

## **The Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP)**

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### **An endangered tradition**

The Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP) was formed for the purpose of preserving the endangered Indo-Tibetan Buddhist literature and making it available to scholars, libraries and researchers. This important body of literature, widespread throughout Central Asia for hundreds of years, was almost completely lost in this century due to unfavorable political and economic circumstances. Some of these books are now the last surviving copy that remains in the world. Other books were saved from oblivion through the efforts of libraries such as the U.S. Library of Congress but it is often difficult for scholars to get access to them. Moreover, it has been almost impossible for these books to reach the people who can use them the most: the more than 10,000 Tibetan Buddhist monk-scholars who are living as refugees in India. But now all of this is starting to change.

### **A virtual library of 100,000 pages of Indo-Tibetan literature**

Since 1987, ACIP has been training Tibetan refugees in South Asia to type these endangered books onto computer disks. The Project has established data entry centers in more than a dozen Tibetan refugee communities: monasteries, nunneries, and lay settlements. The ACIP electronic database now contains over 100,000 pages of Buddhist literature from the Kangyur, Tengyur, and Sungbum collections. The typings of the books are put on diskettes, CD-ROMs and the Internet, and are distributed to scholars and researchers around the world, freely and without charge. ACIP also trains the Tibetan refugees in computerized typesetting; in the past year alone, more than 30 different titles were published as Tibetan monastic textbooks using typed data contained on ACIP disks. So now the refugee Tibetan monk-scholars are finally able to get the important books that they need for their Buddhist education. Wages paid by ACIP for the data entry work provides support to about 2,000 Tibetans in the refugee communities of South Asia.

### **Electronic catalog of Tibetan collections in St. Petersburg, Russia**

Only a small fraction of the Tibetan Buddhist literature reached India following the Communist invasion of Tibet. Therefore, we must look outside of India to find the books that need to be recovered and preserved. For this purpose, ACIP initiated a unique

cooperative effort to catalog the important collections of Tibetan Buddhist books held in St. Petersburg, Russia. The St. Petersburg Catalog created by ACIP now contains entries for nearly 60,000 separate titles. A CD-ROM dedicated to this electronic catalog was released in September of 1997 to celebrate the 50,000th title. Like the typings of the books, this catalog is distributed freely and without charge. The work in St. Petersburg will require at least another 10 years.

### **Electronic catalog of Tibetan collections in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**

The Tibetan Buddhist collections of St. Petersburg are extensive, comprising about 200,000 separate works. They are second in size only to the Buddhist collections of Mongolia, where ACIP recently signed agreements to catalog the estimated 1.6 million titles held in the two major libraries of Ulaanbaatar. This unprecedented opportunity was made possible, firstly, by our close relationship with the Mongolian monks at the head monastery of Gandan Tekchenling; and secondly, because the success of our cataloging efforts in St. Petersburg is well known to the Director and staff of the Mongolian State Library. These two libraries in Ulaanbaatar will certainly yield many rare literary treasures in the years to come.

### **New opportunities and projects**

ACIP continually encounters unique opportunities for preserving the extraordinary and endangered Indo-Tibetan Buddhist literature and making it freely available to the world, now and for the future. For example, the cataloging and input work in Mongolia is an entirely new operation; funding for this effort is not yet finalized. Meanwhile, at the request of the Russians, ACIP has already begun to create a digital image archive --to record each and every folio page-- of the Tibetan collections in St. Petersburg. In India, we constantly receive requests from the Tibetan refugee communities to open new data entry centers; expansion is limited only by the level of available funds and other resources.

Much of this work is time-sensitive: although the people who hold the official posts and the general political climate in the places we work are now favorable, these circumstances could change at any time. So there is a certain urgency to our task -- to preserve and record as much of the Buddhist literature as possible while we still enjoy the opportunity to do so.

