



# CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

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# 25

Years of Preserving  
and Mobilizing  
Jewish History

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## Welcome

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate the Center for Jewish History's 25th anniversary, we look to the future with a keen sense of our past. Building on the vision of our founder Bruce Slovin, the Center welcomed its first visitors in the year 2000 and has since emerged as the one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to the preservation and mobilization of Jewish history.

Today, we stand as a globally acclaimed institution, the vast archives housed at the Center serving as a critical resource for scholars, genealogists, and all who are drawn to Jewish life. These documents, photographs, and artifacts testify to the resilience and vibrancy of Jewish culture.

From thought-provoking exhibitions to transformative educational initiatives, we are devoted to illuminating the Jewish experience in all its dimensions. We have made our resources more accessible, allowing people globally to connect with the Jewish past. We have sponsored public programs that have promoted historical literacy. In a period of spiking antisemitism, these tasks have never been more important.

We are deeply grateful for your help as we safeguard Jewish history for future generations.

Thank you for being part of our story,



Peter Baldwin, *Chair, Center for Jewish History*



## Board of Directors

Bruce Slovin,  
*Founder & Chair Emeritus*

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## Senior Management Team

Prof. Gavriel Rosenfeld, *President*

Rio Daniel, *CEO*

Andrey Filimonov, *Chief Archivist*



## Origins

In the late 1980s, CJH founder Bruce Slovin envisioned a home that would offer unrivaled resources spanning the entire spectrum of the Jewish experience. A decade later, he realized his dream through an extraordinary collaboration among five preeminent Jewish cultural and research organizations.

In 1999, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research relocated to the Center for Jewish History. It was soon joined by the American Jewish Historical Society, Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum, and American Sephardi Federation, collectively establishing 15 West 16th Street as the central address in the United States for Jewish history, representing the diverse backgrounds and traditions of Jews from across the globe. Widely regarded as the Jewish community's Library of Congress and Smithsonian Institution, the Center opened its doors to the world on October 26, 2000.

A quarter of a century later, the Center remains dedicated to its mission of preserving the richness of the Jewish past, mobilizing it to meet the challenges of the moment, and propelling the profound and diverse narrative of the Jewish people forward to inspire future generations.



*Wilhelm Wachtel, [Jewish Refugees],  
oil painting, 1937.*

*Leo Baeck Institute, Art & Objects  
Collection, 92.1*



“For the Jews especially, who have been moved from country to country under terrible circumstances, it’s very important to make an effort to try to capture all that remains of that history.”

— Center for Jewish History Founder Bruce Slovin



## Our Partner Institutions

The Center for Jewish History opened in 2000, bringing together five distinct organizations that represent all facets of Jewish life. The Center provides a collaborative home for its Partner organizations.

### Leo Baeck Institute

Founded in 1955 by leading Jewish émigré intellectuals, the LBI preserves the vibrant cultural heritage of German-speaking Jewry that was nearly destroyed in the Holocaust. Today, the Institute's library, archival, and art collections are among the foremost repositories documenting centuries of Jewish life in Germany, Austria, and other parts of Central Europe.



### American Jewish Historical Society

Founded in 1892, the American Jewish Historical Society is the oldest ethnic, cultural archive in the United States. AJHS provides access to more than 30 million documents and 50,000 books, photographs, art and artifacts that reflect the history of the Jewish presence in the United States from 1654 to the present.



### Yeshiva University Museum

Founded in 1973 with the mission to present, research, and interpret Jewish art and culture across history and from the four corners of the world, the Museum develops artistically creative and thought-provoking exhibitions that offer revealing perspectives on Jewish texts, traditions, and experience.



### American Sephardi Federation

Founded in 1973, the American Sephardi Federation preserves and promotes the history, traditions, and rich mosaic culture of Greater Sephardic communities. At the World Jewish Congress in 1978, ASF was recognized as the United States representative of Sephardic communities.



### YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

Founded in 1925 in Vilna, Poland, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research's mission is to preserve, study, share, and perpetuate knowledge of the history and culture of East European Jewry worldwide. Today, YIVO's collections are the primary source of documentary history of East European Jewry.



