



## PPIE and the Movers and Shakers of the Mechanics' Institute

Lecture with author Lee Bruno and Librarians Diane Lai and Taryn Edwards



**Thursday, August 6 | 6pm**

4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

In 1857, when San Francisco was a large, rugged boom town of over 50,000 people, the Mechanics' Institute embarked on a near annual tradition that carried forward until the turn of the century. During that time, it hosted 31 Industrial Expositions, which displayed and promoted the products of local entrepreneurs and inventors and set the stage for San Francisco's first World's Fair. These Expositions bolstered California's infant economy and whetted the growing middle class' appetite for elaborate, multi-attraction fairs. The Mechanics' Institute's gained tremendous experience with orchestrating these marvelous gatherings over the years, which eventually led to several of its members and trustees becoming directly involved with the planning of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition.

Join us as we introduce these individuals who served on the Executive Committee and dreamed of an event that would benefit the "greater good" of the City and place San Francisco alongside the world's great cities of London, Paris and New York.

**Reservations Required | Free to all.**

More programs on page 2



## A Day (really Eight Years) in the Life of a Mechanics' Institute Librarian

BY TARYN EDWARDS

**Dear Members** of the Mechanics' Institute, It's been almost eight years since I accepted my position at MI. Some people ask why I've stayed so long. The short answer is: **the books.** But after some thought I have concluded that I love the high level of "public service" (i.e. "real life") I experience amongst the Mechanics' community. Some of the unforgettable moments include:

- Congratulating members on new babies, jobs, marriages, books, weight loss, and haircuts..
- Helping members apply for Social Security, unemployment benefits, new jobs, and graduate school..
- Making flyers for lost dogs, wallets, cars and even someone's brother. Yes, there was

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# Programs at the Mechanics'

Our programs bring you into conversation with Bay Area and world renowned writers and thinkers.



**Saturday, August 1 | 10am** MEET IN THE 4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

## **San Francisco Architecture Walking Tour with special emphasis on Willis Polk**

Take a tour of San Francisco's most famous downtown buildings with knowledgeable and friendly city historian **Rick Evans**! On the tour you'll learn about famous architects that influenced the re-building of San Francisco after the 1906 Earthquake and the impact they had during the **Panama-Pacific International Exposition**. Special emphasis will spotlight the work of Willis Polk who was one of the most influential architects and urban planners in the city.

### **Tour highlights include:**

- The world's first "glass curtain" building
- Hard-to-find rooftop gardens
- The "narrowest" building in the City - only 20 feet wide and 80 feet deep!
- Surprising information and stories that you'll never learn from a guidebook .

### **Tour Specifics**

Duration: 2 hours

Distance: 5 blocks in the Financial District (all flat surfaces with a few short staircases)

Meeting Location: Mechanics' Institute, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Meeting Room

End: South of Market, 1<sup>st</sup> and Mission Street

**Members & Public \$40 | Reservations required: [milibrary.org/events](http://milibrary.org/events). Have questions?**

**Contact Taryn Edwards, 415.393.0103**

**Monday, August 3 | 6-7pm** 3RD FLOOR LIBRARY

## **Mechanics' Institute Tour @ Night** Tour & Reception

The Mechanics' Institute of San Francisco was founded in 1854 with four books and a mission to start an organization to serve the education, information, and social needs of the city's mechanics, artisans, and industrialists. Within a few years the Institute was offering classes in such subjects as mechanical drawing, industrial design, electrical science, and applied mathematics; had started a chess club; and had acquired a magnificent library that slaked San Francisco's voracious appetite for technical and pleasurable reading material.

Today the Mechanics' Institute continues as a membership organization boasting a fantastic general-interest library, active cultural events calendar, and world renowned chess club. It is a favorite of avid readers, writers, downtown employees, students, film lovers, chess players, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century nomadic worker who is in search of a place for literary pursuits, thinking, research, and study.

If you are a new, long-time, or prospective member, the Tour of the Institute will orient you to our building, include an overview of our history and mission, and outline our current services and the benefits of membership. Tours typically take 45 to 60 minutes.

