Projection of a fresco in “Roman Wall Decoration in the Pompeian Style,” a new display developed by Assistant Curator Nicola Barham, Exhibition Coordinator Scott Meier, and Graphic Designer Eric Campbell.

Docent Ann Hayden speaks with a student visiting on a school tour.

IPAMAA student Alex Moskowitz presents during a trench tour at the end of the 2023 season in Morgantina, Central Sicily.
DEAR FRIENDS,

The Kelsey Museum is pleased to introduce a new look for our annual report. Designed to share the diverse ways the Kelsey and its team have engaged audiences over the past calendar year, this inaugural Impact Report highlights some of the amazing activities carried out by staff, faculty, students, and affiliates in 2023. As always, our vision revolves around creating knowledge, exploring the past, and educating for the future. The primary focus of our in-house activities has been on the new gallery dedicated to the Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern world. Now renamed “Crossroads of Culture,” it foregrounds the strong continuity between epochs of the first millennium of the Common Era, especially in the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt. Mark your calendar for spring 2026, when we will unveil this new addition to the museum.

The Kelsey is not only involved in important educational activities in Michigan but also in the communities in which we work. In Sudan and Egypt, we are promoting the creation of museum displays and didactic materials that emphasize the transformative value of material heritage for local communities. Along the same lines, we are collaborating on the creation of archaeological parks at two other sites investigated by the Kelsey: Notion in Turkey and Gabii in central Italy. Our activities in all these foreign locations are consistent with the principle that modern archaeological investigation must always be paired with outreach and educational
impact on the people who live near the excavated sites. The reach of these projects is beyond the scope of any one calendar year.

Taking a new look at old collections, the Kelsey Museum is part of a project that examines archaeobotanical remains collected in excavations at Karanis, Egypt, with the goal of reconstructing environmental conditions, diet, and chronology of occupation. The Kelsey is also producing 3-D images of objects in the collection and making them accessible through a new web platform that will facilitate scholarly and educational access to our rich collections.

In my fourth year as director, I am pleased to welcome new staff members to the Kelsey community. In 2023, we received an associate director, a chief administrator, an executive secretary, and an editor. New forces and new energies help us stay relevant and engaged in our rapidly evolving world.

We hope you enjoy reading about the exciting milestones and initiatives of the last year. Whether the activity is campus-focused, community-centered, or scholarly—or all three—the Kelsey Museum remains steadfast in our commitment to promoting the understanding and appreciation of the Mediterranean world. We are grateful for the support and enthusiasm of our members and friends, who make our efforts possible. ■

—Nic Terrenato, Director

**MISSION**

The Kelsey Museum advances understanding and appreciation of the ancient Mediterranean world through our collections, research, exhibitions, and fieldwork.

**VISION**

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology creates knowledge, explores the past, and educates for the future.

**VALUES**

- **Stewardship**: preserving collections and information for future generations in a sustainable way.
- **Research**: advancing knowledge through scholarly inquiry and informed interpretation.
- **Education**: inspiring life-long learning through direct experience of the past.
- **Discovery**: exploring new approaches to antiquity.
- **Creativity**: fostering innovative collaboration and presentation.
- **Respect**: finding strength in collaboration by valuing each other’s expertise and diverse perspectives.
- **Inclusivity**: creating an accessible and welcoming museum and workspace for all community members.
ADVANCING THE KELSEY ONE GIFT AT A TIME

Gifts are essential to the success of the Kelsey Museum. As an integral part of the University of Michigan, the museum is supported in part by the university; however, donations from patrons provide crucial support for archaeological fieldwork, educational programs, research, exhibitions, and conservation. In 2023, 95 generous donors contributed approximately $100,000, while additional funds were raised to support specific archaeological field projects—amounting to $77,000.

A new fund, the **Dr. Richard W. Redding Graduate Support Fund** was established in 2023 by his wife, Cheri Alexander, in honor of her husband—an amazing researcher, an outstanding teacher, and a devoted humanitarian. In its first year, 95 donors made generous gifts to this fund, which will provide tuition support and/or travel support for graduate students studying anthropology, archaeology, biological sciences, zooarchaeology, museum studies, and nonprofit management or who are otherwise involved with the Kelsey Museum. For more information and to donate to this fund, visit [myumi.ch/n7m3r](http://myumi.ch/n7m3r).

