

Archives at NCBS - Enabling diverse stories

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The Archives at a glance!

The primary function of the Archives at NCBS is to document and preserve the history of science in contemporary India. We are a public centre that presently holds over 1,50,000 processed material ranging from books, fine art, paper-based manuscripts, letters, scientific equipment, lab notes and more across 24 collections. On a usual work day, you can find us shifting between the library, exhibition space, processing room, recording room and storage space to ensure the materials get the treatment they deserve.



Our Goals:

Accessibility to growing collections:

To strengthen research collections and access in the history of science in contemporary India.

Archives as an intersectional body:

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.

Public Awareness:

To build capacity and public awareness through education, training and programming, from high school to professional practice.

Build Engagement:

Most importantly, to reimagine the archives as part of the commons through vibrant public engagement.

What we did this past year:

Rendering our Collections

The archives completed processing papers of BV Sreekantan, TSG Sastry and Leslie Coleman, in addition to a digitization project for all received material at the archives as of February 2022. Accessioning and processing steps in 2022 were by a host of interns and new staff members, including Abhijit AV, Anjali R, Deepika S, Hari Sridhar, Malavika Anilkumar, Niranjana K, Preeti Venkatram, Ravi K Boyapati, Samira Agnihotri, Sanjna G Yechareddy, Soumya Swain, and Swathi S.

Bodies At Sea Exhibition

The Archives launched its third exhibition season, "Bodies at Sea" by Kamini Rao (Studio Slip) and Devika Sundar in its gallery space in March 2022. The exhibition traverses the boundaries between the visible and unknown, examining the hidden complexity of our interior bodies alongside oceanic bodies of the deep sea.

August, Art, Archives

The Archives also hosted an art event titled August, Art, Archives, featuring an archival installation by Anima Goyal, poetry by Sanjna G Yechareddy, and a play by Manish Ruparel and Sanjana Ayyapath, with mentoring by Anuja Ghosalkar.

Expansion of the Archive

Sindhu Nagaraja initiated the expansion of the Archives into a new additional space at NCBS, which will include office space, processing space, quarantine area, a conservation lab, and open floor space for anoxic treatment of contaminated material.

Launch of M S Swaminathan Papers

The Archives completed processing new accessions to the papers of M S Swaminathan, with a public launch event in October, 2022.

Artists in Residence

Line Krom, an artist-in-residence through the BangalOResidency collaboration with Goethe Institut, developed and presented her work on 'Dust and Debris in the Archives' in December, 2022. Meera K, an animator, started as an artist-in-residence in December, 2022.

Conference Papers

The Archives at NCBS was invited to present on archives and ethics at the conference, Archiving the Contemporary, organized by IIT Madras and the French Institute, Pondicherry, and at the annual conference of the International Council on Archives Section on University and Research Institutions (ICA SUV). It co-lead an event on archiving practices of performances held by Attakkalari, in association with Goethe Institut. The Archives at NCBS was invited to discuss its work and future projects at the National Museum of American History and Smithsonian Science Education Center in Washington, D.C., the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and Caltech Archives in Pasadena, U.S.

New Catalogue

Ojas Kadu started work on development of new catalogue and digital preservation systems.