**A wine and cheese reception will follow the tour. Free.**





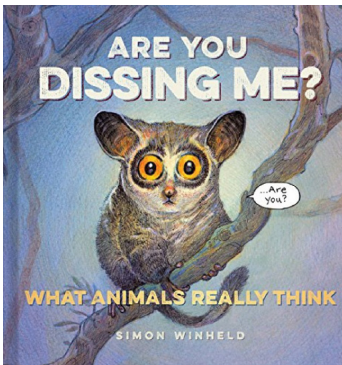
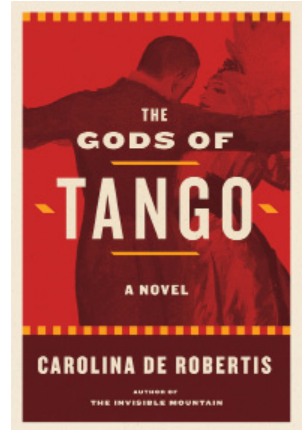
**Friday, August 14 | 6pm** 4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

**The Gods of Tango** Author Carolina De Robertis in conversation with writer Terence Clarke. Plus a tango performance and empanadas!

Set in 1913, *The Gods of Tango* tells the story of Leda, a young Italian girl who leaves her family behind for a new life (and arranged marriage) in Buenos Aires. But, she arrives to find that her "betrothed" has died. Instead of returning to her homeland, she stays in this unfamiliar city, living in a commune on the brink of destitution. She soon becomes seduced by the tango music that infuses the barrios, brothels and cabarets. She realizes for her survival she must pursue her passion to play the violin. But there's one problem—women can't play the violin, especially in public. So Leda disguises herself as a man, learns to play, and soon the line between illusion and reality begins to blur. In her new book, **Carolina De Robertis** offers a courageous and sensuous novel about identity, sexuality, and defiant self-discovery.

**Reservations required. Members Free | Public \$15**

Get started on De Robertis' earlier novel, *Perla* (Located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Fiction).



**Thursday, August 20 | 6pm & 7pm** OFF SITE EVENT

**Are You Dissing Me? What Animals Really Think** Presentation with Illustrator Simon Winheld

**Location: Cartoon Art Museum, 655 Mission Street, San Francisco**

Get a glimpse into the thoughts and concerns of our furry and feathered friends as the Cartoon Art Museum and the Mechanics' Institute co-present Simon Winheld's *Are You Dissing Me?: What Animals Really Think*. Through colorful illustrations, **Simon Winheld** brings insight into the dreams and anxieties of the critters around us: surprisingly, not so different from our own. An all-ages author talk regarding the book will be held at 6pm, with a PG-13 talk following at 7pm. Visitors will also have the chance to chat with Simon, as well as color and give voice to their own animal-selves, and morph into them in our photo-op! This event is free and open to the public. **For more information, visit [thirdthursdaysf.wordpress.com](http://thirdthursdaysf.wordpress.com)**  
**Third Thursday Art Walk | Free to all.**

Need a laugh before the event? Try these other books on the animal psyche! *My dog : the paradox* and *Simon's cat : beyond the fence* (Located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 741.5 I57m and 741.5 T644s Comics).

**Monday, August 24 | 6pm** 4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

**The Art & Architecture of the New Deal in San Francisco** Lecture

In the depths of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised the American people a "New Deal." Over the decade 1933–43, a constellation of federally sponsored programs put millions of jobless Americans back to work and helped to revive a moribund economy. The result was a rich landscape of public works across the nation, often of outstanding beauty, utility and craftsmanship.

**The Living New Deal** is a UC Berkeley-based initiative dedicated to inventorying and mapping these works. It has created a guide to the Art and Architecture of the New Deal in San Francisco, a pocket map and guide to 18 spectacular New Deal sites in the city. Join us and geographer **Gray Brechin** as he discusses the impact of the New Deal on San Francisco and introduces the new map.

**Reservations Required. Members Free | Public \$15**



**THE LIVING NEW DEAL**  
Still Working for America

Before the program, check out the film *Bernard Zakheim's living art; WPA murals in San Francisco ; New Deal art* (Located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, DVD 751.73 B522).

September programs on page 4





**Friday, September 4 | 2–3pm** OFF SITE EVENT

**The California Genealogical Society** Tour

**Meet at the California Genealogical Society and Library, 2201 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94612 (a short walk from 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Oakland BART)**

Interested in researching your genealogy? Join Mechanics' Institute Librarian **Taryn Edwards** for a tour of the California Genealogical Society, one of the premier family history resources in Northern California. The Library is rich in genealogy reference materials, both standard and unique, covering people and places in California and the rest of the country. The Society offers research services, online one-of-a-kind genealogical indexes and databases, and a research library housing over 38,000 reference materials from California, the United States, and around the world.

