Simplifying the Art of Archiving

Earlier this month, Godrej Archives along with AVID learning (an initiative of the Essar Group that fosters learning through creative workshops and discussions) organised ‘Art of Archiving’, a first-of-its-kind initiative that seeks to encourage the practice of collecting and preserving personal histories and memories. Apart from those interested in chronicling their family histories, the evening introduced the science of Archiving as an essential tool for custodians, antique collectors and ‘hoarders’.

To be eventually developed into a series of sessions, the introductory one was a fluid conversation between our very own Vrunda Pathare (Chief Archivist, Godrej Archives), Anupam Sah (Chief Conservator, CSMVS Museum, Mumbai) and author and self-proclaimed hoarder, Sidharth Bhatia. The evening started with a 10 minute presentation by each panelist followed by an interaction with the audience. This well-attended program saw several noteworthy citizens such as artist Brinda Miller, media personality Farzana Contractor and zealous collector, Rajan Jayakar, congregate at Anemos, an antique furniture store in central Mumbai.

An over-riding concern among collectors is the biological degradation of antiquities such as coins, postcards, vinyl records or even comic books, brought about by the heat and humidity of a city like Mumbai. Our panelists therefore, touched upon basic Dos-and-Donts of Archiving and provided helpful tips on conservation and storage.

The introductory session will be followed by all-day workshops in the coming months. In the future, experts will be invited to explore themes like Archiving Sports, Archiving Photography, Archiving Music, Archiving Cinema and Archiving Personal Memories among others.

If you’d like to participate in future sessions write to us at archives@godrej.com
Send us details of your collection, areas of concern and queries to help us fine tune the session.
IPS Collection (1971-2005) catalogued

The Archives Times

The IPS Collection (1971-2005) received in April 2012 and briefly touched upon in our May issue is now available for reference. The collection is a telling statement on the impact of contemporary socio-economic changes on the work culture in Godrej. It would be fruitful for younger and new employees to note that the organisational structure of Godrej has not always been as we see today.

Unlike now, wherein each business vertical has its own Sales Team, up until 1960s, the Sales & Marketing department at Godrej & Boyce was a highly centralized one. However, the 1970s and its unique challenges called for a complete over-haul of the existing system and with that in mind, the company hired Dr. K. K. Anand, ex-Professor, Indian Institute of Management to reorganize the Sales structure in Bombay and branches. Documents such as ‘job descriptions’, flowcharts and matrices that form a part of this collection were maintained by Mr. I P Singh (IPS) who was also part of the task force specially created to assist Dr. Anand. Similarly, the SBU structure or ‘divisions’ of today was a result of a re-structuring that took place in 1991. IPS’s files takes the reader through every stage of the process and are helpful in analyzing man power in terms of new appointments & transfers that took place as a consequence.

Since Mr. Singh was among the first batch of Management trainees inducted into the company in 1968, his files also document the initiation & assimilation of MBAs into Godrej. Apart from the aforesaid topics, the IPS collection contains files on a wide range of subjects like a possible Indo-Italian collaboration to develop the furnishing sector in India and a proposed consumer financing company. Finally, the growth of Process Equipment Division from 1995 to 2005 can also be traced through various Business plans & annual reviews.

Circular announcing appointment of M/s. Anand & Associates
August 3, 1976

We have engaged the services of Dr. K.K. Anand of M/s. Anand & Associates, Management Consultants, Bombay, to help us review our organisation set up in the area of marketing. This would involve review of:

1. (a) The marketing organisation at the head office.
2. (b) The marketing organisation vis-a-vis Wholesale Dealers' set up.
3. The field sales organisation and the structure of the branch organisation from Salesman upwards, including the role of the Branch Manager.
4. Marketing Personnel policies as Recruitment, Training & Development, Performance Appraisal, etc.
5. They will also develop a Manual for the Marketing Organisation.

The collection was processed by our intern Urmi Paralikar

ICL Collection (1963 - 1970) reveals history of data processing industry in India

Shweta Sawant

Eight files pertaining to ‘International Computers Ltd.’ (ICL), a London based company that dealt in sale and hire of Data Processing Machines and equipment, were recovered a couple of years ago from Godrej’s defunct factory premise at Lalbaug (Central Mumbai). Although not directly related to the company’s history, these files were added to the Archives collection, as they are a testimony to the multifarious interests and activities of our former Chairman, Late S. P. Godrej, who served as a Director on the Board of ICL’s Indian subsidiaries—International Computers and Tabulators (India) Pvt. Ltd. (the Marketing company) and International Computers and Tabulators Indian Manufacturing Company, established in 1952 and 1963 respectively.

While providing an overview of the activities of the Indian companies, these files also help in understanding the state of computer business and other data processing equipment in the 1960s. The collection reflects the early years of the manufacturing company; inauguration of its factory at Poona and collaborations with other companies such as BEL (Bharat Electronics Ltd) among other things.

