Dear Friends,

The Mechanics’ Institute was born in a time of great change - the Gold Rush was over and the future uncertain. The vision that has carried us through these 160 years is a deep respect for the imagination, and a belief that people of all backgrounds can create a better life through learning. This past year we’ve fully embraced that vision and have had beautiful results.

We’ve put into motion plans that will preserve one of our greatest assets, our building, for future generations. We are beautifying the front and will be making important structural repairs and improvements.

We have also made great strides by securing federal support to create an extremely fast internet connection which will break down barriers to information beyond our four walls.

The San Francisco Chronicle is calling the Mechanics’ Institute “a vibrant cultural oasis” because of the depth of and excitement surrounding our programs, and the partnerships we are creating.

Our achievements wouldn’t be possible without you, our members and generous donors. I am grateful to our Board of Trustees, wonderful staff, and each of you for your energy, optimism and support. You sustain us.

With all good wishes,
Departmental Updates

Reinvention in the Library: Celebrating History, Forging the Future

Thanks to generous bequests in memory of Garfield McNamara and Carl Christiansen, 2015 began with the unveiling of the Library’s beautiful new archival display cabinet on the 2nd floor. As a major partner in the centennial celebration of the 1915 Pan Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), we developed five exhibits showcasing PPIE ephemera from the MI archives, open to members and to the public. We also hosted six PPIE programs during the year, with discussions encompassing the Mechanics’ Institute’s role in the fair culture of San Francisco, as well as the city’s preparations, propaganda, and staging of the 1915 exposition.

Thanks to the McNamara bequest, we continue to preserve the Mechanics’ Institute archives and make them available either in original print format or digitally. Archivist Librarian Diane Lai and Chess Room Director John Donaldson collaborated to identify key chess photos from the archives, now mounted in the Chess Room.

In November 2016, the Library will host Reinvention – Thriving in the 21st Century, the 4th International Conference of Independent Libraries and Mechanics’ Institutes. This opportunity allows the Mechanics’ Institute to join with like-minded organizations, building on our history and charting our path into the future. Attendees will come from as far away as Australia. Brewster Kahle, digital librarian and founder of The Internet Archive, will be one of our keynote speakers.

I look forward to seeing you in the Library and at our programs!

Programming Highlights: Connecting Past and Present

The highlight of the season was a book release party celebrating Frances Dinkelspiel’s Tangled Vines: Greed, Murder, Obsession and an Arsonist in the Vineyards. In conversation with author Julia Flynn Siler, Frances discussed her investigation of three entwined stories: the dark side of the California wine industry’s history; the 2005 fire which destroyed 4.5 million bottles of wine; and her personal connection to this event.

This Georganne Conley Commemorative Program also served as a tribute to Frances’s mother, a Mechanics’ Institute Trustee. For this special occasion, a three-tiered California wine tasting and food pairing was enjoyed by a sold-out audience of members, friends, and the Dinkelspiel family.

This year, we also welcomed San Francisco actor, activist, and writer, Peter Coyote, who discussed his latest memoir, The Rainman’s Third Cure: An Irregular Education. Coyote provided intimate portraits of the mentors who shaped him—a violent, intimidating father; a bebop bass player; a Mafia consiglieri; and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gary Snyder, who introduced him to Zen practice. Through Zen, Coyote discovered another door offering answers and to his personal conflicts and a path to a life well lived.

In the coming year, Mechanics’ Institute will host more discussions and events celebrating the power of the arts, literature, and technology to transform the world. Check out our monthly calendar throughout the year and join us!

Laura Sheppard, Events Director

Deb Hunt, Library Director
Tuesday Night Marathons: A Chess Club
Fundamental

The centerpiece of the Mechanics’ Institute Chess Club’s activities is its Tuesday Night Marathon series. Dating back to the early 1970s, the TNM is held five times a year on eight consecutive Tuesday nights with a short break between events. It is the largest weekday tournament in the United States.

The Tuesday Night Marathon attracts a mini United Nations – with Russian, Tagalog, Armenian, Mongolian, French, Spanish, Arabic, Dutch and various Indian and Chinese languages routinely spoken.

The last Tuesday Night Marathon was won by International Master Elliott Winslow, who teaches a free class for all ages every Saturday at the Mechanics’ Institute from 11 am to 1 pm. His victory was well-received, as was the performance of 80-year-old Peter Grey, who tied for fourth in the event. Peter has played in the Tuesday Night Marathon since its inception, and in over 40 years he has played in more than 1600 rated games!

Come check out the action and consider joining a tournament or attending a class to learn the game!

John Donaldson,
Chess Room Director

Mechanics’ Institute Outreach: Youth Chess Program

Three years ago, the Mechanics’ Institute’s Youth Chess Outreach program began in a single school; today we serve twenty schools, and the number of children we teach has increased to five hundred students weekly. We are also thrilled to have created and hosted the San Francisco Scholastic Chess Championship, which is scheduled to take place again in March 2016.

National and international studies demonstrate a correlation between participation in chess classes and improved academic performance. Long observed by teachers and confirmed by research, children's critical thinking and problem solving skills are sharpened after training in chess; these benefits are now available to San Francisco’s students through our outreach programming.

