Dan Powell received his BA degree in 1972, and MA degree in 1976 from Central Washington University, and his MFA degree from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana in 1980. Powell taught photography in the Art Department at the University of Northern Iowa from 1980-1987 before beginning his current position teaching photography at the University of Oregon in 1988.

Selected sites of Powell's work in group exhibitions include the Royal College of Art, London: the Isetan Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan: Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Ill: Center for Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Ca: Light Gallery, New York, NY: A. Robert Samuel Gallery, New York, NY: San Francisco Camerawork, S.F., CA: The Friends of Photography, Carmel, CA: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: Albright Knox Museum, Buffalo. NY: La Maison Europeane de la Photographie, Paris, France: Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR: C.E.P.A. Gallery, Syracuse, NY: The Silver Image Gallery, Seattle, WA: Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York, NY. Selected one person exhibitions include Thom Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN: PPS Gallery, Hamburg, Germany: The Silver Image Gallery, Seattle WA: Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, Or: Moore College of Art, Philadelphia: G. Gibson Gallery, Seattle: Ledel Gallery, New York, NY: Project Arts Center, Cambridge, MA: James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.: Condeso/Lawler Gallery, New York, NY.

Powell has received numerous grants and fellowships including University of Oregon research awards: Polaroid Corporation purchase awards: Maine Photographic Workshops grant: and in 1981 received an Emerging Artists Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. His work appears in collections at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle: Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR.: Lightwork, Syracuse, NY: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: Art Institute of Chicago. Powell's work has been reviewed In prestigious publications including Art Week, New Art Examiner, Art News, Afterimage, and the New York Times. A comprehensive archive of Powell's work is being collected by Special Collections, Knight Library at The University of Oregon.