

The Thirty-Nine Steps

A Mentalists Library of Essential Works

Recent Thread on an Internet Magicians' Forum:

Question:

“What book or books are essential reading for someone just starting out in magic, particularly mentalism?”

First Answer:

“Annemann’s *Practical Mental Effects* and Corinda’s *13 Steps to Mentalism* are essential reading for every mentalist.

Second Answer:

“Annemann and Corinda are out of date. The best book is T.A. Waters’ *Mind, Myth and Magick.*”

Third Answer:

“Waters wasn’t a performer and most of his effects aren’t very practical. All you need to study is Corinda.”

Fourth Answer:

“A great book for the beginner is Henry Hay’s *The Amateur Magician’s Handbook.*”

Fifth Answer:

“Don’t forget Larry Becker’s *Stunners!*”

Sixth Answer:

“Banachek’s *Psychological Subtleties* and Richard Busch’s *Peek Performances* top my list of essential reading for the modern mentalist.”

While all of the respondents mentioned valuable works, I agree with only one of the answers - the fourth. It is the only suggestion that answers the original question. None of the other books are particularly suitable for those “just starting out in magic, particularly mentalism.”

The Amateur Magician’s Handbook provides a broad based and practical foundation in the psychology and techniques of magic. While most magic books aimed at beginners start out by teaching self-working effects, Hay wisely devoted the first half of his book to the “hard stuff.” In his words

“...If you start off with a few self-working tricks that you can plod through undetected, you may puzzle people, but you won’t entertain them. Worse, you won’t have entertained yourself. Easy come, easy go. Familiarity breeds contempt... Some notion, at least, of magical acting can be taught in a book; but it takes time to sink in. The time required to memorize a self-working trick is not long enough... The time required to learn a fairly simple sleight probably will be long enough for you to absorb the acting that goes with it.

"In short, you can learn to do a moderately difficult trick more easily than you can a perfectly easy trick. On a sleight of hand trick you can’t skimp; on an easy trick the temptation is almost irresistible. You won’t dare to show a feat of skill that is only half practiced – and this is one of the basic axioms in all conjuring."

It is quite possible to create a complete mental act based on subtleties and self-working effects. Because of this, magicians who have an aversion to “practice” occasionally decide to go into mentalism because they think it is “easier” than straight magic. Their inevitable failure and embarrassment is a fate they could have avoided if someone had recommended Henry Hay’s book to them in the first place.

The section on “mental magic” [see note below] comes in the second half of the book and it is, unabashedly, based on the works of Theodore Annemann. Hay recommends that those wishing to specialize in this branch of the art should obtain a copy of Annemann’s Practical Mental Effects.

I don’t think it’s accidental that Hay doesn’t discuss mentalism, or recommend Annemann, until after the student has “paid his dues” by developing a facility with fundamental sleights.

As you may have guessed, The Amateur Magician’s Handbook was, back in 1962, my gateway into the world of magic and my first step to mentalism. It would be another five years before I heard of a guy named Corinda.

Note: The distinction most of today's mentalists make between "mentalism" and "mental magic" was rarely, if ever, observed until the 1970's, over twenty years after *The Amateur Magician's Handbook* was written. By 1978, the majority of magicians and mentalists who said there was no real difference between "mentalism" and "mental magic," no longer held that opinion. (Basically, this was because of death - Nature's way of illustrating that, in the great scheme of things, she doesn't give a shit what you think.)

Postscript:

Henry Hay (pseudonym of the late Barrows Mussey, 1912 - 1985) wrote his book in 1949 and it was first published the following year. It has remained in print on the mass market ever since. When I worked in a magic shop in the 1960's and early 70's, I often recommended the book to customers, but was surprised that very few of them bought it. Instead, they usually opted for more expensive, though in my opinion, distinctly inferior, books that were not available to the public. When I began asking customers why they didn't want the Hay book, then available in hard cover for \$9.95 and paperback for 95¢, a majority answered that their goal was to become "professional" magicians. Why would they want to buy a book obviously intended for amateurs?

