



ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 2023

**QAMRA Archival Project at NLSIU, Bengaluru
Sri Narayan Rao Melgiri Memorial National Law Library
National Law School of India University
P.B. No. 7201 Nagarbhavi,
Bengaluru – 560072 India**

**email: qamraarchive@nls.ac.in
www.qamra.in**



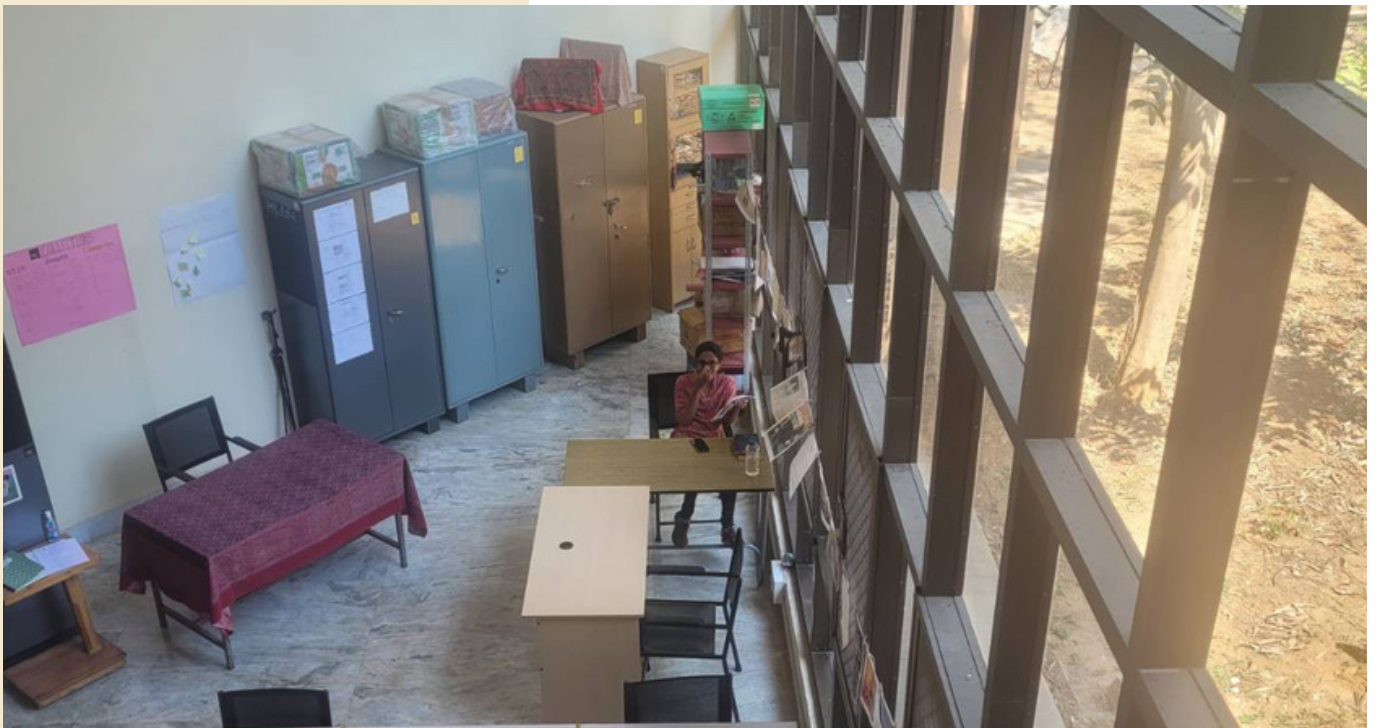
Table of Contents

QAMRA in 2022	3
Campus Outreach	4
Public Outreach	5
Acquisitions and Working with Collections	7
Fundraising	8

QAMRA IN 2022

The Queer Archive for Memory, Reflection and Activism (QAMRA) found a permanent home at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru in 2021. On 6 October 2021, QAMRA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NLSIU. Stepping in this direction made us a public institute, enabling us to provide free, public access to the archive's collections.

The archive relocated to campus on 8 December 2021, and is housed in the Sri Narayan Rao Melgiri Memorial National Law Library. Soon after, QAMRA Archival Project at NLSIU was closed from mid-January 2022 to late-February 2022 during the third COVID-19 wave in Bengaluru. March 2022 onwards, the archive has remained open from Tuesday to Saturday, 10 AM to 5 PM, during the academic term with a change in the work week to Monday to Friday during term breaks.



