

The Mechanic's Institute Strategic Plan for Change

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Early History

Born out of the aftermath California Gold Rush, The Mechanics' Institute was initially created “for the education and advancement of toilers in the field of 'mechanical arts'” (Wendorf, 2007, p. 263). Founded in 1854, with unemployment in the city over fifty percent and the local economy floundering, the Institute was created by individuals who sought to provide a place for adults in need of education and job training, “a small but positive contribution... toward the survival of the beleaguered city” (Reinhardt, 2005, p. 6). With no public library system in San Francisco—the city's public library wouldn't be founded for another 25 years—the Institute provided much-needed resources, including classes in woodworking, mechanical drawing, mathematics, and ironwork, as well as free lectures on technical, historical and cultural topics for San Franciscans from all walks of life. A chess and checkers club was also part of the Institute from its earliest days, occupying, at first, a corner of the Institute's headquarters.

At its founding, the Institute's library was small, consisting of “one two-volume study of architecture and three essential reference works – the United States Constitution, the Bible, and a law text on the conveyance of property” (Ibid, p. 8). Gradually, through donations and eventually a merger with the Mercantile Library Association (a rival library founded in 1852), the library grew, and by January 1906, it contained over 200,000 books, as well as patent records and unique works of art.

The Institute also sought to promote industry in California. In 1857, “with \$300 dollars in cash, a small library of 900 volumes and a declining membership” (Wendorf, 2007, p. 266), and the support of San Francisco's nascent business community, the Institute hosted the first of its industrial fairs, which highlighted “works of California workmanship and ingenuity” (Ibid, p. 267), including inventions, manufactured goods, and agricultural products, as well as crafts and

fine art. Over time, these fairs would serve as launching pads for exhibitors, including Levi Strauss, Singer Sewing Machines, Ghirardelli Chocolate, and many other companies still in existence today (Reinhardt, 2005).

The 1906 Earthquake and Its Aftermath

The Institute's building, entire collection and fair pavilions were completely destroyed by the earthquake of 1906 and the fires that followed in its wake. The only documents that survived were the Institute's original constitution, as well as membership records, meeting minutes, and other official documents stored in the library's fire proof safes or at trustees' houses. Undaunted, the Institute's librarian started contacting libraries back East as trustees sought a temporary headquarters. After four years in a one-story temporary structure built on the empty pavilion lots, the Institute moved to its current home, a nine-story building, at 57 Post Street in downtown San Francisco.

The Institute Today

The Institute's new building was designed as a mixed-use space, including three stories devoted to the library, and four floors of rental office space that continues to ensure regular income for the Institute. Only one third of the Institute's general operating expenses are covered by membership fees (Wendorf, 2007, p. 280). Membership subscriptions are available at a discounted rate for students, and there are special group rates for families. The Mechanics' Institute website indicates that the membership fee for a full-time student, 35 years old and under, enrolled at accredited educational institution is \$35, one adult membership is \$95, and family membership, described as "two adults and their children under the age of 22, living at the same address," is \$150 (2009b). Enhanced annual memberships are offered at the Associate, Patron, and Benefactor levels, and cover the entire family. Prices for the respective levels are

\$250, \$500, and \$1000 per year (The Mechanics' Institute, 2009b). Today, membership holds steady at approximately 5,000 annual subscriptions (Wendorf, 2007, p. 280).