Interestingly, the ICL files also offer a glimpse into the general economic scenario through discussions about devaluation of the rupee and sterling pound, competitors, Customs restrictions, difficulties in acquiring Import Licenses and its impact on the Company. These files specifically contain notices, agendas and minutes of Board Meetings, periodical Financial Returns, Reports by the Managing Director, Annual Reports of both the Indian subsidiaries and also a few Interim Reports of the parent Company in London.

ICL’s 1901A mainframe computer at Electronic Data Processing Dept. at Plant 10, 1970s

Shweta Sawant
Making a case for heritage-led regeneration of Mumbai

In April this year the Mumbai chapter of Observer Research Foundation – a multidisciplinary, public policy think tank - organised a roundtable conference on ‘Is Mumbai Truly Global? How to enhance the international profile of our city’.

The express purpose of the conference was, to look at urban renewal beyond big infrastructure and of hearing from the city’s stakeholders about their concerns and alternate visions for a Mumbai that is more open, accepting and active on the global platform. The conference was geared towards exploring Mumbai’s experience with globalisation at different levels such as Business and Finance, Entertainment, Tourism and Hospitality, Political and Governance Support and Arts, Culture and Heritage.

As someone whose expertise and interest lie in preserving the city’s history in general and industrial heritage in particular, I was invited by ORF to represent and voice my aspirations regarding the last segment. Given the port city’s dynamic international past, especially in the colonial period, and the role played by industry in shaping Mumbai’s history, there is an imperative need to preserve the same, “refocus on our roots and then rise from there”.

My argument was based on two tenets that make a city global – 1) the ability to host international events (Olympics, international summits and expose) and 2) the ability to attract foreign investment and house global headquarters of large MNCs. Making Mumbai ready for this will mean, improving the living conditions in the city and making it more appealing to the international community. The latter is perhaps where our industrial heritage can play a role.

A positive re-use of our erstwhile industrial landscapes, particularly our textile mill complexes will not only preserve the city’s architectural and socio-economic history by creating awareness but can actually ease the immense pressure on land. The emphasis here is on positive re-use by conversion and not obliteration. Industrial cities around the world are waking up to the phenomenon— the Waterfront Walk-way along the south bank of the Thames River in London, once a derelict industrial area, has been revitalized and the austere 19th-century warehouses built of brick and wood timbers have been converted into trendy apartments, cafes, art galleries and shops. Likewise, the iconic mill structures in Mumbai can be readapted in a more imaginative way (other than swanky malls, I mean). By keeping the external shell of the complex intact and by re-modelling the interiors alone, these spaces can be converted into cultural arenas or themed luxury/business hotels. Also, by structurally strengthening chawls and providing them with modern amenities, some of these can be transformed into heritage budget hotels catering to an international community during international events. These can also be let-out as serviced apartments for the nomadic crowd – the international media, expatriates and students.

Each city, be it New York or London or Tokyo, has a distinct character steeped in its local culture. Mumbai’s industrial and commercial heritage can be ours.

Sanghamitra Sen

Owners of Café Zoe at Mathuradas Mill Compound have wisely chosen to leave the space’s industrial rawness intact. High ceilings, exposed brick walls, industrial lights and pipes lend a quaint charm to the dining experience.
Pirojshanagar on Celluloid: Employees remember the days of filming

Our Facebook friends and Godrejites probably recall seeing a photo-essay on the Godrej township, Pirojshanagar, as captured in the 1978 film, Khatta Meetha. Khatta Meetha is the story of Homi Mistry, a widower, and Nargis Sethna, a widowed housewife, who get married resulting in hilarious chaos as members of both families try to accommodate each other and fit in with their new family and surroundings. Sections of the film, particularly those showing Homi Mistry’s work-life, were filmed here.

At the beginning of our essay, we asked readers if they remembered the day of filming. Several employees wrote back with heart-warming stories. Mr. B S Wadiwala, who then worked at the opposite plant i.e. the Typewriter Plant says, “I had witnessed the shooting which lasted for a couple of days and took place on the road from our old VIP Canteen to Plant IX. Yesteryear actors Ashok Kumar, Deven Verma & David alight from the bus along with other workers & proceed to their work place through the first bay entry.”

Inside Plant IX most of the scenes were shot at the machine shop milling section. Ashok Kumar who personifies the character of Homi Mistry in the movie, is seen as the supervisor of the section, a role played in real life by Mr. A. R. Kulkarni (later Safety Head). Mr. Robert Lasrado, part of the Design Department in the same plant recognised his colleague Mr. Bhosle in one of the clips and recollected the day vividly: “It was a typical shooting scene with spot lights, reflectors and curtains to cut distraction.” Mr. M K Bam, who worked night shifts at the Electronic Data Proc-

Although a rare phenomenon these days, the filming of Khatta Meetha on campus was by no means a one-off episode. Our photo-essay aroused enthusiastic responses from employees who recalled that several other films – like Insaan Jaag Utha, Hero and Jaanbaaz – and battle scenes from B R Chopra’s epic tele-series Mahabharat did a fine job of capturing Pirojshanagar on celluloid. We at Godrej Archives are grateful for every input which has happily provided us with an official reason to revisit the country’s cinematic classics.

With inputs from Shweta Sawant, Shailaja Hajare and Sudha Sawant