

## *Ex Libris* by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for September, 2016! Last month we explored the classic text by J. N. Hofzinger and at the end, I promised we would explore another classic tome this month. Which one? **Our Magic** by Nevil Maskelyne and David Devant. It was written in 1911 with a very different intent than most other magic books; that is, it was aimed at educating the general public about the secrets and mysteries of magicians, to pull back the proverbial curtain. Of course, it did contain actual secrets of magic effects, but the authors intended to let the public in on them.

This particular book did not become a great hit with the general public but eventually it became very sought-after by magicians for the wealth of very useful topics that it contained and covered. It is by no means a 'light/easy read' and it is best read in small sections so that one can fully digest what is being discussed. The philosophies in the book are centered on parlor and stage magic, but everything contained in the book can be applied to all other aspects of magic as well. In fact, there was a man named H. Adrian Smith, an historian and collector who, during his lifetime, amassed the largest private library of books on conjuring and magic. He published a list of ten books that he considered essential basics for a working magician and this title was on that list.

Among many other subjects, things covered in this book included Consistency, Justification, Climax, Presentation, Patter, Rehearsal, Stage Manner and Personality, Mental Attitude, The Importance of Artistic Principles, Misdirection, a collection of principles that apply to magic performance including Mechanical, Optical, Acoustic, Electrical, Chemical and Molecular Principles. Among one of the reasons in my opinion that one should own a copy of this book, which is also available in a free eBook format from library.com, is that there is an entire 20 page biographical index of card effects, which includes sleights. Anyone doing research on card sleights and card moves would find this book invaluable for that list alone.

The information in this book is very valuable but as I said, it is not a light read. I believe this is what prompted Nevil Maskelyne to write and publish a shortened version of the book called *Maskelyne on the Performance of Magic*. This is still available today and is every bit as good as *Our Magic*, but it is a much easier read and it covers the most important areas of the larger book. Some of our readers will remember that our featured guest for Michigan Magic Day 2016, Levent, published his list of the "Fundamental Rules of Stage Magic". His list very much complements the list that Maskelyne himself wrote, *the 24 Rules of Magic*, which can be read in the book or also on the website of Martin Lewis ([www.magikraft.com](http://www.magikraft.com)). Darwin Ortiz also published a list called *Darwin's Laws* in his book **Designing Miracles**. That list also reflects the philosophies put forth by Maskelyne.

If you are even remotely interested in magic performance theory, this book is certainly a must-have for your library. It will take a while to absorb the information from the pages, but the most important thing is to take that information and apply it to your own performances. Until next

month folks, enjoy the beautiful weather, read a good magic book – check our club website for all the past articles for some great suggestions – and get out there and share the magic!

**-JMA**