



National Conference On

Archives and Historical Narratives: Developments, Current trends and Future Directions

25th August 2025 (Monday)

Organized by

School of History

Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur

Background and Rationale

Archives are the documents and records from individuals, organizations, and governments that have been preserved and made available to researchers because of their enduring value. Archives aren't just for historians, of course, they are saved for everyone. They are important because they provide evidence of activities and tell us more about individuals and institutions. They also tell stories and increase our sense of identity and understanding of cultures, societies, and human actions. They can even be used to protect hard-won civil, political, legal, and economic rights and to ensure justice. The bottom-line is archives are important to understand the past and to documenting and protecting our rights as citizens.

Recently there has been the emergence of an epistemological and research framework that is self-consciously archival in construction and application, although it is indebted to the epistemologies and methods of other fields, as well as their constructions of the Archive and the archival endeavour. It is thus high time to explore how archival methodologies link to broader intellectual, philosophical and theoretical trends, and related shifts in research paradigms. Continued development and maturation of the diversity of research methodologies, designs, methods and techniques in the field will enable examination of complex and emergent phenomena in the archival multiverse. Research on, and publication of, the literary warrant for archival and recordkeeping research methodologies, including methods and techniques, will facilitate deeper understandings of the epistemological lineage behind methods that are being borrowed from other fields. The ways in which these methods are being adapted for archival uses will also emerge, as well as the evolution and maturation of methods that are uniquely archival, having developed out of archival theory and practice. Being more reflexive and explicit about the development of archival and recordkeeping research agendas and the design of research will enable robust, rigorous and ethical research.

This national Conference aims to reflect upon the past, present and future trends in archival and recordkeeping research, and the philosophies, paradigms and methodologies that frame it. It will explore the growing maturation of the field's research ethos and culture, the evolving toolkit of research methods and techniques, and the field's increasingly robust research infrastructure. It will highlight the increasing awareness and shared understanding of the role and importance of archival research in our own and other fields.

Reinterpreting historical narratives through archives involves critically examining existing historical accounts using newly discovered or previously overlooked archival materials to gain a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the past. This process often challenges dominant or traditional interpretations by incorporating diverse perspectives and evidence. Thus, Archives play a critical role in shaping historical narratives. As repositories of memory and knowledge, archives are not just passive collections but active agents in the construction, preservation, and interpretation of the past. Over time, the nature and function of archives have evolved—shaped by changing political landscapes, technological innovations, and emerging historiographical approaches. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in how archives influence historical understanding, whose voices are included or excluded, and how digital technologies are redefining archival practices. Debates around decolonization, accessibility, ethical curation, and participatory archiving are prompting scholars and practitioners to revisit the very foundations of archival work.

This National Conference aims to explore the dynamic relationship between archives and historical narratives, addressing both traditional methodologies and innovative practices. It will provide a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue among historians, archivists, researchers, information scientists, and students.

Objectives:

- I. To examine the historical evolution of archives and their influence on the production of historical narratives.
- II. To discuss current trends in archival theory and practice, including digitization, participatory archiving, and ethical considerations.
- III. To explore the future directions of archival studies in response to technological advancements and socio-political shifts.
- IV. To create a collaborative space for sharing research, case studies, and best practices from diverse archival and historical contexts.

Themes/Sub-Themes

1. Evolution of Archival Theory and Methodologies
2. Archives and Epistemology: Knowledge Creation and Research Paradigms
3. Archives and Reinterpretation of Historical Narratives
4. Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in Archival Practice

5. Archives as Sites of Power and Memory
6. Colonial and Postcolonial Archival Practices
7. Archives, Rights, and Social Justice
8. Digital Archives and Technological Innovations
9. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Archival Research
10. Future Directions in Archival Studies

About Gangadhar University and Sambalpur

The institute was upgraded from a college to a university in 2015. Sambalpur City, located on the banks of the Mahanadi River in the western part of Odisha, was founded in the 16th century by the Chouhan ruler. Today, it is a thriving municipal corporation and an emerging education hub, home to four universities, an Indian Institute of Management (IIM), the oldest engineering college in Odisha, and a medical college. Located just 9 km from Sambalpur, the Hirakud Dam, the longest earthen dam in the world, is a stunning site offering opportunities for water sports. Sambalpur is renowned for the goddess Samaleswari and its globally recognized warp and weft Bandha textiles.

About the Department:

The Dept. of History came into existence in 1944 catering to the academic needs of the U.G. and P.G. students of this region in particular and of Odisha in general. After the transformation of G.M. College into G. M. University in 2015, the Department also got its new identity as School of History and presently offers U.G., P.G. and Ph.D courses with 48, 78, and 16 seats respectively. The Department is endowed with outstanding faculty members, committed to innovative pedagogic practices and with cutting-edge research interests in History. According to the Objective of the University much emphasis is given on local history, culture, art, architecture, tradition, customs, economic activities, beliefs, technologies and resources in the course content. In the process of teaching ancient Indian coins and inscriptions, emphasis is placed on the allusions to various tribal clans and organizations. Fieldwork and Practical's are an essential component of the Postgraduate Curriculum. Students receive field training while pursuing their education. For a deeper comprehension of ancient civilization, students are introduced to all the theoretical and practical facets of comparing data from ethnography and archaeology, including the use of ethnographic analogies and archaeological ethnography. School of History carried out Archaeological Excavation in Barapali Asurgarh, District Baragarh (Odisha) during the Field Season 2021–22. The School of History has organized several awareness programs to promote the preservation of local heritage and culture. In a bid to inspire both students and the local community, the department has established a museum that houses a rich collection of prehistoric tools, protohistoric artifacts, early historical material culture, and medieval antiquities.

Arriving at Sambalpur

Sambalpur is connected with the major Railway networks of the country. Sambalpur is connected with other parts of India by railways and by road. Jharsuguda is a major Railway junction, 50 km away from Sambalpur, and is connected well with the Tier I cities of India. The nearest airport is at Jharsuguda which is connected with major metros of India. If you are interested to come via the state capital i.e. Bhubaneswar, there are train services throughout the day from Bhubaneswar Railway Station to Sambalpur or Jharsuguda.

Must-Visit Destinations in Sambalpur

If you're seeking a meaningful and enriching experience, Sambalpur offers a variety of incredible places to explore. Some of the top attractions include Samaleswari Temple, Budharaja Hill, the Wild Animal Conservation Centre, Regional Art Gallery, Ghanteswari Temple, Hirakud Dam, and the iconic Huma Leaning Temple. Each location provides a unique glimpse into the culture, nature, and heritage of this fascinating region.

Accommodation:

Accommodation will not be provided for conference delegates. Participants are kindly requested to make their own arrangements.

Registration fee: Kindly submit the registration fee of ₹500 on or before 24th August 2025 to confirm the inclusion of your research paper in the academic programme. Please send your confirmation to **Dr. Sasmita Rani Shasini**, Convener of the conference.

(Please share the remittance PDF/Screen shot on the given WhatsApp no: 82607 92412)

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Yours sincerely,

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