I honestly believe that if Hay's book had been given a different title - Hay's Handbook of Magic, for example, it would today be ranked among the top twenty magic books ever written.

There's an important lesson here, I think:

*While people will agree that you can't judge a book
by its cover, they do it anyway.*

(It saddens me when I hear newcomers to the art advising neophytes that classic texts on the art are "outdated" – these are usually the same guys who are surprised when they learn that the latest "miracle" on the market was actually introduced in a 1939 issue of Annemann's "Jinx," or that the actual inventor of the "missing puzzle piece" effect – a current controversy among those unfamiliar with "outdated" material - has been dead for several years now. He introduced the effect almost forty years ago.)

What's on the List, What's Not, and Why Not

Following is my annotated list of thirty-nine works that I believe will, if they are carefully studied, provide the student with a well-balanced background and a respectable degree of expertise in the art of mentalism.

The most important books to me, of course, are the ones I pored over and studied in the sixties and seventies. They provided me, after all, with the knowledge that enabled me to develop my own style and approach to the art. And all of them, I believe, are still worthy of serious attention. But succeeding generations of authors, building upon the foundations laid by their predecessors, have made valuable, and important, contributions to the literature. I've included a representative sampling of those modern works that I predict will be called "classics" by future generations.

Some readers may notice that several excellent books do not appear on the list. That is because this is a list of those works that I feel are "essential" in one way or another, to a well-rounded education in mentalism. It is not intended to include every mentalism book I have ever read or found interesting. I've included books that introduce, develop, and lucidly explain important principles, as well as those that deal with the psychology of mentalism and important presentational skills.

And, besides, the list is called "The Thirty-Nine Steps," not "The Forty-Seven Steps" or "The Hundred and Twenty-Five Steps." After I set the list parameters, I reviewed my entire library and selected all of the books I thought would qualify. From those I selected the top thirty-nine. While I do feel that some of the books are more essential than others, I did not want to engage in the subjective chore of ranking them from one to thirty-nine. They are, therefore, listed in alphabetical order. I will, though, explain why I think that two books deserve to be at the top of the list.

Because of my self-imposed restrictions, books that deal with important related subjects such as business methods, stagecraft, acting, comedy, etc., are not included. Neither have I included any videos, electronic publications, lecture notes, or single routines published in booklet form.

My own works are not on the list, although they are obviously on my shelves. I leave it to others to determine which, if any, of them might be considered essential. My opinion can hardly be considered objective.

The Thirty-Nine Steps to Mentalism

While most of the following books are readily available through magic shops or the Internet, some of them are temporarily or permanently out of print and may be hard to find. Successful searches, however, will be well worth your efforts.

Anderson, George – *It Must Be Mind Reading*
You, Too, Can Read Minds
Dynamite Mentalism

A part-time mentalist and a full-time television writer, Anderson dressed his mentalism with highly commercial presentations. But it was his development of the “no questions written” approach to the Q&A act, first introduced in *It Must Be Mind Reading* and brought to full fruition in *Dynamite Mentalism*, that warrants the inclusion of his three books in “The Thirty-Nine Steps.”

Andrews, Val – *Simplicity, Audacity and Bluff*

While the book appears to have been typed on a defective 1932 Remington, its production values at least serve, by comparison, to make Al Mann manuscripts look snazzy.

But just as a book cannot be judged by its cover or title, neither can its type to mistype ratio measure the value of its material.

Brilliant, ballsy material. All practical, all professional, and almost completely unknown to today’s mentalists and magicians. Contains the definitive work on the “Electric Chair Routine” and the “Light and Heavy Bar” made famous by Chevalo. No gimmicks, no electricity, and no magnets. The title of the book says it all- three of the most important secrets of the professional mentalist.

