

Overview

The mission of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, Inc. is to promote research and scholarship in Tibetan Buddhism and advance the preservation of the Tibetan cultural heritage by making its literary tradition widely available in the form of digital images.

Current Programs

1. Development a global electronic library

- Preserve texts by using the latest digital imaging technology to create an extensive digital archive.
- Promote an active plan of acquisitions.
- Preserve and collect electronic documents from input projects around the world.
- Facilitate and train other organizations in the use of digital technology for the preservation of texts.

2. Development of on-line reference tools for the Tibetan literary tradition

- Provide an encyclopedic research database and the means to search it.

3. Development of a Tibetan studies research center

- Provide bibliographic and research services
- Pursue collaborations with related projects
- Promote a standard of excellence in Tibetan translations
- Promote the development of computer technologies for Tibetan studies
- Develop methodologies for data sharing of bibliographic information between organizations.

Communities Served

- ❖ Tibetan Buddhist lineage holders
- ❖ The entire Buddhist community including translators, scholars and practitioners
- ❖ Researchers and scholars of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, and also of areas associated with Tibetan Buddhism such as India, China, Bhutan, Mongolia, and Nepal
- ❖ Inter-disciplinary researchers and scholars in fields such as comparative religion, philosophy, literature, and linguistics and anthropology

Time Urgency

Despite the ravages of time and circumstance, a surprising number of the original texts have survived. However, what remains is rapidly deteriorating. The potential loss of important historical knowledge and lineage information is so great that it puts the living traditions at risk, thus threatening a significant part of the creative heritage of the world. Yet, preservation of this heritage is possible if efforts are concerted and immediate. From this perspective, the work of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center is urgent. The Center offers a coherent site for the discovery and identification, collection and cataloguing of the texts.

The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center is the only not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization in the world that has as its sole mission the dissemination of information on the distinct cultural heritage of Tibet and all its spiritual traditions through its religious and secular literature. At the Center's core is the personal library of Executive Director E. Gene Smith, a retired foreign service officer of the US Library of Congress. Mr. Smith's unrivaled knowledge of the Tibetan world forms the heart of the encyclopedic database that is now in progress. The better part of TBRC's library consists of volumes published under the auspices of the PL480, Tibetan Text Publication Project initiated by Mr. Smith in India more than thirty years ago. The Center's project of acquiring all current Tibetan publications from India, Nepal, Bhutan, and China has already made it the most comprehensive and diverse library of Tibetan texts in the world.

Programs

1- Electronic Library

"During the 1960s and 1970s, the US Library of Congress sponsored the wholesale reprinting of thousands of Tibetan texts gathered from Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, and elsewhere. These texts, which were liberally supplied to subscribing American institutions through the US Government's PL-480 program, formed the essential base for the ever-expanding growth of Tibetan Studies that began in the 1970s. As a result Tibetologists have become able to study such diverse topics as Tibetan art, politics, history, linguistics, religion, medicine, etc. through use of this massive body of primary Tibetan source materials previously unavailable outside Tibet..."

*Elliot Sperling, Professor, Department of
Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana
University*

2- ONLINE REFERENCE TOOLS

The research database will function as an online public access catalogue for bibliographic information. Through the use of a topical index, and a user-friendly search engine, the reference tool will provide a way to navigate the immense body of Tibetan literature. By making the digital images available on the Internet, the tool will become an on-demand publishing medium for a plethora of Tibetan texts.

Based on the extensive collection in hand, its active acquisitions program, accessibility to rare volumes and editions and its emphasis on shared international resources and bibliographic and library service, TBRC is well poised to further the development of an electronic library of Tibetan texts.

Preserving the texts using the latest digital imaging technology will be done both in the U.S and in India. A coordinated effort requires a robust digital imaging system that is both sensitive to the quality of the texts and the requirements for high volume batch scanning. While 1700 texts have been scanned to date, the development of a uniform and reliable imaging system is currently underway to handle the challenges that a substantial increase in the size of the image archive has created.

TBRC's mission is becoming more visible and other organizations are turning to TBRC for assistance in the use of digital technology. In order to facilitate and train other organizations in the use of digital technology for the preservation of texts, TBRC is developing standardized systems that include software, hardware and manuals, for the use of these organizations. With the development of expertise in this area, TBRC will hope to propagate the use of digital technology for the preservation of texts worldwide.

Western methods of cataloguing Tibetan texts do not provide an adequate level of detail, or granularity, to a referenced work. Collected works – which may contain up to 230 volumes, 700 pages each, of the writings of a particular master or tradition– are catalogued with a single bibliographic record to the entire work. Currently, researching a collected work is like attempting to use an encyclopedia without the benefit of an alphabetical arrangement of the topics.

TBRC's online reference tools will greatly extend and enhance access to the content of texts. One such tool under development is an encyclopedic database that will make it possible to research scholarly information to find bibliographic details, and will include extensive biographical and geographical information about an author. An interrelated tool will provide direct links from the researched references to e-books in the Center's digital collection and from other input works.

