

# Archives and Access

*Aparna Balachandran and Rochelle Pinto*

In *Archive and Access*, Dr. Aparna Balachandran and Dr. Rochelle Pinto remind us of the larger material history of the archive fever that marks the current wave of digital humanities and big data discussions. While archiving has emerged as a ubiquitous process of the digital, there are specific politics of embeddedness, locatedness, materiality and access which the archives bring with them. The monograph posits the archive not only as a symbolic structure of authority, but as a lived space of contestation and negotiation, offering new ways of changing and forging the relationship between knowledge, archives and the state. In the monograph, Balachandran and Pinto examine the processes of archiving in a larger era of privatisation and digitisation to look at the politics of subversion, preservation and the value and worth of archiving.

Looking at the dual sites of Tamil Nadu and Goa state archives, along with the larger public and State archives in the country, the project looks at the materiality of archiving, the ambitions and aspirations of an archive, and why it is necessary to preserve archives, not as historical artefacts but as living interactive spaces of memory and remembrance. The findings have direct implications on various government and market impulses to digitise archives and show a clear link between opening up archives and other knowledge sources for breathing life into local and alternative histories. The monograph provides a new way of entering the debates around knowledge production and conditions of access which is not contained to just questions of infrastructure. Instead, we get a sense of the archive as a living artefact that invokes and references our past, and shapes and foretells the future of collected and connected learning.



## **Aparna Balachandran**

Aparna Balachandran is Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Delhi.

## **Rochelle Pinto**

Rochelle Pinto is Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Delhi. She is the author of *Between Empires: Print and Politics in Goa*.

## Researchers @ work

The Centre for Internet & Society's 'Researcher's At Work' is a series designed to build and explore the intellectual resources for mapping and understanding the complex interactions between the rise of digital and communication technologies and the spheres of living that they influence. The monographs in this series, explore embedded approaches, frameworks and historical trajectories to understand the ways in which new technologies shape the nature, form, and texture of life and living in contemporary times. The (CIS-RAW) series was designed to build local intellectual resources for mapping and understanding the complex interactions between the rise of digital and internal technologies and the spheres of living that they influence.

# internet, society and space in indian cities

*Pratyush Shankar*

Pratyush Shankar's research on Internet, Society and Space in India, addresses the question that haunts much of the discourse around cyberspaces — the separation of the real and the virtual, or RL (Real Life) and VR (Virtual Reality). Instead of continuing the existing discourse in built environments where technologies are either objects to be housed, or tools in the service of planning, Shankar locates the digital in the context of the IT City, exploring the relationships between physical cities, public planning policies, and plans for urban infrastructure building. His work explores how the digital provides new conceptual frameworks, visualisations and topographies through which the urban is being restructured in India. Simultaneously it also explores how the digital is able to push at the boundaries of traditional understandings of space and the ways in which they can be used.

The monograph deploys a team of students from the field of architecture and urban design to investigate how city spaces — the material as well as the experiential — is changing under the rubric of digital globalisation. Placing his inquiry in the built form, Shankar manoeuvres discourse from architecture, design, cultural studies and urban geography to look at the notions of cyber-publics, digital spaces, and planning policy in India. The findings show that the relationship between cities and cyberspaces need to be seen as located in a dynamic set of negotiations and not as a mere infrastructure question. It dismantles the presumptions that have informed public and city planning in the country by producing alternative futures of users' interaction and mapping of the emerging city spaces.



## **Pratyush Shankar**

Pratyush Shankar is an Associate Professor and Head of the Undergraduate Programme at the Faculty of Architecture, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology, Ahmedabad, India. His teaching interests include urban history and theory, design studio and Himalayan architecture. Pratyush along with his students are actively looking at the key characteristics of Indian cities from the point of view of their social and cultural relevance. He received the Ford Asia Fellowship in 2008-9 to research on the cities and public places in Nepal Himalayas. He has been instrumental in starting a course titled "Cyberculture and the City" at CEPT University as an outcome of this monograph on "Internet, Society and Space in the Indian City".

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# The Last Cultural Mile

*Ashish Rajadhyaksha*

Ashish Rajadhyaksha, in his monograph on *The Last Cultural Mile*, provides an alternative history to Information and Communication Technologies in India, looking at its relationship with infrastructure, citizenship and new conditions of governance. The monograph takes up the challenge of dealing with the existing narratives on their own terms, taking up the much prevalent idea of 'last mile' as the catalyst for technology mediated development and governance, and examining it through a history of relationships between the modern Indian nation state and technologies of governance. Beginning by mapping technology onto developmentalist-democratic priorities which propelled communication technologies since at least the invention of radio in India, the project conceives of the 'last mile' as a mode of techno-democracy, where connectivity has been directly translated into democratic citizenship.

Especially given the rapidly changing nature of governance in the country, from unique identification projects to e-governance initiatives that take on the development problems of the 'broadcast nation state', Rajadhyaksha's analysis through sites of education, regulation, policy and identity, helps look at the larger mechanisms and machineries of the state which support and are transformed through the introduction of the digital. The analysis looks at contemporary debates on policy, pedagogy and practice by offering a new prism to explore instances like the Unique Identity Project without falling into older partisan positions that these projects often inspire. Mapping a range of state ambitions from being a nuclear imagination to becoming a 'SMART' state, and examining the conceptual paradigm of communication within governance, the monograph examines the contemporary as one in a larger history of state interventions to breach the last mile for efficient governance.



