

Museu da Pessoa, Brazil

Karen Worcman¹

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MUSEU DA PESSOA

Conte sua **HISTÓRIA** Monte sua **COLEÇÃO** Como **APOIAR**



Figure 1: *Museu da Pessoa* [website detail] © museudapessoa.org

The idea of creating the [Museu da Pessoa](https://museudapessoa.org) like it is today was developed gradually. I was a History graduate in Universidade Federal Fluminense, and I was involved in many initiatives related to oral history. One of them was a project with Jewish immigrants in Rio de Janeiro in the late 80s. The project was focused on understanding the objects that they had brought to Brazil when they left their original countries. Along with the stories of the objects, there were a series of impactful narratives that showed a profound and human perception of these experiences. All of that inspired me to perceive the power of life stories and how they carry learning opportunities to the society. Besides its social relevance, I also realised the impact that listening can have in someone that tells their life story, usually for the first time.

With these in mind, I asked myself: what if we had a museum to gather and preserve these stories? A museum in which every human being could be treated as a masterpiece.

So the museum started as a database to collect stories, and that's how in 1991 we created one of the first virtual museums of the world. Even before the internet, we understood that *Museu da Pessoa* was a concept that didn't necessarily need a building to exist. After all these years, we keep the same purpose: to collect, preserve and disseminate stories of all and every person.

¹ [Interview edited by MEMORIAMEDIA] Contact: museologia@museudapessoa.net

We developed a “social memory technology”, which is both a concept and method that should be thought together. It explores the idea that social memory has cultural value (within and beyond the individual person). This theory-concept-method is a starting point for all memory work in the *Museu da Pessoa* - every life story and every social group should be allowed to select, produce and analyse its own history based on its own cultural values. This concept is explained on the book ‘Social Memory Technology’: Theory, Practice, Action (Worcman & Garde-Hansen, 2016) and on the publication ‘Tecnologia Social de Memória’ (Worcman & Harasawa, 2009).

Currently, our archive is composed of more than 18.000 life stories collected since 1991. The stories are in video, text and audio. Besides that, we have a collection of more than 60.000 photos and documents shared by people whose stories are part of our archive.

For *Museu da Pessoa*, a “Life Story Archive” is a collection of stories where the subject is responsible for selecting, producing and analysing its own story based on what they believe is important to preserve.

We believe that "the right to memory" is not just the right to have the content of a specific memory, or a group recognised by the rest of the society (the identity politics of recognition) but, more importantly, the right to own and practice that memory (the politics of administration), to have access to it and to re-use it for future resilience (sustainable humanity in a changing natural world).

Its importance is based on empowering local communities and individuals to create their own memory, and because of that, the more collaborative, the richer it is.

Our biggest challenge is to make *Museu da Pessoa* more and more accessible and accessed by as many people as possible, therefore, strengthen our impact in society from the idea that life stories can be an antidote against intolerance.

We have two visions for the future of the *Museu da Pessoa*, both related to access and technology. First, "to be a museum in each hand". In other words, that many people as possible have access and take ownership of our platform and use it to explore, organise and share life stories. Secondly, we aim that more and more groups, communities and people from different parts of Brazil and the world use our "social memory technology" to create their own museums of the person.

Keywords: *Museu da Pessoa*, museum, life stories, archives

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