**Reservations Required | Members Free**

Can't wait to dig into your family history? Come into the Library and try our newest database Ancestry.com Library Edition. Also keep your eye on next month's calendar. The California Genealogical Society will be hosting a Beginning Genealogy class.

**Wednesday, September 9 | 6pm** 2ND FLOOR LIBRARY

**A Tent City No More: a discussion of the 1854 map drawn by R.P. Bridgens** Lecture with

Jimmie Schein from *Schein and Schein Antique Maps and Prints*

Prior to the 1906 earthquake and fire the Mechanics' Institute acquired a large map drawn from the 1853 Survey of San Francisco by noted draftsman Richard P. Bridgens. This excessively rare map is among the earliest printed maps of the city of San Francisco and is notable for its grand dimensions and wonderful vignettes of the city's landmarks and architecture. The Institute's map has recently been relocated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Library. Come celebrate the map's relocation and learn about the early city, its businesses, and other maps from the era in this exciting lecture with local map purveyor and expert **Jimmie Schein**.

**Members Free | Public \$15**



See how others have mapped the city over time: *San Francisco in maps & views* and *Infinite city: a San Francisco atlas* (Location 2A, 912.7946 W88 and 912.7946 S688).



**Thursday, September 10 | 6pm** 4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

**The House of Twenty Thousand Books** Author Sasha Abramsky in conversation with writer David Biale

This is the story of Chimen Abramsky, an extraordinary polymath and bibliophile who amassed a vast collection of socialist literature and Jewish history. For more than fifty years Chimen and his wife, Miriam, hosted epic gatherings in their house of books that brought together many of the age's greatest thinkers.

Journalist **Sasha Abramsky** re-creates a lost world, bringing to life the people, the books, and the ideas that filled his grandparents' house, from salons that included Eric Hobsbawm and Isaiah Berlin to the books that populated every corner including *The Communist Manifesto* with Marx's handwritten notes, William Morris's manuscripts and woodcuts, an early sixteenth-century Bomberg Bible, and a first edition of Descartes's *Meditations*. *The House of Twenty Thousand Books* is a wondrous journey through our times, from the vanished worlds of Eastern Europe, through world wars, to the cacophonous politics of modernity.

**Reservations Required. Members Free | Public \$15**

Check out Abramsky's most recent book *The American Way of Poverty: How the Other Half Still Lives*, which was listed by *The New York Times* as among the one hundred notable books of 2013! (Located on 3A, 362.5 A161)

Call 415.393.0100 or visit [milibrary.org](http://milibrary.org) and click on the **Events** tab to see what's coming up next and to make reservations.

# Chess

INTERNATIONAL MASTER JOHN DONALDSON, DIRECTOR OF THE CHESS ROOM

## Remembering Alan Benson



**Alan Benson** of Berkeley, associated with the Mechanics' Institute for over half a century, died in Oakland on June 10<sup>th</sup>. He was 67 years old.

Alan grew up in San Leandro and learned to play chess in the early 1960s. He made steady progress and was soon rated one of the ten best junior players in the United States. He continued to advance in the rankings the next few years, receiving his National Master (over the board) and Correspondence Master titles in the early 1970s.

Although he stopped playing around 1976, Alan continued to be involved in the chess world, principally through organizing and directing. His tournaments at the Student Union at UC Berkeley in the 1970s and early 1980s had a deserved reputation for being meticulously organized, and many strong players participated in them, including future Grandmasters Yasser Seirawan, Larry Christiansen and Nick de Firmian.

A true chess lover, Alan was involved in all aspects of the game. Besides playing correspondence chess, competing over the board, directing and organizing, he was a problem composer and solver. Alan was also a noted collector who had a large chess library. He wrote well-received articles for the Northern California magazine *Chess Voice* and Walter Browne's *Blitz Chess*. The latter was on a blitz tournament held at the Mechanics' Institute in 1991 won by Alan's favorite player, Mikhail Tal.

A member of the Mechanics' Institute since the early 1960s, Alan played many Grandmasters in simultaneous exhibitions at the M.I. with the list including Bent Larsen, Miguel Najdorf and a young Bobby Fischer. The latter was in 1964 during Fischer's transcontinental tour around the United States.

