

KELSEY MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

2025–2026 Impact Report

FAMILY, HOUSEHOLD, AND DAILY LIFE

Even as religion, language, and politics transformed the region, daily life followed familiar patterns. Families farmed, cooked, made crafts, cared for their children, and many homes displayed protective objects. Over time, the general activities of daily life shared place.

From 2000
and later
culture
the





A young visitor pauses to take a photo in the Kelsey Museum's galleries. In 2025–2026, K–12 visits to the Kelsey Museum were up an astounding 48 percent over the previous year. Read more on page 14.



Students leave their mark on the Kelsey's graffiti table at Artscapade, August 2025. At this event, our undergraduate gallery educators helped us get the Kelsey name out for new U-M students. Photo: VP Communications, Regents of the University of Michigan.



In April 2026, we celebrated the decades-long career of Elaine Gazda, curator emerita and former director of the Kelsey. Here, she holds a 3D-printed replica of the head of Polydeukion—presented in thanks for her service to U-M and the Kelsey Museum.



During the summer of 2025, five Kelsey-sponsored archaeological projects went into the field. Pictured here are students excavating at Gabii, Italy.

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ON THE COVER

In 2025–2026, Kelsey Museum curators and staff finalized “The Byzantine and Islamic Worlds: 400–1800,” the first new gallery in almost 20 years. Featuring objects drawn primarily from the Kelsey’s own collections, this space explores the dynamic history and cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and Middle East. Read more about the gallery—and the community input so instrumental to its development—on page 5.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



DEAR FRIENDS,

This is a very exciting time to be at the Kelsey, one of the premier collections of ancient artifacts from around the Mediterranean. I recently began my term as the museum's new director, and I am profoundly impressed with its dedicated staff, expert conservators, outstanding researchers, thoughtful curators, engaged educators, and others. As a team, they are united in their pursuit of creating open encounters with objects from the distant past in the present moment.

Currently, the vibrancy of the Kelsey as a museum is much in evidence. After years of preparation, a new permanent gallery, "The Byzantine and Islamic Worlds, 400–1800," is now open to visitors. This is the most significant expansion of the museum's mission in at least a generation—made possible by novel partnerships and contributions by leading scholars. Artifacts never or rarely shown before exhibit the many ways in which ancient material practices persisted in the Middle East and North Africa during this period. Whether seals or lamps, texts or textiles, architectural fragments or coins, these objects testify to the power things have. They speak of cultural affinities across differences, religious devotion, trade relations, personal commitments, social ambitions, and more. Essential to the new look we have created over time were listening circles with groups of stakeholders. What is more, rotating responses from the community will regularly invigorate this gallery.

Furthermore, our signature exhibit in the fall promises to shift how we view Roman art. *Ancient Abstractions: Roman Visual Trends Beyond Naturalism* (Nicola Barham, curator) focuses on what has all too long been overlooked: the interplay between the figural and the abstract in artwork from antiquity. The sheer inventiveness and visual impact of the non-figural artistic register is nothing short of stunning.

Finally, we received generous funding for ongoing excavations that advance our knowledge as well as transform our approach to archaeology. If you haven't seen the video, I invite you to watch the recording of a 2025 event hosted by the Kelsey. This presentation and panel discussion with the directors of the five Klinsky Expeditions showcases what are tremendously generative enterprises: myumi.ch/E7rkk. The passion in the room is palpable.

These and other developments are the result of Nicola Terrenato's visionary leadership. Compared to six years ago, the Kelsey is much transformed. We now have a strategic plan, we have added brilliant members to our team, we have carried out necessary reforms, and much more. Most importantly, we remain committed to enhancing visitors' experiences of the museum's displays. After all, serving and engaging you is what we are all about.

I very much hope readers will enjoy learning about our activities. See you at the Kelsey! ■

—Helmut Puff, Director

MISSION

Excavating the past, building community today.

VALUES

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology upholds these values:

- Collaboration and engagement
- Research and learning
- Creativity and innovation
- Inclusion and representation
- Respect and empathy
- Ethics and equity
- Reflection and dialogue
- Communication and access
- Preservation and sustainability

VISION 2034

Inspiring greater empathy and connection in the world through leadership in archaeology and community engagement.

OUR IMPACT

university & community engagement

The Kelsey is expanding its reach and removing barriers to access through intentional community collaboration, a deep commitment to university programming, and new student engagement opportunities across nearly every department.

research & reparative collaboration

In its galleries, in Southeast Michigan, and across the world, the Kelsey Museum is cultivating reparative partnerships that bring multiple voices and community expertise to our exhibits, collections, conservation efforts, and archaeological research.

capacity & operations

Purposeful staffing, transparent institutional policies, and ever-increasing opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students give the Kelsey renewed energy and resources to advance its research and outreach goals ethically and effectively.

financial foundation

As the Kelsey Museum continues to carry out its strategic priorities, an engaged membership, university support, and grants from foundations and private donors safeguard our ability to support important programming, exhibitions, and research.

LEADING WITH COMMUNITY: COLLABORATING ON OUR NEW GALLERY

Over the last year, the Kelsey Museum moved from thematic groupings and object lists to construction and object installation for its first new gallery in almost two decades, “The Byzantine and Islamic Worlds: 400–1800.”

Vital to the entire exhibit-design process was a series of meetings and listening circles with campus and community groups that trace their heritage or faith to the Middle East and North Africa—the main geographic focus of the gallery. Throughout 2025, dozens of groups generously lent their time, expertise, and voices to honing the exhibition’s final form.

Thanks to their input, the Kelsey has developed labels and guides in English, Arabic, and Spanish and implemented a permanent visitor feedback wall. But the most exciting outcome of these partnerships is a community-curated section of the gallery. Rotating semiannually among campus and community groups, this space allows their voices to manifest and stand in conversation with the exhibition. U-M’s Arabesque Dance Troupe has kicked off the first such case, explaining through objects, text, and video how and why its 600 members keep the deep traditions of Arab dance alive and evolving. ■

“The process of community consultation—the time and care taken—dispels the idea that the exhibit is one person’s truth.”

—Will Pestle, Director of Education

INNOVATION IN TEACHING

ANCIENT LIVES AND MODERN RESPONSIBILITIES

“What should the Kelsey Museum do?”

This was the question Terry Wilfong posed to students in his undergraduate survey course on ancient Egyptian religion (MIDEAST 240) for their final writing assignment. As the curator who initiated the “pause” on the display of the mummified child in the Kelsey Museum’s gallery in mid-2025 (see myumi.ch/y1dJy), Terry wanted to get his students involved, leading a discussion of the issues around mummified ancient Egyptians in the modern world.

The students took to the assignment by storm, engaging with the question seriously and giving thoughtful responses that covered a wide range of ideas—from offering creative solutions for communicating information on Egyptian funerary practice without displaying human remains to modifying the child’s presentation through warning signs or obscuring materials. Still others contemplated more generally about how the gallery could better reflect Egyptian tradition or advocated for wider discussion of the issue with local communities.

The assignment was more than a thought experiment, as the students’ input will have an impact on what the museum ultimately does with regard to the mummified child. Perhaps equally as important, it provided Michigan students an opportunity to learn about real issues museums face today—allowing them to consider the ethics and responsibilities we have when sharing history. ■



ANCIENT ROME AT FULL SCALE

For students in curator Nicola Barham’s “Visual Cultures of Ancient Rome” course (HISTART 228) this past spring, the scale and splendor of Roman architecture came alive in ways no photograph or textbook can capture.