Annemann, Theodore – *Annemann’s Practical Mental Effects*,
Annemann’s Mental Bargain Effects
Annemann’s One Man Mental and Psychic Routine
The Jinx- complete file
En Rapport
202 Methods of Forcing

A common misconception among new mentalists is that Theodore Annemann was the author of *Practical Mental Effects*. He never saw the book. It was published in 1944, two years after Annemann’s untimely death. *Practical Mental Effects* (recently re-released by Dover Publishing under the title *Annemann’s Mental Magic*) is a compilation of what John J. Crimmins, Jr. thought were the best mental effects and routines that had appeared over the years in Annemann’s magazine, the *Jinx*. Many excellent mental effects were left out and others were

edited in such a way that the flavor of the original routine was lost or obscured. The best mental effects with playing cards were compiled in two books of card tricks culled from the magazine and later published by Max Holden. They, too, are presently being published by Dover.

This is not to downplay the value of the material contained in *Practical Mental Effects*. If someone tells you that the book is outdated, it is probable that he has never really studied it. The methods and routines are, for the most part, as effective today as they were in the 1930's and early 40's.

The best way, however, to get a real understanding of Annemann's central role in the early years of twentieth century mentalism is to read his words as he originally published them. All issues of the *Jinx* are still readily available in three hardbound volumes available through most magic dealers.

Unlike the compilations, the *Jinx's* articles and photographs, Annemann's legendary editorials and the unedited versions of effects from the era's greatest minds in magic and mentalism, arguably make *The Complete Jinx* the most important volume in my essential library. If you have just the *Jinx* and a complete set of Bascom Jones's *Magick*, which was to the second half of the twentieth century what the *Jinx* was to the first, the knowledge and history of a century of mentalism would be at your fingertips

Just reading the editorial columns brings life to our history. Annemann is still in there; he's still occasionally controversial; he sometimes is less than coherent; most often, though he is completely brilliant and his unedited, raw genius is still there for all of us to learn from and argue with.

Actually, the only reason I included *Practical Mental Effects* in my "Thirty-Nine Steps" is that it is an easily accessible, organized, reference work of important effects, which are naturally hard to find quickly in their original format. It is, though, only a very pale substitute for the *Jinx* and the other Annemann volumes listed above.

Mental Bargain Effects is notable for its extremely well thought out methodology. Those who thought that the card case impression device was a recent development will find the original, and still superior, version in this booklet. It also contains, among many other gems, the first major improvement to the ancient one ahead principle devised by Hewitt and explained by Annemann.

Annemann's Complete One Man Mental and Psychic Routine is an excellent act requiring a minimum of props. But, more importantly, it is a brilliant lesson in effective routining and time delay misdirection. If someone were to ask me to name just one book, which influenced my style of performing more than any other, this would be the one.

is an easily mastered two-person act that uses a minimal amount of cuing and excellent routining to achieve a convincing demonstration of thought reading. Even if you never intend to present a two-person routine, there is some excellent billet handling that you will not find in

Annemann's other works. In fact, for some of Annemann's best billet work you will have to locate a copy of J.G. Thompson's *My Best*, which has also earned a place in the list.

Baker, Al – *Al Baker's Mental Magic*

One of Anneman's early influences, Al Baker, primarily remembered as a master children's entertainer and comic magician, was also the creator of the very practical and illusive Al Baker billet switch. He was also the first to publish an instant access tear, a method of reading the contents of a folded slip of paper in the act of tearing it up. The technique was later refined by many different mentalists including Bruce Bernstein, Richard Osterlind, T.A. Waters, Al Mann, Richard Busch and many others. All are among the true creative masters of present day mentalism. In the hands of Barry Richardson, and because of his own creative contributions to the basic principle, the tear has reached a state of near perfection.

Creativity does not flourish in a vacuum. And art develops much more quickly and effectively when we know the history of our creative endeavors and share our ideas with those who love and appreciate the art and its history.

Al Baker's Mentalism was a seminal work containing ideas and clever subtleties that continue to influence the mentalism of today. As such, it earns a well-deserved place in my list.

Banachek, Steve – *Psychological Subtleties*

Steve Banachek is acknowledged by his peers as one of the most creative and original mentalists working today. While his book is occasionally recommended to beginners, it will yield its most valuable fruits to those who have become fairly well "versed and rehearsed" in the art. Only then can its true value be appreciated. But if you are a beginner, it won't be entirely useless to you. It will act as a barometer of your development as a mentalist. When it starts telling you something new every time you open its pages, you will know that you are headed in the right direction.