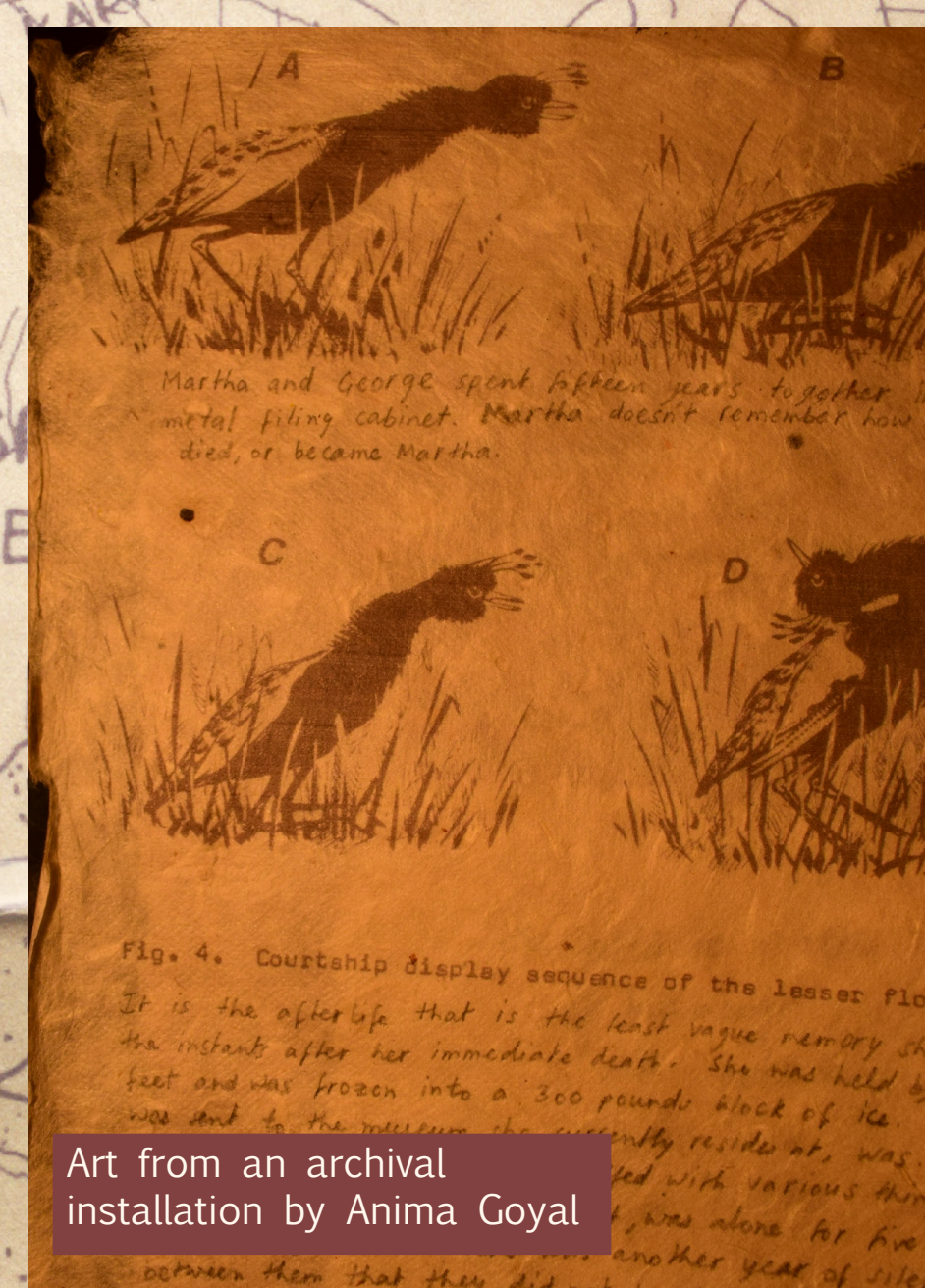
Oral Histories

The Archives received a three-year approval for all its oral history work from the external Ethics Committee and developed a new consent and agreement form drawing on best practices from a variety of archives around the world.



Some of our many collections:

- Ravi Sankaran Collection
- M S Swaminathan Collection
- Obaid Siddiqi Collection
- Ajith Kumar Collections
- TSG Sastry Collection
- T M Sahadevan Collection
- Leslie Coleman Collection
- K S Krishnan Collection



About the Obaid Siddiqi Chair:

Obaid Siddiqi Chair in the History and Culture of Science at the Archives at NCBS was founded to bridge gaps in the practice, history, and philosophy of science and the humanities. The position is awarded to eminent scholars whose work has spanned these disciplines and enriched our knowledge of the history and culture of science.

Obaid Siddiqi Chair 2021-22:

