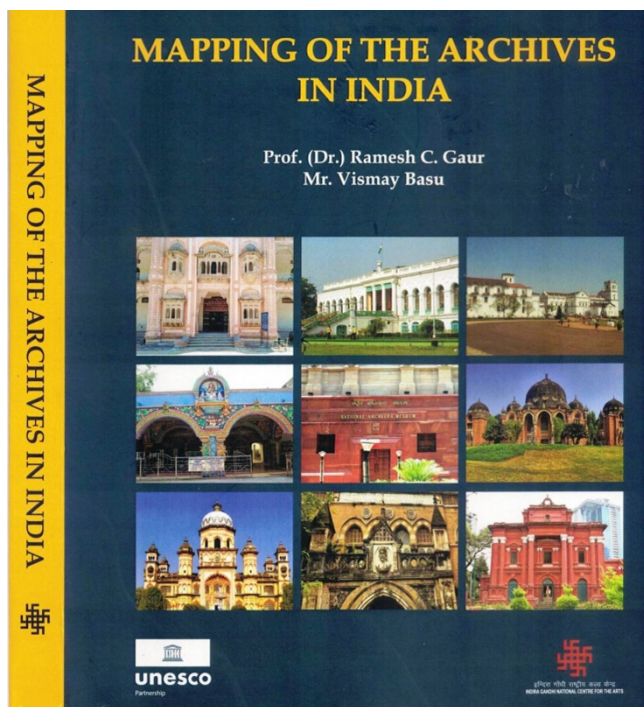


# Understanding Nuances of the Archives in India



**Mapping of the Archives in India.** Written by Ramesh C. Gaur and Vismay Basu. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and UNESCO New Delhi Regional Office, 2023, ISBN: 9789391045791.

"Mapping of the Archives in India," a collaborative publication by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and UNESCO New Delhi Office, is a significant exploration of India's archival landscape. Written by India's well-acclaimed information professional Dr. Ramesh C. Gaur, and independent researcher Vismay Basu, the book delves into the extensive network of archives across the country, providing a comprehensive look at both national, regional and state-level repositories. With the rapid digitization and increased interest in cultural preservation, the work is a timely addition to discussions on documentary heritage management and the accessibility of historical records.

One of the strengths of this publication is its detailed cataloguing of India's archival resources, covering everything from governmental and private collections to provincial archives that preserve invaluable cultural and linguistic records. For researchers and professionals in the field of documentary heritage

conservation, this work is undoubtedly a valuable reference. It offers a panoramic view of India's archives and reveals some of the hidden, lesser-known treasures that may be otherwise inaccessible due to geographical or bureaucratic constraints.

The book is structured into 4 Chapters, namely, (1) Profile of the Participating Archives, (2) Data Analysis and Findings, (3) Indian Submissions to the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register, and (4) Directory of Archives India.

Chapter 1 mainly depicts the historical, administrative and collection-related details of 90 archives from different parts of India. Information on each archive covered in this Chapter was gathered through a structured questionnaire. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the research team used secondary sources to confirm the veracity of the information provided in the filled-in questionnaires. Chapter 2 further elaborates the study design, and the status related to archival collections, digitization initiatives, preservation, conservation, basic infrastructure, and research facilities. Chapter 3 depicts the historical and collection-related details of 11 Indian inscriptions on the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register. The earliest entry on the Register is the IAS Tamil Medical Manuscript Collection, which was inscribed in 1997. The latest entries on the Register are



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Abhinavagupta (940-1015 CE) Collection of Manuscripts of His Works, and the First Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement Archives (joint nomination), which were inscribed in 2023. Other Indian inscriptions briefly described in this Chapter include the Gilgit Manuscripts, Rigveda, Shantinatha Charitra, Tarikh-e-Khandan-e-Timuriyah, the Saiva Manuscripts of Pondicherry, Vimalaprabha Laghukalacakratanrarajatika, Archives of the Dutch East India Company (joint nomination), and Maitreyayvarakarana, which were inscribed on the Register between 2003 and 2017. Chapter 4 provides a Directory of Archives India, which includes administrative details of 424 institutions from 28 states and 3 Union Territories (UTs) of India. The nature of the archives mentioned in this Directory includes institutional archives, state archives, cultural archives, manuscript archives, and museums.

At the end of this book there is a guest article titled "Archives in India: Historical Perspective", written by Dr. Meena Gautam of National Mission of Monuments and Antiquities. The article explores the evolution of archives in India, tracing their development from ancient times to the present day. The article mentioned some of the challenges and initiatives that include: Preservation and Conservation: Efforts to safeguard fragile records

and manuscripts; Access and Outreach: Digitization initiatives to increase accessibility; and Legislative Framework: Enactment of the Public Records Act (1993) and the Right to Information Act (2005). Other key points mentioned in the article include: Ancient India had a robust record-keeping system; colonial era saw centralized archival repositories; post-independence period saw expansion and diversification of archives; and preservation, access, and legislation remain key challenges.

In the appendix, the book provides a copy of the structured questionnaire used for this study titled "Survey of Archives in India", which appears to be very comprehensive and focuses on the modern and contemporary aspects of archival management.

Overall, "Mapping of the Archives in India" is a commendable and essential reference for anyone deeply interested in Indian archival studies. Its collaborative publication by IGNCIA and UNESCO underscores the importance of global partnerships in heritage preservation, especially in countries with vast, multifaceted histories. This book remains a valuable starting point for both academic and governmental efforts to map and preserve India's rich archival heritage. Thus, this book becomes a valuable resource for researchers, scholars, and cultural institutions.

**Reviewed by**

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