

ARCHIVE OF IIT MADRAS

ANNUAL REPORT



JULY 2023- 19TH JULY 2024

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1. Introduction

The Archive completed its fifth anniversary, having been launched in the Diamond jubilee year celebration of IIT Madras in the year 2019. However, groundwork for the Archive commenced in 2017 under the leadership of Dr. Roland Wittje, Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. As a historian specializing in science and technology, Dr. Wittje identified the importance of establishing an archive for a prestigious institution such as IIT Madras. He played a pivotal role in proposing the project, forming committees, recruiting staff members, and overseeing its implementation.

Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Manager of the Heritage Centre at IIT Madras and Secretary to the Archive Planning Committee, collaborated with Dr. Wittje in conducting the initial survey of archival records. Prof. R. Nagarajan, Co-Investigator of the project, facilitated the administrative processes.

Dr. Wittje advocated for the Archive to serve not only as an administrative entity but also as a research facility. The primary goal of the Archive is to preserve institutional memory by acquiring and safeguarding records that document teaching, research, administration, as well as the lives and activities of students, faculty, and staff. These archival materials are essential not only for the history of IIT Madras but also for the broader context of science and technology history.

Prof. Roland Wittje has taken on a new role as Associate Professor in the History of Science at the Museum of University History, University of Oslo, Blindern, Norway. As a result, Dr Mathangi Krishnamurthy, Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Madras, has assumed the position of Principal Investigator for the Archive project, effective December 1, 2023.

The initial plan to establish the Archive of IIT Madras as a dedicated unit with permanent premises and visitor facilities by 2022 encountered delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Moreover, the designated location for the Archive was revised from the Central Library basement to the stilt floor of NAC1. The Archive of IIT Madras was officially launched on July 19th, 2024. This marks a significant milestone for the institution.

The project executed in two phases: the **project phase** and the **permanent setup**. During the project phase, the Archive Team aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. Draft the Archive Plan, the Archive Policy and the Vision Document
- 2. Conduct a survey of archival records available at the different units of the institute
- 3. Collection of information at three levels: collection, series, file and item level, further analysis using MS Access database
- 4. Assess immediate needs for conservation/preservation of archival records, in consultation with specialist conservators
- 5. Plan and execute the **building** of the Archive, including climate-controlled storage facilities, conservation laboratory and offices.
- 6. Create a web presence for the Archive
- 7. Plan and execute a public presence for the Archive
- 8. Present work from the Archive in public events, conferences and workshops

In the permanent setup phase, the archive of IIT Madras focuses on establishing a dedicated archival repository on the IIT Madras campus. This repository will serve as a long-term storage facility for preserving the institutional records and making them readily accessible for research purposes and public inquiries. The Archive team will facilitate the study and deeper understanding of the history of IIT Madras and its community.

Preserving archival records from IIT Madras is profoundly significant, not just for the institution but also within the broader historical narrative of higher education, science, and technology in independent India and globally. Granting access to these records allows researchers and the public to delve into the evolution and contributions of IIT Madras, illuminating its influence on knowledge advancement and innovation. Throughout the project phase, the Archive of IIT Madras functions with two essential components: The Archive Team and the Archive Planning Committee. The Archive Team is tasked with carrying out the objectives detailed in the project plan, while the

Archive Planning Committee monitors progress and offers guidance as needed. This collaborative strategy ensures efficient management and the successful execution of the Archive project.

2. Archive Planning Committee (APC)

The Archive Team is deeply committed to expressing gratitude to all who have supported the Archive Project. While it is challenging to individually mention everyone in this report, we sincerely appreciate the invaluable assistance received from numerous individuals and departments at IIT Madras.

The Archive Planning Committee (APC), comprising experts in their respective fields, has played a crucial role in realizing the Archive of IIT Madras from concept to reality. Their steadfast support and visionary guidance have been invaluable throughout this endeavour.

Special appreciation is extended to Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthy, former Director of IIT Madras, for his enthusiastic involvement in the Archive Project. His support has been instrumental in facilitating various aspects of the project, including providing office space and assisting with survey efforts.

Furthermore, we are thankful to our current Director, Prof. V. Kamakoti, whose keen interest and assistance have been pivotal in meeting our needs. His commitment to establishing the Archive of IIT Madras as a permanent unit is commendable.

We also acknowledge Prof. Ligy Philip, Dean of Planning and the Engineering unit, for her steadfast support of the Archive Project.

The Registrar, Ms. Jane Prasad, and her office, including the DRs (Deputy Registrar) and ARs (Assistant Registrar), have played a crucial role in supporting our efforts. Their assistance has been invaluable in ensuring the smooth operation of the project.

