

The Cable Car's 150th Anniversary

August 2023 marks the 150th anniversary of one of San Francisco's most cherished tourist attractions and the only mobile national monument, the cable car. The cable car and its inception has a direct connection to Mechanics' Institute. Its inventor, Andrew Smith Hallidie, was involved with Mechanics' Institute from 1860 until his death in 1900. He participated in the Mechanics' Institute's industrial exposition each year, served on various committees, and was President of the Board for 14 years. Additionally, several of the cable car's initial financial backers were active Institute members and trustees.



This car stopped at the "City Hall & Mechanics' Pavilion" circa 1900.
(Courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library,
Sacramento, California.)

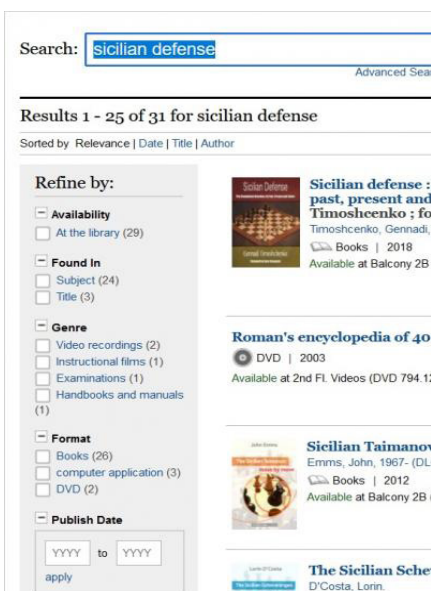
Mechanics' Institute will honor this example of San Francisco ingenuity by participating in a city-wide celebration planned by fellow non-profit Market Street Railway and in partnership with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA/Muni), which owns and operates the cable cars. Other participating organizations include Chinatown Merchants Association, Downtown SF Partnership, Fisherman's Wharf Merchants, Friends of the Cable Car Museum, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco Historical Society, San Francisco Travel, and Union Square Alliance.

Throughout 2023, you can look forward to unique events such as tours of the cable car barn and rides on historic and decorated cars. Here at the Institute, Librarian and Program Manager Taryn Edwards will offer several lectures on the life of Andrew Smith Hallidie and his role in the development of San Francisco's transportation, education, and library systems.

To find out more about the 150th anniversary activities, the celebration's organizers have created a [website](#) which will list all activities participating organizations are offering. The events hosted by Mechanics' Institute also will be listed on [the Institute's website](#).

Library News

Beta Testers Needed for the New Library Catalog



The Mechanics' Institute Library has plans to upgrade and improve our online catalog, providing members with a new and better way to find the materials they seek. The current catalog allows one to search by author, title, and subject, but trying to fine tune a search has proven difficult. This new version will address those challenges by allowing users to narrow their search intuitively. Before the Institute introduces this as the primary way to find physical materials and electronic resources in the collection, testing will take place with users to make sure functionality meets the library needs.

This is where you can help! If you are interested in beta testing the new online catalog, please send an email message to the Institute's Head of Technical Services Steven Dunlap at sdunlap@milibrary.org.

A Selection of Upcoming Library Programs

Mechanics' Institute offers a host of classes as well as reading, activity, and discussion groups each week. For program details and to register for programs, visit [the Mechanics' Institute website](#), where you will find complete listings and information.

What's Streaming on Kanopy with Library Program Manager Myles Cooper

Wednesday, April 5, 6:30 pm PT
Zoom; Registration Required
Members: Free

Join us for this interactive class focused on using Kanopy and what the Institute offers through the service. Librarian and Program Manager Myles Cooper will guide you on how to utilize the advanced search features of the service in order to better find the programs you want to watch. We'll even show you how to set up Kanopy on your devices, including Smart TVs, computers, and mobile devices like smartphones and tablets! Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

Tracing the Truth: Adventures in Historical Research with Librarian and Program Manager Taryn Edwards

Saturday, April 15, 11:00 am PT
4th Floor Meeting Room; Registration Required
Members Free; Public \$15