Through a collaboration with U-M’s Center for Academic Innovation’s extended reality (XR) team, Nicola invited undergraduates to step inside full-scale virtual reconstructions of the Ara Pacis Augustae, the Pantheon, and the Arch of Constantine. Wearing XR headsets, students could walk around ancient monuments that would be difficult or impossible to experience in person, study sculptural details up close, and even fly over them.

The immersive format helped students better understand the size, design, and visual power of these monuments, as well as how architecture shaped movement, perception, and meaning in ancient Roman society. By pairing scholarly expertise with emerging technology, the project expanded what undergraduate learning can look like at Michigan—experiential, collaborative, and unforgettable—all while opening new possibilities for digital preservation and future teaching across the humanities. ■

► Learn more at myumi.ch/zjmXk.

A student in Nicola Barham’s art history course explores ancient Roman monuments using an XR headset. Photo: Charlyn David, Center for Academic Innovation.

RETHINKING ARCHAEOLOGY THROUGH COLLABORATION

In the fall of 2025, Research Scientist Geoff Emberling taught “Anti-Colonial Archaeology and Ancient History” (MIDEAST 439), an advanced course that challenged students to rethink how archaeology and heritage work are imagined, planned, and carried out. The course emphasized collaboration, community partnership, and practical tools for putting anti-colonial approaches into action.

Students learned from a wide network of scholars across Southeast Michigan, including faculty at Michigan, Central, and Wayne State. The conversations struck a chord: “I have never taught a class in which students were as engaged as this one,” Geoff reflected.

For their final projects, students translated the course’s principles into practice, designing fieldwork that reflected both their own research interests and a commitment to collaborative, community-minded scholarship. One student has already begun developing his project through interviews in his home community and is preparing to seek funding. As he observed, the project has brought together “members of this community who...had not really communicated with one another until now.”

Whether these students become archaeologists or museum professionals or find careers in other fields, courses such as this one have staying power, encouraging them to approach their work with community and collaboration at the forefront. ■

3D MODELS TRANSFORM ARCHAEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The Kelsey Museum’s 3D digitization program, headed by Chris Motz, offers modes of viewing and “handling” ancient objects that extend far beyond what is observable in a display case. At the Kelsey, models of hard-to-handle artifacts—from heavy statues and inscriptions to small, highly detailed coins—allow U-M students to examine objects from every angle, including elements that are usually hidden from view. Other 3D objects encourage students to make connections between fragments and intact objects, contextualizing how archaeologists reconstruct whole objects from mere pieces.

And in different cases, these models serve as the catalyst for a tactile and memorable classroom experience. Tom Landvatter, a Reed College professor and IPAMAA alum, recently used full-scale 3D-printed replicas of Kelsey artifacts in an upper-level archaeology course. “Overall, they really liked them,” Tom noted about his students. “There was something about handling them in three dimensions, being able to engage with them as an object as opposed to just an image, that really made them interested.” The students even continued engaging and experimenting with these models beyond the classroom: some printed and painted their own copies to match color reconstructions, while another used a 3D-printed model of a stamp to test its utility as a bread stamp! ■



THE MUSEUM AS A CLASSROOM

University class visits at the Kelsey Museum invite students to learn through close looking, direct engagement, and conversation with ancient objects. This year’s classes explored everything from observational drawing and ancient sound to ceramics technology, bread in Roman life, Silk Roads travel, and magic in the ancient Mediterranean. With Shannon Ness now serving as the Kelsey’s full-time university programs manager, the museum is better situated to support meaningful, object-based learning experiences for students across campus. ■

3,800

U-M students visited the Kelsey this year

1 in 4

visiting students participated in object handling

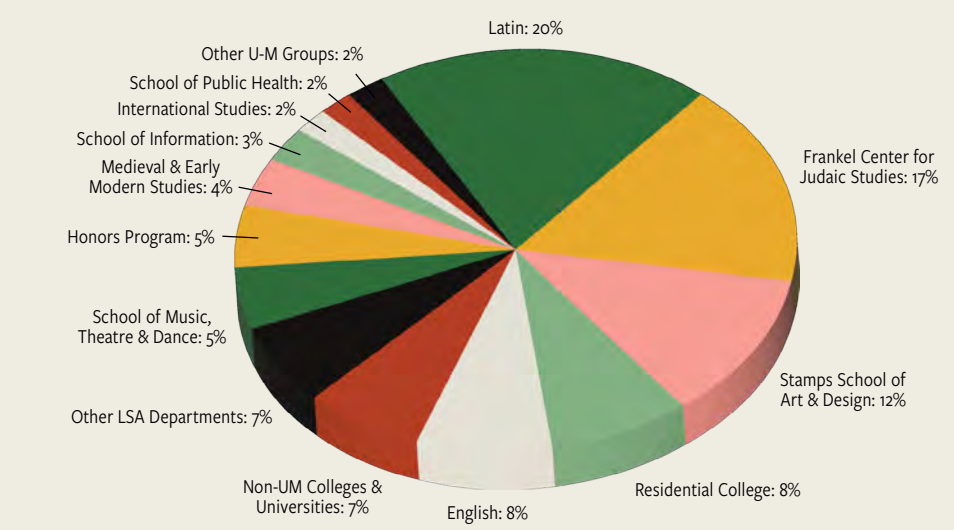
Left: Tom Landvatter’s students handle 3D-printed models of Karanis objects at Reed College.

Right: University Programs Manager Shannon Ness leads an object-handling session with students from U-M’s Stamps School, February 2026.



“More than just the (excellent) selection of materials and overall organization of the visit, the way [Shannon] interacted with the students and answered their questions made the whole experience really exciting. I regularly bring my students to the Kelsey, but this time was the best!”

—Ruth Caston, Associate Professor, Classical Studies



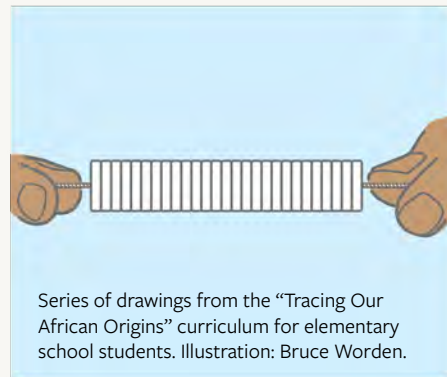
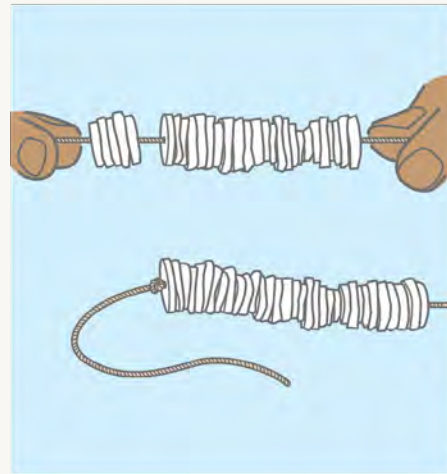
Nearly 70 percent of university visits come from five departments within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts: Classical Studies, History, History of Art, Middle East Studies, and Ancient Mediterranean Archaeology. However, the Kelsey Museum also serves a wide breadth of other schools, departments, and units, as shown in this pie chart breaking down the remaining 30 percent of class visits.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN ACTION FOR K-12 CLASSES

Steve Klinsky's \$1.15 million gift in late 2024 was a game changer for archaeology at U-M, supporting five field projects around the world that are tackling big questions about human history. But it was also an incredible boon for K-12 education in the state, as funding for dedicated curriculum development builds a bridge directly from the field to the classroom.

