Newsletter Vol. 24, Fall 2025
University of Michigan

Museum of Anthropological Archaeology

The Maloti-Drakensberg mountains of highland Lesotho, in Africa, are like cold islands in an otherwise warm continent. They hold potential for preserving ancient DNA from early humans. A gift from U-M alum Steve Klinsky is funding research here and in four other places around the globe. (Photo courtesy Brian Stewart) *See story, page 3.*

Contents

Letter from the Director

Greetings from the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology!

I am happy to report that our Museum is healthy and strong. Curators, students, and staff continue to conduct research in the collections and around the world. Our Museum press produces award-winning books. With the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, we have launched a Center for Collaborative Archaeology and Heritage (see page 10) and the Klinsky Expeditions (see page 3). The future is bright.

But we also, unfortunately, see trouble on the horizon. In the United States, archaeology and museum work have never been particularly well funded. Historically, most of our research funding has come from the National Science Foundation, but the NSF, like many federal agencies, is under threat. Graduate student research is particularly threatened, as programs like the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant program face elimination.

In order to maintain our world-class anthropological archaeology graduate program, we recently decided to extend so-called Griffin Fellowships to ALL graduate students—in the amount of $20,000—regardless of where they work, New World or Old World (see page 8). These fellowships will help stem the loss of NSF funding.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter. I always find it fascinating to read about where our students and curators went this summer and what they did. Thanks, as always, for your support. And please come visit us in Ann Arbor!

Sincerely,

Mike

Michael L. Galaty, Director
Curator of European Archaeology
Professor of Anthropology and Classical Studies

Thank you, generous donors! Your support allows the Museum to send students on excavation trips around the world. Gifts are critical for our ability to attract the best minds in archaeology, which in turn contributes to our standing as a vital and vibrant museum with a reputation as a leader.

To give online, go to the UMMAA main page **(lsa.umich.edu/ummaa)** and look for the blue Look to Michigan rectangle. If you prefer to use mail, cut out and complete the gift form below and send it with your check.

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The Klinsky Expeditions: $1.15 million gift spurs innovative research, collaboration, and new K-12 educational programs

These rockshelters, known as Spitzkloof, in Namaqualand, South Africa, have sequences spanning more than 60,000 years. Researchers are sampling them for human ancient DNA preserved in archaeological sediments and body ornaments. (Photo courtesy Brian Stewart)

It's a dramatic setting: an ancient caribou run at the bottom of Lake Huron. The line of stones, now under about 300 feet of water, used to be on dry land, where people lived and hunted more than 9,000 years ago, before it was submerged due to melting glaciers. Now archaeologists are exploring the lake bottom to find out more about those people.

Four equally dramatic endeavors: Searching for the lost city of Napata along the Nile River in northern Sudan; investigating how steppe nomads in Central Asia created transcontinental networks about 2,000 years ago; answering the question of when and where our species, *Homo sapiens*, evolved within Africa; and attempting to find the site of one of the pivotal battles of the Punic Wars, which were fought between Rome and Carthage in Italy, Tunisia, and Spain.

These five archaeological projects have scientific value and they are important to our understanding of human history—and there is a chance they will not succeed.

For businessman, philanthropist, and U-M alum Steve Klinsky, that's perfect. He asked U-M archaeologists to submit proposals for "moonshot" projects, and from those proposals he chose to fund the five above (two led by archaeologists from the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology and three by archaeologists from UMMAA) with a $1.15 million gift.

"The Klinsky Expeditions represent a wonderful opportunity for both UMMAA and Kelsey archaeologists to undertake risky projects, the kinds of projects a federal agency is unlikely to fund," writes Michael L. Galaty, director of UMMAA. "It also strengthens the already tight bonds between our two museums, encouraging collaboration."

On April 17, to mark the launch of five archaeological projects known as the Klinsky Expeditions, the five principal investigators (PIs)—Geoff Emberling, Bryan

Excavations by the Jebel Barkal Archaeological Project in northern Sudan in April 2025, led by Tohamy Abulgasim (left). (Photo courtesy Geoff Emberling)

Miller, John O'Shea, Brian Stewart, and David Stone—gathered for a panel discussion.

Klinsky joined the panel for a few minutes by zoom.

"I grew up in Michigan, in Southfield and Birmingham," he said. "I have always liked archaeology, even as a kid... So the idea of helping the school by helping some great archaeological expeditions … and hopefully just to build support in general from the greater community for the University of Michigan and for archaeology, it's a great pleasure for me and my family."

Emberling is a research scientist at the Kelsey; Stone is faculty in the U-M Department of Classical Studies and in IPAMAA; Miller, O'Shea, and Stewart are curators at UMMAA. The Kelsey is an exhibit museum with a focus on Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern archaeology, and UMMAA is a research museum with archaeologists working around the globe. Although the two museums are located just a few blocks apart on the U-M central campus, projects rarely overlap.

Nic Terrenato, director of the Kelsey, introduced the panel with these words: "I just want to say how wonderful it is to have the entire archaeological community come together for these events, sitting at the same table, exchanging ideas and methods, and … collaborating in community engagement in all sorts of different ways," he said. "[T]his is really, I think, a step in the right direction, and a step that could not have been taken without the generosity of Steve Klinsky."

Innovative research

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

PI Brian Stewart's team recently wrapped up a fieldwork season at Spitzkloof B in Namaqualand, South Africa. This is one of a series of coastal desert rockshelters they are excavating not far from the border with Namibia. The region is arid, so organic preservation is generally excellent. The project's geoarchaeologist, Dr. Mike Morley (Flinders University, Australia), removed a series of eight micromorphology blocks from levels dating 40,000–65,000 years before present to evaluate for human ancient DNA (aDNA) preservation. They hope that the region's extreme dearth of precipitation will compensate for its high temperatures in this regard. These sites have also yielded some of the subcontinent's earliest ostrich eggshell beads, which will also be evaluated for preserved aDNA. They have recently confirmed that a previously extracted micromorphology block removed from one of Stewart's high elevation sites, Sehonghong Rockshelter in Lesotho, contains mammalian aDNA. This is exciting, especially given that none of the African samples included in the initial benchmark study, which established resin-impregnated micromorphology blocks as viable sources of aDNA, yielded preserved biomolecules. The Sehonghong block extractions still need to be converted to an indexed and hominin-enriched aDNA library to determine whether human material is present, but this preliminary result

suggests that temperate environments like the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains are promising places to search for ancient human biomolecules in an otherwise tropical/subtropical continent.

Finding Ancient Napata: Lost City on the Nile

The support from Klinsky made it possible for the Jebel Barkal Archaeological Project (JBAP) to be one of only two international projects continuing to work in Sudan during the war there, which started in April 2023 and is still active. All key positions of JBAP are jointly held by Sudanese and international scholars. The Sudanese team members carried out all the fieldwork this season, while international team members supported them and did advanced analytical work. By conducting this work the project provided critical financial support for colleagues in Sudan and their families and ensures the site is monitored during the war.

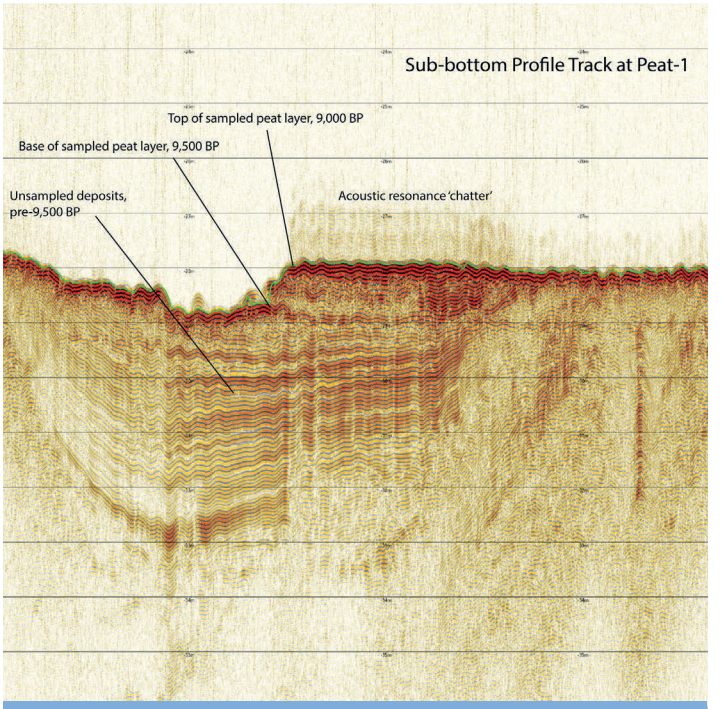
PI Geoff Emberling wrote, "We were able to hold a field season in April, during which our team (directed in the field by Tohamy Abulgasim) opened two trenches at the site that aimed to connect the cityscape of the temple and palace area with what we have called the East Mound, which has been the focus of much of JBAP's recent work."

In one trench the team recovered some architecture of the Meroitic period (ca. 200 BCE—100 CE). A second trench, 3.5 m deep, recovered nothing. That showed that a wadi had run through the city, wrote Emberling, which helped the team understand how the archaeological site was built up.

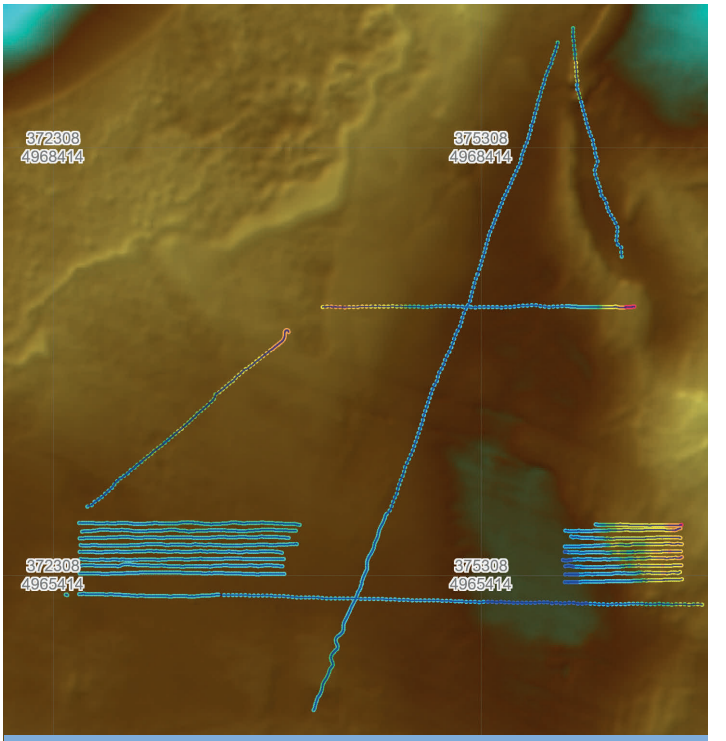
The team also worked with topographical LiDAR data and drone photography gathered by a team from National Geographic when they filmed a documentary at the site in 2023, called "Lost Cities Revealed with Albert Lin" (Episode 2: The Warrior Kings). JBAP colleague Pawel Wolf, working in Germany, combined the drone photography with the topographical data to produce a new image of the site, which resulted in the discovery of at least one unexcavated royal tomb at the site. The team hopes to begin work on this tomb, which would originally have been a pyramid, in January 2026.

