

## From the Archives Preserving the Colonial Science

We are happy to announce the setting up of the IIA archives consisting of a part of the special collections of IIA. The collections are aesthetically displayed in a separate room adjacent to the library on IIA campus in Bangalore.

The process of setting up the archives involved various steps starting from drafting the collection policy to addressing the different preservation issues. As the institute has naturally inherited the library and records of the Madras and Kodaikanal Observatories going back to c.1786, the collection too has parallely grown to include more than 5000 items in various formats such as manuscripts, photographs, maps, films, awards, framed materials, hand-drawn sketches, pictures, and instruments. Most of these items are of historical importance and environmentally sensitive.

The various archival items and contents illustrate essentially the role played by the individual astronomers and the directors of our parent observatories and the institute and the description of the science done at different times. Hence we have chosen to classify and organize these items chronologically according to the directors.

IIA Library has taken the responsibility of arranging these items systematically contents wise, taking appropriate care to meet the storage specifications. The preservation process involves cleaning, fumigation, repair and rebinding. Some of the old hand-written manuscripts and scientific data sheets required photolaming and an encapsulation process to retain the originality and at the same time to give reinforcement, thus adopting the principle of reversible process. For a few rare documents, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is helping us to restore the manuscripts. The library staff have made efforts to index all these items, and soon the finding tool will be available for the users of the archives.

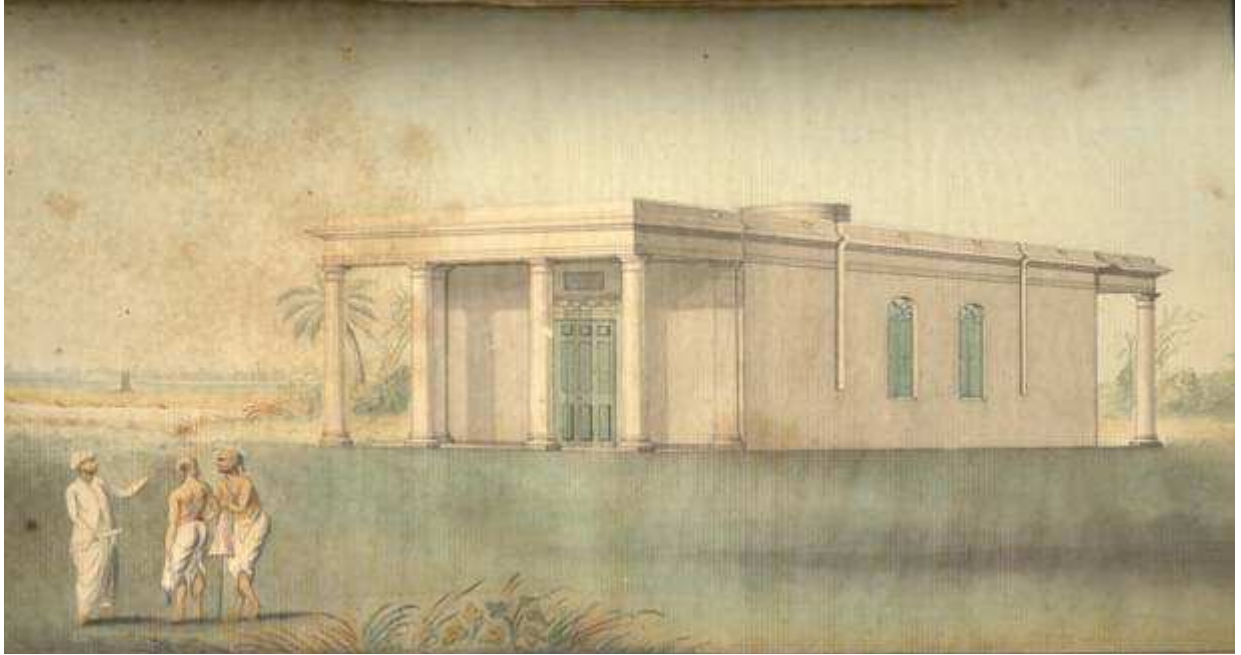
A reference library of the archival material has been created in digital form, accessible from the IIA Open Access Repository (<http://prints.iiap.res.in>). For those contents for which the full text is not available they can be consulted physically in the archives with permission.

Two interesting items from the old manuscripts are presented here. The first is a reproduction from an early manuscript which confirmed that the Madras Observatory, forerunner of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, was established in 1786.

*The Observatory was first established in 1786. in 1790. the Astronomer's Department was formed by the Court of Directors, and since that period it has continued to be a Public office of record transmitting its annual operations to the House of Commons and the Astronomer Royal.*

*H. C. Observatory  
1<sup>st</sup> of January 1809*

*Sir,  
Your most obed<sup>t</sup>. Serv<sup>t</sup>  
(signed) John Warren*



The above is a beautiful hand-drawn image of the Madras Observatory in Egmore taken from the manuscript "Astronomical Observations Madras 1792".

- Christina Birdie and A. Vagiswari