

The Dead Sea Scrolls

“It’s great that Macalester is located within an urban area that provides such opportunities for extracurricular learning, and that the school is able to integrate itself into the community this way.” How do you get fragile 2,000-year-old text fragments from Israel to Minnesota safely, and keep them that way? As members of a Macalester class on the Dead Sea Scrolls found out, you ship them a few at a time on the laps of first-class passengers, and then every half hour you monitor—from Israel—the humidity of their display cases.

These are just a few things this class has learned as they study one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century. Samples of the scrolls are on display at the Science Museum of Minnesota through October.

By the end of the term the class toured the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit twice and attended two conferences on the topic. One of those conferences featured the author of their textbook; the other was an undergraduate conference hosted by Macalester on May 2. Students Jack Grasso '12 (Winnetka, Ill.), Daniel Picus '10 (Houston, Texas), Anne Brown '10 (Aspinwall, Pa.), and Grace Erny '12 (Petaluma, Calif.) presented papers there.

The junior Dead Sea scholars were struck by the controversial nature of the scrolls. There are disagreements about the Qumran site where they were found—Was it sectarian or secular in nature? Was it originally a pottery factory, fortress, or manor house?—and also whether the scrolls belong to Israel or Jordan.

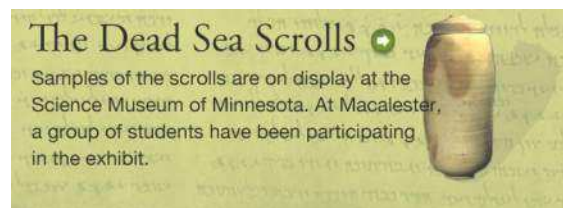
Sophomore classics major Lindsay Morehouse (Hopkins, Minn.) got interested in the Dead Sea Scrolls when she visited Qumran with the classics department last summer. When she found out the exhibit was coming to St. Paul, she volunteered to work as an exhibit interpreter.

Says Morehouse, “It’s great that Macalester is located within an urban area that provides such opportunities for extracurricular learning, and that the school is able to integrate itself into the community this way.”

In a final Mac connection to the exhibit, classics professor (and Dead Sea Scrolls class instructor) Nanette Scott Goldman and Jewish chaplain Barry Cytron served as exhibit advisors.

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