



Mechanics' Institute Annual Report 2020

Dear Friends:

What a year this has been. In the 166-year history of the Mechanics' Institute, 2020 will stand out – not only for the pandemic, wildfires, divisive politics, and the legacy of inequality and systemic racism, but also for the new ways in which all of us at MI have strived to engage with our members and guests who come to us seeking (more than ever) solace and a space to learn, interact, and connect. We could not have come through it without the dedication and hard work of the Mechanics' Institute staff and trustees, as well as the support of our members.

With the necessary closures, the Institute has had to reimagine itself, and we have focused on curating and developing our online library collection, offering our “To-Go” library pick-up service, and working individually with members to meet the need for information requests and research. In addition, we are especially encouraged by the expansion of our virtual programming, which has helped us grow the number of participants in our author events, film series, chess tournaments, and writing and library classes by more than 40 percent over the second half of 2020. MI has been able to reach more friends and supporters as our virtual platforms easily welcome national and global audiences in addition to our local community members.

Our efforts to be more inclusive have not just been about geography – MI has prioritized topics of interest and programs reflecting our diverse communities, from author events honoring the legacy of Toni Morrison and Harlem of the West to films on Black history and experiences to a series celebration of the Centennial of U.S. Women's Suffrage. We welcomed authors Wendy Liu and Paul Madonna and began new reading groups such as “Dostoevsky's Demons,” facilitated discussions on topics such as election polling and the Bay Area's history of resistance and transformation, and hosted global chess tournaments.

Directors' Message, Cont'd



Any institution of our history has weathered and adapted to change – in our case, from fire and earthquake to the current situation. The challenges differ, but we draw confidence from looking at the past for example: a new library at MI was operating within several weeks after the 1906 earthquake, and building on our new home began shortly thereafter. We have adapted from a focus on industrial expositions to become a thriving general-interest library and cultural center – and we are looking ahead, past a vaccine and re-opening – to ways we can meet the needs of the coming decades. While our beloved building is the heart and soul of our offerings, virtual programming can continue to grow as we reach beyond brick-and-mortar boundaries.

Speaking of brick and mortar – we are happy to announce our success raising the funds to exceed our NEH match for the second year in a row. We have also welcomed new trustees and reached out to you – our members and friends – for greater involvement and participation.

Our revenue is declining as we enter our new fiscal year, and we face the unknown of post-pandemic life in downtown San Francisco. Nevertheless, we believe that our members, our beloved institute, and the community at large will emerge from 2020 more connected and stronger than ever. As we navigate these uncharted waters with hope and aspiration, we are ever grateful for your support, engagement, passion, and dedication.

With warmest regards,

Lindsey Crittenden
President, Board of Directors

Kimberly Scrafano
Chief Executive Officer

Financial Highlights

Audited Financial Summary, Fiscal Year Ended August 31, 2020

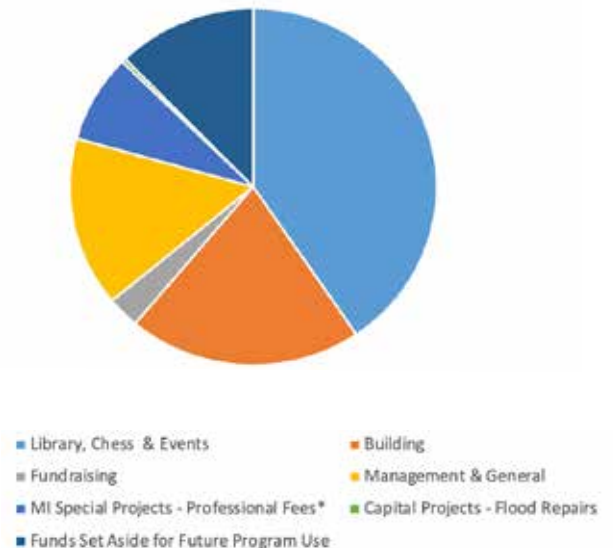
Income

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Rental Income | \$1,305,949 |
| Bequests, Donations, Grants | \$516,483 |
| Chess Room Income | \$188,780 |
| Event Income | \$23,052 |
| Library Services | \$15,725 |
| Membership | \$299,138 |
| Investment & Other Income | \$1,397,444 |
| In-kind Donations* | \$341,427 |
| Restricted Funds Released | \$191,517 |
| Total | \$4,279,515 |



Expenses

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Library, Chess & Events | \$1,733,085 |
| Building | \$882,298 |
| Fundraising | \$122,461 |
| Management & General | \$658,709 |
| MI Special Projects - Professional Fees* | \$341,427 |
| Capital Projects - Flood Repairs | \$15,601 |
| Funds Set Aside for Future Program Use | \$525,934 |
| Total | \$4,279,515 |



*In-Kind Donations of Professional Services are recorded as both income and expense.