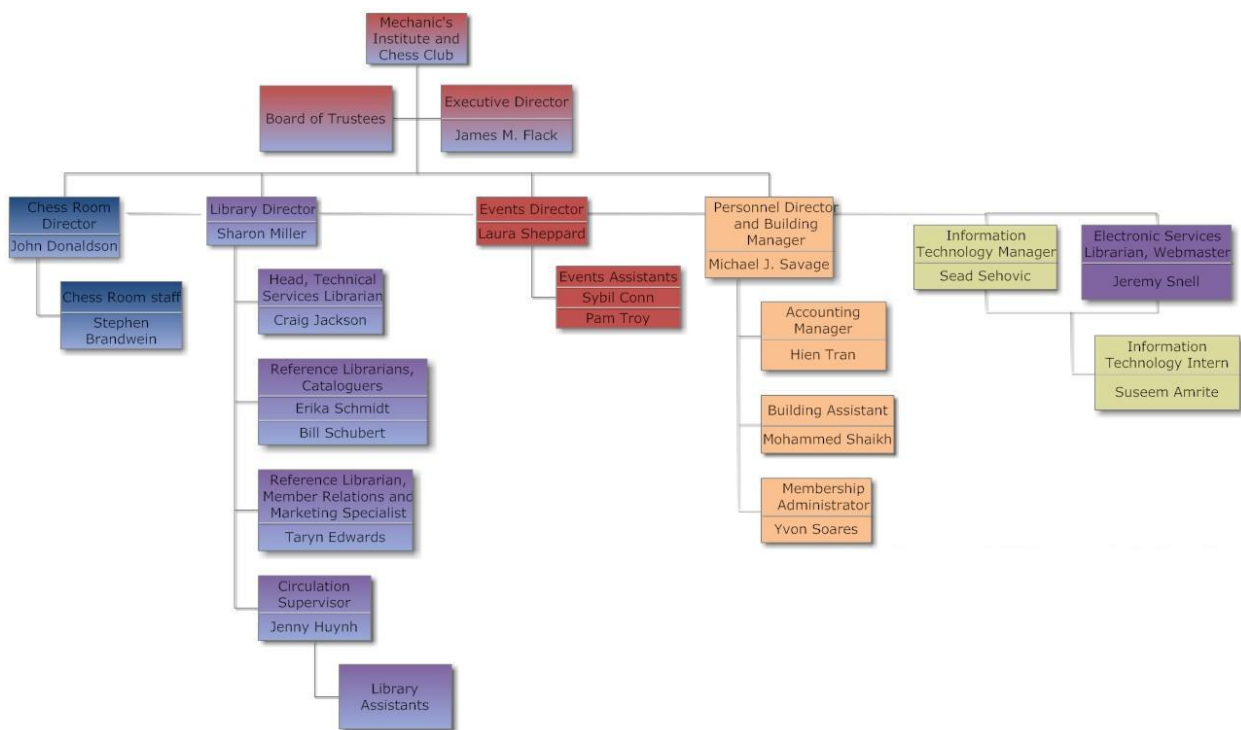
The Institute still offers classes and reading groups for members and lectures to members and the public alike, with a small fee charged for non-members' entry. The Institute also houses a chess club, now the oldest continuously operating club of its kind in the United States. The library offers an online catalog for members and non-members alike, as well as online journal access for members via databases such as JSTOR, InfoTrac, and Books in Print. The library is open seven days a week, as is the chess club, with both offering special after-hours events throughout the week. Upcoming events at the library include an appearance by San Francisco Poet Laureate Diane di Prima, a "literary noir" night, musical performances featuring Renaissance music, and showings of classic American and International films.

Although the Mechanics' Institute does not have a written mission or vision statement, it does have an overarching purpose. The Mechanics' Institute views itself as "an unchanging institution," providing "a center for cultural and education advancement" (Reinhardt, 2005) via its reference and circulation library, educational and cultural programs, and chess room. Unlike many private libraries, the Institute is non-exclusive, with no restrictions on membership and equal access for all members. Though the Mechanics' Institute is proud of its past, it recognizes the need to adapt to changing times and remains committed to providing access to learning in many media, providing Internet access, an online catalog, access to online databases, and computer classes to its members.

The Institute is governed by a board of 15 trustees, elected by the members and serving indefinitely. The Institute's Executive Director oversees the day-to-day operation of the Institute, while the Library Director, Chess Room Director, and Events Director supervise their respective

departments. Within the library, the small staff takes on several roles, with all librarians covering the reference desk and many librarians taking on tasks that most suit their interests, from cataloging to member outreach. With a new Library Director taking the helm this January, the library's management structure has become more consultative, with the director taking an “open door” approach to employee suggestions (Schmidt, personal communication, April 2010).

The following is an organizational chart:



SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The Mechanics' Institute's strengths include the importance it places on its over 150-year history. Currently, the Mechanics' Institute is raising money to finish its lobby restoration project. The Mechanics' Institute's emphasis on making its history known to visitors demonstrates that although San Francisco is culturally-rich and has many museums and libraries,

its history makes it an important landmark and service. Besides providing access to databases and Internet research classes, another unique feature is that it houses the oldest chess club in the United States. An added strength is that the Mechanics' Institute also realizes that although history is important, the organization recognizes that it needs to adapt to changing times.

As demonstrated in the explanation of the Mechanics' Institute's current services, the Institute has an energetic activity program despite its small staff size.

