ICOM COMMS AWARDS 2026

Category: Best Storytelling Project

Museum of the Portuguese Language Digital Collections: Where twenty years of stories live on

Museu da Língua Portuguesa — São Paulo, Brazil

acervo.museudalinguaportuguesa.org.br

THE CHALLENGE

Portuguese is spoken by more than 260 million people across four continents, making it one of the world's most widely spoken languages. Since opening in 2006, the Museum of the Portuguese Language has welcomed millions of visitors through immersive exhibitions that combine sound, images, interactive experiences and personal stories to explore the language as a living expression of culture and identity.

Yet this experience had an inherent limitation: it was tied to a physical place and a specific moment in time. Temporary exhibitions ended after a few months, educational content became difficult to revisit, and much of the Museum's knowledge remained accessible only to those who could visit in person or conduct on-site research.

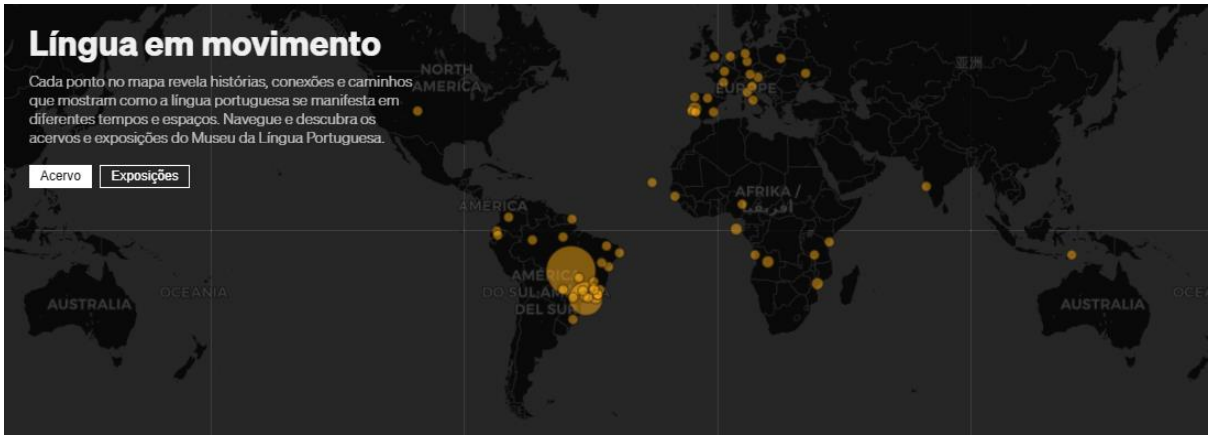
The challenge was to create a digital experience that could extend the Museum beyond its walls—preserving not only its content, but also its distinctive way of telling stories. Rather than replicating a database online, the goal was to build a platform where audiences everywhere could explore, discover and connect with the Museum's narratives.

THE SOLUTION

Launched in **March 2026** as part of the Museum's **20th anniversary celebrations**, following a development process that began in 2024, the Digital Collections platform was conceived as a narrative platform first and a collections platform second. Every design decision sought to extend the Museum's storytelling beyond its physical building, preserving not only its collections but also the curatorial narratives, educational practices and cultural dialogues that shape the institution.

