The field of Tibetan studies has been undergoing dynamic growth over the past 20 or so years. During the 1960s and '70s, the U.S. Library of Congress sponsored the wholesale reprinting of thousands of texts gathered from Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, and elsewhere, and distributed them to subscribing American institutions under a federal program. In 1977, a small group of Tibetologists met in Zurich and formed the International Association of Tibetan Studies.

Since that year, the association has met almost regularly every three years around the world in such cities as New York, Munich, Tokyo, Graz, and Fagernes, Norway. The association is the only worldwide organization devoted to furthering the scientific study and research of Tibetan civilization through periodic meetings and the publication of proceedings. In the 1980s, Tibetan scholars from the People's Republic of China began to attend, finding the congenial and neutral atmosphere of these conferences fruitful for the exchange of ideas with Tibetan colleagues in exile.

The Eighth Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies took place on the Bloomington campus of Indiana University on July 25-31, 1998, convened by Elliot Sperling, director of Tibetan studies in the department of Central Asian Studies. Some 200 scholars from all over the world attended the weeklong conference.

The welcome speech was delivered by Samten Karmay, Association president, who was pleased to note that the scholarly productivity from these seminars—15 volumes of proceedings and 468 articles—should "help to dispel a tendency to mystify Tibet and its culture." Tibet, he said, should neither be perceived as an exotic, feudal society nor a mythical Shangri-La full of ancient wisdom, but a culture like any other to be studied with sound academic methodologies drawn from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

Indeed, the conference papers displayed a broad multidisciplinary focus, ranging from anthropology, art history, history, linguistics, literature, philosophy, politics, and religion, to medicine, music, law, the environment, and developmental issues. Special events featured slide presentations of a traditional festival and the preservation work of the Lhasa Old City, as well as computer demonstrations of a Tibetan research database and use of the World Wide Web to locate Tibetan art. A display of recent publications on Tibet was open throughout the conference.

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CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

"Home/Less: The Polish Experience"
Dec. 4-5, 1998
IUB Polish Studies Center

An international conference addressing the concept and experience of home and homelessness in Poland and Central Europe from a variety of perspectives. Invited participants include scholars from the United States, Canada, and Europe.

For additional information, please contact:
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