One strength in having such a small staff is that individuals seem to have lots of freedom to “own” various aspects of their work and can work at a wide variety of tasks within the library.

Because the library is so small, the director's management style really defines how the library works, including how much its programs are integrated with the rest of the Institute. While this can be seen as a strength, it could also be a weakness depending on the director's management style.

Another strength, although it can be seen as a result of a small budget, is that the Institute, housed in a nine-storey building, seeks to increase its funds by renting out spaces. This is a good example of using resources to the advantage of the Mechanics' Institute. For example, the Meeting Room/Café, located on the fourth floor, is available to rent on an hourly basis when they are not in use for Institute programs. A conference space with room for 14 people can also be rented. Meeting rooms with capacity for 40 to 60 people are also available to rent. Currently, there is also an office space for lease (The Mechanics' Institute, 2009c).

Weaknesses

A weakness to the internal organization is that the Mechanics' Institute has a small budget. According to the Mechanics' Institute's website:

Since 1854 the Mechanics' Institute has been supported by its membership both in the form of dues and donations. Membership dues have never covered the full cost of operations. Member donations in the form of cash, stocks, books, and bequests, have always provided the extra resources that allow the Institute to be a cultural treasure in downtown San Francisco. (2009a)

The fact that donations keep the Institute running can be very unstable. As mentioned in the description of the Institute today, there are about 5,000 annual memberships.

Another weakness is that because of the Mechanics' Institute's small staff size, there is not room for advancement. Many people stay at their jobs until they retire, and retirement is not much for those working at such a small private library.

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Another potential weakness is that the Institute is governed by a board of 15 trustees that serve "indefinitely". Having no limit on the term that a board member may serve could lead to stagnancy in development and growth, and limit the amount of new ideas and input that come into the organization.

The fact that the Institute's librarians all take various tasks, depending on their personal interests could lead to some role confusion. If tasks aren't explicitly assigned and managed there is potential for disorganization.

Another weakness is that the Mechanics' Institute does not offer many youth programs or services. There is a small young adult collection and a chess program for young people.

Opportunities

The current unstable economy could be an opportunity for M.I. to draw community interest. M.I. was founded in 1854, during a time of economic upheaval, to provide adults with education and job training. M.I. could publicize and reconnect to those roots, possibly through the implementation of relevant community programs, to entice membership and acknowledgement.

Another opportunity to attract publicity and interest is by connecting with other local, state, and national chess clubs. Hosting chess competitions or other clubs either for a fee or for an audience could be a good way to raise money and pique interest.

There are opportunities for the Institute to raise awareness through new technologies such as Facebook, MySpace, or blogs, as well. Although the Institute does have a Facebook page, its fan base is only in the 200s. Embracing new technologies could be a good way for the Mechanics' Institute to attract a younger generation of members.

Another way to attract younger members is to create services and programs geared to teens and young adults.

Tourism is another opportunity for M.I. to attract interest. M.I. has a rich and fascinating history, which is the type of thing for which thousands of tourists travel to San Francisco every year. Connecting with the San Francisco Visitor Information Center or www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com is an opportunity to bring the public to M.I. events.

Threats

The biggest threat seems to be how the M.I.'s programs and Library can survive in a culturally-rich city like San Francisco. There are many libraries and museums in the area, and unless the M.I. is heavily marketed, it could be easily lost among all the other choices available.

Another threat is the unstable economy. The M.I. has a small budget that depends mainly on membership and donations. A sharp decline in the economy, such is the situation today, could have a severe and immediate effect on funds for the Institute.

Three Strategic Directions: What the Experts Say

Reward or Recognition Programs

While the Institute and other libraries and organizations exist to serve the community at large, employees, managers, and administrators work together to provide the service. It is important that employees feel appreciated for their efforts. According to Stephanie Wilson, as cited by Linda R. Musser (2001):

In the aftermath of downsizing and restructuring, employees have often felt forgotten and demeaned as extra workloads and longer work hours have become the norm without the balance of additional employee recognition of employee performance. Even annual merit are at their lowest levels in 20 years. (p. 85)

At small institutions like the Mechanics' Institute, where individuals take on a variety of roles, there are not many opportunities for advancement unless someone retires. If there is little advancement available, many qualified employees may not stay with the organization. In tough economic times, like that being experienced in California and around the nation, pay increases or other monetary rewards may not be workable.

