

The Klau Library: “The Soul of the College”



Top: Donors to the Klau Library renovation project.

Bottom left to right: Rabbinical students Scott Segal and Emily Huebscher studying at the Klau Library.

Interior of The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Library Pavilion.

New compact shelving quadruples the capacity of standard library shelving.

Over a thousand local civic and religious leaders and members of the Cincinnati Jewish community convened for the dedication convocation and community-wide celebration of HUC-JIR/Cincinnati’s \$12.1 million renovation and expansion of the Klau Library and construction of The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Library Pavilion, including a \$550,000 state-of-the-art geothermal system, which took place on November 1, 2009.

“The Klau Library resides at the very heart of our enterprise as the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center for Reform Judaism and the entire Jewish people,” said **Rabbi David Ellenson**. “It offers tangible testimony to the absolute commitment we at HUC-JIR have as a liberal Jewish institution of higher learning to sustaining and advancing academic study, research, publication, and teaching for the benefit of the Jewish people and all humanity.”

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of the College in 1875, established its library from the very inception of the institution. With the dedication of its first library building in 1912, HUC-JIR’s library became the first free-standing Jewish library in world history. Today, with nearly half a million volumes, the Klau Library is one of the most comprehensive Jewish libraries in the world and has the largest collection of printed Judaica in North America. This renovation and construction of a new Pavilion transforms the Klau Library into an unparalleled international center for research, teaching, and learning for scholars worldwide and enhances the intellectual and cultural life of the greater Cincinnati region.

Mayor Mark Mallory asserted the significance of this state-of-the-art research resource, saying, “Cincinnati is a city of tolerance, diversity, and progressive values, as symbolized by the presence of



HUC-JIR, which situates Cincinnati on the world stage as a center of scholarship.”

Architects 2enCompass of Cincinnati, with the assistance of library experts Shipley, Bullfinch, Richardson, and Abbott of Boston, have created a facility that includes:

- enhanced research and study facilities for students;
- efficient HVAC systems, temperature and humidity controls, fire suppressions systems, and hand-capped access;
- compact shelving, holding four times as many books as standard library shelving, to accommodate projected growth of the collection over the next few decades; and
- a high-security storage and exhibition area for rare books and manuscripts.

Barbara Friedman, Chair of the Board of Governors, noted, “A great library is the heart of a great academic institution. Its resources are indispensable for faculty scholarship and student learning. It is our privilege and responsibility to preserve these resources for future generations of students and researchers.”

In his keynote address at the dedication convocation on campus, **Dr. Michael A. Meyer**, Ochs Professor of Jewish History, presented an illustrated lecture on the evolution of the library from its first premises in the basement of a downtown congregation, with scarcely a hundred volumes, through the succession of library facilities to its brand-new 21st-century incarnation. He described the crucial roles played by librarians Adolph S. Oko and Professor Herbert C. Zafren in building the collection and by the present day Libraries Director, Dr. David J. Gilner, in implementing state-of-the-art technology.

Gary Heiman, representing **The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati**, which provided the lead institutional gift of \$6.5 million, explained, “We are proud that the Klau Library is located here in Cincinnati, where it can strengthen Jewish life in our community.”

Sanford R. Cardin, President of the **Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation**, agreed, saying “We are gratified that scholars from around the world will benefit from the knowledge housed here.”

Lucille “Twink” Carothers noted her and her sib-

lings’ pride in sustaining the library named in 1961 in honor of their parents, **David and Sadie Klau**.

Their feelings were echoed by **Dr. Gregory H. Williams**, in his first public appearance upon becoming the President of University of Cincinnati (UC). In his keynote address, that evening at the Mayerson JCC on The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati campus, he lauded the long-standing ties between HUC-JIR and UC, saying, “We look forward to strengthening the relationship between our two neighboring academic institutions.”

With a mission to collect, preserve, and provide access to the total record of Jewish thought and experience, the Klau Library’s Rare Book collection includes important collections of incunabula and 16th century Hebrew imprints, and archival and literary manuscripts, including the unique Chinese-Hebrew collection. It has preeminent collections of Jewish music in the Eduard Birnbaum Collection, early Jewish Americana, Spinozana, and Christian Hebraica. Over 200 Judaica databases and 10,000 digitized images of works from its collections can be accessed using its internal computer network. It also houses the American Jewish Periodical Center, which preserves on microfilm some 900 newspaper, journal, and synagogue bulletin titles. It is one of the three conservators in the world for the original negatives of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The online catalogs are accessible to a world-wide community of researchers at the website: <http://www.huc.edu/libraries>

*The Klau Library’s
renovated exterior and
The Jewish Foundation
of Cincinnati Pavilion.*