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

PI John O'Shea, curator of Great Lakes archaeology at UMMAA, routinely uses an ROV (remotely operated vehicle) to do archaeological research at the bottom of Lake Huron. He and his crew have found stone structures that were used as hunting drives (to channel caribou past waiting hunters) about 9,000 years ago, along with stone artifacts associated with these hunting structures. Thanks to the funding from Klinsky, this year they were able to focus their research on an even earlier occupation—they were able to buy a machine called an acoustic sub-bottom profiler, which uses sound waves to identify artifacts and



Sub-bottom profile through densely stratified peat deposits. Exotic obsidian was recovered from the area with acoustic resonance patterns. (Image courtesy John O'Shea)



This image shows signs of very early human occupation *below* the bottom of Lake Huron—survey patterns from an acoustic sub-bottom profiler in the Buried Lake locality. The darker green area in the center of the image would have been a small lake at 11,000 BP. The dense pattern of tracks at the lower right of the picture covers a shore area of the paleo-lake with indications of possible human settlement. (Image courtesy John O'Shea)

An overview of the site of Kumsay in western Kazakhstan. The kurgan mounds, which contain burials, can be identified via the light-colored vegetation on top. U-M archaeologists hope to find materials from about 1000 AD that will help them understand how steppe nomads created transcontinental networks. (Photo courtesy Alicia Ventresca-Miller)

structures *below* the lake bottom. One of their remarkable finds in 2025 was the discovery of the remains of a small inland lake and, along what would have been the shore, net sinkers (weights used for fishing nets)—evidence that the people living near the small lake had been fishing there.

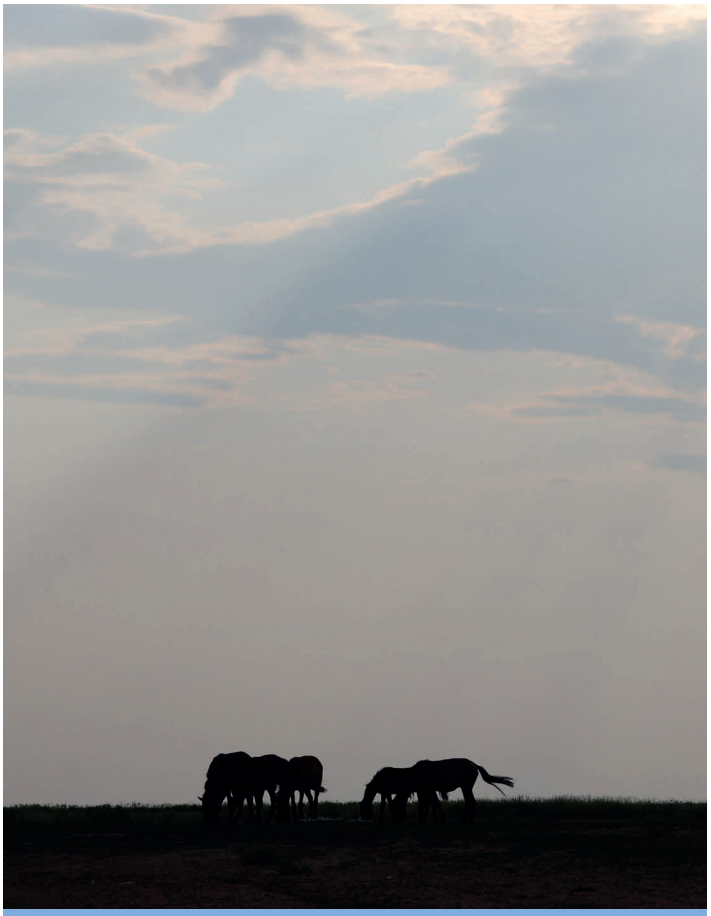
"In the coming year," O'Shea wrote, "we hope to collect cores with datable material from several of the deep deposits and to document potential early site areas in deep water via photogrammetry and sampling from the ROV platform. Intermediate depth targets will be directly investigated via SCUBA."

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

In June and July 2025, co-PI Alicia Ventresca-Miller laid significant groundwork for this project. The team recently wrapped up a field season in Aktobe province in western Kazakhstan, in collaboration with local archaeologist Arman Bisembaev (Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University). This season served as a trial run for next year's investigations. Undeterred by the heat, researchers set up camp and excavated three kurgan mounds—each containing several burials from the time when people first began to herd domestic animals in north-central Asia. The season concluded with a visit to the Aktobe Regional Museum, where the team examined objects excavated from similar mounds in the area, providing a sense of the artifacts they expect to uncover next year and their conservation needs. In November, Ventresca-Miller plans to go back to Kazakhstan to collect more samples from previous excavations, which she will then analyze in her laboratory at U-M.

Battlefields of the Punic Wars

PI David Stone and his team have been searching for clues to possible Punic War battlefields. Very few battlefield locations from the third century BCE are known, because ancient historical sources were rarely specific, but in the last 20 years archaeologists have identified the Battle of the Aegates Islands (241 BCE) and the Battle of Baecula (208 BCE). Stone's team is taking an outside-in approach to narrow down other battlefield locations. This involves using satellite imagery, road networks, and the position of ancient settlements and talking to colleagues with experience of the research questions and approaches. It requires bibliographic research to rule in, or out, previous



Horses grazing in the steppe on the outskirts of the site of Kumsay, Aktobe Province, western Kazakhstan. (Photo courtesy Alicia Ventresca-Miller)

David Stone examines a sling bullet that was probably used by soldiers in the Punic Wars.

suggestions and familiarizing the team with the latest discoveries in battlefield archaeology. Plans are being made to visit locations and to talk with Michigan high school classes about the project.

Education

In addition to funding archaeological expeditions around the globe, the Klinsky donation is also being used to develop new educational programs for local K-12 classrooms. Will Pestle, director of education at the Kelsey, explained that the museum is working with a teacher advisory group and the five principal investigators to build a "partner curriculum" for each of the five projects. The goal is to reach students at every age level.

"We're trying to make clear the value of archaeology across the curriculum," he explains. Currently, the archaeology curriculum is designed mainly for middle school students (the age when the state calls for teaching about ancient civilizations), and that is reflected in the age of their student visitors. At the Kelsey, they'd like kids of all ages to learn about archaeology—and with the Klinsky donation, they can start moving in that direction.

Lesson plans for kindergarteners and early elementary students call for them to make ostrich eggshell beads—a fun art project that links to Brian Stewart's findings in Lesotho in Africa.

Older students will have an age-appropriate program too, says Pestle. Using the acoustic sub-bottom profiler to map features and artifacts underneath the lake bottom is a perfect example of using math, science, and technology.

"John O'Shea's project ties into the high school STEM curriculum," he says. Teachers can talk about interactions between humans and ecological systems using an example from their home state of Michigan.

Steve Klinsky's gift will help the Kelsey provide teachers with the means to educate more students about archaeology, from kindergarten to high school.

"His donation has enabled us to do things we otherwise wouldn't have the bandwidth to do," says Pestle.

Read more about the Klinsky Expeditions on the Kelsey Museum website: myumi.ch/dgAk7.

Digging Deep: U-M Museum of Anthropological Archaeology's Griffin Endowment Fellowship gives Michigan archaeology PhD students the edge

Griffin fellow Hannah Hoover (excavating) and her student research assistants host an annual public archaeology day for members of the community to tour the colonial-era Indigenous town site where they are conducting archaeological research. Dr. Hoover, a U-M alum, is now an assistant professor of anthropological archaeology at the University of Tennessee. (Photo courtesy Hannah Hoover)

by Kristen Loszewski

One of the top concerns for archaeology graduate students is finding the funds to support the field research that they need to write a dissertation. At UMMAA, the Griffin Endowment Fellowship provides students with funding to begin that dissertation research. Read the full story of the "Big Griffin," as the fellowship is called, at Support LSA (https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/support-lsa/stories-of-impact/student-impact/digging-deep.html). Below is an excerpt from the original article.

When Hannah Hoover (M.A. '21, Ph.D. '25) was considering graduate programs in anthropological archaeology, the University of Michigan stood out—not just for its world-class faculty and resources, but also for the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology (UMMAA)'s James B. Griffin Endowment Fellowship. The "Big Griffin," as it's referred to by UMMAA faculty and grad students, is a uniquely structured internal fellowship that gives grad students a significant head start on their careers by providing financial support for independent field research.

Established through a bequest from alumnus and professor emeritus of anthropology James B. "Jimmy" Griffin (Ph.D. 1936), who served as UMMAA's director from 1946 until his retirement in 1975, the fellowship carries a lot of weight. Though he retired 50 years ago, Griffin is still considered one of the most influential archaeologists of the 20th century and is regarded as the dean of North American archaeology. Until this year, the Griffin Endowment Fellowship, which was created in

1997, has been awarded solely to graduate students with research interests in the Eastern United States—Griffin was the internationally recognized expert on the prehistoric indigenous cultures of the Mississippi Valley and the Eastern U.S. during his career.

But over the past 28 years, the James B. Griffin Endowment Fund, which supports the fellowship, has grown large enough to support every archaeology Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology's graduate program, all of whom are affiliated with UMMAA—no matter where in the world they conduct their research. That's a game changer, says Professor Rob Beck, UMMAA's associate director and curator of Eastern North American archaeology. "There's no place else that has this kind of internal opportunity where, if you put in the work and write a solid proposal, you can start your dissertation research with a $20,000 grant in hand," Beck says. "That's a huge draw for students who plan to apply for a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to finish their dissertation."

Fieldwork that builds futures

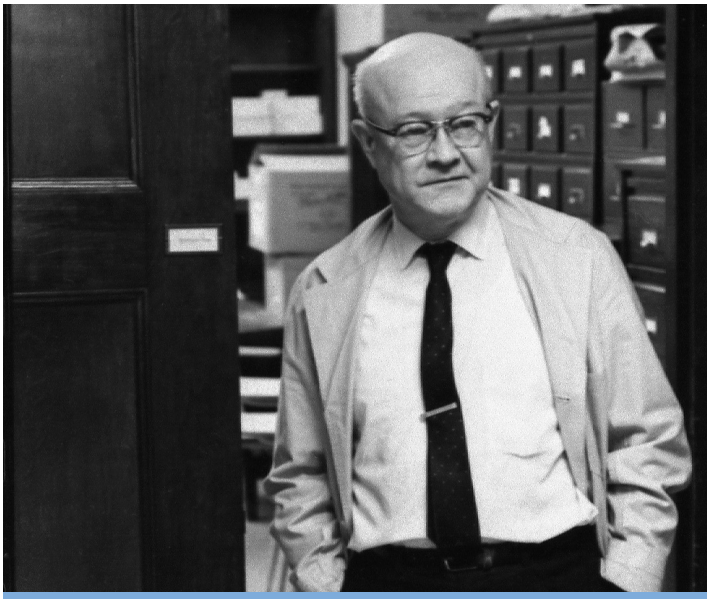
For her dissertation, Hoover led fieldwork at a colonial-era Indigenous town in coastal South Carolina to understand how people mediated regional change through activities in everyday life. Thanks to the fellowship, she spent a full summer at the research site directing 20 undergraduate field research assistants from the College of Charleston and the University of Michigan who helped her conduct survey, excavation, and community-engaged archaeology for her project.

"The Griffin gave me the time and funding to get into the field and refine my research questions. Without it, I would have had to wait or scale back what I wanted to do," she explains.

Beck underscores the importance of that timing. "NSF reviewers want to see that the groundwork is already in place—that the fieldwork is done and the student is now pursuing analysis. That's what the Griffin allows: front-loading the fieldwork so the NSF can support the next phase. It sets our students up for success."

