

Why Members Stay with Mechanics' Institute

In January, MI reached out to our members to say thank you for continuing their memberships. The membership department included an optional survey to gauge members' MI experience during the pandemic, and we received nearly 350 responses.

As evidenced in comments made by survey respondents, many members feel a sense of community and that MI is an organization they have a hand in building. Several staff were singled out by one or more members for special commendation related to their kindness, creativity, passion, and competence in the work they do. A significant number of members, particularly those with a long history of involvement with MI, state that their loyalty drives them to support the Institute, and that they look forward to the future when all can gather together again. Many respondents state that they depend upon the virtual community Mechanics' has established during shelter in place orders. Additionally, several respondents expressed a desire for MI to continue offering virtual programs and services once the pandemic has ended, particularly in terms of events, classes, chess programs, and library resources such as databases, electronic materials, and film streaming.

We received an outpouring of support from members, expressing gratitude for the services provided during the pandemic and eagerness to return in person when it is safe to do so. Members tell us that they value our history, as participants in the long legacy of Mechanics' as an early San Francisco institution. They enjoy the relationships they've developed with staff over the years. They depend upon the resources we provide, both in print and online, and they cherish the friendships they've forged between one another through participation in our chess offerings, reading groups, writing clubs, speaker series, and film programs.

We appreciate the constructive criticism we received from members in the survey and will consider issues related to screen fatigue, convenience of curbside services, and resource expansion. Primarily due to financial, geographical, and public safety considerations, we have lost 30% of our total membership to date. However, based on responses to the Membership Services Survey, the 3,052 individuals who remain on our membership rolls are strong advocates for Mechanics' Institute. In the words of one respondent, "MI is here to stay — even during the pandemic, your presence and work is felt." Thank you for your support. Meanwhile, MI will continue the work of providing you with resources, engaging programs, and opportunities to learn and grow.

Welcome Back

Beginning on April 5, the library at Mechanics' Institute will reopen for limited afternoon hours. Usage will be at reduced capacity and by appointment only. Members are encouraged to continue using our online resources and To-Go service in lieu of visiting the space whenever possible, and those using the library in person are required to adhere to COVID safety protocols. Complete details on the partial reopening can be found at www.milibrary.org/policies/covid.

"I am a proud member and intend to be one for many, many years to come. I recognize Mechanics' Institute as a foundational San Francisco institution with deep, historical roots in our community and I value it greatly."

Featured Events

Shakespeare's Essays: Sampling Montaigne from Hamlet to The Tempest

April 22, 5:30 pm

Online; Registration required

MI Members: Free; Public (sliding scale): \$5-\$10

On the day before the 457th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, lovers of the great playwright can enjoy new insights into his work, offered by author and Mechanics' Institute member Peter G. Platt, in conversation with Philippa Kelly, California Shakespeare Company's Dramaturg. Through in-depth readings of Montaigne's essays and Shakespeare's plays, Platt explores both authors' approaches to self, knowledge, and form that reveal alternatives to conventional wisdom. The result is a book that offers a fresh look at Montaigne's under-recognized influence on later Shakespeare plays like *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.



The Bohemians: A Novel

April 29, 5:30 pm

Online; Registration required

MI Members: Free; Public (sliding scale): \$5-\$10

Author Jasmin Darznik will discuss her new novel, *The Bohemians: A Novel*, with journalist Elaine Elinson. This novel captures a glittering and gritty 1920s San Francisco, with a cast of unforgettable characters, including not only its protagonist, iconic photographer Dorothea Lange, but cameos from such legendary figures as Mabel Dodge Luhan, Frida Kahlo, Ansel Adams, and D. H. Lawrence. A vivid and absorbing portrait of the past, it is also eerily resonant, as anti-immigration sentiment, corrupt politicians, and a devastating pandemic bring tumult to the city. Amidst this, the gift of friendship and the possibility of self-invention persist against the ferocious pull of history.