**Becker, Larry- *World of Super Mentalism,*
World of Super Mentalism Part Two
*Stunners***

Occasionally some mentalists, myself included, have described the work of Larry Becker as "mental magic" rather than "mentalism." I seem to recall Larry telling me that he, too, considered many of his effects to be "mental magic." Either that, or he told me that he didn't give a shit either way, and who I am I to argue with a guy who picked up my tab after I just bought drinks for the whole room? (I don't think he knew about that when he grabbed the bill.)

Actually, Larry doesn't have to worry about labels. His creative genius and his alternatively playful and dramatic approach to performing have earned him the label attained by

few – People don't see him perform and say, "He is a mentalist," or "He is a magician." They don't go home after a performance and tell people that they saw a mentalist today.

His unique brand of whatever-it-is-that-he-does leaves his audiences remembering just one thing – they saw Larry Becker today.

That, of course, is the ultimate goal of any entertainer – to wear a label that says who he is rather than what he does. Since Larry's routines are primarily based on subtlety and psychology rather than difficult moves or switches, most of the performer's efforts can be directed to achieving that goal.

Larry is the creative force behind the most powerful effects presented by many of the leading mentalists in show business today. His routining skills result in presentations that are direct, and as effectively deadly, as a sharpshooter's bullet.

Read these three books very carefully- don't be deceived by Larry's easy writing style and his clear descriptions. You will then be tempted to just present the routines as written and you will miss the true value of his work. Instead, pay close attention to the way he thinks and the way that his routines are put together. These are lessons that will be invaluable to you as you develop your own style, methods and presentations.

Don't just read these books and perform the effects as those "mentalists" who every day futilely struggle to become Larry Becker, present them.

It won't work. The position is already taken.

Bernstein, Bruce – *PsiKicks*

Bernstein is one of mentalism's greatest thinkers. His development of Annemann's classic "Pseudo Psychometry," his modernization of older techniques and methods, and several very commercial routines, warrant the inclusion of this book in *The 39 Steps*. As with the works of Larry Becker, and most of the other authors on this list, your greatest lessons will be learned as you analyze his thinking.

Busch, Richard – *Peek Performances*

The winner of the 2002 Psychic Entertainers Association Creativity Award, Richard Busch has written the most complete one-volume resource on the art of secretly obtaining a spectator's written thoughts. Much of the value of the book is to be found between the lines. As with Banachek's book, it will become increasingly valuable and meaningful as you progress in the art.

(The only person I know whom the book disappointed was Dr. Bob. Apparently, he thought that it was a manual describing advanced techniques for the undercover voyeur.)

13 Steps to Mentalism is often referred to as one of the two cornerstones of modern mentalism. The other common choice is Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects*.

As I explained earlier, I believe Annemann's work is indeed worthy of "cornerstone" status. I don't agree that *Practical Mental Effects* adequately represents his substantial contributions to the art; but it contains such a wealth of valuable material that I will not argue if we settle on giving it second place. But since I think first place should go to Annemann's *Jinx*, it's hardly fair to let *Practical Mental Effects* remain at number two. All of its contents are already included in the *Jinx*.

But does Corinda's book, admittedly an important work, deserve to take over second place?

This is where things get a bit subjective. I got my first copy of Annemann about 37 years ago. Since then, I have always kept a copy of the book nearby. I suppose I probably know most of it by memory now, but I still refer to it frequently.

(I think my handwritten margin notes would add another thirty pages to the book if I had them printed up. The same with Henry Hay; he's was another one of my constant travel companions.)

I first read Corinda around 1969. I re-read and studied it and it provided valuable information about areas of mentalism that called for further study. But after a year or so, I rarely referred to it anymore, except to check references when I started writing my own books several years later. I simply had moved on to more specialized works that picked me up where Corinda left me off. But while Annemann certainly inspired me to explore hundreds of other books and resources, he never "left me off." There was always something interesting to come back to. Things that seemed better and better as my experience in the art grew.