GRANTS

- **Nicola Barham** received a History of Art Faculty Grant of $25,000 for the project “Abstract Chronologies: Radiocarbon-Dating Late Roman ‘Coptic’ Textiles at the Kelsey Museum.”
- **Geoff Emberling** was awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for “Urbanism in Ancient Kush: Archaeological Investigation of Settlement at Jebel Barkal, Northern Sudan.”
- **Christopher Ratté** received $57,000 from the Merops Foundation and $10,000 from the Graham Sustainability Institute for his work at the site of Notion, Turkey.
- **Janet Richards** was awarded $20,000 from the Marjorie M. Fisher Fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan for her fieldwork at Abydos, Egypt.
- **Nic Terrenato** received about $52,000 from the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti for work at a new site in Rome. In addition, the second volume of the Gabii Project Reports series, which he co-edited, was the recipient of the Archaeological Institute of America’s Award for Outstanding Work in Digital Archaeology.
- **Terry Wilfong** received a Michigan Humanities Award from LSA for his Hamzeh Carr project.
Members are at the heart of the Kelsey Museum. Your generosity plays a crucial role in animating our mission for students, community visitors, and scholars. Members support the dual goals of safeguarding and enlivening our artifacts through conservation efforts, innovative research, compelling exhibitions, and dynamic programs. In return—and in thanks—we are pleased to offer you exclusive access to member events at the Kelsey and free admission to more than 1,000 museums and cultural centers across the continent through the North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association and Reciprocal Organization of Associated Museums (ROAM) networks, allowing you to deepen your engagement with the arts, history, and the ancient world.

Why Michigan and why the Kelsey?

“...The University of Michigan is often cited for its academic achievement and the ability to act on ideas. The Kelsey Museum is a prime example of this, not only with its outstanding research in archaeology but also for its contribution to understanding the development of human civilization through the ages. We can think of no more meaningful contribution than to support the work of the Kelsey through donating to its future and that of generations to come.”

—Anonymous member

85 members supported the Kelsey in 2023
OUR IMPACT

**campus**
The Kelsey enriches U-M’s academic rigor—offering unique artifacts for study and facilitating immersive teaching. By actively engaging students and faculty, we equip them to understand the past and make informed decisions for the future.

**community**
The Kelsey Museum connects to communities both locally and globally, partnering with area schools and groups and with colleagues abroad to foster discovery, preservation, and a deeper understanding of the ancient world.

**scholarly**
An epicenter for archaeological scholarship, the Kelsey Museum empowers our staff, curators, and students with robust resources for research, while also welcoming external scholars to explore our rich collections.
BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE FOR U-M STUDENTS

At the Kelsey Museum, university courses are the largest—and most robust—audience served. By combining traditional classroom learning with object-based opportunities, we bring the past to life for U-M students in vibrant, concrete, and memorable ways.

In 2023, the Kelsey continued to play a prominent role in undergraduate education for students in Classics, Middle East Studies, History, and History of Art. We were also excited to welcome classes from other departments: students studying musicology, fine arts drawing, and writing looked to Kelsey objects for inspiration and education, while members of the Cultural Heritage Law Society used their visit to prompt conversations around ethics and museum collections. This year, history was not merely observed; it was actively engaged and deeply felt.

Students participate in an excavation activity developed in 2023. Using faux skeletons and replicas, this activity provides a new spin on our traditional Burial Boxes.

2,300+ U-M students attended class visits

95 courses served across the Ann Arbor campus

1,116 students participated in object-handling
CULTIVATING KNOWLEDGE: ARCHAEOBOTANICAL INSTRUCTION IN THE BIOARCHAEOLOGY LAB

The Kelsey Museum’s Bioarchaeology Lab is a haven for the study of ancient plants and faunal materials. During the Fall 2023 semester, Laura Motta, assistant professor of environmental archaeology, held her archaeobotany course there—allowing graduates and undergraduates alike to spend several hours each week working with actual plant remains and engaging in hands-on discovery.

