



## The Archives Times

Volume 2, Issue 2

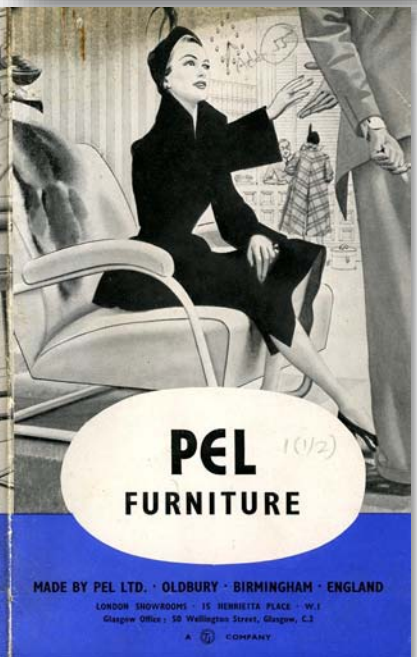
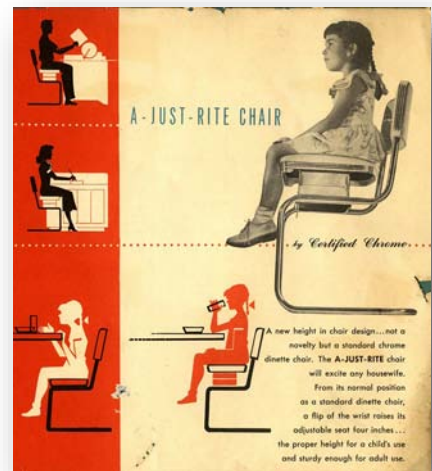
June-Dec, 2014

### International Product Catalogues Collection: Snapshots of a bygone era

What can dry, technical and battered looking catalogues tell the lay person? Perusing through product catalogues of companies manufacturing steel furniture and appliances through the decades, one finds enough to engross the researcher and the casual reader. The Lalbaug Collection of Catalogues, acquired by Godrej Archives in 2008, ranges from precision instruments and sheet metal production to garden chairs and packaging of perfume bottles. The collection was gathered incrementally by the company, to keep up with global innovations and to feed the Godrej passion for reverse engineering. The catalogues in this collection are from England, Europe and the United States, from as early as 1929 to the 1980s.

#### A reflection of its times

It is interesting to note how companies positioned their products in the market with the changing times. Take the '20s and '30s for example: While Republic Steel, American manufacturers of furniture and other products, boasts of its Americanness, British manufacturers Harrild and Sons Ltd, took exceptional pride in their



Clockwise from top left: Navroze Godrej and Kopal Kulkarni from Innovation Centre browsing through our catalogues collection; Certified Chrome's newly launched Just Rite chair, 1948; a catalogue from PEL—pioneers in tubular steel furniture, 1950s

products which were "made from British steel and by British labour". Cut to the 1950s, and one sees traces of blatant sexism in marketing collaterals such as catalogues and brochures, much like in mainstream advertising. A catalogue on Industrial Design, for instance, advertises a range of modern gadgets to use around the house that would delight "the modern housewife", placing all household appliances under the clear jurisdiction of the woman. The Art Metal office furniture catalogue, on the other hand, addresses a class of "executive men" only. A very clear distinction seems to be drawn between the man's world and the woman's.

This strain of sexism is carried through in the American catalogues of the '60s and '70s, mixed with a shocking dose of unabashed cheekiness. An advertisement for the Xerox photocopier says it all. Titled "Let the Xerox 660 bring you and your secretary together again" claims that the "660 lets your girl make all copies right where she sits ... [then] the only waiting your secretary will do will be waiting on you."

Most of the ads for secretarial instruments are accompanied by photographs of nattily dressed young ladies – apparently a requisite, to become a secretary. The English and German catalogues of this period however, remain sedate.

