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Wednesday, June 27th, 2012 - 11:18:20 AM

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## Digital archive donated to National Library

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**Textual Conservation Project:** Monasteries and temples in Bhutan hold most of the Bhutan's rich textual heritage, which, if not conserved, could be lost to natural calamities like fire, earthquake or to theft, burglary and smuggling, and to ignorance and negligence.

Today, digital technology has made conservation much easier than in the past, and Bhutanese scholar Dr Karma Phuntsho has successfully digitalised around 5,000 volumes of various textual heritages from about 20 monasteries and temples.

The textual conservation project, an initiative by Dr Karma Phuntsho that started in 2005, photographed over three million pages of different volumes of texts and documents. The digital archive was handed over to the home minister, Minjur Dorji, as an individual contribution for the National Library yesterday.

"Some of the owners thought that we're into textual business, and we had a difficult time convincing them about our conservation effort," the research associate in Cambridge University in London, said.

According to him, Bhutan is the only Mahayana Buddhist country with a long undisturbed history of Buddhism, and many old monasteries and temples are repositories of undiscovered texts and scriptures of Buddhist scholarly works, poetry, rare documents, biographies and histories.

"We discovered some of the most rare documents and texts from among the waste paper dumped in the corner of monasteries," he said. "People take care of only those ritual scriptures that they use the most, the rest seems neglected."

The project was financially supported by the endangered archive program of British Library and the Cambridge university, which is also financing his research on scholarly works of terton (treasure discoverer) Pema Lingpa.

Textual heritage was also in grave danger of being damaged and destroyed by natural disasters.

For instance, Pagar goenpa lost most of its textual heritage in a fire in March this year. "We could digitalise scriptures, like Nyingmi Gyued Bum, and few others texts at Pagar, but many were not done since a lama objected to photographing the scriptures," Dr Karma Phuntsho said.

Dr Karma Phuntsho said that the copies of the project work will be given to the British Library for preservation, since they have the capacity to update the electronics accordingly, and could serve as a back up, in case anything happens to the archive in Bhutan.

"Such a conservation effort is of benefit to the country and its people, but we weren't able to support financially since government didn't have the budget for it," Lyonpo Minjur Dorji said. "However we'll support with other means to make conservation much easier, such as recommending people and the monasteries to help the process."

Dr Karma Phuntsho said a lot still needs to be done, as Bhutan has at least 2,000 monasteries and temples.

The texts and documents in the archive can be freely assessed.

By **Samten Yeshi**

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1. [Digital Public Library of America » Blog Archive » Digital Library Digest: June 8, 2012](#)
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- Good  
 Inconvenient  
 Impractical  
 Forced  
 Can be improved  
 Don't know  
 Don't care

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as of June 23,24&25, 2012

	Buy	Sell
USD	56.35	58.20
Pound	88.05	90.50
Euro	70.70	72.65
Yen(100)	70.20	72.20
HK \$	7.25	7.45
AUS \$	56.50	58.05
Sing \$	44.10	45.35

Courtesy BNB

## [The burning question: What started the blaze?](#)



Initial inquiries seem to rule out the usual short-circuit suspect «His Majesty examines the sacred artifacts

that were salvaged. The air reeked of charred wood, as thick black smoke continued to loom above the ruins of the traditional Wangduephodrang dzong. Almost 18 hours after the fire engulfed it, the embers of the timber that once made up the ancient fortress were still burning around [\[Read more\]](#)

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