPress platform.

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To help our faculty contextualize BHS's primary sources with secondary books, articles, and the like, we invited librarians from campus library systems for a session on Thursday. Please see below for further discussion about SAFA's cultivation of relationships with partner university library systems. Our Independent Evaluator presented on SAFA's assessment plan, conducted a critical incident survey, and helped evaluate the Summer Institute at the end of the week. Faculty evaluation revealed that most faculty valued not only the extended amount of time in the archives, but the high level of service BHS was able to provide during this week. Faculty greatly appreciated the collegiality and networking. The two most polarizing sessions were Craig Wilder's talk and the WordPress training - some faculty valued these greatly, and others did not gain much. These two sessions reflect the difficulty of planning programming for faculty of very different backgrounds and very different technological skill levels.

Project Goals: Looking Forward

Goal 1

On the last day of the Summer Institute, the group brainstormed ways in which the SAFA community should continue to connect throughout the academic year. In addition to an annual Summer Institute, ideas that were generated include holding regular faculty meetings, inviting guest lecturers, and planning an end-of-year reception for participating students. See Evaluator's report for more details.

Goals 2 and 3

Faculty were given the following deadlines for the academic year 2011 - 2012: final Course Plan due July 15; fall semester syllabi and websites due August 19; spring semester syllabi and websites due January 6; Final websites due at the end of each term; and all SAFA-related assignment instructions due at the end of each term. All faculty indicated they would return to the library to conduct more research before the final Course Plan is due on July 15. The Contract Educational Technologist is available for consultation before the website infrastructure is put in place prior to each course. Over the summer, in addition to serving faculty research appointments and reviewing Course Plans, SAFA staff will build the systems and workflow needed to serve an unprecedented 800+ university students in the archive next year. This will require an appointment system, agreements with faculty, and methods of tracking use of archival materials. SAFA staff will be responsible for instruction, facilitation, and supervision responsibilities of visiting classes and independent SAFA student researchers. Furthermore, BHS will be expanding its patron base (through SAFA and other programs) at a time when its physical resources will be in ever greater demand. BHS begin a building renovation in the fall that will limit public space to the library reading room. Please

see the final section “Project Sustainability,” for further discussion on negotiating institutional limitations with the SAFA project and beyond.

Project Changes and Developments

Since SAFA has commenced, the project directors and staff have made some adjustments to the digital component of the project to better reflect the goals of the grant. In the original grant application, BHS envisioned students designing an “online exhibit” that would feature students’ written work along with digital images of materials from our collections. As the project planning got underway in earnest, we realized that we did not have the equipment or staff necessary to reproduce high-quality scans of each artifact or document that each class hoped to feature on their site. We also feared that the “exhibit” format would not sufficiently chronicle student encounters with our collections, such as initial reactions to particular documents, improved understanding of archival materials, and the development of interpretive skills.

Chronicling and evaluating student engagement has been an important part of the SAFA grant from its inception; thus we adjusted the scope and purpose of the website to better address those goals. We stopped referring to “online exhibits,” and starting planning for “course websites.” The purpose of a course website will be to record students’ intellectual journeys at BHS (and beyond) rather than to offer a polished or formal exhibit of our collections. Instead of providing students and faculty with professional scans of our documents, we purchased a digital camera for the project and will ask students to document their experiences with pictures. By having students take their own research photos, we will give them greater control over their own research process and let them practice an important research skill. (Most researchers in our archives take digital photos to examine our materials after their visits.) This decision allows the digital component of the SAFA project to speak more clearly to the project’s larger goals and creates a more feasible plan of implementation.

We have re-examined our IT needs for the SAFA project. We chose the easy-to-use, open source WordPress platform for our course websites, and tweaked a pre-existing theme called *Atahualpa* to project needs. The theme’s design inherently provides pedagogical flexibility to the diverse group of SAFA faculty. As a result, SAFA had less need for a website designer, and more need for a robust IT support system. In May 2010, we hired Aaron Kendall as the part-time SAFA Contract Educational Technologist. Kendall is a doctoral student in Anthropology (with a concentration in Archeology) at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is also participating in the University’s Interactive Technology and Pedagogy doctoral certificate program. He is uniquely equipped to handle faculty and students’ technical questions, and to help faculty grapple with the pedagogical

implications of creating a course website. Changes have been made in the roster of faculty participants. Two faculty, Aaron Weinstein and Ian Maloney (both from St. Francis College), chose not to participate in the SAFA project because of onerous teaching loads. Two new faculty, Melissa Antinori Berninger (LIU Brooklyn) and Sara Haviland (St. Francis College), joined the project.