Fiscal Year 2020 Donors: Thank You!

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\$50,000 and more

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The Mechanics' Institute thanks the generous individual, foundation, and corporate donors who make our continued growth possible. These listings reflect gifts made between September 1, 2019 and August 31, 2020.

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**Bi-Annual Members' Meeting;
Virtual; December 3, 5:30 pm**

Join us via Zoom for our biannual Mechanics' Institute community gathering to hear from trustees and staff about our efforts to improve your experience as members. Visit milibrary.org to register.

**Members' Holiday Gathering;
Virtual; December 10, 5:30pm**

Join fellow members via Zoom for our annual winter gathering. Visit milibrary.org to register.

Year In Review | Looking Forward

Library: Pivoting For a Pandemic

Overall, 2020 was off to a good start with library occupancy near capacity, robust use of print, audiovisual and electronic resources and popular programming including writers' groups, tours, book groups, Knit Happens and much more.

The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic brought everything to a standstill, and the library closed its doors on Friday, March 13. Library and membership staff reached out to members to let them know we were closed and that we were still offering remote research and reference service and access to electronic resources. We extended the due date for any checked out items due after March 13 to September 30.

By April 1, we moved in-person programming online, making it free to members and nonmembers. Attendance skyrocketed. We became experts on Zoom. We ramped up our blog post content with topics ranging from "She Persisted: Women and the Vote" to "The Say Hey Kid and Other Baseball Legends."

On July 13, we began our Library "To-Go" Service, where members can request items in the library collection and pick them up by appointment. This has proved to be very popular. We realize that not all members have access to email or resources outside of MI. We are working with membership staff to call these members to check in on them and let them know about the To Go Service. When members return materials, we quarantine the items using best practices.

MI librarians continue to review and order new content. Resource use has tripled, yet we continue to order print as well, though not on the same scale as pre-pandemic. We now subscribe to Kanopy which streams thousands of movies and documentaries free to your wifi-enabled device. All of our databases, including Ancestry, are available remotely.

We have created a plan to reopen the library when it is safe to do so. We will abide by physical distancing and safety guidelines to ensure the health and safety of members and MI staff.

Innovation in Chess

The MI Chess team has been planning and hosting Mechanics' Institute online chess events. With all hands on deck, Mechanics' was one of the first clubs in the country to organize online USCF rated events and classes during the ongoing pandemic.

The Mechanics' Institute hosted the 2020 US Cadet National Championship online the weekend of September 25-27, 2020. This event was an 8-player invitational for the top players in the country who are under age 16. The event offered more than \$7000 in prizes — including a \$6000 scholarship for the winner toward the college or university of their choice, through the sponsorship of Dewain Barber, Dean of Scholastic Chess, and the US Chess Federation. These young masters provided exciting and spirited play throughout the weekend, and when it was all over, International Master Christopher Yoo, a previous winner of the Mechanics' Institute's Neil Falconer Award, won the event with 6/7 points.

The Mechanics' Institute's flagship Tuesday Night Marathon event continues online, with solid turnout and participation from our regular players from the club. An average of 60 participants have joined MI for each event, and the chat during the broadcast has been lively and fun.

MI also offers a wide range of virtual classes, including a free Women's Class and online scholastic programming, including daily virtual chess classes, summer camps, and free scholastic tournaments for children.

Many of our Mechanics' regulars have transitioned to our online club. All are able to view archived videos of our events on Mechanics' Institute's YouTube channel. The chess club has made great strides in transitioning our educational and community activities to the online environment. The hard work and dedication of Mechanics' staff in organizing events, classes, and opportunities for interaction is apparent in the success of this year's programs, both before and during the pandemic.

