

Magic and Witchcraft in the Harry Price Library and Beyond

Tansy Barton, Senate House Library
Modern Collections



Harry Price Library of Magical Literature



HPG/1/12/2

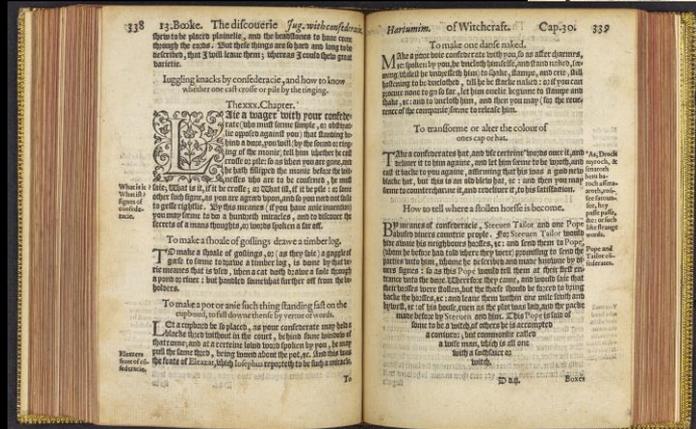
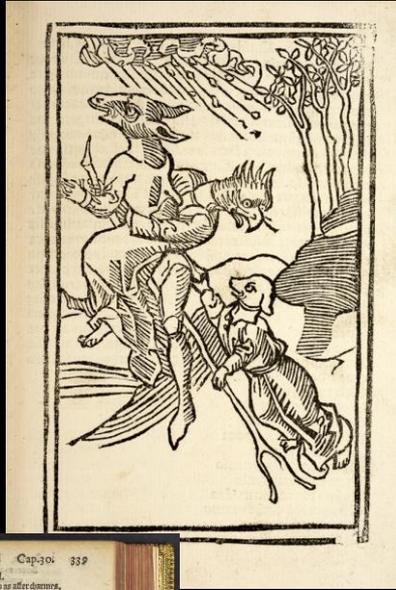
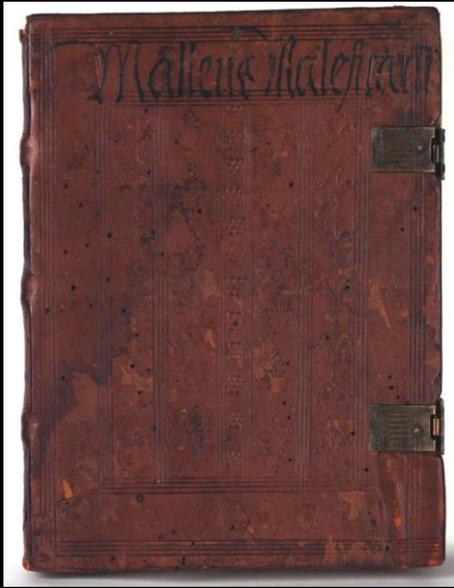


HPF/3A/18

- The Library and archive cover a wide range of subjects on the paranormal, occult, magic and the unexplained.
- Many different formats: books, pamphlets, cuttings, scrapbooks, letters, manuscripts, photographs, transcripts.
- Includes Price's correspondence and working papers, as well as material he collected.



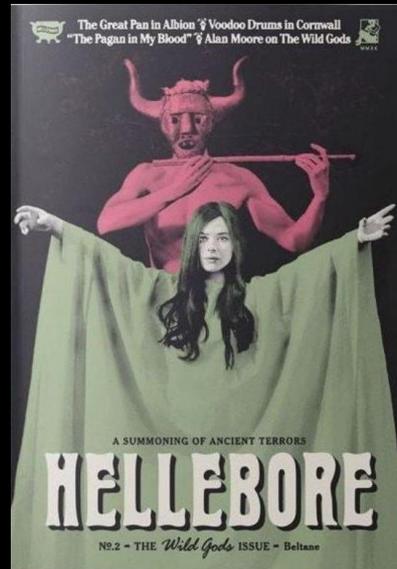
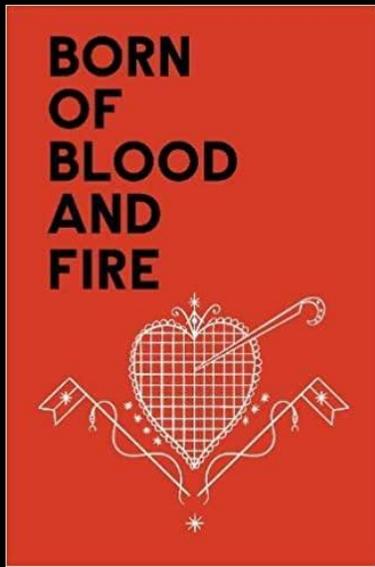
Early Printed Books



