




Historian and writer Wulf is the author of five books, including *The Brother Gardeners: A Generation of Gentleman Naturalists and the Birth of an Obsession* (Vintage, 2010), winner of the American Horticultural Society's Book Award in 2010, and *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (Vintage, 2012), a *New York Times* best seller.

To write her newest book, she retraced some of Humboldt's journeys. "He wasn't a cerebral scholar," she says. "He was brazenly adventurous." In following his footsteps, especially in South America, she realized "how much he was pushing his body to his limits."

Fueling his travels was a love of nature that he sought to ignite in others. "At a time when other scientists were searching for universal laws, Humboldt wrote that nature had to be experienced through feelings," she writes.

That her book is shelved among biographies in bookstores makes Wulf quizzical.

"For me, it's never been a biography of Humboldt," she says. "It was always a biography of how we think about nature."  —KATHLEEN MCGARVEY



**HUMANITIES DIRECTOR:** Historian Rubin will head center.

## Rubin Leads Humanities Center

A noted scholar of American history, Joan Shelley Rubin, has been appointed director of the Humanities Center. Rubin is the Dexter Perkins Professor in History and served as interim director from the center's creation in spring 2015. She'll hold the title of Ani and Mark Gabrellian Director of the Humanities Center.

Rubin says that her work with the center flows naturally out of research to which she has long been devoted. "I'm a historian of the dissemination of the humanities, fundamentally," she says. An American cultural and intellectual historian, Rubin is the author of *The Making of Middle-brow Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992) and *Songs of Ourselves: The History of Poetry in America* (Harvard University Press, 2007), among other projects.

The Gabrellian Directorship is named in recognition of the support of University Trustee Ani Gabrellian '84 and her husband, Mark Gabrellian '79. In addition to the directorship, the couple established the annual Hagop and Artemis Nazerian Lectures, named for Ani Gabrellian's parents and held by the center.

The center, which has a new home in Rush Rhees Library, supports multidisciplinary engagement with literature, history, the arts, and philosophies of cultures past and present in order to foster educated, contributing global citizens. Rubin joined the University in 1995 and specializes in 19th- and 20th-century American history and the history of the book. She serves as the history department's director of graduate studies and also directs the American Studies Program, an initiative she helped found in 2011. Collaboration and exchange are at the heart of the center's efforts to enhance the study of the humanities at Rochester and strengthen ties to related disciplines. But Rubin said that she will also make sure that "the lone scholar, the isolating work of reading a text closely yourself," is also supported.

And she aspires to a wide reach.

"I want our center to touch the life of every University of Rochester undergraduate," she said. "It's a lofty goal but an important one because I firmly believe that an appreciation for the humanities and an understanding of human culture are central to what it means to be an educated citizen."

—Kathleen McGarvey

For more information on the Humanities Center, visit <http://www.sas.rochester.edu/humanities/>.