We are grateful to all the Deans and the HoDs who have granted permission for the survey of records within their units and supported the project by allocating the necessary budget.

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all individuals who have contributed to the success of the Archive Project at IIT Madras.

Who	Where	What
Dr. Roland Wittje Dr. Mathangi Krishnamurthy (Since December 2023)	Dep. of Humanities and Social Sciences	Chair of the Committee and Principal Investigator
Prof. R. Nagarajan	Dep. of Chemical Engineering	Co- Investigator
Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam	Heritage Centre	Secretary
Prof. Koshy Varghese	Dean Administration	Internal Member
Prof. R. G. Robinson (Since March 2023)		
Prof. Mahesh Panchagnula	Dean of Alumni & Corporate Relations	Internal Member
Prof. P. Sriram	Dep. of Aerospace Engineering	Internal Member
Mr. G. Sundar	Director, Roja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai	External Member
Mr. Venkat Srinivasan	Archivist, NCBS, Bangalore	External Member

3. Mission and Vision

The Archive of IIT Madras is dedicated to preserving, documenting, and providing access to the Institute's historical records and cultural heritage. Our mission is to ensure the integrity, authenticity, and long-term accessibility of institutional and community memory. By fostering research, learning, and public engagement, we aim to bridge the past with the present, contributing to the understanding and appreciating of IIT Madras' rich legacy and its role in shaping India's scientific, technological, and educational advancements.

The Archive of IIT Madras envisions becoming a premier repository of knowledge that preserves and celebrates the Institute's historical and cultural legacy. We strive to be a centre of excellence in archival practices, fostering innovation, inclusivity, and collaboration to ensure that the stories, achievements, and contributions of IIT Madras continue to inspire future generations. Through advanced preservation techniques, digitization, and community engagement, we aim to create a dynamic, accessible archive that connects the past, informs the present, and shapes the future.

Through these principles, we aim to establish the Archive of IIT Madras as a vibrant hub that fosters academic and community collaboration, disseminates knowledge, and deepens understanding of the Institute's rich history and its broader impact.

4. Project Team members

The Archive project began its operations on July 15, 2019, with the appointment of Dr. S. Ponnarasu as the Archive Project Leader. Dr. S. Ponnarasu holds a doctoral degree in Anthropology, with a specialization in historical anthropology. Prior to joining IIT Madras, he was actively involved in the Endangered Archives Programme, which received funding from the British Library and ARCADIA. He dedicated ten years to creating the "Digital Archive of Tamil Agrarian History," focusing on endangered archival records found in two traditional territories (Kongu Nadu and Kallar Nadu) of Tamil Nadu.

As part of the project proposal, two project associate positions were included to support the project leader in achieving the aforementioned objectives. (See below for former project associates details).

On June 7, 2022, Ms. A. Raveena Sree, who possesses a Master's degree in History, joined the project, replacing Mr. Javeed Ali. She continues to be part of the team.

Ms. Anika Chinnu became a team member on February 1, 2023. She holds a Master's degree in Sociology and continues to contribute to the project.

Ms. Eshwari Ganesan joined the archive project team in May 2024 and transitioned out in July 2024, replacing by Mr. R. Gopinath, who holds a Master's degree in History.

Mr. Arun S also joined the archive team in May 2024 and remains an active member.

Dr. Mathangi Krishnamurthy has stepped into the role of Principal Investigator for the Archive Project, taking over from Prof. Roland Wittje. As she assumes this responsibility, she leads the team, manage the project's progress, and contribute valuable insights to drive its advancement.

4.1. Present Archive Team



Prof. Roland Wittje
Founder



Prof. R. Nagarajan Co-Investigator



Prof. Mathangi Krishnamurthy
Principal Investigator



Dr. S. Ponnaras u Archive Project Leader

Team archive



Ms. A. Raveena Sree



Ms. Anikka Chinnu



Mr.S. Arun.



Mr. R. Gopinath

5. Work accomplished from July 2023 -19th July 2024

5.1. Appraisal

Appraisal is a critical quality control mechanism for evaluating the worth of records, and determining their suitability for archival preservation. As per archive policy, inactive records exceeding 10 years from their opening date undergo regular appraisal, with input from archive staff as needed.

In alignment with this year's plan, the records appraisal commenced with those from the Director's Office housed at the Archive office. Utilizing the updated Records Retention Schedule (RRS), the archive team assessed the retention period for a total of 18,855 record bundles. This involved visiting all units to categorize each bundle (A, B, C1, C3, C5, C10) based on their enduring value.