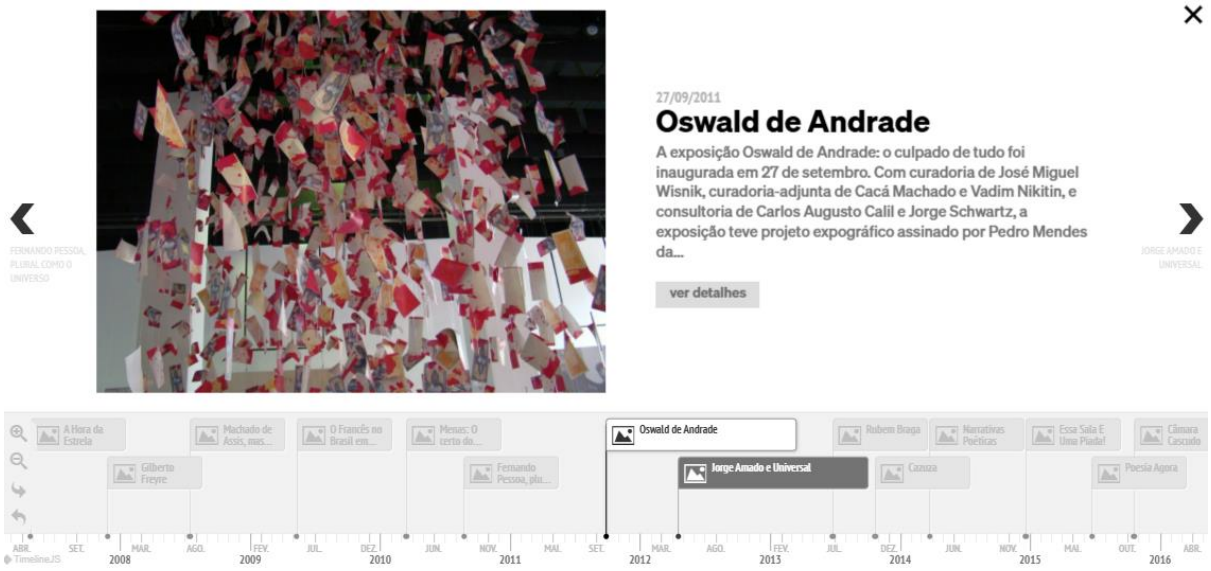
This experience is articulated through a series of interconnected narrative resources:

Language in Motion — an interactive map that allows visitors to explore the history and circulation of Portuguese across territories, revealing connections between places, people, cultural expressions and the Museum's collections through exploration rather than linear navigation.



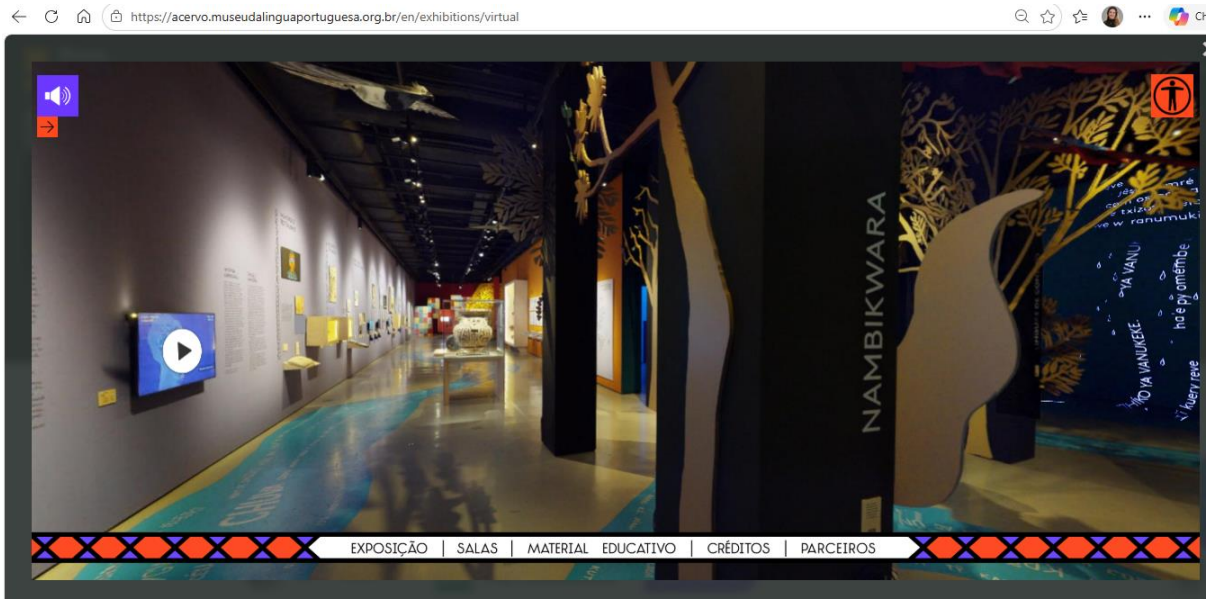
Map illustrating the spread of the Portuguese language based on the Museum's collection and exhibitions

Interactive Timelines — dynamic chronologies that narrate the Museum's twenty-year history through its permanent and temporary exhibitions. Rather than simply listing past programmes, each exhibition becomes an entry point to a broader network of related content, connecting visitors to publications, audiovisual productions, educational resources and associated collections, allowing the Museum's history to be explored as an evolving narrative.