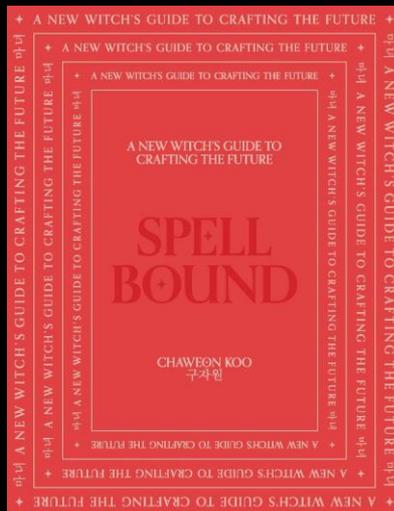
- Early Books: books from 1480s to c.1800
- Treatises, philosophical and religious tracts on magic, witchcraft, astrology, demonology
- Accounts of witchcraft trials
- Sceptical works and rationalist responses
- 18th century works on popular magic and astrology



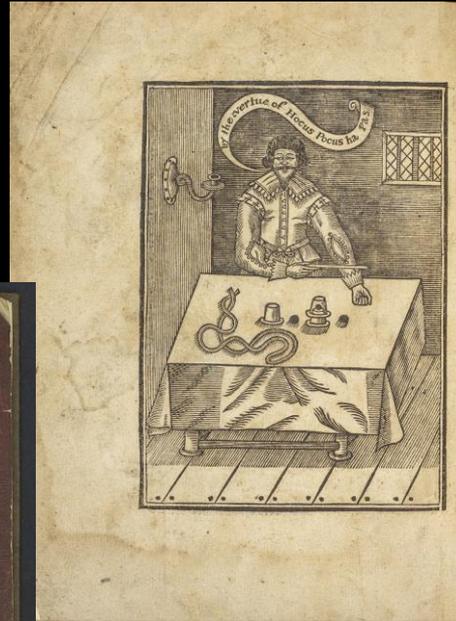
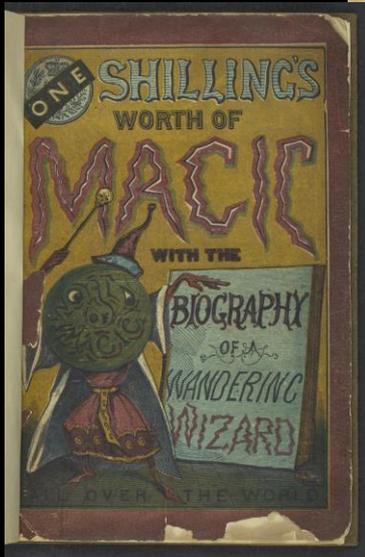
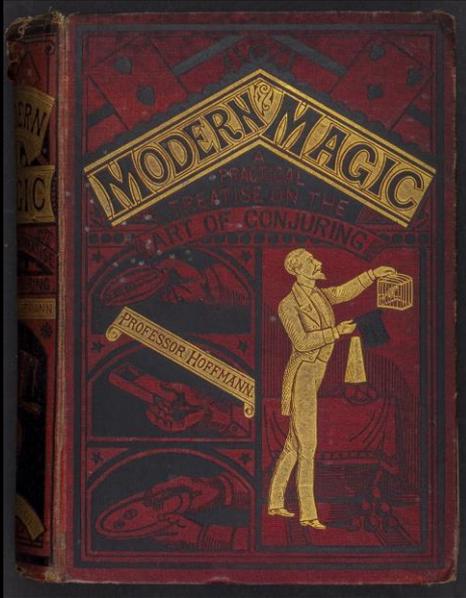
Modern Magic



