

The Buddhist E-Library Project

Website: <http://www.buddhist-elibrary.org>

The Buddhist E-Library is an initiative of Buddhane.net, run by the Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. (BDEA) located at the Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery, NSW Australia, in partnership with Mahachulalongkorn University and the International Buddhist College (IBC).

Primarily, the E-Library is a Digital Resource Library of Buddhist study material that can be freely downloaded via the World Wide Web. And as it expands it aims to develop a Web-based interactive learning environment to disseminate the Teachings of the Buddha Dharma.

Its policy is to support the globalisation of Buddhist education and the systematic development of Dharma based pedagogy by establishing partnerships with Buddhist institutions. The E-Library follows the principle of 'One Dharma', that is, promoting all Buddhist traditions and the diversity of cultures and languages they represent.

What Has Happened So Far (Late May 2007)

We have:

- Secured a server in the USA through the ISP Exabytes;
- The domain name – www.buddhist-elibrary.org (also 'com', 'net');
- Set up a MySQL database on the server;
- Have put up a graphical front page (with a sampling of content)
- Made partnership agreements between Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc (BuddhaNet), Mahachulalongkorn University and the International Buddhist College.

Immediate Work Plan

- BuddhaNet will soon post much of its digital material, eBooks, artwork, audio files, etc.
- Collect currently available digital content from other Buddhist organisations, e.g. the Singapore Buddhist Library.
- Develop an up-to-date Directory of Buddhist Studies, at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary - both online and 'bricks and mortar' institutions.
- Invite Buddhist Studies students and academics to post their dissertations/theses online.
- Set up a catalogue system, e.g. 'Web log'.
- Use 'Mind Map' software, which will diagrammatically illustrate the E-Library content.

Future Plans

1. Assist Buddhist organisations to convert their existing Dharma material - either text or audiotape – into quality digital content.

HOW? By running practical workshops and training young monks and nuns to this end. We hope eventually to set up a multimedia-training centre to do this work at BuddhaNet's new home, the Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery.

2. Translating existing Dharma material into a variety of languages.

HOW? This requires the pooling of skills and bringing together interested people and/or organisations - with perhaps the need for financial incentives to support this work.

3. The implementation of a community based real time Calendar of Events - Notice Board (by regions, traditions and date of events).

HOW? Using the existing database we can set up online forms that allows organisations worldwide to post their teachings and events. For example, see BuddhaNet's World Buddhist Directory database: <http://www.buddhanet.net/wbd/>

4. Develop a Web-based interactive learning environment.

HOW? This is now achievable with the widespread use of broadband. The E-Library partners would need to cooperate with material using content management systems, such as Drupal or other open source software.

5. Develop Buddhist Multimedia content.

HOW? This is even more ambitious as it requires high-end resources and skilled people. But using the Net's ubiquitous multimedia software 'Flash' makes it an affordable option. See the example of BuddhaNet's Multimedia collection: <http://www.buddhanet.net/multimedia.htm>

How Is The E-Library Being Organised?

It is organised on a partnership basis with other Buddhist institutions. The E-Library partners have their own section on the server where they can develop their own content or alternatively the partner can pool some or all of their content on the main section of the server in the public domain.

Also it can be arranged that the main site be mirrored on a partner's server using a sub domain URL, e.g. www.yourname.buddhist-elibrary.org

The funding and maintenance cost for the Buddhist E-Library project is through a 'Partnership Agreement' where a monthly contribution is made.

- Who is running the E-Library? Staff and volunteers from BuddhaNet.net are currently maintaining the server and its database.
- Where is the funding coming from? The E-Library partners will contribute a monthly amount for the maintenance of the site. Thus allowing it to be free for online users.
- Where will the digital content be sourced? Buddhist organisations and the E-Library partners as well as online users.

A Follow Up Conference: There is a conference planned in Kuala Lumpur for August 2007 (the date could be either Saturday 11th or 18th). Ven. Pannyavaro and Lim Kooi Fong of the Buddhist Channel are organizing it. While it will feature the Buddhist E-Library Project, the conference will also address the issue of a Global Buddhist Communications Network.

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