A dynamic, experiential course that combined a seminar component with lab work, the class provided students with precious opportunities to acquire fundamental skills in archaeological research, including how to handle and process raw field data. Perhaps most importantly, they also learned how to make the epistemological connection between microscopic archaeobotanical remains and larger, overarching research questions—thus contributing to ongoing research on agricultural practices, supply economy, and foodways of ancient Mediterranean settlements.

“The Kelsey Museum laboratory not only gave us the opportunity to engage with a space that holds physical history but was an interactive learning experience that allowed us to practice important lab etiquette and skill.”

—Sofia Belabbes, undergraduate in biology and classical archaeology
SCULPTING UNDERSTANDING: AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO ROMAN ART

Safety glasses are not part of the usual uniform for an art history class, but last fall, students in Professor Nicola Barham’s “Roman Sculpture: Image and Identity” course nevertheless donned them, readying themselves for an educational experience that made a lasting mark. Devised by Nicola to tell the story of the development of Roman sculpture, the course—embedded in the Kelsey Museum—brought together graduate and undergraduate students from a variety of programs across the University of Michigan campus.

On November 20, 2023, Michigan sculptor Autumn Bildson of StoneArt Studio came to the Kelsey Museum to speak to students in the class. As a sculptor highly skilled in handling both marble and limestone, Autumn provided practical insight into the process of working with these materials. She even brought blocks for the whole class to take a turn at carving themselves! This was a special opportunity to gain an expert, practical perspective on the realities of working with these materials in the ancient world.

Right: Gretchen Linzner, an undergraduate in the History of Art Department and Museum Studies Program, tries her hand at carving marble with assistance from Autumn Bildson.
FROM GLASS CASES TO GLOBAL ACCESS: THE EVOLUTION OF THE DiSKO PROJECT

In 2023, progress on the Kelsey Museum’s DiSKO project—standing for the “Digital Study of Kelsey Objects”—occurred in leaps and bounds. Launched in 2019 with support from U-M’s Office of the Provost, DiSKO will make Kelsey artifacts available online as 3-D models. These renderings will allow professors, students, and researchers from U-M and other institutions to gain up-close looks at notable objects that are normally stored in our collections facilities or displayed behind glass in the museum. Thanks to the work of graduate students Zoe Ortiz and Taylor Tyrell, we added a new scanning technique to our repertoire to accommodate objects of varying sizes and materials: LiDAR. The CR-Scan Lizard, purchased in 2023, allows for multiple scans to be stitched together, proving itself ideal for capturing small- and medium-size objects in our collection.

As artifact scanning continues, the Education Department is working with Boxcar Studio to develop a website that reduces as many barriers to access as possible—allowing anyone with a computer or smartphone to explore, interact with, and even 3-D print these digital treasures.

900+ minutes spent scanning objects in 2023

75 3-D models completed last year

Model of KM 25752, a falcon-headed crocodile statue of the god Soknopaios.
ARTS & RESISTANCE WEBINAR PRESENTS EL-KURRU HERITAGE

In the fall of 2023, the Kelsey Museum supported the College of LSA’s “Arts and Resistance” theme semester, dedicated to exploring how the visual, performing, and literary arts play a central role in shaping cultural and political narratives. “Local Histories: Heritage and Resistance in a Sudanese Village”—a special webinar presented on November 8—consisted of a dialogue between Geoff Emberling (director of the Kelsey’s project in El-Kurru, Sudan) and Anawar (Anwar) Mahajoub. A scholar from the village of El-Kurru and a current student in U-M’s Masters in International and Regional Studies (MIRS) program, Anawar has worked with Geoff on the Kelsey archaeological project for 10 years.

During the presentation, Anawar discussed his work as the curator of El-Kurru’s Community Heritage Center and how—through the collaborative efforts of local residents and the U-M project—it has been co-created to reflect Sudan’s ancient history and contemporary culture. By blending Anawar’s and Geoff’s perspectives on living and working in El-Kurru, “Local Histories” also resisted the previous archaeological practice in which local communities are not consulted or included in presenting their own heritage.

