

What's in the collection?

The scope of the collection is remarkably broad:

- Magical apparatus from large illusions to small pocket-size tricks
- Novelties, jokes and puzzles
- Catalogues from around the world
- Books
- Photographs
- Posters and programmes for magic and variety shows
- Correspondence
- Maskelyne items. Davenports bought the Maskelyne business in 1935. In 2007 the family purchased additional Maskelyne ephemera which formed part of the John Salisse Collection.
- Will Goldston items. Davenports bought Will Goldston's business following his death in 1948.

The majority of items belong to the period 1900 to 1950. A notable exception is the Maskelyne archive which goes back to the 1870s. The collection has continued to grow through purchases and donations so that it includes material up to the present day.

The collection's breadth is explained by the Davenport family tendency not to throw things away, so in decades of trading a large volume of material was amassed. Davenport's business was not just a retail magic shop. The business was also a wholesaler supplying department stores and shops at home and abroad with magic, jokes, novelties and puzzles. Over the decades the family purchased many other magic businesses, including their stock. In addition, we purchased magical apparatus and even complete shows from performers, or their widows. Finally, Lewis Davenport had a performing career from the 1900s to the 1930s and the resulting correspondence and ephemera provide insight not just into the world of magic, but into the entertainment world as a whole.

Davenports is a British business, but Lewis Davenport traded with and performed with people from around the world. So although the collection is particularly rich in material from Britain, it has a strong international flavour.