Last year, curriculum writer Matt Homrich-Knieling spent many months translating complex archaeological ideas into educational experiences that show the applicability of the discipline across a range of subjects, from arts to social studies to STEM. This project was deeply collaborative, involving input from a wide range of Kelsey staff, in addition to the Klinsky PIs themselves—all of whom were eager to share their research with young learners. Matt's efforts were also supported by the museum's Teacher Advisory Group, whose dedicated educators reviewed, provided feedback for, and even piloted the lessons in their own classrooms.

Far from a traditional textbook-learning approach, the Klinsky curricula shows that archaeology involves more than digging up the past: it's real, it's relevant, and it can shape our approach to the present. ■



Series of drawings from the "Tracing Our African Origins" curriculum for elementary school students. Illustration: Bruce Worden.

2025 EXHIBITIONS AND GALLERY UPDATES

THROUGH THE LENS: EXAMINING COLORFUL OBJECTS FROM KARANIS

Curator: Laurel Fricker

This Kelsey in Focus installment offered a peek under the microscope, revealing the traces of pigment found on three figurines excavated at Karanis, Egypt, and explaining how scientific techniques allow researchers to reconstruct the colors of the ancient world. myumi.ch/qZ2pE

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY: CHILDHOOD AND TEXTILE CRAFT IN ROMAN EGYPT

Curator: Heidi Hilliker

Apprenticeships were one way young people learned skilled trades in Roman Egypt, but this was only a piece of the puzzle. This case exhibited mini spinning and weaving tools to show how learning occurred at home, through observation, imitation, and play. myumi.ch/X8RQn

REINSTALLING INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE ROMAN WORLD

Curator: Nicola Barham

The Kelsey is home to hundreds of tombstones from the multicultural harbor city of Pozzuoli, Italy, that trace the lives and deaths of individual Romans and powerful families. This year, our inscription wall got a refresh, breathing new life into an important collection.

THE INHABITED WORLD: LIVING WITH NATURE

Curators: Heidi Hilliker, Sam Ross, Bailey Franzoi, and Kara Larson

This object spotlight highlighted how nature influenced artistic expression, domestic life, and spiritual experience in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, demonstrating the many ways that people of the past augmented, captured, and consumed elements of their environment. myumi.ch/9pbeg

"THERE ARE IN AMERICA, NO KINGS, PRINCES, OR NOBLES": CAESAR, CATO, & WASHINGTON

Curators: Shannon Ness, Will Pestle, Nic Terrenato

Marking the nation's Semisesquicentennial and supported by a grant from U-M's U.S. at 250 initiative, this Kelsey in Focus exhibition explores conflicting ideas surrounding liberty, leadership, and power in ancient Rome, in Revolutionary America, and in the United States today. myumi.ch/4x82n



A Family Day visitor gets a close-up look at Roman coins, October 2025.

1,100+

Family Day attendees
in October 2025

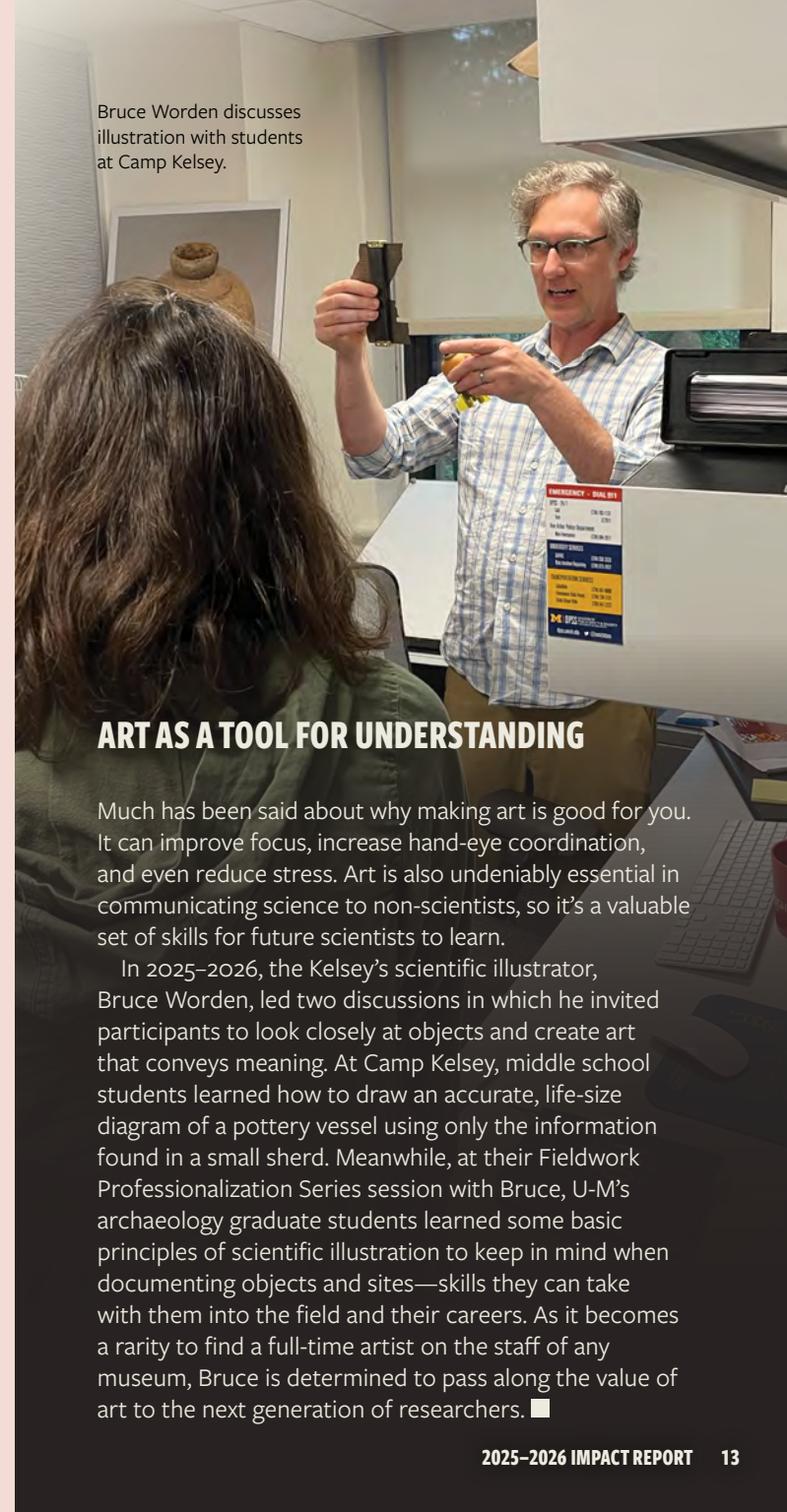
THE KELSEY MUSEUM, LEGO LEAGUE, AND AN UNEXPECTED ARCHAEOLOGY QUEST

Last fall, the Kelsey Museum found itself at the center of an unforeseen robotics frenzy. After archaeology was chosen as the theme for the FIRST® Robotics LEGO® League challenge—an international STEM program for K–12 students—the museum was flooded with requests from robotics teams eager to learn about digging up the past and the tools archaeologists use to do so.

