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NEH Supports Digitization of 17th- and 18th-century Manuscripts

PHILADELPHIA, PA—The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded Penn's Rare Book & Manuscript Library a grant of \$300,000 to digitize and make available on the World Wide Web a collection of approximately 1,000 European and American manuscripts from 1601 to 1800. This two-year project builds on and expands the work of a proposal funded by the NEH in 2009 to digitize Penn's European manuscripts dated before 1601, which has produced the Web site, Penn in Hand: Selected Manuscripts.

"The Penn Libraries are honored to be the recipients of this grant from the NEH, which will allow us to more than double the scope of Penn in Hand," remarked H. Carton Rogers, Vice Provost and Director of Libraries. "Adding manuscripts to 1800 will greatly benefit scholars across disciplines as varied as art history, legal studies, music, religion, history, and literature in Western languages."

Penn's holdings of early modern manuscripts from Europe and the Americas comprise some 1,000 items, whose breadth in terms of language, country of origin, and subject matter maintains the Libraries' vision of Penn in Hand as a comprehensive resource for manuscripts supporting interdisciplinary studies at Penn. Collection strengths include material collected by Henry Charles Lea for his research on the history of the Roman Catholic Church and the Inquisition; university education over the centuries, in particular, the study of philosophy; the history of science, including alchemy; the history of witchcraft and occult activities; political history; and the history of banking and commerce. The new project adds over 350,000 digital images to the 250,000 images currently available, free of charge, through Penn in Hand.

Penn is the first American repository to produce full digital facsimiles of its entire collection of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, and Penn will be the first to digitize and make freely available on the Web all of its early modern, Western manuscripts. The project will make these unique materials accessible globally through a variety of discovery points, enhancing teaching and research worldwide.

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