

NEH Application Cover Sheet

Challenge Grants in United States History and Culture

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Field of Expertise: Ethnic Studies - Jewish

INSTITUTION

Center for Jewish History
New York, NY UNITED STATES

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Endowment Campaign for the Archive and Library Services Program*

Grant Period: From 9/2009 to 9/2013

Field of Project: Ethnic Studies - Jewish

Description of Project: The Center for Jewish History (the Center) respectfully requests a challenge grant of \$1 million towards a \$10 million endowment campaign that will enhance its Archive and Library Services Program. The funds will be used to enhance the Program's two entities: the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and the Lillian Goldman Reading Room. The OPAC is a unique tool that integrates the library, archive and museum holdings of the Center's five partner organizations for researchers around the world. Maintaining the OPAC entails a combination of archival processing, cataloging, and the expansion of digital collections. The Lillian Goldman Reading Room is the physical gateway to the partner collections and several scholarly initiatives that include the Center's Graduate Fellowship Program, Graduate Seminar Series, and Scholars Working Groups, among others.

BUDGET

Fiscal Year # 1	\$250,000.00	Total from NEH	\$1,000,000.00
Fiscal Year # 2	\$250,000.00	Non-Federal	\$3,000,000.00
Fiscal Year # 3	\$250,000.00	Total	\$4,000,000.00
Fiscal Year # 4	\$250,000.00	Matching Ratio:	3.00 to 1

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CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY CHALLENGE GRANT IN UNITED STATES HISTORY AND
CULTURE

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Abstract

The Center for Jewish History (“the Center”) respectfully requests a challenge grant of \$1 million towards a \$10 million endowment campaign that will enhance its Archive and Library Services Program. The funds will be used to enhance the Program’s two entities: the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and the Lillian Goldman Reading Room. The OPAC is a unique tool that integrates the library, archive and museum holdings of the Center’s five partner organizations for researchers around the world. Maintaining the OPAC entails a combination of archival processing, cataloging, and the expansion of digital collections. The Lillian Goldman Reading Room is the physical gateway to the partner collections and several scholarly initiatives that include the Center’s Graduate Fellowship Program, Graduate Seminar Series, and Scholars Working Groups, among others.

The Center for Jewish History is one of the great public Jewish historical and cultural institutions of the world, providing access to the largest repository of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel. Since opening to the public in October 2000, the Center has achieved recognition as a venue of unrivaled historical documentation and scholarship, imaginative exhibitions of art and artifacts, and vital public dialogue.

The collections housed at the Center, among the archives of its five partner institutions, total more than 500,000 volumes, 100 million documents and thousands of pieces of artwork, textiles, and ritual objects, as well as music, films, and photographs. Taken together, these materials comprise one of the most comprehensive archival and library collections in the world relating to modern Jewish history, American history, and the American immigrant experience.

As an institution that is currently approaching its second decade, the Center maintains a modest endowment, and relies heavily each year on philanthropic support to carry out its work. In an effort to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Center’s OPAC and Reading Room, as well as the study of the humanities that it promotes and makes available at no cost to the public, the institution has embarked on an endowment campaign that will attract new donors and motivate the enthusiasm of its existing donor-base to allow their support to make a greater impact.

The collections at the Center are global in origin, but are also deeply and inherently American. From the records of the first Jewish communities arriving in New Amsterdam in 1654 to those of the Soviet Jewish émigrés in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the story of American Jewry is in many ways the story of America itself. For the past 350 years, Jewish and American histories have been deeply intertwined, and for so many of the collections housed here, they are in fact one and the same.

Center for Jewish History challenge grant budget

Total NEH funds requested:		\$1,000,000
Year 1:	\$250,000	
Year 2:	\$250,000	
Year 3:	\$250,000	
Year 4:	\$250,000	

Total nonfederal contributions		\$3,000,000
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Total Grant Funds (NEH plus Match)		\$4,000,000
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Planned Expenditures:**Endowment**

Endowment principal		\$4,000,000
Rate of expendable return		5%
Projected annual income*		\$200,000
OPAC		\$100,000
Reading Room		\$100,000

I. Facts and stats

- A. History.** In October 2000, five institutions, each with their own educational focus, united to create the Center for Jewish History. They are: American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), American Sephardi Federation (ASF), Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), Yeshiva University Museum (YUM) and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO).
- B. Mission.** The Center's mission is to preserve the collections of its five partners, to foster new research within the collections, and to educate diverse constituencies through public program and exhibitions that draw on the vast resources housed here.
- C. Governance.** The Center for Jewish History is governed by a Board of Directors, with a total of 26 members, of whom 20 are Internal Directors, representing the five partner institutions, and 6 are External Directors.
- D. Physical facilities.** The Center is a 145,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility containing exhibition galleries and classrooms, a world-class reading room, a 248-seat auditorium, a digital lab, preservation lab, climate-controlled archival/library stacks, a bookstore, and café.
- E. Humanities staff.** The Center has a staff of 50 members. As the entire institution is devoted solely to the humanities, every one of our staff should be seen as serving the discipline. If a further breakdown is necessary, however, 25 staff members work within the humanities as librarians, archivists and managers of our academic and public programs, including fellowships and scholarly presentations, all of whom are directly involved with work that draws on the humanities collections. Other staff members specialize in Administration and Finance, Public Relations and Marketing, Institutional Advancement, Information Technology and Audio Visual, maintenance, and Volunteer Services for the Center.
- F. Humanities Resources.** All of the collections housed at the Center fall within the humanities. They are 500,000 volumes, 100 million documents and almost 20,000 museum objects.
- G. Accreditation or affiliation.** While the Center is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, there exists no financial exchange within this relationship. The Center is not an accredited institution of higher education.

