

Remembering Donna Wells

The Moorland-Spangarn Research Center is saddened to announce the passing of Donna Marcia Wells suddenly on Monday, November 2, 2009. Ms. Wells was Prints and Photographs Librarian at Howard University's Moorland-Spangarn Research Center from 1993 until June 2009, when she left the University to pursue a variety of independent professional interests.

Services for Ms. Wells will be held on the campus of Howard University in the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel on Monday, November 9, 2009. A viewing will be held from 1-2 p.m., followed by funeral services. The family will receive visitors at the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center in the Founders Library immediately after the service.

Ms. Wells was Prints and Photographs Librarian at Howard University's Moorland-Spangarn Research Center from 1993 until June 2009, when she left the University to pursue a variety of independent professional interests. Before coming to Howard she was the assistant archivist for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, having previously served as archivist for Gallaudet University, where she also taught museum studies, and as photo librarian at the Library of Congress.

She earned the Master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Maryland, College Park and the Bachelor of Arts degree in art history from Hampton University. She was A.B.D. in the Department of History at Howard University.

Ms. Wells devoted her career to the care and interpretation of African American collections and to the preservation of Washington, D.C. history. She lectured frequently and conducted workshops on the care of photographs for general audiences. Her lectures on photographic history incorporated a unique approach, fusing the role of African Americans as subject, creator and critic of images. Not a photographer herself, she was an active member of the Exposure Group African American Photographers Association and the FotoCraft Camera Club, serving as consultant for their public programs and as a resource for the archiving of their work. She served on the city's Emancipation Celebration Commission and on the Historical Records Advisory Review Board. She was a board member of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and had served on the program committee of the D.C. Historical Studies Conference since 1995.

She wrote reviews and articles on photography and photographers, including "Protecting Your Image," which was published in *Essence* magazine in 1999. Ms. Wells co-authored with Thomas C. Battle, MSRC's director, the highly-acclaimed *Legacy: Treasures of Black History*, published by National Geographic in 2006. *Legacy* showcases the many photographs, books and documents in Moorland's collections that had never been published in book form, representing a "visually exciting exploration of the Black experience and its impact on our nation." *Legacy* received the Outstanding Contribution to Publishing Award from the American Library Association's Black Caucus (BCALA) and the Arline Custer Memorial Award from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC).

After leaving MSRC, Ms. Wells was working independently on several projects: co-curator of the exhibit "*Daniel Freeman: the Man behind the Camera and Form and Content: Selected Works by Floyd Coleman*," at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., opening November 6, 2009. She was also curator of an exhibit for the Museu Afro Brasil in Sao Paulo, opening at the end of November 2009, highlighting the accomplishments of African Americans through the eyes of Black photographers. Most recently, Ms. Wells was the recipient of the Arline Custer Memorial

Award from MARAC for her article with David Haberstich, “The Scurlock Studio: A Biography,” in *The Scurlock Studio and Black Washington: Picturing the Promise* (Washington, D.C., The Smithsonian Institution, 2009).