Perhaps most importantly, the chronological scope of the SAFA project has widened. As the SAFA staff met with faculty in May 2011, we realized that their courses would cover much more than nineteenth-century history. Our faculty teach courses in English, History, Photography, Fine Arts, Architectural Technology, Religious Studies, and American Studies departments. Course topics range from cultural histories of rubbish to the 1860s to survey courses spanning World History from 1500 to present. BHS's collections have proved well-suited to this broad range of topics and time periods. In fact, we are confident that this diversity will help create a better replicable pedagogical model for archives and museums across the country with very different collections and materials. We hope that this variety will demonstrate that archival research can be incorporated into a wide range of disciplines and types of assignments. We have experienced no major delays on the SAFA project timeline thus far.

Improving Quality of Teaching and Learning at BHS and elsewhere

SAFA staff and directors are looking forward to the commencement of the fall semester in August 2011. Once courses begin using BHS archival materials, we will be able to measure the impact of archival research on teaching and learning experiences. Our preparation thus far has shown encouraging signs. The 2011 SAFA Summer Institute was particularly successful at sparking excitement and collaboration among our partner faculty. SAFA staff and other pertinent BHS staff members familiarized partner faculty with our library and archival collections. As Education Development Center (EDC) Evaluator William Tally's report shows, the Institute also helped faculty focus their courses and assignments considerably. As mentioned above, some faculty are shaping their courses around the SAFA experience in integrative ways, and planning to bring their students in several times throughout the semester. The Summer Institute pushed these faculty with more in-depth SAFA objectives to sharpen and finalize their plans for each visit, and to narrow down which objects they would use with students, and what learning objectives each visit would address. On the other end of the spectrum, many of the faculty teaching much broader courses, especially history surveys, were able to focus on a particular theme or topic that would comprise their SAFA experience. For example, one City Tech professor teaching "American History, 1877 to Present" plans

to bring his students into BHS to examine a suite of materials related to theaters in Brooklyn. Through these assignments, he will address the rise of sites of leisure in Brooklyn, the history of immigration, and modern popular culture forms.

During the next school year, BHS anticipates that more than 800 first-year students will walk through our doors with their SAFA courses. This is an unprecedented development for BHS. While we have a robust Education Department, most of our programs and outreach have focused on elementary and secondary levels. By targeting college-age students, SAFA opens up the archive to a new body of researchers. By working with faculty to develop assignments, course syllabi, and course websites, future instructors bringing university students into BHS's facilities will have assignment models that will be useful well beyond the SAFA project.

Influencing Educational Practices at Other Institutions

Because our first semester of serving SAFA students has not commenced, we have not yet implemented our plans for outreach and dissemination of the results of the project. However, SAFA staff has already taken important steps to make connections with the three partner universities. We realized that archival work is inherently tied to traditional library research and broader information literacy skills. As such, we needed to be in communication with academic librarians at our partner campuses. This new collaboration within the SAFA project will serve many purposes:

- Provide resources and services to support SAFA courses that BHS cannot offer, such as secondary source monographs, peer-reviewed journals, and robust reference collections
- Further solidify institutional collaboration by enabling campus libraries to connect with their own faculty in a new way
- Illustrate (to students, faculty, and other institutions interested in replicating our model) that primary source in one archive is only part of a bigger constellation of scholarship that happens at many sites, using many types of resources.

SAFA staff has met on several occasions with staff from the libraries at City Tech and LIU Brooklyn. One obstacle SAFA staff has faced thus far is connecting with the St. Francis College Library. We have reached out to the school's Director of Library Services to discuss a collaborative relationship, but he did not think that participation would benefit St. Francis College faculty or librarians. We hope to make more inroads with the library staff so that all three campus libraries will be

invested in the success of the SAFA project and the students and faculty it will serve. As an institution, BHS has also decided to offer free admission to our museum, library, and public programs to all students, faculty, and staff with an ID from St. Francis College, LIU Brooklyn, and City Tech. In this way, we hope to publicize our collections and educational resources to an audience well beyond the SAFA community.