## Our Vision

More than 25 years ago Bruce Slovin's singular dedication and generous philanthropy brought five distinct Jewish history organizations together under one roof. His vision — that these five Partners would emerge as one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to the preservation and mobilization of Jewish history — is realized today as the Center for Jewish History not only provides a safe and secure repository for their collections, but also the staff and resources to make these collections accessible to the public in person and online. Programming throughout the year draws a diverse audience for countless lectures, concerts, receptions, and exhibitions.

Thanks to generous, sustained leadership from the Board of Directors, the Center is thriving. Most programs are now live-streamed and viewable by a global audience, reaching far beyond the walls of the Forchheimer Auditorium. The Center is grateful to the many individuals and families who make the Center a philanthropic priority. You are the driving force behind our important work to protect, illuminate, and mobilize Jewish culture and history. Thank you!



Rio Daniel  
CEO



Dr. Gavriel Rosenfeld  
President

# The Five Foundational Pillars of the Center for Jewish History

The Center for Jewish History stands as the foremost institution in the United States dedicated to preserving and mobilizing Jewish history. It is home to the largest Jewish archive in the country and ranks as the second largest archive globally, surpassed only by the National Library of Israel. As a pivotal repository for Jewish historical documents and artifacts, the Center is committed to promoting the importance of Jewish history worldwide. The Center's mission is supported by five core pillars: preservation, access, scholarship, engagement, and community, each designed to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Jewish heritage while ensuring its relevance for future generations.

The Center for Jewish History pursues the critical task of preservation through the meticulous processing, conservation, and restoration of historical artifacts, documents, and records. In doing so, the Center ensures that these invaluable resources remain accessible for generations to come. Promoting access and scholarship, in turn, allows the Center to democratize knowledge and enhance the understanding of Jewish history. By providing access to its vast collections through digital archives, exhibitions, and public databases, the Center makes Jewish historical resources available worldwide. The Center also champions intellectual inquiry by fostering cutting-edge scholarly research and encourages dialogue among historians, scholars, and researchers through engaging seminars, workshops, and high-level academic initiatives and collaborative projects.

The two final pillars, engagement and community, are equally vital to the Center for Jewish History. Both bring people together and deepen their connection to Jewish history through public programs, educational initiatives, and cultural events. By creating an inclusive, warm, and inviting environment where individuals can explore their heritage, the Center not only preserves Jewish history, but ensures that it remains accessible and relevant to all.

*Luminous Manuscript by Diane Samuels*





## Looking Ahead: The Next 25 Years

To meet this moment, the Center for Jewish History set ambitious goals to enhance its commitment to preserve and mobilize Jewish history. With your help we seek to:



**Implement Sustainable Preservation:** we seek to implement sustainable practices that safeguard the Center's collections for future generations.



**Expand Digital Access:** we aim to process and digitize the entirety of the archival collections and ensure that anyone anywhere in the world can explore the riches of Jewish history.



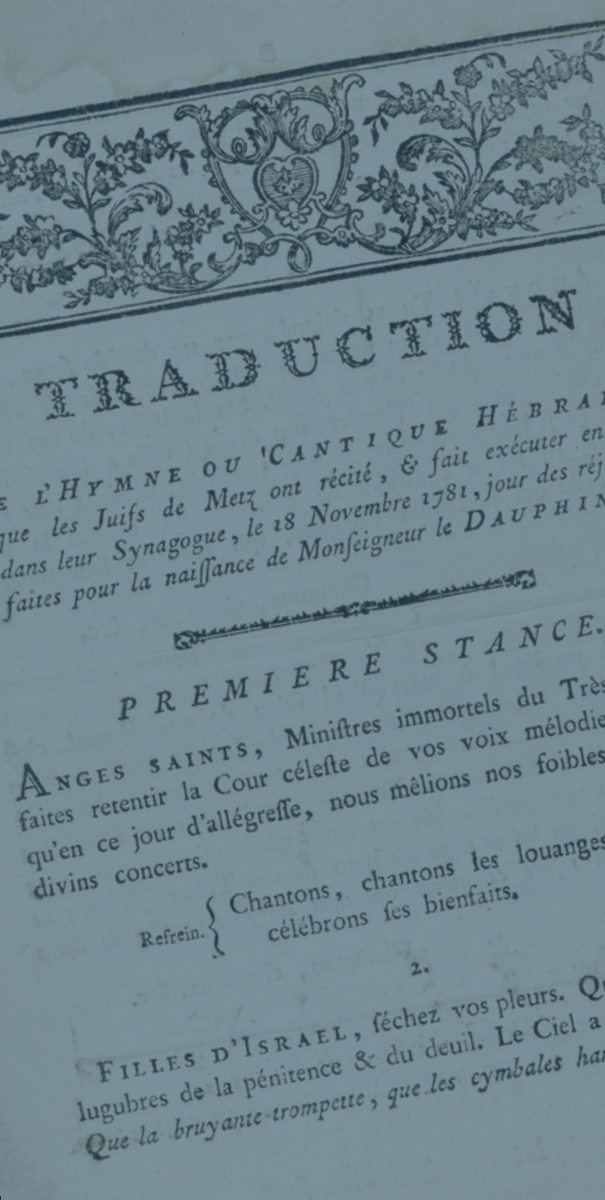
**Create New Educational Programs:** as we recognize the power of education to combat ignorance, we plan to launch ground-breaking initiatives and leverage new technologies to engage and enlighten future generations about the Jewish past.



