



# Mechanics' Institute

## Annual Report 2019

Dear Friends:

The Mechanics' Institute has shined a beacon on education and culture in San Francisco since our founding in 1854. As a member and supporter of the Institute, you are familiar with – and benefit from – our regular author events, our book clubs and writers' groups, our classes, our well-stocked library, and our chess programming.

This past year, we've expanded in significant ways. Youth outreach now offers chess instruction and after-school classes to 35 schools (up from 21 in 2018), helping children grow academically and in their social-emotional intelligence. Online streaming of chess events allows Mechanics' Institute chess to reach viewers around the world. In addition to renowned authors such as Joyce Carol Oates, who visited Mechanics' Institute in 2019, we featured up-and-coming writers from the Bay Area and offered roundtable literary and cultural discussions. Updates to software and IT have improved services for members and the public.

If you have not visited in a while, come see what we are up to. Try something new you have not done here before. Whether you are craving the excitement of putting your chess skills to the test in a tournament, wanting feedback on your novel chapter, curious about our mystery book club, seeking academic citations for a research project, or simply looking for a nourishing community and a quiet space in the bustling city – Mechanics' Institute has that, and more. Our many membership benefits cost significantly more than what is covered by dues and are supported in part by the generosity of members and friends like you.

All of us at MI are deeply grateful for your support, engagement, passion, and dedication. Thank you.

Lindsey Crittenden  
President, Board of Directors

Kimberly Scrafano  
Executive Director

# Year In Review | Looking Forward

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## A Library For All Members

When one asks Mechanics' Institute members what the library means to them, we get as many answers as members we ask. Responses include accessing over 100,000 articles including financial data in online databases, finding just the right book for a rainy weekend, attending a class, book, or writer's group, getting one-on-one help with e-resources, and having a beautiful, quiet space to read and work.

Here are some notable member quotes:

"The library staff are what makes the Mechanics' Institute Library a great library. The library staff are why we are members. Your assistance in researching a recent job offer saved me from being defrauded. You and your staff have also assisted me with researching the feasibility of business ideas."

"I have found the library's collection of books on the craft of writing, both classic and recent cutting edge, to be of great use. I appreciate the staff's assistance in accessing books through interlibrary loan and using online databases."

"I found my mother's birth certificate!" shouted a member attending one of our Ancestry.com classes. (She had been searching for several decades for it.)

"Not only do I get to access to all of the amazing resources and programs at the MI, I get to enjoy membership privileges at other membership libraries." ([milibrary.org/membership-libraries](http://milibrary.org/membership-libraries))

Our librarian-led and professional classes, programs, and book groups continue to thrive. Members have learned to revamp their resumes, to shop smarter, to knit, and about the history of Bay Area coffee. If you are too busy to read an entire book for a traditional book group, try our Fast Fridays for lively discussion on a short story. Are you an aspiring author? Sign up for one of our expert-led writing workshops, join a critique group, or come to our free monthly Writers' Lunch gathering.

There is truly something for everyone.

## Innovation in Chess

For the chess department, 2019 was a year of growth in both programs and processes. Dr. Judit Sztaray, 2017 USCF Organizer of the Year, joined the Mechanics' Institute chess staff in June. As a result of innovation in the chess club, player engagement has increased, we have developed improved diversity in programming, and have expanded scholastic programs – both in the number of educational sites we serve and in newly-established monthly scholastic tournaments. We have worked to solidify our online presence, broadcasting live during events via the chess club's Twitch channel and consolidating our Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter accounts under the @mechanicschess handle.

We partnered with organizations such as Twitch and Chess.com to increase our visibility, attracting high profile events such as the Mechanics' Institute Rapid Championship in May. This event saw the most Grandmasters at one time playing in a single event, including the world #2 ranked player, making it the strongest tournament ever held in San Francisco. We have built a partnership with Marshall Chess Club in New York, and recently hosted an online match promoting the history and culture of both organizations. Following the success of this inaugural event, we will engage other groups around the country and raise awareness for the high degree of social impact and cultural significance chess clubs bring to a community.

In 2020, we will continue to expand and develop our chess programs, offer more tournaments and special activities, and will organize two national championship events: the U.S. Amateur Team West Championship in February and the U.S. Cadet u/16 National Invitational Championship in June. We will hold our annual San Francisco Scholastic Championship in April at Golden Gate Park and hope to organize teams from some of our scholastic programs to compete in the California Spring Scholastic State Championship.