II. Data on recent humanities activities

- A. Visitor numbers.** The Center receives approximately 25,000 visitors to its public events every year from more than 55 countries. The Center has also received more than 40,000 researchers to its Lillian Goldman Reading Room since opening in 2000. In addition, 340,000 research sessions were recorded by the OPAC in 2009.
- B. Humanities programs.** All of the Center's public programs revolve around diverse topics within the humanities.
- C. Audience served.** The Center has received more than 210,000 visitors – Jewish and non-Jewish – from over 100 countries since its inception. The Center is not under the auspices of any religious Jewish denomination, and welcomes viewpoints and perspectives from every religious, cultural and national background.
- D. Cost to participants.** The vast majority of the Center's programs are free to all participants. Access to the Lillian Goldman Reading Room and the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute is free to the public, 5 days each week, as are the museum galleries for 6 days each week. The Center's OPAC is accessible day and night for free. The Center does charge a fee for some of its public events for which ticket prices average between \$15 and \$20, with discounts for members and children.
- E. Evidence of success.** Despite the economic downturn, the Center has been able to increase hours of operation on Monday evenings and Fridays and centralize its reference services for the very first time. These changes have helped increase the total number of users by 30% compared to last year, and achieve an increase in first-time users by 18%. As a result, the Center recently received its 40,000th researcher since it opened in 2000.

NEH Challenge Grant in United States History and Culture

The Center for Jewish History (“the Center”) respectfully requests a challenge grant of \$1 million towards a \$10 million endowment campaign that will enhance its Archive and Library Services Program. The funds will be used to enhance the Program’s two entities: the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and the Lillian Goldman Reading Room. The OPAC is a unique tool that integrates the library, archive and museum holdings of the Center’s five partner organizations for researchers around the world. Maintaining the OPAC entails a combination of archival processing, cataloging, and the expansion of digital collections. The Lillian Goldman Reading Room is the physical gateway to the partner collections and several scholarly initiatives that include the Center’s Graduate Fellowship Program, Graduate Seminar Series, and Scholars Working Groups, among others.

As an institution that is currently approaching its second decade, the Center maintains a modest endowment, and relies heavily each year on philanthropic support to carry out its work. In an effort to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Center’s OPAC and Reading Room, as well as the study of the humanities that it promotes and makes available at no cost to the public, the institution has embarked on an endowment campaign that will attract new donors and motivate the enthusiasm of its existing donor-base to allow their support to make a greater impact.

The record of the Ashkenazic civilization of Central and Eastern Europe over the last thousand years, the rise and flourishing of American Jewish culture, the entire geographic range of Sephardic and Oriental Jewish experience, as well as the world’s most comprehensive documentation on pre-Holocaust Jewish life (including the only Jewish library from Poland to survive the Holocaust) – all of these are preserved within the partner archives at the Center for Jewish History in all of their languages. The Center provides access to otherwise inaccessible material for readers in America and around the world. Indeed, outside of the National Library in Jerusalem, there is no Jewish academic institution which services researchers of such diverse origins doing advanced work in so many different fields.

In the last year or so alone, eminent scholars conducted primary research at the Center as part of outstanding publications such as *Refugees and Rescue: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1935-1945*, which brought to light attempts by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to resettle Jews from Europe as early as 1938, while challenging the notion that he ignored the

plight of European Jews leading up to the Holocaust; and *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, which won the National Jewish Book Council's American Jewish Studies/Celebrate 350 Award. At the same time, Ph.D. Candidates used archival materials in the collections to explore the experiences of Romanian Jewish immigrants to New York at the turn of the 20th century, and of American Jewish doctors in the post-War era. Just last summer a teenager experimenting with genealogical research discovered photos of family members he had never known and a family tree dating back six generations. Other treasures await expert readings and interpretations by scholars of the future – materials ranging from reels of pre-WWII Polish home movies to the damaged yet irreplaceable Iraqi Jewish Archives rescued by American forces in Baghdad in 2003.

As the Center enters its second decade, it is with a multi-faceted vision of becoming the National Jewish Archives that serves as a central holding place of the primary documents of the Jewish past; and as a hub for a thriving community of scholars that is rooted in its interest in the collections and held together by a series of targeted academic programs.

While 90% of the archival collections within the Center's walls are available via the Reading Room and can be found online, 15% of them contain the highest level of description and are accompanied by EAD finding aids that allow their discovery via search engines like Google. Over the next five years, the Center will fully process more than 70% of the materials it houses and expand its digital library by tens of thousands of images, fostering continued research in the humanities, bringing in new scholars, and enhancing the scholarly community that has been developed over the last ten years.

While the Center currently runs a successful Graduate Fellowship program, Scholars Working Group and Professional Development Series, additional funding will support new initiatives including increased fellowship opportunities for post-doctoral and senior scholars; an archival training program for graduate students interested in Jewish studies and other special collections; a visiting scholars program that will foster a thriving intellectual and research community for the finest of scholars that were affected by the downsizing of academic departments nationwide; an expanded collection of unpublished work online such as dissertations and working papers; publication subventions for promising research projects; travel grants for scholars seeking to travel to academic conferences; as well as the Center's own

conferences that present expert interpretations from around the world on important artifacts and documents being displayed in the Center's museum galleries.

Free and open access to the collections at the Center allows the resulting scholarship and interpretations to produce a community of scholars, researchers and learners of all types. Through the institutional collaborations at the Center, which draw on extensive collections, conduct high-level academic programs and attract sizeable public audiences, a broad effort can be made to harness the full potential of an integration of Jewish history and thought, and United States history and culture and to foster the humanities for decades to come.

Background, Governance & Funding. In October 2000, five institutions, each with their own educational focus, united to create the Center for Jewish History. There is great strength in both the unity of the five partner organizations and in their diversity. Together they share an overriding mission to preserve, interpret, and make accessible the primary historical documents of the Jewish people. Since its founding, the Center has become the foremost Jewish research and cultural institution in New York City, enabling the history of the Jewish people to come alive through a vital array of scholarship and cultural programming.