**Enhance Community Engagement:** in the effort to build a stronger, more connected community, we plan to use new public programs and spaces to transform the Center into a multigenerational gathering place.



**Enhance Physical Space:** to broaden our outreach to new audiences, house the expanding collections, support scholars, and make our building accessible to all, we envision updating and improving our facilities, creating an even more welcoming and immersive environment for our visitors.



# Preservation

## Protecting Irreplaceable Treasures

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The Center for Jewish History safeguards millions of irreplaceable historical documents, photographs, and artifacts. At a time of heightened concerns about Jewish well-being, securing the collections is more important than ever.

## History at Risk

The Center for Jewish History's suite of archival preservation labs is where the delicate threads of the past are intertwined with the boundless possibilities of the future. Rare, historical materials, such as those from the **David Berg Rare Book Room**, the **Sid Lapidus Collection**, or the five Partners, come into the care of the Center's experts who catalog, arrange, and repair thousands of pages and objects annually.

The Center's highly skilled archival and conservation teams, based in the **Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Processing Laboratory** and **Werner J. and Gisella Cahnman Preservation Laboratory**, carefully tend to an impressive expanse of 5,600 archival collections spanning seven linear miles, over half a million volumes, and more than 35,000 artworks and artifacts. All this meticulous labor enables researchers to consult the materials onsite or online and ensures that Jewish material culture will be accessible for generations to come.

Among the most at-risk items in the archives are video and sound recordings. These vulnerable treasures degrade far faster than paper or photographs. To combat this threat, we have recently established a state-of-the-art audiovisual preservation lab where we capture videotape, audiotape, and 16mm and 35mm film. It is a race against time before the movements and sounds that represent glimpses into Jewish life may be lost forever.

*David Berg Rare Book Room photo by Beyer Blinder Belle*





## Operations: Modernization and Sustainability

The Center is in the midst of a multi-year initiative to improve environmental responsibility and sustainability throughout its facilities to reduce energy use, limit emissions, and preserve irreplaceable collections. Over the past year, the Center commissioned careful assessments of the archival stacks and its mechanical systems to plan for improvements and replacements to modernize and protect against damaging weather and infrastructure deterioration.

The Center is also working on additional improvements to update flooring and carpets in the galleries, and replace lighting systems for exhibit spaces to enhance the visitor experience.

With your support the Center can embrace these necessary updates and new technologies to safeguard the archive, reduce annual operating costs, and position the Center as a leader in environmental responsibility and sustainability.

*The Center's twelve-story stacks  
building and interior stacks*





# Access

## Jewish History at Your Fingertips

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Through our state-of-the-art archival labs and online digital archive, the Center for Jewish History makes the collections accessible to the public and scholars alike. With millions of files available online, the Center's digital archive reaches audiences worldwide.



# At the Forefront of a Digital Revolution

The Center for Jewish History stands at the forefront of an extraordinary digital revolution. For over two decades, the **Gruss Lipper Digital Laboratory**, together with our esteemed Partners, have digitized the vast collections at the Center culminating in an impressive digital archive of over 12 million files, now accessible globally.