Timeline page of the Museum of the Portuguese Language's exhibitions

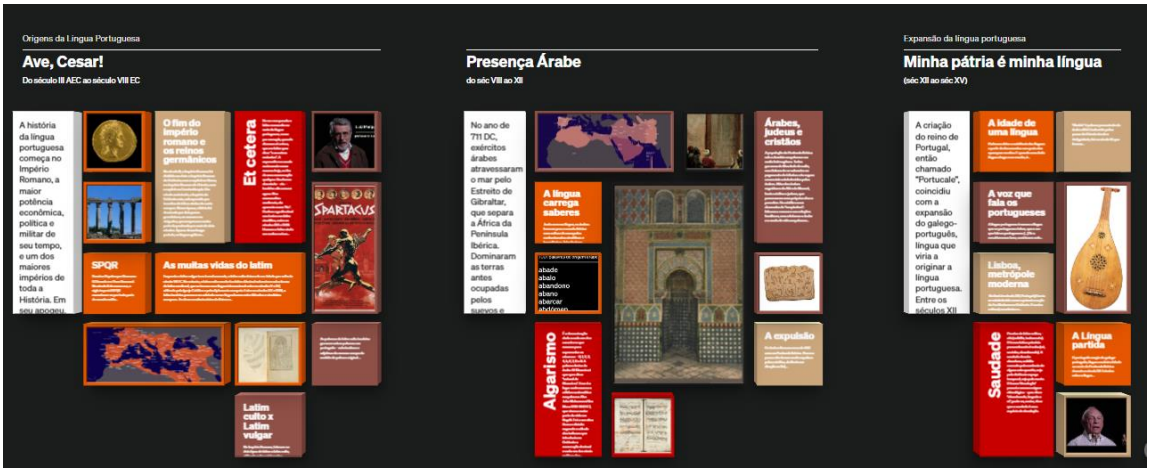
Virtual Exhibitions — complete digital adaptations of landmark exhibitions, preserving their curatorial narratives long after their physical presentations have ended. Projects such as *Línguas Africanas*, *Nhe'ẽ Porã: Memory and Transformation*, *Vidas em Cordel* and *Fala, Falar, Falares* remain accessible through immersive multimedia experiences, extending their reach to audiences worldwide.



Page from the virtual exhibition Nhe'ẽ Porã: Memory and Transformation

Português do Brasil — a flagship interactive timeline developed specifically for the platform, organised into fourteen modules across three thematic axes, presenting the historical formation of Brazilian Portuguese through a self-guided digital experience.

"Português do Brasil" experience in the Museum of the Portuguese Language's permanent exhibition