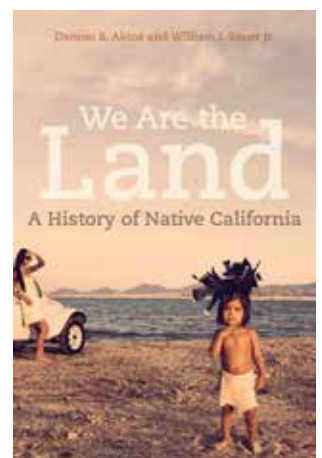
We are the Land: A History of Native California

May 27, 5:30 pm

Online; Registration required

MI Members: Free; Public (sliding scale): \$5-\$10

Authors William Bauer Jr. and Damon Akins will discuss their book *We Are the Land*, an essential chronicle of California history and a corrective to works that gloss over the impact of white expansion. Beginning with the ethnogenesis of California Indigenous peoples, Bauer and Akins reveal the centrality of the Native presence from before European colonization through statehood — paying particularly close attention to the persistence and activism of California's Indigenous people in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.



Watch our website for information about upcoming events including *The Paris Library*, a novel by Janet Skeslien Charles, on May 13; Mechanics' Institute's annual Bloomsday Celebration on June 16; and A Tribute to James Baldwin on June 17.



CinemaLit: The Virtual Salon

Is merely seeing a movie never enough? Does watching a film make you want to talk about it? For the past twenty years, CinemaLit aficionados have joined in the Mechanics' screening room at 6:00 pm every Friday, affording film lovers a chance to talk about movies and why they love them. The pandemic has not stopped us. CinemaLit curator Matthew Kennedy utilizes the video streaming service Kanopy to allow members to screen film selections, using Zoom to host a salon discussion every Friday night.

Check our website to see which movies will be discussed, and log in to the Kanopy app available via your library account to watch the film at your leisure. Sign up for the event via Eventbrite to receive a Zoom link to the Friday night program. Join to hear Matthew Kennedy introduce the film, and then share your own insights about the week's movie. CinemaLit has a new theme each month — films might include silent classics and pre-code cinema, foreign films, and contemporary comedies and thrillers. Featured guest speakers often include film critics such as Omar Moore, Mick LaSalle, and Michael Fox.

This April, CinemaLit will celebrate one of Hollywood's great directors, **William Wyler**, with a series of films starting with his seven-time Oscar winner, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, guest hosted by Wyler's daughter, Judy Wyler Sheldon. In May, we will examine faith in **Visions of the Sacred: Spirituality in the Movies**, a film series that will include *Ida*, which won the Oscar for the best Foreign Language Film in 2015, and the enchanting Taiwanese epic, *Legends of the Mountain*. June will feature *SF Chronicle* film critic Mick LaSalle's new book, ***Dream State: California in the Movies***. LaSalle will present *A Star is Born* on June 4 to kick off the series, which will feature films in and about the Golden State, ranging from Hollywood careers to Los Angeles thrillers and classic San Francisco noir, concluding with *Chinatown*, Roman Polanski's neo-noir take on the water wars. *Images used with permission from Kanopy Inc.*

Hollywood Master William Wyler

April 2 *The Best Years of Our Lives*

With special guest Judy Wyler Sheldon
(1946) 170 Min Directed by William Wyler
Myrna Loy, Frederic March

April 9 *Dodsworth*

(1936) 101 min Directed by William Wyler
Walter Huston, Ruth Chatterton

April 16 *Dead End*

(1937) 93 min Directed by William Wyler
Sylvia Sydney, Joel McCrea

April 23 *Wuthering Heights*

(1939) 104 min Directed by William Wyler
Laurence Olivier, Merle Oberon

April 30 *The Little Foxes*

(1941) 116 min Directed by William Wyler
Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall

Visions of the Sacred – Spirituality in the Movies

May 7 *The Seventh Seal*

(1957) 98 min Directed by Ingmar Bergman
Max Von Sydow, Bibi Andersson

May 14 *Whale Rider*

(2002) 101 min Directed by Niki Caro
Keisha Castle-Hughes, Rawiri Paratene

May 21 *Leona*

(2018) 94 min Directed by Isaac Cherem
Naian Gonzalez Norvind, Christian Vazquez

May 28 *Legend of the Mountain*

(1979) 192 min Directed by King Hu
Chun Shih, Feng Hsu

Programs begin at 6:00 pm;
MI members free; Public \$10 Suggested Donation;
Registration required

Featured Library Programs

From Storyboard to Narrative

May 8, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Online; Registration required

MI Members \$15 Public: \$25

In this workshop, authors Sheryl J. Bize-Boutte and Joan Gelfand will guide you from storyboard creation to narrative. You will become familiar with the process of storyboarding, learn how a storyboard guides the writer, hear how Sheryl and Joan each used their own unique storyboarding techniques to create narrative for their novels, and participate in a storyboarding exercise for class participants.



