Going to the Oxford Patristics conference this August, I had two non-stereotypical encounters that sharpened for me the task of the scholar of religion. The first was with a flight attendant on British Airways who, seeing me grading papers in flight said, “Madam, you are very busy at work; what is that you do?” When I gave the general answer that I was a professor, he responded, “of what?” “Ancient religion,” I replied in turn, “ancient Christianity.” All pretty predictable so far (this question comes up a lot at 37,000 feet). But his next line was not: “I sure would like to have you at my next dinner party!” I never did learn what he would like to discuss at that dinner party (“Is The Da Vinci Code accurate?” “Did Constantine invent the divinity of Christ?” “Are religions ‘true’?”), though it was important enough to him that, six and a half hours later, he repeated the aspirational invitation with a grin as I disembarked the aircraft. That encounter was, comparatively speaking, a breeze.

The second was a meeting with a Norwegian scholarly colleague in Oxford. Naturally we discussed the horrific events there of July 22. I mentioned that I had read Anders Breivik’s “2083 Manifesto,” and had written a piece for our electronic publication, Sightings, about the question of whether or not he can or should be called “Christian.” This colleague said firmly, “no, he’s not Christian, just crazy. And, no, I did not read his manifesto because that is what he wants.” I replied that I could very well understand both points, but I also said that someone with scholarly training has to read and analyze this document in terms of its use and dependence upon religious symbols, traditions and motivations in order to question statements repeated in the media, such as that “[Breivik’s] faith-infused views are likely peculiar to the suspected gunman and do not appear [to] reflect wider religious movements.” Some scholars of religion (in this case, Christianity) must analyze this material to aid our understanding of the mind and motivations of this killer as reflected in the sources of his carefully documented death manifesto.

The student of religion will speak to publics that range from scholarly peers in an academic conference to the ad hoc assemblage at dinner parties, to an array of non-specialists interested in the role of religion in the broader world. That is one reason on earth why one might want to do this, and indeed why one might think it vital that there are some people who can and will do this, and pursue it with the highest level of scholarly rigor, depth of knowledge and intellectual honesty.

Each year several thousand students in the United States decide to pursue graduate study in the academic study of religion – a minuscule portion of those who continue their education beyond the bachelor’s degree. They do so in a broad range of institutions, and for many reasons, and against the kinds of objections I mentioned above. One of the greatest challenges for the Divinity School today is to find sufficient resources for the very best of those students to do their work at Chicago. Our support for incoming Ph.D. students is an all-time high, with a guarantee of five-year funding with full tuition, stipends of $21,000 per year, and two summer stipends of $3,000 each.

Continued on page 2
Hopkins Appointed Director of M.A. Studies

Dwight N. Hopkins, Professor of Theology, has agreed to serve as the Divinity School’s first Director of M.A. Studies, effective July 1, 2011. This new position, designed by the faculty’s Academic Policy Committee, chaired by Professor Jeffrey Stackert, is designed to ensure that students in our M.A. program can maximize their educational experience in this flexible two-year program in the academic study of religion.

In close coordination with individual faculty advisors, Prof. Hopkins will help M.A. students to identify the curricular resources they need to acquire skills and knowledge in their chosen area of study, and develop a cogent agenda for their research.

“Professor Hopkins is an ideal choice for this role,” Dean Mitchell said. “The author of seven books and coeditor of some ten more on the subjects of black religion and theology in America and throughout the globe, Professor Hopkins has served on this faculty for fifteen years. He understands very well the range of topics and perspectives in the academic study of religion that are represented at the Divinity School, and he has the energy and vision to help develop the M.A. cohort as an intellectual community of diverse interests. The rest of the faculty and I look forward to working closely with Professor Hopkins in this new role in the life of the School.”