That is not intended to be a criticism of the book. For, unlike Annemann's work, the *13 Steps* is primarily a textbook, a primer aimed at readers seeking to learn about the art of mentalism. It is the best, and most complete, introduction to mentalism ever written. Textbooks are stepping stones to more advanced studies.

Corinda is primarily a book of description; Annemann's works constitute creation and innovation. Corinda took the art of mentalism and put it into context. Annemann's works, on the other hand, are part of the art itself.

Is Corinda, then, one of the foundations of the art? No, not at all. It is simply a description of the foundations that were laid many years before by Annemann and the other creators in the field. (Corinda's book does contain many effects, which are used as examples in each section. But if the *13 Steps* was simply a collection of these effects, I would not have included it on the list, there are just too many better books of effects and routines available – many of which I have included in this list.)

To someone just starting out in mentalism, I would recommend Corinda first, the Jinx second (or *Practical Mental Effects* if the Jinx is not available), and then Bascom Jones *Magick*. A solid background in the necessary magical skills can be obtained from Henry Hay's *Amateur Magician's Handbook*. The *Jinx* and *Magick* will lead the student to all of the other important books and resources in the field. (Both of them provided reviews and recommendations of new material pretty much as it was released.)

Dewey, Herb and Seville, Tom – *Red Hot Cold Reading*

The late Herb Dewey was known as “The King of the Cold Readers.” I thought I knew a lot about cold reading until I first saw Dewey work many years ago. *Red Hot Cold Reading*, which he co-authored with Doctor of Psychology, and P.E.A. member, Tom Saville, was the first book on the subject that went far beyond the memorization of canned character readings. It remains an essential piece of work, even though more extensive books have followed in its wake, because many of his approaches, lines, and ploys are as effective on stage as they are in one-on-one readings.

Goldstein, Phil - *The Color Series of Mentalism*

Four books explaining some of Max Maven's most powerful routines. In his classic “Four-Sided Triangle” he lucidly explains the psychology behind pre-show work, a tool whose many applications justifies the claim that mentalism really does take place in the mind. Hard to find, but well worth whatever they cost.

Hay, Henry – *The Amateur Magician's Handbook*

You already know why I have included this one. I've already worn out four or five copies of the book and I will probably wear out a few more. If you haven't read it, or for some reason do not want to read it, you are directed to explain yourself by writing a one thousand word essay titled “The Amateur Mentalist's Excuse Book.”

Hilliard, John Northern - *Greater Magic*

Simply the most ambitious, important and extensive magic book of the first half of the Twentieth Century. Many important contributions by Annemann and some very powerful mentalism.

Hoy, David- *The Bold and Subtle Miracles of Dr Faust*

Hoy's “Impromptu Book Test”, “Tossed Out Deck” and “Hurling the Headlines” are three of the greatest pieces of mentalism ever devised.

Hugard, Jean - *The Encyclopedia of Card Tricks*

Contains quite a bit of believable mentalism with a pack of playing cards. Most important, though, because it also contains a complete exposition of the Nikola Card System, which is the basis for the incredible “Any Card at Any Number” effect, a version of which has attained almost legendary status in the hands of English mentalist David Berglas.

Jones, Bascom – *The Compleat Magick*

Refer to my comments about Annemann’s Jinx. The Compleat Magick is a hardbound collection of all of the issues of “Magick,” the most important mentalism periodical of the second half of the Twentieth Century. Want to be a part of what really went down in the Seventies and Eighties? I can trace my own development in these pages as well as everyone else I knew during these incredibly productive decades. Like Annemann, Jones didn’t pull punches in his editorial columns. He said it like it is, and he’s still saying it in the pages of these priceless volumes. Dr. Bob says, “Do not hesitate to sell your car or knock over a liquor store in order to obtain this monumental work. Take this into the joint with you and doing time is a snap!”

Knepper, Kenton – *Wonder Words*
Completely Cold
Miracles of Suggestion

Different, original, powerful, mind-expanding, seminal, important and essential. Kenton occasionally comes under fire for some of his radical approaches to our art. His work, though, is the most important development in mentalism of the last decade.

This stuff turns skeptics into believers.

