



ARCHIVE OF IIT MADRAS

ANNUAL REPORT



JULY 2019 – JUNE 2020

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1. Introduction

The Archive Project was inaugurated as part of the 60th anniversary celebration of IIT Madras on 12 September 2019. Though the inauguration done in 2019, the groundwork for the Archive started in 2017 by Dr. Roland Wittje, Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. Dr. Wittje, as a historian of Science and Technology, envisioned the importance of the archive for a premier institution such as IIT Madras. He was involved in the proposal, formation of the committee and recruitment of staff members and supervision of the project. Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Manager, Heritage Centre of IIT Madras, who is the Secretary to the Archive Planning Committee, conducted the preliminary survey of archival records together with Dr. Wittje. Prof. R. Nagarajan, who is the Co-Investigator of the project facilitated administrative procedure. Dr. Wittje argued that the Archive, should be an integral part of administrative unit as well as a research facility. The aim of the Archive is to preserve the institutional memory through the acquisition and preservation of records documenting teaching, research, administration, and the lives and activities of students, faculty and employees. The archival records of IIT Madras are not only crucial for the history of the institute but also for the history of science and technology in general.

As of now, the Archive is in its initial state, and the Archive Team is working simultaneously on several tasks. We plan to open the Archive of IIT Madras as a unit with permanent premises and visiting facilities by 2022. This idea is implemented in two phases, *project phase* and the *permanent setup*. During the project phase, the Archive Team is involved in 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 work will focus on establishing an archival repository on campus, where permanent records will be kept and made accessible for research and to the public. The Archive will facilitate the study and understanding of the history of IIT Madras and its people.

Preserving the archival records of IIT Madras, and making them accessible to researchers and the public, is also important for understanding the broader history of higher education and science and technology in independent India and beyond.

We are currently in the project stage where the Archive of IIT Madras functions with two kind of setup, Archive Team and Archive Planning Committee. The Archive Team works on the objectives of the project, while the Archive Planning Committee, oversees the progress of the work and directs them wherever necessary.

2. Archive Team

Dr. Roland Wittje, Principal Investigator

Prof. R. Nagarajan, Co-Investigator

Dr. Ponnarasu Subramanian, Project Leader

Ms. Rashmi, Project Associate

Mr. Goutham Sukumaran, Project Associate

3. Archive Planning Committee (APC)

We (the Archive Team) feel that it is appropriate to acknowledge those who are supportive to the Archive Project. In general, whoever we approached for help at IIT Madras campus, have helped the smooth running of the project, it is difficult to name everyone here in this report.

The Archive Planning Committee comprised of experts in their field and enthusiastic in the making of the Archive of IIT Madras into a reality. Their constant support and vision is immeasurable in this endeavor.

Apart from the APC, Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director, IIT Madras is very enthusiastic in the Archive Project and lends all kind of support for the functioning. All our requests are sanctioned by the director, from providing office space to facilitating the survey effort and so on.

Prof. Ligy Philip, Dean Planning and the Engineering unit has been very supportive of the Archive Project.

The Registrar, Ms. Jane Prasad and her office with all the DR and AR facilitated our effort. All our Deans have permitted to conduct the survey of records in their units also helped the project by sanctioning the budget.

Who	Where	What
Dr. Roland Wittje	Dep. of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras	Chair of the Committee and Principal Investigator
Prof. R. Nagarajan	Dep. of Chemical Engineering, IIT Madras	Co- Investigator
Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam	Heritage Centre, IIT Madras	Secretary
Prof. Koshy Varghese	Dean Administration, IIT Madras	Internal Member
Prof. Mahesh Panchagnula	Dean of Alumni & Corporate Relations, IIT Madras	Internal Member
Prof. P. Sriram	Dep. of Aerospace Engineering, IIT Madras	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 will preserve the rich historical records of IIT Madras and its people and make them accessible to researchers and the public. We are committed to provide resources on the history of IIT Madras, but the history of science, technology, and higher education in general.

We understand archiving not as a product but as a process that connects to producers and users of archival records as well as a wider public that facilitates a dialogue about history. The Archive will not just be an administrative unit but a vibrant hub that enrolls a variety of academic fields and students in research and teaching projects with its own outreach program.

5. Project start date and joining of Team members

The Archive project started effectively on July 15, 2019 with the joining of Dr. Ponnarasu as Archive Project Leader, who had completed his doctoral degree in Anthropology, specializing in historical anthropology. He was involved in the Endangered Archives Programme, funded by the British Library and ARCADIA, since January 2010 until he joined IIT Madras. During the last ten years he created a “Digital Archive of Tamil Agrarian History”, from the endangered archival records scattered in two traditional territories (Kongu Nadu and Kallar Nadu) of Tamil Nadu.