The combined collections of the Center's partners – American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), American Sephardi Federation (ASF), Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), Yeshiva University Museum (YUM) and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO) – bring together more than 500,000 volumes, over 100 million archival documents and almost 20,000 museum objects that together constitute the largest repository of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel.

Scholars and community leaders from across the world have hailed the Center as the “Smithsonian and Library of Congress of the Jewish People.”¹ The Center brings together the rich and diverse records and resources of all facets of the contemporary Jewish community, including every major cultural, geographic and religious denomination of Jewish life.

The Center and its partners reside in a twelve-story, 145,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility, centrally located in the Union Square/Chelsea neighborhood of New York City. It is within walking distance of New York University, the New School, Baruch College, The Graduate Center at the City University of New York, Hebrew Union College and Touro College, as well as a subway ride away from other New York-based institutions such as Columbia

¹ Larry Schiffman, Chair of the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. “Jews, Scholarship and the American Context,” *Centers of Modern Jewish History*, symposium in 2001 marking the Founding of the Center for Jewish History.

University, Jewish Theological Seminary, and Yeshiva University, Union Theological Seminary, Bank Street College of Education, and several CUNY schools around New York City.

The Center for Jewish History is governed by a Board of Directors, with a total of 26 members, of whom 20 are Internal Directors, representing the five partners, and 6 are External Directors. Directors represent such areas as business, finance, law, medicine, philanthropy and scholarship. The Center is not under the auspices of any religious Jewish denomination, and welcomes viewpoints and perspectives from every religious, cultural and national background.

The Center has a professional staff of 50 members. As the entire institution is devoted solely to the study and interpretation of topics within the humanities, every one of our staff should be seen as serving the humanities. However, if a further breakdown is necessary, 25 staff members work as librarians, archivists and managers of our academic and public programs, including fellowships and scholarly presentations, all of whom are directly involved with work that draws on collection within the humanities. Other staff members fall into categories such as Administration and Finance, Public Relations and Marketing, Institutional Advancement, Information Technology, Facility Services, and Volunteer Services. Each of the Center's five partners maintains its autonomy with separate governing bodies and professional staff.

Since its formation, the Center has secured more than \$130 million from individual donors, foundations, and government entities. The breakdown of Center funding is as follows: 26% from individuals, 40% from public and family foundations, 7% from corporate donors, and 27% from government entities including city, state and federal agencies.

While each partner is autonomous from mission to management, the Center has successfully centralized many of the core functions and procedures that provide reference services for researchers; established a coordinated effort for the preservation and digitization of collections; and created an online presence providing those with Internet access with the use of the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). The facility also offers exhibition galleries and classrooms, a world-class reading room, a 248-seat auditorium, climate-controlled archival/library stacks, a bookstore, and café. The Center exists with one overriding objective: to enable easy access to the history and culture of the Jewish people worldwide.

The Center's Partners and the Collections at the Center

The collections at the Center are global in origin, but are also deeply and inherently American. From the records of the first Jewish communities arriving in New Amsterdam in 1654 to those of the Soviet Jewish émigrés in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the story of American Jewry is in many ways the story of America itself. For the past 350 years, Jewish and American histories have been deeply intertwined, and for so many of the collections housed here, they are in fact one and the same.

One of the Center's partners, the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), is the oldest national ethnic historical organization in the United States, which since its formation in 1892, has grown from consolidating the history of previously established German and Sephardic communities in America to encompassing those arriving during the great migration of European Jews to the U.S. in the late 1800s and beyond. AJHS publishes its official quarterly journal, *American Jewish History*, which is the most widely respected journal in its field.

American Sephardi Federation (ASF) grew out of the global Sephardic community in 1973 and has since served to promote the awareness of Sephardic culture, while systematically developing a library and archive devoted to documenting the culture of Jews who were forced out of Spain during the Inquisition and lived in the Diaspora countries of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. Many of these groups eventually planted their roots in the United States, including little-known Sephardic communities in Russia and the Eastern Bloc that were the focus of initiatives within the American Soviet Jewry Movement, a campaign attracting much of the American Jewish community during the 1970s and 1980s.

Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), founded in New York in 1955 in the aftermath of the Holocaust, has devoted itself to the scholarly study and documentation of pre-war Central European German-speaking Jews, whose intellectual and religious movements have had lasting impacts on 19th and 20th century American culture. LBI's current exhibition, *Publishing in Exile: German-Language Literature in the U.S. in the 1940s*, brings together for the first time the literary works of authors banned by the Nazis that were able to be published in the U.S. during the Third Reich. Jewish writers were among the Marxists, pacifists, internationalists and other persecuted groups that sought political, cultural and religious freedom in the U.S. since before its inception.

Since 1973, Yeshiva University Museum (YUM) has engaged public audiences in educational programs that incorporate diverse resources spanning the life of the American Jewish

community. YUM holds an original handwritten letter by Thomas Jefferson in which he denounced anti-Semitism and endorsed education as the key to ending racial discrimination. The letter was sent to Congregation Shearith Israel, North America's first Jewish congregation founded in 1654 by Sephardic immigrants to New Amsterdam from Recife, Brazil. The Museum's most successful exhibition to date detailed perhaps the most fundamental of stories for immigrants to this country, entitled: *A Perfect Fit: The Garment Industry and American Jewry, 1860-1960*.

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO), founded in 1925 in Vilna Poland (now Vilnius, Lithuania) to document Eastern European culture and history, narrowly escaped the destruction of the Holocaust in 1940 by moving its headquarters to its existing branch in New York. Since then, YIVO has continued its tradition by collecting the histories of immigrant Jewish communities in the U.S. and elsewhere in the Diaspora for whom the centrality of the United States continues to loom large. A recent acquisition of YIVO's was from the New York Association for New Americans, which chronicles the experience of Holocaust survivors that emigrated to the U.S. during and after the Second World War.