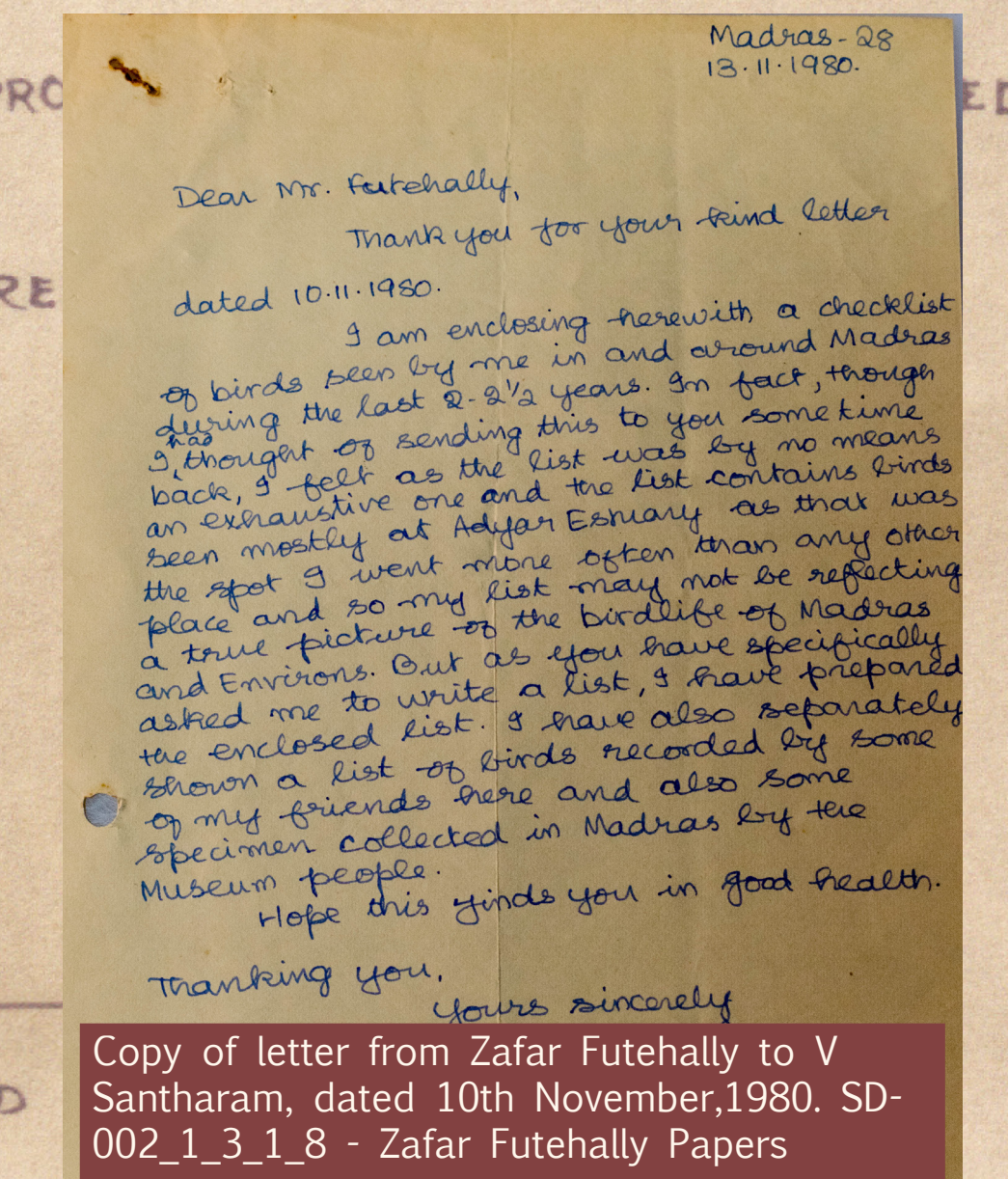
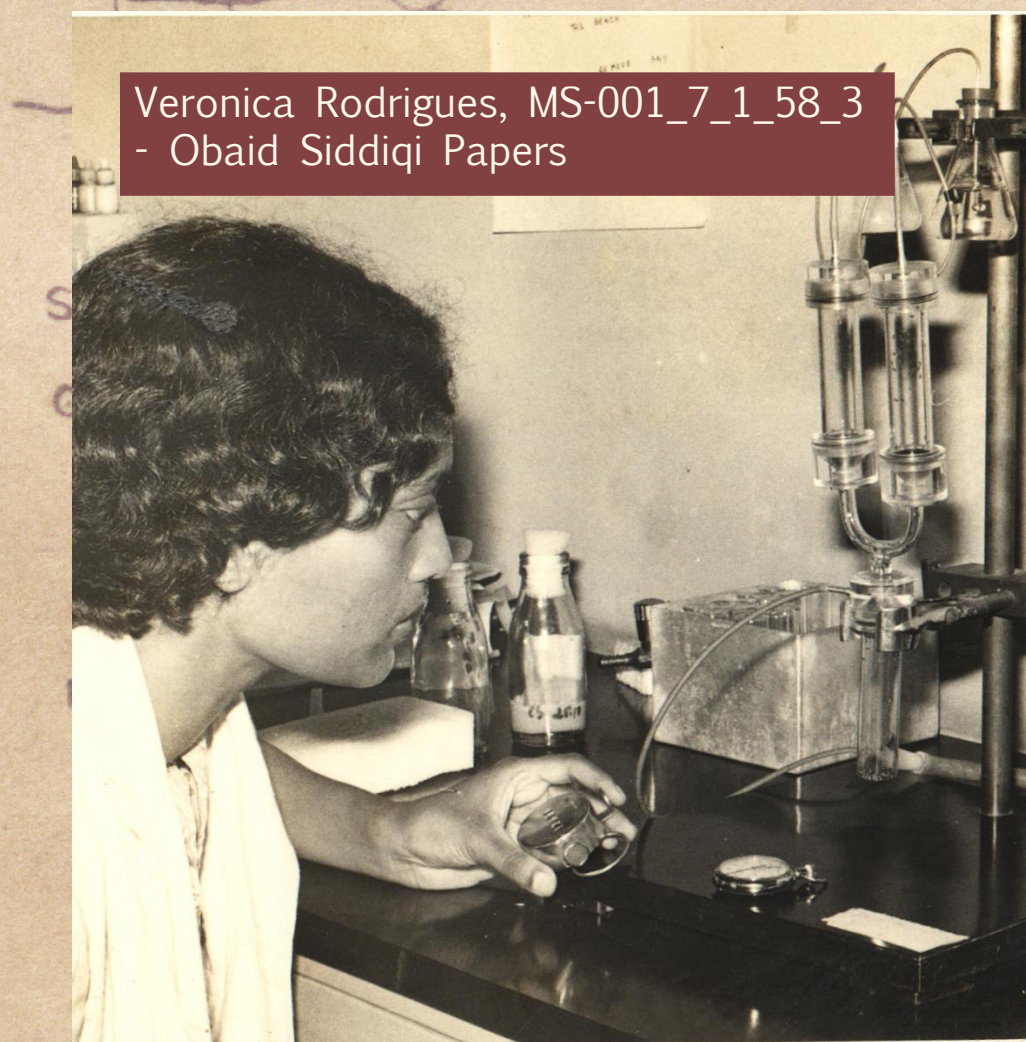
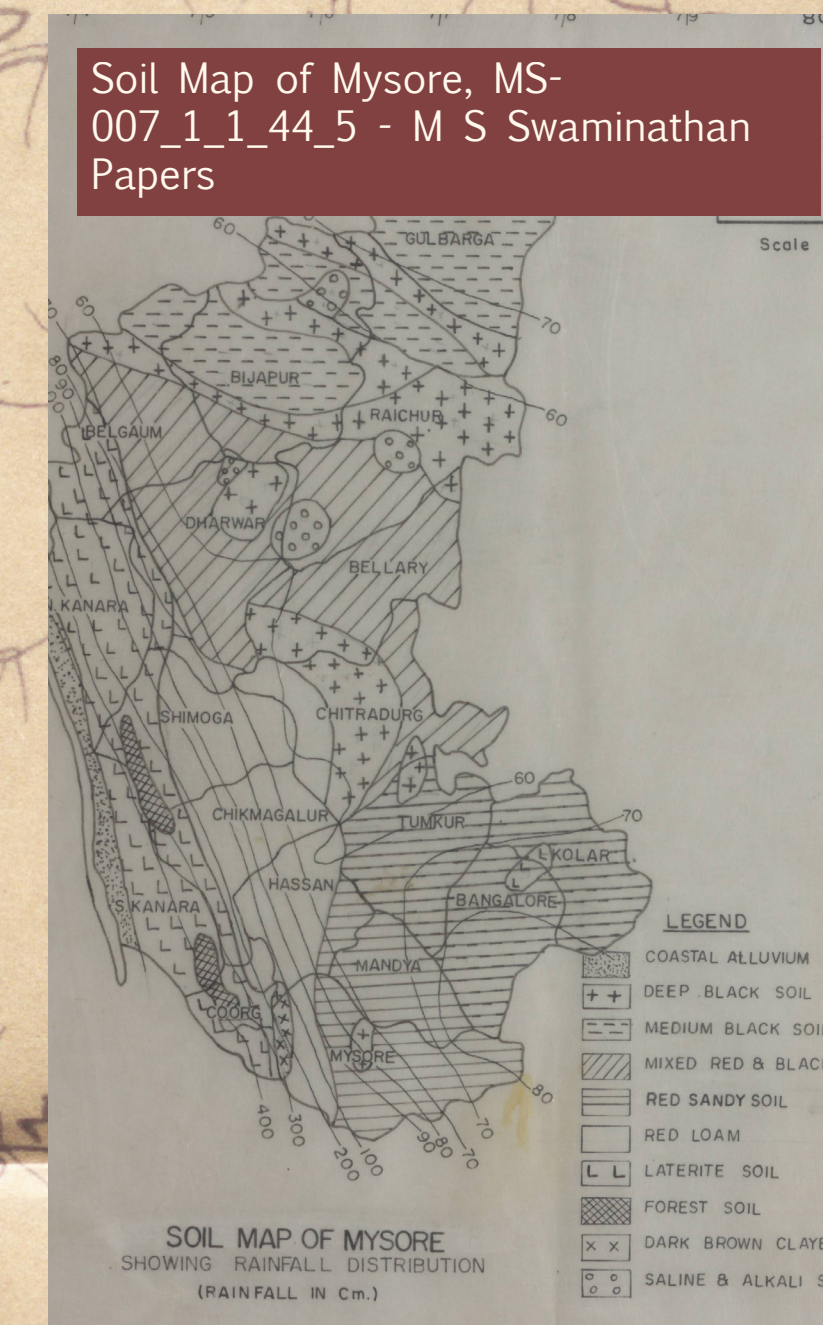
