

**Ex Libris** by Joaquin M. Ayala de Cédoz, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for March of 2026! As you read this, we may well have already *switched* over to the Spring season (March 20<sup>th</sup>) and if that is the case, I hope you are starting to warm up weatherwise! I just had to sneak it into the intro...

This month our book has something to do with switches of some sort, but not banknotes and such as in the January article. This time, we are diving into *The Art of Switching Decks* by **Roberto Giobbi**, a 153-page hardcover book, originally published in 2013 by *Hermetic Press*.

If you have been a long-time reader of my articles, you will, by now, recognize both Roberto Giobbi and the publisher, Hermetic Press (formerly run) by Stephen Minch, a very prolific publisher of many, many, many high quality and best-selling magic books. Roberto Giobbi, of course, became very well known for his publishing of the *Card College* series of books, which start with the basics and move on up to advanced work with cards.

This book is all about ways to “covertly” switch a deck of cards, for whatever purpose you may need to do so. I say “covertly” because, while they will go undetected if done properly, some of them are so devious that they happen out in the open, in plain sight. That is the power of well-timed action and misdirection.

Giobbi wastes *zero* time getting right into it because as soon as you open the cover, you will see diagrams printed on both the pastedown and the flyleaf (go ahead, look those terms up if you are unfamiliar with them), illustrating and labeling all the parts and finger sections of both sides of both hands, and a diagram of the different parts of all sides of a deck of cards, *and* the cardinal directions in which that deck might move. Strange, you say? Not in this case, but particularly useful because those are all the terms that may or may not be used throughout the book to describe or otherwise indicate the particulars of each deck switch.

Further in, you will also find a map, of sorts, of the various parts of your wardrobe, also used in tandem, in the same way, for each of the switches throughout. But here is where the book really begins in earnest, with Giobbi describing the terminology used not only in this book, but as often found in other publications, as well as a deck switching diagram, which shows the flow of various types of switches, the types (read: categories) of deck switches (i.e. mechanical vs. technical), the where, when and why of switching decks, and more.

He details some actual card effects in this tome where the switch may rely on an actual effect to be done, and while these are good effects in and of themselves, the switches detailed within them are not tied specifically to that effect. The effects herein exist primarily to help clarify *how* and/or *when* to affect the switch within the context of a card effect, meaning you can plug these types into any effect where you might need to switch a

deck in the middle of, or toward the end of, an effect that you already perform. This book is well-illustrated with diagrams and black & white photos throughout.

The endpaper in the back includes a handy table of all the switches, the page numbers where they are found, and all of the seven categories to which they may belong. The categories are: Seated, Stand-up, Technical, During a Specific Trick, On the Offbeat, No Coat Needed, and No Pockets Needed. Some switches belong to one or two categories, others belong to four or five.

A sweet little bonus will be found bound inside the rear cover of the book – a DVD which was filmed during a Deck Switch lecture given at the Genii Convention in Orlando, Florida back in 2012, and was never meant for release to anyone. The footage is very rough, but what you will see in action is a bunch (hint: 10+) of switches done within, as Giobbi puts it, “...the very rough concept of a “comprehensive show” order...” No matter – you will get the point when you watch it, and you will still see *nothing!*

If you every find yourself performing with gaffed decks, or decks that are set up in advance for a later payoff, you should consider obtaining this book. The techniques are very useful, and it can also apply to other types of cards (ESP decks, non-playing card decks, etc.), and in some cases, even other objects can be switched out using some of these techniques (maybe slightly modifying them to suit). Be sure to tune in next month where we will dive into yet another magical tome!

-J. M. A.