WORK DONE

In our first year, the QAMRA Archival Project at NLSIU has worked along four major axes: campus outreach, public outreach, acquisitions and working with collections, and fundraising.

CAMPUS OUTREACH

- To give our space in the library more visibility, we inaugurated our presence on campus with a permanent exhibition. Both original items and copies were exhibited across the archival space to offer visitors a brief glimpse at the diversity of material in our collections.
- The library staff since our relocation to NLSIU had been curious about the work we do. As we began reopening partially after the third Covid-19 wave in January-February 2022, T Jayashree, Shalom Gauri and Siddarth S Ganesh made a presentation to the library staff to introduce them to the archive, its material and speak about the similarities and differences between our fields.
- To integrate into campus life at the NLSIU, we interacted with various students including members of the National Law School of India University Queer Alliance (NLSIUQA). We also began a volunteer program on campus, where students catalogued newspaper clippings in the Sangama Collection and the Ivan John Collection, and compiled a glossary of archival terms.
- In April, we were approached by the Student Welfare Office on campus to work with students to create a queer sensitisation primer. The primer is intended to be used by the university to create awareness for and about queer students on campus. The primer's targeted audience is new incoming students and their parents. Members of the NLSIUQA volunteered to work on the primer. This ongoing project is a student-led effort being advised by the archive.
- July marks the start of the new academic year at NLSIU. The NLSIUQA conducted gender and sexuality sensitisation sessions for the new batches, which the archive advised and participated in. As part of orientation week, the archive was also introduced to all new batches of students during the library tour through a small presentation.
- As per the MoU, QAMRA agreed to offer a 40-hour elective course every year. The first iteration of the course, titled 'Preserving Memories: Law, Social Transformation and the Queer Archive,' was offered in the second trimester of the 2022-2023 academic year. The course with 13 enrolled students began in November 2022 and concluded in January 2023. It was taught by T Jayashree and Arvind Narrain with archival assistance from Siddarth S Ganesh. The course introduced the idea and role of the archive from the point of view of collective memory and collective histories. It called attention to how the past becomes a vital part of our futures. Students worked with archival collections, and feedback was positive: the experience revised their ideas of dusty, solitary libraries, and most groups produced collective and reflective multimedia projects including a catalogue, podcast, and interactive posters.



Siddarth S Ganesh and Shalom Gauri shifting the archive to NLSIU

PUBLIC OUTREACH

To garner more visibility for our website, and to reflect the work we were doing, we redesigned and updated our website adding a repository page that gives information about the different collections in the archive, events pages that document the events organised by us and events

organised by others that we participated in, and commenced a blog on our website. Website updates continued to be a regular part of our work throughout the year as more of our collections were catalogued and the events we were part of grew in number.

QAMRA EVENTS

Queering the Pitch – Life and Times of Saleem Kidwai 24th June 2022

In International Pride Month, to celebrate our mentor, the late historian Saleem Kidwai, we organised the Bengaluru premiere of *Queering the Pitch*, a short film in the picture story format produced by Nirantar, a Delhi-based feminist resource group working on gender, sexuality and education.



T Jayashree talking to the participants about Saleem Kidwai at the *Queering the Pitch* launch screening

The 377 Journey – Archives, Activism and the Law + mini-exhibition 27th August 2022

The *377 Journey: Archives, Activism and the Law*, was our first on-campus event. The archive hosted a conversation between Anuja Gupta, Founder of RAHI, Ashwini Ailwadi, Co-founder

of RAHI, who were both part of the team that filed the first petition against Sec 377 in the Delhi High Court in 1994; Prof. Kunal Ambasta, NLSIU; and Prof. Arun Thiruvengadam, NLSIU, to tell another story about the verdict in *Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India*. A small selection of material from the archive which referenced the different milestones of the litigation against Sec 377 IPC was displayed at the event. Both the discussion and the exhibition were met with a great deal of interest.



