



MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

57 POST STREET • SAN FRANCISCO

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2014

RALPH LEWIN: OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Executive Director Jim Flack retired in August after fifteen years with MI. Ably steering the Institute into the twenty-first century, we now salute him and hope he enjoys the next phase in life.

Meanwhile, we are pleased to welcome Ralph Lewin as the Mechanics' Institute's new Executive Director. Mr. Lewin assumed his new duties in September. He comes to us after serving six years as President and CEO of Cal Humanities, where he was a fierce advocate for the support of the humanities in California and nationwide. Mr. Lewin serves on the boards of the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the University of California Humanities Research Institute and is on the editorial board of the magazine *BOOM: A Journal of California*. He was born in San Francisco, raised in San Diego, and now lives locally with his wife, Caitlin Mohan, and sons Sam and Leo.

"I am honored and thrilled to be entrusted with the leadership of the Mechanics' Institute," Mr. Lewin said. "I look forward to working with the board, staff, members and supporters to create an exciting new chapter in the Mechanics' Institute's development. I firmly believe that the work of the Mechanics' Institute always has been and will be essential to the DNA of the Bay Area. The excellent library, vibrant lectures and conversations, and the world renowned chess club are something that each person in the Bay Area should know about and support."

Ralph already seems to have fallen in love with the Mechanics' Institute - its history, its spirit, and the collective charm of its members. He has a warm personality and a ready smile. If you see him feel free to introduce yourself!

—Taryn Edwards

Member Relations and Marketing Specialist

LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION AND NEW SERVICES

I am well into my second year as Library Director and love coming to the Mechanics' Institute each day, interacting with you, our members, and working with our dedicated and hard working staff. We are committed to providing great library resources, research support, programming and instructional classes for you.

Thanks to a generous bequest by Garfield McNamara, we are taking inventory of our Mechanics' archives to preserve and make them available, either in their original print format or digitally if they are too delicate to handle. This is an ongoing project - stay tuned for more information.

You may have noticed construction on the 2nd floor and painting in the 3rd floor alcove that houses our magazines. As part of the archives project, we are installing a new archival quality display cabinet on the 2nd floor where the DVDs have been shelved. (The DVDs will shift over to the opposite wall.) This new cabinet will enable us to display our archival materials, special collections and other items on a rotating basis. The centerpiece of this cabinet display area will be our 1854 *Bridgens Map of the City of San Francisco*, that now hangs outside my

office. We plan to have our first exhibit in early 2015.

The newly repainted 3rd floor East wall will be the backdrop for Andrew Smith Hallidie's portrait that for years hung above the DVDs on the 2nd floor. He was a dedicated and long running president of the Institute, as well as being the father of San Francisco's cable car. We hope he enjoys his new vista over the 3rd floor reading room and that you enjoy his recently restored portrait and frame.



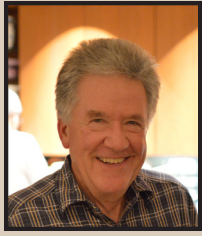
Members and library staff have been disappointed at the selection of eBooks that OverDrive offered us. Effective November 1, we have subscribed to Baker & Taylor's Axis 360 eBook library and will have access to over 700,000 titles, including bestsellers and popular fiction and nonfiction titles.

2015 marks the Centennial of the Pan Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) and we are one of the major partners in this citywide celebration. We will be hosting many PPIE events in 2015. Watch for programming information starting in December.

In July, we had our first evening tour and it was a resounding success with 56 guests. Now in addition to our weekly Wednesday noon tours, we are holding quarterly evening tours. Please come

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

GRATITUDE FOR JIM FLACK



*"Steady. Dedicated.
Honest. Fair. Trusted.
Supportive."*

These are the words that come to mind when staff think of Jim Flack's leadership. Jim has been a member of the Mechanics' Institute for more than 40 years and served as Executive Director for the past fifteen years. As ED, he led the Mechanics' Institute with distinction, ensuring its place as a cultural center of San Francisco, and a leading resource for residents of the City to books, chess, and provocative speakers.

One staff member said that Jim's vision and leadership made it a "lot more fun to be here." Not only did he manage and direct the Institute into financial stability, but he encouraged efforts to provide more programmatic offerings to the membership.

Although Jim has retired as Executive Director, we are pleased that he will continue to be an active member of Mechanics'.

A HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

The success of our programs largely depends on our volunteers.

Thank you for helping us create a rewarding community.

