CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A card handling device, comprising:

a card shuffling apparatus for shuffling playing cards; and

a card output portion comprising a card buffer area positioned at an interface of the card shuffling apparatus and the card output portion, the card handling device configured to deliver cards from the card buffer area to a card output area of the card handling device, the card output portion being configured to move relative to the card shuffling apparatus in order to alter an orientation of the card buffer area relative to the card shuffling apparatus.

2. The card handling device of claim 1, wherein the card handling device is configured to position the card output portion in a first orientation relative to the card shuffling apparatus such that the card shuffling apparatus is configured to insert the playing cards into the card buffer area at a top of a group of cards in the card buffer area, and to position the card output portion in a second orientation relative to the card shuffling apparatus such that the card shuffling apparatus is configured to insert the playing cards into the card buffer area at a bottom of the group of cards in the card buffer area.

3. The card handling device of claim 2, further comprising an actuation system attached to the card output portion and a frame structure of the card handling device, the actuation system configured to move the card output portion between the first orientation and the second orientation.

4. The card handling device of claim 3, wherein the actuation system comprises an electronic spindle.

5. The card handling device of claim 1, further comprising:

a card input portion having a card intake area configured to be positioned above a table surface of a table for receiving playing cards to be shuffled and delivering the playing cards to be shuffled to the card shuffling apparatus; and

a substantially flat card output area configured to be positioned above the table surface of the table for receiving cards from the card buffer area of the card output portion, wherein the card intake area of the card input portion and the substantially flat card output area

are both positioned proximate one side of the card shuffling apparatus of the card handling device.

6. The card handling device of any one of claims 1 through 5, wherein the card buffer area comprises:

a support plate having an upper surface for supporting a group of playing cards;

a pick-off roller oriented above the plate; and

a bias attached to the plate and configured to urge the plate toward the pick-off roller, wherein the card buffer area is configured to hold the group of playing cards between the plate and the pick-off roller.

7. The card handling device of claim 6, wherein the plate of the card buffer area is translatable at least partially in a vertical direction relative to the pick-off roller of the card buffer area.

8. The card handling device of any one of claims 1 through 5, further comprising a card input portion comprising:

a first card feed system for transporting playing cards from a card intake area to the card shuffling apparatus, the first card feed system defining a first card pathway; and

a first imaging system oriented along the first card pathway of the first card feed system and for reading playing cards being transported along the first card pathway of the first card feed system.

9. The card handling device of any one of claims 1 through 5, wherein the card output portion further comprises:

a second card feed system for transporting playing cards from the card buffer area to a substantially flat card output area of the card handling device, the second card feed system defining a second card pathway; and

a second imaging system oriented along the second card pathway of the second card feed system and for reading playing cards being transported along the second card pathway of the second card feed system.

selectively receive playing cards at both a top and a bottom of the group of playing cards in the card buffer area.

20. The card handling device of claim 18 or claim 19, wherein the card buffer area is positioned within the card handling device at a location proximal from the card output area.

21. A method of shuffling cards, comprising:

inputting playing cards into a card input portion of a card handling device;

transporting the playing cards from the card input portion into a card shuffling apparatus;

outputting at least one playing card from the card shuffling apparatus into a card buffer area;

altering an orientation of the card buffer area relative to the card shuffling apparatus;

outputting at least another playing card from the card shuffling apparatus into the card buffer area while the card buffer area is in an altered orientation to alter a sequence of playing cards in the card buffer area; and

transporting at least one of the playing cards from the card buffer area to a card output area.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising outputting the at least another playing card from the card shuffling apparatus into the card buffer area at a first position on top of a group of playing cards in the card buffer area while the card buffer area is in an altered orientation.

23. The method of claim 21 or claim 22, further comprising outputting at least one playing card from the card shuffling apparatus into the card buffer area at a second position beneath the group of playing cards in the card buffer area.

24. A method of shuffling cards, comprising:

removing playing cards from a card shuffling apparatus for shuffling playing cards of a card handling device;

forming a group of playing cards with the playing cards in a card buffer area of the card handling device;

adding at least one playing card to the bottom of the group of playing cards;

adding at least one playing card to the top of the group of playing cards;

and

transporting at least one playing card of the group of playing cards from the card buffer area to a card output area.

25. The method of shuffling cards of claim 24, wherein adding at least one playing card to the bottom of the group of playing cards and adding at least one playing card to the top of the group of playing cards comprises adding the at least one playing card to the bottom of the group of playing cards and then adding the at least one playing card to the top of the group of playing cards.

26. The method of shuffling cards of claim 25, further comprising changing an orientation of the card buffer area of the card handling device after adding the at least one playing card to the bottom of the group of playing cards and prior to adding the at least one playing card to the top of the group of playing cards.

27. The method of shuffling cards of claim 26, wherein changing an orientation of the card buffer area comprises rotating the orientation of the card buffer area from a first orientation to a second orientation.

28. The method of shuffling card of claim 27, further comprising adding the at least one playing card to the top of the group of playing cards while the card buffer area is in the second orientation.

29. The method of shuffling cards of claim 27, further comprising delivering the at least one playing card that was added to the top of the group of playing cards, to the card output area prior to removing any of the other playing cards in the group of playing cards in the card buffer area from in the card buffer area.

30. A method of shuffling cards, comprising:
moving playing cards into a card buffer area of a card handling device in a first direction; and
moving cards out of the card buffer area in a second direction, wherein the second direction defines an obtuse angle with the first direction.

31. The method of shuffling cards of claim 30, wherein moving the playing cards in first direction comprises moving the playing cards in a declining direction relative to a surface on which at least a portion of the card handling device is positioned and

wherein moving the playing cards in the second direction comprises moving the playing cards in an inclining direction relative to the surface on which the at least a portion of the card handling device is positioned.

32. A card handling device for a gaming table comprising:

a housing for mounting to a gaming table, the housing comprising a card intake area to receive cards to be shuffled and a card output area for a dealer to take cards from the card handling device for dealing a game of cards at the table, the card intake area and card output area disposed to be arranged at the top of the gaming table when the housing is mounted to a table;

a card shuffling apparatus to receive cards from the card intake;

a card buffer area to receive and hold a group of cards from the shuffling apparatus;

a card output portion to transport cards, one at a time, from the card buffer area to the card output area;

an apparatus configured to alter an orientation of the card buffer area to receive cards at either the top or bottom of the group of cards from the shuffling apparatus to alter the arrangement of cards in the group;

a sensor to provide a signal in response to removal of a card from the card output area by a dealer; and

a processor to receive the signal from the sensor and in response thereto control the card output portion to transport another card from the card buffer area to the card output area, the processor configured to control the card shuffling apparatus to re-supply cards to the buffer area to maintain the group of cards therein for supply to the card output area,

wherein cards are continuously supplied from the card buffer area to the card output area.

33. The device of claim 32, the card output area comprising a flat draw surface and a cover defining a planar spacing there between for an outlet to permit cards to be pulled from the outlet in a plurality of different directions substantially within the plane of the outlet without first being drawn from the outlet.