Panelists at *The 377 Journey*, from L to R: Prof. Kunal Ambasta, Anuja Gupta, Ashwini Ailwadi, Prof. Arun Thiruvengadam

Namma Pride 2022

To celebrate the 15th anniversary of Pride in Bengaluru, Siddarth S Ganesh collaborated with the Pride Organising Committee to organise a two-part meditation on the city's queer history set in the larger context of the queer movement in

India—Queer History Walk on 12 December 2022 and an exhibition, Pride and Protest, on 19 December 2022. The Queer History Walk took two groups of people on a stroll through Cubbon Park, where queer activism began in the city in the 90s and 2000s in response to increasing episodes of police brutality. Uma, human rights activist, was invited to talk to the participants to share her story of having been a sex worker at Cubbon Park and her involvement in the queer movement. Anchored in the geography of Cubbon Park, the walks were an opportunity to remember the people and the places who played a key role in transforming Bengaluru into a hub of queer activism.

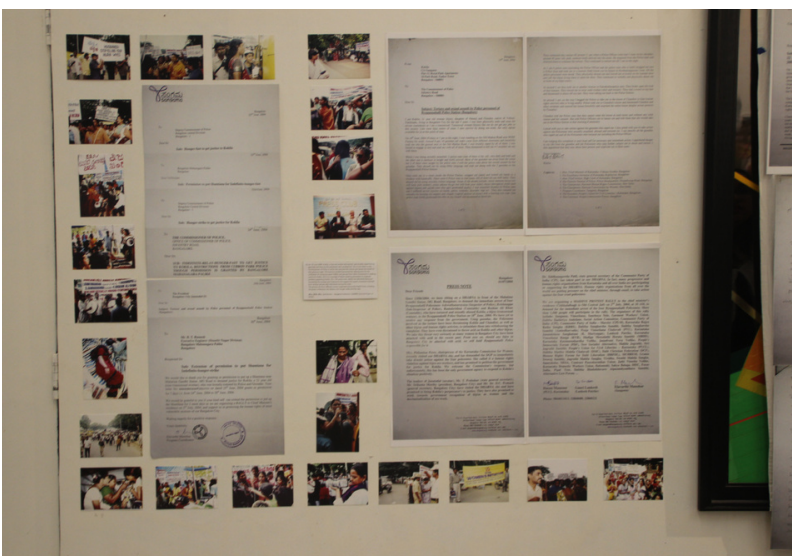
At the Kamanabillu Santhe, the **Pride and Protest** exhibition was curated in two sections—Pride and Anatomy of Protest. Through the ephemera of the Pride Organising Committee, Bengaluru, Pride reflected on the first two years of Pride celebrations in Karnataka (2008 & 2009). Anatomy of Protest, covering a timespan of 1988-2004 focused on different episodes of Indian queer history in Bhopal, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Bengaluru, and the queer politics embodied in these spaces.

Archiving Workshop 10th December 2022

Responding to the general interest in queer history and archiving it, we conducted a 3-hour archiving workshop at the Alternative Law Forum. The objective of the workshop was to familiarise the participants with the archive and our approach to working with queer collections.



Different groups sorting through material at the Archival Workshop held at ALF



Archival material about the Kokila crisis, 2004, displayed at the Pride and Protest exhibition



Deluge of Memories- an installation at the Pride and Protest exhibition featuring Thejaswi Shivanand's umbrella from Pride 2008 and photos from Pride 2008 and 2009 in Bangalore

EVENTS ORGANISED BY OTHERS

Namma Pride 2021 Garage Sale 12 December 2021

In 2021, the Garage Sale was held on 12 December, at the Alternative Law Forum terrace, and the archive had a stall there. Just having moved to NLSIU, this event was QAMRA Archival Project at NLSIU's introduction to Bengaluru's queer public. We had made postcards and bookmarks featuring some material from the archive which were offered as gifts to people who made donations to the archive.

Panel Discussion - Archives, Law and Ethics Workshop 28 to 31 March 2022

This workshop organised by the Archives at NCBS and supported by the International Council on Archives brought together archivists, legal practitioners, activists and scholars to explore concerns across archival practice, ethics and the law in India. It was an opportunity to discuss both what the role of the law is for archival practice, as well as what it should be, and how legal and ethical questions can potentially be navigated by archivists. The discussions in the workshop will inform an open access guidebook on archives, ethics and the law intended to help archivists in different contexts navigate these issues.

On day 2, Siddarth S Ganesh was part of a panel discussion with Vrundha Pathare, Godrej Culture Labs; Ranjani and Faisal, Keystone Foundation. The panel addressed ethics in archival practice. The questions asked concerned the responsibility of the archivist to the archive, the public, and the stakeholders in the archive.