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AUTHORS AND CONVERSATIONS

We opened the Fall 2014 season with award-winning journalist Lawrence Wright, for his new book, *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David*, which described the historic process and significance of the 1978 Camp David Accord, highlighting the fissions and compromises made by Israeli President Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Awar Sadat, brokered by President Jimmy Carter and advisors.

October had a whirlwind of author events starting off with John Lahr's compelling biography, *Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh*, which detailed William's childhood and how his family members influenced the formation of his plays and characters. He was known to have said, "I have a theater inside me".



Author John Lahr

Our Litquake Panel: *Does literature make you an empath?*, moderated by Ransom Stephens, investigated how and why reading literature and other genre invokes empathy and informs behavior. Dan Jones, author of *Wars of the Roses*, gave a dynamic talk about 15th century English history and the fight for power between the houses of Lancaster and York.

Finally, writer Elizabeth Rosner

interviewed author Martin Amis, about his new book, *The Zone of Interest*, a powerful and disturbing novel about the everyday life of the creators and enablers of the Holocaust.

In 2015, author events will include writer Vikram Chandra for his distinctive view of aesthetics and high tech in *Geek Sublime: The Beauty of Code, The Code of Beauty*; a Mid-Winter Noir/Mystery Night with ladies of the night, authors Cara Black, author of the *Murder on the Champ de Mars* (Aimee Leduc series) set in Paris, and Katie Gilmartin, *Black Mail, My Love*, set in San Francisco's North Beach. We will also host a lecture by Northern California Book Award/Fred Cody Award winning author Adam Hochschild, author of *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*, on the cultural effects of WWI in collaboration with Humanities West for their upcoming symposium.

Starting in January, MI will launch a six-month lecture series as part of the city-wide Centennial Celebration of the PPIE (1915-2015). One highlight will be a program on Thursday, March 12 with historian Laura A. Ackley for her stunning new book *San Francisco's Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915*.

Under consideration for our Winter CinemaLit Film Series are feature films inspired by the legacy of Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty, the writing of Raymond Chandler, the filmography of actor Nick Nolte, and a look back at Hollywood's Golden Age. Watch for upcoming books to tie in with all these great themes!

We look forward to your attendance and participation at our events!

—Laura Sheppard
Director of Events



Author Martin Amis signing books

YOUTH OUTREACH CHESS PROGRAM



Middle School winners (Jade Greer at left)

This September began the third year of our Youth Outreach Chess Program, which teaches free chess classes in twenty San Francisco schools. Bringing chess to the schools helps the children learn critical thinking and problem solving skills, and so we revert to the educational origins of the Mechanics' Institute. The classes are popular with the children, parents and teachers and we often have difficulty meeting demand within our budget constraints. The fall chess class at Yick Wo Elementary had 56 children

enrolled, which had the principal and chess staff scrambling to include them all.

We will again hold the San Francisco Scholastic Chess Championship at the County Fair Building. The inaugural event, held last March, was sponsored by Robert W. Baird & Co. due to the efforts of MI Trustee Vince McCambridge. Three hundred kids from around the city came to compete and have fun. We were pleased to see MI library regular Jade Greer take third place in the Middle School division of the tournament (beating out the boys). You will often see her in the building with her mother Diana at various MI classes/events.

— Nick de Firmian
Grandmaster-in-Residence

DANIEL NARODITSKY - GRANDMASTER AT AGE 17

The past year has been a successful one for the Mechanics' Institute Chess Club. The Winter Tuesday Night Marathon set an all-time attendance record with 100 participants and the Mechanics' team in the U.S. Chess League once again made the playoffs, but the real news was the emergence of Sam Shankland and Daniel Naroditsky as two of the best players in the United States.

Sam and Daniel both started playing in Mechanics' events when they had not yet reached their teens and steadily made their way up through the ranks playing in events like the Tuesday Night Marathon, representing MI in the U.S. Chess League, attending camps and lectures and checking out all the chess books in the library.

Daniel, who lives in Foster City, confirmed his great potential when he won the World Under 12 Championship in 2007 and Sam followed suit the next year tying for first in the World Under 18. More recently, Sam made his debut at the U.S. Chess Olympiad this summer in Tromsø, Norway, where he made the best score of any reserve player in the competition which attracted 177

countries. Daniel, who tied with Sam for fourth in the U.S. Championship this past April, has improved his rating in every event he has played the past year and is now ranked seventh in the United States, one place behind Sam.

The Mechanics' Chess Club is proud to be associated with Sam and Daniel who are perfect examples of its philosophy of encouraging and supporting the pursuit of excellence in the Royal Game.

— John Donaldson
Chess Director



Sam Shankland and Daniel Naroditsky
Photo provided by the Chess Club and
Scholastic Center of St. Louis.



