Ten Thousand Rooms:

A Report of Dr. Hunter's Talk at the

University of British Columbia (January 8, 2018)

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On January 8th, 2018 the University of British Columbia hosted Dr. Mick Hunter, Assistant Professor of East Asian Languages & Literatures at Yale University, to share his work on the Ten Thousand Rooms Project. Dr. Hunter is a co-principal investor of the project, a collaborative online workspace for scholars of pre-modern texts, which is funded through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This event was sponsored by the project From the Ground Up: Buddhism and East Asian Religions.

Dr. Hunter created this project with his colleague Tina Lu, Chair & Professor of East Asian Languages & Literatures, Yale University. Both scholars felt there was a need for a digital tool that would allow scholars of early China to annotate, translate, and interpret texts. Given that scholars of early China often work with print sources that have multiple layers of text and commentary, a digital tool for organizing and expanding upon these sources would be particularly useful. Since its conception, the Ten Thousand Rooms Project received $430,000 for four years of funding to develop and maintain the website. The website has been in

operation for approximately one year, and already hosts over thirty projects from a variety of sources and disciplines.

Dr. Hunter gave a demonstration of the site's tools and projects, which he envisions as a digital workspace. Anyone can create an account, explore existing projects, upload their own materials to the user-friendly interface. If they create a new project, users can choose who can access and edit the work, allowing colleagues or students to collaborate in translation and annotation projects. Users can also create their own categories to annotate the documents they have uploaded. For example, Dr. Hunter showed the audience one of his own projects on the Ten Thousand Rooms site, where he has translated and annotated less popular works of Confucius. Here, the audience saw that Dr. Hunter had layers for translation, transcription, commentary, and a log of project activity. Other users may choose other layers of annotation that best suit their own texts.

Dr. Hunter suggested some of the benefits of the project, emphasizing the site as a place for scholars to share their translations and analysis in progress without the commitment of a permanent formal publication. Its collaborative nature also allows scholars to work with their colleagues on projects from a distance. Additionally, he sees the promise of the site as a pedagogical tool; instructors can create seminars with a translation or transcription project as the goal, using the Ten Thousand Rooms as a student workspace.

Dr. Hunter invited questions and feedback following his demonstration. The audience, mainly UBC instructors and upper level graduate students, wondered how users might navigate copyright when uploading texts, and further examples of how the site could be used in their teaching. Others were interested in the details of creating, funding, and maintaining a large digital humanities project. Dr. Hunter hopes that moving forward, the site will connect with existing databases, such as ctext.org

and the Chinese Biographical Database, so users will be able to import texts, rather than upload their own images.

This tool is well suited to scholars of Chinese Buddhist texts, who can make use of the site's tools in their research, or examine pre-existing projects relevant to Buddhist Studies. However, Dr. Hunter emphasized that the site is not exclusively for Chinese language sources, and welcomes projects from other languages and disciplines. Scholars working with primary Buddhist texts from any era may find the annotation tools useful in translation, transcription, and interpretation in their research and teaching.