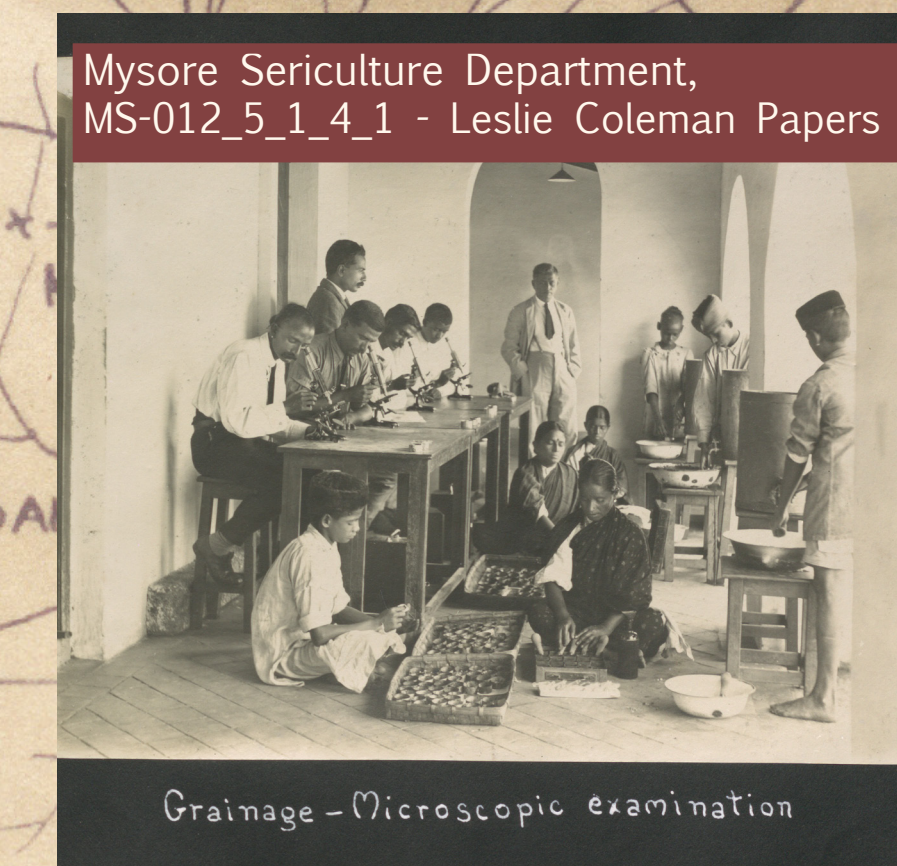
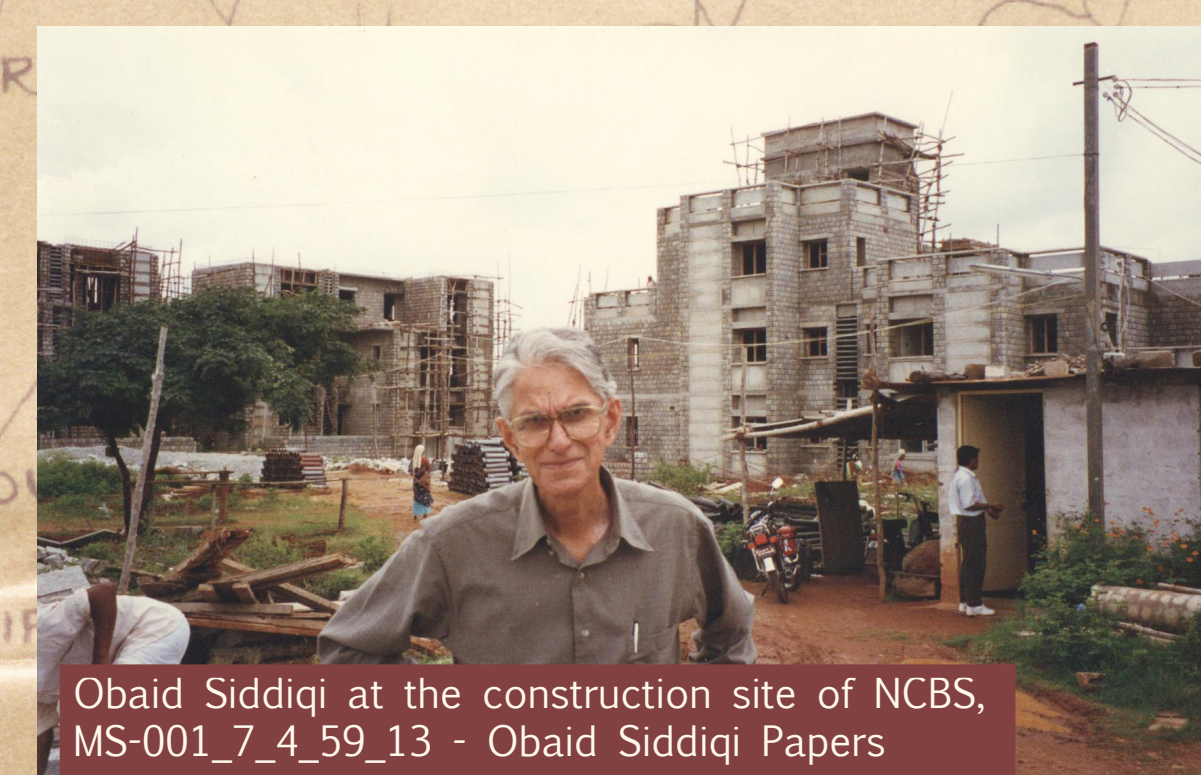
MD Madhusudhan was the first Obaid Siddiqi chair. He is an Indian wildlife biologist and ecologist. He is the Co-founder and Director of Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore.