Jerry McAdams (2000) writes that there are many types of recognition programs. "Recognition plans are investments in human capital and often reflect the culture of an organization" (p. 20). Plans can be categorized in a number of ways. There are those which celebrate organizational objectives, and these can be "inexpensive, fun, significant, and make a positive cultural statement. They must be frequent, open, honest, and involving. They are about

focus and celebration, rather than manipulation and hype" (p. 20). Other plans reinforce "outstanding performers, as individuals, teams, or organizational units," while still others reinforce "desired behaviors or activities" or recognize years of service to the organization (p. 21). McAdams suggests that showing appreciation can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

In the mid-late 1990s, Pennsylvania State University encouraged its departments to address the lack of recognition and rewards programs. Pennsylvania State, university-wide, mainly offered typical awards that recognize "length of service or excellent job performance in the form of an Employee of the Year award" (p. 86). The Penn State University Libraries developed a task force to research rewards and recognition programs in an effort to improve rewards and recognition in its libraries (Musser, 2001). The task force discovered that most university libraries also employ these types of awards (p. 87), but "[s]everal institutions have implemented rewards and recognition programs...[that] are given with greater frequency (either weekly or monthly) and with less fanfare than length of service or Employee of the Year awards" (p. 87). Duke University, for example, offers a series of awards in separate categories for Cool Under Fire, Ice Breaker, Problem Solver, and the Bright Idea Award. The University of Missouri-Columbia has a letter writing program in which a staff member writes a letter of appreciation for another staff member's efforts. (p. 87). The University of Michigan has an UMatter program that "presents ten awards per month to recipients who also are recognized at an annual staff recognition event. The awardees receive a gold UMatter pin presented by unit supervisors" (p. 87). Research in the management realm indicates that that "the value of recognition should not be underestimated in the work environment...appreciation for a job well done is the highest motivator for employees" (p. 86).

Dale Dauten, a management writer, commented that "most people—and the best and most competitive people—try harder at whatever game they play if someone keeps score" (White, 1999, para. 1). He also noted that "the preferred form of recognition is financial, but far less costly approaches are available," examples which include a preferred parking spot for the employee of the month or even a free pizza (White, 1999, para. 7). A survey conducted by the Penn State Libraries found that the top ten items that employees would want for rewards include a salary increase, cash bonus, letter of commendation for their file, a free lunch or dinner which was tied with a gift certificate, a free university class, review of job grade and pay level, tickets to a cultural event, either free parking or a designated space with was tied with a thank you card, being called into the manager's office to hear praise or appreciation, or a hand-written note by the dean which tied with an award (Musser, 2001, p. 88-89). Although some of the ideas are monetary, many of the ideas are more creative.

Elissa F. Topper (2004a) notes that "some research shows that reward programs that only emphasize cash incentives can actually 'de-motivate' staff by shifting the goal away from a sense of accomplishment and contribution to attaining the carrot of a fiscal award" (p. 96). Topper provides several ideas as to how to find out what kinds of rewards, besides money, employees would like, the first being to ask them (as the Penn State Libraries did). Saying thank-you is important; "[o]ut of 67 potential rewards for doing a good job, employees ranked personal congratulations from the manager as number one, and a written note from the boss came in second, according to a survey reported on the Foundation for Enterprise development website" (Topper, 2004a, p. 96). Departmental awards can be created based on a special emphasis (cost cutting or customer service), "a 'thanks for your help' box" can be made in which staff "drop in the names of fellow employees who go beyond the call of duty" for a monthly drawing, and

simple treats can be offered once a project is finished (Topper, 2004a, p. 96). Another tip is to celebrate each employee's hiring date anniversary with a card. In a part two of Topper's article, other librarians offered ideas, including a parking space, gift certificate for a free meal, an employee of the year award with 500 dollars and a plaque in the library, a "Kudos box—a box of goodies and inexpensive gifts like pens, notepads, etc. [and]...an online thank-you system with a form that can be completed by both staff and library users" (2004b, p. 94). One Interlibrary Loan department has a Mr. Wonderful doll trophy that employees take turns giving to each other. Another idea was to have a staff appreciation day during National Library Week in which the public is invited.