Built-in NSF practice

Another strategic advantage of the "Big Griffin" is that its application process is structured to closely mirror that of the prestigious NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG). "We require our Ph.D. students to write their dissertation proposals in the form of an NSF grant," says Beck. "The Griffin application process teaches students how to frame a research question, lay out a methodology, and articulate broader impacts—skills that are crucial not just for the National Science Foundation grant application, but for their entire careers."



James B. "Jimmy" Griffin, a renowned archaeologist who specialized in prehistoric cultures of eastern North America, was UMMAA's director for nearly 30 years (1946 to 1975).

For students like Hoover, who was awarded an NSF DDRIG in 2024, the process gives them early and realistic experience writing competitive proposals. "Being able to workshop a proposal with the Griffin committee helped me understand how to write for an academic grant audience in a specific, persuasive way, and grounded in a clear research plan," she says. "It made my NSF application stronger."

With their field research already completed through the Griffin fellowship, students can use the NSF grant to advance their research and fund expensive lab analysis, including things like radiocarbon dating, animal bone analysis, and ceramic analysis—work that is essential to completing a project.

"The expansion of the Griffin Endowment Fellowship will have a huge impact on UMMAA students and the research trajectory of the museum, and is an amazing tribute to Jimmy's foresight and generosity," says Michael Galaty, director of UMMAA. "Jimmy traveled the world, visiting archaeological sites and interacting with a global archaeology community. He would be thrilled to know that his gift now supports research across the globe. We used to name a couple of Fellows every few years. Now, we can award as many as four Fellowships a year. This is a sea change for us."

UMMAA graduate students are currently conducting research on just about every continent—from Kazakhstan to Kosovo, Mesoamerica to the Andes, Africa, Asia and the United States—and, Galaty continues, "increasing the Griffin Fellowship's funding and accessibility to match UMMAA's scope will support the next generation of Michigan archaeologists as they push boundaries and address the big questions about human history and culture worldwide."

Handle with Care: The opening of the new Center for Community Archaeology and Heritage and what it means

Geoff Emberling and Tiffany Fryer, co-directors of the new Center for Community Archaeology and Heritage at the University of Michigan, a collaboration between UMMAA and the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.

You wouldn't think that a cup of coffee would change archaeology. But it does, says Geoff Emberling, a research scientist at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology who received his PhD in anthropology and Near Eastern studies from U-M. At the site of El-Kurru in northern Sudan, where he and his team have worked for more than 10 years, the crew breaks several times daily for tea or coffee (served Sudanese style—with ginger). "In the old model, you kind of grit your teeth and then get back to work," recalls Emberling about the breaks. But now, with a focus on community engagement and collaboration, the breaks are considered a critical part of the work—bringing everyone on the project into conversation daily to share perspectives and information.

In central Quintana Roo, Mexico, UMMAA curator Tiffany Fryer has been investigating historic sites on communal (*ejido*) lands surrounding Tihosuco (a village in the municipality of Felipe Carrillo Puerto) for 12 years, first as a graduate student and then as co-director. Most of the archaeological work is survey; she and the rest of the crew might walk for miles on a typical day.

"We start every day by eating breakfast together," Fryer says. Breakfast is usually eggs and homemade tortillas; occasionally it's peanut butter sandwiches.

"It's really integral to making this kind of work sustainable," she adds. "By sharing something like tea, like food, you start to dissolve some of those hierarchies between field members."

In March 2025, Emberling and Fryer announced the opening of a new archaeology center at U-M, one that they hope will support and develop this approach to fieldwork: the Center for Community Archaeology and Heritage, a collaborative project between the Kelsey Museum and UMMAA. Speakers at the inaugural conference, held on the U-M campus March 14–15, talked about research projects around the globe that have included efforts to engage communities and work collaboratively—from innovative partnerships between descendant communities and archaeologists in northeastern Arizona, to a massive open-access database of archaeological projects in Kosova, to an ecomuseum in Lesotho in Africa.

As different as the speakers' projects were, there were common themes, including commitment to collaborating with local communities and engaging with local heritage narratives. Archaeology that is done in this way has improved results that benefit from local knowledge, and it is also more equitable and beneficial to local communities, say Fryer and Emberling. It also communicates research results beyond academic settings and is more likely to result in the long-term protection of heritage sites.

The idea of community archaeology has been around for decades, but until recently it was on the fringes. Both Fryer and Emberling found their way to it about ten years ago.

"I'm a late adopter," says Emberling. Working in Sudan in 2015, he found himself talking with a community that was very interested in archaeological heritage. "I immediately saw how this represented an important opportunity for the field."

Fryer says her interest in the approach matured in her days as a graduate student, working at the Penn Cultural Heritage Center while earning her PhD at U of Penn.

"[I was] one of the first generation of archaeologists trained to approach archaeology and heritage as deeply linked," she explains. When she was hired at U-M in 2022, one of her goals was to start a heritage center that would support community-embedded and grassroots approaches to heritage management.

As it happened, Emberling was also thinking about this. "It meshes with the way the Kelsey sees the exhibition of archaeology engaging with the community."

Left: Drone "selfie" of project team at the ex-hacienda known today as xArcos. Tihosuco, Municipio de Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo, Mexico. Tihosuco Heritage Preservation & Community Development Project. (Photo courtesy Tiffany Fryer)

Below: Sudanese men in white robes visiting the ancient pyramids of El-Kurru in northern Sudan, 2015. (Photo courtesy Geoff Emberling)

In the fall of 2024, he reached out to Fryer and they started talking about what such a center would look like and what they hoped to accomplish.

Initially, the goal of the CCAH will be to provide funding, resources, and other support for students and faculty who are working on heritage projects and doing community-based fieldwork. In the process, they plan to host a conference every two years and to publish a series of volumes on conference proceedings. Eventually, they hope, the center will become known as a place to train scholars in community-based archaeological research and to host community heritage practitioners in residence at U-M.

Community archaeology makes a commitment to the present, Fryer explains—a commitment to people who live on or near archaeological sites (who in some cases are descendants of those who inhabited those sites) and whose livelihoods and fortunes rise or fall with what happens in the region.

"Practicing community archaeology reminds archaeologists that we aren't the only ones who care about the past," she says. "People have real stakes in their heritage and real interest in their local histories. There's a lot that can be gained by attending to that."

Emberling adds, "It's not easy to do this kind of work. You spend more of your time being a community ethnographer and you make a lot of mistakes. There's a different skill set."

But the effort is worth it, both agree.

"When you're working this way, the question of 'is archaeology relevant' disappears," says Fryer.

Meet the New Graduate Students

Amy Socha

Amy Socha dives at the Wakulla Springs archaeological site, assisting the state park in maintenance and monitoring of the material preserved there. (Photo courtesy Amy Socha)

Amy Socha earned her bachelor's degree from Tufts University in archaeology, where she researched site formation processes in a case study of structure abandonment in northwest Belize. She received her master's in anthropology from Florida State University, continuing to research site formation processes, though now focusing on underwater archaeological contexts and sediment core analysis in the Aucilla River in Florida.

After completing her master's, Amy worked for two years as a senior archaeologist at the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research in the Underwater Archaeology Program, where she managed the state's dugout canoe program and assisted with program projects, including remote sensing, sediment coring, site assessment, and public outreach.

Her research focuses on geoarchaeology, submerged landscapes, and archaeological site formation via sediment analysis and geophysics. She is also interested in paleoclimate reconstruction, resource acquisition and use, and human mobility in the late Pleistocene and early Holocene.

Please join us in welcoming **Amy Socha** to our program!

Meet the New Graduate Students

Liley Bozard

Liley Bozard shows a historic sherd from a kiln site in northeast Arkansas. (Photo courtesy Liley Bozard)

Liley Bozard earned her bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville in 2024. Her undergraduate thesis examined ~800 whole and partial vessels from Parkin and Nodena phase sites in eastern Arkansas (ca AD 1450). Using these assemblages, she argued that Parkin and Nodena phase vessels were remarkably similar in form and stylistic preference, despite earlier claims that Nodena ceramics appear more commonly decorated and ceremonial in nature. Her work suggested that communities in the region were likely engaged in some level of interaction, shared preferences concerning vessel design, and were involved in similar activities at these sites.

Liley has also previously worked for the Arkansas Archeological Survey as their Collections and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) assistant. She has field experience from across Arkansas, working at a range of sites (temporally and spatially).

Liley has interests in ceremonialism, foodways, interaction, and community-making in southeastern Indigenous communities, specifically in the Central Mississippi River Valley. She hopes to continue these lines of research during her time at the University of Michigan, understanding community-making practices and how communities interacted across social boundaries.

Please join us in welcoming **Liley Bozard** to our program!

Undergraduates Go to the Field

In 2025, the Museum (UMMAA) was able to send five undergraduate students to the field. They learned about archaeology in Greece, Croatia, Italy, Belize, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Below they write about their experiences and their gratitude to the donors and the Museum for the chance to spend their summer developing excavation and analytical skills.

Meghan Dwan and the crew at the Pella Urban Dynamics Project in Pella, Greece, in 2025. (Photo courtesy Meghan Dwan)

Meghan Dwan

This summer I was given the opportunity to excavate in Pella, Greece, on the Pella Urban Dynamics Project, gaining experience in excavation, survey techniques, flotation sampling, and more. I was excavating a house from the Hellenistic period, providing insight into how people lived. Each weekday we excavated for six hours, and on the weekends we were able to explore the area and become familiar with different cultural landmarks and archaeological sites. We were able to assist with survey, pottery washing, and flotation, and I gained experience that will help me immensely in my future. I offer thanks to the Hays Family Endowment for Undergraduate Research. Without the funds I would not have been able to participate in this research and gain this vital knowledge that I can carry with me throughout my career.

During my weeks there, I was able to help the survey team collect data. By the end of my stay, I was able to sort through the materials and tell the difference between finds. I learned how these data are recorded to shed light on the past. One aspect of survey work that I loved was the diversity of finds you see as you walk along. Survey gave me the opportunity to identify and learn about many different objects, like figurines and lamps as well as pottery and tiles. As we found objects, we would discuss what they indicated about the site and those who lived there, helping me learn about the area across time periods and spaces.

Excavation gave me the opportunity to focus on one area. As the trench grew deeper and wider, we were able to learn more about the structure and how the people who lived there might have used the area. I was able to dig on a grid, taking samples for flotation and soil for archaeobotanical analysis, and place finds in the context of the specific part of the building. After digging and survey, we cleaned our finds and exchanged ideas about our finds.

On the weekends, we traveled and became acquainted with Greece and the people who live there. I was able to visit museums, the tomb of Phillip the Second, go to

several historical sites in Thessaloniki, visit Meteora, and climb Mount Olympus. I have never felt more welcomed somewhere than I felt in Pella. People were genuinely kind and I made friends I plan to see again in the future. Often we were invited to come to local festivals and concerts and given delicious food to try.

The site itself had a rich and interesting history, but Pella as a town was beautiful and a place I now love. Getting to climb Mount Olympus, swim in the Aegean, and see the history of Thessaloniki set next to office buildings and subways was an irreplaceable experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

This experience has helped me grow as an anthropological archaeologist, as well as a person. With the funds from the Hays Family Endowment, I was able to get tickets, room and board, and food. Few people get to see another side of the world, let alone study its history, and I am so beyond thankful to have been given the resources to make that possible. As I use the knowledge in excavation and survey that I gained, I will continue to be grateful for the UMMAA Research Fund and the Hays Family Endowment for making this truly incredible experience possible.