During his term, he worked on multiple projects spanning oral history, teaching an Environmental History course to the masters students at NCBS, and critical assessments of 16 India State of Forest Reports. However, his primary focus was on two projects - the making of the Indian Conservation Project along with his collaborators, Hari Sridhar and Preeti Venkatram, and the India Open Land Cover Project with his collaborator Pradeep Kougli.

Obaid Siddiqi Chair 2022-23:

Prof. Ganesh N Devy was chosen as the recipient of the second Obaid Siddiqi Chair. Prof Devy is a literary scholar, historian, and social and cultural activist, and is perhaps best known for establishing the People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI).

During his time here at NCBS, Prof Devy will be working on a book on the prehistory and history of Indian civilization from a linguistic perspective. He will also be teaching a course with a linguistic perspective on the people of India, and also initiating inter-disciplinary discussions on the nature of science, in addition to delivering the Siddiqi Lectures in summer 2023.



Developing a guidebook for archivists:

Between 2020 and 2022, the Archives worked with Divij Joshi and Farah Yameen to develop a project funded by NCBS and the International Council on Archives titled "Archives, Ethics and the Law in India: A Guidebook and Training Programme for Archivists in India". This is perhaps the first of its kind in India. The first version was completed in December 2022, and will be made public in January 2023, paving the way for broader discussions, especially through the Milli Archives Collective.

