

Acquisitions

The University of Pennsylvania Libraries has received a series of gifts from Arnold and Deanne Kaplan, including the world's first endowed position in Judaica digital humanities, totaling \$12 million. The Kaplans' contributions also comprise an in-kind gift of collections of Americana and Early American Judaica, research fellowships, and an endowment for continuing acquisitions.

The most recent gifts coincide with the release of a new website, The Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica, offering free access to nearly 7,000 digital copies of items from the collection for viewing and downloading. Digital copies of recent acquisitions will be made available this year, and all future items will be made available, as well.

The foundation for a partnership between the Kaplans and the Penn Libraries was established more than ten years ago between Arnold Kaplan and Arthur Kiron, Schottenstein-Jesselson Curator of Judaica Collections at the Penn Libraries. Their initial collaboration, the Jesselson-Kaplan American Genizah Project, centered around the letters of the mid-19th-century rabbi Isaac Leaser. The resulting website served as an early model for using digital technologies to integrate dispersed but related documents and make them accessible to scholars around the world.

When the Arnold and Deanne Kaplan Collection of Early American Judaica was donated to the Penn Libraries in November

2012, it was considered the most important private collection of its kind. Since that time, the Kaplans have added numerous additions. Now largely available online, the collection documents a broad range of commercial, social, religious, political, and cultural ties that connected Jews and the general public from the early colonial era through the onset of mass migration at the end of the 19th century.

The collection reveals four centuries of

history, not only from the perspective of American Jewish citizens, but also in the context of the larger communities in which they lived and traveled across the Atlantic. A bound file of documents, dating back to 1597, follows the arrest and trial of Goncalo Perez Ferro by the Mexican Inquisition for a "relapse" into Judaism. One of the publications of David Nassy, a Suriname-born Jewish physician who was in Philadelphia during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, details his successful treatment of the disease, which defied the bloodletting methods of

Benjamin Rush. A handwritten receipt by Solomon Levy, confirming payment from Martha Washington for a shipment of cotton, is the only known document demonstrating trade between a Jewish merchant and the Washington family. A set of five rare trade cards advertise the Levi Strauss clothing business, which supplied pants worn by the "forty-niners" during the California Gold Rush. A small handful of artifacts—a Civil War-era pistol, an oil painting of a naval ship, and a shaving mug—were owned and held by Jefferson Levy at Monticello, which he restored following the Civil War at great personal expense. ¶¶

