

Edward Murray Peters, Jr., History and Penn Libraries

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Edward Peters

Edward Murray Peters, Jr., the Henry Charles Lea Professor Emeritus in the School of Arts & Sciences and curator of the Penn Libraries' Henry Charles Lea Library, died on November 6, 2024. He was 88.

Born in 1936, Dr. Peters received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Yale University, then went on to earn the first PhD in medieval studies in Yale's history. Dr. Peters came to Penn in 1968 as the Henry C. Lea Assistant Professor of Medieval History. He was promoted to associate professor two years later and became a full professor in 1981. Beginning in 1976, he served as graduate chair of the history department, and he also taught in Penn's College of General Studies (the precursor to today's College of Liberal & Professional Studies), in the Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics program, and in the Wharton School's Lauder

Institute. He also curated Penn's Henry Charles Lea Library and edited the Penn Press's book series on the Middle Ages for 25 years. He retired from his teaching duties at Penn in 1999, taking emeritus status, but continued his work at the Penn Libraries until 2009.

Dr. Peters' research focused on the early history of Europe, from the second to the seventeenth centuries. His chief interests included political and constitutional history, including church history, intellectual and legal history, and historiography. He wrote about various aspects of crime and punishment, juxtaposing the ideas of curiosity and the limits of intellectual inquiry. He wrote over a hundred peer-reviewed articles and books, including *The Magician, The Witch, & The Law* (1978), *Torture* (1985), *Inquisition* (1989), *The First Crusade: "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres" and Other Source Materials* (1998), *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History* (2000), and *Europe and the Middle Ages* (2003). He was widely recognized as a pioneer in his field, receiving fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the Medieval Academy of America.

"Simply put, he is one of the great medievalists of his generation," said E. Ann Matter, Dr. Peters' colleague and the former chair of Penn's department of religious studies. "He is such a learned and urbane person that it is actually rather odd to think of him as an expert on torture (the subject of one of his books) and Inquisitorial politics."

Dr. Peters is survived by his children and their spouses, Greg and Nicole Kane, Moira and Dave Pakulniewicz, and Clare and Edward M. Peters, III; grandchildren, Caroline, Charles, Timothy, Mary Elizabeth and Peter; his sisters, Teri Ciaburro and MaryEllen DelVecchio; his sister-in-law, Ann Peters; and his brother, John.