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Buddhist-Christian Scholarship and the World Wide Web

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The Internet and the World Wide Web have had an enormous effect on academic scholarship by transforming the way scholars conduct research and publish its results. But for some, the ease of access to information offered by the Web is more than offset by the difficulty of identifying which Web research resources and publications are authoritative and which are not. Before the Web, high-quality scholarship could be easily identified because it appeared in carefully edited books and peer-reviewed journals produced by recognized publishers and collected by academic libraries. This is still the case, of course, but the Web now offers a parallel universe of research resources largely lacking the same identifying marks of quality and authority. In an effort to provide some guidance in navigating this realm, which still feels much more like the wild frontier than a library, I will attempt to list some of the basic Web resources in Buddhist and Christian scholarship and provide some guidelines for locating authoritative material beyond the basic sources. I will list the websites mentioned in the following paragraphs with their Web addresses (also called uniform resource locators, or URLs) at the end of this article.

Beginning with resources for both Christian and Buddhist scholarship, researchers in religious studies should be familiar with the ATLA Religion Database, which includes the American Theological Library Association's print indexes *Religion Index One*, *Religion Index Two*, and *Index to Book Reviews in Religion*. Indexing journals and book collections of essays, but not monographs, it has proven to be an indispensable tool. However, it goes back only to 1949, and therefore other indexes would need to be consulted. During the course of the previous century, Western philosophers became more aware of the great philosophers of Asia. This is reflected in the *Philosopher's Index*, a tool that indexes journal articles, essays, and monographs. Its coverage goes back to 1940. A more specialized index, the Buddhist-Christian Studies Database (BCSD), is available as a free site. As its editor, I welcome any citation submissions for published articles, essays, and books as well as unpublished conference papers. Any papers residing on a stable website can be linked to BCSD in order to provide

immediate access. Still in the process of being created, its coverage will go back only to 1981.

Because much of the indexing available on the Web concentrates on the most recent decades, the researcher who needs indexes for articles published earlier than the 1940s will need to take the time to become familiar with a number of other potentially useful tools. One example is Periodical Index Online, an interdisciplinary index (mostly humanities) with coverage going back to the late eighteenth century. Another is Humanities and Social Sciences Index Retrospective, 1907–1984.

Important reference works on the Web include the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed.; the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed.; and the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, all Web versions of the multivolume sets.

I should add that the works listed thus far require subscriptions, but most research libraries have acquired access to them.

Two important free reference works should be mentioned: the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Catholic Encyclopedia. The latter title is the Web version of the print set published in the early twentieth century, and as such it offers an interesting comparison to its post-Vatican II version, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Topics appearing in both works can be compared to see how thinking changed during that critical fifty-year period.

Scholarship of the Christian tradition is well served by the availability of authoritative primary texts on the Web. The major resources are the Patrologia Latina Database, the Patriologiae Graecae, and more recent critical editions in the Library of Latin Texts, which provides the most important patristic works, an extensive corpus of Medieval Latin literature, and works of *recentior latinitas* including texts from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The texts have been taken from Brepols's Corpus Christianorum series and from other important editions. Images of original sixteenth- and seventeenth-century book pages as well as their more easily readable digitized contents are available in two resources, the Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts and the Digital Library of the Catholic Reformation. Web resources devoted to individual theologians are few, but there are two sites with the complete works of Martin Luther and Karl Barth in the original German.

The locations of authoritative Buddhist primary text sites are more difficult to determine, but there are certain search strategies the scholar can use to identify potentially useful material. One good tool to start with is WorldCat, a bibliographic database of more than 75 million bibliographic records in over nine thousand libraries around the world. In its "Advanced Search" mode, one can limit searches to Internet resources while searching for specific authors and titles. When reviewing the results lists, the researcher can select a promising bibliographic record, click on its "Libraries Worldwide" link, and discover which libraries have chosen to link their online catalogs to the Web resource that is being cited in the bibliographic record. The assumption here is that if one or more major research libraries have decided to include a bibliographic record of a spe-

cific Web resource in their own catalogues, the resource must have some value. Of course, the researcher's own expertise may lead him or her to use other criteria (e.g., familiarity with the website's creator) and evaluate the resource differently.