Penn State Libraries, after researching other recognition programs and surveying staff, implemented a Thanks! online mailbox that allows staff and patrons to email messages of appreciation. A staff member gathers all messages from the week and sends them out to the entire staff. These messages are also printed in the libraries' monthly newsletter. The libraries at Penn State also have a website dedicated to recognition initiatives. It includes information about the history of the recognition task force along with the task force's reports, "a bibliography of recommended reading on the topic of rewards and recognition, and an archive of Thanks! messages" (Musser, 2001, p. 89). The Mechanics' Institute would benefit from such an inventive recognition program as the Institute does not have the means to change pay scales or offer many positions. This is one way to relieve the pressure.

Marketing

Known for being one of "San Francisco's best kept secrets," the Mechanics Institute is hidden in plain sight in the midst of the city's cultural scene. As such, the Mechanic's Institute is poised for excellent growth as an organization if they can target the correct population and use

affordable means to spread the word about their available services in order to obtain new members. It has been noted that the Mechanic's Institute has a steady membership of approximately 5,000 patrons who help to keep the library running through their annual membership donations. This core group demonstrates their belief in the mission of the Institute, and the services that it offers, as they continue their sponsorship even throughout such difficult economic times.

As such, the membership base of the institute needs to remain the focal point of the marketing efforts that need to be made. In any marketing plan, non-users are the absolute last place to focus direct marketing efforts. "These are the people who are hardest to influence, and marketing literature suggests, this is the area on which *least* effort should be concentrated" (Kerr, 2010, p. 9) Although marketing messages are hardest to direct to non-users, obviously there is still a need to turn those non-users into members. So, while organizations with limited budgets should not usually focus on directly marketing to non-users, they should indeed ask their current members to share information about the Mechanic's Institute with their friends, families and coworkers in an effort to expand the user population, and effectively increase the Institute's funding. The loyal group of current members and followers of the organization are the most important resource the Mechanic's Institute has in marketing itself to new members (Hernon & Altman, 2010).

According to Barber and Wallace, "One study suggests that the average person is exposed to 3,000 advertising messages in a day" (2009). That is an incredible number, but when one thinks about it, it's not that hard to believe. What's even more important to think about is how most people actually react to advertising. They certainly don't run out every one of those 3,000 times to buy a product or sign up for a service. But if someone's best friend tells her to

check out the new restaurant that just opened up down the street, chances are she will take his word for it one day in the near future. Word of mouth advertising is simply effective, as long as current fans and members of an organization know what to say.

One of the most inexpensive and simplest ways to keep members connected and informed is to dedicate some staff to maintaining and developing the organization's social media pages. Constantly interacting with news about the Mechanics Institute, as well as relevant trivia, tips and other information that members would find valuable creates a fun and interactive way to keep members involved. It is also beneficial to have bookmarks, postcards, and other collateral materials readily available for members to use themselves and disseminate to others to help spread the word about the Institute's offerings. The easier it is for members to share their experiences about the Institute with their peers, the more likely it is that they will do so (Barber & Wallace, 2009).

In addition, as the Institute adopts plans to upgrade services and expand their offerings, it should alert current members of the efforts at hand in order to receive as much support as possible. Members can be asked to make additional donations to campaigns for better services, renovated spaces, or whatever it is the Institute is currently undertaking. But more importantly, members need to understand that by spreading the word about the institute to others, they will help speed up the process of receiving even more from their membership, and it doesn't even cost them a thing. Simply talking about why they value the institute, bringing friends in to see the services offered, etc. can all help to reign in more members, and thereby increase funding for the projects the Institute would like to see completed.

Another key focus that the Mechanic's Institute should have as far as marketing is concerned is to increase support from within the current membership. Keeping up constant communications with current members, alerting them to special events & activities and keeping them informed of the Institute's offerings is key to maintaining relationships with those members. In addition, it improves the likelihood that the Institute will be able to upsell memberships. For instance, getting a member to move from an individual membership to a family membership, or even better, to the higher sponsorship levels of associate, donor and beyond can significantly drive up the Institute's revenue (Kerr, 2010). Ultimately, communication is absolutely key in making sure that members understand that they are directly affecting the ability of the institute to offer enhanced services, and in also making sure that members know of all the offerings available to them at the Mechanic's Institute.

In trying to advance the Institute's membership to non-users, another avenue that increases the likelihood of actually making a sizeable impression is to branch out to other local groups that share commonalities with the Institute. Community organizations, vocational schools, and many other groups are excellent sources for referrals to possible new members. By collaborating with groups that share similar goals and objectives as the Institute, it becomes possible to reach out to a fairly targeted audience that will be much more receptive than if the Institute simply marketed to the general public. Plus, it may provide the institute with much needed support in other arenas besides simply membership, perhaps being able to borrow space, co-host events, and collaborate in any number of ways with these new partner organizations.

