

PRESERVING OUR SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE, BANGALORE, JANUARY 2008

Archiving Institutional History:

The setting up of the TIFR Archives

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Institutional narcissism

Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize. They fix processes that are essentially dynamic, they hide their influence, and they rouse our emotions to a standardized pitch on standardized issues. Add to all this that they endow themselves with rightness and send their mutual corroboration cascading through all the levels of our information system. No wonder they easily recruit us into joining their narcissistic self-contemplation.

Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, 1986



Science as Salvation

When science remains committed to solving immediate social problems it finds no use for the past.

Mary Midgley, *Science as Salvation*, 1992.



Institutional Support and the Science Archives


- The perils of ‘presentism’.
- Non-academic uses of the archives
- Limitations of disciplinary vision



Obstacles to historicising the ‘Temples of Science’ in India

We are now entering into an age when scientists begin to function like the high priests of old, who looked after the sacred mysteries; we all bow down to them in reverence and awe, and sometimes, with a little fear, as to what they might be up to.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Speech at inauguration of new buildings TIFR, 15 January 1962.



Confronting presentism and the 'Temple of Science' paradigm

- Archives and emerging disciplinary parameters
- Memory as a historical resource?
- Histories of scientific enterprise and the state
- History of scientific programmes and policy studies



Defining the Archives

TIFR archival records consist of the following:

1. Institutional documents: administrative records, records of research groups
2. Correspondence
3. Scientific papers
4. Lab journals and notebooks
5. Photographs
6. Films, sound recordings of oral history interviews
7. Transcriptions of oral history interviews

TIFR Archives Mumbai

The TIFR Archives stores the collective memory of the institute by preserving papers, documents, photographs, sound recordings that tell the history of the institute from 1945 to the present.

Researchers will find here a wealth of resources for the



Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru looks at the Facsimile edition of the Srinivasa Ramanujan Note Books published by TIFR in 1962.



Materials

- Collections
- Photos
- Oral Histories
- Sound Recordings

Services

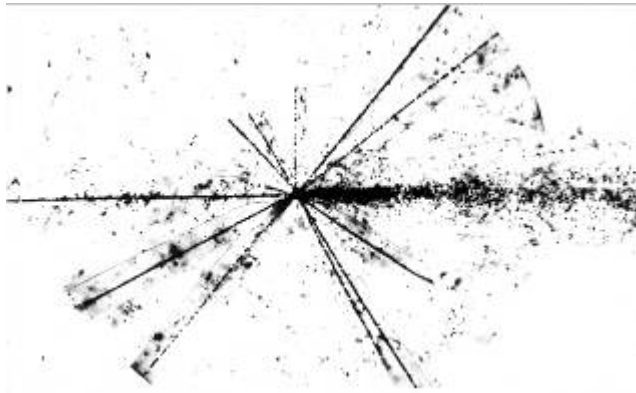
- Use of Materials
- Visiting Us
- Contact Info
- Staff

Features

- Exhibitions
- Publications

Archival Collections

The holdings of the TIFR Archives include manuscript collections, photographs, oral histories and print and audiovisual material, fine art and scientific instruments



An example of a nuclear collision in a photographic emulsion.

Bernard Peters, Homi Bhabha, Interpreter, President Khrushchev (looking through microscope) and Nikolai Bulganin during their Visit to the Institute in 1956.