The Director of M.A. Studies “needs to have a sense of the breadth and nuance of the field of religious studies,” noted Prof. Stackert. “Having a faculty member occupy this position is significant not only because it requires an intimate understanding of the academic qualities of theology, black theologies, liberation theologies, and East-West cross-cultural comparisons. He is interested in multidisciplinary approaches to the academic study of religious thought, especially cultural, political, economic, and interpretive methods. He received his M.Div., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees from Union Theological Seminary in New York and a second Ph.D. from the University of Cape Town, South Africa.”

This puts us now in the pack of other institutions offering doctoral programs in religion, but by no means at the front. However, the most difficult issue is master’s level financial aid, at a time when most bachelor’s graduates are either saddled with debt already, or deeply reluctant to begin accruing it. As I indicated when I wrote to our alumni via email in April, we have taken some significant steps to try to improve the financial picture for our master’s level students in the past year: we decreased the tuition for the M.A. and A.M.R.S. degree programs from nearly $40,000 per year to $30,000, and we have secured one more M.Div. fellowship, for a total of five fellowships per year with full tuition scholarship and stipends.

Still we must do more. We need the help of our alumni and friends, those who have already asked and answered the question of why they would want to engage in and support the academic study of religion, to help send outstanding students to Chicago, and to help contribute in any way you can to scholarships to help make this education accessible to them. We look forward to introducing you to these new and future students who are writing their own answer to the question of why one should “do that” — and why one should do that in Swift Hall.

— Margaret M. Mitchell, Dean and Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature

Hopkins said about his appointment that “this is an energizing time in the academic life of the Divinity School. The M.A. degree program is vital for fostering the intellectual rigor and creative critical questioning emblematic of Divinity School culture. I’m excited to be the first Director of M.A. Studies and to enhance further curricular and advising needs of our M.A. students. In fact, I see my role as advocating for M.A. students and facilitating a cohort culture in this essential intellectual community in our larger critical conversations.”

Prof. Hopkins will continue with his own research and teaching in addition to his work with the M.A. Program. In the Winter Quarter of 2011 he will offer “Theology and Cultural Studies” and in the Spring of 2012, “Theological Anthropology.”

Prof. Hopkins joined the Divinity School faculty in 1996. A scholar of theology, he works in the areas of contemporary models of religious thought, especially cultural, political, economic, and interpretive methods. He received his M.Div., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees from Union Theological Seminary in New York and a second Ph.D. from the University of Cape Town, South Africa.
News and Notes

Schweiker Receives Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching

William Schweiker, Director of the Martin Marty Center and Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor of Theological Ethics in the Divinity School, received a Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching during the Divinity School’s diploma ceremony, as part of the University of Chicago’s 157th Convocation.

The ceremony took place on Saturday, June 12, 2010, in Bond Chapel.

An internationally recognized leader in the field of religious ethics, Schweiker has already trained an impressive cohort of doctoral students who are currently shaping the field. He is a dedicated and inspiring teacher, always meticulously prepared, with a gift for situating significant moral questions and classic texts within the big picture, never losing sight of the importance of these reflections for human life.

His passion for rigorous thought and argument, combined with warm hospitality and genuine interest in his students both in and out of the classroom, create an intellectual community within which his students flourish. Schweiker is a humane and generous advisor, encouraging students to pursue their own interests and to discover their individual voices. Balancing highly effective teaching, his own ambitious research program and constructive engagement in the lives and careers of his students, Schweiker is an academic role model par excellence.

The citation for the award reads—

Rigorous thinker, talented teacher, and humane advisor, William Schweiker's investment in the lives of his students goes far beyond the classroom. In his generous nurturing of their intellectual, professional, and personal flourishing, he models the ethical concern for human life that is the driving question of his academic work.

Divinity Student Receives Wayne C. Booth Prize for Graduate Teaching

Sunith Singh, a Divinity School Ph.D. student, was a 2012 recipient of the Wayne C. Booth Graduate Student Prize for Excellence in Teaching. The prize was established in 1991 in honor of Wayne C. Booth, the George M. Pullman Distinguished Service Professor in English Language & Literature and the College.