Can you speak to your vision for El-Kurru’s Community Heritage Center?

“I hope it will be as planned and even more… I didn’t get the chance to learn in school about the kings and queens of this ancient Kush kingdom. I’m hoping that kids… will grow up knowing and understanding their culture better.”

—Anawar Mahajoub, curator and MIRS student
ENGAGING OUR MUSEUM VISITORS

Our Kelsey Museum community extends far beyond the U-M campus, embracing homeschool groups, K–12 classes, local clubs, and more. In addition to weekly public programs, we offer numerous options for remote engagement through monthly Zoom lectures, online exhibitions, social media channels, and virtual tours enjoyed by global audiences.

The Kelsey’s programming thrives thanks to our diligent team of volunteer docents, who go above and beyond by leading both formal and informal educational opportunities. Last year, the Education Department nearly doubled the docent guild by training eight community members and five graduate students in museum content and instructional methods—allowing them to develop experiences that educate, engage, and further our mission.
BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: SHAPING K–12 EDUCATION

Throughout the galleries of the Kelsey Museum, echoes of young voices reflect an extraordinary encounter: one of K–12 students stepping into the history of the ancient Mediterranean. The Kelsey had the privilege of igniting the imaginations of more than 1,500 elementary, middle, and high school students in 2023. Especially for Michigan’s 7th graders—who study ancient societies such as Egypt, Greece, and Rome in their social studies classes—a visit to the Kelsey Museum actualizes historical topics, transforming their curriculum from abstract words on a page to history they can see, explore, and connect with. Looking forward, we aim to further expand the reach of these transformative experiences in the metro Detroit area, engaging more teachers and inspiring greater numbers of young learners with the enduring stories of the Mediterranean’s past.

“We had a fantastic visit. The Kelsey staff was welcoming, helpful, and set our group up for a great time exploring the museum and making connections to our Greece, Egypt, and Rome units.”
—Aimee Grant, Huron High School

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—Aimee Grant, Huron High School

“Outstanding! Everything we expected and more.”
—Mark Bray, Detroit Country Day School
Members of the Jebel Barkal team at Temple B700. Left to right: Suzanne Davis, David Flory, Sufian Mutawakil, and Elmontaser Dafalla.
SUPPORTING CONSERVATION, COLLEAGUES, AND COMMUNITIES: AFCP FUNDING AT JEBEL BARKAL

Since 2022, a grant from the U.S. Department of State’s Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) has supported conservation, archaeology, and community engagement at Jebel Barkal. Consisting of a team of archaeologists, conservators, and scholars—half from Sudan, half from other nations—the project was designed to foster collaboration between Sudanese and international colleagues and to increase local capacity for archaeological and conservation work. Winter 2023 marked the project’s first full field season, with the team making significant progress in site protection and conservation of one of the temples at Jebel Barkal. Temple B700 was built around 650 BCE by Kushite kings Atlanersa and Senkamanisken, a father and son who dedicated it to the hybrid Egyptian-Kushite god Osiris-Dedwen. Conservation involved stabilizing the walls, burying uninscribed blocks to ensure their long-term preservation, and relaying original and new paving stones to make the temple more accessible to visitors.

While conservation is at the heart of the AFCP grant, so, too, is collaboration. For every foreign project participant, including Co-Director Geoff Emberling and Director of Conservation Suzanne Davis, there is a Sudanese counterpart—an arrangement that has proven essential to continued site protection and community engagement during the ongoing civil war. Since the conflict began in April 2023, the AFCP grant has provided support for Sudanese team members working under extremely difficult conditions. Protection efforts are vital to ensuring the safety of the site, especially as large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) have traveled to the area around Jebel Barkal. One important preservation activity was the installation of bollards around the site’s perimeter. These short, cement pillars keep cars and trucks from driving over and damaging buried ancient architecture, all the while allowing easy access for visitors on foot. Sudanese colleagues have also worked hard to connect local residents and IDPs to their ancient heritage. Among the team’s most rewarding achievements included bringing displaced children to Jebel Barkal for a day of education and fun. In these ways, against the backdrop of unrest, the AFCP project has been a mainstay of employment, purpose, and connection for Sudanese team members.
BRIDGING TIME AND COMMUNITIES: CREATING THE WENI EXHIBITION

Limestone blocks bearing images of Weni the Elder and his many titles line the walls at Egypt’s Sohag National Museum, reconstructing the tomb in which the 6th dynasty government official was buried more than 4,000 years ago. Previously housed in different storage repositories in Cairo, Abydos, and Sheikh Hamad, these objects—and their reunification—do not merely tell the story of Weni, the “True Governor of Upper Egypt”; they also tell a tale of international collaboration.