The institutional relationship that each of the partners has with the United States, developed during a unique time of American crisis, with the danger of political violence abroad and the immediate necessity to salvage a disintegrated or fractured communal identities. The collections housed at the Center in the archives of its partner organizations offer a specific look at the United States, one in which the successes and struggles of immigrant communities are chronicled. The archives here offer the world a view of history in its most raw form, allowing researchers and the public to interpret and learn about the lives and communities from which they come.

Every archive is proud to highlight the special items in their collections. The Center frequently points to a letter sent by George Washington to Touro synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island in celebration of Jewish membership in the American citizenry; and to Emma Lazarus' handwritten draft of her famous 1883 poem, "The New Colossus," which is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. But we also know that the strength of these collections lies in the stunning accumulation of documents that support research on a broad swath of the historical endeavor. As scholars work in a research center such as the Center's Lillian Goldman Reading Room, they slowly amass evidence drawn from often routine items that eventually build to support the thesis

of a historical monograph. The historical evidence from the collections at the Center on the United States support biographical explorations, intellectual history, immigration, and studies of women, literature, labor, and cultural history.

The collections of our partners range from the early modern era in Europe and pre-colonial times in the Americas, to present-day materials from across the globe. The arrival of Jews to Newport, Rhode Island in 1658 spawned Touro synagogue, North America's oldest and still-standing Jewish prayer building, whose archives rest within the AJHS and ASF collections. Other colonial-era resources include: the Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr. Database of Early American Jewish Portraits, consisting of images of every known portrait of American Jews painted before 1865 including distinguished Jews in the Colonial and post-Colonial era; the A.S.W. Rosenbach collection of American Judaica including over 350 books and pamphlets published in America before 1850; and the letters of prominent Jewish community leader Abigail Franks, written between 1731 and 1748.

Researchers also have access to the first Hebrew books and Jewish prayer books published in the United States and the personal papers of prominent public figures from 18th and 19th century America such as Haym Salomon, financier of the American Revolution; Uriah P. Levy, the nation's first Jewish Commodore and savior of Thomas Jefferson's home in Monticello; Moses Michael Hays, founder of the Bank of Boston; and Adolphus S. Solomons, co-founder with Clara Barton of the American Red Cross.

20th century American figures are thoroughly represented by, for instance, the collections of Oscar Straus, the first Jewish Cabinet Secretary; Zionist leader Rabbi Stephen S. Wise; Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis; Admiral Lewis L. Strauss, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission; and the papers and unpublished manuscripts of the author Henry Roth.

Collections also come to the Center from major communal organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC); the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), a federal agency working cooperatively with the Jewish community to steer Jews away from urban centers to the interior of the U.S.; and in more recent times, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the American Association of Ethiopian Jews.

Other institutional collections include the Graduate School for Jewish Social Work in New York; the Grand Street Boys Association; and orphanage records of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York and the Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum. The library also maintains

extensive records of both the American and European offices of over 10,000 *landsmanshaftn* and other communal and religious organizations such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), instrumental in aiding the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from 1880 to 1920.

The newspapers and periodicals present in all of the partner collections date back to the 18th century, including the first Jewish newspaper in the U.S., *The Occident*, published between 1843 and 1869; publications of Jewish political movements throughout Europe and America; Ladino newspapers from the Sephardic world and New York City, as well as rare anti-Semitic propaganda from six continents over the last 500 years.

The collections include the Bund archives and library, documenting the Jewish labor movement from the late 19th century onwards; the world's largest collection of sound recordings, photographs and films related to East European Jewish culture; a prominent collection of Yiddish and Hebrew children's literature; and records of the Educational Alliance.

The Center provides access to the Fred W. Lessing Memorial Archives, which contain a unique collection – largely unpublished – of more than 1,000 memoirs, written from 1790 to the present. The memoir collection permits study of any number of social processes, such as the changing family structures of a minority in a rapidly changing society, or the ways in which anti-Semitism was experienced, ignored, or overcome at various times during the past 200 years.

The history of the Center's partners is inextricably linked to the Holocaust. Both YIVO and LBI have embarked on missions to document Jewish life under the Nazis and to rescue and preserve the historical record of the European Jewish life that was then in the process of being destroyed. The volunteer collecting tradition sprang from YIVO's escape from Vilna; continued in displaced-persons (DP) camps and refugee centers in Germany, Austria, and Italy; and was aided by Jewish chaplains and soldiers in the U.S. Army, and staff members of Jewish relief organizations, who collected testimonies from Holocaust survivors.

The Holocaust resources at the Center are among the most extensive in the world, frequently requested by researchers and detailed in an annotated bibliography available on site and online. The Center's Holocaust bibliography emphasizes archival holdings, a rarity among Holocaust reference guides. In addition to some of the rarest of early and first-person, eye-witness, survivor testimonies, the library holds photographs of burning synagogues on *Kristallnacht*; original documents from the Warsaw, Lodz, and Vilna ghettos; and over 6,000

yiskor-bikher (memorial books) that commemorate the pre-war Jewish communities that perished across Eastern Europe.

Paintings, sculptures, and thousands of drawings, watercolors and prints further enhance the Center's repository. Portraits, landscapes, and realistic and abstract art attest to the universality of experience depicted by the creativity of Jewish artists. The collections contain paintings such as the Meyerhoff Collection from the seminal early Zionist period in Israel, 1910-1940; and important works by Arthur Szyk, Yaakov Agam, Leonard Baskin, Louise Nevelson, Abraham Rattner, Reuben Rubin and Ben Shahn.