Students and faculty members submit nominations, and the winners each receive a $5,000 cash award. The awards parallel the Llewellyn John and Harriet Manchester Quantrell Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, which recognize distinguished teachers on the faculty.

"That is, I sure didn't ask, 'whether there is a philosophy of history implicit in Freud's Civilization and its Discontents that differ from that in Marx's Capital?' to take only one example from class, when I was 18 or so," he says.

Students in "Self, Culture, and Society" are expected to tackle an ambitious syllabus. In his way of conveying the import of these works, Schweiker is a philosophy of history implicit in Freud's "Self, Culture, and Society" sequence, once arguing for the 'plausibility' of each book within the syllabus.

"A friend once offered me the invaluable advice to teach by arguing for the 'plausibility' of each book on the syllabus."

"I was particularly fortunate to find exemplary teachers in Susanne Rudolph and Dipesh Chakrabarty while I was still a young college student," he says. "And, in retrospect, it was their classes that introduced me to the field of South Asian studies, helped to shape my own views about pedagogy, and instilled in me the worth of a liberal education."
News and Notes

Marion Named Greeley
Professor of Catholic Studies

Jean-Luc Marion, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and of Theology, is now the Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Professor of Catholic Studies. He is a member of the Académie française (elected 2008) and of the Academia dei Lincei, Rome (2009). Marion studies both the history of modern philosophy and contemporary phenomenology. Awarded with the 1992 Grand Prix du Philosophie de l'Académie Française, and the 2008 Karl-Jaspers Preise, Professor Marion has also worked in the areas of Greek and Latin patristics; the history of medieval and modern philosophy; aesthetics; and constructive theology.

On Tuesday, November 3, 2011, he gave a lecture in Swift Hall entitled “The Question of the Unconditional—God” to inaugurate this new chair.

Visiting Faculty Join Autumn Quarter

Over the course of the 2011-12 academic year the Divinity School will be welcoming six Visiting Faculty Members, two of whom join us in the Autumn quarter. Mathiell Fierro, Visiting Professor of Islamic Studies, is Research Professor at the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences (CCHS) at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). Also arriving in Autumn quarter and remaining for the year to teach in both the College and the Divinity School is Sarah Hammerschлаг from Williams College.

Professor Hammerschlag is a scholar of modern Jewish thought and continental philosophy. Her research thus far has focused on the position of Judaism in the post-World War II French intellectual scene, a field that puts her at the crossroads of numerous disciplines and scholarly approaches including philosophy, literary studies, and intellectual history. She is the author of The Jewish French Political and Identity in Postwar French Thought (University of Chicago Press, 2010). She has written essays on Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Blanchot, which have appeared in Critical Inquiry.

Marion is currently working on a project financed by the European Research Council and entitled “Knowledge, heresy and political culture in the Islamic West (eighth-fifteenth centuries).” She has published numerous books and articles, including most recently Abd al-Rahman III y el califato omeya de Córdoba (2011) and Abd al-Rahman III: The First Cordoban Caliph (2005). She is a member of the editorial boards of the journals Al-Qu'ran (CSIC), Islamic Law and Society (Brill, Leiden), Studia Islamica (Princeton University Press, CNRS), and Al-Manaq (Society for the Medieval Mediterranean).

Staff Members Recognized

Several Divinity School staff members were recognized at the annual Alice W. Chandler Staff Service Recognition Ceremony, held on June 14, 2011. Staff members who choose to remain in the University’s employ for many years embody a rich tradition that is part of the fabric of the University community. The 2011 Ceremony celebrated staff members who reached service milestones of ten to forty (and beyond) in 2010.

The Divinity School’s Joann Dowells, Sandra Peppers, and Linda Lyles were all recognized for service of thirty years. Sandra Peppers, and Linda Lyles were all recognized for service of thirty years. Sandra Peppers, and Linda Lyles were all recognized for service of thirty years.