## **Ashish Rajadhyaksha**

Ashish Rajadhyaksha is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Study of Culture & Society, Bangalore. He is the author of *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency* (2009), and co-author, with Paul Willemen, of the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (2001).

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# Porn, Law, video technology

*Namita A. Malhotra*

The Internet in India has had many problem children, of which pornography and access to adult content has probably been one of the most notorious. The availability of pornographic content coupled with new forms of social interaction through networking platforms, especially against the backdrop of growing gendered and sexuality violence has been a concern for most of the stakeholders. It is a mixed problem that necessitates some forms of regulation, which, net-porn, because of its very nature, escapes, and also a problem that has severe ramifications about the freedom of speech and expression, censorship and authoritarian control of online content.

Namita A. Malhotra, in her monograph on 'Porn, Law, Video Technology', changes the stake of this debate by building a framework that charts out the rather tricky terrains of working with pornography. The monograph finds a new point of entry into existing debates by looking at legal construction of pleasure through different technologies of mass consumption. The monograph suggests that pornography is a mode of engagement with technology — erotic, engendered, intimate, and perverse. In the law's inability to deal with this affective, subjective and personal investment in production, consumption and distribution of material that can be deemed pornographic, Malhotra recognises the potentials of revisiting debates around obscenity, morality, late-modernity and cultural production in India. Malhotra produces a comprehensive over-view of different debates, both in the West and in India, to concentrate on how the visual aesthetics of pornography, the new circuits of pornographic consumption, the privilege of affect over regulation lead to possibilities of interaction and negotiation with heteronormative power structures in the country. The monograph demonstrates how the grey zones of pornography and the law's inability to deal with it, offer new conceptual tools of understanding the spaces of digital interaction and identity.



**Namita A. Malhotra**

Namita A Malhotra is a researcher, writer and media practitioner. She works at Alternative Lawit Forum and Pad.ma (Public Access Digital Media Archive). Her current obsessions are technology, video, law and affect. She is interested in exploring these via interdisciplinary research, video and art practices and collaborative models of knowledge production and archiving. Her works have been published by Association for Progressive Communication, Public Service Broadcasting Trust (India) and Yoda Press and her media/art/database works have been shown in Bangalore, Delhi, Jakarta and Athens. They engage with information and media politics in form and content, with a focus on technology, remixing practices and open video.

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# Re:Wiring Bodies

*Dr. Asha Achuthan*

Re:Wiring Bodies is one of the first interventions from a feminist epistemology of Science standpoint, examining the relationship between body and technology in India. It initiates a historical research inquiry, beginning with the nationalist debates between Gandhi and Tagore, to the neo-liberal ICT4D perspectives produced by feminists like Martha Nussbaum, and offers a unique entry point into cybercultures discourse that traces new historical origins and ontologies for the debates around questions of bodies and technology. It locates the contemporary anxieties around body, gender, sexuality and the future of being human, within a larger history of science and technology, and the ways in which science policy, technology visions and development agendas have created legacies of experiencing, living, shaping and designing our bodies within a technological complex.

The monograph identifies a pre-history to the communication narratives that often imagine the digital as beginning only in the late 1990s. By charting four epochs in the political and cultural approaches to science and technology in India, and by re-introducing the biological body and its spheres of life into the debates around technology, the monograph creates a framework that unpacks 'attitudes to technology' to provide a strong critique, not only of the access and rights based approach to understanding digital technology, but also to the forced separation and construction of technology as discrete from the human body and subject. Re:Wiring Bodies introduces a new set of histories that need to be addressed even as we live in intimate contact with technologies, in a continuous process of being and becoming cyborgs.



**Asha Achuthan**

Dr. Asha Achuthan works with the Centre for Contemporary Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. She graduated in medicine (M.B.B.S.) in 1992 from Medical College, Calcutta and thereafter did a diploma in Ophthalmology in 1998 from the Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, Medical College, Calcutta and MPhil (Women's Studies) in 2003 from the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta. She has a PhD from the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore, on Feminism and Science.

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# special issue: community informatics and open government data

*Zainab Bawa*

One of the biggest concerns about internet studies in India and other similar developed contexts is the object oriented approach that looks largely at specific usages, access, infrastructure, etc. However, it is necessary to understand that the Internet is not merely a tool or a gadget. The growth of Internets produces systemic changes at the level of process and thought. The technologies often get appropriated for governance both by the State and the Civil Society, producing new processes and dissonances which need to be charted. The contemporary processes that the digital and internet technologies bring, drastically recalibrate the relationship between the State, the Market and the Citizen.

Zainab Bawa's critical interventions, in curating and collecting different ideas around transparency and openness examine the emergence of Internet technologies, the rise of e-governance initiatives and the way in which the rhetoric of 'transparency' has informed different modes of citizen engagement with the state in India. The project produces case-studies of various e-governance models that have been variously experimented within India, to see how Internet technologies through their material presence, through different paradigms of interaction, and through the imagination in policy have brought about a significant change in the state-citizen relationship. Through the special journal issue focusing on the politics of community informatics, Bawa brings together a multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary dialogue around the nature, content, politics and form of activism and practice, negotiation and contestations of the open and the free.

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