

Sustaining an Open-Access Journal: Lessons for the Future

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The inaugural event of *Reading the Archive* was held on 14 September 2025 at the India International Centre, New Delhi. The formal release of the first volume of the journal was followed by a special lecture by Prof. Madhavan K. Palat on 'Genocide: Barbarism in Civilization in the Twentieth Century'. The lecture was chaired by Prof. Salil Misra and was attended by a wide fraternity of established and budding scholars. It was seen as a promising enterprise for the future of graduate student research, encouraging a strengthened resolve for sustained efforts to carry forward this endeavour.

Much has changed since the publication of the maiden issue of *Reading the Archive*. The sudden surge in the use of generative AI (artificial intelligence)-based tools in academic writing poses serious ethical and methodological challenges for the future of academic journals. The accessibility of this technology has impacted the nature of submissions, invariably bearing the imprint of AI. Almost all submissions make use of AI software — ranging from various versions of ChatGPT to Grammarly — for refinement of language. This dynamically evolving challenge must be viewed through the lens of opportunity and ethical responsibility. There exists a substantive debate about who holds the copyright over content created by AI tools. For a new academic journal that seeks to establish a benchmark for research undertaken by young scholars, the ethical need for human-generated academic content is fundamental to sustaining a viable future for the journal.

There are a variety of positions on the use of AI software for academic learning, ranging from dismissiveness to whole-hearted embrace. However, there is little nuance in these binary discussions. One is reminded of similar debates at the dawn of the Internet age in the early twenty-first century. Like the internet and the advent of email, there do not seem to be any possibilities for the reversal of AI technology. The fundamental question, however, is

whether this will bring redundancy to the academic enterprise. These were the very questions being asked when Google occupied *Britannica's* space. The questions of veracity and verifiability of content on the internet remain relevant in the age of AI as well. These questions must also have been relevant when token currency was replacing gold and silver, and when memory was transitioning to print capitalism. To address some of these concerns, the editors of the journal made it mandatory for all authors to voluntarily declare the nature and extent of the use of AI in their submissions. The journal is yet to evolve a policy on the ethical use of AI, and this acknowledgement is merely a first step towards addressing this challenge.

The present issue has contributions spanning across and intermingling with a variety of disciplines. This, to us, is an encouraging sign, since the journal continuously seeks to expand the boundaries of what constitutes an archive. We have research papers focusing on performance archives, postal services, archival practices, letters, the visual archives of 1857, memory, women-led peace movements, gallantry awards, opium smuggling, and the epics. A Hindi translation of a hitherto lesser-known essay by Hegel, published in 1808, is a first. The reviews also cover a wide range of themes in anthropology, literature, archival studies, history, political science, film, and museum studies. We wish to sustain this ebb and flow of thematic variety and hence, foster the convergence of disciplinary boundaries while also encouraging the exploration of new themes within the multifarious domains of archival research.