### A crash course in visual style

The ads also reflect the visual styles prevalent at the time. The art deco style emerged in France and spread internationally in the 1920s, and 1930s. Though, the fad seems to have waned post WWII, the furniture catalogues of the 1940s belie an Art Deco hangover in the USA. The Certified Chrome furniture brochure from 1948, launching its new *A-Just-Rite* chair advertises steel furniture with a "modern

**Let the Xerox 660  
bring you and your secretary  
together again.**

To keep your secretary behind her desk, put a Xerox 660 beside it. The 660 lets your girl make all the copies you need right where she sits. Instead of having to walk around and wait for them. With the new 660, there's no waiting for warm-up, either. Just push a couple of buttons, and out come copies. Crisp, clear copies on ordinary untreated paper—11 a minute. And no matter how small your copying needs, new low minimum pricing makes the 660 economical for you. Borrow a 660 from Xerox. Then the only waiting your secretary will do will be waiting on you.

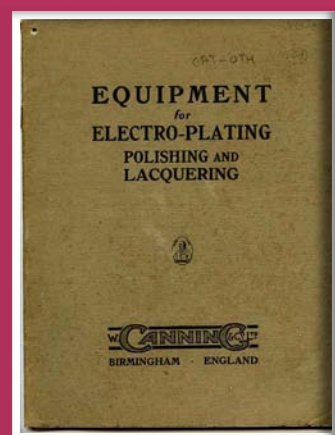
**XEROX**

December, 1960 MODERN OFFICE PROCEDURES

XEROX CORPORATION, ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14642. THE OFFICE EQUIPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED, AND ASSOCIATION WITH BARR BRADSHAW LTD., NEW YORK CITY, LONDON, AND TRADING MARK XEROX LTD., PALM BEACH, FLA. XEROX CO., LTD., TRADING MARK IN A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF XEROX CORPORATION, AND IS A TRADEMARK OF XEROX CORPORATION.

Circle 49 on Reader Service Card for more information about Xerox 660 copier

style" and "smooth edges". New features such as plastic upholstery and coloured plastic-coated table-tops, lent the furniture a minimalistic and metallic look. The post war period saw the return of structuralism and a return to the "classic" in the west. And sure enough, in the early 1950s, Art Metal furniture advertises a new line, the *De Luxe Suite* comprising steel office desks with a wooden finish. The attempt is to use the advantages of steel but make it look like wood – an attempt to return to the classic with new technology.



Printed in 1931, the catalogue of W. Canning & Co. Ltd., is the oldest one in our collection. Based in Birmingham, the company manufactured polishing lathes, mops, buffs, compositions, lacquer and circular brushes.

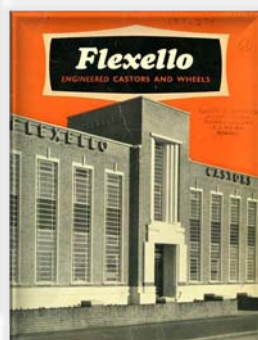
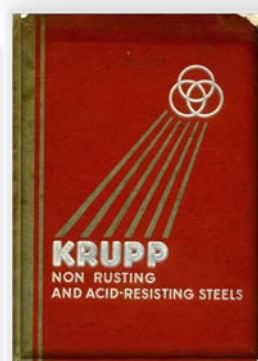
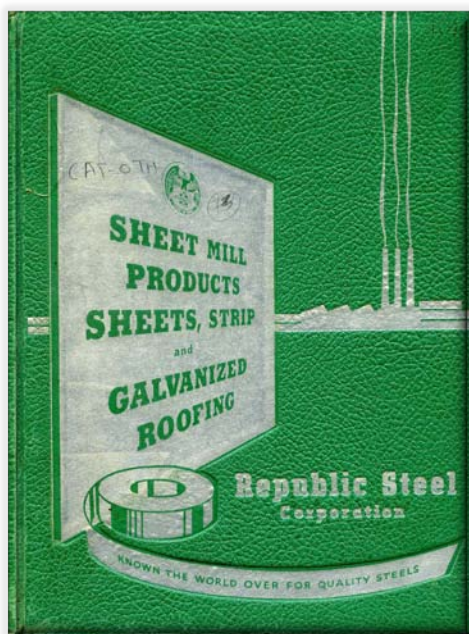
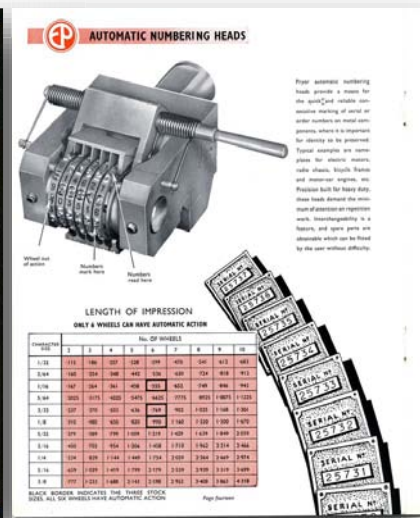
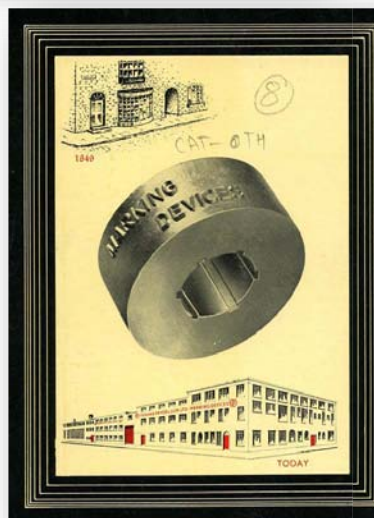