In response, the Kelsey quickly developed new ways to support these students, fielding dozens of requests for tours, Zoom sessions, and mentorship opportunities. Editor Emily Allison-Siep created an online hub featuring virtual archaeology resources and tour information. Community and Youth Educator Stephanie Wottreng Haley completely reimaged the museum’s biannual Family Day around the questions LEGO League students were asking. Manager of Digital Assets Chris Motz personally advised 22 teams and participated in an Archaeological Institute of America–hosted “Ask an Archaeologist” webinar that has reached more than 11,000 viewers to date. Other staff, including Will Pestle and Jennifer Kirker, provided hands-on guidance throughout the year—even helping one team from Rochester, Michigan, reach the FIRST world championships in Houston, Texas.

The semester crescendoed into a record-breaking Family Day, which welcomed more than 1,000 children and family members—far above the usual 300–400 attendees. U-M professor Katie Skinner, who shared her underwater robotics equipment at the event, was especially impactful, inspiring many teams to pursue this angle in their projects.

For many visitors, the LEGO challenge offered a first encounter with the Kelsey and with archaeology itself. What began as a wave of student requests became a powerful opportunity to connect new audiences with the museum, bridging STEM and the humanities in creative, memorable ways. ■



Bruce Worden discusses illustration with students at Camp Kelsey.

ART AS A TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING

Much has been said about why making art is good for you. It can improve focus, increase hand-eye coordination, and even reduce stress. Art is also undeniably essential in communicating science to non-scientists, so it’s a valuable set of skills for future scientists to learn.

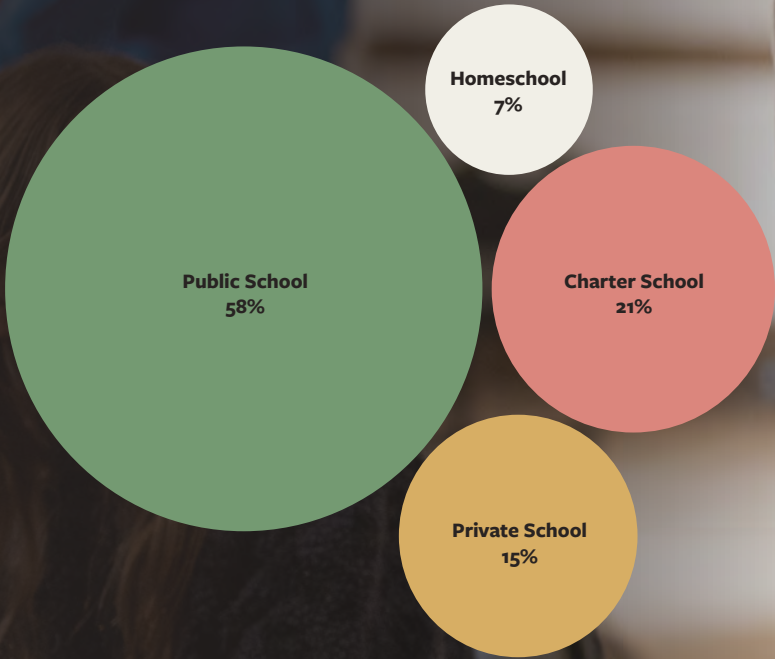
In 2025–2026, the Kelsey’s scientific illustrator, Bruce Worden, led two discussions in which he invited participants to look closely at objects and create art that conveys meaning. At Camp Kelsey, middle school students learned how to draw an accurate, life-size diagram of a pottery vessel using only the information found in a small sherd. Meanwhile, at their Fieldwork Professionalization Series session with Bruce, U-M’s archaeology graduate students learned some basic principles of scientific illustration to keep in mind when documenting objects and sites—skills they can take with them into the field and their careers. As it becomes a rarity to find a full-time artist on the staff of any museum, Bruce is determined to pass along the value of art to the next generation of researchers. ■

“We want to extend a special thank-you to Stephanie Wottreng Haley for organizing such an incredible event. Her hard work, coordination, and enthusiasm created an environment where the kids could learn, explore, and truly shine.”

—Robo-Fairies Team, Sterling Heights, Michigan

K-12 VISITORS AT THE KELSEY

The number of K-12 students who came to the Kelsey increased exponentially in 2025-2026, up by more than 1,000 students from the previous academic year. Pictured below is the breakdown of school types that visited—demonstrating the museum’s continued commitment to welcoming students from a broad range of educational settings.



“Amazing! We enjoyed the activities provided, and the tour of the gallery was super informative and engaging. The staff was wonderful, very knowledgeable, and helped keep students engaged. Some of our students said ‘best field trip ever!’”

—5th Grade Teacher, Garden City, Michigan

GENERAL VISITORSHIP: A MILESTONE YEAR

In 2025-2026, the Kelsey welcomed almost 29,000 visitors—a nearly 17 percent increase from the previous fiscal year (see graph below). Intentional outreach to new audiences, expanded visits by university students, LEGO® Leaguers eager to learn about archaeology, an increased number of weekend tours led by volunteer docents, and extended evening hours on Kelsey “Third Thursdays” all converged to make this year one of the best yet.

2,200+

community tour participants

2,800

K-12 students visited the Kelsey during the school year

16.9%

increase in visitors compared to last year



STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE MUSEUM

This year, the Kelsey Museum provided hands-on learning and professional experience for dozens of U-M students across nearly every area of museum work, with undergraduate opportunities at the center of this effort. Students contributed to the Archaeobiology, Education, Conservation, Administration, Digital Assets, and Curatorial Departments, gaining firsthand insight into the many forms museum practice can take.

Their work strengthened the museum in tangible ways. In the galleries, undergraduate educators brought fresh energy and a near-peer perspective to K-12 tours, helping young visitors make personal connections to ancient cultures. In conservation, interns learned close looking, documentation, photography, and object care while supporting daily lab activities. Administrative interns explored the essential behind-the-scenes work that keeps a museum running, from mailings and donations to accessibility and archival support. Others contributed to research, collections, and digital projects that expand access to the Kelsey's resources.

For students, these opportunities offered mentorship, skill-building, and exposure to possible career paths. For the Kelsey, they deepened connections across campus while advancing the museum's teaching, research, and public-engagement mission. ■

by the numbers FY 2025-2026

30+

undergraduate and
graduate students
worked at the Kelsey

12

undergraduates
mentored by Kelsey
curator Laura Motta

7

undergraduate gallery
educators guided K-12
visits and tours

3

interns hosted in
partnership with U-M's
museum studies minor

Undergraduate lab assistant Janet Larios with curator Laura Motta in the Kelsey Museum's Archaeobiology Lab. Photo: Christina Merrill, Michigan Photography.



In the spring of 2026, the Conservation Department hosted undergraduate museum studies intern **Hope Zainea**, who gained practical hands-on experience in a team-based environment as she learned how to handle, photograph, and treat objects.

“I am able to apply what I read from conservation books to actual work in the lab. It has been very educational to read the theory and research and then see the process and results firsthand.”

—Hope Zainea, Conservation Intern

For the past two semesters, undergraduate museum studies student **Sarah Kovacs** has worked in the administrative office to create dynamic social media content that highlights the Kelsey as a one-of-a-kind institution for learning and engaging with the ancient past.

“Working at the Kelsey has given me the confidence to trust my creativity. It has taught me that museums have so many stories to tell, and social media is a meaningful way to share them with a wider audience.”