- Studies, texts and histories on magic and witchcraft from the 19th and 20th century including modern paganism and wicca
- Works on associated areas such as spiritualism, the occult revival and theosophy
- Magic in the popular press
- Current acquisitions include works on contemporary practice and zines and other small press publications



Stage Magic



- Magic tricks, legerdemain and stage illusions
- Books from the 16th to 20th century
- Manuals of magic, histories, biographies of magicians
- Find out more here: <https://archive.senatehouse.library.ac.uk/staging-magic/index.html>



A Little White Magic: Exploring the Harry Price Collection



HPG/1/12/1 (vii)

- The Brocken Experiment: a recreation of a ritual from a c.1500 'High German Black Book'
- Held on the Brocken peak in June 1932 for the Goethe centenary, a place with long associations with witchcraft.
- The stated aim was to 'emphasize the absolute futility of Black Magic ritual'
- The collection includes photographs, Price's manuscript translation of the Bloskberg Tryst, extensive press cuttings, letters and film...



HPH/1/8



NOVEMBER 27, 1931

BLACK MAGIC MENACE: A Warning



DAILY SKETCH WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 1932 - Page 4

"BLACK MAGIC" MAIDEN

Scots Girl Chosen for Mountain Experiment ANCIENT FORMULA Effort to Turn Goat Into a Beautiful Prince

A beautiful twenty-one-year girl, Miss Gordon, the daughter of a Scotswoman, has been chosen, the *Daily Sketch* is able to reveal, to play the chief part in one of the most remarkable experiments in "black magic" ever carried out. The test will be made on the top of the Brocken, highest of the famous Harz range of mountains in Germany. A "black magic" formula, given in what is known as the High German Black Book, will be followed to discover what, if anything, will happen to a goat which should, if the magic works, be turned into a beautiful prince!

"PURE IN HEART" Thousands Expected to Watch Weirid Ceremony

In order thoroughly to carry out the formula, which dates from 1500 A.D., the presence of a maiden "pure in heart" is necessary. Miss Gordon has been selected, and with thousands of spectators she will make the ascent of the Brocken on Friday of next week. Miss Gordon, who lives in the Harz country, is the daughter of a German doctor who married a Scotswoman. She uses her mother's maiden name. Thus, half a Scot, she speaks the English language as well as she speaks German. Queer markings on the ground, the use of the blood of a bat, and other strange things will figure in the ceremony.

Walpurgisnacht auf dem Brocken

Eine tiefsame Veranstaltung am 1. Mai
als Geistes- und Zeitwunder - "Was einem Tod soll ein Dämonia werden" - Unterbrechung aller den besagten Hauptleistungen der Verbrennung physiologischer Geisteskräfte



Isabel Kingsley of Oakwood R challenges the gesture of "Proto 'The Open Window'" for "an discussion of the bearing of as

Girl In Black Magic Tryst On Top of Mountain

Twenty-year-old German T Aid Scientists In Witchcraft Test
Will Try to Transform He-goat Into "Youth of Surpassing Beauty"
Fraulein Urta Bohn, an attracti

Gruesome Witchcraft Rites That Still Persist In Civilised Lands

BLACK MAGIC IN PUBLICITY TEST ON GERMAN MOUNT

Should Settle Modern World's Doubts of Medieval Occult Powers

WITCHCRAFT, or black magic, is of never-failing interest, and the experiment in Germany this month, by which a research society will show if it be possible to turn a black goat into a beautiful youth by anointing it, at the right moment—presumably to the presence of the presiding witch with bat's blood.

Society Believes Goat Experiment Will Be Failed

Press cuttings from cuttings books vol. 10-14 HPF/3A/10-14

AND BILLY BOAT WAS STILL A GOAT

Wernigerode, Saxony, Germany, July 18.—Even the most elaborate hocus pocus won't change a goat into a young man as a group of British and German psychic investigators found when they climbed to

Can Black Magic Turn a He-Goat Into a Man?

(“Mail” Special Representative)
LONDON, Today.