Join Librarian and Program Manager Taryn Edwards in a discussion on how to start and sustain a historical research project or find historical detail that will enliven your novel, memoir, or other work of nonfiction. She will cover how to get started, how to find primary sources, strategies for organizing your material, how to overcome roadblocks, and how to effectively talk to librarians about your research needs. Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

Ebooks Made Easy with Library Program Manager Myles Cooper

Wednesday, May 17, 6:30 pm PT
Zoom; Registration Required
Members: Free

Not sure how to borrow an eBook from the Library? Are you perplexed by eReaders? Let the Institute's Library Program Manager Myles Cooper answer your eBook questions in this class! You'll discover what titles are immediately available to borrow from the Institute's growing collection. Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

Chess

Classes & Tournaments

Join us to learn more about chess! Classes are typically 60-90 minutes and pre-registration is required. Classes take place online or in person as indicated. Optional links to sign up for web-based platforms will be provided if players would like to compete online.

Class details can be found on the [chess classes](#) page of the website. Tournaments can be found on the [chess calendar](#) page.

Classes:

Free Online Chess Class for Women & Girls

Sundays, 10:00 am PT (Ongoing)

Zoom; Registration Required

Members Free; Public Free

Coached by FIDE Trainer Sophie Adams, Mechanics' Institute's free women's chess class is for women and girls looking to develop their chess skills within a community of learners. There is no age restriction to participate in the class, but knowledge of piece movements and mates is expected. Register via [Jumbula](#).

Introduction to Chess

Wednesdays March 22nd-May 3rd and May 17th through June 28th, 5:00 pm PT

4th floor Chess Room; Registration Required

Members Free

Join us and learn the fundamentals of the Royal Game with MI Chess Room Coordinator and FIDE Master Paul Whitehead. Learn the basics: how the pieces move and capture, castling and en passant to more advanced strategy: checkmating patterns, how to think in the openings, middle-game strategy, and what to do in the endgame. Register via [Jumbula](#).

Endgame Lab

Thursdays April 13th-June 1st, 5:30 pm PT

4th floor Chess Room; Registration Required

Members \$200; Public \$220

In this eight-week course, FM Paul Whitehead will lead a discussion covering basic and intermediate endings, including reviewing the participant's knowledge of basic checkmates, principals and terminology. We will discuss and review the theory and practice of king and pawn endings, rook endings, minor piece endings, queen endings, and various material imbalances. Participants will also be encouraged to bring in examples from their own games, and there will be plenty of take home material and examples for independent study. Register via [Jumbula](#).

Tournaments:

Two-Day FIDE Chess Tournament

Saturday & Sunday, June 10-11, 10:00 am PT

Chess Room; Registration Required

Members \$65; Public \$95

The quarterly four-round, FIDE-rated 22nd Addison Memorial Championship returns in person! Tournament format is individual Swiss. Register via [Jumbula](#).

Monthly Online Scholastic

Saturday & Monday, April 22 & May 29, 3:00 pm PT

Online via ChessKid.com; Registration Required

Members \$15; Public \$25

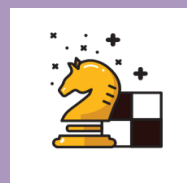
Attend our recurring Weekend USCF Online-rated Scholastic Event via ChessKid.com. Open for all scholastic K-12. Tournament format is automatically paired Swiss. Register via [Jumbula](#).

Check [the Institute website](#) for more upcoming tournaments and chess events!

Join the Chess Socials!

First Fridays of the month, 5 pm
Chess Room; No Registration Required
Unwind from the week with fellow chess players! Join us for rousing game replays on the big screen, snacks, and lively conversation. Wine will be available for purchase in the Meeting Room.

Contact the Chess Room at chessroom@milibrary.org or call (415) 393-0110 with any questions!



**Save the date! Summer
Tuesday Night Marathon
returns May 2 - June 13!**

CinemaLit

April: Films from *Sight & Sound*'s Top 100 of All Time



Image used with permission of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc.

Fridays; Café opens at 5:30 pm PT
Program begins at 6:00 pm PT
4th floor Meeting Room
Registration is required
Members Free; Public \$10

Come early for freshly-popped popcorn!

