Advancing Jewish Knowledge in the 21st Century
Supporting the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies

The Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies is a unique research center with a mission to deepen and broaden the understanding of Jewish history, texts, cultures, ideas, and experiences. Over the decades, the Katz Center has earned its reputation as the nation’s preeminent research center in the study of Jewish history and culture. The research that the Katz Center makes possible spans all periods of Jewish history, from distant antiquity to the present day. It reaches into every part of the globe where Jews live and have lived and is grounded in a wide range of disciplines and approaches. Its commitment to scholarly excellence has made the Center a leader in connecting Jewish studies scholars around the globe.

The international fellowship program has supported over 500 scholars from throughout the world. Through its journal, the Jewish Quarterly Review, and other publications, the Katz Center publishes the most current research, and its library is home to one of the world’s great research collections of Judaica. The Center is also committed to public scholarship—sharing the insights of new research with the community at large.

The Center’s rich history goes back to its founding as Dropsie College, chartered in 1907 as the first institution in the world accredited to offer Ph.D.s in Jewish studies. It became part of Penn in 1994 as a center for advanced study and was renamed the Katz Center in 2008. Today, it continues to build on its legacy of excellence by supporting new discoveries, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, and supporting the scholars who make the field so vibrant and exciting.
Fellowship Program

At the heart of the Katz Center is a residential fellowship program nurturing innovative, interdisciplinary research into all aspects of Jewish history, thought, and culture, structured around an annual theme. Our fellows, who are preeminent among their peers, represent a range of disciplines and career stages and come from all corners of the world—from Israel and Europe to Turkey and Brazil. Each year witnesses the creation of a new scholarly community that invariably sustains itself for years after the fellowship ends, providing mentorship for younger scholars, expanding networks of knowledge-sharing, and generating dozens of publications.

A Vast Treasure of Jewish Books

The Judaica collections at the Penn Libraries constitute one of the world’s largest and richest resources on the history and culture of Jews. The Library at the Katz Center houses over 200,000 volumes. Its treasures include more than 500 fragments from the Cairo Genizah, representing the largest collection of medieval Jewish documents ever found; rare medieval manuscripts and early printed books, archival material in dozens of languages, rare photographs of Jewish life, and the foremost collection of early American Judaica, documenting Jewish life in the Atlantic world between the 16th and 19th centuries.

The Center library is at the forefront of making such resources available to the broader world through open-access, digital, and collaborative curation. A partnership with Penn’s Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies is shedding new light on manuscripts in the university’s collections, while digitization projects, online exhibitions, and a new curatorship in digital Judaica put the Katz Center and the Judaica collections at the leading edge of using technology to deepen knowledge of Jewish texts.
Building Intellectual Community and Sharing Knowledge

The Katz Center is an institution dedicated to forging connections. In addition to its fellowship program, the Center hosts an advanced summer school for graduate students, underwrites collaborative research projects in a summer institute, has launched an ongoing seminar in the study of Jewish philanthropy, and works with many other research centers and institutions within and beyond Penn in an effort to connect scholars across the divides of discipline and geography.

Publication is one of the many ways the Katz Center shares knowledge. The Center is home to the Jewish Quarterly Review, the oldest English language academic journal of Jewish studies. Established in 1889, it continues to be a leading journal in the field. The Center also publishes a highly regarded book series with the University of Pennsylvania Press, called Jewish Culture and Contexts, presenting new research in all aspects of Jewish studies and textual scholarship.

The Katz Center is dedicated to sharing research with the broader community, and to that end produces a vibrant slate of outward-looking programming each year for the public in the form of lectures, panels, and mini-courses. Moving these programs online in 2020 has further expanded the Center’s reach.

Giving Opportunities

The giving opportunities below support the Katz Center’s legacy, build its future, and advance the study of Jewish civilization in all its historical and cultural manifestations. Term gifts are payable over five years.

Endow the editorship of the Jewish Quarterly Review with a gift of $2 million

First established in England in 1889, the Jewish Quarterly Review is the oldest English language journal in the field of Jewish studies. JQR preserves the attention to textual detail so characteristic of the journal’s early years, while encouraging scholarship in a wide range of fields and time periods. In each issue, the ancient stands alongside the modern, the historical alongside the literary, and the textual alongside the contextual. Endowing the editorship of JQR will ensure that the journal can recruit and retain the best editorial staff, as well as move to the forefront in the use of digital technology to present research in new ways for new audiences.

Sustain the Center itself by endowing and naming a facilities fund to preserve and update the building to better support 21st century research

The Katz Center’s award-winning building on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall places the Center in the symbolic center of the history of the country, but because it is located beyond the Penn campus, the Center is entirely responsible for the maintenance of its own space and infrastructure. As it heads into its fourth decade, the Katz Center seeks not just to maintain the building but to adapt and improve it in ways that will better support 21st-century scholarship, allowing the Center to expand how we share Jewish studies scholarship with the broader public and enlist technology as a scholarly tool.
Fund Katz Center fellowships with an endowed or term gift

Supporting Jewish knowledge means supporting scholars. Named fellowships allow the Center to attract the best in their fields. Term gifts of $150,000 or $300,000 fund single-semester or year-long fellowships for five years; an endowed gift of $600,000 or $1.2 million can fund semester- and year-long fellowships in perpetuity. Since fellowships support scholars at various stages of their career, they are transformative for early career scholars and provide an invaluable opportunity for more senior scholars to focus on their research.

Support the Katz Center Director’s Discretionary Fund

Gifts of any size to the Director’s Fund allow the Center to respond to emerging needs and priorities. Recent examples include initiatives to support scholars in Ukraine and to build a network with Jewish studies scholars in Islamic countries.

To learn more about supporting the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, please contact Deb Rhebergen, Vice Dean for Advancement, at 215-898-9942 or drheberg@sas.upenn.edu.