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# ARCHIVE OF IIT MADRAS

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ANNUAL REPORT



JULY 2022 – JUNE 2023

## Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Archive Team.....	4
3. Archive Planning Committee (APC) .....	4
4. Mission and Vision.....	6
5. Project Team members .....	6
6. Work accomplished from July 2022 – June 2023 .....	7
6.1. Archive policy and the vision document .....	7
6.2. Survey of Records.....	8
6.3. Record Retention Schedule (RRS).....	10
6.4. Appraisal.....	11
6.5. Accession.....	12
6.6. Boxing the records for Conservation.....	13
6.7. Description & Finding Aids .....	14
6.8. Alumni Reunion & Digitization .....	15
6.9. Public presence for the Archive.....	16
6.9.1. Poster Presentation .....	16
6.9.2. Visits .....	18
6.10. Archive building.....	20

## 1. Introduction

The Archive Project is now completing its fourth year, having been inaugurated as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations of IIT Madras on September 12, 2019. However, the groundwork for the Archive began in 2017 under the guidance of Dr. Roland Wittje, Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. Dr. Wittje, being a historian of science and technology, recognized the significance of an archive for a prestigious institution like IIT Madras. He played a crucial role in the proposal, committee formation, recruitment of staff members, and project supervision.

Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, the Manager of the Heritage Centre at IIT Madras and Secretary to the Archive Planning Committee, collaborated with Dr. Wittje to conduct the preliminary survey of archival records. Prof. R. Nagarajan, the Co-Investigator of the project, facilitated the administrative procedures. Dr. Wittje advocated for the Archive to function not only as an administrative unit but also as a research facility. The primary objective of the Archive is to preserve the institutional memory by acquiring and safeguarding records that document teaching, research, administration, as well as the lives and activities of students, faculty, and employees. These archival records are not only crucial for the history of IIT Madras but also hold significant value in the broader context of science and technology history.

The Archive Team is currently working on various tasks assigned by Dr. Wittje. The original plan to establish the Archive of IIT Madras as a unit with permanent premises and visitor facilities by 2022 faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Additionally, there was a reassignment of the Archive's location from the Central Library basement to the stilt floor of NAC1. The revised plan now aims to open the permanent unit by the first quarter of 2024. This approach will be implemented in two phases: the project phase and the permanent setup. During the project phase, the Archive Team is focused on accomplishing 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 and bundle, 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 workshop 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, our primary focus will be 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. Through the Archive, we aim to facilitate the study and deeper understanding of the history of IIT Madras and its community.

The preservation of archival records from IIT Madras holds immense significance not only in the context of the institute itself but also in the broader historical narrative of higher education, science, and technology in independent India and beyond. By providing access to these records, we enable researchers and the public to gain insights into the evolution and contributions of IIT Madras, as well as its impact on the development of knowledge and innovation.

During the project phase, the Archive of IIT Madras operates with two distinct components: the Archive Team and the Archive Planning Committee. The Archive Team is responsible for executing the objectives outlined in the project plan, while the Archive Planning Committee oversees the progress of the work and provides guidance and direction whenever necessary. This collaborative approach ensures effective management and successful implementation of the Archive project. Dr. Wittje has been on leave from August 2022 to July 2023. During this period, Prof. Nagarajan and Prof. Sriram have been officially in charge of the project while Dr. Wittje continued to supervise the project online.

## **2. Archive Team**

Dr. Roland Wittje, Principal Investigator

Prof. R. Nagarajan, Co-Investigator

Dr. Ponnarasu Subramanian, Project Leader

Ms. Raveena Sree, Project Associate

Ms. Anika Chinnu, Project Associate

## **3. Archive Planning Committee (APC)**

The Archive Team strongly believes in expressing gratitude to those who have been supportive of the Archive Project. While it is challenging to mention everyone individually in this report, we acknowledge the invaluable assistance we have received from numerous individuals and departments at IIT Madras.

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

We would like to extend our appreciation 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 the provision of office space and assistance with the survey efforts.

Furthermore, we are grateful to our Director, Prof. V. Kamakoti, who has shown exceptional interest and provided assistance in all our requests. His dedication to establishing the Archive of IIT Madras as a permanent unit is commendable.

We would like to acknowledge Prof. Ligy Philip, Dean of Planning and the Engineering unit, for her unwavering support of the Archive Project.