GOAT OUTWITS MAGIC

NO CHANGE OF FORM DESPITE GREAT SHOW OF WITCHERY

EERIE MIDNIGHT SCENE

MANY believers in black magic received a rude shock last night on the summit of the Brocken in Saxony when all the

“Personally, I think it's all rot, but the experiment is worth while if only to disprove the nonsense. Mr. Harry Price (director) told the National Psychological Research Laboratory in regard to a proposal to test a black magic claim. A document before the society promised that it a maiden pure in heart and clad in white garments, a he-goat with a concoction of bats' blood, scrapings of its, soot, and honey, the goat would instantly be changed into a youth of surpassing beauty. The experiment was to be performed at full moon on the highest peak of the Brocken in Saxony. Those enquired what it was proposed to do with the beautiful youth got him. Others suggested that it would be better to take a goat in case they were needed. The meeting decided to leave members to attend a test on January 23.

THE OCCULT REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE INVESTIGATION OF SUPERNORMAL PHENOMENA AND THE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS.

"*Nullius in verba* jurare solent magistri."

ALL COMMUNICATIONS INTENDED FOR THE EDITOR should be addressed to the Editor, "THE OCCULT REVIEW," PATERNOSTER HOUSE, LONDON, E.C.4.

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Contributors are specially requested to put their name and address legibly written, on all manuscripts submitted.

Subscribers in India can obtain the magazine from Thacker & Co., Bombay and Calcutta; or from *The Theosophical Publishing House*, Adyar, Madras.

VOL. LVI JULY, 1932 No. 1

EDITORIAL

ALTHOUGH, presumably, merely a stunt to secure publicity, the ostensible object of Mr. Harry Price, the Director of the National Laboratory for Psychical Research, in staging a reconstruction of the Brocken ceremony, is to "emphasize the absolute futility of black magic under twentieth-century conditions, and thus shame its remaining devotees". From the point of view of the occultist, the regrettable fact of the matter is that a distinct danger exists lest in the mind of the masses who read the Press reports, the vagaries of mediæval witchcraft may be regarded as synonymous with true occultism. Apart from anything else, the article by Dion Fortune, the first instalment of which appears in the pages of the present issue of this magazine, will sufficiently demonstrate how inconclusive must be any results achieved under such conditions as are likely to obtain on the occasion of the projected experiment, with the anticipated presence of "thousands of spectators" to witness the fun.

Students of occult and theosophical literature, however, are well aware that ceremonial magic, no matter of how "white" a

'a distinct danger exists lest in the mind of the masses who read the press reports, the vagaries of mediæval witchcraft may be regarded as synonymous with true occultism'

'There are some experiments not worth performing...'

THAT GOAT

SIR OLIVER LODGE ON THE BLACK MAGIC TEST

Sir Oliver Lodge brought the recent abortive experiment with a goat and a "maid pure of heart" on the top of the Brocken, Germany, into his presidential address to the Society for Psychical Research yesterday.

"I am convinced," he said, "of telekenisis (the movement of objects otherwise than by ordinary touch) by direct observation. It may be the introduction to semi-physiological phenomena.

"There are experiments not worth performing, however, such as experiments with goats on the top of the Brocken, and many scientific men consider that attempts at telekenisis are in that category."

Press cuttings from cuttings books
vol. 10-14 HPF/3A/10-14

The Listener

8-11 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated..... 13 JUL 1932 103

The Brocken Experiment

Mr. Harry Price has described his Brocken experiment as 'white magic'. It turned out so very white as to do harm to no one, but in intention it was jet black. He does not give the text of the incantation, but the adjuncts alone are enough to colour the operation. One considers the facts that: (1) The Blocksberg Tryst is taken from the High German Black Book; (2) the unguent contains the blood of bats and the scrapings from church bells; (3) the Brocken is notorious only for its association with 'black' ceremonies; (4) the moon is to be at the full; and (5) the essential he-goat is the classic symbol of the devil himself. And yet Mr. Price calmly states that 'no *diablerie* enters into it'.

The true object in this, as in many similar experiments, is, without doubt, a tryst with the devil in person. Satan is to be enabled by incantations and propitiations to relinquish his symbolic goat-shape and to assume human form. Had all gone well, Mr. Price and his friends would, no doubt, have found great favour in the Infernal Realm not only by presenting its ruler with a 'pure virgin', but by the less rare achievement of whitewashing black.