Jennifer Harmon

I greatly appreciate this award [the Carl E. Guthe Endowment]. It provided me with the hands-on experience that I need to progress in the field of archaeology. This past summer I attended a seven-week field school in Michigan's Upper Peninsula at Michigan Tech University. The field school focused on excavating a blacksmith shop and pumphouse at the Delaware copper mine. While attending this field school, I learned more about the field of industrial archaeology. I really appreciated the opportunity to learn about that part of archaeology. The field school gave me foundational skills that I will continue to use throughout my career and in future excavations. Before we started digging, we visited the Hancock community hub (which has taken over the building that used to be the high school) and learned how to use LiDAR to take a scan of the basement.

We also learned about the long history of copper mining in the Keweenaw Peninsula and about the basic components of a nineteenth-century blacksmith shop. The first spot that we excavated turned out to be a pumphouse, instead of the blacksmith's shop; it turned out that we had been walking past the actual blacksmith shop every day for that entire week. So we wrapped up our units in the pumphouse and began our excavation of the actual blacksmith shop. I learned how to lay out a grid for our excavation units and how to excavate a unit with trowel and brush. I drew each level of my excavation unit and learned how to fill out the forms for each level and determine the dirt color and texture. I also learned how to plot artifacts on the official site plan drawing, complete with a key, that I made for the blacksmith shop. We learned about ground survey techniques and conducted a small survey of a section of the land not far from our excavation site, and learned how to mark ruins and artifact scatters using GPS. We also began the process of cleaning all of the artifacts that we excavated and making sure that all the artifacts from the same unit and level were kept together. Unfortunately, both the pumphouse and blacksmith shop were remarkably clean sites, and we found very few personal items from the people who used to work there. Among the personal items we did find were several pieces of clay tobacco pipes, the leather sole of a shoe, some buttons, and what seems to be a piece of a coconut shell, though we are still confused by that particular artifact. This experience has allowed me to get a better understanding of how archaeology is actually conducted, giving me a glimpse into what my future career might look like.

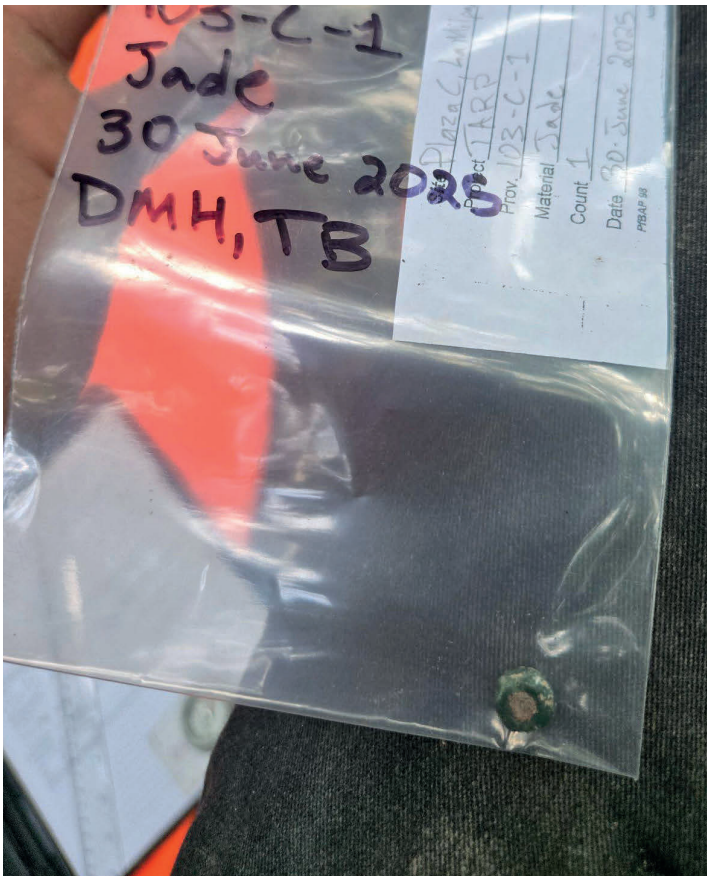
Here is a link to an article in the local newspaper about the excavation: https://www.mininggazette.com/news/education/2025/06/diggin-in/

Mitchell Kyger

I would like to thank you for making it possible for me to attend the second session of the Program for Belize Archaeological Project. I cannot convey properly how frequently it occurred to me that I was there because of the generosity of others. I currently receive financial aid and work during the summers and part-time during the school year to afford rent and groceries. Hence, an opportunity like this is something I have always had to pass up until I was awarded these funds. Coming up with the money for the program, flights, and renewing my passport were made possible because of the money I received from the Carl E. Guthe Endowment.

I remember the first morning I was there—waking to the sound of howler monkeys that had made it close to our camp, and realizing they sound nothing like how I expected them to. Most mornings, I enjoyed some coffee and breakfast, packed a lunch, and went to "the field" by 7 a.m. to excavate Plaza C at the Maya site of La Milpa. During three of the four weeks I spent in Belize, I worked under Dr. David Hyde, who was researching monumental architecture. I worked on subop 103 in Plaza C, and we excavated a stone alignment thought to be a range structure wall. In my group were some fantastic people with whom I am still in contact, and together we gained experience with excavation, data recording, and artifact handling. I also had two lab days, where I worked in camp

Undergraduates Go to the Field



(Above) Local wildlife (tarantula) held by research crew member in Belize.

(Left) Jade bead found by Mitchell Kyger at Plaza C, at the Maya site of La Milpa in the Three River region of Belize. This was the only jade bead found during the second session of work during summer 2025. (Photos courtesy Mitchell Kyger)

cleaning and cataloging artifacts that the entire camp had found. I worked with Michael Maddox from Yale, who is studying the Maya living on the outskirts of La Milpa. I am especially pleased that I worked with two experienced archaeologists studying different topics.

I found that there are fascinating differences between the artifacts in Plaza C and on the outskirts. For example, the ceramics that I found in Plaza C were often slipped, exceptionally thin, and uniform in thickness. The ceramics I found on the outskirts were noticeably drab and occasionally warped or imperfect. Another example is obsidian, which in Plaza C could be found in blades up to 7 cm long, but in the outskirts, the obsidian flakes were no bigger than a quarter. I learned the importance of archaeological "context," from staking off an area to the handling of artifacts. When working with Mr. Maddox, we found human teeth, fingers, and even a femur that we had to handle with the utmost care and record as accurately as possible. It is impossible to re-excavate a site, so taking thorough notes and precise measurements are essential.

I had never been to any country other than Canada, and I had never been on a plane by myself, so this was an exhilarating experience from start to finish. I loved being in the jungle, especially during the rainy season. I had never experienced anything like it before, the fast-onset torrential downpours that might vanish just as quickly as they started or last all day. The wildlife was excellent; the monkeys, frogs, birds, spiders, scorpions, and even insects were all new to me, and I remain amazed even to this day, looking back at some of the photos I took.

Moving forward, I hope to benefit from this experience as much as I can. The connections I made with students and faculty, the archaeological skills, the life experiences, and much more help me in subtle ways. I spent a month without electricity and running water, and it was incredible; that really changed my perspective on the quality of life. I ate the same food, stayed off my phone, and was constantly bitten by bugs and rained on, but I was thrilled to be there. I hope to practice archaeology again soon, and thanks again for your generosity.

Teagan Messing

I am extremely grateful to have received funding from both the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology Hays Family Endowment for Undergraduate Research and the Riggs Hoenecke Undergraduate Student Experience Fund. Without this funding I would not have been able to participate in the Lobor Archaeological and Bioarchaeological Program in Lobor, Croatia. Thank you to all of the University of Michigan donors whose generous

Teagan Messing at the Lobor archaeological site in Lobor, Croatia, summer 2025. (Photo courtesy Teagan Messing)

contribution to the department and museum made this experience possible.

During my time in the field at Lobor I gained hands-on experience in archaeology through excavation, lectures, labs, and museum visits. Upon arrival in Zagreb, we were given introductory lectures on the history of the site at Lobor and excavation techniques. We spent our first few days exploring Zagreb before being transported to Lobor to begin our excavation. The site at Lobor has long been associated with female religious icons. This site has a very long history of sacred buildings, with a Gothic church from the 15th century built upon a Romanesque church, and what is believed to be a Roman temple to the Goddess Diana. A wall dating back to the first century AD is thought to have encircled the site. We continued excavations of this wall, which the previous year's students had begun. The very first day at the site we cleared off the geotarp and cleaned out some of the surrounding forest to extend the trenches down the hill on the outside of the wall. While clearing brush, we stumbled upon our first burial site. One of our professors said "things tend to just pop out of the ground here!" Immediately, we were able to learn how to mark special finds with the total station.

We continued our excavations, finding Roman pottery sherds, Medieval glass fragments, and even a coin from the 1800s. For a few hours every day we would have a bioarchaeology lab in the crypt under the church. During the lab we worked with human remains from the University of Zagreb's collection, learning proper handling techniques and identifying human remains. We learned how to age, sex, and determine potential causes of death. Towards the end of the fieldwork we uncovered two more burial sites near the first. This helped confirm that the first burial we found was part of the original cemetery. After expressing my interest in archaeological illustration, I was able to gain experience drawing the wall and burial sites.

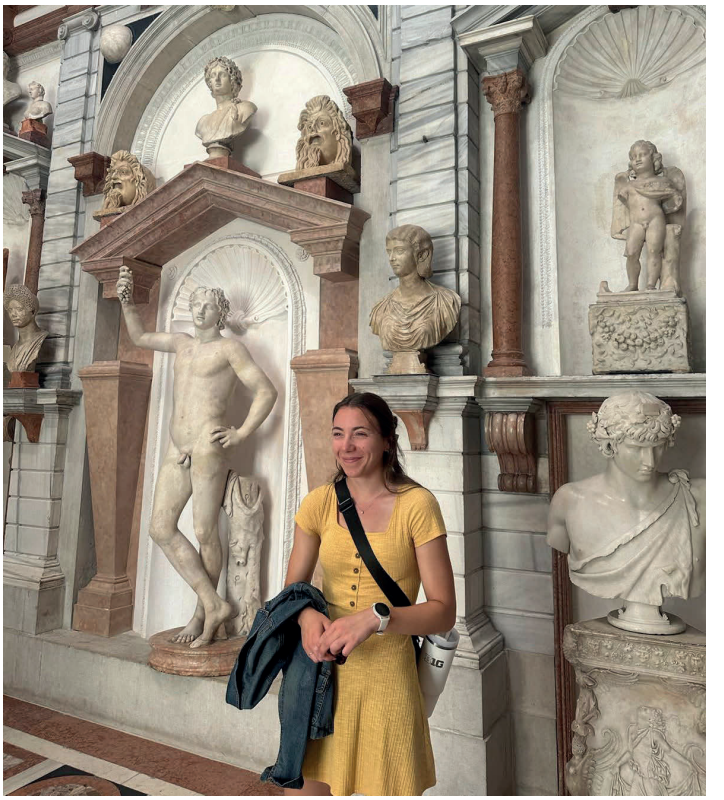
As I wrap up my undergraduate experience and apply to graduate programs this year, the skills I learned during my fieldwork will continue to influence my research into burial rituals in the ancient Mediterranean. From the friends and professional connections I made to the excavations of burials, my time spent in Croatia was an experience that I will never forget. I would once again like to reiterate my gratitude for the funding I received from the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology and the Riggs Hoenecke Undergraduate Student Experience Fund. None of this would have been possible without the generous support of the donors.