Another approach is to use Google, but with care, to refine the search using certain limiters (in particular the website limiter) and a willingness to experiment with different search terms. I tried the following search: site:.edu+internet+"sacred texts"+buddhism. The first element of my search—site:.edu—limits the results to academic websites. The use of quotation marks around the second element—"sacred texts"—defines the search as a search for a phrase, not a search for two words that may or may not be adjacent to each other. The plus sign means that the term or phrase must be in any webpage found by Google. In testing this search, I scanned the results to see if I recognized any particular university, and then, when I entered a particular academic site, I checked to see if I recognized the people or organization involved in its creation. I also experimented with the following search: site:.edu + buddhism + library + guide. Both searches came up with interesting possibilities, for example, the Asian Classic Input Project, Access to Insight, and the Internet Sacred Text Archive.

Another way to find material on the Web is to see what links are listed on reputable websites that act as directories of Web resources. Here are two:

1. Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Religion: This site includes links to sites with course syllabi as well as primary texts. Click on "Resources" in the right column, then on "Internet Guide to Religion." On the next page, a link to Buddhism appears in the right-hand column under "Religions." When this link is clicked, a page will appear with a long table of entries and links. The second column can be clicked to sort the entries by type. Two types that may be of special interest are "e-text" and "Web." Note that most entries are annotated and some are ranked as "top site."
2. John Jaeger, "World Religions on the Web: A Guide to Some of the Most Helpful Sites." *C&RL News* 63, no. 6 (June 2002): 426–429. Although written five years ago, Jaeger's review article is still valuable. Some of the links are dead, but a Google search for the Web resource's title can lead to a new Web address. Remember to use quotation marks around the title.

Clearly, using the Web is still an adventure for scholars seeking reliable texts, particularly Buddhist texts, but excellent and authoritative sites are available. The more one experiments with search strategies, the greater the possibility some useful material will be found. Although still far from the great treasure house of organized information that libraries have traditionally been, the Web is now a vital part of our intellectual environment. The task of finding the right text or the essential commentary will continue to be a challenge, but given the

speed with which the information revolution has taken place, it may not be too long before the World Wide Web will be the scholar's primary locus of recorded knowledge.

WEBLIOGRAPHY

This list also appears on the Buddhist-Christian Studies Database Web site (<http://www.bc.edu/bcsd>) with live links to facilitate access. Resources with an asterisk (*) require a subscription for access. Please note: The links below are not for access but to freely available information about the resource. The resources requiring subscriptions are commonly found in larger academic libraries.

Access to Insight: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/>. English translations of Theravada texts.

Asian Classics Input Project: <http://www.asianclassics.org/>. Transliterated Buddhist texts in Sanskrit and Tibetan with English translations. Much of the work is being done in India by Tibetan refugees.

*ATLA Religion Database: http://www.atla.com/products/catalogs/catalogs_rdb.html.

Catholic Encyclopedia: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>.

*The Digital Karl Barth Library: <http://www.alexanderstreetpress.com/products/bart.htm>.

*Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts: <http://www.alexanderstreetpress.com/products/tcpt.htm>.

*Digital Library of the Catholic Reformation: <http://www.alexanderstreetpress.com/products/dlcr.htm>.

**Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed.: <http://www.galegroup.com/>. Click on "Catalog" in the left-hand column. On the next page, type "Encyclopedia of Religion" in the title search box, and click on the "eBook version" link when the search results appear.

*Humanities and Social Sciences Index Retrospective, 1907–1984: http://www.hwwilson.com/Databases/ssi_hum_retro.htm.

Internet Sacred Text Archive: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>. English translations of Buddhist texts using familiar out-of-copyright editions.

Jaeger, John. "World Religions on the Web: A Guide to Some of the Most Helpful Sites." *C&RL News* 63, no. 6 (June 2002): 426–429. On the Web: <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2002/june/worldreligions.htm>.

*Library of Latin Texts Online: http://www.brepolis.net/info/info_clt_en.html.

*Luthers Werke im WWW: <http://luther.chadwyck.co.uk/>.

**New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed.: <http://www.galegroup.com/>. Follow the same directions as for the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, but type "New Catholic Encyclopedia" in the title search box.

*Patrologia Latina Database: <http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>.

**Patrologiae Graecae*: <http://phoenix.retech.org/Migne.html>.

*Periodicals Index Online: <http://pio.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing.do>.

*Philosopher's Index: <http://www.philinfo.org/>.

*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.rep.routledge.com>.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>.

Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion: <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/>.

*WorldCat: <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/>.