Koran, Al – *Professional Presentations*

It is very easy to tell when a book has been written by a professional performer. You will find niceties of handling and safety precautions, which indicate that the effect had been subjected to the rigors of actual performance – not for the boys at the magic club, but for the paying public.

The effects in a working professional’s repertoire are usually almost foolproof. Careful attention to detail and preparedness for anything that could possibly go wrong characterize Al Koran’s thoroughly professional approach to mentalism.

Koran’s contributions to the art include his famous “Gold Medallion Routine,” the “Torn Newspaper” prediction, his presentations of the “Linking Finger Rings” and “The Flying Ring,” as well as his classic “Five Star Miracle,” which was the inspiration for the methodology I employed in the “Chronologue” effect.

In addition to examples of Koran's unusually straightforward effects, this book contains an excellent description explanation of "The Koran Center Tear." Unlike most traditional handlings, Koran's version is designed to be "fumble free." The center is cleanly stolen and is automatically positioned in perfect position for what is known as the "umbrella move". Koran's handling of the "read" is clever, natural, and has no angle problems if handled properly.

While the strength of the performance material alone would qualify this book for my "Thirty-Nine Steps," I have included it as a perfect example of how a professional structures his effects and handlings.

Many professionals consider this book to be among the top ten works in mentalism. I would have to agree.

Kross, Ford – *Out of the Deep Freeze*

Kross is the only individual in the world of mentalism who has known me since I was a teenager. We go way back and have had some pretty interesting adventures, including winning the last witchcraft trial held in the State of New Jersey.

Ford and I have been sharing ideas and interesting escapades for over thirty years. Since he is such an old friend I often forget that he is one of the most talented readers in the business; It's hard to categorize him as a "cold reader" though, because many of his techniques are based on his considerable skill as a hypnotist as well as psychological techniques he developed on his own.

His book, *Out of the Deep Freeze*, is uniquely original and contains innovative, powerful and very useable material, but the only way you can get a copy is to personally ask him if you may buy one. He won't sell it to anyone who lacks the experience required to use his methods properly. You may think that this rather unusual. You're right. Ford IS unusual and it is he, not you, who will decide if you may buy his book. Since Ford is currently the membership chairman of the Psychic Entertainers Association, as well as one of its earliest members, he is not particularly hard to find.

Just don't try to bullshit him.

He'll know.

Larson, William, Sr. – *The Mental Magic of William Larson Sr.*

I understand that this wonderful, but presently out-of-print book, will soon be reissued by "Genii, the Conjuror's Magazine." This is excellent news for it contains the "Dr. Q" material, including the legendary "Dr. Q's Hypnotic Act," In addition to excellent mentalism routines used by Larson, Sr. in his performances at clubs and resort hotels, the book contains what Dai Vernon once described as the best explanation of muscle reading ever to see print.

The book is not only an essential part of my “working performer’s library,” but it is a valuable piece of history that will likely become a valuable collector’s item.

Lesley, Ted – *Paramiracles*

Again, a book written by a working performer for working performers. Ted Lesley’s material is well known for its originality, commercial value, and powerful impact. This is not just a collection of excellent routines; it is a storehouse of versatile utility items, including one of the best gaffed envelopes I have ever seen. Lesley’s explanation and development of the valuable “Kornwinder” principle is certain to inspire every mentalist’s creativity. His professional presentations of Eddie Clever’s “Calcutta Mystery” and an original version of the “Bank Night” Routine are object lessons in the art of performing mentalism effectively. If you take the time to build and experiment with his “Bending Champagne Glass”, you will have a routine that is Gelleresque in its magnitude. Not only does the stem of a champagne glass begin to visibly bend while you simply stare at it, but glasses all over the room start to do likewise. The routine, whether you actually use it in your act or not, is another excellent example of how a mentalist can use psychology to convince audiences they have witnessed a miracle.