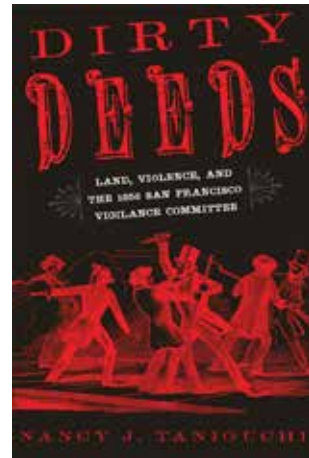
Words Matter: James King of William and San Francisco's 1856 Vigilantes

May 14, 12:00 pm

Online; Registration required

MI Members and Public: Free

Award-winning historian Dr. Nancy J. Taniguchi, author of *Dirty Deeds: Land, Violence, and the 1856 San Francisco Vigilance Committee*, will discuss the life and tragic death of outspoken journalist James King of William and how he, a group of wealthy merchants, and a couple of committed historians shaped San Francisco's history.



Stepping into the Past: Early San Francisco Panoramas

May 19, 6:00 pm

Online; Registration required

MI Members and Public: Free

Join historian Nick Wright on a journey back in time to experience ultra-high-resolution views of Gold Rush San Francisco. Founder of History Alliance, Nick has painstakingly recreated early multi-plate views of the nascent city as it developed. This will be your chance to see old San Francisco like never before, and Wright will share some of the custom tools and research he has created to record and track history.



Missed any of our recent events or programs? Many of them are recorded and available online. Please visit the [MI YouTube channel](#) to enjoy some of our recent events!

Featured Chess Activities

Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Championship

The Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Championship, or “Pan-Am,” is the premier event for college chess, open to four-player college and university teams from North, Central, and South America, as well as the Caribbean. Mechanics’ Institute hosted the event with 59 teams at the virtual Pan-Am in January. Playing three online matches per day for three days, Missouri’s Webster University captured its eighth title in nine years, reclaiming the championship from the 2020 winner, Texas Tech. The top four finishers — Webster, Saint Louis University, University of Texas @ Rio Grande Valley, and Texas Tech — will compete in the President’s Cup, which is the final four of chess, determining the national champion. Watch the archived Twitch video on the [Mechanics’ Chess YouTube channel](#).



U.S. Amateur Team West Championship

January 30-31, Mechanics’ Institute hosted the 2021 U.S. Amateur Team West Championship. With a four-player team format where the combined USCF ratings of the ten members must be under 2200, 75 teams joined the competition. Top players from across the U.S. took part in this online championship, with Mechanics’ players making a strong showing — including GM Patrick Wolff, IM John Donaldson, and FM Mark Pinto. Many players from the MI chess club, including students who have participated in scholastic chess programs, joined the tournament. After six hard-fought rounds with exciting games and dramatic moments, UC Berkeley won with a perfect score of 6/6 in a competitive team field. The Mechanics’ Chess Twitch channel broadcast live coverage of the event, and the archived video can be found on the [Mechanics’ Chess YouTube channel](#).



San Francisco Scholastic Championship

Mechanics’ Institute has organized the San Francisco Scholastic Championship each year since 2014, and hosted the 2021 Championship in March, online for the second year in a row. Scholastic players participated in this free event, either in non-USCF rated sections based on grade level, or in one of the three USCF-rated sections based on player ratings. Games were played on ChessKid and Chess.com platforms, and players joined a Zoom program for the meet and greet, as well as for fair play monitoring during the championship sections. The Mechanics’ Institute chess team entertained parents and coaches by following the twists and turns of the games, and hosting discussions with special guests on the Mechanics’ Chess Twitch channel. This signature annual event affords Mechanics’ Institute the opportunity to expand our mission to San Francisco students through engagement in chess.



Want to learn more about our chess programs? Find our [Chess Club Newsletter](#), join us on [Twitch](#), or check out our [events listings](#) online.

Navigating the Library Online

Databases

Mechanics' Institute subscribes to searchable databases such as Ancestry Library, JSTOR, Morningstar Investment Research Center, Value Line Resource Center, and Proquest — offering thousands of full text articles, in-depth financial resources, and genealogical collections. Use the barcode on your MI library card to access these resources via our website by navigating to milibrary.org/research/databases and clicking the name of the database or resource you'd like to peruse. On this page, you will also find a collection of free databases vetted by librarians.

