Rajmohan Gandhi, Research Professor and Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, to Speak at the Library Society Dinner, April 12, 2013.

The MU Libraries are pleased to announce that Rajmohan Gandhi will be this year’s speaker at the annual Library Society Dinner April 12, 2013. Gandhi is a research professor at the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. He also is the grandson of Indian political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was born in India in 1935 and attended St. Stephen’s College in New Delhi. In 1956 he began working with Initiatives of Change, a nongovernmental organization with a primary objective to build trust across the world’s divides of culture, nationality, belief and background. Since becoming involved with Initiatives for Change, Gandhi has been engaged in international efforts for trust-building, reconciliation and democracy, and in battles against corruption and inequalities. His efforts have included speaking, performing public interventions and organizing dialogues. He served as the president of the organization from 2009 through 2010.

Gandhi is known not only for his humanitarian and peacemaking initiatives but also for his writing. He has written extensively on the Indian independence movement, great Indian leaders, Indo-Pakistan relations, human rights and conflict resolution.

Carnegie Biographer to Speak at Friends of the Library Luncheon

Steven Watts, a history professor at the University of Missouri specializing in the cultural and intellectual history of the United States, will speak at the Friends of the Libraries Luncheon April 20 at noon in the Reynolds Alumni Center. Watts has won two prestigious teaching awards at MU and has published work in the American Quarterly, Journal of American History, Journal of the Early Republic and American Studies. He also is the author of biographies covering the lives of Walt Disney, Henry Ford and Hugh Hefner. His biography of Dale Carnegie is scheduled for publication in 2013.

Rajmohan Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, will speak at the Library Society Dinner April 12. He is a research professor at the University of Illinois and author of several books, including Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, His People and an Empire. Photo by Rajmohan Gandhi.
In my 43 years at the MU Libraries, you have plans to retire this year. What are your plans after you retire?

I would like to volunteer to help low literacy adults develop better reading skills whether it is English as a second language or others who for a variety of reasons have reading difficulties. Literacy deficits are likely to limit these individuals’ academic appeal. After four years in civil service, I went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to work on a master’s degree in political science and history. I had the good fortune to meet other graduate students, including students working on beginning and advanced degrees in library and information science from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. Although this was a new field to me, I already had an interest not only in liberal arts but also presidential libraries. I completed my master’s and returned a year later to the University of Illinois to pursue a master’s degree in library and information science.

I hope to see many of you at these and other upcoming events. As always, I offer everyone a standing invitation to join us for a conversation on how our department impacts your work. What are some of the unique aspects of your job? How has the role of the reference department changed since you first started working in reference?

The most remarkable change is the role technology has played in transforming the field of library and information science. In 1972 when I came to MU, there was no Internet, no Google capability, reference resources were primarily indexes, books, newspapers and government documents searchable via hard copies or microfiche. We had print and even handwritten catalog cards to search manually as we helped patrons find needed books and journals. Electronic searching of databases, Internet resources, online searchable catalogs and e-books have brought rapid change to our field and to the work of the reference department. Online information and instruction content provided by the reference staff has expanded rapidly. We also have seen the migration of books, journals and manuscripts scanned and stored in databases for access in this explosion of information and knowledge. In addition to providing face-to-face, mail and telephone reference as we did in the early days, we now also provide assistance in countless ways. The underlying constant is that you get to work with a diversity of interesting people and you deal with a wide array of library issues. It has been my good fortune to interact with students more directly in my earlier years and supervise reference librarians who carry out that work today. Even though our libraries have subject specialists, all of the reference librarians are comfortable dealing with a variety of questions and concerns. We are simultaneously subject specialists and generalists. Our work provides a constant intellectual challenge. How has the role of the reference department changed since you first started working in reference?

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Early in 2011, the MU Libraries received the papers and manuscripts of Lanford Wilson, one of the premier American playwrights of the last half of the 20th century, as a bequest. Considered one of the founders of the Off-Off Broadway movement, Wilson earned the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for the play *Talley’s Folly*, the second in his trilogy of works dealing with familial relationships in small-town Missouri. Wilson is known for exploring the themes of alienation, loneliness and cultural illusion in his works, and he has been compared to influential playwrights such as Tennessee Williams and William Inge. Though not a graduate of the University of Missouri, Wilson was a speaker and participant in the Missouri Playwright’s Workshop program of the MU Department of Theatre in 2006.

The collection of more than 45 boxes is currently being prepared for public use by the staff of the Special Collections, Archives & Rare Books division. The collection includes extensive correspondence and numerous play and short story manuscripts. Some of the materials in his manuscripts have neither been published nor produced, making the scholarly research value of this collection truly remarkable.