—Sarah Kovacs, Administrative Intern

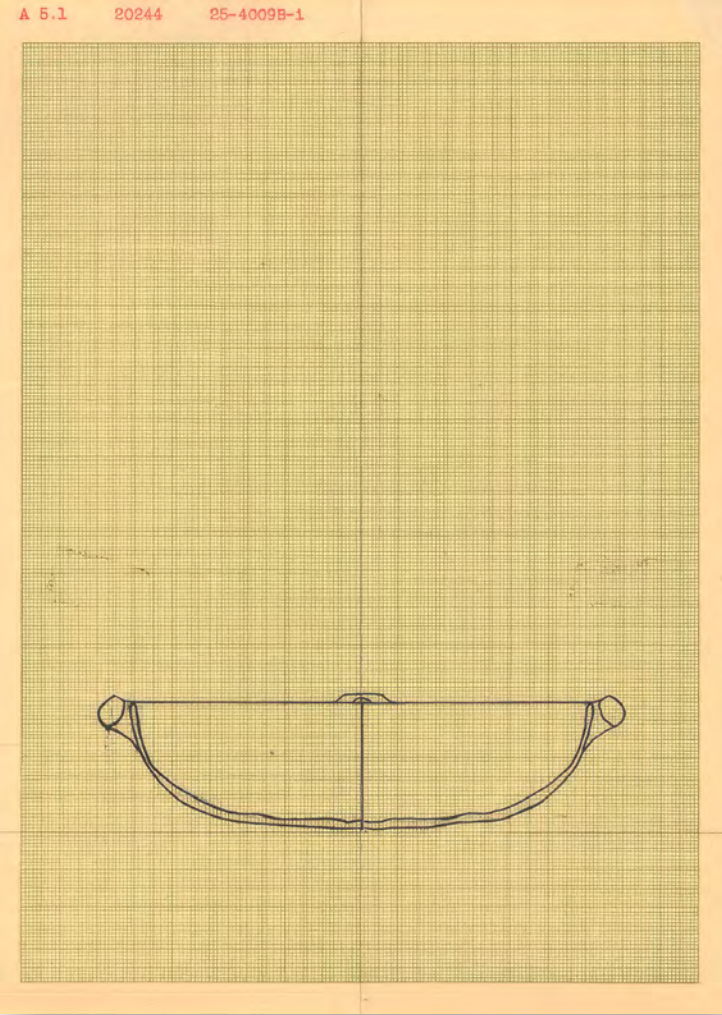


OPENING THE ARCHIVE: EXPANDING ACCESS TO KARANIS MATERIALS

U-M's dig at Karanis may have ended 90 years ago, but for researchers at the Kelsey and across the world, the legacy collection and rich excavation records continue to reshape understandings of Graeco-Roman Egypt. Since 2023, IPAMAA alum Tyler Johnson has worked with Kelsey curator Laura Motta as a postdoctoral research fellow. His work is part of the broader reexamination of the Kelsey's Karanis excavations through new approaches ranging from the chemical analysis of organic remains to digital and stratigraphic reanalysis.

A central part of this project is the digitization and organization of the Karanis excavation archives—transforming a vast but difficult-to-navigate body of material into a searchable and accessible research resource. To date, Tyler has coordinated the digitization of around 600 maps and section drawings, 31 notebooks of survey data at about 90 pages each, approximately 1,500 non-scaled field sketches, 780 field note cards, more than 800 entries with spot data for individual structures, dozens of internal and preliminary reports, over 6,000 photos, and around 1,500 pottery drawings.

Tyler also leads an effort to revise and disseminate the unfinished official excavation report of Karanis, drafted by former Michigan professor Enoch Peterson. This project will result in a digital monograph fully interlinked with a cross-referenced database. Combined with new radiocarbon evidence and an interactive, game-engine-based 3D environment, these resources are clarifying the site's long-obscured chronology and illuminating patterns of occupation, reuse, and change at Karanis. ■



11,000+
maps, photos, reports,
and other Karanis archival
materials digitized

IN THE FIELD, ACROSS THE ANCIENT WORLD

Under the summer sun—amid the scrape of trowels, the sweep of brushes, and the careful study of objects newly uncovered or long held in collections—five Kelsey Museum-sponsored archaeological projects continued their work in 2025. Across Türkiye, Italy, and Greece, U-M faculty, staff, students, and alumni, as well as international collaborators, carried out work ranging from excavation and survey to conservation, artifact study, environmental analysis, archival research, and community engagement. These projects are collaborative endeavors, grounded in local expertise and international partnership. They also serve as important training grounds, offering undergraduates hands-on experience with archaeological fieldwork and helping graduate students hone specialized skills so necessary to their future careers. ■

34
U-M students participated
in Kelsey-affiliated
fieldwork

30+
institutions and universities
represented across all five
projects in 2025

Hannah Edwards, a graduate student in U-M's Interdepartmental Program in Ancient History, working at Pella, Greece, summer 2025.





Sami Elamin meeting with trainees under the “Peace Tent” at Jebel Barkal, 2026.

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GUIDES AT JEBEL BARKAL, SUDAN

As part of its commitment to provide benefits to the local community, the Jebel Barkal project launched a program to train local college students in archaeology to become guides to the site.

The training program was designed by community engagement leaders Tohamy Abulgasim and Rebecca Bradshaw and implemented on the ground by Hassan Faki and Sami Elamin. It combined study with hands-on practice: learning about the site from a newly produced bilingual visitor’s guide and directly from Hassan and Sami, and progressively guiding real audiences—first each other, then neighbors, then an unannounced group of visiting university students. Trainees took a 50-question test covering everything from straightforward facts to thornier questions about looting and media neglect, before guiding over 150 schoolchildren in four organized events, growing visibly more confident and assured with each one.

The trainees—all recent college graduates in archaeology and, as it happened, all women—gained transferable career skills and real guiding experience in addition to being paid for their work. The site, meanwhile, gained informed young custodians better equipped to protect and represent it. And the process itself—seeing what real visitors ask and want to know—is deepening the team’s own understanding of how the public engages with Jebel Barkal’s history. ■

DIGITAL STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

Before 12 corncobs return home to the Santa Ana Pueblo, the Kelsey Museum is helping ensure that a digital record remains available at U-M. This spring, in partnership with the U-M Museum of Anthropological Archaeology, graduate students Lauren Alberti (pictured at right) and Anton Strachan 3D-scanned and processed the cobs under the guidance of Chris Motz, the Kelsey’s manager of digital assets. The project, arranged by former director Nic Terrenato, is being carried out with the Pueblo’s permission and support. It reflects an intersection of technology, collaboration, and care: using the Kelsey’s expanding digital documentation expertise to support repatriation, reinforce campus partnerships, and preserve knowledge respectfully and responsibly. ■



TREATING (AND DECIPHERING) A LUSTER-GLAZED TILE

Kelsey conservators spent much of the last year preparing objects for display in the new Byzantine and Islamic gallery. Much of this work centered on basic care: photographing objects, assessing their conditions, making lighting and mounting recommendations, and assisting with installation. But some objects required additional levels of attention and, sometimes, the careful unraveling of past treatments.

The first sign that things were not right with a beautiful luster-glazed tile was that neither Katherine Burge, the gallery’s curator, nor conservator Suzanne Davis (both pictured below) could decipher the inscription, even though both read Arabic script. The next clue was its backing: a sandwich of plywood, cardboard, plaster, and adhesive, an odd style of presentation even for something restored by a dealer at the turn of the last century.