Rylee Tolson

To the donors of the UMMAA Research Fund - Carl E. Guthe Endowment, THANK YOU! My experience at the Bostel di Rotzo excavation site was truly life-changing and I don't mean that in a cliché way. I was surprised in several major ways and it affected the entire direction of my future. Firstly, it taught me to pursue happiness. Before taking this trip, I prioritized events that I believed would enhance my resumé. The culture in Italy prioritized self-care and introspection. Within this environment, I made a commitment to take home the joy that I was experiencing. Since returning home, I can proudly say that I am chasing peace and joy in every aspect of my life, not just professionally and academically.

Next, this experience taught me to value connections over personal productivity. With good connection, teams are more productive than any individual can be by oneself. I worked closely with several colleagues and mentors that created an environment where we accomplished more as a team than I could have by myself. We excavated a Bronze Age house, opening 3 new quadrants, and carefully

Undergraduates Go to the Field



(Above) Rylee Tolson in the Museum of Palazzo Grimani during the team's cultural education visit to Venice.

(Left) Tolson documents the excavation of Sector G at the Bostel di Rotzo site in Italy. (Photos courtesy Rylee Tolson)

documenting each and every stratigraphic unit and artifact with precision. This would have been impossible without the collaboration and effort that each individual put into the team culture.

Finally, my exposure to hands-on work in an archaeological setting solidified my professional interests. I knew that I was interested in human osteology within a lab setting, but moving this interest into the field created a new dynamic that I have found increasingly attractive. Since experiencing archaeology without a human osteology component in Rotzo, I find myself progressively more excited to combine my two interests. Next summer, I will be pursuing bioarchaeology and hopefully returning to Italy.

Through the field school experience, I worked on applying and then refining techniques that I had only heard about in a classroom setting. I primarily worked with tools like a pickaxe, shovel, and trowel to slowly strip away stratigraphic units that had piled up on top of the Bronze Age house that we were searching for. While going through these units, we could recount the time periods that each represented from the artifacts found within them. For example, the different types of pottery we found pointed to the transition between a stratigraphic unit that represented the Medieval Age and one that represented prehistoric time periods like the Bronze Age. These pottery fragments can assist in dating the archaeological layer of interest.

Another opportunity that this field school provided was cultural enrichment trips to Venice and Verona. While visiting these cities, we explored several archaeological museums, many of which were archaeological sites themselves due to the age of the buildings. The ceilings often had beautiful paintings and the collections represented time periods from the Paleolithic to the modern era. We viewed exhibitions that displayed artifacts as small as microliths and as large as the entire original floor of a Roman church. Each artifact represented a unique perspective and time period that could be researched for a lifetime and never be fully understood. Such is the beauty of archaeology: we may never fully understand exactly what we examine.

Again, I cannot express my gratitude to the donors who made this experience possible for me. I may never be able to truly repay the debts I owe to those that created this opportunity. Go Blue, Rylee

Africa

After a six-year hiatus, curator **Brian Stewart**'s team returned last summer to continue excavating the remote site of Spitzkloof B Rockshelter in South Africa's Namaqualand region, a southern extension of the Namib Desert. His research there, co-directed with Dr. Geneviève Dewar (University of Toronto), explores deep time adaptations to dryland environments by *Homo sapiens*, and complements their work on early mountain lifeways in highland Lesotho. They began in deposits dated around 40,000 years ago that consist of relatively uniform reddish-brown sandy silts, within which three intact hearth features were identified. Beneath these they encountered a more organic-rich horizon with abundant archaeological material. Hearths in this layer possessed larger botanical remains, including partly burned twigs preserved well enough for species-level identification. The faunal assemblage also diversified and increased in abundance, with frequent tortoise remains and several taxa not previously documented at the site. Lithic density rose markedly, with bladelets manufactured on quartz crystal and fine-grained cryptocrystalline silicates. These finds strongly suggest the team has now reached levels dating 60–65,000 years ago, coinciding with the well-known Howieson's Poort technocomplex of the southern African Middle Stone Age. Paleoenvironmental evidence indicates this was a period of enhanced humidity in the region. Excitingly, they also recovered a very early example of a trimmed and perforated ostrich eggshell fragment suggestive of a pendant or a bead preform, broken while the aperture was being drilled. This project supports six PhD research projects at various universities, ranging from geoarchaeology, grindstone use-wear and residue analyses, faunal identification, macro- and microbotanical remains, paleoenvironmental isotopes, uranium-thorium dating, and one master's student (faunal identification) at Sol Plaatje University, South Africa.

This summer graduate student **Timilehin Ayelagbe** carried out a second round of archaeological research within the Udo moat, a part of the Benin Moat System. He also completed an internship at the Museum of West Africa Art (MOWAA), Edo as part of his graduate certificate in the Museum Studies Program. This year's research saw the completion of the systematic survey of the area enclosed by the Udo moat and some test excavations of suspected mounds and ceramic production sites. Preliminary results indicate that only about 10 percent of the total area that was occupied in the past is occupied today. Scores of what are suspected to be mounds of collapsed mud structures were recorded. Evidence from test excavation show a continuous occupation of large mud structures. His internship with MOWAA advanced his public scholarship efforts through collaborations with the MOWAA, including curating the Garden of Heritage exhibition and initiatives linking local plant knowledge, sustainability, and heritage interpretation. His other engagement with MOWAA included a public talk on archaeology and museums, which he presented at the University of Benin—a talk on museum practices, curatorial work, and some exclusive objects such as the Ugbo Ukwu Bronze and Ile-Ori. Timi is grateful to the International Institute and the Museum Studies Program for their financial support, which enabled him to participate in these activities.

(Above) Team member Michael Schillaci (University of Toronto) and former U-M anthropology undergrad Kristin Cimmerer remove 60,000-year-old deposits at Spitzkloof B in South Africa.

(Right) Graduate student Timilehin Ayelagbe excavates a test pit at Udo in May 2025.

The Americas

Argentina
Curator **Raven Garvey** spent the winter term in Patagonia, excavating, meeting with local stakeholders, and developing multiple aspects of her field program in Neuquén Province, Argentina. When not in the field, Garvey continues work on her Mellon Foundation-funded project studying—via modeling and experimentation—effects of wind on prehistoric peoples, which she conducts in collaboration with aerospace engineers. She also partnered with an international team of geophysicists to explore potential effects of geomagnetic anomalies and space weather affecting humans living ~41,000 years ago. The results attracted wide public interest, with coverage in international media outlets including the BBC and *Wall Street Journal*.

Belize
PhD candidate **Brett Meyer** directed his fourth and final season of research at the site of Ek Tzul in western Belize. Pedestrian survey confirmed that the settlement around the site was denser than the LiDAR data had suggested. Brett succeeded in recording several mounds before they were destroyed by development. Excavations continued in the site core and the settlement, with U-M alumna Allison Densel supervising the investigation of four house mounds. The data from the last four seasons comprise Brett's dissertation research and will allow him to answer questions on the growth of Ek Tzul and its interaction with the various polities in the valley.

Mexico
Curator **Tiffany Fryer** returned the Yucatan Peninsula, where she continues to co-facilitate an integrative, community-centered heritage project. She and her colleagues (US-based and local to Mexico) continued their multiyear work conducting historical archaeological survey and investigating the ruptures to the landscape caused by the Maya Social War. This year their investigations yielded evidence of several previously unaccounted-for fortifications and trails. They also continued restoration work on a reclaimed historic building and broke ground on a new locally driven community museum. This year the team published the sixth volume of their zine, *Imágenes de Tihosuco: Úuchben Najo'ob (Las Casas Coloniales)*, which provides an avenue for sharing the results of the project's longstanding oral history program. They finished up the season by co-sponsoring an annual commemoration festival focused on the heritage of the Maya Social War. Beyond fieldwork, she co-founded the U-M Center for Community Archaeology and Heritage (CCAH) alongside Kelsey

Curator Raven Garvey prepares to photograph rock art in a boulder field near Arroyo Yumu Yumu, Neuquén, Argentina.

PhD candidate Brett Meyer and his Belizean and American colleagues at the gate to Ek Tzul. Left to right: Brett Meyer, Carlos Méndez, Julio Trujillo, Flavio García, Abner Méndez, Allison Densel (U-M alum), Axel Jacobs, Rose Rioux, and Kevin Madison.

(Above, left to right) Anthropologist Kasey Diserens Morgan, Maya linguist and educator Marcelina Chan Canche, and curator Tiffany Fryer work on crafting this year's oral history zine (left).

Museum colleague Geoff Emberling. They hosted the inaugural conference in March and are excited to see the center's growth and development in coming years.

In 2025 **Soren Frykholm** published a co-authored article in *Latin American Antiquity* entitled "Neighborhoods on Cerro Amole, Oaxaca: Models for a Mixtec Cabecera." Soren was responsible for the GIS analyses presented in the article. He has also wrapped up excavations at Monte Negro—a Late Formative (ca. 300–100 BC) site in western Oaxaca—and is now making progress on his dissertation. Based on the excavations he directed in ceremonial, residential, and defensive contexts, he will be evaluating both local processes and foreign influences that played a part in the development of this remote, defensible site.

Jennifer Larios completed her fieldwork in Oaxaca, Mexico in the spring, and then had an action-packed summer. Her highlights included teaching a class and participating in a conference in Oaxaca. Jennifer taught a class for U-M Department of Anthropology called "The Collapse of Ancient Civilizations." She also assisted in organizing a conference, Diálogos por Oaxaca, at the Museo Frissell in Mitla. The Diálogos group promotes discourse between local communities and experts in the social sciences who are conducting research in Oaxaca.

Peru

This summer, PhD candidate **Ian Beggen** led a second season of excavations at Hatun Machay, a rockshelter

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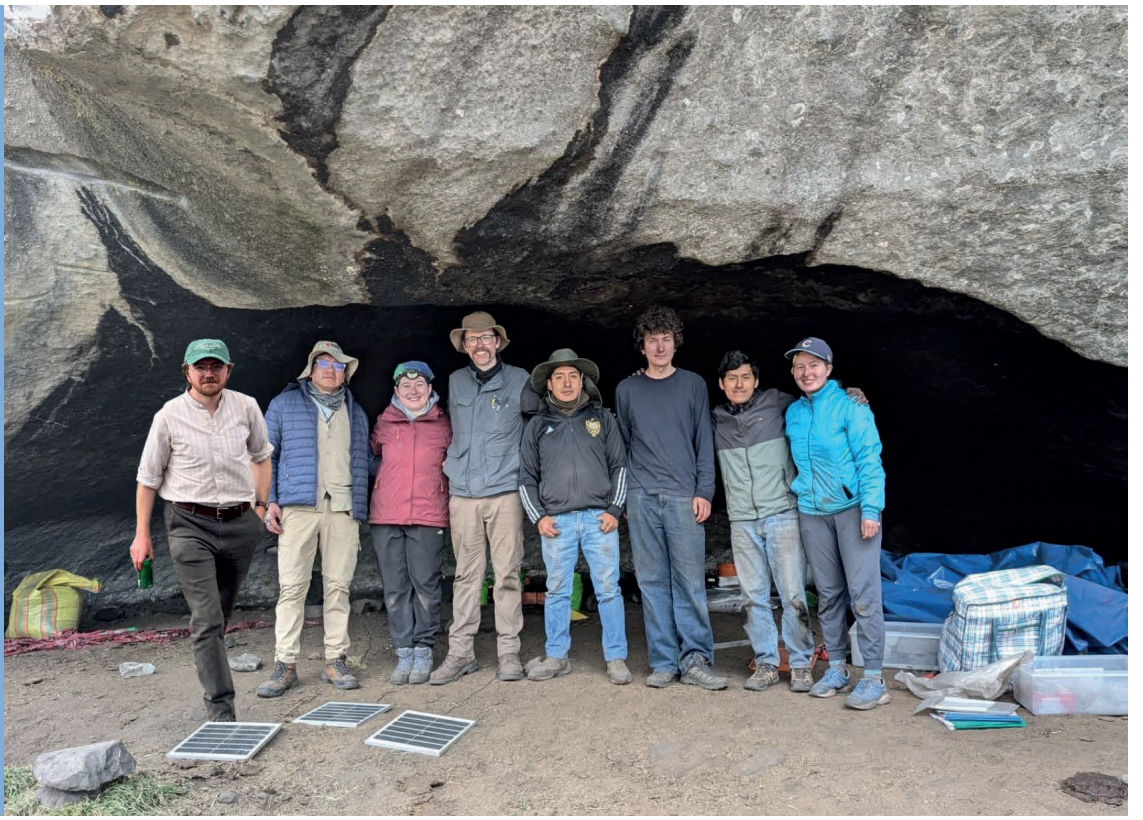
U-M graduate student Soren Frykholm with representatives from the tourism office of Santiago Tilantongo, Oaxaca. As part of a collaborative project funded by Rackham Graduate School's Program in Public Scholarship, informational signs were installed at the archaeological site of Monte Negro.