We look forward to continuing to provide excellent chess programming while making a social and cultural impact in the community.

## Event Highlights

### Author Events

*Happy Birthday Walt Whitman: A Bicentennial Celebration* was hosted at Dada Bar on Saturday, June 29 during Pride Weekend, and was one of the most expansive programs of the year. This community event, directed by Dan Harder, featured a reading of *Leaves of Grass: Song of Myself* with actors, poets, musicians and the a cappella ensemble Conspiracy of Beards. Whitman's poetic work is a declaration of all we hold dear – democracy, diversity, freedom of expression, sexual and gender equality, and a celebration of our land, nature, and citizens.

Another highlight was the sell-out program for *The San Francisco Civic Center: A History of the Design, Controversies, and Realization of the City Beautiful Masterpiece* with author James W. Haas in conversation with John King, Urban Design Critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Two popular programs on current issues were *Rectify: The Power of Restorative Justice after Wrongful Conviction* with the author, law professor Lara Bazelon and Alameda County Public Defender Brendon Woods; and *Generation Priced Out: Who Gets to Live in the New Urban America* with author Randy Shaw.

### CinemaLit

March, with its theme of *Just Say No(ir)*, saw our highest attendance of the year for CinemaLit, and included classics like Hitchcock's *Suspicion* and Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai*. During the summer, the theme *Funny Ladies* featured King Vidor's silent classic *The Patsy*, starring Marion Davies, and the finale, *Born Yesterday*, starring Judy Holliday, which drew the largest crowd, filling every seat.

### Upcoming in 2020

Winter 2020 will open with editor David Ulin's collection, *Joan Didion: The 60's & 70's*, cosponsored by ZYZZYVA and *Alta Magazine*, and a tribute to Toni Morrison in February. Voting rights will be viewed from various perspectives with *Election Meltdown* by Richard Hasen, followed by several programs to commemorate "Suffrage 100," the anniversary of women's right to vote.

## Building Notes

The Mechanics' Institute building was completed in 1910 after our previous building at this location was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fires. The building has endured for nearly 110 years and we continue to make repairs and upgrades to meet member and tenant needs.

This past summer we suffered a water line break that impacted several offices and restrooms. All tenants are back in their spaces and we were able to upgrade our restroom facilities and water lines during the repair. Other 2018-2019 building improvements included the addition of an all-gender restroom in the 2nd floor library, water conserving fixtures throughout the building, continued upgrades to LED lighting, an evaluation and reconfiguration of our IT infrastructure, and the addition of new print stations which allow members to print, copy, or scan documents to their personal drives.

In the upcoming year we hope to improve access to our Wi-Fi network, refresh the common areas of the building, and upgrade amenities for our programs while still maintaining our historic feel and ambiance. If you would like to ensure that this building continues to host the Mechanics' Institute's community of users, please designate your next donation to our building fund.

## Membership Overview

As of August 31, 2019, Mechanics' Institute supports over 4,000 members: a community of writers, readers, chess players, historians, and the culturally inquisitive.

In the coming year, you will receive a member survey – please take the time to complete this, as it helps us to direct our efforts in ways that matter most to members. It's your chance to give anonymous feedback on how we're doing, what we could be doing better, and your wish list for services and activities as we move forward.

62% of members who tell us why they have joined are referred by word of mouth. Whether you value the Mechanics' Institute for its rich history, its beautiful spaces, or its robust services, please spread the word and support our work as you are able. Thank you for your membership and your patronage.