Lanford Wilson was born in 1937 in Lebanon, Mo. After the divorce and remarriage of his mother, Wilson moved to Ozark, where he graduated from Ozark High School. Wilson began his collegiate studies at Southwest Missouri State College (now Missouri State University). In 1956, Wilson moved to San Diego to live with his biological father, a situation that would provide material for his autobiographical play, *Lemon Sky*. While in San Diego, Wilson worked in an airplane manufacturing plant and enrolled in art and art history classes at San Diego State University. In 1957, Wilson moved to Chicago and worked as a graphic artist for an advertising agency. It was in Chicago that Wilson realized the short stories he had been writing actually worked better in play form. Wilson also attended a class in playwriting at the University of Chicago. Because of a lack of live theatre opportunities in Chicago, Wilson relocated to New York City in 1962.

It was in New York that Wilson encountered playwriting success at a small Off-Off Broadway coffee house/theater, Caffe Cino, where his play *So Long at the Fair*, was produced in 1963. Many of his early plays were produced at Caffe Cino and at La Mama Experimental Theater Club. He would later have his most famous plays premiere at the Circle Repertory Company in New York City, an Off Broadway theatre company that Wilson co-founded and for which he was resident playwright.

Among the works Wilson wrote for the Circle Repertory Company were *The Hot L Baltimore* (which won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the Best American Play in 1973), *The Mound Builders*, *Serenading Louie*, *Fifth of July* and *Talley’s Folly*. He also was the winner of several Tony Awards for other plays. Actors who portrayed Wilson’s characters on Broadway include Judd Hirsch, Christopher Reeve, Swoosie Kurtz and Jeff Daniels.

The Special Collections, Archives & Rare Books Division anticipates the Lanford Wilson papers will be available for research sometime in 2013.
Fall Events at Ellis Library

### Libraries Co-sponsor Conference with Theatre Department

In concert with the scheduled MU Department of Theatre production of Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America* (First Part: “The Millenium Approaches”), the MU Libraries are sponsoring an interdisciplinary mini-conference titled “Angels in Performance: Documenting LGBTQ Lives in Theatre & Performance” on April 24–27. The conference will feature guest speaker Tony Kushner, as well as two major scholars in the field of LGBTQ theatre and performance history: Robert Schanke, professor emeritus of theatre at Central College, Iowa, and editor of Theatre & Performance History, and former Southern Illinois University Press editor and current University of Iowa professor Deborah Schanke. (The conference is titled after a book Schanke edited.)

The conference will feature an onstage interview with Kushner, as well as workshops and conference presentations on the nature of documenting LGBTQ lives in theatre and performance. Presentations will include papers on theatre and performance history, ethnography, theory, interactive theatre and creative presentations keeping within the conference theme of documenting LGBTQ lives in theatre and performance. The conference events will be held in the Rynikerbinger Theatre and the Corner Playhouse. The conference also will include an announcement and a celebration of the bequest of papers from the estate of lanford Wilson, Missouri’s own Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, to the MU Libraries.

### Gandhi

Gandhi also has written several books about his grandfather, including *Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, His People and an Empire*, which was published in 2007. In this work, he paints a portrait of what Mahatma Gandhi was like in his daily life and personal relationships. Rajmohan Gandhi received the prestigious Biennial Award from the Indian History Congress in 2007 for the book.

Gandhi met his grandfather only a few times during his life, saying that much of his knowledge of Mahatma Gandhi in a personal context came from his own father. Through these personal connections and his in-depth research, Rajmohan Gandhi is considered by many to be the final authority on his grandfather’s life. Many have asked “what would Mahatma Gandhi be saying now in this post-WWII world?” Gandhi’s latest work is *A Tale of Two Revolts: India’s Mutiny & the American Civil War*. In this book he examines the similarities between two simultaneous wars occurring on opposite sides of the globe.

### Endowment

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 weren’t in the MU Libraries. MU Libraries’ ILL department was able to request materials from libraries throughout the world. But Hunvald finally put an ILL request for an article from a Swiss archaeology journal that could not be filled because the cost of borrowing the item was too expensive. This led Hunvald to create an endowment for ILL so that researchers would be able to access the materials they need regardless of the expense.

We are very grateful to Ms. Hunvald for her generous gift to the MU Libraries. Our users rely on Interlibrary Loan as an extension of the collection. Because of the ever-increasing proliferation of materials and the impossibility of one library owning everything, the importance of Interlibrary Loan has intensified," June DeWeese, head of MU Libraries access services department, says. In addition, changes in technology have created faster and more efficient ILL operations over the years. Instead of photocopying articles and sending them by mail, libraries scan articles and provide electronic copies by email. Increased use of databases, such as WorldCat and Google, means that users are turning to Interlibrary Loan more often. Hunvald’s gift is vital in helping the MU Libraries provide high-quality ILL service to its patrons.

Hunvald says she was happy to give back to the libraries that had been so helpful in getting her the documents she needed to complete her research. She was especially grateful to the staff members, including DeWeese and Delores Fisher, head of the ILL-borrowing unit, for being so friendly and helpful. “Without the MU Libraries’ ILL service and their dedicated staff, I would not have been able to complete my research.”
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