## **Announcing ACIP Release IV: A Thousand Books of Wisdom**

This CD-ROM contains a virtual library of Indo-Tibetan literature and research materials. It incorporates a new Windows 95 user interface that enables easy access to more than 1,000 complete Buddhist books, in addition to the other information contained on the CD-ROM. ACIP does not charge for the release data, though we do request a small donation to help cover the cost of materials and shipping.

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All released texts and other materials are available for free download from the ACIP website.

### **Purpose of ACIP**

- Locate & catalog important, endangered Buddhist literature
- Preserve this material in digital format
- Disseminate in a useable form
- Provide tools and reference materials
- Source of technical support & information

### **ACIP Highlights**

- More than 120,000 pages input over last 11 years
- All texts are typed twice and verified for accuracy
- Data can be used on any computer system
- Run as a public service, materials are offered free of charge (by donation) on CD-ROM and via the Internet

### Target Literature

- Kangyur = Tibetan Tripitaka
  - 81,600 pages (about 100 volumes)
- Tengyur = classical commentaries
  - 147,000 pages (more than 200 volumes)
- Sungbum = native Tibetan commentaries
  - millions of pages
  - focus on capturing a complete tradition
- Reference materials

### Text Input Overview

- Texts are typed exactly as in the original
- Input work is done by refugee Tibetans
  - they gain a marketable skill
  - their wages support local communities
- ACIP provides training and equipment
- Support of native scholastic tradition
  - scholarship fund
  - textbooks printed from ACIP data

### Data Entry in India

- Trained more than 140 people in 15 locations
- Monasteries, nunneries, lay communities

### Catalog Project in Mongolia

- Signed agreements with the major libraries
- Estimated 1.6 million titles in U.B.
- Can expect to find rare texts
- Mongolians will share much of the work
- All logistics in place; funding still needed

*ACIP is now actively seeking partners/sponsors for this cataloging work in Mongolia*

### Beyond the Words

- Non-textual aspects of Buddhist culture

- Line drawings in texts
- Texts of special ornamental design
- Drawings and paintings
- Sculpture
- Traditional architecture
- Sacred dance, music and performance arts

#### St. Petersburg Catalog

- Nearly 60,000 titles completed (of 200,000)
- Catalog distributed electronically
  - dedicated CD-ROM released in Sep '97
  - included on Release IV CD-ROM
- Creating a digital image archive
 

*already started in Russia; the complete works of Cone Lama Drakpa Shedrup have been digitally imaged and sent to India for input*

  - a means of text acquisition for ACIP input

*bringing important texts located in Mongolia and Russia to ACIP's extensive pool of labor in India*

  - also plan image acquisition in Mongolia
  - 2 possible methods

*digital photography; or conventional photography with digitalization of film images via a special scanner*

#### ACIP Opportunities

- Requests from refugee communities in India to open new data entry centers
  - nominal operating costs & high productivity

*typical costs are \$350 to \$800 per month, depending on the size of the data entry center*
- Opportunities in Russia & Mongolia
  - now we have a chance, but situation could change
- Requests from Buryatia, Tuva, & Kalmykia
 

*additional funding is required before these requests can be honored*

#### The Future...

- Continued, faster data entry & cataloging
  - expansion limited only by funding

*input of particular texts or collections of texts can be sponsored by interested persons or organizations*

- Digital images linked to typed data
  - vital to manual proofreading & editing stages
  - applications for optical character recognition
- On-line Contextual Dictionary (OCD)
  - Tibetan & English linked in bilingual materials
- Enhanced mark-up & hyperlinking of texts
  - by users of ACIP data (?)

#### ACIP Release IV

##### *A Thousand Books of Wisdom*

- Cumulative of all previously released data
  - Over 1,000 complete Buddhist books
- can be used on virtually any computer, including DOS/Windows, Mac, Unix, etc.*
- Catalogs and other reference materials
  - *AsiaView* Windows 95 user interface

##### Features of *AsiaView*

- Provides easy access to the texts & graphics
- Can view and print texts in Tibetan script
  - now Tibetans can use ACIP database directly
- Supports sophisticated searching