The excavation team at Hatun Machay, a rockshelter in Peru, was an international team of Peruvian, Canadian, and American archaeological professionals, graduate, and undergraduate students. From left to right: Matt Brown (U-M PhD student), Polay Maza, Julia McCuaig (U-M PhD student), Ian Beggen (U-M PhD student), Pedro Moreno, Calvin Stineman (U-M undergraduate), Patrick Phang del Pozo (U-M undergraduate), and Emma Weinberger (U-M graduate).

in highland Peru. Two months of excavation uncovered thousands of stone tools and flakes, animal bones, ceramics, and macrobotanical remains. Through analysis of these materials, Ian aims to develop a better understanding of technological adaptations by mobile foragers that occupied the site at least 10,000 years ago.

U-M archaeology graduate students **Julia McCuaig** and **Matt Brown** participated in Ian Beggen's excavations at Hatun Machay. Julia spent eight weeks excavating with Ian, finding artifacts from the Archaic to the Formative. Julia also conducted flotation for the project, collecting macrobotanical remains to identify plants and to conduct stable isotope analysis. Matt Brown and Julia McCuaig traveled to the Lake Titicaca Basin to work with Dr. Elizabeth Arkush (University of Pittsburgh). Matt and Julia spent two weeks excavating a pukara called Machu Asillo. The site appears to have been occupied by the Collas and was subsequently taken over by the Inca after the latter's expansion into Collasuyu. The excavations showed that the Collas may have potentially destroyed several Inca structures at the site. Matt and Julia also visited the Formative site of Pucara.

Besides working at Hatun Machay and Machu Asillo, Matt Brown finished the analysis of artifacts from Muyumoqo, his dissertation site. Preliminary results from the analysis have provided evidence for the manufacturing of fine ceramics onsite. The majority of the stone tools at the site were of nonlocal material, such as andesite and obsidian. In addition to nonlocal ceramics and marine shell, these findings suggest that the site was deeply embedded in interregional exchange networks, much more than other excavated Formative (2200 BCE–200 CE) sites in the Cusco region. Some ceramics were exported for further analyses to understand local manufacturing and exchange and will be studied at the Field Museum and the University of Missouri Research Reactor. In addition to finishing up the lab work, Matt published an article in the *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* that focused on early village formation, long-term settlement success, and landscape use in Formative Cusco.

(Above) Matt Brown uses an Andean foot plow (*chakitaqlla*) to prepare the ground for an earth oven (*huatia*).

(Below) The gradiometer survey in progress at Cahokia. Photo credit: Tatum Poirier/LSA Advancement.

United States

Curator **Rob Beck** continued his NSF-funded work at Cahokia with U-M archaeology alum and Bryn Mawr professor Casey Barrier (PhD 2014), Ed Henry (Colorado State), and Tim Horsley (Horsley Archaeological Prospection). Beck and his colleagues are conducting a gradiometer survey of all the area currently included in the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Park, an area of nearly 6 square kilometers. To date they have covered about 4 square kilometers, and on completion this will be the largest contiguous geophysical survey in the Americas.

Curator Rob Beck and his colleagues continue to work on a gradiometer survey of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Park (above), an area of nearly 6 sq km. When they are finished, the project will be the largest contiguous geophysical survey in the Americas. Photo credit: Tatum Poirier/LSA Advancement.

Their aim is to create a map of subsurface anomalies at Cahokia, including houses, temples, borrow pits, and even smaller features like refuse and post pits. This "new Cahokia atlas" will help archaeologists to better understand the processes of aggregation that led to the development of this remarkable site. In fall 2025, the PBS program Overview came to Cahokia and filmed Beck and his colleagues collecting data. The episode aired in 2025 and has more than 1.1 million views on YouTube. It can be viewed online at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruWuAas8T7Y

or at

https://www.pbs.org/video/what-happened-to-americas-first-megacity-yemsv8/

The spring 2025 issue of U-M's *LSA Magazine* also featured a story on the project, which can be viewed online:

https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/news-events/lsa-magazine/spring-2025/notes-from-underground.html

In spring 2025, curator **John O'Shea** received the Binford Family Award for Teaching Scientific Reasoning in Archaeology from the Society for American Archaeology. This prestigious award was given to him in recognition of his teaching the following courses: archaeological systematics, analytical methods, and more recently, underwater archaeology. Some students arrive at Michigan with a substantial background in scientific reasoning and hypothesis formation, but most do not. It has been O'Shea's mission to give them those skills, and his students emerged at the end of his courses as social scientists with quantitative skills, analytical skills, and the ability to link multiple lines of archaeological evidence to models and theories.

Curator John O'Shea receives the Binford Family Award for Teaching Scientific Reasoning in Archaeology at the SAA conference in spring 2025.

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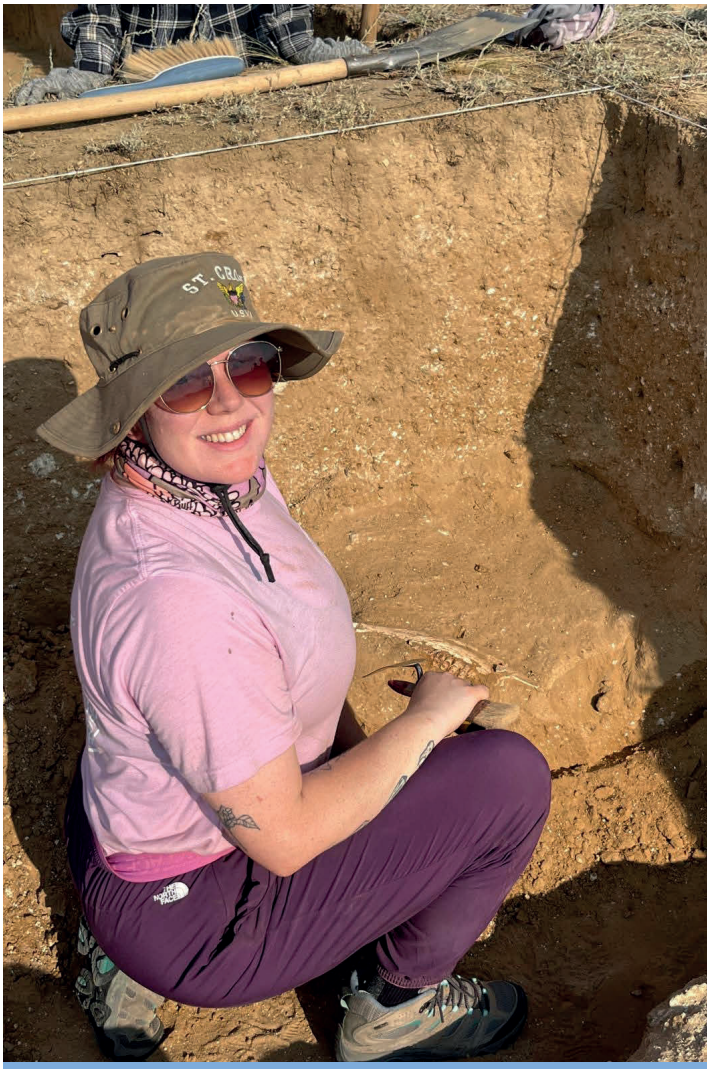
Central Asia

Kazakhstan

This summer graduate student **Kara Larson** participated in several research and writing projects. She joined fellow PhD student **Dan Garner** and curator **Alicia Ventresca-Miller** in excavations of Early Bronze Age kurgans at the site of Kumsay, Kazakhstan. Kara also traveled to California to work at the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University, where she analyzed faunal remains from Tall al-ʿUmayri, Jordan. In addition, Kara completed a dissertation chapter and co-authored a publication on Levantine Early Bronze Age bone tube traditions entitled "Reassessing the Levantine Tradition of Early Bronze III Bone Tubes: The View from Tell el-Hesi" in the *Bulletin of the American Society of Overseas Research* 394(1).



Kara Larson at Kumsay, Kazakhstan with an identified *Bos taurus* (cow) mandible.

Europe

Greece

This summer graduate student **Drosos Kardulias** directed the Medieval Roman Archaeological Survey of Kalymnos (MRASK). He fully documented two of the island's three Early Medieval fortifications and completed a survey of the remote hinterlands. Digital reconstruction, population estimates, and resource modeling are now within reach, and in-press publications on the island's communication network and modern geomorphology will serve as a basis for his future work. With one site remaining, Drosos will shift to an intensive site-focused survey in the coming years.

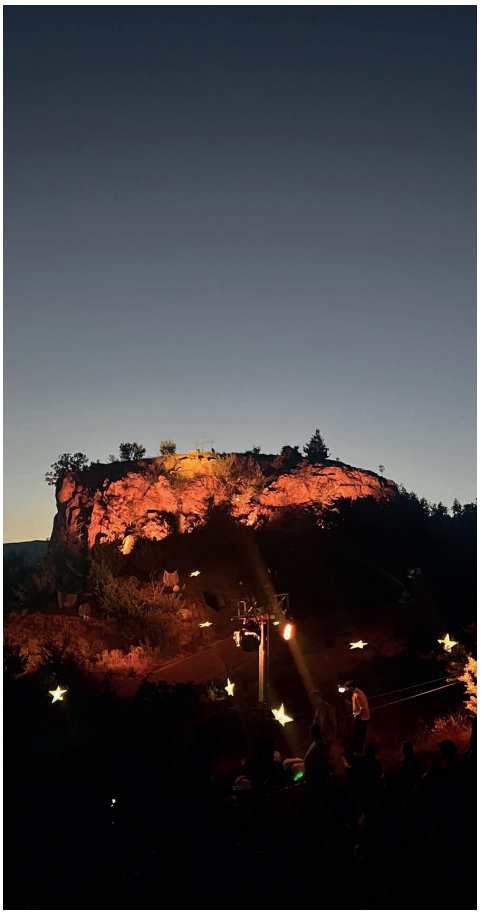
Kosova

Curator **Michael Galaty** spent six weeks in Kosova this summer. For the first two weeks he was in the capital, Prishtina, serving as a Fulbright Specialist at the University of Prishtina in the Institute of Anthropology. While there, he delivered two seminars, one on the future of Balkan archaeology and one for undergraduate students who plan to apply to anthropology graduate programs in the United States. He also toured various archaeological sites and museums where the Institute is active, including the Krushë e Madhe Massacre Museum, dedicated to preserving the memory of the massacre of 219 civilians (205 Albanians and 14 Ashkali) by Serbs in 1999 during the Kosovo War. Efforts to build the Museum and to interview survivors were spearheaded by the Institute's director, cultural anthropologist Arsim Canolli, who is spending the fall semester in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan as a Fulbright Fellow. For the subsequent four weeks, Galaty conducted test excavations at the very large (circa 20 hectares), Late Bronze-Early Iron Age settlement of Pepaj-Lubozhdë, located near Istog in western Kosova. The site, situated between a hillfort and several burial mounds, was discovered by the RAPID survey in 2018.