The Abydos Middle Cemetery (AMC) Project, with the continuing support of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), is an international team of Egyptians, Americans, experts of other nationalities, and graduate students conducting research on a vast mortuary and political landscape. This sacred zone at Abydos was initiated by two late Old Kingdom government officials—Weni the Elder and his father, the Vizier Iuu—who were sent to Abydos from the northern capital at Memphis to develop a public cult of the god Osiris.

Archaeologists first explored the AMC in the mid-19th century. In 1995, U-M teams resumed work there, with the support of a large local excavation/collections workforce, site guards, and a dedicated dig house staff. Researchers rediscovered Weni’s and Iuu’s tombs and have amassed significant new data that sheds light on their family network, their political project, the continuing development of the cemetery they founded, and its relationship to local communities and the landscape of the Osiris cult that persisted over the next 2,000 years.

In 2020, Janet Richards (project director) and Suzanne Davis (associate director) received a grant from the American Research Center in Egypt’s Antiquities Endowment Fund to partner with MoTA, the Sohag National Museum,
and the Kelsey Museum to develop an exhibition in Sohag centered on a reconstruction of Weni’s tomb chapel. Delayed by the pandemic, the project launched in late summer 2022 with additional support from the Kelsey Museum, LSA, the Department of Middle East Studies, and Marjorie M. Fisher. Several Kelsey Museum staff, U-M faculty, and graduate students, staff at both the Sohag and Egyptian Museums, and the AMC Project’s entire multinational project team participated in planning the exhibition. Together, they developed extensive didactic material and installed over 100 objects from various locations—reuniting them for the first time since 1858. After extensive work in 2023, the installation is now complete and will be enjoyed by the many visitors to the Sohag National Museum.

In parallel, the exhibition team developed and installed a photo show about Weni’s tomb at the Kelsey Museum in April 2024, highlighting key points and imagery from its sister show in Sohag and spotlighting the collaboration that made it possible. Working together, the international team has provided visitors with an understanding of Weni’s tomb, its place in the Abydos landscape, and the festivals and pilgrimages of Osiris—first in Sohag and now in Ann Arbor.

“The Sohag collaboration embodies best practice for a museum like the Kelsey. It leverages our collection to raise awareness and resources to help preserve and exhibit archaeological remains while also forming meaningful partnerships that encourage local engagement with Egypt’s history.”

—Nic Terrenato, Kelsey Museum Director
Conservator Suzanne Davis studies colorful textiles from Karanis.

“Investigating Color in Roman Egypt has established itself as an essential resource for studying ancient painting in both ancient Egypt and the wider Roman world. It has produced the first detailed corpus of ancient pigments and dyes from this important province, which is increasingly recognized as essential to the history and production of Roman visual culture...Its focus on excavated artworks and objects provides an exemplary model for future color studies in archaeology.”

—Mark Abbe, Associate Professor of Art History, Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia
YESTERDAY’S COLORS, TODAY’S TECHNOLOGIES: CONSERVATORS COMPLETE NEH-FUNDED PROJECT

By the fall of 2023, the Conservation Department at the Kelsey Museum had achieved several major milestones in its research on color and pigments in the ancient world, thanks to a Research and Development Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded in 2021. Titled Investigating Color in Roman Egypt, this project had two main goals: to study color in the Kelsey’s Karanis and Terenouthis collections and to develop practical research methods to enable the study of color in other academic museums.

The scientific study of ancient colorants provides evidence of the prevalence and variety of color in antiquity and is changing the way scholars think about the ancient world. This kind of research has been limited, however, because it is expensive and requires specialized equipment and expertise. For these reasons, it has tended to focus on small studies of single objects—often lacking provenience—from only a few time periods and cultures. The Kelsey conservators sought to change this with their project.