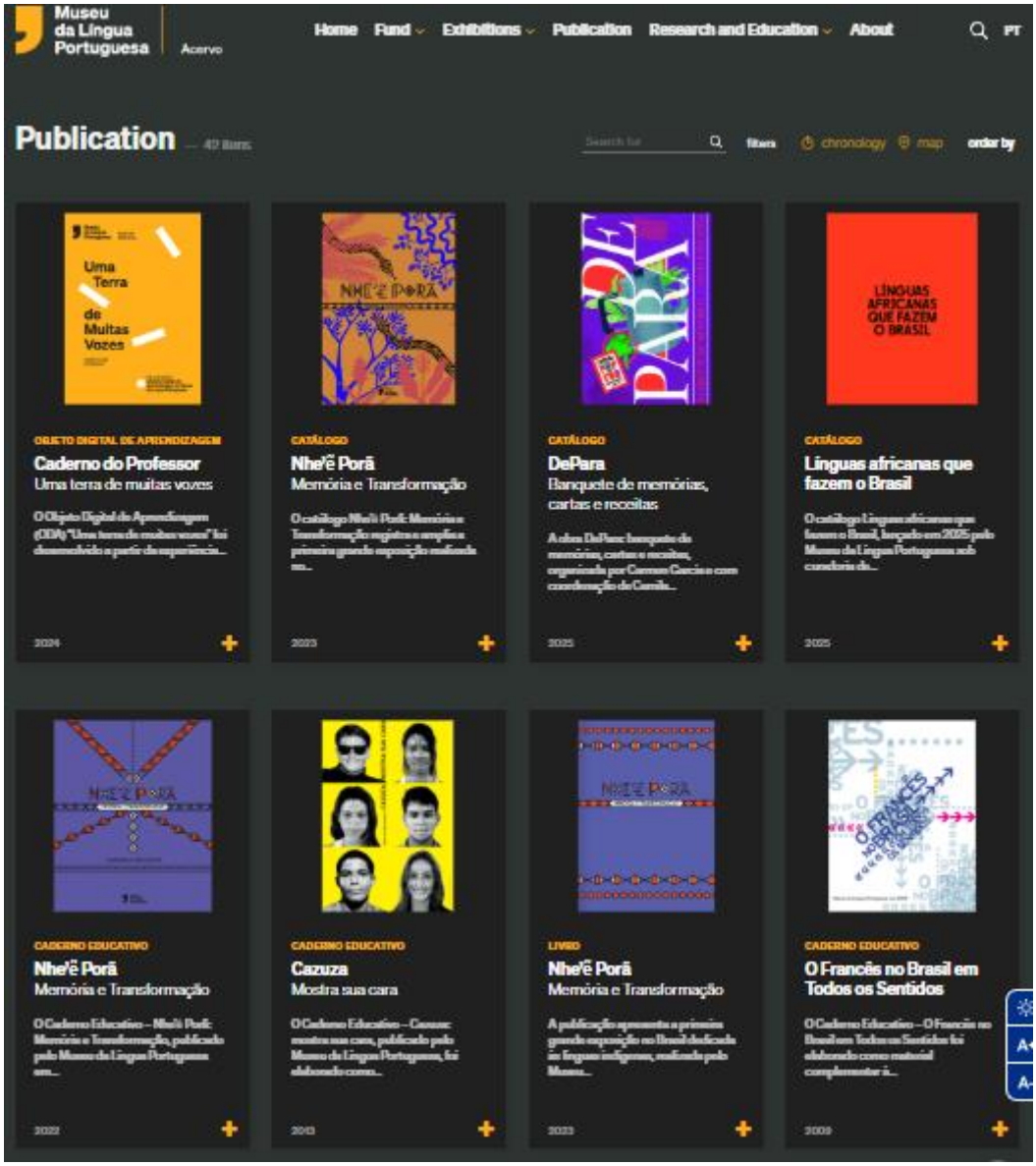


Digital version of the "Português do Brasil" experience on the Museum of the Portuguese Language's digital platform

A

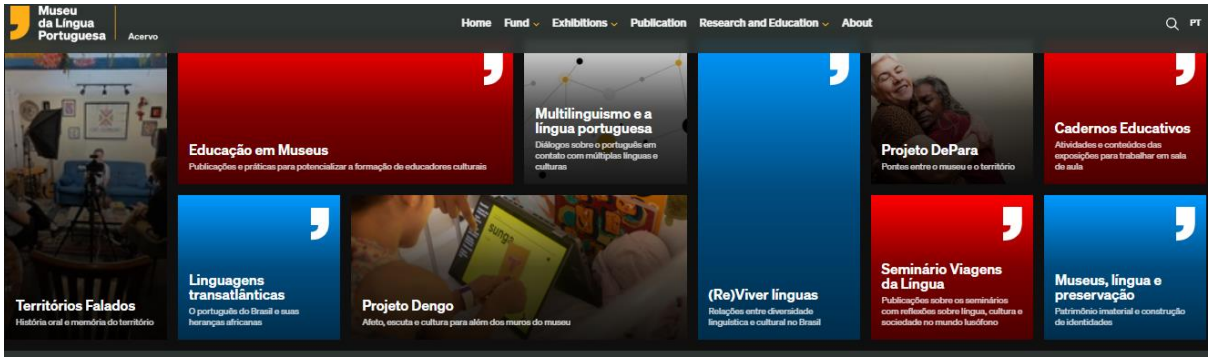
"Português do Brasil" collection item displayed on the digital platform