Whenever developing a marketing plan, it is essential to make sure that there are measurable goals which the organization is trying to address (Kerr, 2010 p.9). In this case, the

Mechanic's institute could focus on the following measurable objectives, for example (specific amounts would be determined by the Institute based on current figures):

1. Maintain member renewal rates of at least xx%, and increase renewal of memberships at higher levels (i.e. Associate and Donor versus Student or Individual) by XX% of members.
2. Contact all members at least 3-4 times monthly via newsletters, email campaigns and physical mail in order to ensure constant communication of the Institute's current goals and available services.
3. Increase annual memberships by XX% through a combination of enhanced word-of-mouth advertising, social media, and collaboration with other organizations and groups in the area.
4. Create public awareness of the Mechanic Institute by writing press releases for every major event and at least once a month. These should then be distributed to local papers, schools, and other organizations in order to get the word out about the Institute's offerings and current developments.
5. Create a network of local organizations with similar goals and objectives that can be used to pool resources, attract new members, and strengthen the visibility of the Mechanic's Institute in the community.

Innovation: Young Adult Services and Events

During his tenure in the 1870's and 90's, director and later president of the Mechanics Institute Andrew Smith Hallidie reached out specifically to San Francisco's youth. A British-born engineer perhaps best known for inventing the cable car, Hallidie sought to combat the

hooliganism he saw in San Francisco's youth. By providing access to educational resources and the "intellectual and social pursuit of chess" (Wendorf, 2007, p. 280), Hallidie hoped to combat the gambling, alcohol use, and general misbehavior he saw on the streets of San Francisco.

This spirit is core to mechanics' institutes around the world. Reinhardt (p 27) notes that "the first purpose -- almost the sacred duty" of mechanics' institutes is to offer free or low-cost access to lecturers speaking on the arts and sciences. In contemporary San Francisco, however, the Mechanics' Institute is just one of the "rich variety of educational and cultural institutions" available (Aveney, 1986). One of the challenges that face the Institute today is how to stay true to its origins while adapting to the changing needs of the community it serves. Reinhardt (2005) writes that the Institute is at a crossroads:

Is there a need for a membership library in the financial district of a commuter city? How can its role be differentiated from that of other educational and cultural institutions?

Should it aspire to be a sort of educational community center? Or should it hew to the line it has always followed, of providing an inexpensive, non-exclusive, club-like refuge for people who seek the companionship, stimulation, and solace of books?

Perhaps the answer lies in the Mechanics' Institute's origins. The Mechanics' Institute, as previously discussed, recognizes the need to adapt to changing times and remains committed to providing access to learning in many media, providing Internet access, an online catalog, access to online databases, and computer classes to its members. Most of the membership, however, is strongly geared to adults. There is great potential for the Institute to attract young people.

Although there is a special chess program for young people, the Library collection for youth is small. The Institute can do more to encourage youth to participate in its culture of learning and discussion. This is not necessarily an original idea, but G. Edward Evans and Patricia Layzell

Ward writes that "it is possible to be 'innovative; through the introduction of a new idea for your organization even if the idea itself has existed for some time and or has been used in other organizations" (2007, p. 117).

According to Sven C. Voelpel, Marius Leibold, and Christoph K. Streb (2005), "Recent academic and business evidence indicate that innovation is the key factor for companies' success and sustained fitness in a rapidly evolving, knowledge-networked economy" (p. 57). In a culturally-rich area like San Francisco, the Mechanics' Institute needs to be able to compete with the many other libraries, museums, and similar institutions in the area to sustain itself. The Institute has the ability to provide much needed services and cultural engagement to young adults, and by opening these spaces up and encouraging local youth to become a part of the Institute, there is a great opportunity for the organization to grow.

The library's existing space for children – a small area by the building's front windows, with two long bookshelves forming an 'L' shaped space – provides shelving for the library's youth-oriented collection, but little more. Even on a small budget, steps could be taken to provide a more welcoming atmosphere for children. By transforming the space into a more child friendly environment, the library could expand its appeal to young readers.

