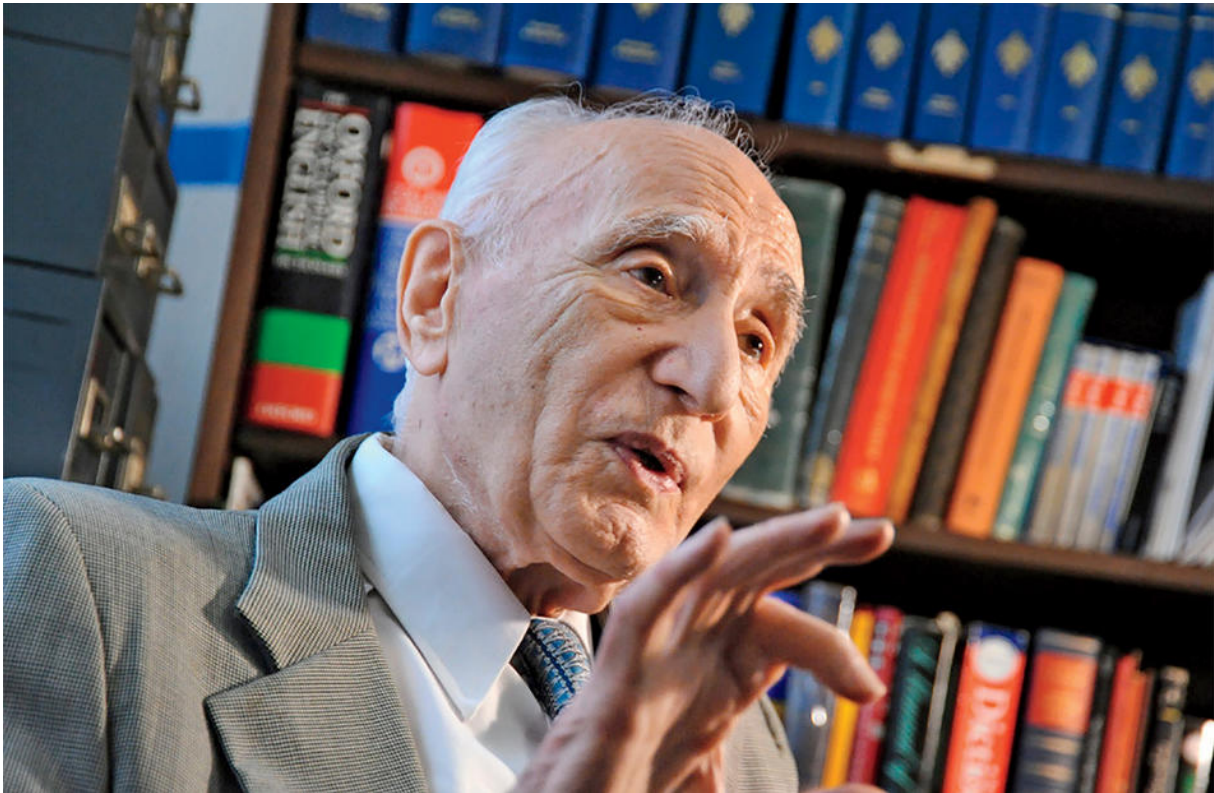


On Campus

# Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies Endowed With \$10M Gift

Winter 2018-19



Ehsan Yarshater (Eileen Barroso)

Columbia has received a \$10 million gift from the Persian Heritage Foundation to endow the [Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies](#), formerly known as the Center for Iranian Studies. The center has been renamed in honor of its founding director, a longtime Columbia professor and leading historian of Iran. Yarshater died on September 2 at the age of ninety-eight, just two weeks after the gift and the center's renaming were announced.

The gift will enable the Yarshater Center to continue to advance the field of Iranian studies through its scholarly publications, which include the fifteen-volume [Encyclopaedia Iranica](#), a book series on Persian art, and critical editions of Persian

texts.

“I am deeply honored as well as delighted to witness the creation of the Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies,” Yarshater said in a statement shortly before he died. “It is a source of great comfort to me that through the support of the [Persian Heritage Foundation](#) and the stewardship of Columbia University such internationally acclaimed projects as the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and *A History of Persian Literature*, as well as many other future projects, will find a secure home at the Yarshater Center.”

Born in 1920 in Hamadan, Iran, Yarshater was educated in Tehran and London before coming to teach at Columbia in 1958. The first full-time professor of Persian studies at an American university in the post-World War II era, Yarshater launched the Center for Iranian Studies here in 1968. In 1972, he began work on the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, which (though still unfinished) would become the center’s most prominent achievement. Now overseen by Columbia historian Elton Daniel, the encyclopedia features thousands of entries written by some 1,600 scholars. The *New York Times*, in its obituary for Yarshater, called it “a magnum opus of Iranian history and culture that helped transform the modern understanding of Persian civilization.”



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