Over the last two years, principal investigators Caroline Roberts and Suzanne Davis collaborated with an interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, collections managers, conservators, curators, scientists, and undergraduate and graduate students to gather pigment and dye data from nearly 200 Roman Egyptian objects in the Kelsey’s collection. Items studied included limestone funerary stelae, wall paintings, stone sculpture, wood panel paintings and toys, terracotta figurines, textiles, and baskets. The project team also developed and tested workflows for using multispectral imaging (MSI), X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF), and digital microscopy to investigate ancient pigments and dyes.

In tandem with these accomplishments, a dedicated website for the project—accessible at sites.isa.umich.edu/color-roman-egypt—was launched during the summer of 2023. This open-access hub features the project’s workflows, a comprehensive bibliography, and more than a dozen in-depth case studies of Kelsey objects—serving as an invaluable resource for researchers exploring ancient color in other archaeological collections.

“**My time with [Carrie] and Suzanne showed me that I really did want to continue with conservation and conservation science. [Their] guidance, both direct and indirect, has helped me figure out where I want to be, and plot a general course to get there.”**

—Harrison Biggs, undergraduate student studying material science

“I have learned so much from the color project! Besides just learning more about the [Kelsey Museum], the conservation lab, and all of the work that goes into conserving and studying objects, I have gained real, hands-on experience and skills doing scientific study of ancient artifacts!”

—Laurel Fricker, graduate student in IPAMAA
SHIFTING THE FOCUS: PELLA PROJECT UNCOVERS NARRATIVES OF NON-ELITE RESIDENTS

In 2023, the Pella Urban Dynamics Project, co-directed by U-M’s Lisa Nevett and David Stone, yielded transformative insights into the bustling Hellenistic past of this northern Greek site. During a four-week field season, an international contingent of 45 scholars—including students, faculty, and specialists—delved into the heart of ancient Pella’s societal matrix.

Excavations at the site since the 1950s have uncovered civic, religious, and commercial buildings, part of a royal palace, and elite residences. The Pella Urban Dynamics Project, however, pivots the lens away from these upper-class inhabitants, instead concentrating on the experiences of the community’s ordinary people. All the while, researchers seek to gain an understanding of the city as a whole, its expansion over time, and its importance in the Greek world, following its designation as the capital of the Macedonian kingdom around 400 BCE.

A late Hellenistic house—once pulsing with the daily life of non-elite residents—was the focus of last year’s dig as team members uncovered a cobbled peristyle, a stone stylobate, and parts of interior rooms. Beyond the excavation site, a field survey of Pella’s northern and western zones illuminated the living patterns of the city’s classical and Hellenistic eras. This work sets the stage for further investigations into the city’s vast urban development—and the ways in which average people experienced such changes.

Left: IPAMAA student Ginevra Miglierina excavates a cobbled courtyard floor at Pella, Greece.
In 2023, the Kelsey Museum’s scholarly contributions once again exemplified its commitment to advancing the understanding of the ancient Mediterranean world and surrounding regions. Publishing a dozen works featuring research on such diverse topics as Meroitic graffiti in Sudan and innovation in Iron Age Italy, our curators, staff, and affiliates were at the forefront of archaeological scholarship. Taken together, these publications not only support the Kelsey’s internal research endeavors but also serve as vital resources for scholars worldwide. Visit myumi.ch/nyDwN to learn more.

In addition to the wide breadth of chapters, edited volumes, and books with Kelsey-affiliated contributors released this past year, our museum was a lodestone for external researchers, providing access to artifact and archival collections that serve as critical assets for academic inquiry. Scholars seeking information about daily life in Karanis, U-M 20th-century excavations, and other topics benefited from the Kelsey Museum’s dedication to sharing its resources and contributing to the collective endeavor of historical discovery.
KARANIS REVISITED: THE AGROS PROJECT REDEFINES SITE HISTORY

When Francis Kelsey led excavations at Karanis, Egypt, more than a century ago, U-M researchers used papyrological and numismatic evidence to establish an estimated chronology of the site, from its founding in the Ptolemaic period to its eventual abandonment, which they believed to be in the 5th century CE.

