My project is on the enjoyment of literature on magic, and Harry Houdini. I would like to start by giving a brief history of magic, and a background of Harry Houdini.

Magic is the oldest of the theatrical arts. Its earliest origins were in shamanism and the priesthood. By the time of ancient Egypt, clever conjurors were using many of the same tricks performed by magicians today to convince the masses of their supernatural power. In the thousands of years since its earliest recorded beginnings, magic moved from the temples of ancient times to the street corners and fairs of the Middle Ages, then into taverns and drawing rooms and, finally, onto the stage and television.

Harry Houdini - Display portrait

American escape artist and magician, who was one of the greatest showmen of all time. He was named Erich Weiss and claimed to have been born in Appleton, Wisconsin, on April 6, 1874, but he probably was born in Budapest, Hungary. After working as a trapeze artist, he turned to magic and took the name Houdini. Houdini's career was extremely influenced by the French illusionist Jean-Eugene Robert-Houdin, who had written on magic: "The Memoirs of Robert-Houdin."
It was because of this book and the name of Robert Houdin, that Houdini improvised his own name by adding a "i" to Houdin to make Houdini. In 1894, Houdini married Wilhelmina Beatrice Rahner, and from that time they worked together as the Houdinis - Harry and Bessie. In 1897, Houdini developed a "challenge" act, escaping from handcuffs brought by spectators. He also escaped from prison cells, straight jackets, and boxes. His brother, Theodore, who called himself Hardeen, did a similar act. Later feats by Houdini included an escape from a "Water Torture Cell" and another was "Walking Through a Brick Wall." Houdini also starred in silent films and in his later years crusaded vigorously against fraudulent mediums exposing their methods. Houdini died in Detroit, Mich. on Oct. 31, 1926, Halloween, from advanced appendicitis, caused by a seemingly minor injury. Houdini willed his magic books to his brother Hardeen. Among his published works are The Right Way to Do Wrong and Magic and Mystery.

I would now like to explain why you see all these books and these posters. The reason being, is that my hobby is the study of magic and Harry Houdini. It all started in 6th grade when my dad showed me a trick. A little later, I'll
show you my very first trick. This first trick lead to a magic set for Christmas, which lead to me putting on shows for my family. It seemed like one thing lead to another. Then one day, I'm watching T.V. when I saw the movie *Houdini*, starring Tony Curtis. I was intrigued by the movie, so I had to find out more about the man, Harry Houdini. In 7th grade for an English Assignment, we were assigned to read a biography. Because of the movie I had seen, I chose *Houdini: Master of Escape* by Adrian Stoutenburg for my biography. This first book led to a collection of books now numbering 34, and a deep interest in magic and escape.

I also collect pictures, posters, pamphlets, clippings, articles, handcuffs, locks, keys, and other paraphernalia regarding my subject. I was unable to bring my handcuff collection which consists of antique cuffs and modern police and thumb cuffs. It was a few posters. The purpose of the magic poster is to evoke a sense of wonder. I hope that posters do the same for you as they do for me. I would like to pass out a book that is nothing but magic posters. Also, I would like to pass out a *Houdini* scrapbook that I've put together.
stripped away about Houdini, that the actual man turns out to be much greater, and much more interesting than the legendary one. Reading different books on Houdini adds new dimensions to the stock character of legend, making the real man seem all the more real and his accomplishments all the more remarkable.

Quotě Milbourne Christopher: "The performing of magic is my profession; the study of its history my pleasure." The study of magic and studying Houdini is my pleasure.

Magic books can be read simply for the pleasure of reading about magic. And from such reading one gradually acquires a learning that deepens into a total enjoyment of magic. The more proficient in the art of magic one becomes, and the more widely one reads in magical literature, both new and old, the more fully aware does one become of the extent and variety of the world of magic. Besides bringing together a variety of magic, tricks, and its performers, books capture something of the mood and mystique, the color and atmosphere, of this graceful and imaginative art.

For example, this book (Panorama of Magic)
is a pleasure to read and look through; the text teems with lively anecdotes about the wizards themselves, and the illustrations are an unending delight. Anyone interested in magic, costuming, stage setting and design, ethology, and psychology, or anyone who simply likes to read about interesting people or see unusual prints and engravings, will want to own this book.

Here then is another unique book ('Magic Catalogue'), that brings together a treasury of information about magic and its performers and also captures, in text and illustrations, the color and fascination of the mystic art.

This book here ('World's Greatest Magic') conveys the mood of a live performance of magic with its printed words and photographs.

The point I'm trying to make is that photographs, engravings, posters, and other memorabilia will help the reader to share in the pleasure of this enchanted world of magic. They help to recreate the life and times of great predecessors like Harry Houdini.

Anyone who delves into magic's history like myself is indebted to Milbourne Christopher for his fine work and to Walter B. Gibson for his many books on the subject. These are two leading
Authorities on the subject of Harry Houdini and Magic.

Walter B. Gibson - An amateur magician himself, has been interested in magic for most of his life. He has written numerous works and articles on the subject, has edited many magazines, and has known personally the greatest magicians of the past fifty years. He traveled, worked, and wrote with Thuner, Bactotone, Raymond, and Houdini, and from them gained first-hand impressions of an early generation of magicians.

Display some of Walter B. Gibson's books. Some of these books are available in the Library.

Milbourne Christopher also knew Houdini personally. Mr. Christopher is a famous magician himself and is noted for catching bullets between his teeth and making a live elephant disappear. I would like to say that he probably wrote the most definitive biography on Harry Houdini (Houdini: The Untold Story). I would like to read some of the book reviews.

Houdini: The Untold Story; This book is more than the best life of Houdini, it is, quite simply, one of the best biographies I have ever read. Houdini: The Untold Story; like being backstage with the tireless performer... You don't have to be a magic buff to enjoy Mr. Christopher's book.
Another book by Christopher is:

_Houdini: A Pictorial Life_. A couple reviews:

_Houdini_ the name is magic. And so is this book.

For magic buffs in particular—

_for lovers of mystics (in general)—

this book will be a wonderful event.

He also wrote _Panorama of Magic_ which I've already commented on.

As heard in the review, you don't have to be a magic buff to enjoy books on Houdini or magic.

Books are but one of the many aspects of magic. I was fortunate to visit the Magic Castle in Hollywood, and the Houdini Museum in Niagara Falls. These were both special experiences for me, and could be for you also.

Here is a pamphlet about the Houdini museum and experience:

Im sure that mother and I are fascinated by magic and I think that we've all enjoyed the magic specials with Parks, Fleming the last few years on TV.

As promised earlier, I would now like to perform a few simple magic tricks:

1. Number Mystery
2. Marked Coin
3. Card Penetration

I would like to conclude by saying that I hope that what I've presented and displayed helped you to have in the pleasure that I myself have experienced since my first venturing into this enchanted world of magic.