The encyclopedic database builds on the scholarship initiated by E. Gene Smith more than 35 years ago as he began to catalogue the PL-480 Library of Congress Tibetan collection. The database captures colophon information, long and short titles, title pages, tables of contents, page extents, and chapter descriptions, authors' names and their variations, biographical and topic indexes, and geographic locations referenced by latitude and longitude coordinates as well as by local, county, prefecture, and province levels. The scope of this undertaking is prodigious, requiring considerable erudition and attention to detail.

The final reference tool will make it possible to cross-index all of this information (using Sanskrit diacritics, Tibetan scripts, and Roman transliteration) with digitized e-books. The reference tool will be completely compatible with those of the US Library of Congress such that the entire community including other libraries can use the database and the digital texts

collaboratively on the Internet.

3- TIBETAN STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER

“Gene Smith has always been gracious in providing vital information to scholars or students in the fields of Tibetology and Indology. By his personal example and his thorough knowledge, he has enriched many and thus strengthened the field of Tibetology and elevated it to a major Asian cultural stature....”

Lobsang Lhalungpa, Teacher and Translator of Buddhist Texts

TBRC is providing bibliographic and research services and is already known as a valued resource to researchers and institutions worldwide. The Executive Director regularly receives and responds to requests for bibliographic and historical information.

In addition, TBRC is pursuing collaboration on related projects that include collaboration with the University of Virginia on a computerized encyclopedia of Tibetan history and religion, and work with the Tibetan Digital Archives, Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative, and the Cultural Atlas of China.

TBRC is in an ideal position to promote a standard of excellence for Tibetan translations. With the use of its reference tools, TBRC hopes to increase access to scholarship and through its advocacy of collaborative efforts, the most accurate and elegant translations will become available.

By uniting its scholarly mission with its technological mission, TBRC is promoting the development of Tibetan computer technologies. TBRC will work with other institutions, such as the National Digital Library Program of the US Library of Congress, and also sponsor cooperation among scholars in the field of digital library development and technology standards. The Center will test the most promising solutions and create flexible reference tools for the Tibetan literary heritage. Using internationally accepted standards, TBRC will develop software interfaces to allow connections on the Internet between users, other libraries, and electronic archives.

Staff Projection

As funding becomes available, the Center will include the following permanent staff:

- ◆ Executive Director
- ◆ Tibetan Studies Research Assistant
- ◆ Information Technology Manager
- ◆ Office Manager
- ◆ Image Specialist
- ◆ Permanent Work-Study position for students

Contract consultants might include a web developer, a database developer or a development consultant.

As much as is possible, members of the staff and consulting team, and volunteers and interns will have knowledge of the Tibetan and Chinese languages, and Tibetan literature, culture, history, and spiritual traditions.

Budget & Funding

Keys to the success of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center's mission are good planning and suitable staffing, technical infrastructure, and resource development. The scope of the project, including the bibliographic and research service, the continuing collection of textual materials, the creation of the encyclopedic database, the technological development of the digital archives, integrating the reference and search tools to international standards, and the mounting of these tools seamlessly on the Internet, is projected to require funding of approximately \$2 million for the first three years of a ten-year project.

While initial funding has secured a solid base, the promulgation of TBRC's work requires further infusions of capital. In these first three years, the Center has equipped an office with computers, printers, and scanners and set up a local area network; created software infrastructure for the database; developed a search engine and mounted on the Internet; linked the database on the web to our archives of digital texts; input twenty-five percent of the total data and make significant progress in digitizing texts. All this is in addition to responding on an ongoing basis to the requests of clients, pursuing international discovery and collection of the texts, and facilitating cooperation among all those interested in the field has been done by a small group of paid and volunteer positions

To begin full operations, the need of funding is urgent. We have scanned 1700 volumes to date and are beginning to develop process control standards. In order to purchase equipment and hire a staff of dedicated professionals, the Center is now actively seeking funding.

While a broad base of support will be sought, the infrastructure requirements of the Center's early years call for initial and substantial multi-year gifts.

We welcome your contribution to the Center at this critical moment.

Board of Directors

Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp President	Professor of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, Harvard University Doctorate, University of Hamburg, 1983 Recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, 1993
E. Gene Smith Executive Director	Former Field Director, US Library of Congress, New Delhi, India, 1974–1985 Director of the Tibetan Text Publication PL-480 Project, Library of Congress
David Lunsford Secretary	Former Director of Advanced Technology, Dell Computer Corporation, Inc. Founder of the Bodhi Foundation
Derek Kolleeny Treasurer	Chief Financial Officer, Greyston Foundation, a not-for-profit community development organization; retains a particular interest in translations
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Lama Thubten Zopa	Buddhist teacher and Spiritual Director, Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT)
Michele E. Martin	Professional translator for Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche (currently tutor to H.H. the Karmapa)
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