Curated Paths and Original Essays — thematic journeys and editorial content invite visitors to move across exhibitions, publications, audiovisual materials and institutional projects, encouraging unexpected connections and multiple ways of discovering the Museum's knowledge.



Publications page of the Museum of the Portuguese Language

Beyond documenting the Museum's history, the platform also reflects its ongoing social and educational mission. Dedicated sections bring together educational programmes, public initiatives and community projects, highlighting actions developed with schools, educators and diverse audiences. Particular emphasis is given to projects that engage with Indigenous languages and cultures, as well as initiatives rooted in the territory surrounding the Museum, reinforcing the institution's commitment to linguistic diversity, cultural participation and dialogue with its local communities.



Content trails highlighting the Museum of the Portuguese Language's research and educational activities

Behind every digital experience is the collaborative work of documentation specialists, researchers, educators, curators, designers and developers, ensuring that complex cultural knowledge is transformed into an intuitive, engaging and meaningful public experience.

RESULTS & IMPACT

Between March and July 2026, Google Analytics recorded more than 40,000 page views and nearly 15,000 users, demonstrating strong public interest in the Museum's new digital experience just a few months after its launch.

The platform has already reached audiences in more than 40 countries, with particularly strong engagement across the Portuguese-speaking world, including Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste. This international reach confirms the platform's ability to connect with the global Lusophone community and extend the Museum's mission far beyond Brazil.

Audience engagement has grown steadily over time. The number of returning users more than doubled, increasing from 160 in March to 371 in June, indicating that visitors are not simply discovering the platform—they are returning to continue exploring its stories. Several countries with comparatively fewer visits, including Uruguay, Paraguay, Cape Verde and Mozambique, showed particularly high engagement, suggesting deep and meaningful exploration of the content.

Visitors are engaging with the platform as a storytelling experience rather than a simple search tool. The most visited sections include the Digital Collections, the **Long-Term Exhibition**, and the **Português do Brasil** interactive experience. These same areas also recorded the longest average engagement times, demonstrating that audiences are actively exploring exhibitions, publications, audiovisual content, educational resources and thematic connections instead of making quick, transactional visits.

Organic search traffic increased consistently throughout the platform's first months, demonstrating strong search engine visibility and showing that users are discovering the Museum's content organically, well beyond the Museum's own communication channels.

The project's innovative storytelling approach has also gained professional recognition. The **Português do Brasil** interactive timeline was selected as the central case study for the Museum of the Portuguese Language's presentation at the MuseumNext Digital Exhibitions Summit 2026, highlighting the

platform as an example of how digital storytelling can extend the life and impact of museum experiences.

Most importantly, the Digital Collections achieved the ambition that inspired the project: transforming twenty years of exhibitions, research, educational programmes and cultural initiatives into a living digital ecosystem where collections, stories and people remain connected over time.

The Digital Collections are designed as a living platform that will continue to grow over the coming years. New educational programmes, teacher training courses, thematic editorial content and digital experiences will ensure that the platform remains dynamic, relevant and responsive to the interests of increasingly diverse audiences. Its ambition is not simply to preserve memory, but to create lasting connections—offering meaningful experiences of learning, discovery and wonder through the Portuguese language and the many languages, cultures and voices that continue to shape it in Brazil.

Today, a visit to the Museum no longer ends at its doors. Through the Digital Collections platform, the Museum continues to grow as a living, evolving space where collections, stories and communities remain connected—anywhere, anytime, and for everyone.

Today, a visit to the Museum no longer ends at its doors. Through the Digital Collections platform, twenty years of stories remain open to discovery—anywhere, anytime, and for everyone.