The Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project

The Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project was founded at the University of Washington in September 1996 to promote the study, edition and publication of twenty-seven unique birch-bark scrolls, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script and the Gāndhārī language, that had been acquired by the British Library in 1994. Further discoveries have greatly increased the number of known Gāndhārī manuscripts, and the EBMP is currently involved in the study of seventy-six birch-bark scrolls (primarily in the British Library, the Senior Collection, the University of Washington Libraries and the Library of Congress) as well as numerous smaller manuscript fragments (in the Schøyen Collection, the Hirayama Collection, the Hayashida Collection and the Bibliothèque nationale de France). These manuscripts date from the first century BCE to the third century CE, and as such are the oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts as well as the oldest manuscripts from South Asia. They provide unprecedented insights into the early history of Buddhism in South Asia as well as its transmission to Central Asia and China. The research results of the EBMP and translations of the manuscripts are published by the University of Washington Press.

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Department of Asian Languages & Literature
University of Washington
225 Gowen Hall
Box 353521
Seattle, WA 98195-3521

Phone: (206) 543-4996
asianll@uw.edu

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