# Year In Images



*Events Director Laura Sheppard, Stage Director Dan Harder, Conspiracy of Beards, and cast read Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: Song of Myself at the Whitman Bicentennial Celebration.*



*Actor Ryan Hayes reads Walt Whitman's Calamus.*



*Chess players compete at the recurring Scholastic Chess Tournament at Mechanics' Chess Club.*



*Tech professionals gather on a weekday evening for casual play at the club.*



*Attendees of the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Golden Gate International Exposition enjoy costumes and camaraderie in the library.*



*Find fiction, DVDs, graphic novels, and more on the second floor of the library.*

# Financial Highlights

## Audited Financial Summary, Fiscal Year Ended August 31, 2019

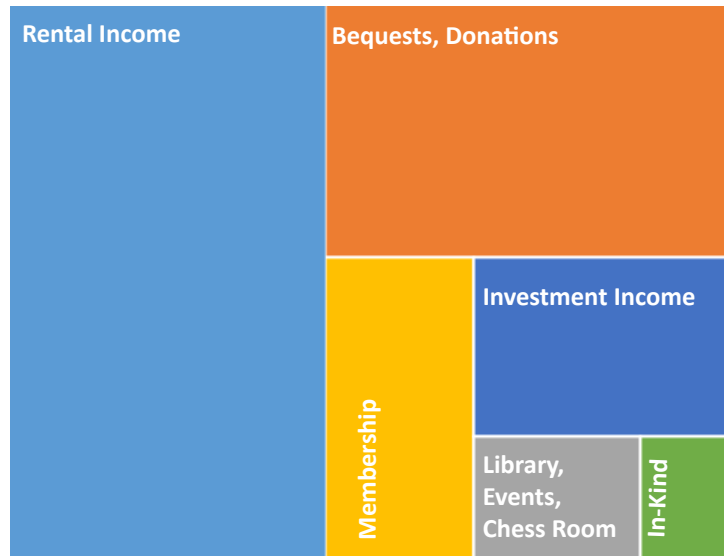
**Total Assets** (cash, accounts receivable, prepaid expenses, investments at fair market value, deferred rent, building and equipment) \$16,861,568

**Total Liabilities** (accounts payable, other liabilities, unearned income, tenants' deposits) \$678,317

**Net Assets** \$16,183,568

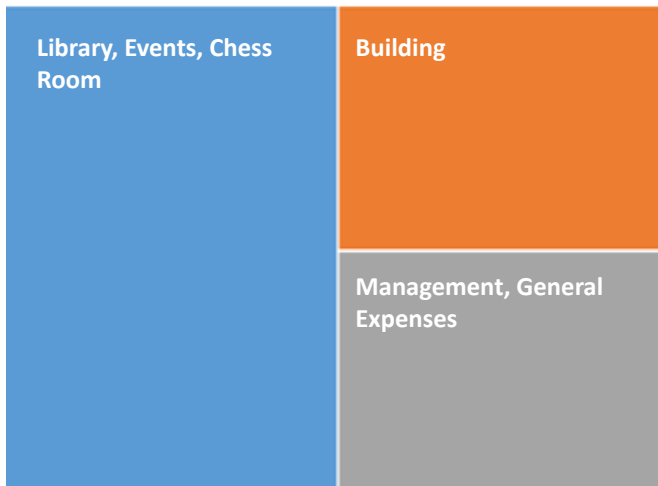
**Total Income** **\$3,081,389**

Rental Income	\$1,355,286
Bequests, Donations	\$788,308
Library, Events, Chess Room	\$161,790
Membership	\$347,855
Investment Income	\$344,151
In-kind Donation	\$83,999



**Total Expenses**

**\$3,534,208**



Library, Events, Chess Room	\$1,774,233
Building	\$880,276
Management, General Expenses	\$879,699

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**Donors: Time, Materials, and Gifts**

Thank you to all of those who donated their **time** to the MI in 2019. More than 30 regular volunteers have helped at chess programs, hosting special events, and in the library.

Thanks to those who donated **materials** to the library this year. Librarians added a record number of 544 donated items to the collection in 2019.

Thank you to the 223 MI members who each **contributed** \$5-\$99 in 2019. Every dollar is important!

**Thank You to Our Volunteers**

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**Bi-Annual Members' Meeting  
December 5  
5:30pm Reception, 6:00pm Meeting  
Members & Guests Free  
No registration required  
Meeting Room**

Join us for our bi-annual Mechanics' Institute community gathering to meet fellow members, staff, and trustees. Hear from trustees and staff about our efforts to improve your experience as members.

**Members' Holiday Gathering  
December 12  
5:30pm - 7:00pm  
Members & Guests \$15 Admission  
Registration required  
2nd Floor Library**

Join fellow members and staff for our annual winter gathering to mingle and nosh. We will serve hors d'oeuvres, gourmet cheeses, delectable desserts, and tempting libations!