John T. Cacioppo, the Tiffany & Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Psychology and Director, Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago, has been named the 2011 NuGrene Lecturer. His NuGrene Lecture, delivered on November 8, 2011, was entitled: “Invisible Forces Revealed Through Studies of Social Isolation.”

Cacioppo’s research focuses on the neural, hormonal, cellular, and genetic consequences of the superorganismal structures that define humans as a social species. He and his colleagues have used social isolation, real and perceived, as a lens to reveal the behavioral, neural, hormonal, cellular, and genetic effects of social connection. Evidence from human and nonhuman animal studies indicates that isolation heightens sensitivity to social threats (predator evasion) and motivates activation; and decreased inflammatory control, immuno, deep salidity, and expression of genes regulating glucocorticoid responses. Together, these effects contribute to higher rates of morbidity and mortality.

Cacioppo is currently the President of the Society for Social Neuroscience, the Chair of Section J (Psychology) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a member of the Council of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) of the National Institutes of Health, the Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences of the National Research Council, the Board of the Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences Foundation; and the MacArthur Foundation Apgo. Society Network. His many books are (with L. Freberg) Discovering Psychology: The Science of the Mind (2012); (with J. Decety) The Oxford Handbook of Social Neuroscience (2011); (as Director of the Chicago Social

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Please see http://divinity.uchicago.edu/alumni/nugen.shtml for more information on the NuGrene Lecture series.
A Interview with Wedemeyer and Ngodup

C hristian Wedemeyer is Associate Professor of the History of Religions; Karma Ngodup is Lecturer in South Asian Languages and Civilizations, with a cross-appointment in the Divinity School.

Before joining the University of Chicago in October of 2010, Ngodup started and taught at the Tibetan program at the University of Chicago, Berkeley; previously he was Director of the Tibetan Education Development and Research Center in Dharmsala, India, where he was involved in the publication of Tibetan text books and supplementary reading materials. In this interview Ngodup and Wedemeyer discuss Tibetan studies at the University of Chicago.

CIRCA: “What has been the historic relationship in academia between Tibetan Studies and Buddhist Studies? How has Western academic interest in Tibetan religions helped engender the production of new work in Tibetan Area Studies or other departments?”

KN: I think Tibetan and Buddhist Studies in the Western academy has been closely intertwined from the beginning. This follows from the way Buddhism penetrates all aspects of Tibetan culture and history and is inextricably bound up with them. The resulting cross-fertilization works both ways. There are studies primarily dedicated to Tibetan Buddhism that also contribute to our knowledge of other aspects of Tibetan history and culture, and there are inversely studies that are not dedicated to Tibetan Buddhism, but yet indirectly shed light on the way Buddhism penetrates into these other fields. I’ll defer to Karma, whose work in this area is truly remarkable. In his first year at Chicago, he has brought Tibetan pedagogy here fully into the twenty-first century. We are extremely lucky to have a teacher of his skills, energy, and dedication.

KN: Tibetan digitization and new electronic resources have completely revolutionized the pace of studying Tibetan and Buddhism. Online dictionary and translation tools have further helped students and scholars to work independently. They no longer need to follow from other campus divisions. Visit https://lists.uchicago.edu/web/info/atds to sign up. If you have questions about any of these options, please contact Terren Ilana Wein, Director of Communications, at terren@uchicago.edu or 773-702-8230. We are happy to walk you through the process!

Conferences

The Divinity School hosted three conferences in the Autumn Quarter. “Democracy on Trial: Religion, Civil Society, and Democratic Theory,” was the second of four conferences in the series “The Engaged Mind,” underwritten by the MacDonald Agape Foundation and reflecting on themes drawn from the work of Jean Bethke Elshtain. “Erruigena and Creation,” held in honor of Edouard Jeauneau, also served as the Eleventh International Conference of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies (SPES). And “The Making of Scholars in the Medieval Islamic West” was the first conference from the Mellon Islamic Studies Initiative—a cross-divisional collaboration, intended to create a sustained campus conversation about the future of Islamic studies and funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Audio and some photographs from these conferences will be available on our website.

