

**B**oth in the lives of individuals and in those of institutions, it is vital to take stock, to see from where we have come and to where we are going, and especially to express our joy and gratitude to the many people who have made it possible to ultimately reach our goals. This wonderful publication records the first eleven years of the life of the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies of the University of Pennsylvania. It marks a de-

the University had assumed. Despite the generous initial support of Ambassador Annenberg and the equally generous commitment the University had pledged to this enterprise, no one had the faintest idea what this project would eventually cost, who would raise the money, and whether there were donors who might be interested in supporting the project at all. It was clear from the start that this exciting merger would be a learning experience for staff, fellows, faculty,

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## Director's Preface

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by David Ruderman

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cisive milestone in the history of Judaic Studies at Penn, in the history of humanistic learning at the University, and, I might add, in the history of the academic study of Jewish civilization in this country and worldwide.

Some ten years ago a festive dinner took place in Philadelphia, in the presence of the late Ambassador Walter Annenberg, to celebrate the merger of the Annenberg Research Institute with the University of Pennsylvania. Those in attendance might recall both the euphoria of the moment and the sense of uncertainty regarding the actual joining of two institutions that had never worked closely together. The Annenberg Research Institute, the direct successor to the historic Dropsie College, had been created only five years earlier as an independent institution for post-doctoral research in Judaic studies. What would it mean to the fellows and staff of the Institute to be under the supervision of the dean of the School of Arts and Sciences? How would the precious library and staff function under the new arrangements? How would the Jewish Studies Program at Penn interface with this new weighty acquisition situated some thirty blocks from campus? As an outsider visiting Penn for the first time, I could sense uncertainty on all sides—from deans, faculty, staff, and the fellows themselves. Most daunting of all was the financial challenge

and Penn's leadership.

When I arrived as Director of CAJS in the fall of 1994, the experience was challenging. The Center needed to demonstrate its excellence as an institute for advanced studies while projecting the image of an open and collegial setting where students and faculty of Penn could feel at home. We needed to fine-tune the balance between integration within the larger environment of the University and the intellectual isolation necessary to the productivity and collegiality of the fellows. Students and faculty needed to feel a stake in this institution despite its distance from campus. The administration had to appreciate the value of this Center to the University as a whole. And most importantly, the University had to find a way to raise sufficient funds to insure a future for this institution way beyond the initial years of its existence.

Luckily, I did not have to face these daunting challenges alone. Sheila Allen, my executive assistant, Samuel Cardillo, the Center's administrator, and Bonnie Blankenship, the administrator of our journal, the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, had faithfully served the Center from its earliest transformations in name and identity. Their wisdom, their hard work, and their love for, and devotion to, this institution were crucial to the institutional development that we recognize in this volume. David Goldenberg, editor of the *Jewish Quarterly*

*Review* and former president of Dropsie College, was instrumental as the Center's first Associate Director. I was also inspired by a visionary named Al Wood who had worked tirelessly for years to provide the foundation from which the Center would eventually emerge, and I was partnered from the start by a dedicated group of individuals who gave generously of their time and resources to make the Center a reality. Among the first to offer their unstinting support were Martin Gruss, Herbert and Ellie Meyerhoff Katz, and Lone Strauss.

More than ten years have passed since those uncertain moments and although the Center still presents a work in progress, it is with a deep sense of humility, satisfaction, and gratitude, that I recount the Center's wonderful accomplishments. Over the years, scholars from countless fields: biblical philology and archeology, ancient, medieval, and modern Jewish history, history of art and music, Jewish-Muslim and Jewish-Christian relations, Midrash, Talmud, and comparative exegesis, kabbalah and philosophy, anthropology and sociology, modern Jewish literature, and political thought, have been part of the Center family. More than 200 scholars have been full-time fellows while many others have served as short-term fellows and as adjuncts. The Center has attracted faculty and students from Penn on a regular basis. Its academic advisory committees in Israel and at Penn have served the Center with remarkable dedication and vision.

The sheer numbers of scholars in North America, Israel, and Europe who have been affected by our program is impressive enough. But if one looks closely at the individual accomplishments of these scholars during their tenure at Penn, if one assesses the impact of the Center on individual careers—especially on those of young scholars—and if one takes into account the impact that the vigorous and sustained discussions at the Center have had on the development of specific fields of Judaic learning, the results are staggering. When one adds to the mix the impact these scholars have made through undergraduate instruction, mentoring of graduate students, and teaching in the community, one begins to

appreciate how meaningful the annual shaping of a scholarly community at CAJS has become.

The Center's accomplishments extend beyond the impressive work and influence of its fellows. Through a new and creative partnership with the University of Pennsylvania Press, the Center has inaugurated a new series of books and a revamped and revitalized *Jewish Quarterly Review*. We sponsor an expanded program of community lectures and symposia in Philadelphia and in other cities nation-wide, and enjoy a meaningful and synergistic relationship with the faculty and students of Penn's Jewish Studies Program as well as with Penn's other programs in the Humanities. We house a magnificent library, staffed by gifted librarians and well-equipped with books and electronic aids; and most importantly, we are blessed with a devoted and energetic staff who create the special ambiance that inspires the renewed creativity of the fellowships from year to year. All of this has also come about through the work and generosity of a powerful and deeply committed board of overseers and other friends of the Center who have raised a significant endowment for the Center, thereby insuring its longevity for years to come.

In recording the names and academic achievements of the fellows who have worked independently and collaboratively to enhance Jewish knowledge in so many fields and disciplines in the course of the last decade, we thank from the bottom of our hearts all those donors, administrators, faculty members, students, and friends of the Center who have made this institution the foremost incubator of advanced Judaic learning on this continent. I offer a special thanks to the editors of this volume, Drs. Elsie Stern and Natalie Dohrmann. The dazzling accomplishments recorded here, which represent only a small sampling of the groundbreaking scholarship of our fellows, inspire us to look forward to the next decade and to the new challenges and goals we confidently have set for ourselves. May CAJS go from strength to strength!

**David Ruderman**

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