Two project associate positions were part of the project proposal, they assist the project leader in accomplishing the above mentioned objectives:

Ms. Rashmi joined on 1 November 2020. She has been an M.Phil. Research Scholar at the Department of History, University of Delhi and holds a diploma in Archives and Records Management from the School of Archival Studies, National Archives of India, Delhi.

Mr. Goutham Sukumaran joined on 11 November 2019. He has a BS-MS Dual Degree with Chemistry as the major subject, from IISER Pune. He has worked as an intern in the Archives at NCBS, Bangalore and has done one summer project with historian of science Dr. John Bosco Lourdasamy of the HSS department, IIT Madras.

Dr. Roland Wittje, Principal Investigator of the Archive Project, directs the Team and monitors the work progress and gives important timely suggestions for the betterment of the project.

6. Record Collection

The collections of the Archive of IIT Madras are still in the making. In the future we will have collections regarding the history of IIT Madras, research and teaching, student life, the Campus, and personal papers of former students, faculty, employees, and other people that were affiliated with IIT Madras.

7. Work accomplished from July 15th 2019 - based on the project objectives

7.1. Archive policy and the vision document

The work of the Archive Team has focused on drafting the Policy document of the Archive of IIT Madras based on legal procedures and archival principles and guidelines. The draft Archive Policy prepared by the Team has been submitted to the Archive Planning Committee for their approval. Certain legal issues on the collection and access can be dealt only by a legal expert, thus the Archive Project is discussing with experts to clear those doubts. Archive plan is under preparation which will delineate procedures involved in the collection of records from various units of IIT Madras.

7.2. Survey of Records

Conducting a survey of records is one of the earliest stages of archiving. It involves the evaluation of the content as well as the quantity of the available records and its physical condition. The information is used for the subsequent steps in building the Archive.



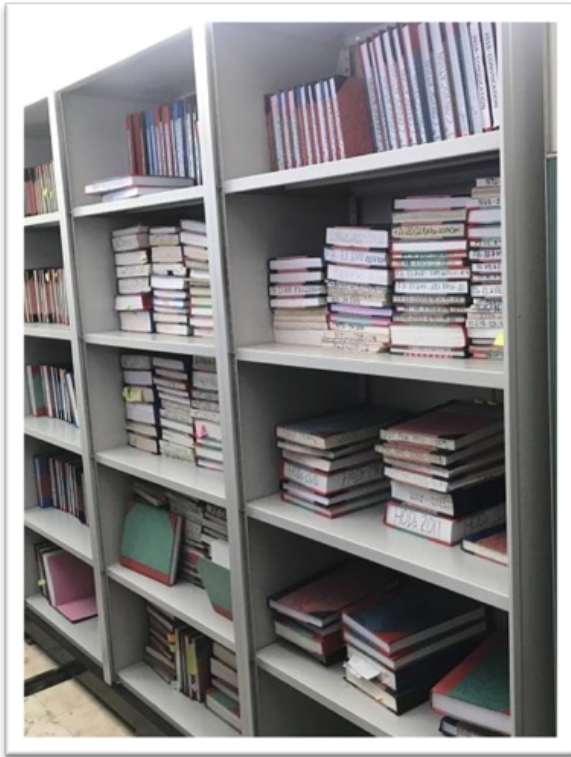
Survey is conducted by the Team (Goutham & Rashmi) to determine the quantity and the content of the records at various units of IIT Madras campus (*Source: Archive Team (Jan. 2020)*)

Although most of the records found during the survey at IIT Madras are in good condition, some records are in a deteriorated state. Most common causes for deterioration include termites, silverfish and other insect attacks, and acidification of paper and other damages caused by poor storage conditions. During the survey, records are assessed for their conservation requirements, and the damaged or deteriorated records will be subjected to conservation.

