

Archives at NCBS
Tata Institute for Fundamental Research
GKVK Campus, Bellary Road, Bangalore – 560065. India.

**Student Internship Call
Making sense of history**

Duration: 6-12 weeks

Period: Flexible, rolling

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January 2023

Archive Description:

The Archives at NCBS (<https://archives.ncbs.res.in/>) is a public collecting centre for the history of science in contemporary India. Over 150,000 processed objects across 24 collections are in various forms, ranging from paper-based manuscripts to negatives to photographs, books, fine art, audio recordings, scientific equipment, letters, and field and lab notes. The 2000-square-foot state-of-the-art physical centre at NCBS includes space for research, processing, exhibitions, recording, and a leading-edge storage facility with monitors for temperature, light, humidity, air quality, water, fire, pests, and noise. In addition to the collections visible on the website such as the Ravi Sankaran Papers and Obaid Siddiqi Papers, we hold other valuable material like the papers of TSG Sastry, a physicist who worked on the Thumba rocket programme, Leslie Coleman, an early 20th century agricultural scientist in Mysore state, and the renowned agricultural scientist, MS Swaminathan. We are also leading efforts in developing legal and ethical standards, and digital annotation tools for archival material. A full range of activities undertaken by the archives is in the annual report, <https://www.ncbs.res.in/annual-report>.

The Archives has one underlying philosophy—of enabling diverse stories—and operates on four broad verticals. One is to strengthen research collections and access in the history of science in contemporary India. The second is to push the frontiers of research in archival sciences in India, forging intersections with scholarship in law, ethics, information theory and the semantic web, for instance. The third is to collaborate with a variety of individuals in rethinking archives as vibrant public spaces, as sites of education and critical inquiry. And the fourth is to reimagine the archives as part of the commons through vibrant public engagement.

The Archives at NCBS is also a founding member of Milli, a collective of individuals and communities dedicated to the nurturing of archives, and to help the public find, describe and share archival material and stories (<https://www.milli.link>). A longer abstract of the core of this work is available here: <http://oralhistory.columbia.edu/calendar/People/mar-20-thirteen-ways-of-looking-at-institutional-history>.

Internship Description:

The Archives at NCBS has an active internship programme. Between 2017 and 2022, it has worked with over 55 students from across the country, from high school students to postdoctoral researchers, and from over a dozen disciplines. A nominal stipend is offered to selected students to cover expenses. The intern will be in the unique position of being part of the team that is setting up a relatively new science archive in India.

This IS NOT an internship in biology or the sciences. And this is not an entry point into scientific research at NCBS.

Here are some of the things that the archiving team is involved in:

- (A) Archival Arrangement and Description
 - a. sorting material to go either into the archive, the library, or to be recycled or disposed of – applying archival judgment along with the team.
 - b. building an initial classification and organization structure for the Archives.
 - c. building an initial metadata glossary for the Archives.
 - d. digitizing the archival records.
 - e. cataloguing the archival material with accession numbers, classification hierarchy and relevant metadata. This will be on an open source archives database management system, likely on ArchivesSpace or AtoM. This is a critical task, which lays the foundation for the digital platform, which will be embedded into an interconnected digital archive later.
 - f. labelling the boxes and folders with appropriate classification hierarchy.
 - g. writing extensive finding aids for the archival records.
- (B) Archival Preservation and Conservation
 - a. cleaning material under the guidance of the archiving team.
 - b. picking out archival records that need further preservation/conservation.
 - c. binning the physical material into archive-grade sleeves, folders and boxes, with appropriate interleaving acid-free paper where necessary (such as in old photographs).
 - d. working with a conservator for preservation/conservation tasks
- (C) Art and Writing
 - a. Publicity material for the archives: brochures, pamphlets, posters, postcards.
 - b. Development of exhibit narratives based on archival material: written/artistic work
- (D) Law
 - a. Framing policies around open access to archival material in the sciences, aligning with IT/digital copyright legal standards in India and abroad.
- (E) Other options: Graphic / Space / Interior Design, Education, Marketing, History

Eligibility:

The task of setting up a new physical and digital archive is an opportunity to think about the links between journalism, storytelling using archival material, web annotations, scientific research, IT law and classification of information. This is also an opportunity to think of ways to spread awareness about the archival material, both through exhibits and publicity artwork.

If you are interested and think you'd be a good fit, you should apply. If you don't think you are a good fit for the immediate tasks listed above but have ideas on other ways to contribute, you should apply. There are no specific requirements. That said, it will be great (not necessary) to have candidates with a degree or be enrolled in a degree-programmes in history, library sciences, law, museum studies, design or archives. Science backgrounds help (including being enrolled in science degree programmes). Interns should be competent with most things digital (spreadsheets, word processing, database entry, web navigation, ability to figure out scanning and archiving cataloguing needs). They should have good organization and communication skills (English/Hindi/Kannada). Commitment to time, an eye for detail and an ability to self-direct after initial training is critical. Also essential is an ability to maintain confidentiality of sensitive documents. A sense of humour and being resourceful helps. Depending on the nature of the task, interns should expect to work both alone and as part of a larger team in hot, humid and dusty work environments at times.

Interested? Let us know: archives@ncbs.res.in.