Records categorized as A and B remain stored in their respective units' locations, with unit staff informed not to discard them. However, should disposal be considered, units are instructed to notify the Archive team, who will collect the records after completing a transfer form.

Despite regular updates and reminders, certain units have disregarded instructions and disposed of selected A and B type records. Consequently, the next phase of the archiving process, accessioning, has been initiated.

During the appraisal process, the archive team identified new records previously overlooked in the preliminary survey. These records were categorized, listed according to the RRS, and integrated into the master database.







Anika and Raveena appraising the records as per RRS and labelling A/B/C1/C3/C5/C10 (Source: Archive Team- 2023)

5.2. Acquisition

The Acquisition process entails the physical and legal transfer of archival materials to a repository as a cohesive unit, typically acquired at a single instance. It formalises the acquisition of these materials into the archive's collection.

With utmost care to preserve valuable records, the Archive team proceeded with transferring the marked A and B-type records to the Archive office. These records were carefully packed into small boxes, accompanied by a detailed record list and transfer form provided to the respective units, with a duplicate retained by the Archive. Subsequently, the small boxes were transported to the Archive office.

Upon arrival, the transferred records were reorganised into new, larger boxes and housed at the Archive office located at the Central Lecture Theatre. The next phase involves the conservation of these records, for which the Archive team will undergo a comprehensive two-day training session on conservation techniques provided by RMRL. Following this training, they will initiate the process of cleaning the records and preparing them for their permanent placement within the Archive.





Records were transferred from Engineering Unit to the Archive creating unit office

(Source: Archive Team (April 2024)

5.3. Records are boxed and kept ready for further processes

Records brought to the Archive office were safeguarded in good quality boxes for preservation. The team conducted an initial cleaning process to remove dust from the records before boxing them for conservation.







Raveena and Anika are cleaning the records before boxing it

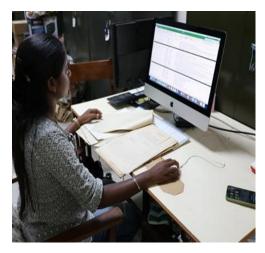
Repacked & ready for Conservation

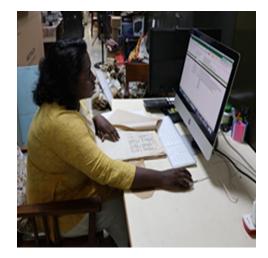
(Source: Archive Team (May 2023)

5.4. Description & Finding Aids

Description is a crucial process in archiving as it enhances the efficiency of locating specific records. The Archive Team undertook the task of writing file-level descriptions for the Director's Office records housed at the Archive office. The listing template used for this purpose was adopted from the Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library. The variables utilized in this template are compatible with Access to Memory (AtoM), the Finding Aid software currently employed by archives.

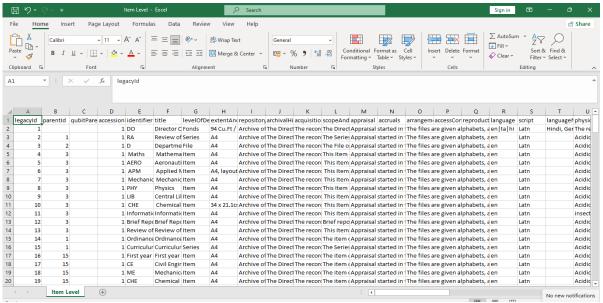
In collaboration with Prof. P. Sriram from the Aerospace Engineering department, who also heads the Computer Centre, we successfully installed AtoM on our institute's server and conducted initial trial runs. The Archive of IIT Madras now utilizes the AtoM software for description and cataloguing purposes.



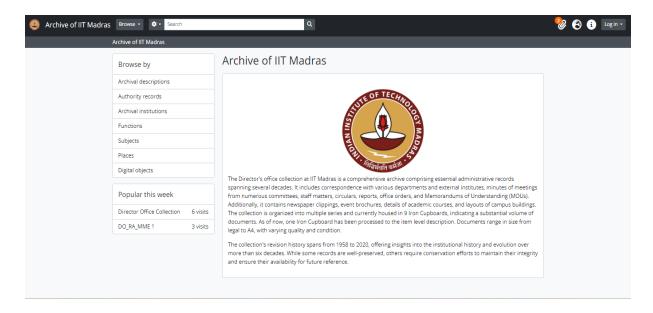


Anika and Eshwari are importing data for collection, series, file, and item-level description into AtoM for the Director Office records which stationed at the Archive office.