The Center runs the critical network of systems necessary to describe, catalog, manage, and share all those digital holdings. These centralized systems are accessed more than 1.1 million times annually by researchers in over 120 countries. This unparalleled digital access reflects the Center's profound commitment to preserving and sharing Jewish history with the world.

In a groundbreaking initiative, Center librarians are poised to launch the nation's first Jewish history hub for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), promising to enrich the DPLA with a 100-fold increase in Jewish historical content. By integrating collections through this new hub, the Center will broaden access to millions of items and champion the facts and truths of Jewish history to a wider audience.

*An audiovisual digitization specialist is restoring an audio recording captured from a cassette tape (above); a photographer is preparing an oil painting to be digitally captured (below)*





## Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute

Step into a space where you hold the keys to unlock the tales of those who came before you. Whether you are driven by curiosity, looking to fill gaps in your family history, or connect with living relatives, the **Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute** is a bridge to the profound stories that define us.

The Institute offers free access to an extensive array of resources, including the rich collections of the Center's Partners, online databases, and specialized research guides. Our dedicated staff provides expert guidance to researchers of all levels, from novices to professionals, ensuring visitors have the support needed to navigate the complexities of genealogical research.

Here, every search is a step towards discovering your family's history, creating a link to the past and a legacy for the future.

*Family photo of Walter, Mara, (née Pokorny), Hilde (née Hensel) and Hermann Pinkus, with family dog, undated.*

*Leo Baeck Institute, Archives, Felix Pinkus Family collection, AR 25456 Foo7*





# Scholarship

## Fueling Knowledge

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The Center's Lillian Goldman Reading Room welcomes the public to engage with archives and resources on-site. The Center's distinguished Fellowship program helps junior and senior scholars conduct ground-breaking research that shapes and informs our understanding of the Jewish past.



## The Lillian Goldman Reading Room

Imagine a library warmed by sunlight illuminating shelves of books overflowing with stories waiting to be discovered. This is the **Lillian Goldman Reading Room**, the heart of the Center for Jewish History. For 25 years, it has served as a vibrant hub for scholars, students, and history enthusiasts.

Free and open to the public, the Reading Room is the access point for the extensive archive and library collections of the Center's Partner organizations, which comprise over 500,000 volumes in multiple languages spanning many historical periods, as well as a repository of over 100 million documents.

Researchers from all over the world come to the **Lillian Goldman Reading Room** to encounter the raw materials of history, while scholars pore over centuries-old documents to hear the voices of past generations. The **Lillian Goldman Reading Room** fuels intellectual curiosity, powered by the irreplaceable resources meticulously preserved within the Partner collections.

"I love being in the Reading Room with the helpful archivists and the gorgeous space and all of the other researchers quietly abuzz, working through interesting material."

—David Koffman, 2008 Dr. Sophie Bookhalter  
Fellow in Jewish Culture





## Fellows, Fellowships, and Academia: Cultivating the Leaders of Tomorrow

A beacon of academic excellence, the Center nurtures the careers of countless scholars through its prestigious Fellowship program. Each year, eight talented individuals from around the world, from advanced graduate students to senior scholars, gather to pursue groundbreaking research. Fostering innovative ideas and pushing the boundaries of knowledge, the Fellowship program propels these rising stars on a path to academic leadership.

These scholars have written scores of books on myriad topics, including the music of Holocaust remembrance in postwar Western culture, the world of 18th-century Jamaican Jews, and the phenomenon of Jewish joke-telling. With more than 160 Fellows since 2002, the Center is making a direct impact on Jewish scholarship.

*Books by Center for Jewish History Fellows*

**“I can’t imagine my career without the resources of and the support of the Center for Jewish History.”**

— Jessica Cooperman, 2019 CJH-Fordham University  
Fellow in Jewish-Christian Relations and 2002  
Dr. Sophie Bookhalter Fellow in Jewish Culture





# Engagement

## Activating Audiences

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The Center seeks to bring high-level historical knowledge to the broader public through engaging events and symposia. The vibrant symposia of the Jewish Public History Forum foster critical conversations about historical topics of contemporary relevance, while our onsite exhibitions introduce the public to the importance of Jewish cultural artifacts.