London, W.C. 1

JOHN BEYNON HARRIS

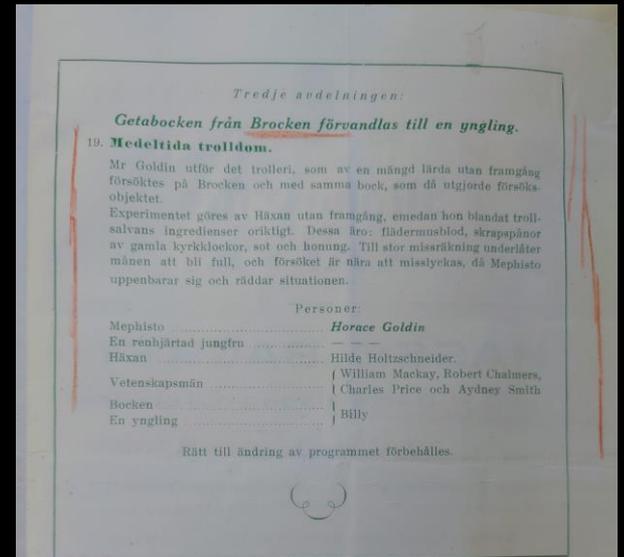
'The true object in this, as in many similar experiments, is without doubt, a tryst with the devil in person'





Brocken Hotel Medal HPI/6/3/13

'...it has at least achieved the object of giving a little publicity to a very deserving mountain... But it is clear that the witches have now vanished. Perhaps they were frightened away by the great Nazi demonstration in Bad Harzburg last year.'