CinemaLit's spring rotation highlights some of the 100 greatest films of all time. The first film showing in April is *The Apartment* on April 7th. Watch [the website](#) for details.

The Apartment (1960): 125 minutes, directed by Billy Wilder, starring Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, and Fred MacMurray.

Billy Wilder's trenchant comedy-drama of American corporate culture, ambition, ethics, and romance was a huge critical and popular hit in its day, winning both the Best Picture and Director Oscars. It continues to rise in stature, and was 57th in *Sight & Sound*'s recent once-a-decade critics' poll of the 100 greatest films of all time.

Stay tuned for upcoming CinemaLit series

May: Silent Spring
June: Novel Ideas – Book to Screen
July: Classic Musicals

April is Volunteer Recognition Month!

Thank you, Volunteers!

April is Volunteer Recognition month, providing a chance to acknowledge and to be grateful for the many volunteers who lend their time, talents, and voices to meet the needs of the Mechanics' Institute community. These generous members help make a difference supporting CinemaLit features, library, classes, chess events, and beyond. Volunteers help to create a vibrant, participatory community for the Institute. Thank you!

Please reach membership@milllibrary.org if you are interested in becoming a volunteer.

Upcoming Events

No Poetry, No Peace: A Reading and Celebration of Human Expression and Peace

Moderated by Sheryl J. Bize-Boutte

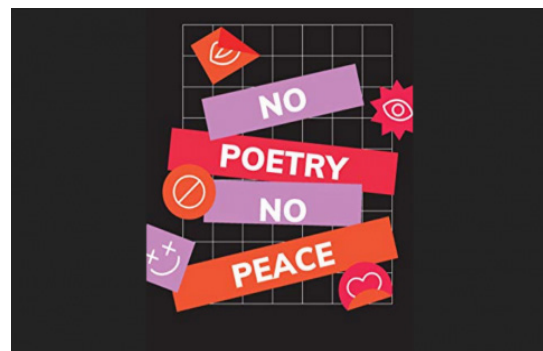
Wednesday, April 12, 6:00 pm PT

Zoom; Registration Required

Members and Cosponsors Free; Public Free

"Poetry provides pathways for creative and cathartic human expression and peace." Join us in celebration of National Poetry Month for a reading of poems from *No Poetry No Peace*, a collection written by Sheryl Bize-Boutte and her daughter Dr. Angela Boutte and a selection of local poets.

This event is produced in partnership with the [San Francisco Writers Conference](#). Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.



National Poetry Month Double-Bill with Acclaimed Poets Henri Cole & Brenda Hillman, joined by special guest former US Poet Laureate Robert Hass

Moderated by Laura Sheppard

Thursday, April 20, 6:00 pm PT

4th Floor Meeting Room; Registration Required

Members Free; Public \$5-\$10 Sliding Scale

Two nationally known award-winning poets read from their new works and talk about their influences and passions. Henri Cole explores the formality and density of the sonnet with its glorious layers of emotion with a contemporary twist in his new collection *Gravity and Center: Selected Sonnets*. Brenda Hillman's bold, experimental eco-poems in her recent *A Few Minutes Before Later* branch out on free-form tangents exploring nature and human nature, power and devastation.



Henri Cole

Brenda Hillman

Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

Mechanics' Institute Biannual Members' Meeting

Thursday, May 25

Reception opens at 5:30 pm PT, Meeting begins at 6:00 pm PT

In Person and Zoom; Registration Required

Members Free

You are invited to the Institute's Biannual Members' Meeting, held onsite and on Zoom, to hear from fellow members, staff, and trustees! Learn about our new plans and programs, technology updates, and efforts to improve your experience as members. Light refreshments will be included.

Please watch [the website](#) for details!



Save the date! The Mechanics' Institute annual Bloomsday celebration is coming Friday, June 16th at 6:00 pm PT.