Little gems from the collection...



The catalogue of America's third largest steel company, Republic Steel Corporation's Enduro range of heat and corrosion resisting steels is a comprehensive record, showcasing the fabrication of the product and its application in various industries such as transportation, dairy, dyeing, appliances etc. This 68-page catalogue contains several striking photographs and detailed explanatory text. Godrej Archives has five such catalogues of Republic Steel in its collection.

Headquartered in Sheffield, England, Edward Pryor & Son Ltd. have been producing a wide range of permanent marking systems from 1849. Although the company today specializes in marking, automatic reading and traceability, this catalogue is from a much simpler time. Back in the 1960s, Pryors supplied marking machines such as numbering heads, punches, dies and nameplate marking equipment to 22 countries, including India.



For a hundred years manufacturers used catalogues to reach those buyers who could not come to the store. Annual or special Christmas catalogues of large retailers such as Marks & Spencers and Seers-Roebuck were eagerly awaited by children and their parents. Our collection of international catalogues on industrial equipment, steel and furniture with their bright covers in retro colours will warm the hearts of ephemera collectors and design enthusiasts. These catalogues take you back to a bygone era and show not only what was out there but what were the hot properties of the day. Godrej Archives has close to 300 international catalogues, available for research or casual browsing.

- Harini Alladi

## New in the archive

Godrej Archives received 266 files and 2253 photographs in 2014. 83 and 21 items were added to our Audio-Visual and Memorabilia collections respectively. Some of the noteworthy material received this year were:

Accession No.	Details of Item
MS14-76-5-5	Documents such as Agreement with dealers, Annual Business Plans and reviews of Godrej-GE Appliances
MS14-76-5-4	Quality Enhancement in Godrej: Includes correspondence regarding formation of steering committee and discussions held in subsequent meetings.
MS14-101-7	Files on major projects undertaken by Green Business Consultancy Services from 2006 onwards
PH14-12-100-61	Photographs of Naoroji Godrej at Diwali function and Soonuben & Jaiben Godrej participating in various welfare activities
AV14-40-7	Godrej Master-Brand Phase 2 TVC campaigns, 2014
AV14-35-1-1	Godrej Centenary song sung by singer Shaan, 1997
MB14-09-1-1	Godrej Steel Cupboard (1940s) belonging to P S Kini (customer)
MB14-10-2-1	Godrej Safe belonging to Mrs. Geeta Pendse (customer)

### Thank you Contributors :

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We'd love to engage in a dialogue. Send us your feedback and comments to [archives@godrej.com](mailto:archives@godrej.com)  
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