What’s the best way to find out about events at The Divinity School?

Our weekly email listserve, At the Divinity School, is also a great way to stay up-to-date with our events. The email goes out one week in advance of events, and includes relevant listings from other campus divisions. Visit https://lists.uchicago.edu/web/info/ands to sign up.

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Lectures and other events

Throughout the academic year the Divinity School hosts or cosponsors a wide variety of lectures, symposia, graduate workshops, and more. All these events, including the annual John Nuveen Lecture (see more on page 3) and the annual Alumnus of the Year Lecture (see more on page 3), are announced on our website. Of special note this winter: “The Matter of Israeliite Religion,” a four-part lecture series cosponsored by the Chicago Center for Jewish Studies, highlighting recent material finds relevant to, and theoretical advances in, the study of ancient Israeliite religion.
Grant program, our development of teaching teams including pastors and Ph.D. students in our Arts of Ministry classrooms, and our new collaborative course populated by faculty and students from the medical school and the Divinity school.

On occasion, as well, we have offered anecdotal responses to that perennial question, “what does one do with an M.Div. degree?”, profiling recent alums who engage public religious leadership in a surprising variety of venues. It has perhaps become a truism to observe that the Divinity School’s ministry program is thoroughly multidisciplinary, forming leaders who are able to fashion new models of ministry for our rapidly changing cultural context. However, this emphasis on our emerging practices might obscure a more subtle but possibly more radical trend for our program: what one does with an M.Div. degree from the University of Chicago Divinity School is to enter or leave our culture. Still, what is it that moves us? What is it that moves us to commit ourselves to the complex world of meaning and compassion, prepared to pass on the wisdom we have received to the next generation? What is it that moves us to our work as clergy, teachers, and scholars of religion? What does ordination mean for our time? What does ordination mean for the ancient rite of ordination.

A focus on Vocational Integration

Ministry Program Update

We asked some of our newly ordained M.Div. alumni to share their reflections on ordination with the readers of Circa. Most of these new pastors reported important relationships with communities of faith at significant times in their lives. Harris remembers the church community that became his home for him and his mother following the family’s divorce: “...my mom and I were invited to build the kingdom of God— to play our part, to offer our set of gifts, no matter how small or insignificant they might have seemed to us;” and Anderson recalls that growing up evangelically she “struggled to find a place in the church; I thought there was no place for me; I fell into the wide-open doors of Hope Church in Boston (planted by two Div School alumni) and discovered that while I’d been struggling after God, God had been seeking me out.” Every one of these alums wrote about their education for ordination as a continuing collaboration between these communities and their formal education, and at their ordinations themselves, felt empowered to offer connection and meaning to others. Braun observed: “My theology of ordination isn’t particularly high… but something happened that day, and in the days leading up to it. I received so much... there were just so many people who took the time to be there. And then they all laid their hands on me. My heart felt almost forced to grow, stretched to receive so much goodness, like the way Kenyon Tanner talks about being stretched to keep receiving the abundant gifts that God has to give us in Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity... I truly felt clothed in kindness and compassion, prepared to pass those gifts on to other people in blessing.”

The new pastors are realistic—and yet undaunted—by the complexity of making meaning and leading change in a complicated world. In fact, it seems to be this complexity, this multiplicity of roles, rules, and meanings, that intrigues and energizes us, that strengthens, deepens, and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through the deliberating bodies of the students, faculty, and public. William Schweiker, Director of the Marty Center

The Marty Center builds on a long-standing conviction of the Divinity School that the best and most innovative scholarship in religion emerges from sustained dialogue with the world outside the academy. In all of its projects, the Center aims to serve as a robust circulatory system that strengthens, deepens, and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through the deliberating bodies of the students, faculty, and public.

