



What kinds of historical materials does the Leo Baeck Institute accept as donations?

The LBI's core mission is to preserve and make publicly available materials pertaining to the history and culture of German-speaking Jews. This includes correspondence, manuscripts, official documents, photographs, and ephemera. In general, we believe that if a family deemed materials important enough to save over decades or generations since their emigration from Germany, then the materials are likely of historical interest and should be preserved.

What are the advantages in donating my family's papers to the LBI?

By donating your family's materials to the LBI, you ensure that they will be preserved, both physically and digitally, for generations to come and made accessible not only to future researchers and educators, but to your own family members and descendants. Entrusting them to the LBI also enriches their value and meaning by placing them in the context of thousands of other family collections in the LBI archives, the LBI's 80,000 volume library, and the global view of Jewish history presented by the collections of the other partners in the Center for Jewish History.

How does the LBI process and care for the materials entrusted to it by donors?

- Professional archivists make an initial assessment to determine whether there are urgent environmental and preservation issues, such as mold, insects, or moisture, which may require quarantine of the materials or treatment in the Werner J. and Gisella Levi Cahnman Preservation Laboratory at the Center for Jewish history.
- A preliminary survey of the scope and content of the collection is undertaken while preserving the original order of materials, and a preliminary catalog record is created to enable tracking of the donation throughout the processing of the collection.
- Materials are transferred to acid-free folders and boxes. Materials containing sensitive personal data (e.g., financial papers, tax documents, social security cards, etc.) are taken out and either returned to the donor or discarded.
- An archivist arranges the collection according to categories such as date, family branch, or genre. Whenever possible, the original order of papers is preserved, since the arrangement of the materials may provide information that helps to interpret the contents.
- The archivist then creates a Finding Aid, which is a standardized inventory of the materials in the collection that includes a detailed description of the contents.
- The catalog entry is enhanced with a link to the Finding Aid as well as subject headings and other metadata that will allow users to discover the collections via search, and the catalog record is made public.
- The collection is microfilmed and digitized, either at the LBI Microfilming and Digitization Lab, the Gruss Lipper Digital Laboratory at the Center for Jewish History or by a trusted external vendor.



How are donated materials used?

The public can access digitized materials through the online catalogs and websites of the Center for Jewish History. Researchers who demonstrate a special need may also view the original materials in the Reading Room at the Center for Jewish History. Additionally, LBI and its partner organizations at the Center for Jewish History may include the materials in exhibitions, or LBI may loan the materials to museums for exhibits.

Are donations of historical materials tax-deductible?

All donors receive an acknowledgment letter including, upon request, a statement of the approximate value of the collection based on a guideline of \$500 per linear foot of materials. For an assessed value of more than \$5,000, a professional independent appraisal is required, to be paid for and arranged by the donor.

What are the legal terms of a donation of materials to the LBI?

All donors sign a Deed of Gift which stipulates ownership of the collection and any special conditions. Usually the donated materials and all rights owned by the donor are transferred to the LBI. However, sometimes donors wish to retain copyrights or place access restrictions on the collection, for example making it available only to qualified researchers or keeping it closed until a specific date. Donor information is retained by the LBI but remains confidential unless the donor wishes to release it.

Will my family still have access to the original materials?

Yes. While having your family papers professionally cataloged and digitized means they can be accessed online at any time, some donors and their family members occasionally want to view original materials, and LBI makes every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests.

How can I further support the preservation and processing of my family's materials?

While donating materials to the Leo Baeck Institute does not come with any financial obligations for the donor, many materials donors choose to support the preservation and processing of the LBI's collections with a financial gift to LBI's preservation fund. Please contact us to discuss your giving options.

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