



Mechanics' Institute

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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Executive Director's Message

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,



Mechanics' Institute Executive Director Ralph Lewin with Juan Felipe Herrera, United States Poet Laureate

"...a vibrant cultural oasis ...
where tradition and progress
meet."

-*San Francisco Chronicle*, October 7, 2015

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Departmental Updates

Reinvention in the Library: Celebrating History, Forging the Future

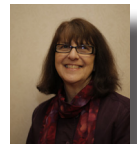


Thanks to generous bequests in memory of Garfield McNamara and Carl Christiansen, 2015 began with the unveiling of the Library's beautiful new archival display cabinet on the 2nd floor. As a major partner in the centennial celebration of the 1915 Pan Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), we developed 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!



Deb Hunt,
Library Director

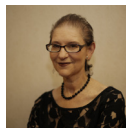
Programming Highlights: Connecting Past and Present

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 consigliere; 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



Frances Dinkelspiel



Peter Coyote

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 11am to 1pm. 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



MEMBERS' MEETING

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

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



Peter Grey (L), Uyanga Byambaa (R), Natalia Tsodikova (foreground)



Chess Camp, 2015

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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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-Marine 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.



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.

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Michele Anderson
Paulette Aroesty
Robert Benson
Jo Falcon
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Helen Munch
Theodora Rossi
Eric Shanks
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Phyllis Spandorf
Mary-Ellen White-Vondran
Mitzi Wortman

Archives Intern

Kris Ashley

Chess Room Volunteers

Jules Jelinek
Renate Otterbach
Peter Sherwood

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

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

	2015	2014
Summary Statements of Financial Position		
Assets		
Cash, accounts receivable, and prepaid expenses	\$1,575,593	\$1,568,314
Investments at fair value	13,813,397	15,648,338
Building and equipment, net	1,270,652	929,637
Total assets	16,659,642	18,146,289
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	279,666	239,187
Tenants' deposits	85,019	68,730
Total liabilities	364,685	307,917
Net assets	16,294,957	17,838,372
Total liabilities and net assets	\$16,659,642	\$18,146,289
Summary Statements of Changes in Net Assets		
Support and Revenue		
Rental income	\$937,756	\$772,835
Bequests and donations	385,899	493,683
Library, Events & Chess Room	97,701	99,059
Investment income (loss), net	(420,599)	2,164,705
In-kind donation	63,634	64,300
Other income	5,154	1,528
Total support and revenue	1,356,174	3,860,818
Expenses		
Library, Events and Chess Room	1,513,923	1,463,636
Building	704,030	705,717
Management and general	681,636	647,049
Total expenses	2,899,589	2,816,402
Changes in net assets	\$(1,543,415)	\$1,044,416

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