SAFA staff has already started thinking about the dissemination of SAFA findings and experiences. Robin Katz and Julie Golia will present at conferences, and possibly co-author an article for a peer-reviewed journal having to do with archives, museum studies, or public history. We are also collaborating with SAFA faculty on collaborative dissemination projects. For example, a SAFA history professor and BHS employee have already begun brainstorming an article that to be written together from both the professorial and institutional perspectives. Lastly, we are encouraging our faculty to present and write on the project separate from BHS. We hope to get publications in a broad range of journals or edited volumes, including those addressing education, archives, academic history, and public history. We are compiling a list of conferences and other public programs to which we will apply to present on the SAFA experience. Finally, we have begun preliminary plans for our Year Two Summer Institute, at which we will host staff members from a nation-wide cohort of schools and cultural repositories interested in replicating and building on our program. These institutions come from the areas of Burlington, VT (University of Vermont, Burlington College), Philadelphia, PA (St. Joseph's University, Cliveden of the National Trust, Historical Society of Pennsylvania), and Providence, RI (Brown University, New Bedford Whaling Museum). We received excellent feedback from our partner faculty at the 2011 Summer Institute. They have expressed excitement about publicizing and disseminating the results of the SAFA project, and are committed to promoting the project on a national level. They are also excited about the ways that BHS can partner with their schools beyond the three-year SAFA project.

Progress of Evaluation Procedures

BHS is pleased about the progress we have made in terms of evaluating the SAFA project. Working closely with our evaluator, William Tally, we have laid out important preliminary goals and made key decisions about several things: what skills, knowledge, and attitudes we want to measure in students; what assessment materials and feedback we will require from faculty and students, and when; and the purpose and scope of the course website. With the SAFA staff, Tally has created draft rubrics to assess the course websites and success that SAFA staff, partner faculty, and students have in meeting SAFA objectives. Tally has also helped SAFA staff brainstorm how we can use the course websites as assessment tools –

especially when measuring students' encounters in the archive and their ability to reflect on their research experiences. Finally, with the help of other EDC staff, Tally has helped us evaluate the success of the 2011 Summer Institute. He also took time at the Institute to capture pre-semester data in a critical incident survey taken by the faculty at the Summer Institute. Moving forward, we expect Tally to make contact with campus assessment officers by the end of July. He will discuss access to student data on engagement, retention, and other metrics. By the end of the summer, we hope to have answers to questions such as: What baseline student data is available at each of the campuses? How can SAFA track student data over time? Can data on a cohort of SAFA students be compared to a control group of non-SAFA students? How will IRB / FERPA concerns affect SAFA assessment?

Project Sustainability

Even before the first semester of SAFA courses commences, BHS recognizes that the SAFA project is an excellent way of publicizing our collections as teaching tools to a broad educational audience. We have already found that our partner faculty have great interest in using our materials in non-SAFA courses as well. One faculty member at St. Francis College has proposed shaping the capstone project for the college's new American Studies major around the BHS collection. Over the next three years, we anticipate that our SAFA faculty, related faculty from the three participating schools, and faculty from our national cohort will help brand BHS as an institution dedicated to postsecondary learning. This is both exciting and potentially overwhelming. Thanks to FIPSE funding, we have two full-time staff members dedicated to serving SAFA's eighteen faculty and, over three years, thousands of first-year students. Partner faculty have expressed excitement and appreciation that SAFA staff call up their collections ahead of time, open the library during closed hours, and identify collections pertinent to their individual needs. Without SAFA-dedicated staff, this kind of specialized attention is not sustainable.

Herein lies the paradox of the success of the SAFA project: as we better publicize our collections and their utility to post-secondary learning, we will need to make more institutional resources (like research space and staff time) available for such uses. In fact, we have already heard from interested faculty not affiliated with SAFA, and we cannot currently support them. This sustainability issue could prove particularly problematic for smaller institutions that do not have the infrastructure to support specialized programs like SAFA. At the same time, the SAFA program is amassing materials, including assignments, syllabi, and course websites, that will help future faculty in Brooklyn and elsewhere to use our materials in their courses. This, we hope, will help lessen the need for specialized staff.