To stabilize the tile for long-term display, Suzanne began conservation treatment to remove it from the acidic wood and cardboard backing. As treatment progressed, it became apparent not only that the tile was heavily restored but also that the restoration had been accomplished with pieces of several different tiles. These fragments had all been carefully joined together, but because the inscriptions didn’t match up, the restorer “adjusted” some of the Arabic letters to make them appear whole, creating a nonsensical inscription in the process.

This interesting, real-life example of restoration and collecting practices in the early 20th century will feature in the new gallery, along with the tile itself—minus the unusual backing. ■



TWELVE YEARS AT NOTION: CHRISTOPHER RATTÉ'S LEADERSHIP AND LEGACY

In 2014, when Christopher Ratté launched a short survey season at Notion, Türkiye—an ancient Ionian Greek city overlooking the Aegean Sea—he did not know he was beginning a 12-plus-year commitment. Then again, he notes, perhaps he should have: his career has been defined by sustained engagement with archaeological sites in Türkiye, including 13 years at Sardis and 16 years at Aphrodisias.

Now, as he prepares to retire at the end of 2026, Chris looks back on a project that has reshaped scholarly understanding of an ancient city, created transformative opportunities for students, and extended the University of Michigan's impact across the Mediterranean.

Sponsored in part by the Kelsey Museum, the Notion project began as an archaeological survey from 2014 to 2021. The site's exceptional surface legibility and lack of modern buildings suggested it would be an ideal place to study the evolution of the ancient town on an urban scale. That indeed proved to be the case, but the survey also challenged expectations. Rather than revealing continuous occupation from the early first millennium BCE through the medieval period, as at nearby Ephesus, the team found that Notion's most intensive occupation was concentrated in the Hellenistic and Augustan periods (3rd century BCE–1st century CE). This discovery has offered new insight into the changing

fortunes of cities in western Anatolia in the Roman imperial era.

Since 2022, excavations have both confirmed and complicated prior interpretations, providing new details about the main period of habitation while also revealing interesting evidence for earlier and later activity. Among the most striking discoveries was a hoard of Persian gold coins buried beneath the floor of a late 5th-century BCE house. The team also identified a late Roman harbor warehouse outside the city limits and uncovered archaeological and epigraphic evidence for an ambitious Augustan-era program of urban renewal.

Chris's leadership has made Notion a training ground for the next generation of archaeologists. The project's forthcoming publication in the Kelsey Museum Studies series includes contributions from multiple U-M alumni and Kelsey colleagues, and current Michigan students are developing dissertations and research projects based on the site and its material culture.

As Kelsey-sponsored research at Notion draws to a close, Chris hopes the project will continue under the aegis of the University of Toronto, where he will begin a new position in 2027, while maintaining close ties with U-M. "On behalf of all my colleagues," he says, "I want to express my sincerest thanks to the Kelsey Museum for its support of the first 12 years of work at this remarkable and rewarding site." ■

IPAMAA graduate Christina DiFabio (far right) and Turkish workers at Notion's East Ridge House.



► In a 30-plus-year career encompassing fieldwork at many archaeological sites, conservator **Suzanne Davis's** experience at Notion has been unique, instructive, and deeply meaningful. Suzanne joined the Notion Archaeological Project about six years before excavation began—an exceptional opportunity few conservators ever have. Too often, conservators are brought in only after major preservation problems emerge, but those early years at Notion allowed her to obtain a strong understanding of the site's needs that continues to guide the team's approach.

Today, much of the hands-on conservation is carried out by Suzanne's Turkish colleagues and their students. Even when she is on-site only briefly, her long familiarity with Notion allows her to contribute quickly and meaningfully, holistically supporting this important site's long-term preservation.

21

U-M students who have participated at Notion over the last 12 years

COLLECTIONS IN MOTION: RESEARCH, ACCESS, AND GLOBAL REACH

This year, the Kelsey Museum's collections and research once again made an impact far beyond Ann Arbor. Through object loans, research visits, archival consultations, and digital access, the museum supported discoveries about the ancient Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern worlds. Whether studied in person, explored online, or featured in exhibitions, the Kelsey's collections continued to advance research, teaching, and public engagement.

At the same time, Kelsey Museum staff, faculty, students, and affiliated scholars shared their research widely through publications, lectures, conference papers, workshops, and invited talks—addressing such diverse topics as gender in ancient Egypt, community-engaged archaeology in Sudan, and craft production in the Aegean. See more at myumi.ch/RQmp5. ■

Photo: Christina Merrill, Michigan Photography.

by the numbers
FY 2025–2026

450

objects studied by U-M
and external researchers

433

objects loaned to
10 institutions

20,500

public database
users

19

archival research
consultations/inquiries

30+

publications and scholarly
manuscripts

45+

talks led by faculty,
staff, and students

A New Accession for the Kelsey

Last fall, the Kelsey Museum received a remarkable gift from the estate of Eugene and Emily Grant: six oversize bound portfolios of *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt, and Nubia*, one of the great works of Scottish painter David Roberts. First published in the 1840s, the set includes nearly 250 tinted lithographs by Louis Haghe, tracing Roberts' 11-month journey through North Africa and the Middle East.

Revisiting Karanis at ASOR

A century after U-M excavations began at Karanis, Egypt, the site continues to inspire new insights. At the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) Annual Meeting in Boston (November 2025), the Kelsey-chaired session "(Re)excavating Karanis 100 Years Later: New Research on the Legacy Collections and Archival Records" brought together scholars working on Karanis materials today, demonstrating the enduring value of the site's collections and archives.

Kelsey Connections in Rome

The Kelsey's global reach was visible this year in Rome, where the Musei Capitolini Centrale Montemartini mounted an exhibition dedicated to the life and career of artist Maria Barosso. A section of the exhibition highlighted Barosso's connection to Francis W. Kelsey, who commissioned her in 1924 to paint a nearly full-size watercolor replica of the Villa of the Mysteries frescoes.

THE KLINSKY EXPEDITIONS: PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY

“This funding came at a particularly precarious time, not just for archaeology in general, but for work in Sudan in particular since the outbreak of war there in 2023... [Klinsky] support has allowed us to continue our research, to keep our research team together, and to support our colleagues in Sudan during very difficult times.”

—Geoff Emberling, Principal Investigator, Finding Ancient Napata



The Klinsky Expeditions tackle major challenges in the field by combining cutting-edge technology with innovative thinking. Rooted in rigorous academic research, these projects push technological boundaries to uncover long-held secrets of the past. Eighteen months into the work, archaeologists are now at the midpoint of their research, and early findings are promising. ■



Finding Ancient Napata: Lost City on the Nile

With support from Steve Klinsky, the Jebel Barkal Archaeological Project has significantly enhanced its understanding of the city of Napata in northern Sudan—one of the major urban centers of ancient Kush. Geoff Emberling’s team has expanded knowledge of the urban occupation by 50 percent through magnetometry surveys, located the main cemetery for the ancient city, and carried out analysis of satellite, drone, and LiDAR imagery of the site.



The Northern Masters of Eurasia: Nomadic Elites at the Dawn of the Silk Roads

Brian Miller and Alicia Ventresca-Miller are excavating tombs in Kazakhstan and Mongolia to elucidate how steppe nomads harnessed together the east-west Silk Routes and the north-south Fur Routes to become architects of archaic globalizations. Working at the site of Gol Mod, they identified eight tombs on a high mountain ridge that date to the Mongol era (1200 to 1400 CE)—including an unlooted burial with a fully intact saddle.