Join the annual gathering of Joycean celebrants for community readings and live music. This year will feature YOU – so bring your favorite selection to read for all to hear and a friend to share a toast with your libation of choice! *Sláinte!*

Tales from the Chess Café

A Perspective Piece by Chess Instructor Richard Hack



Young players at the 2023 Scholastic Chess Championship in Golden Gate Park.

In thinking of the San Francisco Scholastic Chess Tournament, which was held on March 4th, and considering the Institute's instructors working in schools and meeting monthly to build a chess curriculum, the question of how to teach chess to beginners and others becomes even more interesting. Recently, I've been thinking of the game primarily as an art of arrangement, with the purpose of building a strong position as well as an attack and a defense.

A few weeks ago, I noticed some kids with pawns on the first rank. When I went over to get them to position them according to the rules, I saw that they had made a fine-looking, well-proportioned design of all the pawns and pieces radiating from two foci out to the corners and edges of the board. I decided my impatience was out of place and I told them how nice it looked instead. I guess attack and defense can come later – they're already seeing beauty in the game!

A daily engagement with the 64 squares and 32 starting pieces is kind of like going to work, except most people don't get paid. A player's commitment is similar to that of an artist, scientist, or other thinker. It's a great form of competition and a serious sport that one can play at any age.

The first Friday in February brought me at last to the monthly Chess Social at the Mechanics' Institute Chess Room. There were several games going on, and a good number of people dropping in to socialize for the hour. I got in a number of informal games with a better player, and we found our taste for friendly jibes entertaining to some of the others at the Social.

For years I've been meeting and remembering players who crossed paths with me in the life-stream of chess, especially at a crossroads like this. They are all interesting individuals, friends, rivals, teachers, students, and world-class competitors who come here to give lectures and simuls, fill positions, and help us organize outreach. Once, after a long absence from the chess room, I bumped into an old friend in the doorway of the Mechanics' Institute Library. I congratulated him when he told me he'd become a master, but he insisted on modestly replying, "It's not so hard if all you do is study chess eight hours a day for twenty years."

Each *partie* begins with the looks of the players and the opening engagement of pawns and pieces, followed by the struggle to lead, to make plans, to come through a messy position into order step by step, and hopefully an arrangement that seriously threatens a *coup de grâce*. The end of one is the beginning of another. Every game score is the subject of further consideration: progress, replay, fluctuation, redo. You must effectively arrange the pieces on the board, and arrange your life to fit the game into it. The game makes you think and is a gateway to the rest of it all.

Richard Hack, currently a Chess Instructor at Mechanics' Institute, has worked in the publishing industry. He also writes, and has published many poems and stories over the years. Some of his work can be found [here](#).

The Chess Café is a place to talk about chess, life, and everything in between! Join FM Paul Whitehead and a revolving cast of folks from around the country in a fun and casual atmosphere. Join the Monday chess café for the pure love of the game. The Chess Café is suitable for ALL level of players.

Information about joining the weekly Chess Café can be found [here](#). It meets on Mondays at 4:00 pm PT.

Upcoming Events

Mental Health Month with Dr Stevan M. Weine, author of *How*

Allen Ginsberg Made Revolutionary Poetry from Madness

Monday, May 22, 6:00 pm PT

4th floor Meeting Room; Registration Required

Members Free; Public \$5-\$10 Sliding Scale

Join us for a revelatory look at how poet Allen Ginsberg transformed his personal experiences of mental illness into some of the most powerful and widely read poems of the twentieth century. Through his mother's ongoing confinement and the social and political upheaval of the time, Ginsberg brought forth his voice for freedom of expression, social justice and sexual identity.

Please watch [the website](#) for details.

NEA Big Read Program: *Interior Chinatown* Grand Finale with Chef Martin Yan

Thursday, June 29, 6:00 pm PT

4th floor Meeting Room; Registration Required

Members and Cosponsors \$10; Public \$15

Join us for the finale of our 10 month NEA Big Read series inspired by the themes from *Interior Chinatown* by Charles Yu. The evening opens with a special performance. It will also feature Chinese-American immigrant stories and history with international celebrity Chef Martin Yan and other special guests.

This event is cosponsored by the Chinese Historical Society and Young Audiences of Northern California

Please watch [the website](#) for details.