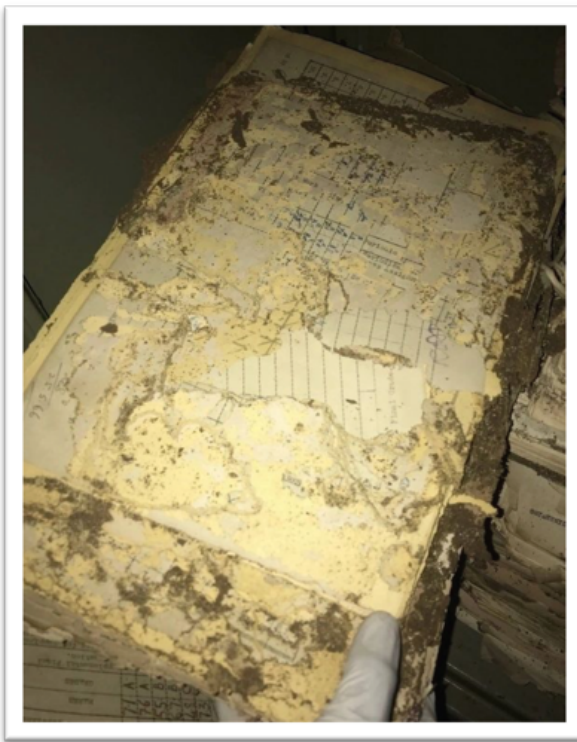
Here are some of the pictures from the survey conducted by the Archive Team at various locations of IIT Madras showing the varying condition of records.



Source: Archive Team (Jan. 2020)



Source: Archive Team (Jan. 2020)



Source: Archive Team (Jan. 2020)

The Archive Team has identified 50 units, in the IIT Madras main campus, and a record volume of 10,000 cubic feet. We are in the process of determining the building and infrastructure requirements for safe keeping of these records.



Source: Archive Team

7.3. Plan and execution of the building of the Archive

The plan for the Archive building includes determining the location of the building, sections of the Archive, i.e. storage area, office space, digital conservation lab, physical conservation lab, records sorting room, reading room, and exhibition area etc. Infrastructure involves the compact storages, acid and lignin free storage boxes and folders, etc.

7.4. Public presence for the Archive

- **Presentation by Archive Team at the Heritage Day Celebration**

On March 5, 2020, Dr. S. Ponnarasu gave an introductory talk about the Archive Project during the Heritage Day celebrations of the institute held at the Heritage Centre. The dignitaries in the audience included Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director of IIT Madras, Prof. R. Nagarajan among others.



Photo courtesy: Heritage Centre, IIT Madras, March 5, 2020

- **Poster presentation by the Archive Team for the Alumni Reunion at IIT Madras**



Photo courtesy: Heritage Centre, IIT Madras, January 27, 2020

- **Poster presentation by the Archive Team for the 1979 Batch Reunion**



Photo courtesy: Heritage Centre, IIT Madras, January 2, 2020

- ***Poster presentation by the Archive Team for Alumni Reunion Day, IIT Madras***



Photo courtesy: Heritage Centre, IIT Madras, December 27, 2020

- **Poster Presentation and an Introductory talk by the Archive Team**

On December 11, 2019, Prof. Wittje and Dr. S Ponnarasu gave an introductory talk about the Archive project to the participants of the 'Republic of Plants' conference held at the IIT Madras. The Team also presented a poster explaining the vision, mission and the current status of the project.



Photo courtesy: Heritage Centre, IIT Madras, December 11, 2019

- Attended the anniversary conference of the Roja Muthiah Research Library for their contribution on rare books and other archival collections
- Attended a workshop at NCBS Archives on Digitisation Workflows, Archival Standards, and Digital Research Studies Methodologies
- Visited three different archives at Bangalore – National Centre for Biological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, and Raman Research Institute
- Visited the archive of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai
- Given a short presentation on the Archive to the newly arrived students along with Mr. Kumaran from the Heritage Centre
- Participated in the Diamond Jubilee event of IIT Madras

8. Major work done during and after the lockdown (from home office, March-June 2020)

8.1. Drafted the following documents and submitted to Archive Planning Committee:

- Survey report
- Archive Policy document
- Report on building and infrastructure requirements
- Report of work accomplished till May 2020

8.2. Drafted Record Retention Schedules (RRS) for the following units:

- Teaching units (Five Departments)
- Director's Office
- Dean (Academics Courses)

8.3. Drafted an Organizational Chart for IIT Madras.

8.4. International Archive Week 2020

- Prof. Wittje and Dr. Ponnarasu presented the IIT Madras Archive in the International Archive Week (Jun 8 -14 2020) webinar organised by Milli Network and NCBS Archives.

8.5. Web presence for the Archive

- The Team has designed and hosted the website of the Archive of IIT Madras. The website contains relevant information about the Archive Project. The website will also update information regarding

upcoming events and other activities. The site is live and can be accessed in the address <https://archive.iitm.ac.in/>



8.6. COVID-19 Story collection

Archive of IIT Madras started an initiative to collect the experiences in the form of stories from the IIT Madras community.

<https://archive.iitm.ac.in/covid-19-stories>

8.7. Former faculty papers

Archive of IIT Madras started collecting records from former faculties, this include question banks, teaching materials, experiments etc.

<https://archive.iitm.ac.in/faculty-collection>