(Source: Archive Team 2024)



Meta data for records from a unit of IIT Madras is entered in an Excel sheet



AtoM catalogue domain for Archive of IIT Madras

5.5. Alumni Reunion & Digitisation

We received a request from the Heritage Centre for the alumni photographs from their student files, which are stored in the large record room of the Dean Students building. We had previously undertaken a similar task for the first and second batches of B. Tech students three years ago. This served as a catalyst for the initiative, we relocated the records from the record room to the Archive office and digitised them using the equipment available at our facility. These student photographs provide great entertainment for the alumni, who warmly appreciated the effort and enjoyed sharing them with their families.





Arun and Eshwari digitising the record (Source: Archive Team 2023)

5.6. Training

5.6.1. Roja Muthiah Research Library

To expand the expertise in conservation practices, the archive team pursued a 2-day training session with Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL). On the initial day, the RMRL team conducted lessons on fundamental tasks such as cleaning, brushing the records, and repairing and straightening the papers. The following day, the archive team visited RMRL to learn about advanced techniques including deacidification and further mending processes.







Source: Archive Team (2024)

5.6.2. AToM (Access to Memory)

In March 2024, Abid from Jindal Global University provided us with training on the AtoM (Access to Memory is an open-source software platform that enables institutions to manage, describe, and provide online access to their archival collections in a standardized and user-friendly manner)

5.6.3. Training from NCBS Archives

The Archive team got training for the conservation from Sindhu Nagaraja, who work as an Archival Conservator at Archives at NCBS (National Centre for Biological Sciences -Bangalore) where we learnt the conservation process: mending, dry brushing, flattening process, glue process, vacuuming etc.







Source: Archive Team (February 2024)

5.7. Visits

5.7.1. Visit of NCBS Archive Team to Archive of IIT Madras

The NCBS archive team visited IIT Madras, where Dr. S. Ponnarasu, along with the archive team, provided a general introduction to the archive project and the processes currently underway, followed by a tour of the building process at the newly allocated space in NAC 1.





Source: NCBS Archives (February 2024)

6. Archive building

The topic of discussion regarding the archive building started in 2019 with Prof. Ligy Philip, the Dean of Planning. The initial plan was to set up the archive in the basement of the central Library building. The Engineering Unit at IIT Madras worked to refurbish the area and prevent water

infiltration by reinforcing the walls and floor with additional concrete layers. Despite these efforts, water infiltration continued during the monsoon season in the basement.

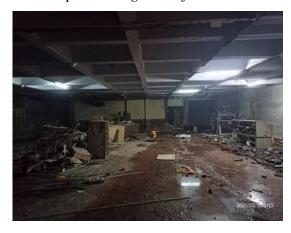
Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthy, the former Director, and Prof. Ligy decided to reconsider the idea and allocate a new space for the archive. They identified the stilt floor in the New Academic Complex 1 as the new location. However, the space was being utilized by the Centre for Innovation until the beginning of this year, before they moved to their new space.

During a meeting with Prof. V. Kamakoti, the Director of IIT Madras, Dr. Wittje proposed the use of an architect to design the archive space. Based on this proposal, Dr. Ponnarasu approached Dr. Benny Kuriakose, an architect who is also an alumnus of IIT Madras. Dr. Kuriakose agreed to design the archive premises after visiting the stilt floor of NAC 1 and discussing with Prof. S.A. Sannasiraj, the Chairman of the Engineering Unit, and other members.

He presented the design to the Dean of Planning, the Dean of Administration, the Archive project investigators, and the design staff of the Engineering Unit. The outcome of the meeting was that the proposed design should be improved, and a comprehensive budget for necessary furniture and equipment should be submitted to the administration for further approval. The proposed archive premise will include storage areas, office space, record processing areas (such as a digital conservation lab, physical conservation lab, and records sorting and cleaning room), a reading room, and an exhibition area, among others.

The process of building the IIT Madras Archive, from the selection of the area to the final outlook, involves several essential stages:

Initial space designated for the archive in the basement of the central Library building





To ensure optimal preservation conditions and avoid potential issues with flooding and high humidity in the basement, the decision was made to relocate the archive to the stilt floor of NAC 1, providing a more secure and suitable environment for its valuable collections.





Building process:







7. Infra-structure facilities and installation

The procurement of materials for the Archive project is a critical aspect of ensuring the successful construction and timely completion of our new building. During the procurement process, we have encountered challenges such as availability constraints, fluctuating market prices, and logistical issues. These challenges are managed through proactive communication with suppliers, alternative sourcing strategies, and contingency planning to ensure minimal disruption to the construction schedule.