Electronic Books, Magazines, Audiobooks

The library adds new titles to our digital collections each week. Find e-books (including Kindle books), e-magazines, and e-audiobooks via Overdrive's Libby application at milibrary.overdrive.com and sign in using your library barcode. You'll find bestselling mysteries, science fiction, literary fiction, and non-fiction spanning a wide gamut of topics in the e-books and e-audiobooks collections. More than 3,000 e-magazine titles are also available for member access, including *The New Yorker*, *Elle Decor*, *Cook's Illustrated*, *The Economist*, and more.

Film Streaming

In response to the pandemic closure, Mechanics' Institute sought a new way to screen films for CinemaLit, as well as offering a streaming service to members. Kanopy, found at milibrary.kanopy.com, partners with libraries to provide ad-free movies, documentaries, foreign films, classic cinema, independent films and educational videos. MI members get ten play credits every month, and the service can be accessed via the MI website after creating a username and password to stream thousands of films on a wi-fi enabled tablet, smartphone, computer, or television via a streaming device.

Ask a Librarian

Since March 2020, on-site staff at MI has been limited to allow for social distancing. In that time, we have answered more than 3,000 member calls and emails. Library staff is eager to help with your information needs. Reach out to circulation staff at 415-393-0101 or circulation@milibrary.org for help with your library account or with questions about checkout. Contact reference staff at 415-393-0102 or reference@milibrary.org to ask research questions; get instructions on accessing the library's electronic resources; request help figuring out what to read, watch, or listen to next; and find resources to answer other burning questions you may have.

Find Materials for Pickup

The library began our socially-distanced pickup program — *MI Library To-Go* — in June 2020. Since that time, library staff have retrieved 2,400 items for members. To find books you'd like to read, check the library catalog at search.milibrary.org/search/ and find materials by title, author, keyword, subject, call number, or even ISBN. You can browse by type of media such as DVD or audiobook CD. You will also find guided suggestion tools such as New Title Lists, Staff Picks, and *New York Times* Bestsellers. Appointments for contactless pickup at the second floor of the library are available on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between noon and 2 p.m., arranged in advance. More information can be found at milibrary.org/blog/library-service-faqs.

Read a Blog Post

If you haven't yet taken a look at Mechanics' Institute's blog, check it out at milibrary.org/blog and find a wealth of information, including interviews with authors, staff, and board members; book recommendations and up-to-date new title purchases; critical information; historical articles; descriptions of MI services you may not be aware of; event recaps; and much more. If you miss chatting with MI staff at the circulation desk, over the chess board, or at events, take a look at the blog to "meet" with staff on the page.

Desk Space: a Tangible Gift

Soon after the Mechanics' Institute shut its doors in mid-March, Library Director Deb Hunt received an offer for the donation of a large antique oak desk. The donation is from Briscoe, Ivester & Bazel LLP, and was the firm's stunning and functional partners' desk. It is a wonderful addition to the library and looks as if it has been in the space since the "new" building was unveiled in 1910. In addition to the desk donation, longtime member John Briscoe underwrote the moving and placement costs. The library can't wait for members and guests to see the beautiful desk. It will not only be treasured, but also well used.

To give a tangible item as a gift to any MI department, please contact the Department Director or CEO Kimberly Scrafano so they may determine whether the donation can be utilized by the MI, or is a good fit for our existing collections. Please note that although MI is not able to provide valuation for tangible in-kind gifts, we will provide an acknowledgement of receipt for tax purposes.



Your Gifts Sustain Programs and Services

MI recently concluded the annual year-end donor appeal, and we are grateful to all of those who were able to give during these trying times. If you would like to give a gift of any amount to Mechanics' Institute, donations may be made online at milibrary.org/give, by mail, via your company's **matching gifts** program, or directly from your **retirement or other investment account**.

Another way to lend a hand is by joining the **James Lick Legacy Society**, designating a special gift for the MI in your will so that future generations may benefit from your generosity. Contact Chief Executive Officer Kimberly Scrafano at ksorafano@milibrary.org to request more information, or call her at 415.393.0117 to discuss additional giving opportunities.

Recent Major Gifts

We are grateful for the support we receive from the following individuals and foundations, who make our continued growth possible. Thank you! The following contributions were received between December 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021.