Emanuelle Burton (Religion and Literature)

“Fantasy and Responsibility: the formation of the ethical actor in the Chronicles of Narnia”

Keitel Clayville (Religious Ethics and Bible)

“Responsible Hermeneutics: Interpretation of Religious Texts in the Environmental Ethics of Hans Jonas and Holmes Rolston III”

Jessica DeCoo (Theology)

“Parables of Freedom: Toward a Barthian Pneumatology of Culture for Engaging Popular Culture in the 21st Century”

Rick Elyegody (Theology)

“Power, Complicity, and Resistance: Rereading ‘The Powers’ with Karl Barth and Michel Foucault”

Vincent Everett (Theology)

“Suffering and Truth in Sixteenth-Century Religious Controversy”

Marty Center Junior Fellows

The Marty Center, continuing its emphasis on global interactions and aspects of religion, will have sixteen dissertation (junior) fellows in the upcoming academic year.

This year’s Marty Center dissertation seminar is being offered in two sections, one led by Michael Sells, John Henry Barrows Professor of Islamic History and Literature, the other by James T. Robinson, Associate Professor of the History of Judaism.

The Junior Dissertation Fellows, listed below, will participate in the seminar, which is designed to advance interdisciplinary research in all areas of religious studies. Dissertation Fellows will be required to present their individual projects not only within the seminar, before their peers, but also to the broader public at a special spring meeting.

Dr. Robert C. Clark, Professor of Religion and Literature at the University of Pennsylvania and the election of the American Academy of Religion, will serve as the seminar’s director.

The seminar’s goal is to advance scholarship and the public presentation of theses in the fields of religion and literature.

The seminar will be held over two days, with sessions focusing on the presenters’ projects in a way that will be intelligible to non-specialists and specialists alike.


Rachel Adelstein (Ethnomusicology)

“Beaded Voices: Women Cantors in Non-Orthodox Judaism”

Shakti Almoutawat (History of Judaism)

“The Use of Narrative in ‘Rainb’l Dhee’man Al-Safe’a: Imagination at the Intersections of Religion, Philosophy and Science”

Samuel Brody (History of Judaism)

“The Paradox of Hour: Messianism, Anarchism, Zionism, and Martin Buber’s Theopolitics Reconsidered”

Katherine Milos (Classics)

“Perpetua’s Two Audiences: the Passio as a Sacred Performance”

Lilah Shapiro (Comparative Human Development)

“Driven to Orthodoxy: Jewish Identity, the Achievement Narrative, and Family Dynamics in American-Jewish Culture as Motivations for Teshuvah”

Katharine Sirry (Islamic Studies)

“Reformist Muslim Approaches to the Polities of the Qur’an against Other Religious Traditions”

Michael Saha (Religious Ethics)

“The Good of Recognition: Phenomenology, Ethics, and Religion in the ‘Thought of Levinas and Ricoeur’”

Myung-Sahm Suh (Anthropology and Sociology of Religion)

“Generational Dynamics and the Crystalization of the Christian Right in Korea”

Suzanne Wint (Ethnomusicology)

“The Western Classical Music Scene in Kampala, Uganda: A Music of the Other?”

Karl Lampley (Theology)

“A Theological Account of Nat Turner: Christianity, Violence, and Theology”

Alan Levinovitz (Religion and Literature)

“The Concept of Toy—at Play with the Zhuangzi”

Martin Marty Center Fellows 2011–2012

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This fall, the Divinity School enrolled 82 entering degree candidates (4 M.R., 37 M.A., 20 M.Div., and 21 Ph.D.).

College Graduates in Religious Studies 2010–2011

Three students completed fourth-year papers in Religious Studies this year, led by the B.A. paper proctor, Joseph Bullan.