Event Highlights

Highlights of 2020 included celebrations of two renowned women of American literature who have offered their potent views of American history and life through their work. This included *Joan Didion: The 1960's and 70s* with editor David Ulin and Oscar Villalon, and "A Tribute to Toni Morrison" with a dynamic panel of local writers cosponsored by the Museum of African Diaspora (MoAD).

Tech and the City was reinvigorated online with our collaboration and co-sponsorship with Gray Area and Goethe-Institut. Three provocative programs included *Breath* with James Nestor, *Abolish Silicon Valley* with Wendy Liu and *Artificial You*, about the perils of AI, with Susan Schneider. The series will continue in 2021.

"Suffrage 100: A Centennial Celebration," a four part series with The League of Women Voters of San Francisco, offered historical and contemporary perspectives on the fight for women's right to vote and equal rights today. A stellar culmination, "Women in Politics Today: A Progress Report" featured Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan, Aimee Allison, founder She the People, Alison Goh, President of LWV-SF, journalist Elaine Elinson and suffrage historian Jennifer Helton, hosted by KQED news correspondent Marisa Lagos.

CinemaLit adopted Kanopy, which proved to be a superb service for film programming that members have enjoyed using. Most popular series included "Black Lives on Film," "French Classics," and "Prohibition at 100." Online film salons increased from 36 to 39.

In January 2021, look forward to topics not often talked about. *Elderhood: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life* with author Louise Aronson and personal debt with authors of *The Debt Project*. February will feature a dedication to writer James Baldwin for Black History Month and a program with photographer Dick Evans for San Francisco's Chinatown, just in time for Chinese New Year.

Our CinemaLit winter line-up includes Silent epics and raucous comedies (January), Black Lives on Film Revisited by notable directors (February), and The Literary Adaptations of Merchant-Ivory (March).

Building Notes



This year was an eventful time for Building Operations. In Fall 2019, we completed a plumbing upgrade project that replaced approximately 80% of the existing plumbing and restroom fixtures. This was spurred by a broken pipe that ended up being a blessing in disguise as much of the plumbing was in

poor condition. The system is now up to date and more conserving of water. Then in Spring of 2020, following the COVID-19 Shelter-In-Place guidelines, the Mechanics' Institute library, chess club, and events shut down, most MI staff began working from home, and the building was accessible to essential workers only.

During this closure, staff have worked hard to keep building systems active and in good operating condition, to keep the facilities clean, and to ensure the safety of the staff and tenants that need to access the building. In addition, we replaced the carpeting on the third floor of the library, did a thorough cleaning of the book stacks, and polished flooring and common areas. We implemented more rigorous disinfecting and sanitizing throughout the building and posted and alerted everyone to new public health guidelines mandated by the City and County of San Francisco. This includes public health restrictions related to the Library's "To-Go" service, such as returning books in the lobby book drop only.

The Mechanics' Institute building has been closed to members, although we are working on reopening plans as permitted by local regulations. Protocols for face masks, social distancing, and personal health assessments are required before entering the MI building, and we limit the number of people in the elevators and hallways at any one time.

Membership Overview

As of August 31, 2020, Mechanics' Institute supported 3,500 members: a temporarily-virtual community of writers, readers, cinephiles, and chess players. Last year, we served more than 4,000 members, and we anticipate that the pandemic has changed the size of our community a bit. We appreciate the continued support from our members during this very challenging time in MI's history.



As reported by new members, more than 60% join because of a friend's recommendation that they check out the Mechanics' Institute. We'd like to thank those passionate individuals for referring new members to the MI community by providing a complimentary 3-month membership extension for each referral going forward. That means that if two of your friends list you as their referral source when joining as new members, you will receive six months of free membership. (Find full details of this new program on our website.) So, keep spreading the word, and we will continue to sustain and grow our virtual programs and expand library services as we are permitted and can safely do so.

Many of you are reminded of your renewal date by staff when visiting the library or signing up for events, while others respond to renewal notices mailed via USPS. Since March, renewal notices have been sent via email, and we will send reminders in January to anyone whose membership has expired during the mandated closure. Please renew and support the ongoing work of the Mechanics' Institute during the pandemic so we can make it through this public health crisis together.



Mechanics' Institute
57 Post Street
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www.milibrary.org

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