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## Gearing Up for Anniversary, Public Library to Display Original Copy of Bill of Rights

By [ROBIN POGREBIN](#)

The [New York Public Library](#)'s original copy of the Bill of Rights will be exhibited for the first time in decades this fall, the library is to announce on Wednesday with the state of Pennsylvania.

The document, which has been in the library's collection since 1896, will alternately be displayed at the library and at the [National Constitution Center](#) in Philadelphia starting in fall 2014, the 225th anniversary of its drafting by Congress.

It is one of at least 14 original copies of [the Bill of Rights](#), the library said, sent by the First Congress of the United States to the first 12 states, to Rhode Island (which became a state in 1790) and to the Federal government in 1789. Four states, including New York and Pennsylvania, no longer have their copies.

"This landmark agreement makes public one of the most important documents in the nation's history, an over 200-year-old, original copy of the Bill of Rights," Anthony Marx, the library's president, said in a statement. "People in New York, Pennsylvania, and beyond will now have an opportunity to see and learn from this rare piece of history."

John S. Kennedy – a library trustee – donated the document in 1896, along with [other items](#) he purchased from Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, a noted surgeon and collector of Americana. Some have speculated as to whether the library's copy originally belonged to Pennsylvania.

To protect the document, a \$600,000 case is to be constructed by the National Institute for Standards and Technology, based on technology developed for the [Charters of Freedom at the National Archives](#). This measure was made possible by a gift from Ed Wachenheim III, a library trustee, and his wife, Sue.

The library and Pennsylvania will share the document equally for the first six years, after which the library – which is responsible for its care – will have it 60 percent of the time.

The document will be on display at the Constitution Center starting from fall 2014 until 2017, when it will travel back to the library's 42d Street building in New York.