In "Designing Spaces for Children and Teens," an article that ran the October 2009 issue of the ALA's *Libraries* magazine, Sandra Feinberg and James R. Keller provide steps for libraries seeking to create a child-friendly space. First, Feinberg and Keller recommend that "the project team needs to learn just as much about the attitudes and commitment to youth by staff, board and the community" as they do about the needs of children in the community. Any change in services -- even an expansion of services to children and teens -- needs to take into account the full picture of the library's patron services, history and atmosphere. A focus group involving

members with and without children, staff, and board members should convene to discuss potential changes during the initial planning stages.

The editor of the *School Library Journal*, Brian Kennedy, writes that libraries need to "[e]mbrace OST" (2006, p. 11). OST stands for out-of-school time, which "refers to meaningful programs and services that are provided to children and teens after school, on weekends, and over the summer" (Kennedy, 2006, p. 11). Libraries everywhere have such programs, but Kennedy explains that these services should be made a priority rather than a consequence of having tons of kids in the library afterschool (2006, p. 11).

There are many ideas for programs, events, and services for young adults. Establishing reading groups for teens is one idea suggested by Anne Spelman (2001). This is a regular forum for teenagers to meet each other and with a librarian to talk about materials they have used and enjoyed. The forum also provides opportunities for teenagers to become involved in developing a local library service that suits their needs, something that clearly belongs to them. (Spelman, 2001, Teenage reading groups section, para. 1)

In order to plan for a reading group, the library needs to research other libraries' teen groups and then meet with teens that currently use the library or reach out to schools to find out what teens want in a reading group. An initial planning meeting should be conducted with these participants (Spelman, 2001, Planning section, para. 1-3). According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, for a library program for young adults to be effective, the organization "must regard young people as resources in planning and program development and involve them in meaningful roles" (Bishop & Bauer, 2002). A survey conducted by Bishop and Bauer (2002) found that young adults are interested in the programs and services available to them through the library and that they'd like to have input in their development. The results show that youth are

“...extremely enthusiastic about serving on teen advisory boards and [like] to have input into the programs offered at the library” (Bishop & Bauer, 2002).

Spelman (2001) writes that most reading groups meet once a month for an hour on an established day of the week. The idea behind such groups is that they are flexible. Teens usually are greeted by the librarian and mingle with friends while browsing materials the librarian has left out. The librarian or staff member then "talks to participants about books they have used since the last meeting and recommend new materials from the current display" (Structure and format section, para. 2). The reading group session ends with a group activity or "ongoing project" (Structure and format section, para. 3). Serving refreshments is also recommended. The idea behind the informality of these sessions is that teens will be encouraged "to indirectly recommend materials to each other" (Content section, para. 1).

Another idea is to create an afterschool writing and math tutoring program. Cindy Mediavilla writes that "[a]pproximately one in seven public libraries nationwide offers [sic] formal after-school homework assistance to elementary, middle, and high school students" (2003, p. 56). In order for such a program to work, libraries, schools, and appropriate nonprofit organizations need to work together to create a program that suits the needs of the particular community (Mediavilla, 2003; McNally, 2005). According to Bishop and Bauer (2002), "Librarians should continue efforts to connect school and public libraries in ways that demonstrate they are willing to cooperate in order to meet the young adults' needs for information and entertainment." Connecting with local schools, making them aware of the library programs, and possibly coordinating programs with the schools is a good way to start implementing new after school tutoring programs.

There are many examples of successful programs in libraries. In Monterey, California, the youth services librarian launched an "outreach program called Homework Pals, which

provides off-site homework assistance to children attending after-school daycare service" (Mediavilla, 2003, p. 56). Monroe County in Indiana has two homework centers in its library, one for elementary students and one for middle and high school students. The library in Monroe is near Indiana University; so many tutors are recruited from the college. The college students can either earn school credit or pay. A library in Pasadena, California recruited tutors from a high school with a special teaching program. These students "are paid by the school district after completing 100 hours of volunteer service in the library" (p. 57). One library in Oregon buses children to the library from school for tutoring.

Eileen McNally (2005) writes about the experience of the Broward County Library system in South Florida in implementing an afterschool program. The branches became flooded with visitors because of the addition of computers. "After school, the libraries' staffs were overwhelmed by the press of children clamoring to get their hands on a keyboard" (2005, p. 27). In 2000, the staff brainstormed solutions and realized that they needed more staff to work with students. The library partnered with the school district's afterschool director who created the curriculum and promoted the new library program, Afterschool@ your library, to principals and teachers.