## Jewish Public History Forum

Established in 2023, the Jewish Public History Forum embodies the Center's tradition of academic rigor by making the latest scholarly research available to a broader audience. Since its creation, the Forum has convened major scholars, public intellectuals, and Jewish organizational leaders to discuss such topics as the relationship between Zionism and American Jews, the history of Jewish responses to fascism, the challenges of confronting antisemitism, and the history of Jewish migration to the United States.

Presented in person at the Center and live-streamed around the world, the Jewish Public History Forum seeks to expand the horizons of public history, fostering a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the Jewish past and its lessons for the present.

“History shows that when antisemitism rears its ugly head and is not dealt with directly, it grows into a deadly force.”

— Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer,  
*Addressing Antisemitism: Contemporary Challenges*





## Engagement: Public Programming and Events

The Center for Jewish History, alongside its Partner institutions, is a leader in cultural and historical engagement, hosting hundreds of public programs and events each year in the prestigious **Leo and Julia Forchheimer Auditorium** and **Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Great Hall**. Additionally, the Center celebrates the Jewish experience by offering a multitude of online classes, webinars, and lectures to people around the globe.

The Center's programs are diverse, ambitious, and inclusive. They include original initiatives like the *Jewish Comics Experience (JewCE)*, which is a must-attend convention for comic enthusiasts, the New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, now in its impressive 26th year, and the enduring tradition of concerts by the Phoenix Chamber Ensemble, which are testament to the Center's commitment to celebrating culture in all its forms. Other noteworthy events include the American Sephardi Federation's annual Ladino Day, the American Jewish Historical Society's Biennial Scholars Conference, and a variety of special concerts and performances in collaboration with the American Society for Jewish Music, such as the Musicians from Vienna's ExilArte and Mannes School of Music. Moreover, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research offers a comprehensive range of Yiddish classes capped by the esteemed Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture. These initiatives, along with countless other programs and events, ensure the Center remains a vital hub for exploring and celebrating Jewish history, culture, and heritage.



## Exhibitions: Enriching Experiences

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to possess the power of a superhero and protect the remarkable history of the Jewish people? Our recent exhibit, *JewCE! The Museum and Laboratory of the Jewish Comics Experience*, held in the Rosenberg and Winnick galleries, introduced visitors to the deep Jewish roots of the comic book industry. The exhibition, which was created in collaboration with the Center's five Partners, even allowed guests to design their own superhero costumes!

An important part of the Center for Jewish History's mission is to offer enriching experiences through exhibitions like *JewCE*. *How Jews Became Citizens: Highlights from the Sid Lapidus Collection*, held in the Selz Foundation Gallery, explored how Jews fought for equal rights in early modern Europe, and *Idealizing Zion: Visualizing the Jewish State*, held in the Valentin Blavatnik Gallery, showed how European Zionists envisioned the Jewish future in Ottoman and British-ruled Palestine. By introducing viewers to the authentic artifacts of Jewish history, we enable people of all ages to connect with their heritage.







# Community

## Fostering Connections

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By hosting community gatherings and social events, the Center strives to create a place where people of all generations gather to celebrate, learn, and cherish the richness of Jewish history.



## Opportunities for Connection

Opportunities for connection at the Center for Jewish History are both diverse and impactful, fostering a community spirit that spans generations and interests.

A notable highlight was the Rosh Hashanah celebration, which featured a special announcement by New York Governor Kathy Hochul about her efforts to combat antisemitism. This event brought together hundreds of Jewish groups, demonstrating the Center's role as a hub for significant cultural and communal gatherings.

Further enriching the community, the Center hosts university student mixers each semester. These events are not just social; they lay groundwork for enduring friendships and the development of fruitful professional relationships. The mixers offer students a unique opportunity to engage with their heritage and connect with peers in meaningful ways.

Additionally, the Center's annual gala is pivotal in raising funds and awareness while celebrating the significant mission of the institution. These events honor the remarkable achievements of scholars and distinguished individuals who make significant contributions to the Jewish community.

Together, these events exemplify the Center for Jewish History's commitment to creating vibrant and meaningful connections within the Jewish community.