The two crossed paths two years later during the second Piatigorsky tournament. Alan enjoyed telling friends how on the free day before the last round he set up in the lobby of the Miramar Hotel with the latest Soviet chess literature (*Shakmaty Bulletin*, *Shakmaty v SSR* and *Shakmaty Riga*) which promptly caught Bobby's eye. The two talked for a few minutes and realized they had friends in common (Ray Oster being one). Soon they were heading up to Fischer's room where they looked at recent games for several hours. This was definitely the highlight of Alan's life.



Alan Benson playing blindfold chess

## Chess (continued from page 5)

### Chess for Women

SUNDAYS, AUGUST 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

11AM – 1PM

TAUGHT BY EWELINA KRUBNIK

### Tournaments

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

10AM – 7PM

15<sup>th</sup> Annual Vladimir Paffnutieff Memorial  
G/45

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

10AM – 7PM

10<sup>th</sup> Bernardo Smith Memorial (under 2200)

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

10AM – 7PM

10<sup>th</sup> Bernardo Smith Memorial (under 2200)

### Tuesday Night Events

AUGUST 4, 11, 18, 25

5:15 PM - 6:15 PM

LECTURE BY JOHN DONALDSON

6:30 PM – 10:30 PM

Leighton Allen Tuesday Night Marathon

### Saturday Morning Chess Class for Kids

AUGUST 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

11AM – 1PM

TAUGHT BY INTERNATIONAL MASTER  
ELLIOTT WINSLOW

Information & reservations: 415.393.0110 or [chessclub.org](http://chessclub.org).

## A Day in the Life (continued from page 1)

a missing person who was apparently last seen in the Financial District.

- Holding the hand of a member while waiting for the ambulance.
- Crying with joy and hugging random members during the live broadcast of the Presidential election of 2008.
- Visiting sick members at home and writing letters of condolence when they've passed.

The thing I value most however, is the bigheartedness of MI's members. If I need a handyman, an editor, parenting guidance or cooking advice, I know who to ask. I've been given homemade cookies, sourdough starter, homegrown vegetables and even a tree. One memorable time, I was treated to a slice of pie and French fries at McDonald's from an elderly member who is no longer with us. I can't begin to count the hugs and smiles I've received, or most importantly the number of times I've met a true friend.

The past eight years have been nothing like what I thought my life as a "librarian" would be. That's why I'm still here. Thank you Mechanics' community – you make my day bright and my career full of fun. I wouldn't have it any other way.

—Taryn Edwards

### New Group for Mystery Writers

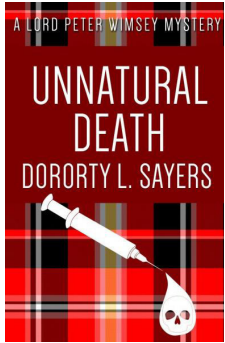
**Are you writing** a mystery novel? The Mechanics' Institute is hosting a new writers' working group centered on the production of mysteries. The purpose of this group is to give its members an audience for reading their work aloud. The group will meet weekly, from **6 pm to 8 pm on Wednesdays, beginning October 14, 2015**. Every member will read every week, and get responses from the other members. This format will allow writers with a completed manuscript of a crime novel, or a first draft already underway, to edit their manuscripts in less than a year. If interested, write to [RickHomanFiction@gmail.com](mailto:RickHomanFiction@gmail.com).





# Book Discussion Groups

Our members-only Book Groups select, read, and discuss books of a particular type or genre. Members lead the discussions and new members are always welcome. Please note that Book Groups are not author events and the authors will not be present during the discussions.



## First Wednesday Mystery Book Group

**Wednesday, August 5 | 6pm** 4TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM

**Unnatural Death: A Lord Peter Wimsey Mystery** BY DOROTHY SAYERS

Though never quick-witted, Agatha Dawson had an iron constitution and a will to fight that never abated in her old age. Even after three operations failed to rid her of her cancer, she refused to give in. But as her body began to weaken, she accused lawyers, nurses, and doctors of trying to kill her and snatch her fortune. The town physician, an expert in cancer, gives her six months to live. Three days later, she is dead.