We are able to serve the children of San Francisco, thanks to fantastic teachers who invite us into their classrooms, engaged students who diligently master the tenets of chess play, and, of course, you and your support for our program!

Nick de Firmian,
Grandmaster-in-Residence

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MEMBERS’ MEETING
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3  |  5:30 PM RECEPTION AND REFRESHMENTS  |  6:00 PM MEETING  |  4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM & CAFE

Join us for the bi-annual Members’ Meeting to socialize with fellow members, hear about the year at Mechanics’ Institute, and discuss what the future might bring.

Members and Guests Free
The James Lick Society...

Bequests are the simplest way to make a planned gift to the Mechanics’ Institute. We invite you to join the James Lick Legacy Society by including the Mechanics’ Institute in your estate plan.

Contact Executive Director Ralph Lewin at 415-393-0117 to learn how to become a member of the James Lick Legacy Society, helping ensure that the Mechanics’ Institute’s library, chess room, and special events continue to add to the cultural bounty of the Bay Area for future generations.

We invite you to peruse our website at http://www.milibrary.org/give, where you will find our free estate planning organizer.

Events and Programs
The Institute produced 50 library programs, 36 CinemaLit salons, and 36 author events in 2015.

Chess
The Chess Room hosted 24 tournaments, weekly blitz competitions, 40 lectures, and 110 classes in 2015. Its flagship event, the Tuesday Night Marathons, attracted more than 100 competitors at each competition throughout the year.

Community
Our member community has grown to 4,550 members. Throughout 2015, the library offered 7 writers’ groups and 6 book discussion groups each month, as well as nearly 100 instructional classes on technology and database offerings. Together, we far exceeded Institute goals in supporting the SF-Marin Food Bank this holiday season!

Service
Over the last twelve months, library staff has provided answers to over 17,000 reference, research and instructional queries from members.

What Members Say...
“The Mechanics’ Institute is a gift from the Gold Rush to today... It’s like belonging to a private club in downtown San Francisco, except it’s for everyone.”

–TJ Stiles, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Mechanics’ Institute member

Mechanics’ Institute is “...a place where I can bond with like minded individuals in an era that values conformity over originality.” Our members “...love the quiet energy that fills this glorious space; a joy to come into from the clang and clatter of the outside world.”

–Mechanics’ Institute Member Survey, 2014

Collection
The addition of Ancestry.com and JSTOR to the library’s databases has been well-received. 59,000 materials were checked out by members during the year.

Building Tours
Attendance of public tours has more than doubled since last year; 750 people have toured the Institute this year!

M.I. Volunteers
We extend our heartfelt thanks for helping Mechanics’ Institute build a community of engaged members.

Events Assistants
Michele Anderson
Paulette Arroesty
Robert Benson
Jo Falcon
Barbara Kadri
Judith Kahn
Helen Munch
Theodora Rossi
Eric Shanks
Steven Simon
Phyllis Spandorf
Mary-Ellen White-Vondran
Mitzi Wortman

Archives Intern
Kris Ashley

Chess Room Volunteers
Jules Jelinek
Renate Otterbach
Peter Sherwood
# Financial Highlights

The financial performance of the Mechanics’ Institute shows that we remain fiscally strong, benefiting from a healthy endowment and well-managed operating expenses. Net Assets, made up primarily of the investment portfolio, decreased during the fiscal year ending August 31, 2015, largely reflecting the market. We are glad that one of our two ground floor rental vacancies is now filled, which will assist with income in 2016. We are grateful to you for your generous donations, which make the Mechanics’ Institute an even stronger part of your life and the life of the San Francisco Bay Area.

## MECHANICS’ INSTITUTE

### Summary Financial Data

As of and for the Years Ended August 31, 2015 and 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary Statements of Financial Position</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash, accounts receivable, and prepaid expenses</td>
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<td>$1,568,314</td>
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<td>Investments at fair value</td>
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<td>Building and equipment, net</td>
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<td>929,637</td>
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<td>Total assets</td>
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<td>18,146,289</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liabilities and Net Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts payable and accrued expenses</td>
<td>279,666</td>
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<td>Tenants' deposits</td>
<td>85,019</td>
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<td>Total liabilities</td>
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<td>Net assets</td>
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<td>17,838,372</td>
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<td>Total liabilities and net assets</td>
<td>$16,659,642</td>
<td>$18,146,289</td>
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### Summary Statements of Changes in Net Assets

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Support and Revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rental income</td>
<td>$937,756</td>
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<td>Bequests and donations</td>
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<td>493,683</td>
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<td>Library, Events &amp; Chess Room</td>
<td>97,701</td>
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<td>Investment income (loss), net</td>
<td>(420,599)</td>
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<td>In-kind donation</td>
<td>63,634</td>
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<td>Other income</td>
<td>5,154</td>
<td>1,528</td>
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<td>Total support and revenue</td>
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<td>3,860,818</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library, Events and Chess Room</td>
<td>1,513,923</td>
<td>1,463,636</td>
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<td>Building</td>
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<td>Management and general</td>
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<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>2,899,589</td>
<td>2,816,402</td>
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<td>Changes in net assets</td>
<td>$(1,543,415)</td>
<td>$1,044,416</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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