Also on site are ceremonial objects and artifacts from the 18th through the 20th centuries, such as handwritten illuminated marriage contracts and scores of amulets; the Torah scroll of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hassidism; Confederate currency containing Judah P. Benjamin's image and signature; and archeological artifacts including ceramics, bronzes and glass from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity, representing the early material culture of Jewish settlements in Israel and the Diaspora.

The Center also provides access to rare Sephardic resources such as a digital birth records database of Rangoon, Burma, from 1896 to 1972; the Louis N. Levy Ladino and Rare Book Collection, containing important works in Judeo-Spanish that trace an often overlooked but vibrant Sephardic heritage in the United States; and documents of the mass emigration of Jews from Yemen in the early 1990s.

In order to make these collections available in the Lillian Goldman Reading Room or for researchers online, the Center and its partners continue to process and describe archival collections, catalog book volumes, and preserve damaged or vulnerable materials through restorative methods and the creation of digital facsimiles. These activities not only preserve the history of the Jewish community, but also foster research and allow for its dissemination through on-site reference services, digital web-based tools, public events and academic programs. The Center has created a number of avenues through which the institution advances these goals, and is committed to continuing to nurture an understanding of the significance of these collections for the humanities, American history and modern Jewish history.

Lillian Goodman Reading Room

The collections housed at the Center are available through centralized access in its Lillian Goldman Reading Room. One of the service areas to benefit from the Center's endowment campaign, the Reading Room provides a gateway to the collections as well as research programs for scholars and the general public. By the end of 2009, the Center had received 40,407 research visits since its opening in 2000, with use of its Reading Room increasing steadily with each successive year. 85% of researchers come from within the U.S. and 30% come each year from more than 150 colleges, universities and other research institutions. Researchers from outside of the United States now account for 15% of all users, a proportion that has been upward trending since the Center's establishment. On average, researchers from 26 countries visit the Center each year, and since 2001 scholars from 53 countries have conducted research here.

The Reading Room's open-stack reference collection offers the most current as well as classic reference texts in addition to major publications of the Center partners. The remaining half million volumes as well as 100 million original documents, are available by request through traditional as well as electronic means.

As the stewards of these important collections, the Reading Room's archivists and librarians offer a considerable depth of knowledge about these resources to aid in research. They hail from over ten different countries and are fluent in more than 20 languages. Some members of the combined archivist and librarian team have worked with the partner collections for more than half a century. YIVO's Music Archivist, for example, has worked with the YIVO staff and collections since she began working with YIVO's founder, Dr. Max Weinreich, in 1944. The Reading Room also benefits from the experience of YIVO's Senior Research Associate, who has worked in YIVO's archives since 1970, as well as its Chief Archivist who came to YIVO in 1978, and its Bibliographic Specialist and Cataloger, who wields reading fluency in over 10 languages. Diane Spielmann, the Center's Director of Public Services, began managing the Center's Reading Room after working at the LBI archives for 25 years, since 1976. Robert Sink, the Center's Chief of Archive and Library Services, came to the position in 2001 from the New York Public Library, where he worked since 1981 to establish and direct the Library's first institutional archives management system. Susan Malbin, Director of Library and Archives at AJHS, comes to the Center from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and was recently appointed Co-Chair of the Committee of Archives, Libraries and Museums, a combined

national committee of the Society of American Archivists, the American Library Association, and the American Association of Museums. Together, these professionals offer researchers highly specialized expertise, as well as unique experience with the collections at hand.

In endowing the Lillian Goldman Reading Room, the Center will use funds to support a team of archive and library staff with the ability to gain knowledge of the collections from all the partners; process collections to be made accessible through the Reading Room; restore and conserve vulnerable documents in the Cahnman Preservation Lab; enhance the reference collections and annotated bibliographies; and augment the various scholarly programs run out of the Reading Room as detailed below.

Cahnman Preservation Lab. In order to provide sustained access to the collections, the Reading Room routinely employs the expertise of The Werner J. and Gisella Levi Cahnman Preservation Laboratory. Serving the critical mission of stabilizing, maintaining, and prolonging the life of the partners' extensive paper-based collections that are subject to deterioration due to age and handling, the Lab is an integral part of the Reading Room's daily functioning. The Preservation Lab reformats brittle materials, treats items damaged by use, microfilms documents for safe access and retrieval, and preserves and stores collections in customized protective containers and sleeves. Without this preservation effort, many materials, some of which date back four centuries, would not be accessible to the public.

Bibliographies. Staff within the Center's Reading Room have completed two annotated bibliographies to aid researchers: *Women in Daily Life: An Online Bibliography* and *Holocaust Resources: An Annotated Bibliography of Archival Holdings at the Center for Jewish History*, which stands out among Holocaust reference guides due to its emphasis on archival holdings. The Center is currently developing *Performing Arts Collections: An Annotated Bibliography of Film, Theater and Music*, which will compile citations of Jewish performing arts dating back to the 16th century, including the abundance of Yiddish theater, a language representing the majority of theater houses in New York City during the early part of the 20th century.

Graduate Fellowships. Since 2002, the Reading Room has housed the Center's Graduate Fellowship Program to support doctoral research conducted at the Center by emerging scholars in Ph.D. programs. Since then, the program has served 42 Fellows from 20 institutions ranging from universities across the United States such as Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University, to international institutions such as Universitaet Salzburg

in Austria and the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, England. The current stipend for each Fellow is set at \$12,500 per year, bringing the Center's financial commitment for this program to \$462,500 in direct support since its inception. While all of the research conducted by Center Fellows relates to American history from a variety of different directions, one of the fellowships each year is specifically reserved for a project set exclusively within American Jewish history. The resulting innovative scholarship has focused on long-overlooked topics in U.S. history such as Yiddish newspaper cartoons in early 20th-century New York, the use of modern dance choreography to forge an American Jewish identity, and the place of Native Americans in the cultural imagination of American Jews.