Battlefields of the Punic Wars

The Battlefields of the Punic Wars Project carried out a comprehensive scanning campaign of air and satellite photos in central Tunisia to assess the suitability of various areas to support the 60,000-plus soldiers who would have moved around the landscape at the time of the Battle of Zama. In the spring, two visits to Tunisia aimed to establish contact with the local archaeological authorities and to arrive at an agreement to conduct fieldwork next year.



Dust, Beads and Genes: Pinpointing Our African Origins with Ancient DNA

In Africa, Brian Stewart seeks to shed much-needed light on the search for human origins by extracting ancient human DNA (aDNA) from jewelry worn by our early ancestors and from the sediments of sites they inhabited. As a first step, team members must study sediments to make sure human aDNA is preserved in Africa’s mountains. If confirmed, they will scan Pleistocene Later Stone Age ostrich eggshell bead assemblages for ochreous specimens with potential for preserving residues.



A Moonshot Under Water: Discovering Ancient Hunting Sites Beneath the Great Lakes

John O’Shea’s search for ancient hunting sites underneath Lake Huron employs an acoustic sub-bottom profiler to survey 12 localities, covering a total of 140 linear miles of lake bottom. This new technology successfully identified a series of locations with finely stratified deposits that chronicle the changing Early Holocene climate and environment and a series of buried land surfaces with the potential to contain traces of the very earliest occupation of the region.



The Sixth Project: Subsurface Techniques in Urban Centers

The Kelsey Museum is excited to launch a sixth expedition with new support from donor Steve Klinsky and his family to hone new methods and technologies for revealing what lies beneath long-occupied, deep, and densely built modern cities. The project aims to refine methodologies for subsurface testing in complex metropolitan environments and leverage new technologies and improved data filtering to detect meaningful evidence amid the “noise” of contemporary urban centers.



HONORING SIX YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

After six years of dedicated service as director and curator at the Kelsey Museum, Nic Terrenato stepped down on June 30 to return to his full-time faculty role. His tenure can be defined by the continued professionalization of the museum and a renewed energy across its exhibitions, fieldwork, and educational programs. Under his leadership, the Kelsey strengthened its foundations while expanding its reach, setting the stage for an exciting new chapter.

Nic assumed leadership during the COVID-19 closure, at a time when staff and faculty were working remotely and the path forward was unclear. During his first term, he focused on addressing structural challenges within the museum, leading the development of museum bylaws, reorganizing the staff and internal committee structure, and raising funds for a permanent gallery highlighting the museum's Byzantine and Islamic collections. The gallery, now open, stands as a visible testament to his leadership. Yet perhaps even more significant was his thoughtful creation of new staff positions and his commitment to hiring and retaining exceptional colleagues—efforts that continue to propel the Kelsey forward.

In his second term, Nic turned his attention to preparing the Kelsey for reaccreditation. He coordinated an inclusive strategic-planning process, revised the museum's mission and vision, and secured significant funding for archaeological research and student engagement at Michigan. His connection with U-M alum Steve Klinsky has grown into a remarkable partnership, generating nearly \$2 million to reinvigorate Michigan-led archaeological research around the world. Nic also raised more than \$2 million in support of student research and engagement in the archaeology of the Mediterranean, Middle East, and North Africa.

Nic Terrenato leaves an important and lasting legacy at the Kelsey Museum. Still, it is his great sense of humor, steady perspective, and generous collegiality that will be missed most. Grazie, Nic! ■

RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO MUSEUM STANDARDS

The Kelsey Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), reflecting our commitment to the highest standards and best practices in the museum field. To uphold this distinction, the museum must regularly review its policies and procedures to ensure they remain aligned with professional standards and current laws. Building on the goals outlined in the 2025–2029 strategic plan, the Kelsey devoted time this year to updating three of its core documents:

- The **Code of Ethics** defines the museum's core values and principles.
- The **Collections Management Policy** establishes procedures for the care, stewardship, and oversight of the permanent collection.

- Developed in collaboration with U-M's Division of Public Safety and Security, the **Emergency Response and Disaster Preparedness Plan** identifies lines of communication and key actions to take in the event of an emergency.

Museums such as the Kelsey have important responsibilities to both their collections and their audiences. Clear, carefully developed policies help guide this work and ensure that these responsibilities are carried out ethically and effectively. With these updated policies in place, the Kelsey Museum is well positioned to continue advancing its exceptional research, dynamic exhibitions, and engaging public programs. ■



A FOUNDATION FOR IMPACT

Gifts to the Kelsey Museum provide vital financial support for exhibitions, education, conservation, and research. These contributions help the Kelsey realize its mission, allowing us to share the ancient Mediterranean world and build community today.

This year, the Kelsey Museum continued to expand and diversify its financial foundation. While giving and membership have remained steady, the museum has seen significant growth in grant support for research, programs, and exhibitions. The total amount raised is important, but the breadth of stakeholder engagement is equally essential. With a new membership program, a newly reimagined permanent gallery, fresh temporary exhibitions, and innovative research initiatives, the Kelsey Museum is equipped to broaden its community of supporters and strengthen its donor base. ■

136

donors gave to the
Kelsey Museum

\$1.46M

raised through gifts
and grants

OUR MEMBERSHIP COMMUNITY

Membership at the Kelsey Museum enables us to serve our communities and preserve cultural heritage through exhibitions, education programs, collections care, and conservation. Members also build a strong, engaged community around the museum itself—creating lasting connections between people, art, archaeology, and learning.

This past year, the Kelsey revamped its membership program to offer more opportunities and access to our research and work. From exclusive object-handling workshops to pre-lecture receptions with scholars and behind-the-scenes evenings at the museum, we are excited to bring our members experiences unique to the Kelsey. As we approach the museum’s centennial year in 2028, we look forward to expanding the member community and celebrating with friends, supporters, and people who love archaeology. ■



\$30K

for community
education

\$780K

in support of
archaeological
fieldwork

ADVANCING DISCOVERY, EDUCATION, AND PRESERVATION

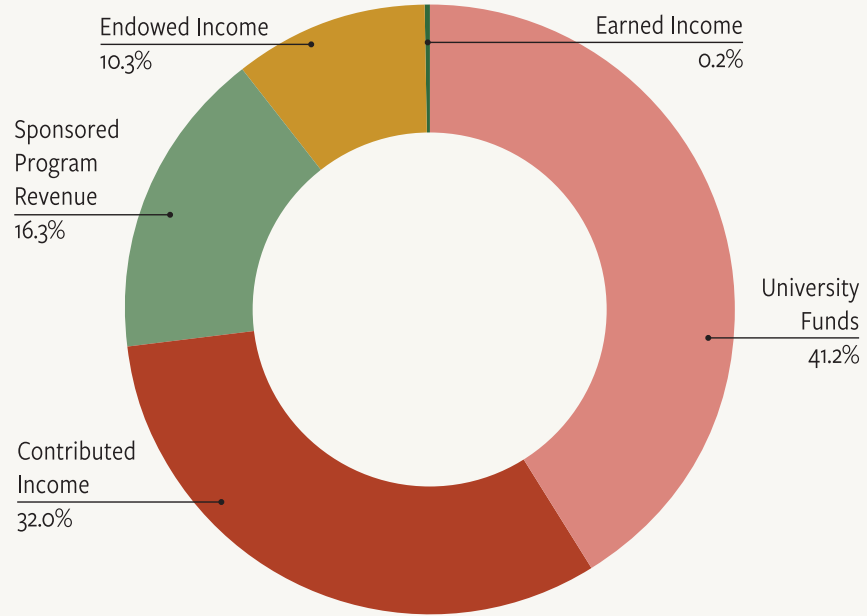
This year, Kelsey Museum faculty and staff were particularly resourceful and successful in seeking out and winning grants spanning University of Michigan sources, private donors, and nationally renowned foundations:

- The Kelsey Education Department received \$7,100 from the U-M Initiative for Democracy and Civic Empowerment for “From Asylee to Citizen: Legal Education for Newly Resettled Refugees (Year 2).”
- Education staff received \$18,900 through the U-M Life Changing Education Initiative to launch a partnership between the Kelsey Museum and Michigan’s Egyptian and Iraqi communities.
- Kelsey educators were also awarded \$4,574 from the U-M Initiative for Democracy and Civic Empowerment for “Ancient Rome and American Democracy: An Evening with Dr. Dean Hammer.”
- The Kelsey Museum received \$50,000 from an anonymous donor to create a one-year postdoc position to update the museum’s Mesopotamian exhibits and research its ancient Middle East collections.
- Marjorie Fisher contributed \$20,000 in support of Janet Richards’ ongoing work at Abydos, Egypt.
- A gift of \$750,000 from Steve Klinsky will hone new methods and technologies for revealing what lies beneath long-occupied, deep, and densely built modern cities.
- U-M’s African Studies Center awarded \$10,000 to Geoff Emberling in support of a collaborative field training program at Jebel Barkal for Sudanese archaeology students who remain in the country during war.
- Suzanne Davis and Geoff Emberling received a grant of \$499,988 from the Getty Foundation to research, implement, and evaluate climate adaptation approaches to conservation at Jebel Barkal.
- The Kelsey in Focus exhibition “‘There Are in America, No Kings, Princes, or Nobles’: Caesar, Cato, and Washington” was generously funded by a \$4,400 grant from U-M’s U.S. at 250 initiative.
- Curator Nicola Barham received several grants in 2025–2026 for teaching and the development of her upcoming exhibition, *Ancient Abstractions: SUCCEED* Grant, U-M ADVANCE Program (\$7,800); shortlisted for Provost’s Teaching Innovation Prize, U-M Office of the Provost; Arts Initiative Project Support grant, U-M Arts Initiative (\$10,000); eGIF Award, U-M College of LSA (\$25,000); U-M History of Art Faculty Grant (\$12,800); and support from the Academic Innovation Fund, U-M Center for Academic Innovation, for the development of an extended reality (XR) undergraduate teaching modality.

FY 2025–2026 REVENUE

Total Revenue: \$4.25 million

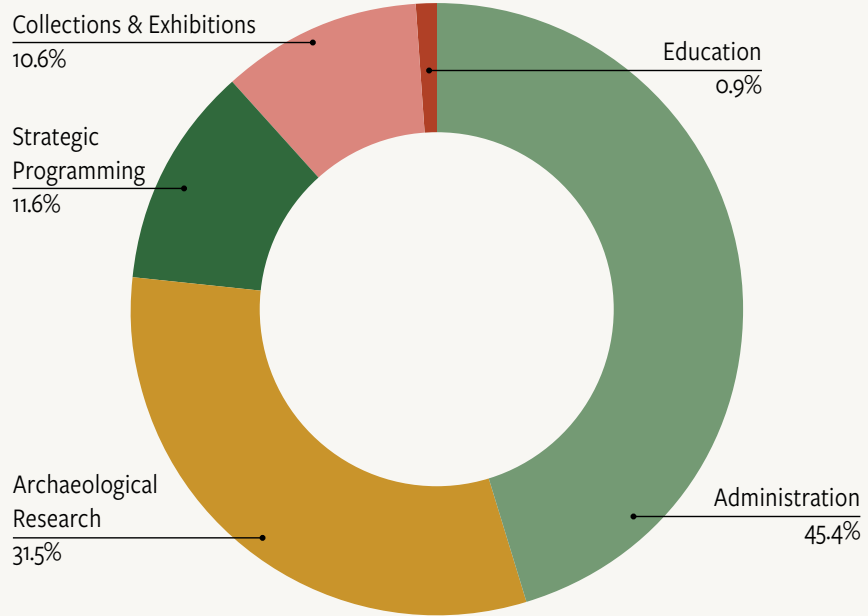
To align with overall U-M financial reporting, the graphs showing annual revenue and expenses are now based on U-M's fiscal year (July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026). The largest single source of revenue consisted of university funds allocated to the Kelsey from the College of LSA. Another key source was contributed income from museum donors, including several gifts from Steve Klinsky and anonymous support for a Kelsey postdoc position. Income from the endowment and from sponsored federal/non-federal funds rounded out our mix of revenue sources. ■



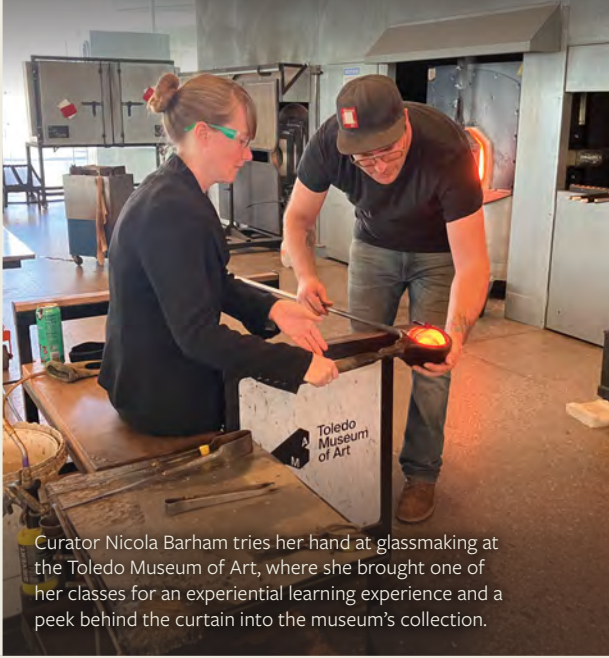
FY 2025–2026 EXPENSES

Total Expenses: \$3.46 million

The Klinsky donations allowed the Kelsey to invest heavily in archaeological research in fiscal year 2025–2026. Less obvious but crucially important was the contribution of endowment funds to the creation of a new full-time position within the Education Department; like all staff salaries, this position is included in the “administration” category in the chart to the right. A mix of internal university funding and endowment revenue also enabled us to greatly increase our expenses for exhibitions, particularly the new Byzantine and Islamic gallery. ■



Camp Kelsey attendees view artifacts from the U-M Museum of Anthropological Archaeology. In 2025, attendance for this program doubled, as we welcomed two groups of campers eager to learn about history, mythology, and archaeology.



Curator Nicola Barham tries her hand at glassmaking at the Toledo Museum of Art, where she brought one of her classes for an experiential learning experience and a peek behind the curtain into the museum's collection.



Curator Janet Richards being interviewed at Abydos, Egypt, for the Arte documentary *Égypte: le mystère du tombeau du vizir*.



Undergraduate gallery educator Sofia Lanza with a young visitor at Family Day, March 2026. Sofia was one of several U-M undergraduate students who worked at the Kelsey Museum this year—gaining hands-on skills that enrich their educational experience and provide valuable tools for their futures.

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.



IPAMAA students Erica Venturo and Felicity Sorenson speak with visitors at the Kelsey Museum's record-breaking Family Day, October 2025.