The Registrar, Ms. Jane Prasad, and her office, including the DR (Deputy Registrar) and AR (Assistant Registrar), have been instrumental in facilitating our efforts. Their assistance has been invaluable in ensuring the smooth functioning of the project.

We are also grateful to all the Deans who have granted permission for the survey of records in their respective units and have supported the project by sanctioning the necessary budget.

We extend our sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the success of the Archive Project at IIT Madras.

Who	Where	What
Dr. Roland Wittje	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 Prof. R. G. Robinson (since March 2023)	Dean Administration	Internal Member
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

## **4. Mission and Vision**

The Archive of IIT Madras has a significant objective of preserving the extensive historical records related to IIT Madras and its community, ensuring their availability to researchers and the general public. Our commitment extends beyond the history of IIT Madras itself and encompasses the history of science, technology, and higher education on a broader scale.

We view archiving not merely as a static product but as an ongoing process that facilitates connections between the producers and users of archival records. Additionally, we aim to engage a wider audience, fostering a dialogue about history. The Archive will serve not only as an administrative unit but also as a dynamic hub that actively involves various academic disciplines and students in research and teaching projects. Furthermore, we have implemented an outreach program to extend the reach and impact of our endeavours.

By embracing these principles, we endeavour to establish the Archive of IIT Madras as a thriving centre that fosters academic collaboration, knowledge dissemination, and a deeper understanding of our shared history.

## **5. Project Team members**

The Archive project began its operations on July 15, 2019, with the appointment of Dr. Ponnarasu as the Archive Project Leader. Dr. 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. On June 7, 2022, Ms. 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. Ananya Deka joined the project on August 1, 2022, and worked for six months before accepting a new position in Bengaluru. She replaced Ms. Minnu Mathew Ann, who had joined as a school teacher in her native place.

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

Dr. Wittje, the Principal Investigator of the Archive Project, leads the team, monitors the progress of the work, and provides valuable suggestions for the improvement of the project.

## **6. Work accomplished from July 2022 – June 2023**

### **6.1. Archive Policy**

The Archive Team has been dedicated to drafting the Archive Policy document of IIT Madras, adhering to legal procedures and archival principles and guidelines. The initial draft of the Archive Policy was prepared by the team in 2020 and subsequently submitted to the Archive Planning Committee for their approval. After incorporating their feedback, the revised version was then submitted to the Director for final approval.

During the *Dean's Committee meeting in January 2023*, it was agreed upon to approve the Archive Policy and the Record Retention Schedule pending clearance from IIT Madras' legal team. Certain legal aspects concerning collection and access require the expertise of legal professionals, and therefore, the Archive has been patiently awaiting their clearance on these matters.

In the *first week of June 2023*, the Dean's IC&SR office reached out to the Archive of IIT Madras, conveying the remarks shared by the legal team. The “attached reviewed draft of the *Record Retention Schedule and Archive Policy* indicated no changes to the document, *granting permission to proceed forward*”. This sets the mandate for the Archive to operate as one of the units of IIT Madras, following the prescribed procedures.

## **6.2. Survey of Records**

Conducting a thorough survey of records is an essential initial step in the archiving process. This survey involves evaluating the content, quantity, and physical condition of the available records. The gathered information serves as a foundation for the subsequent stages involved in building the Archive.

The Archive Team has identified a total of 60 units (16 admin Units, 16 teaching, 2 record rooms, 3 Academic Facilities, 3 Research Facilities, and 6 Other Facilities 14 Advanced Research Centres) within the IIT Madras main campus, with each unit forming a distinct Collection within the archival organization. The surveyed records amount to a volume of approximately 7,000 cubic feet, consisting of approximately 20,000 bundles of paper documents. Each bundle is labelled with a specific topic, and these bundles form individual series within the archival organization. Each series, in turn, comprises one or more files, and each file contains items such as single or multiple sheets of paper, books, booklets, brochures, and so on.

While the majority of records discovered during the survey at IIT Madras are in good condition, some records have experienced deterioration over time. Common causes of deterioration include infestations by termites, silverfish, and other insects, as well as acidification of paper and damage resulting from poor storage conditions. As part of the survey, records are assessed to determine their conservation requirements, and any damaged or deteriorated records will be subjected to conservation efforts.