"What is an Archive in India and Europe?" #2, Archiving the Contemporary: Memory, Technology and People 6 to 8 April 2022

The second international conference in the series "What is an archive in India and Europe?" was organised by Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM); Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes (ITEM), CNRS/ENS, Paris; and Institut Français de Pondicherry (IFP). This three-day event brought together scholars and practitioners from India, France, Germany, Portugal, and Italy working in the fields of history, archivy and the digital humanities. It was an opportunity for professionals studying and working with different archives to come together to discuss the practices, ethics, and politics of this emergent field.

Shalom Gauri and Siddarth S Ganesh, who were representing the archive, presented a paper titled 'Digital Fever – Reflections of a Queer Archive' at the conference.

COLLABORATIONS

QAMRA - IFA Creative and Scholarly Project under IFA Archives and Museums Programme

The archive in collaboration with the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) invited applications for an IFA-QAMRA Creative Project and an IFA-QAMRA Scholarly Project, under its Archives and Museums programme, which IFA will implement. The Archives and Museums programme of IFA was initiated with a two-fold objective: to provide arts practitioners and researchers with an opportunity to generate new, critical and creative approaches for public engagement with archives and museum collections, and to energise these spaces as platforms for dialogue and discourse. One applicant each for scholarly and artistic projects will be selected after shortlisting and interviews. IFA will provide them each with a grant of Rs. 2 lakhs disbursed over a year for the realisation of their projects.



QAMRA at the Namma Pride garage sale

ACQUISITIONS AND WORKING WITH COLLECTIONS



Collections at the archive

- ‘Queer Journeys: Interactive Web-story Project’ is a digital, interactive timeline of the litigation against Section 377 IPC we had been conceptualising for many months. The content for the timeline has been compiled and a project proposal drafted. We are exploring different avenues of funding to finance this project.
- T. Jayashree’s Audio Visual Collection was worked on extensively this year, with the transcripts of most audio and video files being finalised. The catalogue of the collection was also designed.
- This year, QAMRA was fortunate to acquire the Maya Sharma and Indra Pathak collection. An acquisition trip to Vadodara, Gujarat was planned. Pawan Dhall and Siddarth S Ganesh went to Vadodara to meet Maya Sharma and Indra Pathak to appraise and acquire material. Their collection included documentation of cases of violence against female born queer individuals in rural Gujarat and documents from the feminist organisation Vikalp, being led by Indra Pathak and Maya Sharma. After preliminary sorting in Vadodara, Siddarth S Ganesh bought the material back to Bengaluru with them to undergo cataloguing and digitisation.

LIST OF ACQUISITIONS THIS YEAR

Ivan John Collection

January 2022

Maya Sharma and Indra Pathak Collection

June 2022

Shyam Divan

Shyam Divan's office shared additional material towards the Sec 377 litigation collection

July 2022

Interview with Justice Kirby

18 October 2022

Thejaswi Shivanand

2008 Pride Umbrella

November 2022

Pawan Dhall

In conversation about material from Kolkata.

By September, the sorting, cataloguing and translation of the Maya Sharma and Indra Pathak Collection was completed this quarter. As a majority of the collection is in Gujarati, the titles of items were translated from Gujarati to English in the catalogue to make the collection more accessible. We hope to digitise the entire collection by February 2023.

- Preliminary preservation for the 377 Courtroom Papers has been completed. This involved the removal of all corrosive binding agents (stapler pins, paper clips, treasury tags) which had started corroding the paper. This essential step was carried out while sourcing acid free juris folders for the permanent storage and preservation of this collection.
- In October, we conducted an online interview with Justice Michael Kirby, Australian High Court. As a legal expert who influenced early queer activism in India and has worked on issues of gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in the country, his interview makes a valuable addition to the archive.

FUNDRAISING

Total funds raised through private donations in the year 2021 – 2022 is Rs. 15,06,100. Of which, Rs. 5,27,533 is the total expenditure for the year.

The total remaining funds at the beginning of 2023 is Rs. 9,78,567. The following table gives the breakdown of expenses incurred by the archive.

Particulars	Cost (in rupees)
Income	
Funds Raised	1,506,100
Expenditure	
Operations	453,167
Acquisitions	64,206
Reimbursement	5,154
Events	2,625
Office Expenses	2,074
Books	307
Balance	
Funds Remaining	978,567