Manuscript Collections

Photographs

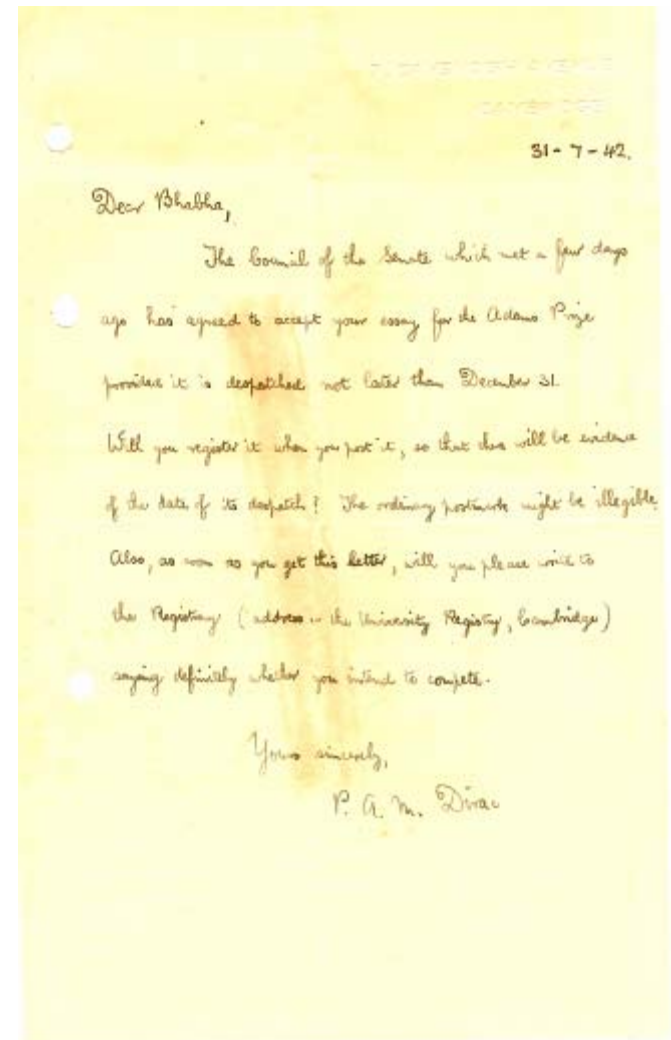
Oral Histories

Sound Recordings

Manuscript Collection

At present, the Archives houses close to **2111 files**, among them the majority are of TIFR Faculty, Administration and papers from scientific groups. The **Homi Bhabha Papers** includes correspondence with scientists such as **Albert Einstein, P.A.M. Dirac, Wolfgang Pauli, Robert Millikan, Meghnad Saha** as well as with philanthropists like **J.R.D. Tata** as well as statesmen like **Jawaharlal Nehru**.

Letter from P.A.M. Dirac to HJ Bhabha written during World War II when Bhabha was in IISc Bangalore asking him to submit his essay for the Adam's Prize. Bhabha won the Adam's Prize in 1942.



Photographs

The Archives has a collection of 1091 photographs of the Institute's history.



Homi Bhabha and P.A.M. Dirac during the latter's visit to TIFR in 1949.

Oral Histories

From 2002, the Archives started an oral history programme centred on the TIFR community and its distinguished scientists. The Archives **154** tapes of multi-session interviews with **35** scientists, mathematicians and administrators who belonged to the TIFR community. Some of these interviews have already been made accessible to researchers after processing. The first phase of the oral history project will end in 2008.



Sound Recordings

The Archives has **46** digitized recordings of lectures given by distinguished visitors to the Institute. These include:

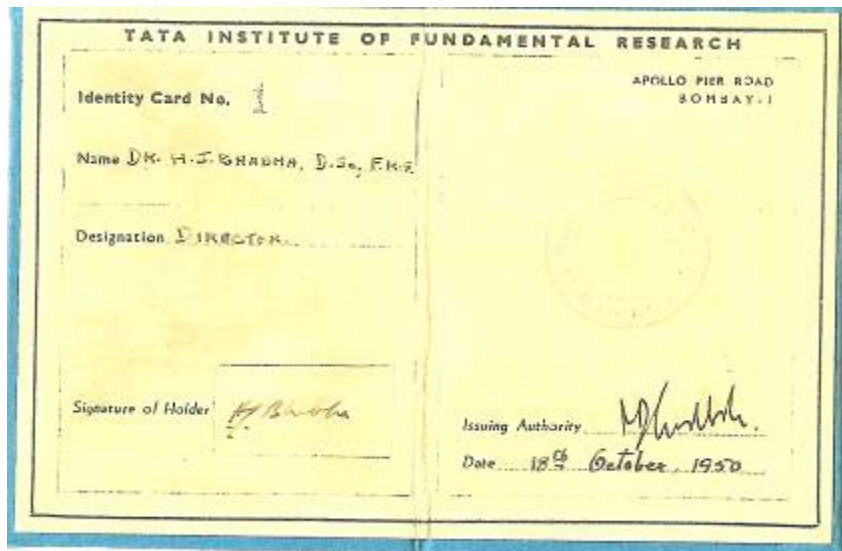
Patrick Blackett, Cecil Powell, Sidney Brenner, Bart Bok, Phillip Morrison, Michael Atiyah and Hans Bethe to name a few.



Homi Bhabha speaking at the inauguration of the new buildings of TIFR, 1962.

Other Collections

The Archives has a catalogue of the Institute's collection of Modern Indian Art that total **250**. The Archives also has a small collection of instruments used in the 1940s and 1950s as well as Bhabha memorabilia.



TIFR Identity card of Homi Bhabha issued on 18 October 1950.

Dissemination and outreach



Exhibition, exhibition brochures, Audiovisual slideshows, quiz contest and monthly bulletin boards.





Nurturing critical history

Publications:

Partners in Science: JRD Tata and TIFR, Exhibition brochure.

Catalogue of Paintings in TIFR (with Ms Caroline Brimmer of the Tate Gallery, London).

Commemorative volume on Homi Bhabha (in progress).

Consultation by researchers and scholars:

Professor Uma DasGupta, Centre for the Study of Civilizations

Mr Sunil Shanbag: research for film on P.C. Vaidya.

Graham Farmelo biography of P.A.M. Dirac.

Mr Dinesh Sharma research into history of computers in India.

Ms Jahnvi Phalkey, PhD scholar Georgia Institute of Technology, USA.

Lecture Series on Science, History and Philosophy.

Special thanks to TIFR Archives (past and present members)