Lorayne, Harry - *How to Develop a Super Power Memory*

While he has authored many books on the art of rapid memorization, his first, *How to Develop a Super Power Memory*, is still his best. The book contains everything a mentalist will ever need to learn about mnemonics - techniques that not only enable you to perform standard memory effects, but which can be used to effectively enhance demonstrations of apparent mind reading, psychometry, rapid calculation (as in the “Day for any Date” effect, the “Knight’s Tour” and almost any other type of “mind power” demonstration. While mnemonic techniques are familiar to a large percentage of the public, it is in their covert applications that they are such a powerful and essential tools.

Usually the best way to accomplish something is the simplest and most direct. Yet many mentalists who want to exploit the effects made possible by a memorized card stack, for example, utilize “calculation stacks” that they believe to be “easier” and more accessible than memorization. What they don’t seem to realize, is that when the stack is memorized (and that is really quite easy once you have mastered the mnemonics), and a person names a card, you instantly know its location in the pack. You will not need to apply an intermediate calculation to arrive at the proper position.

“But the calculation is easy,” you might reply. And it may well be “easy.” The problem is that the calculation may suddenly become very difficult if you try to do it while interacting with the audience. Of course, you can just stand there and stare up in the air for a second while everyone wonders if you are having a stroke, thus adding some unexpected drama to your act.

Or you can come to the realization that the hard way is actually the easy way. And besides, the calculation stack is a one trick pony. When you learn to memorize a deck of cards you automatically learn to memorize just about anything else.

Lorayne's writing style makes for very easy and entertaining reading. By the time you are ten pages into the book you will be amazed at just how easy mnemonics can be.

All you have to do is try it. Believe me, it is far easier than learning to do a good double lift. (You'll have to buy Harry's other books if that's what you're into.)

Rowland, Ian – *The Full Facts of Cold Reading*

This is probably the most complete modern resource on the art of cold reading. It is presently out of print but a new and expanded edition is scheduled for release later this year. The last edition justifiably attained recognition as a standard work because of its comprehensive nature, its clear explanations and its detailed exploration of the reader's craft.

Sharpe, Sam- *Conjuring Psychological Principles*

Originally published by Micky Hades, Sam Sharp's book is well worth finding. The principles described cover all of the magic arts in addition to mentalism. Probably every psychological and mental technique ever devised can be found somewhere in this painstakingly assembled work. This is not a book that will be of much use to the beginner, but for the writer, researcher, creator, and experienced performer, it is a gold mine of information and an excellent source book.

Shiels, Tony "Doc" – *The Shiels' Effect*

The Shiels' Effect was originally released as a special "supplement" to Tony Raven's "Invocation." (There were two books in this series. The first was my "Pseudomentially Yours" in 1977. The Shiels' book appeared shortly thereafter. As far as I know, these were the only two such supplements Raven published. He must have published quite a few of them, though, because they appear to be readily available.)

The Shiels' Effect appeared while Uri Geller was still a major, and very controversial, figure on the psychic scene. It was Geller's leap to fame that provided the book's premise – how to create a psychic superstar. From the ground up Doc Shiels' chronicles, the rise to fame of "Tim Finnegan," from the creation of his image, the methods behind his "psychic" abilities, and his publicity campaign.

There is a lot more in the book that is of great value to the psychic entertainer who is contemplating a new publicity campaign.

Tarbell, Harlan – *The Tarbell Course in Magic*

Volumes Four, Five, and Six of Tarbell's monumental course in magic cover major blindfold methods, question and answering routines and mentalism in general. Much of the material is not available elsewhere.

The fact that these books are still an important part of my working library is proven by the fact that the "billet stand" I described in my "Godfather's Billet Routine" (Theories and Methods for the Practical Psychic Part 3) was inspired by the holder used in one of Tarbell's Q&A routines.

Tarbell's theories about the presentation of mentalism often raise eyebrows among those who think it is unethical for a mentalist to claim psychic abilities. Sam Sharpe severely criticizes Tarbell in *Conjuring Psychological Techniques*, a book that is also included in my "Thirty-Nine Steps."

Thompson, J.G. – *My Best*

Three years after Ted Annemann's death in 1942, J.G. Thompson released this fantastic collection of material contributed by the leading creators and performers of his generation. The biographical sketches at the end of the book were each written by the contributors themselves. They serve to make this entire generation of performers come alive.

