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University News

March 14, 2005

Noshir Contractor to Present Western's Annual Thompson Lecture

MACOMB, IL - - The Western Illinois University department of communication will host the annual Thompson Lecture at 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 28 in the University Union Sandburg Theatre. Noshir Contractor, a professor in the coordinated science laboratory, speech communication department and psychology department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will be the featured speaker.

Contractor will present "Coevolution of Knowledge Networks and 21st Century Organizational Forms." The presentation will describe a multi-theoretical multilevel model of why we create, maintain, dissolve and reconstitute knowledge and social networks. His examples are derived from profit and nonprofit organizations, government agencies, community participation in the arts, food safety networks, open source movement, tobacco control, WTO protests and other areas.

Contractor is a research affiliate of the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, director of the Science of Networks in Communities (SONIC) group at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications and co-director of the Age of Networks Initiative at the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois. His research program, funded continuously for the past decade by major grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation, is investigating factors that lead to formation, maintenance and dissolution of dynamically linked knowledge networks in 21st century organizational forms.

He has published or presented more than 250 research papers in the field of communication. His book titled "Theories of Communication Networks" received the 2003 Book of the Year award from the organizational communication division of the National Communication Association (NCA). His papers have received top awards from the International Communication Association and the NCA.

In 2000 Contractor was awarded the Outstanding Member Award by the organizational communication division of the International Communication Association. He has served on the editorial boards of Human Communication Research, Journal of Applied Communication Research, Journal of Communication, Management Communication Quarterly, Organization Science and the World Wide Web Electronic Journal of

Computer-Mediated Communication.

Contractor is also the lead developer of Inquiring Knowledge Networks On the Web (IKNOW), which is a community-ware web-based software, and Blanche, a software program to simulate the dynamics of social networks.

He has served on numerous review panels for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the United States National Science Foundation's Digital Society and Technology Program, Information Technology Research Program and

Digital Government Program.

At the request of the National Science Foundation and the European Commission's Information Society and Technology Program, Contractor has organized several workshops and panels to foster international collaborations in the area of information and communication technologies.

He has consulted with Boeing, Charles Schwab, Fiat, Illinois Power, McKinsey Management Consulting, Merrill Lynch, Michigan Consolidated, National Cancer Institute, Paramount Pictures, Procter & Gamble, the Utah Transit Authority and Vodafone. Internationally, Contractor has also conducted workshops on the management of knowledge networks in China, Finland, India, Italy, Japan, Spain, Thailand and the United Kingdom.

Western's annual lecture is named in honor of Wayne Thompson, a WIU alumnus and noted professor of speech communication. The Thompson endowment makes possible a number of departmental programs to enhance learning and scholarship in the field of communication, including the annual Thompson Lecture by a prominent scholar in the field. The lecture and the following reception are open free to the public. For more information contact Western's communication department at 309/298-1507 or Debi Travis at 309/298-2161.

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