

Ex Libris by **Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.**

Hello folks and welcome to 2018 and to the first Ex Libris article for the year! Every year for January I try to go back to the real basics of conjuring books, seeing as it is the first (read: *beginning*) month of the year; it is a time to have a fresh new start to things. In that spirit I like to talk about books that beginners to magic may be told to read but that even experienced magicians would do well to revisit from time to time. Counting this month, I have written 34 articles (more accurately, 33, as the very first article was only an introductory one) dedicated to the purpose of hopefully inspiring the readers to pick up a copy of those books, or *any* magic book, because that is where all the good stuff is hidden! Shhh!

This month I thought I would focus on the *Encyclopedia of Card Tricks* first published in 1937 by **Max Holden**. It was originally compiled by **Doctor Wilhelm von Deussen** in a collaborative effort with **Glenn Gravatt**. **Jean Hugard** later added to and edited the book and is widely (though erroneously) credited as the originator. *Dover Publications* reprinted the book in 1974, followed later by *D. Robbins & Co.* It is currently available on the used market as a softcover book and as a PDF from Lybrary.com.

This is a most excellent book for beginners solely because of its wide range of content, but even well-versed magicians can get a lot out of this book. As Theo Annemann pointed out in his introduction for this book that if one were to combine the original market value of its contents, this book would be worth thousands of dollars; that estimation includes effects using gaffed decks and cards as well as normal decks. The book is broken down into sections that deal with different [now] classic plots in card magic, plots such as *Do As I Do* and *Spelling Tricks*. Further sections deal with describing a few different types gaffed decks that are still on the market today followed by some effects using them.

The first section details impromptu and easy effects, many of which you will recognize such as the *Card Detectives*, the *Easy Card to Wallet*, *Whispering Queen* and *Matching the Aces*, along with plenty of them that will no doubt be new to you. The effects here are not necessarily self-working but they are good, and can all be done with a borrowed deck. The second section deals with spelling effects and for those of you unfamiliar with that plot, the selected card(s) are found by spelling their names out with each card representing one letter in the name (i.e. Ace of Spades, Two of Hearts). Some other versions might spell other words to locate the cards, such as the name of the audience participant, their birth month, etc. There are versions that can be done on the fly as well as those with pre-arranged set-ups.

The third section is dedicated to the Key Card idea, something that even many laypeople are familiar with but when done correctly, you can easily dispel the idea that you are using one. The next two sections are ideas using slick cards and a substance called Diachylon, which was a substance that was lightly tacky and contained a bit of plaster; it has long since been banned due to its lead content but there are many modern substances that can be used in its place.

The book also contains rather large sections that teach you calculation effects based on simple math (mathemagic, if you will), effects using short cards, reversed cards, prearranged packets and decks, double backed cards, double face cards and a few special packs. It details what Svengali, Mene-Tekel and Stripper decks are and how to use them. The description of the decks is also thorough enough for you to make your own, but all of them are still readily available on the market these days. Also described in a short section

are sundry sleights that one may find useful, but they are by no means the only ones applicable to this book.

The book is closed with a section that is dedicated to the Nikola Card System, which is a system for memorizing the Nikola Stack. Not only does it describe the stack itself, but the entire mnemonic system for memorizing the cards and their numeric positions is detailed, though you could use any memory peg system you like. Following that there are a few effects that can be used with this memorized deck including *Cards by Weight*, *Spelling Any Card Called For* and *Wizard's Whist*, which is sort of a gambling-themed demo based on the game of Bid Whist.

There are a lot of books out there that use the term 'encyclopedia' and while many of them are not quite worthy of the word, this book really is. There are more card effects contained in this book than you ever wanted to know and given the broad range and scope of the contents, this book truly is encyclopedic, at least for its age. The good news about this book is that it is available anywhere from a mere \$6/USD for the PDF to about \$20/USD for the softcover, but they are usually closer to the \$10/USD range.

I do hope that you give this book a try because there are some really good effects hidden within and none of them are particularly difficult. That is all for this month folks – Happy New Year to all of you and we will see you soon! – **J.M.A.**