The 2025 team, which included several Michigan students—**Erina Baci** and **Julian Schultz** (with excellent logistical support from **Zhaneta Gjyshja** and **Jhon Cruz**)—was co-directed by Galaty and Premtim Alaj, from the Archaeological Institute of Kosova. Nine test pits were excavated across the site. One of these, Unit 005, revealed a floor feature that dated to the Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age. Excavations in 2026 will focus on this feature in the hopes of identifying a structure.

Zhaneta Gjyshja spent her summer excavating at the Late Neolithic village of Lluga, Vrellë. In collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology of Kosova and funded by the National Science Foundation, the Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia, and the International Institute at the University of Michigan, she completed the final stage of

News from the Field 2025



Above: Drosos Kardulias directed an archaeological survey of the Greek island of Kalymnos, documenting two of three Early Medieval sites. During the survey, the crew investigated this 1300-year-old cistern, which was 4 m deep.

Above right: The archaeological site of Syriganë—Erina Baci's dissertation site—was lit up on June 29 for the premiere of Petrit Halilaj's opera, Syrigana.

Right (l-r): Arsim Canolli, UMMAA director Michael Galaty, and Premtim Alaj at the Krushë e Madhe Massacre Museum, Rehovac, Kosova, in May 2025.

Opposite page, above: Zhaneta Gjyshja and her team stand within the house foundation they excavated at the Late Neolithic village of Lluga, Vrellë, in Kosova.

Opposite page, below: Erina Baci and Gabriella Armstrong use drones to collect aerial images at Cernicë.

data collection for her dissertation. The team uncovered a complete house foundation, identified an area used for stone tool production, and discovered an altar, which will help her to understand household activities and rituals of Neolithic villagers in the Balkans.

This summer doctoral candidate Erina Baci excavated at Pepaj, a Late Bronze Age site in western Kosova. Erina was part of the survey team that first discovered Pepaj in 2018 during Phase One of the RAPID-Kosova Project. In addition to excavation, she collected aerial imagery via drone to produce orthophotos and 3D models of the site. After completing fieldwork, she spent two weeks in Prishtina analyzing and photographing the finds from Pepaj, with the help of former U-M anthropology undergraduate and current Stanford PhD candidate Gabriella Armstrong. To close out the season, Erina had the chance to attend an opera held on June 29 at Syriganë, her primary dissertation site. The opera, written and directed by Petrit Halilaj, reimagines the story of Adam and Eve and their relocation on earth to Syriganë, after having been banished from Eden. Erina also collaborated with Lura Limani, the editor of the opera's brochure, to provide archaeological context and interpretation, which was incorporated into the storytelling and framing of the evening.

Megan Savoy (standing) gives a seminar at the Roca Vecchia Field School on bioarchaeology methods; she also spoke about her own research. (Photo courtesy of Chiara Corvaglia)

Italy

This summer graduate student **Megan Savoy** began preparing for her 10-month stay in Italy as she collects data for her dissertation. To prepare for fieldwork, Megan and curator **Giulia Saltini Semerari** translated previous field notes from the excavations of Hypogeic Tomb 1, a communal burial located in Roca Vecchia (Salento, Italy). This grave site and nearby fortification settlement are currently being investigated by Theodoro Scarano (University of Salento), Megan's main collaborator. Megan is currently at the Roca Vecchia Field School teaching students bioarchaeological methods and identifying the skeletal remains. The results from this research will illuminate what life was like in Salento during the Early Iron Age, a poorly known period. Megan's research is funded by the Fulbright Institute, the Archaeological Institute of America, and the American Philosophical Society's Research and Exploration Fund.

Graduate student **Arantxa Bertholet del Barrio** conducted lab analyses and participated in excavations on two projects in Italy—at the Iron Age site of Incoronata and at the Bronze Age site of Roca Vecchia. She also visited museums in the Balkans to gather preliminary data for her dissertation. Later in the summer Arantxa went to Burrel, Albania to participate in Giulia Saltini Semerari's CLAMS project, where they did drone testing and finished washing and cataloging objects in the Burrel Archaeological Museum.

Arantxa Bertholet del Barrio, seen through the open door of the lab at the Bronze Age site of Roca Vecchia. She excavated at this site and at Incoronata in 2025.

Connecting Collections Through Collaboration

The University of Michigan Museum of Anthropological Archaeology (UMMAA) traces its origins to the 1922–1925 Philippine Expedition, directed by Carl E. Guthe. Over the course of that project, Guthe assembled more than 13,000 objects (represented by 5,300 catalog records), which became the Museum's founding collection. Upon his return to Ann Arbor, Guthe was appointed the first director of the newly established Museum of Anthropology in 1928, as well as the inaugural chair of the Department of Anthropology.

Over the past century, UMMAA has become home to extensive ethnographic, archaeological, and archival collections from the Philippines. Many of these remain unpublished and therefore inaccessible to communities and scholars beyond Ann Arbor.

Increasingly, museum professionals have come to recognize that stewardship entails more than just managing the physical and intellectual control: collections exist within cultural systems, and their care must be informed by relationships with descendant communities.

Building on the 2021–2023 initiative ReConnect/ReCollect: Reparative Connections to Philippine Collections at the University of Michigan (see the UMMAA Newsletter Vol. 22, Fall 2023) collection manager Jim Moss, with support from collection manager Andrea Blaser, has been developing new relationships with Filipino and Filipinx-American scholars and artists. Two significant connections took place during summer 2025:

1. National Museum of the Philippines: In June, three curators from the Philippine National Museum's Archaeology Division conducted a three-week survey of the Guthe Collection. Their insights have provided important perspectives on the continuing significance of these materials for Filipino archaeologists and have opened discussions on making the materials more accessible to researchers and communities in the Philippines.
2. Community consultations in Mindanao: In July, Jim joined an interdisciplinary team of University of Michigan scholars for a series of community consultations across three cities in Mindanao. Organized by U-M assistant professor of anthropology Alyssa Paredes, who conducts anthropological research on banana plantations in Mindanao and has contacts with many local cultural institutions, these meetings brought together a cross section of Muslim, Indigenous, and Christian cultural institutions. Presentations highlighted the ReConnect/ReCollect project (Deirdre de la Cruz), UMMAA's Mindanao collections (Moss), and the U-M Bentley Library's Mindanao materials (Alexis Antrocoli and Gideon Goodrich). At the request of several of the institutions, Jim also delivered a lecture on museum conservation and object care.

Alyssa Paredes (left) and Loreta Sol L. Dinlayan (right), director of Bukidnon Studies Center, discuss the Dean C. Worcester Photograph Collection with a community elder at Bukidnon State University, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Mindanao, the Philippines.

Presentations were paired with interactive sessions in which participants examined reproduced photographs, corrected archival information, and identified avenues for collaboration.

At each consultation the host institutions were presented with:

- A hardbound reproduction of The University of Michigan Philippine Expedition Field Catalog 1922–1925.
- A binder of approximately 50 photos printed on water-resistant paper. Photos were selected by Dr. Paredes for relevance to the institution to which they were donated. Printing paid for by Dr. Paredes' research fund.
- A one-TB solid-state drive with digital copies of UMMAA's entire Worcester collection, scans of Carl Guthe's field catalog and site notes (originals curated at UMMAA), scans of Guthe's photographs (originals curated at the Bentley Library), and collection guides of UMMAA's Philippine collections.
- A binder of printed finding aids related to the Bentley Library's Mindanao material.
- An external drive with all digital finding aids related to the Bentley Library's Philippine material.

Students at Ateneo de Davao University discuss the Dean C. Worcester Photograph Collection, Davao City, Davao del Sur, Mindanao, the Philippines.

Teduray woman with image from the Dean C. Worcester Collection at the Bangsamoro Museum, Cotabato City, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Jim's travel was generously supported by the U-M Inclusive History Project (inclusivehistory.umich.edu). Catalog reproduction and solid-state drives were funded by a grant from the University of Michigan Library's Anti-Racist Digital Research Institute (ARDRI) (https://www.lib.umich.edu/research-and-scholarship/awards-and-grants/anti-racist-digital-research-institute)

ARDRI support was provided through Jim's project, From Archives to Access: A GIS Portal for UMMAA's Philippine Collections. As part of the award, he attended a series of weekly sessions over the summer, working with peers and digital scholarship technical and methodology experts to develop ethical, sustainable, and justice-oriented digital projects.

In October, the Inclusive History Project sponsored Balikan: Shared Stewardship & Ethical Returns for Philippine Collections Symposium (October 24–25, 2025), organized by Deirdre de la Cruz and Ricky Punzalan.To read more about the symposium: myumi.ch/9pmJJ.

Expanding Collaborative Stewardship

UMMAA's collections staff continue to pursue projects that address historical legacies and strengthen community relationships.

Osteology

Irene Hochgraf-Cameron, osteology inventory specialist, spent 2024–2025 conducting a comprehensive assessment of the Corydon L. Ford Cranial Collection. Corydon Ford, a professor of anatomy from 1854 to 1894, donated his teaching collection to the University in 1873, forming the basis of Michigan's Anatomical Museum and later the 19th-century Dental Museum. Irene's work encompassed more than 170 individuals, ensuring that all human remains of Native American ancestry were transferred to the University's NAGPRA office. She successfully reunited remains that had been dispersed for over a century across multiple departments, and her ongoing efforts focus on identifying and addressing other culturally sensitive cases.

Her assessment restored lost context to long-overlooked histories by drawing together archival documentation, osteological study, and curatorial records to reconnect individuals with their original collection histories. These recoveries have provided U-M students with new research opportunities and strengthened collaboration with U-M anthropology and anatomy departments as well as the Sindecuse Museum of Dentistry. In several cases, Irene has reunited remains of the same individual that had been separated since the 19th century, an ethical step toward restoring dignity and wholeness to those once treated as fragmented specimens.

News about UMMAA Collections

Irene has organized a symposium at the upcoming American Association of Biological Anthropologists 95th Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, titled "Sharing Forgotten Histories: Stories and Methods of Identifying Unprovenienced Human Skeletal Remains and Establishing Best Practices for their Ethical Treatment." Here, she and her collaborators will bring together voices from institutions worldwide that are working to address the challenges of unprovenienced human skeletons. Her personal contribution to this event will highlight success stories with the Ford Collection and the Anthropology Department's Von Luschan Collection from Hungary, another assemblage with individuals dispersed across institutions. The symposium underscores U-M's growing role in developing ethical frameworks and best practices for the stewardship of human remains, while also highlighting the university's cross-departmental collaborations and the contributions of student research.