Some units were left out during the preliminary survey (Security Section, Gymkhana, IIT M AA, Hostel and Hospital). The Archive Team completed survey in the Security Section and IIT M AA and the remaining units will be covered shortly.

**Photos from the Survey** (Source: Archive Team (Jan. 2020))

Here are some pictures showcasing the varying conditions of records at various locations of IIT Madras.



Fully organized records



Partly organized records



Records affected by rodents



Records affected by termite



Brittle records



Fully Acidic

Source: Archive Team (Nov, 2019 - June 2022)

### **6.3. Record Retention Schedule (RRS)**

Record Retention Schedule (RRS) is an important document that establishes the criteria for selecting records based on their enduring value. These values include intrinsic, informational, historical, evidential, fiscal, administrative, and academic (teaching, research, and student-related) factors. The Archive Team has created an RRS for each unit based on survey information since each unit handles various issues, resulting in different record topics. The records at the series level indicate the topics addressed by each unit. These topics are compared with two sources, RRSs from other educational institutions abroad and government agencies in India, such as the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (CSMOP) and the RRS suggested to the IIT Madras by the National Archive of India (Dt. 3-9-2003 to the Dean Admin office). The survey data's extracted topics are compared with these two sources to determine the appropriate retention period, which is then set by the Archive Team.

To align with current practices, the unit-specific RRSs are shared with the respective record creating units. Their input is obtained to readjust the retention periods based on their corrections and suggestions. From the unit-specific RRSs, a comprehensive RRS for IIT Madras is developed, considering the absence of an existing RRS for the institution. This consolidated RRS, along with the Archive Policy, received approval from the legal team in June 2023. The IIT Madras administration is responsible for distributing this RRS to all units and instructing them to securely store the valuable records in their custody until the Archive of IIT Madras appraises and accession them to the archive.

#### **Categorization of Records**

Physical Records (*From the paragraph No.105 of the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure*) - File may be recorded under any one of the following category:

(1) Category 'A' meaning 'keep and microfilm' -

(a) Files which qualify for permanent preservation for administrative purposes and which have to be microfilmed because they contain:

(i) A document so precious that its original must be preserved intact and access to it in the original form must be restricted to the barest minimum to avoid its damage or loss; or

(ii) Material likely to be required for frequent reference by different parties simultaneously/frequently.

(b) Files of historical importance.

(2) Category `B' meaning `keep but do not microfilm'-This category will cover files required for permanent preservation for administrative purpose. It will, however, exclude the nature of material falling under the category described in (i) or (ii) of sub-para (1) (a) above and therefore need not be microfilmed.

(3) Category `C' meaning `keep for specified period only'. This category will include files of secondary importance having reference value for a limited period not exceeding 10 years. In exceptional cases, if the record is required to be retained beyond 10 years it will be upgraded to B Category. **C-3, C-5 & C-10** means Category `C' files to be kept for 3 years, 5 years and 10 years respectively.

#### **6.4. Appraisal**

Appraisal serves as a quality control mechanism that assesses the value of records, determining their eligibility for archival preservation. In accordance with the archive policy, inactive records that have surpassed 10 years from the date of opening should undergo regular appraisal, with consultation from the archive staff as required.

According to the current year's plan, the process of appraising records began in July 2022, starting with the Director's Office records located at the Archive office. The archive team utilized the updated Records Retention Schedule (RRS) to assess the retention period for a total of 18,855 bundles of records. Using this updated information, the archive team visited all the units and classified each bundle of records into categories A, B, C1, C3, C5, and C10 based on their enduring value.

Records designated as A and B categories are sorted and arranged in the same location where they are currently stored within the record creating units. The staff of the respective units have been informed about this arrangement and have been requested not to discard these records. However, in case they decide to dispose of them, they are instructed to inform the Archive team, who will then collect the records after signing a transfer form.

Despite regular updates and reminders, it has been observed that certain units have disregarded the instructions and discarded the selected A and B type records. This situation has prompted the next stage of the archiving process, which is accessioning.

During the appraisal process the archive team found some new records, which were left out in the preliminary survey, those records were categorized and listed as per RRS and incorporated in the master database.