Procurement of Compactor set *Source: Archive Team (June 2024)*



Installation of Compactor Source: Archive Team (July 2024)



Installation of Anoxic Tent Source: Archive Team (July 2024)



Installation of A/C Source: Archive Team (July 2024)

8. Social media presence of the Archive:

The Archive of IIT Madras actively engages with the community through its social media platforms, sharing the institution's rich history including updates on events and services offered by the team. You can stay informed by following the Archive on its Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts.

- 8.1 Facebook https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61562389167925
- **8.2 Instagram** https://www.instagram.com/archive_iitm/?hl=en
- 8.3 Twitter- https://x.com/aoiitm

9. Pre-Inauguration and Inauguration of Archive of IIT Madras

9.1 Pre-Inauguration Event

The pre-inauguration event of the Archive of IIT Madras was a significant occasion held prior to the official launch of the archive. It featured a series of discussions aimed at introducing the archive's concept and goals to the community, stakeholders, and key personnel involved in its development. "The Evolution of IIT Madras Archives" provided an insightful overview of the archive's journey, from its initial concept to its establishment as a vital facility for preserving the

institution's history. Highlights included a discussion on the historical context and significance of the archive by Dr. Roland Wittje, Founder of the Archive of IIT Madras. The Archive Project Leader, Dr. S. Ponnarasu, gave a presentation detailing the vision, processes, and significance of preserving the history of IIT Madras, along with an overview of the planning and design. The event also highlighted the generous contributions of donors. Focusing on future plans and ongoing preservation efforts, the event successfully set the stage for the official inauguration, celebrating the archive's pivotal role in safeguarding IIT Madras's legacy.

9.1.1 Gallery from the Pre-Inauguration Event





Dr Roland Wittje – Founder of the "Archive of IIT Madras"



Dr Mathangi Krishnamurthy – Principle Investigator of Archive of IIT Madras



Dr S. Ponnarasu- Archive Project Leader

9.2 Inauguration Event

On 19th July 2024, IIT Madras celebrated a significant milestone with the inauguration of the Archive. This state-of-the-art facility was officially inaugurated by Prof. Brian K. Kobilka (Nobel Laureate in Chemistry – 2012) in the presence of Dr. Pawan Goenka (Chairperson, Board of Governors of IIT Madras) and Prof. V. Kamakoti Director of IIT Madras. The Archive represents a monumental effort to preserve and showcase the rich history and legacy of the institution.

The Archive will serve as a comprehensive repository of IIT Madras's historical records, including documents, photographs, and artefacts that chronicle the institution's journey from its inception to its current status as a global leader in education and research. The ceremony included a formal ribbon-cutting, marking the official opening of the Archive.

The establishment of this Archive is a testament to the institution's dedication to preserving its academic and research heritage, providing valuable resources for scholars and researchers, and maintaining a tangible connection to its storied past.

9.2.1 Gallery from the Inauguration Event



Inauguration of the Archive of IIT Madras by Prof. Brian K. Kobilka (Nobel Laureate in Chemistry – 2012)

L-R: Dr Mathangi Krishnamurthy – Principle Investigator of Archive of IIT Madras, Prof. V. Kamakoti Director of IIT Madras, Dr. Pawan Goenka (Chairperson, Board of Governors of IIT Madras), Dr. Sreedhara Panicker Somanath, Chairman, ISRO, Prof. Brian K. Kobilka



Inauguration of the Archive of IIT Madras by Prof. Brian K. Kobilka (Nobel Laureate in Chemistry – 2012)

L-R: Dr. Pawan Goenka (Chairperson, Board of Governors of IIT Madras), Prof. Brian K. Kobilka, Prof. V. Kamakoti Director of IIT Madras.

Source: Archive Team – July 2024



Dignitaries are viewing the collections at the display.

L-R: Prof. V. Kamakoti Director of IIT Madras, Prof. R, Nagarajan, Co-PI Archive of IIT Madras, Dr. Pawan Goenka (Chairperson, Board of Governors of IIT Madras), Prof. Brian K. Kobilka, Dr. S. Ponnarasu, Archive Project Leader, Archive of IIT Madras, Dr. Sreedhara Panicker Somanath, Chairman, ISRO



L-R: Diya, Sindhu, Minnu, Gopi, Arun, Dr Mathangi, Dr. Ponnarasu, Dr. Roland, Anika, Dr Benny Kuriakose, Kumaran Sathasivam, Raveena, Mamata

Source: Archive Team – July 2024