The Center requires all Graduate Fellows to offer a public seminar to the local scholarly community on his/her findings. Initially intended to be a small gathering for scholars and peers, interest in the Graduate Seminar Series from the academic world quickly grew, with attendance increasing for each successive seminar. Today the Director of Public Services invites the general public along with graduate students from local college and university campuses. The Graduate Seminar is under the charge of an academic coordinator, a position previously filled by Dr. Hasia Diner, Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University, and now held by Nancy Sinkoff, Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and History at Rutgers University. Interest in and attendance at the Graduate Seminars has been sustained over the years, usually ranging from 20 to 30 participants.

The Center currently has a proposal before the NEH to secure financial support for post-doctoral fellowships for independent and early-career scholars, as well as tenured professors. The Center hopes to begin such a program in 2010.

Scholars Working Groups. In October 2009, the Reading Room launched a *Scholars Working Group*. In this multi-disciplinary project, the Center serves as a support system and "think tank" for a team of up to 30 distinguished scholars at various career stages, creating a new venue for scholarly conversation and collaboration that will complement existing public lectures, on-going seminars, and conferences and workshops in the New York area. The working group model enables academics to engage in interdisciplinary work and to take advantage of the human capital in the New York area by consulting with practitioners, community leaders, journalists and others when their expertise serves to benefit academic work. By creating a "working group" rather than a "lecture series" or "seminar" on a given subject, the project emphasizes on-going

conversation and active discussion. To this end, scholars have experimented with different formats for presentations and discussions, including not only traditional lectures and pre-circulated papers, but also roundtable discussions, presentations of material artifacts from the collections held at the Center, and dialogues with scholars and other experts

The Center currently runs a Scholars Working Group on the “History of the Jewish Book” in partnership with Columbia University and New York University. In the last few decades, the study of reading, writing and publishing has emerged as a lively field of inquiry in which scholars have engaged the impact of technology on traditional reading and writing practices and their relation to social, religious and political change. The Center intends to hold a conference and produce an edited publication that will present the group’s findings.

Initial planning meetings have already begun to reproduce this model in spring 2010 in the form of a Scholars Working Group on “New York Jews” that would partner with New York University’s Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History. Led by Hasia Diner, Professor of American Jewish History at New York University and Tony Michels, Associate Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, the broadly assembled team of scholars will explore over a two-year period the synergetic relationship between New York, arguably America’s most important city, and the Jews for whom New York provided their most central home. The project will focus on the areas of demography (immigration, settlement and the establishment of “Jewish neighborhoods”), politics (implications of Jewish political behaviors in New York for national and international politics), work and business (how Jewish labor built connections with other New Yorkers and forged the economic life of the city), and culture (how Jewish wealth, interest and sheer numbers shaped popular culture and literary and intellectual life in New York).

Professional Development Series. Recognizing the urgent needs of emerging scholars, the Center launched a national initiative, in conjunction with the Association for Jewish Studies, to provide a Professional Development Series in Jewish Studies that will address pressing issues facing graduate students and early career scholars. Run through the Lillian Goldman Reading Room, the series consists of six public seminars throughout the academic year, each featuring well-known and respected presenters addressing a variety of issues targeted towards early career and graduate students in the New York metropolitan area and those participating from across the country via the live webcast. Recordings of each presentation are permanently stored for public

viewing on the Center's website. This initiative has had an important hand in helping to develop solutions for emerging scholars, whose professional opportunities have become more competitive amid the current economic distress. This collective and focused approach aims to enhance the quality of scholarship in the coming years. The Professional Development Series is not only an opportunity to fortify techniques and understanding within the humanities and Jewish Studies, but one for the Center to solidify its role within the academic community as a resource not only of primary source materials, but of guidance and professional development as well.

Visiting Scholars. To augment the Center's growing community of scholars, the Center plans to launch a non-stipend Visiting Scholars program in late 2010, which will offer accomplished and promising scholars the benefits of participating in an academic community, regardless of institutional affiliation. Selected through a rigorous application process, Visiting Scholars will be given a place to store research materials, be granted borrowing privileges at a local university library, hold a Center email account, and enjoy a stable working environment to continue their research. The program is a response in part to the downsizing of university faculties in the current economy. While professors on sabbatical, or any other proven researcher, may apply, the program is designed to be one of the few that admits independent scholars not affiliated with an institution of higher education.

Archivists' Training. Another project to be implemented in the coming year is a Graduate Student Archival Training Program for students who are pursuing their Master's degrees in either library and information science or history at universities and colleges where programs exist with an archival major. The program will address the looming shortage that many institutions are facing with respect to the limited number of skilled professionals available to work in archives and libraries, particularly within special collections. Students will gain valuable experience processing premier Jewish studies collections, receive training in increasingly important digital technologies and access systems, bolster their language skills with onsite evening classes in a variety of appropriate languages, and work at other institutional archives to help diversify their experience.

Academic Advisory Council. In operating all of its academic and research programs, the Center benefits from consultation with its Academic Advisory Council (AAC). Composed of 15 notable Jewish studies scholars, the AAC includes members of the faculty and staffs of leading academic and research institutions across the country. The AAC helps to guide the formation of

programs, weaves historical research into exhibitions, and represents the needs of the scholarly community for the Center's academic programs. The Center also maintains an affiliation with the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS), whose office is located at the Center. The AJS, the largest representative body of Jewish studies scholars in the U.S., maintains close relations with its 1,700 members in university departments across the country, and serves in an external advisory role for the Center.