A nonprofit drop-out agency recruited and screened prospective staff members, hired a project director, procured supplies, and administered the payroll. Broward County Library provided sites, learning resources, and workshops on library resources for the new team. Three generous foundations provided start-up funding. (p. 27).

Over time, and with support of the schools, teachers, community agencies, and state grants, the program has grown. 10 branches now serve approximately 300 students (p. 27).

Mediavilla (2003) also writes that libraries must recruit volunteers or staff members who have the basic qualifications to help students with their homework. Policies will need to be

designed to ensure that volunteers and staff have the appropriate math, language, and computer skills. Specific days and times will also need to be established, as well as designating a special area for tutoring. Homework collections should also be developed so students have needed materials to carry out assignments, including encyclopedias, dictionaries, and textbooks if students are not allowed to bring textbooks home.

Strategic Plan for Attracting Youth to the Mechanics' Institute

Objective: Build and enhance teen and young adult centered services over a five year period (2010-2015).

Goal 1: Increase funding for young adult programming.

Action: Initiate collaborative efforts with local school districts, community college districts, Boys & Girls clubs etc. to help strengthen the Institute's network of potential users and supportive community groups. Research and apply for grants that would provide necessary funding for the various projects the Mechanics Institute would like to bring to light. Constant attention should be paid to fundraising efforts, especially focusing on campaigns to current members and supporters, helping them understand the goals of this strategic plan, and why they should help support the Institute in achieving these goals.

Goal 2: Develop the youth collection.

Action: Create and implement a donation program specifically for the betterment of the youth collection. Increase potential for donations by increasing visibility of the organization by utilizing all marketing opportunities. Target local schools and youth organizations as prospective donations, and host book drives or other material donation events encouraging the community to participate in the building of this significant resource.

Goal 3: Provide teens and young adults with the means to discuss books via reading groups or books clubs.

Action: In order to plan for a teen-focused reading group or book club, the Institute's staff members who will be involved with this project need to first research other libraries' teen-based programs. "Consider all the resources your community that may be able to help promote, sponsor or resource the group" (Spelman, 2001). After these steps, the staff needs to reach out to teens who visit the Mechanics' Institute and non-users in the surrounding middle and high schools to get participants for an initial planning meeting to get a sense of what students are looking for in such a group or how to get more young adults in the Institute. Spelman (2001) suggests that during the planning meeting, the group can develop a direction and start planning for promotion, events for the year, and a year-end evaluation. When the reading group convenes, they can help plan for other events and choose a name. The idea is to get the students' input for their own space.

Goal 4: Provide homework assistance for writing and math.

Action: The first step for such a program is for staff to meet and discuss ideas for the types of help that will be provided. Partnering with an after school program director and any nonprofit agencies with an interest in education as the Broward County Library system has done is a vital step in creating an appropriate program (McNally, 2005). Talking with teachers and principals about implementing a program is necessary. Parents should also be informed of a proposed plan in order to garner support. The Institute would also need to seek out potential tutors from nearby colleges and high schools. Funds from nonprofit organizations and grants will need to be sought. The Broward County Library was fortunate in that they found a partner in a drop-out prevention agency who recruited and hired staff for the afterschool program at the

library. If the Institute is unable to find a similar resource, tutors or helpers will most likely be volunteers. Classroom resources will also need to be collected through donations. Establishing this program will require lots of pre-planning. For it to work, the Institute will need to work with educators and community members. The plan also needs to incorporate the use of new technologies and social medias to encourage youth participation and get them excited about the offerings of the Mechanic's Institute.

Goal 5: Provide information on technology, computer, and/or vocational training.

Action: The Mechanics Institute can expand its reach and impact by encouraging young adults to come there to find out more about career technical education and vocational training. Adding databases like Proquest's Career and Technical Education collection would provide the MI with important access to contemporary literature and information on numerous occupations and opportunities for youth and adults to find out more about their desired vocations (Golderman et al., 2010). Also, by initiating collaboration with the San Francisco community college system (the downtown campus is located just a few blocks from the Institute), the Mechanic's Institute could easily partner with existing Career Technical Programs and offer itself as an additional resource for students. It should also spend some time looking for grants and funding that can be accessed by organizations working to support Career Technical Education (Garbart, 1998), which is rather heavily funded by the California Department of Education and other large organizations at this time. In fact, by creating a specific vocational support program and seeking appropriate funding, the Institute could easily increase its revenue and align its services with its initial mission since inception.

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