

## **Rethinking Scholarship: Data Analytics in Chinese Buddhist Philology**

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Data may construct reality or vice versa. From an epistemological perspective, data are representations of observations, objects, or other entities used as evidence of phenomena for the purposes of research or scholarship. Thus, almost anything can be considered data in the humanities; it is the act of using something as evidence that creates data. This talk is drawn from a case study of a Chinese Buddhist philologist whose scholarship employs evidence from all manner of material objects and digital resources to study the communication of Buddhist texts c. 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. His early work with digital objects and digital publishing remains available only as images of text, lacking migration to new forms of technology. He was an early adopter of CBETA, the digital counterpart of the Taisho edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon. As CBETA expanded in scope and in tools over the course of a decade, it grew in value as a data source. His research questions and methods evolved, employing CBETA as a “microscope and a telescope.” Because these new tools are integrated into a knowledge infrastructure that serves his community, his scholarly products have become more portable across platforms, increasing the likelihood they will be sustained. However, these infrastructures remain fragile as they depend on the invisible work of the monks who curate the content and the technologies. The talk will set the Chinese scholarship case study in a broader context of data in scholarly communication, drawn from the author’s recent book, *Big Data, Little Data, No Data, Scholarship in the Networked World* (MIT Press, 2015).