Online Public Access Catalog

One of the Center's greatest accomplishments is the creation of its Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), a rarity in the library world that provides a single portal to offer seamless searching of the partners' collections, whether archival materials, library books, or museum objects. After an unprecedented \$2 million grant awarded in 1998 by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a division of the National Archives and Records Administration, the OPAC went live to the public in 2007. Additional grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Leon Levy Foundation have helped catalog and process materials located within the Center's walls so that they can be accessed electronically from anywhere in the world. Since its creation, the OPAC has received more than \$4 million in support from the Center and partnering foundations and government agencies, adding more than 600,000 records, archival finding aids, and digital images to the content made available to researchers around the world. In 2009 the OPAC recorded more than 340,000 research sessions from over 20 different countries, averaging 24 minutes each. The OPAC contains a record for all 11,000 archival collections, and will eventually provide folder-level detail on these materials. The Center is also working to create records for every volume and artifact, allowing research in the humanities to proceed uninhibited.

Endowment funds will be used to expand the OPAC, integrating additional records as collections are processed, employing the Gruss Lipper Digital Lab to digitize especially important documents, and grow the Center's existing digital collections of unpublished scholarship and other materials of which its partners do not hold hard copies.

Digitization Laboratory. The Gruss Lipper Digital Laboratory works in concert with the Preservation Laboratory, providing the Center community with high-quality digital multimedia facsimiles of items from the partners' collections. Its experienced staff works with state-of-the-

art hardware and software to produce images, audio files, and other digital resources that make delicate and vulnerable treasures from the partners' archives accessible to a wide audience. A Digital Asset Management System housed within the OPAC catalogs, manages, preserves, and provides integrated access to the repository's assets. The Center is committed to continuing the work of the lab, as it is essential to the success of the Center's mission, and holds unwavering value for the humanities and archival disciplines.

Collecting Dissertations. In August 2009, the Center began amassing a centralized resource of Jewish studies dissertations from around the world. We currently offer hundreds of full-text searchable dissertations via the OPAC, and the endeavor will soon be formalized and grow to provide immediate and free access to thousands of research works through our website. The earliest of these works was completed in 1894, only 12 years after the first Ph.D. in history was conferred by an American university. The collection has already received considerable attention, being accessed hundreds of times each month, and represents not only a technological breakthrough, but one in cutting edge research as well.

Other Notable Center Programs Of Valuable to the Humanities

Public Programs. The Center's public programs attract approximately 25,000 visitors each year from around the world. The uniqueness of its programs comes from the Center's ability to draw on the same collections available every day to researchers, but present them to the public in innovative ways. Whether by hosting outside scholars to present on the significance of a particular set of primary documents being featured in one of the Center's museum galleries, or by presenting online exhibitions of the digitized originals and maintaining a blog to stimulate discussion between scholars and the general public, the Center has been able to bring to life the sometimes passive role of archives and libraries by opening up the collections it houses in new and engaging ways.

Upon the Center's founding in 2000, a major conference entitled *Centers of Modern Jewish History* led by Professor Lawrence Schiffman, Chair of the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University, addressed the importance of the Center in the history of Jewish collecting traditions. The conference was accompanied by the *Intersections* exhibit, a long-running series that incorporated the collections of all 5 partner organizations. The exhibition, curated by YUM, was enhanced by film, lectures, and symposia over a four-year

period, garnering interest and support for the collections at the Center, and culminating in the 2004 celebration of “350 Years of American Jewry”. For this, the Center received a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to create www.jewsinamerica.org, a website devoted to the historical legacy of American Jewry. The project has been a tremendous success, receiving more than 30,000 unique search sessions each year.

In December 2007, the Center organized a public presentation devoted to the legacy of Abraham Joshua Heschel, famed Rabbi in Europe, and celebrated intellectual and activist of the civil rights movement in America. The conference featured a gathering of scholars, educators, community leaders, activists and friends that honored and addressed Heschel’s impact on religious thought, Jewish scholarship, and social engagement on the centennial of his birth.

In November 2008, the Center hosted “Jewish Youth and Cultural Change: Rethinking American Jewish History,” a conference directed by Dr. Riv-Ellen Prell, Professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota and member of the Center’s Academic Advisory Council. The conference brought together some of the most distinguished scholars in American Jewish history to discuss how the stories of Jews in the United States change when youth is treated as the central focus.

Most recently, the center’s public programs have taken a more far-reaching approach. While previous programs have consisted of either the display of artifacts or a series of panelists, the Center is now employing new technologies to introduce wider audiences to the collections, and building its programs into multi-faceted initiatives that involve visitors in multiple ways.

The *History of Genocide Initiative* that began in November 2009 was the culmination of almost 10 years of program development at the Center, employing all the components used in previous endeavors: on-site exhibitions to connect people directly to the original documents of Jewish history; online exhibitions to provide an unrivaled resource for educators; a conference hosting outside scholars to provide expert interpretations of the materials; and a new media presence to create an interactive forum of public engagement on multiple levels.

The initiative opened with a major international conference featuring experts from around the globe, as well as an accompanying gallery exhibition displaying the personal papers of Raphael Lemkin. Housed on-site in the archive of the AJHS, the Lemkin collection details his courageous campaign in Europe and the U.S. to end mass murder, from coining the term “genocide” to realizing the United Nations’ 1948 Convention on such crimes. By combining

outside scholarship with the exhibition of related collections in an adjacent gallery, the Center has been able to open up this vast repository in new ways, allowing sustained engagement with diverse sectors of the public, and in this case, bringing to light new perspectives of the important contributions that various Jewish figures have had on the history of the United States, and on its relationship with the outside world.

In addition to the conference and exhibition, the Center has extended the *History of Genocide Initiative* far into 2010 by making available web-based versions of the conference talks; an online exhibition in which people can view the collections in a digital format at www.cjh.org/lemkin; a blog in which visitors to the online or physical galleries can give feedback, pose questions and receive answers from participating scholars; and a series of public programs that involve collaboration with outside organizations to discuss genocide through a variety of perspectives, including journalism, diplomacy, art, literature and film.