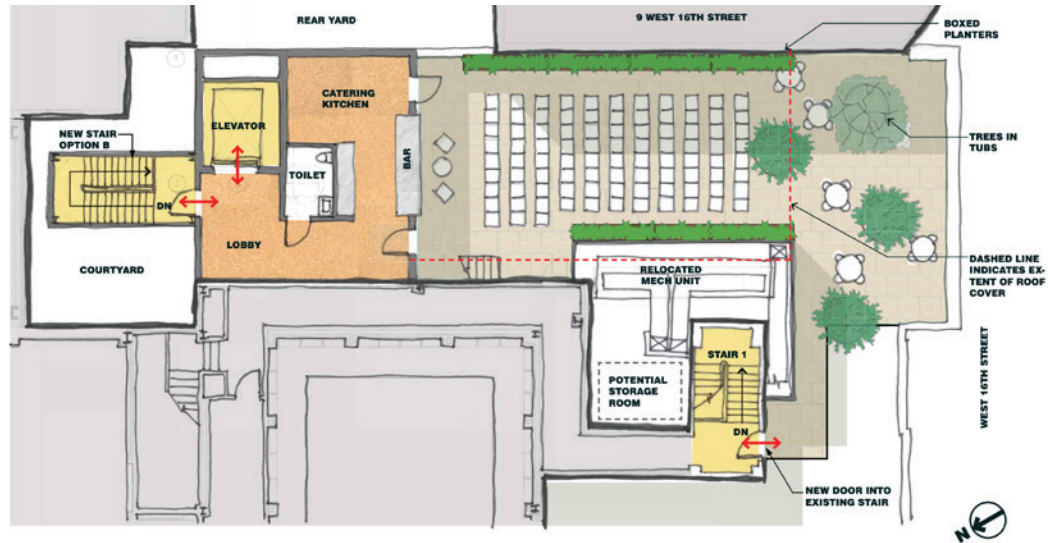
## Envisioning New Communal Spaces

Food and fellowship are fundamental features of Jewish life, culture, and history. From Shabbat dinners to Passover Seders, Jews have traditionally gathered over food to reflect on their shared historical experience. The Center's ambitions include the dream of building a rooftop terrace, kitchen, and café.

Imagine a rooftop terrace, a vibrant outdoor space for community engagement. This area would serve as a unique gathering spot for events, fostering connections among visitors and providing a stunning backdrop for cultural experiences like outdoor film screenings. It would also provide an opportunity for urban gardening.

With a commercial kitchen, the Center could support a range of catered events, bringing new revenue streams as well as audiences to the campus. A welcoming café will become a cornerstone for connection fostering a sense of belonging and community.

*Renderings by Beyer Blinder Belle*



For more information on ways to get involved  
at the Center for Jewish History, please contact:

Rio Daniel, CEO  
[CEO@cjh.org](mailto:CEO@cjh.org)

Dr. Gavriel Rosenfeld, President  
[president@cjh.org](mailto:president@cjh.org)

Paul Wolfram, Director of Development  
(212) 294-8305  
[development@cjh.org](mailto:development@cjh.org)

Ben Gurin, Assistant Manager of Events  
[rentals@cjh.org](mailto:rentals@cjh.org)

Ilana Rosenbluth, Director of Communications  
[media@cjh.org](mailto:media@cjh.org)



Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th Street

New York, NY 10011

(212) 294-8301

[cjh.org](http://cjh.org)





15 W. 16th

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CENTER OF JEWISH HISTORY



The **Center for Jewish History** is one of the greatest public Jewish historical and cultural institutions in the world. Opened to the public in October 2000 as the campus to its five Partner organizations, the Center has achieved recognition as a venue of unrivaled historical documentation and scholarship, imaginative exhibitions of Judaic art and artifacts, and vital public dialogue. The collections of its Partners total more than 500,000 volumes and 100 million archival documents, and include thousands of pieces of artwork, textile, and ritual objects, as well as music, films, and photographs. They comprise the largest repository of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel. The Center offers academic fellowships, symposia, conferences, and lectures as well as a wide array of cultural, educational, and genealogy programs for the public.

**cjh.org**