CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A card shuffler comprising:

a deck-crib configured to contain a stack of playing cards with one card of the stack adjacent a deck support member of the deck-crib;

a dealing rack located adjacent to the deck-crib and defining receptacles, each receptacle sized to receive only a single card;

a card mover associated with the deck-crib and operable to move a single playing card from the deck-crib to a receptacle aligned with the deck-crib, the card mover including:

a primary card-contacting drive member in position to engage a surface of a playing card located adjacent to the deck support member of the deck-crib to move the single playing card toward the aligned receptacle;

an auxiliary card pusher including a card-contacting member movable reciprocably in the deck-crib toward and away from the dealing rack to move the single playing card out of the deck-crib and substantially into the aligned receptacle;

a first motor operably connected to cause movement of one of the dealing rack and the deck-crib relative to the other and to place the card mover and a receptacle into mutual alignment; and

a second motor operably connected to cause movement of the auxiliary card pusher.

2. The card shuffler of claim 1, wherein the deck support member of the deck-crib includes a card-facing surface and the card mover includes a frictional drive element protruding into the deck-crib beyond the card-facing surface of the deck support member.

3. The card shuffler of claim 2, wherein the card-contacting member protrudes into the deck-crib relative to the deck support member beyond the frictional drive element, far enough to disengage from the frictional drive element a card adjacent to the single card being moved to the receptacle.

4. The card shuffler of claim 1, further including a card presentation pusher movable between retracted and extended positions, and wherein the dealing rack defines a presentation pusher receptacle on a side of the dealing rack facing the deck-crib sized and configured to receive a portion of the card presentation pusher in the extended position.

5. The card shuffler of claim 4, including a blocking wall located adjacent a side of the dealing rack opposite the deck-crib, the blocking wall having a blocking wall margin, and wherein the dealing rack is movable to a position with respect to the blocking wall, wherein at least one receptacle is exposed beyond the blocking wall margin in a card-presenting position from which every playing card in each exposed receptacle can be slid simultaneously partially out of the dealing rack by the card presentation pusher.

6. The card shuffler of claim 5, in combination with a game table, wherein the shuffler is mounted in a partially recessed position in a top of the game table and the blocking wall margin is located at a predetermined height above the game table top.

7. The shuffler of claim 1, wherein the deck-crib comprises a card block wall and a card transfer slot proximate a bottom of the card block wall having a gap height greater than a thickness of a single playing card and less than twice the thickness of the single playing card.

8. The card shuffler of claim 1, further including a controller operably connected to the first motor, wherein the controller includes a random number generator arranged to randomly select an empty receptacle, and is programmed to cause the first motor to move one of the dealing rack and the deck-crib to align the randomly selected empty receptacle with the card mover and cause the primary card-contacting drive member and the auxiliary card pusher to move the single playing card from the deck-crib substantially into the randomly selected empty receptacle.

9. The card shuffler of claim 1, further including a card shield located alongside the dealing rack and arranged to move automatically to and remain in a first, extended position during a shuffling operation and to move to a second, retracted position thereafter.

10. The card shuffler of claim 1, wherein the dealing rack includes shelves defining the receptacles between adjacent shelves, each of the shelves defining a notch along a margin thereof, the notches jointly defining a presentation pusher receptacle in a side of the dealing rack facing toward the deck-crib.

11. A card shuffler comprising:

a deck-crib configured to contain physical playing cards arranged in a stack;

a receiving rack defining mutually adjacent receptacles, each receptacle sized to receive only a single card, the receiving rack located adjacent to the deck-crib, one of the deck-crib and the receiving rack being movable in a straight line parallel with and along the other one of the deck-crib and the receiving rack;

a card mover associated with the deck-crib and selectively operable to move ones of the playing cards from the deck-crib to selected ones of the receptacles;

a card presentation pusher located in operative proximity to the receiving rack;

a motor operably coupled to move the card presentation pusher reciprocably between retracted and extended positions relative to the receiving rack; and

a controller programmed to activate the motor to move the card presentation pusher to an extended position to contact and move at least one playing card in the receiving rack partially out of the receiving rack to enable the at least one playing card to be removed manually from the receiving rack.

12. The card shuffler of claim 11, wherein the card presentation pusher is movable to make the at least one playing card in the receiving rack enabled to be removed manually at a side of the receiving rack opposite the card mover.

13. The card shuffler of claim 11, wherein the controller is programmed, upon receipt of an input signal, to cause the receiving rack to move a selected distance to place a predetermined number of receptacles of the receiving rack into a card-presenting position in which any cards in the predetermined number of receptacles can be moved by the card presentation pusher to be made available to be manually removed simultaneously from the receiving rack.

14. A method of distributing playing cards comprising:

receiving playing cards in respective receptacles of a dealing rack, each receptacle sized to receive only a single card, the dealing rack including mutually parallel receptacles adjacent one another in a fixed array;

placing the dealing rack into a first position adjacent a blocking wall alongside a card removal side of the dealing rack;

in response to a predetermined condition, moving one of the dealing rack and the blocking wall relative to the other a distance determined by a controller to expose a selected number of receptacles beyond a margin of the blocking wall and create an open path for removal of playing cards from the exposed receptacles;

pushing the playing cards of the exposed single-card receptacles with a card presentation pusher to extend the playing cards of the exposed single-card receptacles from the exposed receptacles partially beyond the blocking wall to enable manual removal of the extended playing cards from the exposed receptacles as a group;

communicating electrically to the controller to expose additional receptacles beyond the margin by moving the one of the dealing rack and the blocking wall a farther distance relative to the other to expose another selected number of additional receptacles beyond the margin; and

pushing the playing cards of the exposed additional receptacles with the card presentation pusher to extend from the exposed receptacles partially beyond the blocking wall.

15. The method of claim 14, further including sensing that at least one receptacle exposed beyond the margin has been emptied of an extended playing card.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the sensing is performed with respect to an exposed receptacle closest to the margin.

17. The method of claim 14, further including sensing that a predetermined time has passed since a group of playing cards has been removed from the dealing rack, and in response thereto causing one of the dealing rack and the blocking wall to move relative to the other to expose all remaining receptacles beyond the margin.

18. The method of claim 14, further including determining that a predetermined number of cards have been removed from the dealing rack and in response thereto causing one of the dealing rack and the blocking wall to move relative to the other to expose all remaining receptacles beyond the margin.

19. The method of claim 14, further including keeping the dealing rack and the blocking wall in relative positions to retain playing cards in receptacles not exposed beyond the margin.

20. The method of claim 14, wherein placing playing cards into respective receptacles of a dealing rack comprises randomly placing playing cards into the receptacles.