The initiative has served as a way for the Center to bridge the academic and lay communities with distinct topics in U.S. history and culture. Since beginning the initiative, the Center received a \$300,000 grant to reproduce this model in future years, involving topics such as the Cold War or the era of massive immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in which millions of Jews and other immigrants arrived in the U.S.

In 2010, the Center will co-sponsor with the American Jewish Historical Society the Biennial Scholars' Conference on American Jewish History, a recurring event that will focus on the notion of American Jewish "exceptionalism," or uniqueness that has shaped conceptions of American Jewish history from its beginning. Standard narratives of exceptionalism have characterized American Jewish history with an unparalleled degree of freedom, acceptance, and prosperity that has enabled Jews to synthesize their Jewish identities with the demands of national citizenship far more effortlessly than other diasporic Jews. American Jewish exceptionalism has been used to differentiate Jews from other Americans by virtue of educational and economic attainment, as well as other "Jewish values," such as social liberalism or scholarly engagement. The conference will bring scholars from across the country to the Center to question the extent to which these notions about American uniqueness, on the one hand, and Jewish uniqueness, on the other, are accurate.

Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute. Another important resource at the Center is the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute. Providing researchers with access to millions of

documents in the library and archives, along with dozens of Internet-based biographical and geographical tools and databases to conduct a family historical search, the Institute is the most comprehensive genealogy resource in the country. The Center enjoys a partnership with the New York Jewish Genealogical Society, which offers its expertise in amassing and navigating documents related to family history. Complementing the work of the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute, the Center offers the Samberg Family History Program, which over the past seven years has instructed more than 250 high school students in advanced genealogical research techniques, as well as American history and common experiences of immigration. The Center is already receiving inquiries and applications for the 2010 summer.

Fellowships in Film. Emphasizing the integration of scholarship and the arts, the Center has established the Joseph S. Steinberg Fund for Emerging Jewish Filmmakers, which will offer a stipend for pre-production research at the Center to filmmakers creating works on Jewish themes. The Center will soon launch this project as a way to cultivate more interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Jewish history.

Fundraising Plans

Working with an elite group of business professionals, philanthropists, and leaders in the Jewish community, the Center for Jewish History launched a capital campaign in September 2009 to raise \$30 million to eliminate the debt the Center incurred when the institution was built. The campaign, led by Joseph S. Steinberg of Leucadia National Corporation and William A. Ackman of Pershing Square Capital Management, has garnered \$20,600,000 in support since its inception. The Center is on target to meet its goals and emerge as a debt-free institution in 2010.

In the spring of 2010 the Center intends to announce the completion of its capital campaign and launch an endowment campaign in order to continue the momentum and generosity of its supporters. As philanthropic interest in the institution increases, the Center anticipates that additional campaign donations will be used to match a challenge grant from the NEH and help strengthen the long-term viability of the Center's Archive and Library Service Program. The endowment campaign will continue to be led by Mr. Ackman and Mr. Steinberg, and the Center anticipates strong support from its board in this effort, whether by personal contribution or assistance in the solicitation of other donors. The Center has already identified several prospective donors for the campaign, including The Cahnman Foundation, The David

Berg Foundation, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Lillian Goldman Charitable Trust, and the Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund, as well as several anonymous individuals. By bolstering the Center's modest endowment, the institution will be better equipped to preserve access to the primary documents of the Jewish and American past.

The Center currently has two open grant applications before the National Endowment for the Humanities. The first proposal is for Fellowships at Independent Research Institutions (FPIRI) in the Division of Research. If awarded, this grant for post-doctoral fellowships will dramatically enhance the Center's academic program, logically extending its Graduate Fellowships for pre-doctoral scholars and bringing scholarship opportunities at the Center to the next level. By hosting both tenured professors and more recent Ph.D.s for a year of research and presentation, the grant would enrich a community of scholars at the Center and throughout New York City. The total request is \$398,000 and while there is no requirement to match funds for this grant, the Center intends to provide \$74,524 in direct support from current donors who fund fellowship activities at the Center.

The second pending proposal is from the DFG/NEH Bilateral Digital Humanities Program of the Office of Digital Humanities. With joint funding from the NEH and the German Research Foundation (DFG), the initiative entitled "Enriching Digital Collections" will entail collaboration between the Center and the Frankfurt University Library to digitize 1,400 books from the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism). A 19th-century German-Jewish intellectual movement that existed entirely outside of the university system, *Wissenschaft* amounted to some of the earliest engagement with religious Jewish texts by users of modern academic techniques, wielding tremendous influence on future Jewish religious and political movements in America, such as Zionism, Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and educational institutions such as the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Hebrew University. While the Frankfurt University Library has begun digitizing its immense *Wissenschaft* holdings, the Center houses approximately 60% of those missing from its collections. The project will not only produce the world's most comprehensive digital library of *Wissenschaft* materials, but will also encompass an attempt at using 21st century technology to reproduce academic and cultural resources from the Pre-Holocaust era. The grant requests \$178,156 from the NEH. For this initiative, the Center will secure \$155,262 in matching funds from already identified foundations and individuals that are supportive of this project.

The Center has received other grants from the NEH in the past. In addition to the 2004 grant of \$38,209 for the creation of www.jewsinamerica.org to be devoted to the 350 years of American Jewish History, the Center was awarded \$98,536 to collaborate with the National Archives to house, examine and catalog the Iraqi Jewish Archives found by American forces in 2003.

Other federal grants to the Center include a \$2,000,000 award in 1998 from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission for the creation and on-going implementation of the Online Public Access Catalog; a 2001 grant for \$250,000 from the Institute for Museum and Library Services for the Center's programming under the heading "Exploration of Jewish Culture;" and a 2004 grant from the U.S Department of Education for \$99,200 as part of the Fund for the Improvement of Education to sponsor educational programming on Jewish history as well as technological upgrades.