

THE LIBRARY

The Mechanics' Institute Library was established in 1854 to promote the technical and scientific arts. In January 1906, the largely technical collection of the Library was combined with the humanities collection of the San Francisco Mercantile Library. Although substantial portions of both collections burned a few months later in the fire following the 1906 earthquake, the Mechanics' Institute Library today houses an excellent current and retrospective collection, consisting of 160,000 books, periodicals and audiovisual materials on subjects ranging from art, music, history, biography, and philosophy, to the pure and applied sciences and the social sciences. A generous annual materials budget allows for the addition of approximately 3,500 items per year, a substantial portion of which is purchased in response to members' requests. Special collections focusing on California history, business, finance and investment, fiction and literature, travel and chess are arranged in open stacks in the Library's gracious neo-classical reading rooms.

Library services include professional reference and research assistance, interlibrary loan, online reserves and renewals, and remote access to the Library's online catalog and periodical databases. The Library offers members free access to the Internet from ten public computers and wireless access to connect personal laptops to the Library's network. Workshops highlighting the Library's resources, classes on searching the Internet and book discussion groups are regular features of the educational program.

THE CHESS ROOM

The Mechanics' Institute houses the oldest chess club in the United States. The Chess Room, located on the fourth floor, offers a variety of activities for players of all abilities. These include tournaments, lectures, lessons and casual play. The strength of members ranges from beginner to Grandmaster.

The backbone of the Club's tournament program is its Tuesday Night Marathon, running continuously since 1975. Approximately 70 to 80 players meet on eight consecutive Tuesday nights in a non-elimination competition. Many participants come early to

attend the pre-competition lecture given by the Grandmaster-in-Residence. Weekly lectures are also scheduled on Wednesday evenings.

Once a month, a Game-in-45-Minutes tournament is played over five rounds. This event, which typically attracts 40 to 60 players, provides an opportunity to play a great deal of chess in one day. Several times a year, the Club hosts multi-day events including its traditional Carroll Capps and Arthur Stamer Memorials. From time to time, various invitational events are held as well. In recent years, the MI Chess Club has held more Grandmaster events than any other club in the country.

The Chess Club also offers a range of programs for children. These programs include Saturday morning classes, monthly scholastic tournaments and a summer chess camp featuring some of the top instructors on the West Coast.

EVENTS

The Events Program at the Mechanics' Institute presents over 50 author events, lectures and special programs annually, hosting local, national, and international writers and guests. Programs include authors with new fiction and non-fiction releases from major publishing houses and small and independent presses. Open to members and the public, these programs offer provocative, timely, and engaging literary events on a variety of topics.

The CinemaLit Film Series, created to highlight the Library's film collection of more than 2,500 videocassettes and DVDs, features weekly Friday night films on a new theme each month. Programs begin with an introduction of the movie genre and themes by well-known local film critics and writers and conclude with a salon discussion involving the audience. The Mechanics' Institute's charming meeting room/members' lounge, which seats up to 80 people, provides an intimate, informal atmosphere for film viewing and lively conversation.

Members and the public may also participate in various salons and poetry groups which are facilitated by members.