They and their topics are (advisors’ names in brackets):

Maura Jayne de Batista, “Peacebuilding through Pluralistic Religious Education: A Look at the Holy Land.” (Robinson)

Robert Tinkle, “Extravagant Vice, Extravagant Voice in Thomas Shadwell’s A Look at the Holy Land.” (Robinson)

Maurice and James Jones, “Peacebuilding Concerning Artificial Nutrition and Hydration.” (Curlin)
Interview, continued from page 8

your finger tips in your room. The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center in New York (tibrc.org) and the Asian Classics Input Project (asianclassics.org) stand out in terms of electronic resources, both digitized and manually input. In this sense, the late Gene Smith deserves to be called the true master (rinpoche) spending almost the whole of his life in the preservation of Tibetan Buddhist texts, making them accessible to universities and elsewhere. Because of his initiative, almost any Tibetan Buddhist text can be found in digitized form. Christian and I are currently working on creating a Tibetan Studies website for the university that will incorporate these various tools, with special focus on systematic and clear resources for Tibetan language and Buddhist studies.

Microsoft’s Tibetan Unicode initiative (Microsoft Himalaya), followed by Apple’s recent True Wylie Unicode, changed the face of Tibetan-language computing, allowing one to browse through any operating system. Any Apple devices (iPhone, iPad, etc.) can now use Tibetan: one can literally browse Google or YouTube, participate in discussions, work, and communicate — all in the Tibetan script. This allows access to previously unimaginable resources for Tibetan studies. The Center for the Study of Languages is already supporting teaching of languages through iPad with Buddhist Studies text materials in iCasebook, video and audio clips of all the dialogue from the textbooks, and self-recording facilities.

Monlam Universal Pronunciation software is another big step in creating phonetic Flash animation for learning accurate pronunciation; and Monlam Tibetan (bodyig 3) has fourteen different Tibetan fonts. I seek to use every available technology to help students learn Tibetan and for their academic research on Tibetan Buddhist Studies.

CIRCA: “What have you found to be the primary reasons students wish to learn Tibetan? How do you hope to broaden the appeal of Tibetan language acquisition?”

KN: Most of the students come from Divinity or SAlC, where Tibetan language serves primarily as a tool to understand and conduct research on topics related to Buddhism and Buddhist culture. There are also several students from Anthropology interested in the unique and rich Tibetan cultural heritage. Students also come from linguistics, interested in the unique characteristics of Tibetan language pedagogy in terms of phonology, philology, and grammatical structure. Students from art history find Tibetan thangka painting, mural painting, and their significance very interesting. I have students from political science interested in the historical and current political dilemmas of Tibetan nationality. Tibetan medicine has also garnered attention from students in understanding concepts of human physical and cognitive behavior. Sometimes students come from Tibetan Buddhist centers; and others from sheer curiosity to explore the ‘forbidden land’ and its people.

Before coming to Chicago, I developed a Tibetan language program at University of California-Berkeley from scratch; and today students can go to the Berkeley language center, record, write, and so on. Things have changed rapidly in the last year with the adoption of Tibetan Unicode by both Microsoft and Apple. Now students can work on their own computers, write Tibetan, do recording, and access almost any Tibetan Buddhist text on earth. They can even engage in online discussions with native speakers; they can pose questions of interest and the responses may come from any part of the world, including Tibet. You can text in Tibetan, maintain Tibetan Facebook pages, tweet and so on. My focus is to make these resources available to students through Chalk and the Center for the Study of Languages here on campus. Today there are so many Tibetan resources that the challenge is to choose the right one, based on quality, for the ever increasing needs of the academic enterprise.

Go Green! CIRCA is also available online as a PDF document, which you can download to your desktop. You can read current and past issues of CIRCA by visiting http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/circa. If you would prefer not to receive CIRCA via postal mail, please let us know by emailing Sara Bigger, Assistant Director of Development, at sbigger@uchicago.edu. We will send you a link when CIRCA is available for viewing online!

Please help us improve our communication with you. Update your email address at http://divinity.uchicago.edu/alumni.