**Raveena**



**Raveena & Ananya**



**Ananya**

**During Appraisal** (Source: Archive Team (Jan. 2022-23))

### **6.5. Accession**

The accession process involves the physical and legal transfer of archival materials to a repository as a complete unit, typically acquired at a single point in time. It represents the formal acquisition of the materials into the archive's collection.

With the caution of not losing important records, the Archive team moved ahead of transferring the valuable records to the Archive office. The marked A, B type records are packed in small boxes and the appropriate record list with transfer form is handed over to the units and a copy retained by the Archive. The small boxes are transported to the Archive office.

The transferred records are repacked in new larger boxes and stationed in the Archive office at the Central Lecture Theatre. The next stage is conservation of the records where the Archive team will undergo a two-day training session on conservation provided by RMRL. Following the training, they will commence the process of cleaning the records and preparing them for relocation to the Archive.

**During Accession** (Source: Archive Team (May 2023))

**Records moved from the creating units**



**Transferring therecords to the Archive office**



**6.6. Boxing the records for Conservation**

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**  
(Source: Archive Team (May 2023))



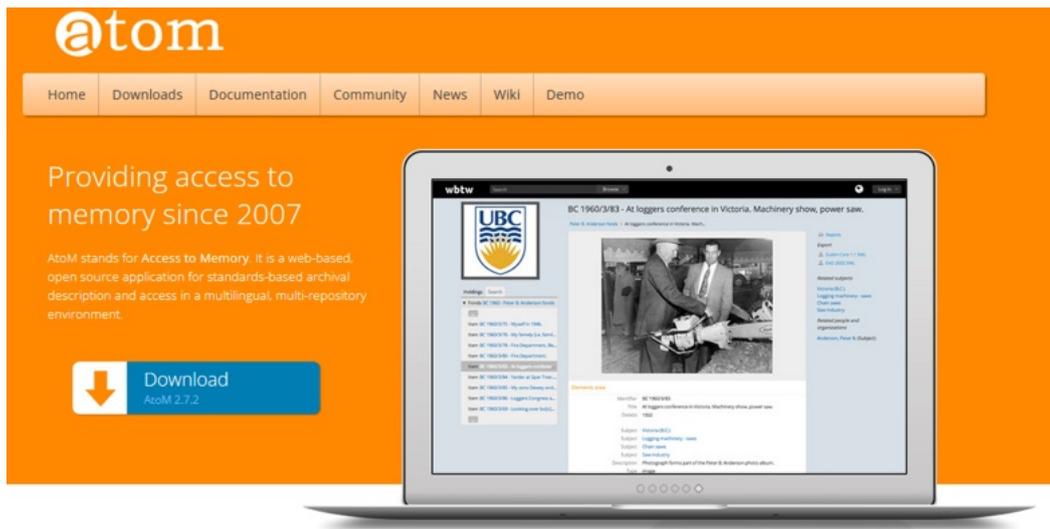
**Repacked & ready for Conservation**

## 6.7. Description & Finding Aids

Description is an important process in the archiving, this will facilitate in finding a particular record with more efficiently. Archive Team made an attempt to write the file level description for the Director Office records which stationed at the Archive office. The listing template used for this purpose is adopted from the Endangered Archives programme by the British Library. The variables used in this LT is adoptable for Access to Memory (AtoM) and Archive Space to of the Finding Aid software used by archives recently. Archive of IIT Madras, working on these two platforms as well as consulting with other archives and libraries to adopt the best one for our archive. In this connection, with the help of Prof. P. Sriram from the Aerospace Engineering department, also head of the computer Centre, we have installed the AtoM in our institute server and made initial trail runs. Soon we planned to make a two-day workshop in our institute for the AtoM software where archivist from other institutions will join and take training.

