

# hi-tech VOLUNTEERS

**T**ucked away in an anonymous building in a seedy part of Melbourne, a team of volunteers is using the latest technology to preserve the voices of respected Buddhist teachers.



Photo Greg Sneddon

Anne Pottage, database and quality control volunteer, sits below a bank of high-speed tape players.

Led by former monk **Greg Sneddon**, a two-year project will preserve the complete collection of recorded teachings of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche – some 7000 audiotapes and 10,000 hours of material. Converted to a digital medium from their original recordings on the magnetic tape of cassettes and reels (an easily degradable medium which is not useful for long-term archiving), the teachings will be available on CD-ROM, and possibly on the Internet in the future.

According to **Nick Ribush**, director of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, impetus for the project began when Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teaching on the Heart Sutra in March 2000 at Tara Institute in Melbourne, was digitally videoed.

"Greg started working on making that teaching available on a set of CDs, work which is still in progress," Nick said. "He has more than twenty years' experience in filmmaking, audio and video, and when I was in Melbourne in January 2001, I asked his advice on preserving the Archive. We decided that we had to get the teachings off magnetic tape and onto a digital format. A loan of \$US60,000 from FPMT Inc has enabled the work to start. Of course, donors are still needed, but by using volunteers costs could be kept down."

Greg Sneddon says that it's a matter of principle with him not to charge for Dharma work.

"Many times I've had to explain to students why it is necessary to pay to hear Lama Zopa and others when they are in town, because it costs money to run a center and bring teachers here. Having done that again and again, I decided I won't work on any Dharma project where pay is involved," he said.

It was not hard to conscript seven volunteers from the St Kilda Study Group, which has been running for 10 years. Each puts in three-hour shifts, sitting in front of a bank of monitors, operating seven tape recorders which can digitize a 90-minute tape – both sides at once – in 22-and-a-half minutes. One shift can get through three tapes per machine, so 21 tapes would be completed by sign-off.

"Once the teachings are digitized and on a hard drive, we can do anything with them," Nick explained. "Of course, Rinpoche's on-going teachings will be added (we are already recording his new ones digitally), and once Lama Osel Rinpoche starts teaching, we'll be preserving his teachings digitally as well.

"Soon we can start making selected teachings available on CD and on our Web site. Whatever we present in this way will have been edited, and cleaned up to remove clicks, pops, background noise, gaps, coughs and so forth.

"It's amazing to me that once it's digitized, the whole 10,000 hours will fit onto a \$200 hard drive," Nick said.

"We will make several copies of the one hard drive and send them round the world so that if one was damaged or destroyed, there would be others in existence as back-up," Greg said. "The original tapes may be preserved in the basement of the giant stupa being erected in Bendigo, Victoria.

"A fellow student of Lama Zopa is working with me on researching what the next generation of media delivery for educational material might be in the next two or three years. Broadband connection, for instance, so that people can down-

load this material from the Internet. Not that I would expect every individual to have broadband connection and a computer. So I would really like to encourage Dharma centers to think of themselves as being able to bring their means of educating students into the next stage by having this technology in the future. Students could then access, download and print the information at a center for a fee.

"Another dream is to have a video camera with a broadband connection at His Holiness the Dalai Lama's or other lamas' teachings. We could upload the teaching live and Dharma centers could have live-stream video nights no matter where they are in the world.

"What we are doing here is really a pilot and it's not terribly expensive to set up in other places."

Greg is also working on digitizing videotapes of Lama Yeshe's teachings, complete with written text as part of the viewing image so students can read the words on screen as they are listening and watching. ☸

## FREE CDs

The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive now has four free CDs available. They are:

Lama Yeshe video:

THREE PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH

Lama Yeshe video:

INTRODUCTION TO TANTRA

Lama Zopa Rinpoche chanting:

OM MANI PADME HUM

(OVER AN HOUR)

Lama Zopa Rinpoche chanting:

PRAISE TO THE TWENTY-ONE TARAS

(OVER AN HOUR)

Contact the Archive on the web at

<http://www.LamaYeshe.com>

or PO Box 356 Weston, MA 02493.

Tel: (781) 899 9587

## UPAYA ZEN CENTER

### 2002

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June 7-9 - The Great Precepts

June 9-14 - Dogen Sesshin

June 14-16 - Calligraphy Meditation

June 21-23 - Living with Mara

June 28-July 4: Bodhidharma Sesshin

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