Press cuttings from cuttings books vol. 10-14
HPF/3A/10-14

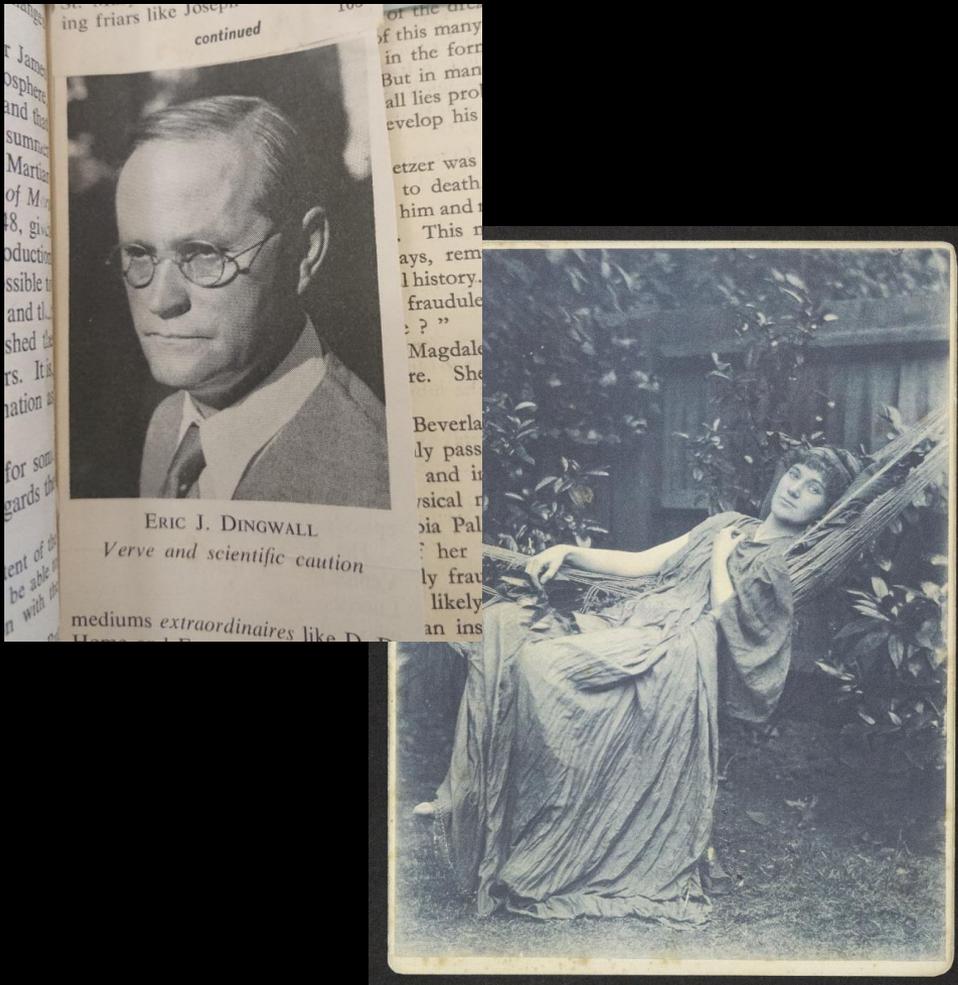
E-Resources



- Victorian Popular Culture, *Spiritualism, Sensation and Magic*: material from the Harry Price Library and other repositories
- Early printed books via Early English Books Online, Eighteenth Century Collections Online and Early European Books
- Open Access: [IAPSOP](#) Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals and more



Archives: Other Collections

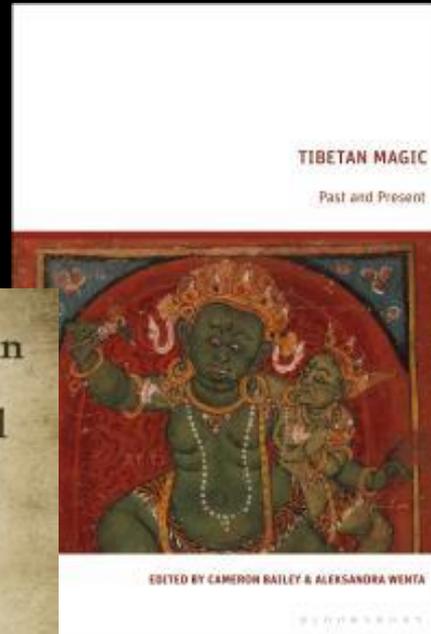
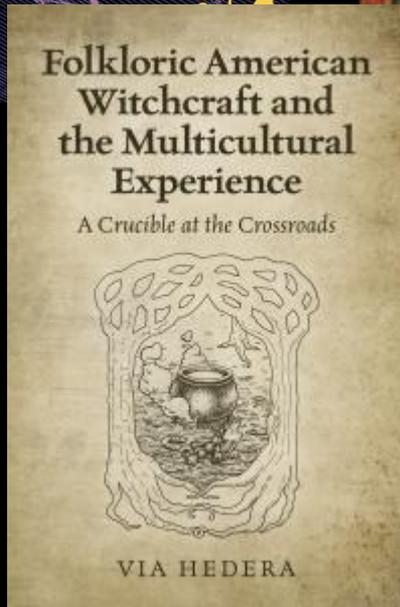
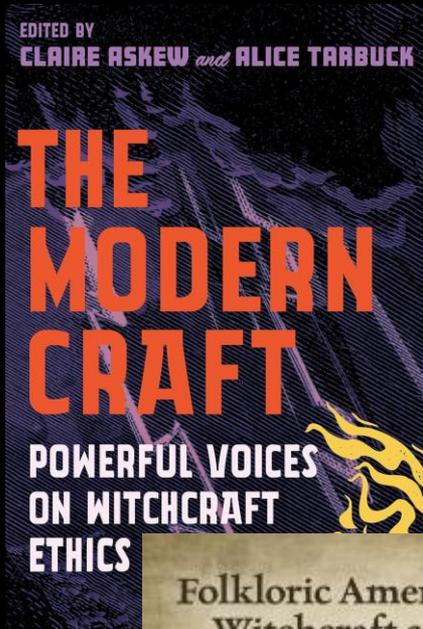


MS982/G/4

- MS912: Collection of research material, index cards and correspondence collected by Eric Dingwall. Most of the collection is scrapbooks compiled by Dingwall covering a wide range of subjects
- MS1005: Harold Frost Scrapbooks
- MS982: Florence Farr papers
- MS1224: Edinburgh Séances
- More collections can be found in our [Archive Subject Guide](#)



Modern Collections



- More books are available in the Library's Modern Collections and e-book collections
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 - Sociology and Anthropology 7th floor, classmark **KIE**
 - Also: History and English Literature (5th floor)
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- Some material may be closed, but the majority can be accessed
- E-resources and E-books can be accessed onsite via the Library Wi-Fi network

Contact us

Adelaide Herrmann, the 'world's only female magician'



[Research Strength page](#)

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