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A MESSAGE FROM RALPH LEWIN



Dear Friend of the Institute,

The first time I walked into the Mechanics' Institute I fell in love. You may know this feeling – finding a home in the Mechanics' Institute, in the conversations, the quiet, the books, the chess room. Mechanics' is a place with a deep respect for the life of the mind and the democratic belief that people of all backgrounds can create a better life through learning. In today's society, such places can be hard to find and are worth our support.

Sometimes it's difficult to ask for a gift, but this isn't difficult. I'm asking you to give to something you care about – your Mechanics' Institute. Your generosity allows us to purchase the books that spark the imagination, to introduce children to the playful and sometimes profound world of chess, and to bring together people for conversations of depth and beauty.

We at Mechanics' are truly touched and honored by your generosity. You, and those who have come before, have allowed Mechanics' to thrive for 160 years – an amazing run. Please deepen your contribution this year with a gift that will celebrate all that Mechanics' stands for and ensures that it will be here for future generations.

With gratitude,

Ralph Lewin
Executive Director

p.s. Please make a gift today online at www.milibrary.org (click the donate button) or call (415) 393-0105.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL HOLIDAY GATHERING

Thursday, December 11

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm • 2nd floor Library

Join members and friends for holiday cheer and lively conversation while relaxing to musical interludes. Enjoy gourmet cheeses and hors d'oeuvres, delectable desserts and tempting libations!

Admission \$10. Open to Members & Guests.

ADVANCE RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Call 415.393.0100 or online at www.milibrary.org/events



Scene from the 2012 Holiday Gathering.
This event always sells out, get your tickets early!

HOLIDAY BOOK SALE

Wednesday, December 3

11:00 am - 4:00 pm

4th floor Meeting Room & Café

Last minute holiday shoppers—come and select the perfect gifts for friends, family, colleagues or significant others! A delightful and diverse selection of hard-covers, paperbacks, book art, posters, and MORE will be available for purchase. Café open for refreshments. **Free to All.**

MEMBERS' MEETING

Thursday, December 4

4th floor Meeting Room & Café

5:30 pm Reception and Refreshments

6:00 pm Meeting

Join us for our bi-annual Members' Meeting!

Meet our new Executive Director Ralph Lewin and celebrate the Institute's 160th year with a special lecture on MI's founding and first five years by Librarian Taryn Edwards.

Members and Guests Free.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY: NET ASSETS INCREASE

From the summary financial statement below, you can see that the Net Assets, made up primarily of the investment portfolio, increased more than \$1 million dollars during the fiscal year ending August 31, 2014. We started the year with Net Assets of \$16.8 million and ended the year with \$17.8 million. The most significant difference between 2013 and 2014 was an improvement in the value of our endowment's investment portfolio.

Each year we have an operating shortfall that is covered by the endowment. By policy, we budget this support at 5% of the investment portfolio, which resulted in \$625,000 of support for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2014. Due primarily to rental vacancies in the ground floor of the building, we ran an additional, and unusually large, operating deficit of \$248,000. The Mechanics' Institute is grateful for your excellent efforts to offset the impact of the vacancies with your generous donations.

— *Ralph Lewin*
Executive Director

Mechanics' Institute Summary Financial Data For the Years Ended August 31, 2014 and 2013 Summary Statements of Changes in Net Assets

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Revenues and Support		
Member dues	\$264,708	258,089
Library, Events & Chess Room	99,059	102,633
Rental income	772,835	1,105,388
Bequests and donations	493,683	1,397,082
Dividend and interest income	16,970	14,279
Net realized gains from sales of investments	341,245	2,455,176
Increase (decrease) in fair value of investments	1,822,428	(1,006,322)
Other income	1,528	118,128
Total Revenues and Support	3,812,456	4,434,443
Expenses		
Library, Events & Chess Room	1,463,636	1,444,526
Building	705,717	715,022
Management and general	582,749	550,247
Other expenses	15,938	11,257
Total Expenses	2,768,040	2,721,052
Changes in Net Assets	\$1,044,416	1,713,391

Summary Statements of Financial Position August 31, 2014 and 2013

Assets		
Cash, accounts receivable and prepaid expenses	\$1,568,314	1,816,445
Investments at fair value	15,648,338	14,613,652
Building and equipment at cost	929,637	688,541
Total Assets	18,146,289	17,118,638
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$239,187	279,300
Tenant deposits	68,730	45,382
Total Liabilities	307,917	324,682
Net Assets	17,838,372	16,793,956
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$18,146,289	17,118,638

Please contact the Executive Director for a complete set of financial statements.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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