Identification		Titles		Scope and Content	
Level	Original Reference	Title (In English)	Title (In Original Language/Script)	Content Type	Description
Select an option from the dropdown list	Shelfmark or Accession number at original Institution of Deposit		Please enter the titles in the original font, if it has Unicode characters. <a href="https://unicode.org/faq/utf32.html">https://unicode.org/faq/utf32.html</a>	Select an option from the dropdown list. If you cannot find an appropriate	A complete statement describing the subject matter and context of the material
Mandatory	Mandatory if known/applicable	Mandatory	Mandatory if applicable	Mandatory at File and Item levels	Mandatory at Collection level (But preferable at all levels)
Collection		Director Office Collection		Document	The Director office collection contains the administration records of IIT Madras. The collection mainly contains correspondence with various departments, collaboration with various institutes, minutes of meeting of various committees, staff matters, circulars, reports, office orders, and MOU's. It also consists of newspaper clipping, brochures of various events, course details of various academic courses and layouts of buildings in campus. The documents give a clear idea about the growth and development of various departments of IIT Madras.
		Administration			The collection deals with meeting of various committees of IIT Madras and correspondence with various organisations regarding research activities and faculty matters.
Series				Correspondence	The file contains quarterly publication- Research and Consultancy at IIT Madras, Vol.3, No.2, letters with GOI regarding nominations for Joint Educational Advisers and various other posts, Board Standing Committee (BSC meeting) item, Committee meetings

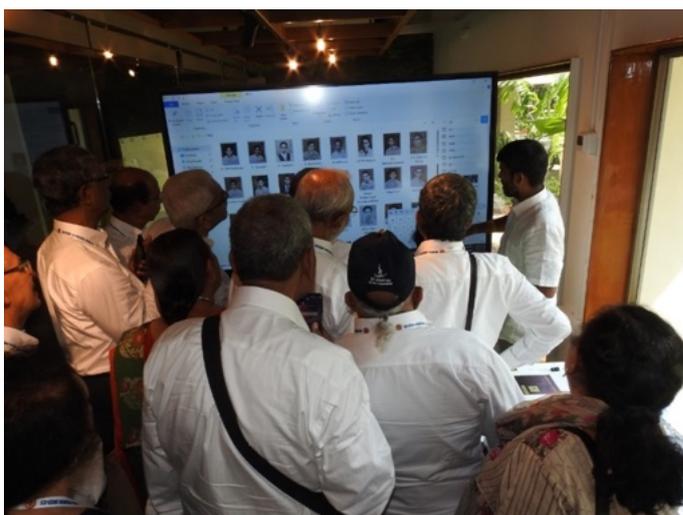
Meta data entered in an Excel sheet



AtoM software for creating the catalogue

### 6.8. Alumni Reunion & Digitization

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 two years ago. This served as a catalyst for the initiative. With the assistance of the heritage club students and the Centre's team, we relocated the records from the record room to the Archive office and digitized 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.



Alumni are looking at their student time photographs  
Source: Heritage Centre (Jan 2023)



Raveena and Anaya during digitization  
Source: Archive Team (Jan 2023)

## 6.9. Public presence for the Archive

### 6.9.1. Poster Presentation

In order to enhance the visibility of the Archive of IIT Madras, the archive team made efforts to display posters on two significant occasions at the institute. The first occasion was during the inauguration of the Heritage Centre, known as "Heritage Centre - Reimagined." The second occasion was during the visit of G20 delegates to IIT Madras. However, this time Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, instructed the Archive of IIT Madras to display the engagement of the IIT Madras with G20 countries.

#### 6.9.1.1. Heritage Centre Inauguration,

On 18th December 2022, the Heritage Centre - Reimagined was inaugurated by the Honorable Finance Minister of India, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, in the presence of Prof. V. Kamakoti, the Director of IIT Madras. The Heritage Centre underwent a complete revamp with new designs and additions. On this occasion, the Archive of IIT Madras presented posters that described the objectives and establishment of the physical Archive of IIT Madras.



Hon. Finance Minister of India with our Director

Poster of the Archive of IIT Madras

Source: Heritage Centre (Dec 2022)

### **6.9.1.2. G20 Visit of Delegates - Poster Presentation by the Archive Team**

During the visit of G20 delegates to IIT Madras, the Director instructed the Archive team during the Dean's committee meeting to gather information related to the collaboration between IIT Madras and G20 countries. Currently, the archive is in its initial stage, and detailed descriptions of the records at the *file* or *item* level are not available, making it difficult to extract specific information. However, the Dean Global Engagement office provided the Archive team with details of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and photographs of the signing ceremony were collected. Additionally, in collaboration with the Heritage Centre, posters were created and displayed during the delegates' visit.