Colleagues at the Hungarian National Museum (l-r): Maureen Devlin (U-M Anthropology), Barbara TeßMann (museum für vor und frühgeschichte), and Irene Hochgraf-Cameron, discovering archives related to the Von Luschan Collection.

Collections Data

Andrea Blaser continues to refine UMMAA's CollectiveAccess database, integrating plural approaches to metadata and supporting student-led data cleanup. Her efforts were highlighted at the 2025 Society for American Archaeology symposium Reckoning with Legacy Exhibits, Data, and Collections.

Community Partnerships

Andrea facilitated collaborations with Indigenous communities, including the loan of belongings in UMMAA's collection to the Stamps Gallery exhibition Kelly Church & Cherish Parrish: In Our Words, which explored the work of two contemporary Anishinaabe black-ash basket weavers. The past summer, she supported a conversation with representatives from the Pueblo of Isleta, which was the result of a collaboration with the Matthaei Botanical Garden and the Center for Braiding Indigenous Knowledges and Science funded by the National Science Foundation. This meeting has opened pathways for additional Pueblo collaborations focused on ethnobotanical collections. (https://mbgna.umich.edu/cbiks-midwest)

Sarah Carlson is UMMAA's new NAGPRA compliance specialist.

New Staff

UMMAA is pleased to welcome Sarah Carlson, NAGPRA compliance specialist. Formerly curator of collections at the University of Denver Museum of Anthropology, Carlson studied at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and brings experience from the Milwaukee Public Museum, Field Museum, and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. She will work closely with U-M's NAGPRA office to support research and compliance for North American collections. Carlson looks forward to building relationships

with university and tribal communities and supporting the repatriation process.

Building Relationships

Last year, UMMAA entered a period of policy review and revision, and collections managers Jim and Andrea thought the ideal way forward was to learn from those who had already built success in this area.

Together they applied for and received a 2024 Career Development Fund for Staff grant from U-M. With this grant, Andrea and Jim traveled to Los Angeles for three days in fall 2025 to consult with colleagues and museum leaders working to develop community-centered collections policies. They visited colleagues at the UCLA Fowler Museum's NAGPRA department, the director of the Waystation Initiative at UCLA's Cotsen Institute, and collections and repatriation staff at the Autry Museum of the American West. They also met with Karl Hutterer, director emeritus of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and curator emeritus of the UMMAA Asia Collections: he was one of the Museum's first faculty to build relationships in the Philippines since Guthe.

After Jim and Andrea talked to colleagues about the policies they planned to work on at UMMAA, they realized they should begin with a cohesive and community-informed policy for the care and stewardship of ancestral remains. Their peers agreed that such a policy is a strong signal to communities that UMMAA wants to engage in collaborative decision making and demonstrates an institutional as well as a personal respect for the ancestors.

Jim and Andrea returned to Ann Arbor reinvigorated and dedicated to a future of collaboration. They are excited to begin again, to workshop ideas with their new collaborators, and implement what they have learned.

At the University of California, Santa Barbara (l to r): collections managers Jim Moss and Andrea Blaser with Karl Hutterer, director emeritus of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and curator emeritus of the UMMAA Asia Collections.

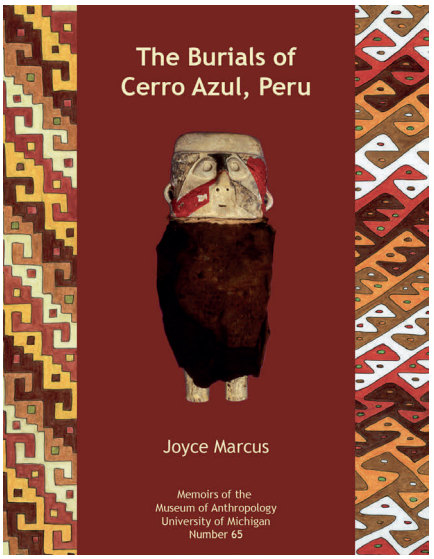
At the meditation garden of the Autry Museum of the American West (l to r): Karimah Richardson, associate curator of anthropology and repatriation supervisor; Andrea Blaser, UMMAA collections manager; and LaLena Lewark, vice president of exhibitions, collections, and conservation.

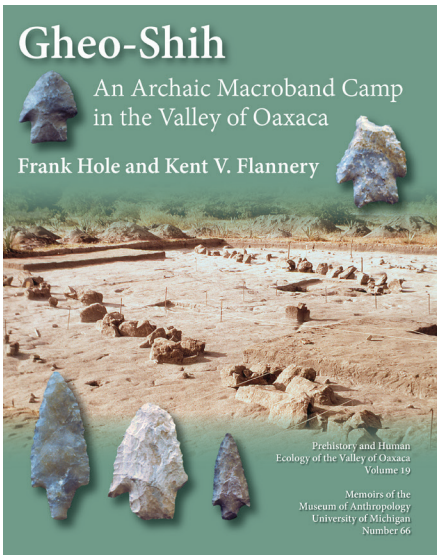
The Autry's ethnobotanical garden, one of the museum's permanent public spaces, was designed by Matthew Kennedy, a Ponca landscape architect. On the grounds are more than 60 native California plant species. Read more at https://theautry.org/exhibitions/california-continued-ethnobotanical-garden

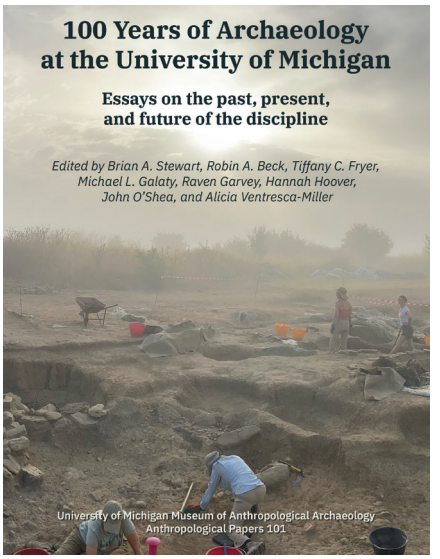
UMMAA Press

sites.lsa.umich.edu/archaeology-books

Recent publications ...







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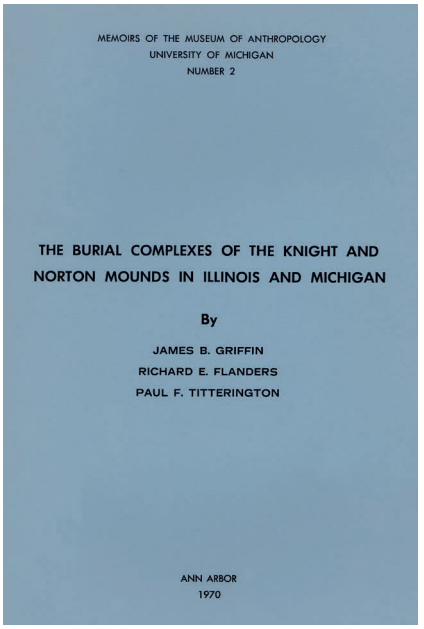

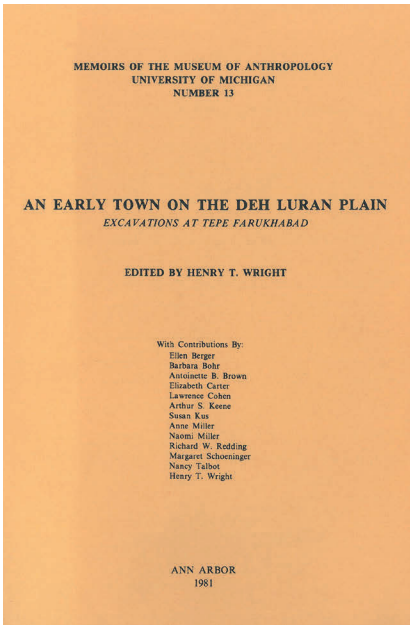

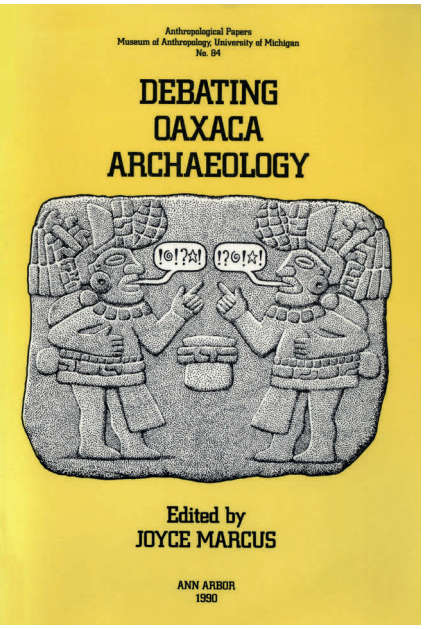

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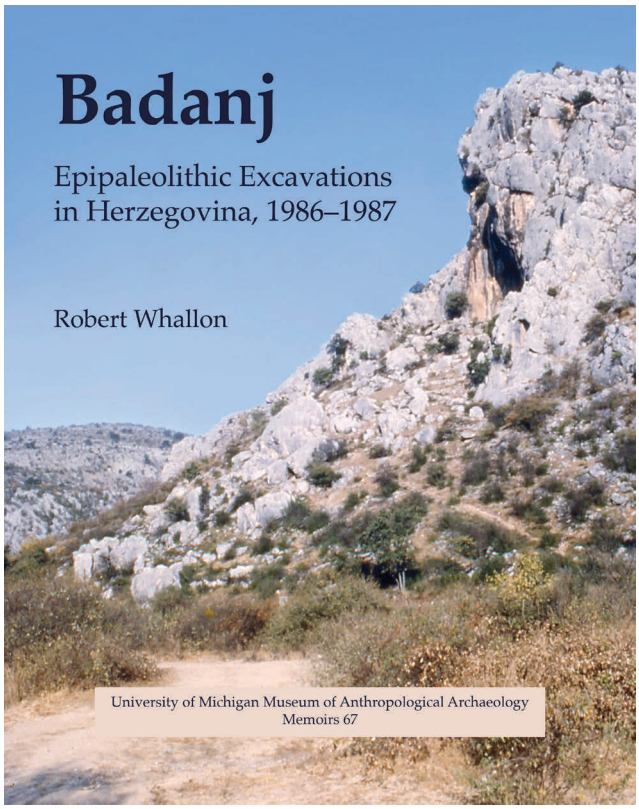
Forthcoming in 2025



Badanj: Epipaleolithic Excavations in Herzegovina, 1986–1987

This monograph presents the results of excavations made from 1986 to 1987 at the Epipaleolithic site of Badanj. The excavations exposed a sequence of some ten occupation levels, seven activity or refuse levels, and three geologically deposited levels, covering a period from approximately 16,000 to 13,000 cal BP—from the latter part of the Oldest Dryas to the end of the Bølling-Allerød late glacial climatic phases.

Combining qualitative and quantitative aspects of lithic technology and typology, the reconstruction of the potential foraging areas around Badanj, and estimates of supportable population, the site can be placed in a clear regional context that can be extended to suggest a hypothetical regional organization of similar sites across the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea.

Paperback
8.25 x 11 inches
298 pages

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Stone tools uncovered in the house foundation that Zhaneta Gjyshja and her crew excavated in 2025 in the Late Neolithic village of Lluga, Vrellë, in Kosova.