

University of Toronto

Christoph Emmrich

2014 saw another year of the UofT and its Buddhist Studies faculty Christoph Emmrich (South and Southeast Asian Buddhism), Frances Garrett (Tibetan Buddhism) and Amanda Goodman (East Asian Buddhism) attracting a high number of promising young graduate students. A total of seven (three MA, four PhD) joined the Department for the Study of Religion this fall. Their projects engage with fields as diverse as Chinese (one student), Pali and Burmese (four), and Sanskrit and Newar Buddhism (two). They join the already rich community of doctoral students (six) with ongoing projects primarily in Tibetan Buddhism. In winter 2014, Bryan Levman was successfully awarded his doctoral degree for his thesis on the remnants of Middle Indic languages underlying the Pali canon. Buddhist Studies at the UofT could also rightly be proud of its most recent alumnus Matthew King. After receiving his doctoral degree for a dissertation on Mongolian Buddhist historiography in spring 2014, Matt joined the Religious Studies Department at the University of California Riverside as Assistant Professor in Transnational Buddhism. After Benjamin Wood, who was hired by St. Francis College, Brooklyn, NY, last year, this is the second success in a row for a UofT Buddhist Studies graduate students in securing a tenure track position.

In the spring term of 2014, as part of the UofT/McMaster Numata Program, the art historian Nicolas Morrissey (University of Georgia) shared his “Reflections on an Enigmatic Structure at Nālandā and Visual Eclecticism in the Buddhist Art of Medieval Bihar and Bengal,” while the anthropologist Anya Bernstein (Harvard) talked to us about those who are “More Alive Than All the Living: Sovereign Bodies and Cultural Politics in Buddhist Siberia.” John Kieschnick (Stanford) successfully had his audience take a closer look at “The Encounter with Modernity in Chinese Buddhist Historiography.” The current academic year was inaugurated in the fall by Lucia Dolce (SOAS), from whom the UofT academic community learnt “Of Monks and Embryos: Tantric Practices and the Ritualization of Buddhist Embryology in Mediaeval Japan.”

Amy Holmes Tagchungdarpa (now Grinnell College) continued her work as the Tung Lin Kok Yuen Distinguished Visiting Professor in Buddhist Studies at the UofT, Scarborough, in 2013-14. As part of the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women held in May, 2014, she organized the panel “Beyond Goddesses and Yoginis: Buddhism and Gender Across Asian Societies and Traditions.” The current TLKY Distinguished Visiting Professor is Kalzang Bhutia (University of Alabama), a specialist in Tibetan and Sikkimese culture, religion, literature, and history.

Looking ahead, an important piece of event-related news for Buddhist Studies in Canada to transpire this year was that in summer, at the International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS) Congress in Vienna, the UofT was successful in its bid to bring the VIIIth IABS Congress to Toronto. With the world of Buddhist Studies poised to converge on the shores of Lake Ontario in 2017 from August 20 to 25, this will be the first time that an IABS meeting will take place in Canada.