Now, thanks to an ongoing Excellence of Science grant awarded to a consortium of five universities, including Principal Investigator Laura Motta and the late Richard Redding from the University of Michigan, scholars are rewriting what we know about Karanis’s chronology using the Kelsey Museum’s collection of exceptionally preserved plant and animal remains. The project, “AGROS: Agriculture, Diet and Nutrition in Greco-Roman Egypt: Reassessing Ancient Sustenance, Food Processing and Malnutrition” (2022–2026), investigates the nutritional profiles, fatty acid profiles, antinutrients and toxins, and other components of ancient materials.

According to Laura, initial radiocarbon dating performed on 19 plant specimens from 15 Karanis structures represents the “first-ever, reliable, absolute dates from a Graeco-Roman settlement in Egypt.” This testing indicates that the chronology of the Kelsey samples ranges from the late 4th to the second half of the 6th century CE, with two even reaching into the middle of the 7th century.

Such results bring to light two important implications for the history of Karanis: First, the results do not support the existence of the discrete levels that have up until this point been used to define the chronology of the site, and the analyzed structures appear to be off by several centuries compared to their assigned level.

And second, the dates are later than expected, placing the abandonment of the settlement within the Late Antique Little Ice Age—a period characterized by political transitions. “The timing of Karanis’s decline and fall also has a wider significance for our understanding of the socioeconomic history of late antiquity and the environmental changes affecting the Fayum region at the end of the Roman Climatic Optimum,” Laura added.
Meanwhile, postdoc Tyler Johnson, undergraduate research assistant Benjamin Thomas, and U-M alumna Shannon Burton spent much of 2023 hard at work in the archives, digging into Kelsey excavation records. Their quest to contextualize remains and reconstruct the century-old archaeological field survey fuses the past’s fragmented echoes with today’s voices of inquiry.

The Kelsey Museum mourns the passing of Dr. Richard W. Redding, a cherished colleague and friend whose pioneering spirit and compassionate mentorship profoundly shaped the fields of zooarchaeology and bioarchaeology. Dr. Redding’s innovative work, particularly at Giza, has left an indelible mark on our understanding of ancient societies. His remarkable legacy lives on at the University of Michigan, in the communities in which he excavated, and in the countless lives he touched.
2023 REVENUE SOURCES
Total Revenue: $2.86 million

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology is funded through a variety of sources, including general income from the University of Michigan, gifts from individuals and foundations, grants, and investment income from endowments.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum decided to close the gift shop and eliminate fees for group tours; these earned income streams have not yet been reinstated.

2023 OPERATING EXPENSES
Total Expenses: $2.58 million

The Kelsey budget reflects its dual role as a museum and a center for archaeological research in the Mediterranean. Approximately half the budget is dedicated to the hiring and retention of world-renowned scholars, archaeologists, and professional staff. Additional expenses support archaeological research, publications, educational outreach, collections care, and exhibitions. Strategic programming expenses range from research assistants and special projects to member events and other activities in support of the Kelsey’s strategic operations.
Geoff Emberling filming *Lost Cities Revealed with Albert Lin* at Jebel Barkal, Sudan, in January 2023. Because participants of the Jebel Barkal Archaeological Project (JBAP) had significant input into the structure of the episode, they encouraged the showrunners to include a Sudanese co-host to mitigate the colonial perspective inherent in the idea of discovering “lost” civilizations. Photo by Henrike Brahe, JBAP.

Museum visitors view objects in the Crossroads of Culture Object Spotlight.

IPAMAA student Erica Ventura sorts pottery in the lab for the Gabii Legacy Data Project.
ABOUT THE KELSEY MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology has explored the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East since 1928—bringing the ancient world to life for generations of Michigan students, faculty, and staff. An internationally recognized institution, the Kelsey supports active archaeological fieldwork, advancing public and scholarly access to its collections through publications in diverse media and dynamic museum exhibitions and programs.

Below: IPAMAA student Lorraine Abagatnan excavating at Notion, Turkey.