Ms. Raveena explaining a display to the G20 Delegates



Dr. S. Ponnarasu explaining IIT M's collaboration with G20 countries to the G20 Delegates

Source: Heritage Centre (Jan 2023)



Team's of the Heritage Centre and the Archive of IIT Madras during G20 visit  
Source: Heritage Centre (Jan 2023)

### **6.9.2. Visits**

#### ***6.9.2.1. Visit to Godrej Archive and Planet Larsen & Toubro***

Dr. Ponnarasu visited both Godrej Archive and L&T Museum in the month of April to observe and understand how these two places are organized in order to bring ideas to implement in our archive at IIT Madras. He interacted with Dr. Vrunda Pathare and her team and understood their organization of records, physical and digital conservation methods and the exhibition.



Godrej Archives - Exhibition



Godrej Archives - Physical conservation Lab

Source: Archive Team (Apr 2023)

Planet Larsen & Toubro (L&T) is a modern museum and experience center located in Powai, Mumbai. The facility offers a glimpse into the rich history and remarkable achievements of the company through a combination of physical objects and digital displays. Visitors can explore miniature models of L&T's major projects, allowing them to appreciate the scale and complexity of these endeavors. The museum also provides immersive showcases, highlighting significant milestones in L&T's journey. Additionally, there is a special section paying tribute to L&T's contributions as a nationalist organization. Planet L&T offers visitors a comprehensive overview of the company's growth from its inception to its ambitious future projects.



Physical Display at Planet L&T



Digital Display at Planet L&T

Source: Archive Team (Apr 2023)

### **6.9.2.2. Milli Archive Collective - 2023 Session**

Milli is a collective of individuals and communities interested in the nurturing of archives. So far, there have been four meetings starting from 2020, held on the International Archives Day (June 9th). Milli organizes interactive sessions to discuss the various requirements met by archivists from different organizations in the country. This initiative is undertaken by Venkat Srinivasan of NCBS Archives in Bengaluru. The Archive of IIT Madras has been a partner institute since its inception and has participated in all four years. Dr. Ponnarasu attended this year's session, which focused on Archival Conservation and Preservation.



Dr. Ponnarasu discussing with Ms. Sindhu N, Conservator, NCBS Archives

Source: NCBS Archives (Jun 2023)

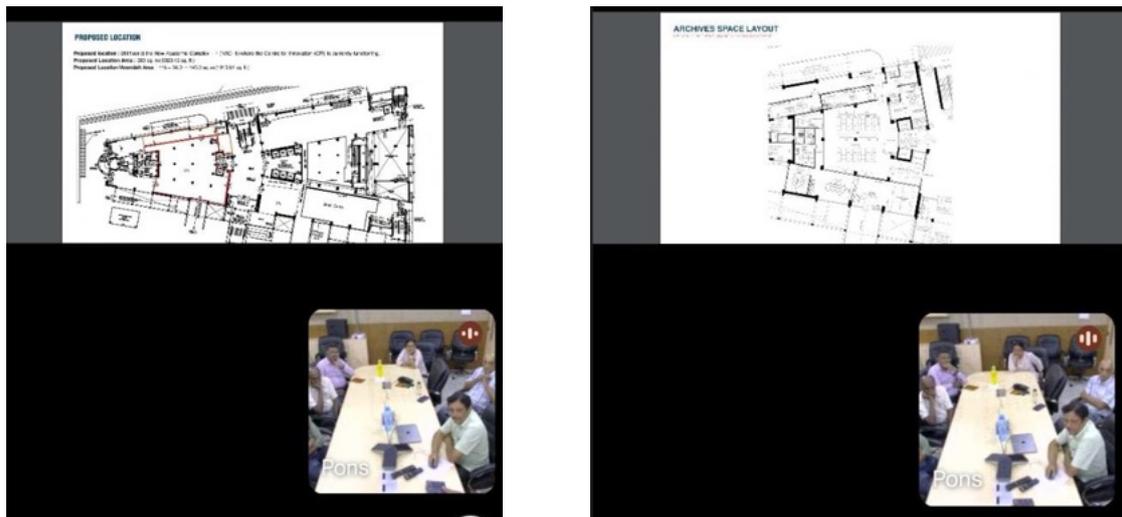
### **6.10. Archive building**

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 of IIT Madras made efforts to refurbish the area to prevent water seepage by reinforcing the walls and the floor with extra concrete layers. However, despite these efforts, water seepage continued to occur during the monsoon season in the basement floor.

Prof. Baskar 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.



Dr. Benny Kuriakose presenting the design