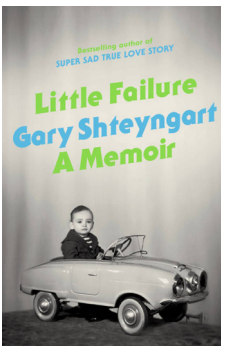
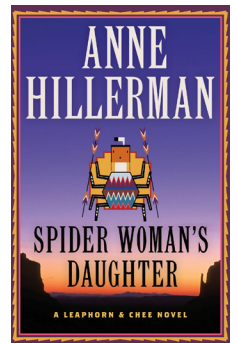
Though the autopsy reveals nothing surprising, the doctor suspects that Agatha's niece had some hand in the old woman's death. When Lord Peter Wimsey, the dashing gentleman detective, looks into the matter, he finds that death stalks all those who might testify. How can he continue his investigation when every question marks another innocent for murder? **Members Only. Walk-ins Welcome.**

## Brown Bag Mystery Readers

**Monday, August 10 | Noon** 4TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM

**Spider Woman's Daughter** BY ANNE HILLERMAN

Navajo Nation Police Officer Bernadette Manualito witnesses the cold-blooded shooting of someone very close to her. With the victim fighting for his life, the entire squad and the local FBI office are hell-bent on catching the gunman. Bernie, too, wants in on the investigation, despite regulations forbidding eyewitness involvement. But that doesn't mean she's going to sit idly by, especially when her husband, Sergeant Jim Chee, is in charge of finding the shooter. Bernie and Chee discover that a cold case involving his former boss and partner, retired Inspector Joe Leaphorn, may hold the key. Digging into the old investigation, husband and wife find themselves inching closer to the truth...and closer to a killer determined to prevent justice from taking its course. *(annotation courtesy of ipage.ingramcontent.com)* **Members Only. Walk-ins Welcome.**



## Good Reads Book Group

**Tuesday, August 18 | Noon** 4TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM

**Little Failure** BY GARY SHTEYNGART

*Little Failure* is the all too true story of an immigrant family betting its future on America, as told by a lifelong misfit who finally finds a place for himself in the world through books and words. In 1979, a little boy dragging a ginormous fur hat and an overcoat made from the skin of some Soviet woodland creature steps off the plane at New York's JFK International Airport and into his new American life. His troubles are just beginning. For the former Igor Shteyngart, coming to the United States from the Soviet Union is like stumbling off a monochromatic cliff and landing in a pool of Technicolor. *(annotation courtesy of ipage.ingramcontent.com)*

**Members Only. Walk-ins Welcome.**

**Information & registration:** Diane Lai at 415.393.0118, [dlai@milibrary.org](mailto:dlai@milibrary.org), or [milibrary.org/events/book-group-meetings](http://milibrary.org/events/book-group-meetings). A copy of each book is available at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Circulation desk. All Book Discussions are held in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Board Room.

# CinemaLit Musicals and Amusements

CURATED & HOSTED BY MICHAEL FOX

Fridays | Program 6pm (Cafe 5:30pm)



Friday, August 7 | 6pm

**Top Hat** (1935)

DIRECTED BY MARK SANDRICH

Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers

A star-crossed (and deliriously talented) couple falls in love from London to Venice, aided and abetted by Irving Berlin's songs. DANCING!



Friday, August 21 | 6pm

**The Illusionist** (2006)

DIRECTED BY NEIL BURGER

Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti

In this deeply satisfying sleight-of-hand, a magician in turn-of-the-century Vienna schemes to save an old flame from her all-powerful fiancée. MAGIC!

## September Preview: Movies and the Power of Ideas

CinemaLit greets fall with Movies and the Power of Ideas, saluting the controversial writers Susan Sontag (*Regarding Susan Sontag*), the Marquis de Sade (*Quills*) and Dorothy Parker (*Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*). Witty social critics and courageous public intellectuals, they moved the world through their words. **Watch our website for dates and details!**

Members Free | Public Suggested Donation \$10



## Chess at the Mechanics' Institute

Monday, August 11 | 5:15–6:15pm

4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Chess has been a fixture of the Mechanics' Institute for 160 years. Learn about the Chess Club's history, anecdotes about famous players and tournaments, and current achievements.

After the lecture stay and watch the Institute's Tuesday Night Marathon.

Reservations Required | Free to all.

Information & registration: 415.393.0101 or visit [milibrary.org/events](http://milibrary.org/events)



MECHANICS' INSTITUTE  
LIBRARY & CHESS ROOM

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Library Hours

Monday - Thursday: 9 am - 9 pm

Friday: 9 am - 6 pm

Saturday: 10 am - 5 pm

Sunday: 1 pm - 5 pm

Sarah Cruz, Editor