

2020 Recipient of the Information Professionals
The Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley Award

Ms. Deborah L. Dandridge

Bibliophile, Historian, Archivist, and Professor



The Information Professionals of ASALH proudly announce Ms. Deborah Dandridge as the 2020 recipient of the Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley Award. Ms. Dandridge helped pioneer the establishment of one of the few African American archives maintained among non-Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Great Plains Region. After having successfully completed her responsibilities as field archivist for a three year National Historical Preservation and Records grant awarded in 1986 to the University of Kansas Libraries' Kansas Collection in collaboration with the University's African and African American Studies Department, she continues to serve as field archivist and curator of the African American Experience Collections at the University's Kenneth Spencer Research Library. She is a longtime member of ASALH and other Information Professional organizations.

Ms. Dandridge says, with missionary-like zeal,

I travel across the region preaching the 'gospel' of the enduring historical value of the variety of written and photographic materials created by African American families, churches, organizations, and businesses. I help these 'history makers' locate and sift through their 'old stuff' often stored away in attics, basements and garages of multi-storied homes, farmhouses, and barns. With their signed permission, I transport these materials to our research library where they are processed and made available for public use. However, my work does not end there. I seek to forge an ongoing partnership with the region's local communities, often providing exhibits for their local programs and

events or serving as speaker and hosting events for them at the Spencer Research library. Due to this partnership, our collections have helped augment a permanent historical record that provides an “inside” view of African American life, especially during the 20th century.

Ms. Dandridge is the 2008 recipient of the coveted Gretchen and Gene A. Budig Distinguished Librarian Award for the University of Kansas’ Libraries. As an active member of the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research, Inc. since 1994, she has served on the 50th Anniversary Brown v. Board of Education Presidential Commission and as principal investigator for the 2019 book project, *Recovering Untold Stories: An Enduring Legacy of the Brown v Board of Education Decision*, which was funded by the Hall Center for Humanities and the Walton Family Foundation and published by KU Libraries.

Links for Discovery of some of Ms. Dandridge’s Research Projects:

Dandridge, D., curator. (2017). *Education: The Mightiest Weapon*. Retrieved May 27, 2020, from <https://exhibits.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/show/education>.

Dandridge, D., archivist. (2000). *No Dreams Deferred: African American Leadership In The Kansas Region*. Retrieved May 27, 2020, from <https://wayback.archive-it.org/3577/20170331162533/http://liblamp.vm.ku.edu/spencer/exhibits/dreams/index.htm>.

Dandridge, D. *Michael G. Shinn: Premier Jayhawk Leader and Innovator*. Retrieved May 27, 2020, from <https://exhibits.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/show/michael-shinn>.

Dandridge, D., curator. *Achievement Against the Odds: Sumner High School, Kansas City, Kansas 1905-1978*. Retrieved May 27, 2020, from <https://wayback.archive-it.org/3577/20170328182032/http://liblamp.vm.ku.edu/spencer/exhibits/sumner/>.

See attached page highlighting letters of support for Ms. Dandridge’s years of service and her work as the recipient of Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley Award.

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The committee received several letters of support from the University of Kansas community and state-wide organizations to complement the application. To highlight a few.:

- **Professor Sherry Williams**, Librarian Emerita, writes: ...as field archivist, Ms. Dandridge acquired hundreds of collections over the past thirty-three years that are now cataloged and available for research. Ms. Dandridge exemplifies the contributions that Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley had. She is a passionate advocate for the preservation and accessibility of African American papers. She adds; she has served as a mentor to many students, ensuring that they connect with the resources they need to pursue their research and complete their degrees. She has been largely responsible for the development of the *Alyce Hunley Wayne Visiting Researchers Travel Award* program, now offered by Spencer Library to researchers intending to use our African American holdings.
- **Dr. William Tuttle**, Professor of Emeritus of American Studies expressed that he met and knew Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley when he was doing research at Howard University. In his opinion Ms. Dandridge's work and ethic follows in Dr. Wesley's footsteps.
- **Dr. William Crowe**, former Dean and Librarian Emeritus of the University of Kansas' Libraries says; Deborah Dandridge represents the information professional at her best, striving always to learn and teach with imagination and zeal, and always in highly visible service to people of today and tomorrow.
- **Mr. Chester Owens**, local historian of Kansas City, Kansas says that Ms. Dandridge has encouraged the collection of artifacts and inspired many others to conduct research that includes rich, oral histories of individuals in our communities. She has the highest standard possible for us to follow in researching and writing African American history.
- **Dr. Tidwell** says, anecdotally, that Ms. Dandridge has been held in high esteem by those seeking information about Black life in Kansas. Luminaries such as the eminent Langston

Hughes biographer, Arnold Rampersad and the late poet Michael S. Harper have spoken effusively about her assistance. Ms. Dandridge has become synonymous with excellence in archival and curatorial work.

- **Professor Beth Whitaker**, Director of Spencer Research Library says; Ms. Dandridge's long career of documenting the African American experience in Kansas, along with her programmatic outreach to the African American community in the region, exemplifies the dedication, scholarship, and commitment to history, collection development, scholarship, and service that Dr. Dorothy Porter Wesley Award embodied.
- **Dr. Doretha Williams**, Program Manager, Robert F. Smith Fund, National Museum of African American History says: As a colleague, I routinely collaborate with Deborah as we examine the lives of Black people in Kansas. Born and raised in Topeka, we share a contemporary story as well as historical narratives of black migration, community building, racial and social justice.....;Deborah's efforts to capture and curate the collection of African American club women's work served to richly contribute to the study of black women in the early twentieth century..... Deborah served on my dissertation committee and was a direct mentor for my work *Kansas Grows the Best Wheat and the Best Race Women: Black Kansas Clubwomen, 1900-1930*. I would definitely not be working in the field of archives and museums if she did not take me under her wing and offer to me her time and energy.

Ms. Johnnieque (Johnnie) B. Love
Librarian Emerita 6/2019
Chair of IP of ASALH Awards Committee

Dr. Janet Sims Wood
Co-Chair of IP of ASALH Awards Committee

Ms. Cheylon Woods
Chair of Information Professionals of ASALH