I was fortunate enough to meet many of the contributors in the late sixties, when I became the youngest member of the Parent Assembly of the S.A.M. in New York. Most of them were very old men by that time and I hadn't heard of many of them or their contributions.

But when I read Thompson's book, I was transported back to the time when these men were in their primes. That's one of the reasons that this book is included in my list. It serves as a partial bridge between Annemann's *Jinx* and Jones' *Magick*. You can complete the bridge by obtaining complete files of two major publications that appeared in the interim, *The Phoenix* and *The New Phoenix*. (I haven't included these in my list because they are not focused primarily on mentalism, although many mental effects appeared in their pages over the years – besides, my list isn't long enough to include everything.)

Apart from its historical value, though, the book contains what each of the contributors believed to be his "best" creation. The book lives up to its title. In addition to all forms of magic, you will find in its pages some of the best mental effects ever created.

Waters, T.A. - *Man, Myth, and Magick*

This book could also have been called “The Complete Works of T.A. Waters.” It is an indexed, edited and updated collection of almost every mentalism book and booklet he wrote in his all too short life.

Waters was a major figure on the creative side of our art. Many performers have justifiably noted that his effects were not always suitable, in a practical sense, for the working mentalist. I find that to be true of his earlier works but much less so in his later ones. Since the material in the book is presented in chronological order, you can literally follow the progression and refinement of his thoughts as he became an influential figure in the world of mentalism.

Like some other works on this list, *Mind, Myth and Magick* is often recommended to beginners. And newcomers will indeed benefit very much by reading it. His essays, in fact, should be required reading for. While he may not have been a top performer of mentalism, he was one of its greatest thinkers and theorists.

As with many of the books in this list, the value of Water’s volume does not lie primarily in the effects he describes, but in the creative inspiration they provide. I don’t think I have ever performed any of his effects in the manner he described them. But the reasoning underlying his effects, approaches, and methods, is what qualifies his book as essential reading. It doesn’t matter if you agree with him or not. (Waters and I differed on many points and, on at least one occasion, our differences were extreme.) The point is that Waters works will make you think. And they’ll make you think every time you re-read them.

Mind, Myth and Magic is the living testament of a finely tuned creative mind and deserves to be read by every thoughtful performer.

The books listed in the “Thirty-Nine Steps” span an entire century of magic and mentalism. Looking back over the list, I was struck by an amazing realization – all of the authors are still alive!

It’s true. Ted Annemann, Tom Waters, and everyone else on the list who you may have thought was dead, had actually stumbled upon the secret of immortality. They put their thoughts on paper and shared them not only with their contemporaries, but also with unborn generations of mentalists who followed them. They still live between the covers of their books and will happily talk or argue with you anytime you’d like to visit them.

Their immortality is conditional. It will last only as long as their books are studied

A few friends who looked over my selections were amazed that I didn’t include any works by Barry Richardson on the list. (Even though I have lately been loudly proclaiming to anyone who will listen, that Barry’s version of the center tear is the best and most practical I have ever seen. This really annoys people on the bus who are trying to do the crossword puzzle.)

I am ashamed to admit, that while I have read most of Barry’s wonderful contributions to the magazines and periodicals, I have not yet had the opportunity to read any of his books. This failure, I suspect, indicates that my “solid foundation” in the art may have developed a leak. I will correct this as soon as possible.

If, as is likely, it becomes necessary to add Mr. Richardson’s works to my “Thirty Nine Steps,” I will have no alternative but to either dump someone who pisses me off, or add a step, thus ruining my private tribute to Mr. Memory- the only guy who knows the real meaning of the steps. Perhaps I will even need more than one step because it appears that I may soon require space for Doug Dymont, Ted Karmilovitch, Chuck Hickok, Andy Leviss, Paul Alberstadt and the many other creators and innovators whose present and future works loom on the horizon.

I have no idea how I will find the strength to weather this challenge. But this is the sad fate I accepted when I became “Custodian of the Steps.” (And the men’s room on weekends – that’s just the way they assign the jobs here in rehab.)

The future of mentalism looks pretty good, though.