Maria E. Dichov

In Memory Of Maria's Parents

Paul A. Fisher

Robert and Michelle Friend

Hannah T. Hale

In Memory Of Eugene & Margarite Hale

Dwight L. Johnson

Mrs. Louis O. Kelso

Fritz L. Maytag

Charles K. McCabe

In Memory Of Nini McCabe

Paul McCauley

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Anthony Nash

William L. Newmeyer, III

Gertrude Bland Platt

Matthew H. Scanlan

Celia D. Siroskey

Richard Smith

In Memory Of Barbara McMillin

Lindsey and Keith Tonsager

US Chess Federation

Peter B. Wiley

Patrick Wolff and Diana Schneider

Supporting Memberships

We are grateful to all MI donors, at every level of giving. If you are looking for a simple way to contribute to the Mechanics', consider renewing at the **Associate**, **Patron**, or **Benefactor** level. In 2020, supporting memberships increased 25% over 2019 levels. Some of these supporters tell us it's their way to ensure that MI thrives during the pandemic and is able to remain a San Francisco bulwark for decades to come.

Supporting members give an additional gift at renewal, either \$300-\$599 (Associate), \$600-\$999 (Patron), or \$1000 and up (Benefactor). These memberships are 100% tax-deductible.

Upgrade to a supporting membership by contacting membership@milibrary.org or 415.393.0115, or by [renewing online](#).

Virtual Community-Building



Visiting *San Francisco's Chinatown* Virtually

To do its subject justice, any book entitled *San Francisco's Chinatown* would have to be lavishly illustrated. On February 11, 2021 — Chinese New Year — photographer Dick Evans' and journalist Kathy Chin Leong presented their new book to program attendees via Zoom, celebrating San Francisco's most famous neighborhood.

The event opened with a montage of Evans' photographs, followed by a slide show narrated by both authors. Evans provided historic background, while Leong offered intimate insight into Chinatown as a neighborhood. Attendees were offered glimpses of Chinatown personalities, like Bruce Lee memorabilia collector Jeff Chin, the Reverend Norman Fong, who is the former Executive Director of the Chinatown Community Development Center, and Corey Chan, the "Lion Head Whisperer," who repairs the damaged heads of the beautiful lion puppets used by lion dancers. "For forty years he's been repairing injured lion heads and giving them back their roar," said Leong. Attendees "visited" the century-old Far East Café, the Stockton produce market known as "the locals' Chinatown," with their daily 4:00 pm sales of produce or doughnuts for one dollar a bag, and the many family and benevolent associations that have kept Chinatown's sense of community exceptionally strong in the face of years of discrimination and exclusion.

The pandemic may prevent many from visiting Chinatown, but this event offered an enticing glimpse, both visually and textually, of the history and culture of America's most famous Chinatown.

Learn Chess and Compete in Online Tournaments

If you, like many, are intrigued by Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*, check out the virtual offerings of the MI Chess Club — the longest continuously-operating chess club in the U.S. — via virtual platforms such as ChessKid, chess.com, and Zoom.

Partnering with Chess Weekend Chicago, the Mechanics' Institute will co-organize the **2021 U.S. Junior Chess Congress** in April. This national championship scholastic event will be held online. For the third year in a row, MI is organizing a signature event, **Blitz and Rapid Championship**, on the last weekend of May. This annual event complements the recurring USCF-rated **Online Blitz Championship** hosted once each month. **Tuesday and Thursday Night Marathons** are offered online. Thursday consists of one game with a longer time control (G/60+5), while Tuesdays are comprised of two games playing at G/35+2.

MI offers chess instruction in classes such as the free adult **beginner classes** and **women's classes**; **The Art of Defense in Chess**, **The Art of Attack in Chess**, and **Endgame Lab** with FM Paul Whitehead; **Game Review**; and **Chess Cafe**.

Mechanics' Institute offers free or low-cost learning opportunities via our **Scholastic Chess Program**. Daily virtual tournaments, monthly events, and a scholastic blitz championship are offered, as well as virtual chess camps during school breaks. An official US Chess Federation online-rated tournament is organized weekly by Mechanics' on ChessKid.

To learn more about these and other chess happenings at Mechanics', visit milibrary.org/chess.

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www.milibrary.org

Library Questions?

Call:
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Membership Questions?

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membership@milibrary.org

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Renew: milibrary.org/renew

Library Hours

Please see our website for details.

Closures

April 4
Easter

May 31
Memorial Day

After a long closure of the MI building except for pick-up service, MI has been permitted to reopen with limited capacity.

On April 5, 2021, we begin a partial reopening of the library by appointment only. Please check www.milibrary.org/policies/covid for details.