



# THE STEREOPTICON

Views of the Mechanics' Institute Library

January 2003  
Volume 4, no. 1

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Library Classes\*

*InfoTrac (Periodical Databases)*, January 23  
*Introduction to Financial Newsletters*, January 28  
*Company Investment Information on the Web*,  
February 4  
*Introduction to Computers and the World Wide Web*,  
February 6  
*Using Search Engines, Part I*, February 13  
*Using Search Engines, Part II*, February 20  
*Electronic Mail*, February 27

\*All classes are held from 10am to noon.

### Library Tours

Tours are held every Wednesday at noon, starting at the 3rd floor Information Desk. Docent-led evening tours will be held on Wednesday, January 15, at 5:30 pm and Tuesday, February 25, at 5:30 pm.

### Important Numbers

Circulation: 393-0101  
Reference: 393-0102  
Membership: 393-0105  
Events: 393-0114  
Chess Room: 393-0110  
Library Fax: 397-8747  
E-Mail: [reference@milibrary.org](mailto:reference@milibrary.org)  
Website: [www.milibrary.org](http://www.milibrary.org)

### Library Hours\*

Monday—Thursday	9am-9pm
Friday	9am-6pm
Saturday	10am-5pm
Sunday	1pm-5pm

\*The library will be closed on January 20 and February 17.

Mechanics' Institute Library  
57 Post Street  
San Francisco, CA 94104

## NEW TITLES

November 16—December 13, 2002

\*Donations indicated with an asterisk.

### BOOKS—FICTION

Bender, Aimée *An invisible sign of my own*  
Bôtan *Letters from Thailand*  
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor *Crime and punishment*.  
1993 ed. (c1993)  
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor *Demons*. 2002 ed.  
Housden, Roger *Chasing Rumi: a story about finding  
the heart's desire*  
Lemann, Nancy *Malaise*  
Lewis, Matthew *The monk*  
Lewis, Sinclair *Arrowsmith; Elmer Gantry;*  
*Dodsworth*  
O'Donovan, Síonfra *Malinski*  
*Tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann* (c1972), edited by Leonard  
J. Kent and Elizabeth C. Knight  
Updike, John *Seek my face*

### Historical Fiction

Cornwell, Bernard *Vagabond*  
Horch, Daniel *The angel with one hundred wings: a  
tale from the Arabian nights*  
Morrison, Blake *The justification of Johann  
Gutenberg*  
Murphy, Garth *The Indian lover*  
Richler, Nancy *Your mouth is lovely*  
Scarrow, Simon *The eagle's conquest*  
Stevenson, Jane *The winter queen*



### Mystery & Suspense

Bowen, Rhys *Death of Riley*  
Brown, Rita Mae *Hotspur*  
Buckley, Fiona *A pawn for a queen: an Ursula  
Blanchard mystery at Queen Elizabeth I's court*  
Camilleri, Andrea *The terra-cotta dog*  
Case, John *The eighth day*  
Constantine, K. C. *Saving room for dessert*

(Continued on page 6)

50 years ago:

**President Eisenhower:** On January 20, 1953, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was inaugurated as the 34<sup>th</sup> president of the US, with Richard M. Nixon sworn in as vice-president. A Republican sits in the Oval Office for the first time in 24 years.



**Mount Everest:** On May 29, 1953, the summit of Mount Everest was reached. Sir Edmund Hillary, a New Zealand explorer, and Tenzing Norgay of Nepal, became the first men to reach the 29,035 foot summit, the highest point on Earth. The two climbers instantly became international heroes.

**Korean War ends:** An armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, and the boundary of North and South Korea was settled at the front line. South Korea gains 12,000 square miles above the 38th parallel and a 2 1/2 mile-wide demilitarized zone divides the two nations.

.... and closer to home, the **Buena Vista Café** introduces **Irish coffee**. Columnist Stanton Delaplane, who discovered the mix of whisky, coffee, cream, and sugar in Ireland, gave the recipe to the café owners.

**Sources consulted:** *Chase's Calendar of Events*. 2003 edition REF 394 C48  
*When We Were Young : A Baby Boomer Yearbook* (for 1953 info)  
REF 973.92 K64

*Craig Jackson, Head Reference Librarian*

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms, and Cultures*, by Chris McManus. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002. 152.33 M16

This book is a very thorough study of the pervasive phenomenon of right- and left-handedness. McManus' book provides many astonishing facts and anecdotes, but also underlying scientific data.

Most organic molecules, including amino acids, come in "L" and "D" (left and right) versions, and this asymmetry is ultimately reflected in the physiology of plant and animal bodies. But many mysteries remain about the function of biological asymmetry. The subject is of obvious interest in art, industrial design, and analyses of perception and behavior, particularly the studies of right- and left-brain function.

Why do some written languages go from right to left, and others from left to right? Why do the "rules of the road" vary so that drivers in some countries drive on the left side of the road, but in other countries on the right side? How the concepts of "gauche" and "sinister" arise? Why is there a "right-wing" and a "left-wing" in politics? How does a left-handed athlete gain an advantage in baseball, boxing, tennis, or fencing? Why does a left-hander forced to write right-handedly develop a stammer? Are there truly ambidextrous people? (The British royal family alone provides plenty of case studies.) Is it significant that four of the last six U. S. presidents are southpaws? How is



handedness passed along genetically? Are there mirror-image identical twins? Do Southern Hemisphere organisms differ from their counterparts north of the Equator? What about those rare human and animal specimens in which all the organs are reversed? Is it true that left-handers are more creative or have more immune disorders?

McManus covers the vast array of social, cultural, linguistic and biological issues with wit and humor, and provides many illustrated examples, as well as sufficient—but not excessive—scientific rigor.

*Herb Childs, Acquisitions Librarian*

*Disaster in Dearborn: The Story of the Edsel*, by Thomas E. Bonsall. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002. 629.222 B721



The Edsel has long been considered the most famous flop in the history of American industrial design and marketing. But it's an interesting and instructive flop, and the whole episode has been closely scrutinized since the last Edsel rolled off the line.

Ford's vast motivational research determined that a new car that was "different just to be different" would be a success in the mid-1950s. Through compromises, Edsel ended up functionally not much different from Fords and Mercurys of the same era, or from comparable GM and Chrysler models. Edsel's innovations turned out to be superficial and ephemeral. The vertical front "horsecollar" grille opening, Edsel's most identifiable feature at first, was downplayed, then became a split horizontal grille by 1960, which gave it a striking resemblance to the competing Pontiac of that year. The side-scallops were de-emphasized, and the instrument panel, featuring five gearshift buttons in the middle of the steering column, was modified. All these experiments contributed to later design changes in the other Ford lines.

Edsel started strong as a novelty in the first half of its 1957 model year, but sales declined steadily as word got out "on the street" that the new cars were not reliable due to rushed production, that dealer services were spotty, and that the Edsel was not so "different" after all. In the media, ridicule and innuendo (*Time* called the front grille "an Oldsmobile sucking on a lemon") stuck the tag of "loser" on the car. Ford's Edsel division ceased production in late 1959, as the now extremely rare 1960 models were coming off the line.

Bonsall has produced the most thoroughly researched book on the Edsel thus far. He includes much on the Ford family and early history of the corporation, the corporate politics and personnel issues that influenced the project, the extent and nature of research that was carried on at Ford, a complete production history of each Edsel model, and many photographs of experimental and finished production cars. He includes a chapter on "Why the Edsel Failed." This is a book of enduring interest to auto buffs, industrial historians, and anyone who owned or has wanted to own an Edsel.

*Herb Childs, Acquisitions Librarian*