Reflections on the February Bruce Lee Tour

On Wednesday, February 1st, a dedicated group of excited fans gathered in front of the Chinese Historical Society, housed at the Julia Morgan Building at 965 Clay Street, for a guided tour of its newest exhibit, "We Are Bruce Lee: Under the Sky, One Family." The guide was Jeff Chinn, whose carefully organized and fascinating collection of Bruce Lee memorabilia comprises much of the exhibit. Included in the exhibition are lively drawings and handwritten notes and letters penned by Bruce Lee. The rare personal artifacts are accompanied by historic photos, movie posters, clips from Bruce Lee films, and interviews with Lee from early in his career. A colorful mural by Elaine Chu and Marina Perez-Wong of Twin Walls Mural Company accents the installation.

Lee was not just an action film star: he was also a dancer, artist, and voracious reader interested in Chinese philosophy. He was a man who broke racial barriers in both his personal and professional life. His wife was an American of Swedish and Irish descent, and one of his first Kung Fu studios opened in North Oakland, the birthplace of the Black Panther party. Chinn's tour brings to life a legend and a complex man whose influence on the Asian community, and America's perception of it, has extended long after his untimely death.

Ongoing Reading & Writing Programs

World Literature Book Group

2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, 7:00 pm PT

Zoom; Registration Required

Members Free

World Literature is a member-led book group that explores books written by a variety of authors around the globe. Upcoming titles include *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* by George Orwell, *The Fish Can Sing* by Halldor Laxness, *The House in Smyrna* by Tatiana Salem Levy with translation by Alison Entrekin, *The Man who Disappeared* by Franz Kafka, and *A Woman's Story* and *The Years* by Annie Ernaux. The group welcomes new participants!

Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

The Writers' Lunch

3rd Friday of the month, 12:00 pm PT

Zoom; Registration Required

Members Free

The Writers' Lunch is a casual brown-bag lunch activity for writers of all skill levels. Look forward to craft discussion, informal presentations on all forms of writing, and excellent conversation.

Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

Write If You Dare

Weekly on Thursdays, 11:00 am PT

Zoom; Registration Required

Members Free

Come explore a couple of writing prompts at this member-led, low-key scribble session. Whatever your genre, you will have fun putting pen to paper with other writers!

Please check the [event link](#) for additional details and to register.

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

Member Profile: Mia Morrill



Mia Morrill, a retired schoolteacher, has been a member of the Mechanics' Institute for a little more than ten years. Although she had known about the Institute prior to joining, she did not know we were a library. One day, she accompanied a friend to return their library book to us and joined an Institute weekly tour. From there, she learned about the Institute's writer's activities, and she has been a member ever since!

Mia describes the building as a "sanctuary of sorts" and feels that stepping into the building is like "stepping into another world." She lives within walking distance of the Institute and loves coming here to attend our various classes and events. She says those events help her maintain her curiosity, and she enjoys discovering new things that she might not have considered before. In addition to our writers' activities, she enjoys our weekly CinemaLit offerings.

While she does not intend to publish, Mia enjoys writing about things based on her personal experiences and sending those stories on to members of her family, who live in the Bay Area as well. She is planning to travel to Europe to the Icelandic Writers Retreat in April in order to learn more about writing – especially how to find the time to write.

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Library Questions

Call:
415.393.0101
E-mail:
reference@milibrary.org

Membership Questions

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Support the Institute

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Library Hours

Mon/Weds/Fri 10 - 6
Tues/Thurs 10 - 8
Sat 10 - 5

Closures

May 29
Memorial Day

June 19
Juneteenth

Support the Institute

To support the Institute's outstanding programs and activities, as well as the library itself, donations may be made [online](#), by mail, via your company's matching gifts program, or directly from your retirement or other investment account.

For members who would like to include Mechanics' Institute in their trusts or wills, joining the [James Lick Legacy Society](#) signals your commitment to the Institute's ongoing mission so that future generations may benefit from your generosity.

Contact Director of Development and Membership Cathy Abel at cabel@milibrary.org, or call 415.393.0115.