

**MEMÓRIA VIRTUAL DE SÃO JOÃO DO POLÉSINO: INTERAÇÕES TÉCNICA,  
HISTÓRICA E ENSINO**

**VIRTUAL MEMORY OF SÃO JOÃO DO POLÊSINE: TECHNIQUE, HISTORY AND  
TEACHING INTERACTIONS**

**MEMORIAL VIRTUAL DE SAN JUAN DEL POLÊSINE: INTERACCIONES ENTRE  
TÉCNICA, HISTORIA Y ENSEÑANZA**

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**RESUMO:** Este estudo relata a experiência decorrente da utilização de configurações específicas do ciberespaço: o Memorial Virtual de São João do Polêsine, pequeno município da Região Central do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. Ele tem por finalidade expor recortes de pesquisas de sua história, visando divulgá-los e utilizá-los de modo integrado ao ensino fundamental. Através de um instrumento virtual interativo de fácil acesso público, a população de São João do Polêsine, uma das cidades que fazem parte da Quarta Colônia Italiana, registra e dissemina parte de suas memórias e conhecimentos culturais na rede mundial de computadores. Dados históricos da cidade foram coletados e posteriormente sistematizados para compor o Memorial Virtual. Além de servir como laboratório para atividades de pesquisa, o Memorial também atende aos preceitos de interdisciplinaridade sugeridos pelo BNCC, ou seja, "entender a linguagem como um fenômeno cultural, histórico, social, variável, heterogêneo e sensível ao contexto" (Brasil, BNCC, p. 66).

**Palavras-Chave:** História, Memorial, Ensino, Pesquisa.

**ABSTRACT:** This study reports the experience from the use of specific cyber space configurations: the Virtual Memorial of São João do Polêsine, a small town in the Central Region of Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil. Its purpose is to present historical research cuts and clippings aiming to disclose and use them integrated with elementary education. Through an interactive virtual instrument with easy public access, the population of São João do Polêsine, one of the towns which are part of the Fourth Italian Colony, the registration and dissemination of part of their memories and cultural knowledge

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through of the World Wide Web. Historical data from the town was collected and later systematized to compose the Virtual Memorial. In addition to serving as a laboratory for research activities, the Memorial also complies with the precepts of interdisciplinarity suggested by the BNCC, namely, "understanding language as a cultural, historical, social, variable, heterogeneous and context-sensitive phenomenon" (Brazil, BNCC, p. 66).

Keywords: History, Memorial, Teaching, Research.

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio relata la experiencia derivada de la utilización de configuraciones específicas del ciberespacio: el Memorial Virtual de San Juan del Polésine, pequeño condado de la Región Central de Río Grande del Sur, Brasil. Se tiene por objeto exponer recortes de investigaciones de su historia, con el fin de divulgarlos y utilizarlos de modo integrado a la enseñanza fundamental. A través de un instrumento virtual interactivo de fácil acceso público, la población de San Juan del Polésine, una de las ciudades que forman la Cuarta Colonia Italiana, registra y disemina parte de sus memorias y conocimientos culturales en la red mundial de computadoras. Los datos históricos de la ciudad fueron recolectados y posteriormente sistematizados para componer el Memorial Virtual. Además de servir como laboratorio para actividades de investigación, el Memorial también atiende a los preceptos de interdisciplinaridad sugeridos por el BNCC, es decir, "entender el lenguaje como un fenómeno cultural, histórico, social, variable, heterogéneo y sensible al contexto" (Brasil, BNCC, p. 66).

Palabras Clave: Historia, Memorial, Enseñanza, Investigación.

## INTRODUCTION

This study reports the experience from the use of specific cyber space configurations: the Virtual Memorial of São João do Polêsine, a small town in the Central Region of Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil. Its purpose is to present cuts and clippings from historical research aiming to disclose and use them integrated with elementary education as a reference to a past which has left its marks of time in space.

However, the account of this experience with informational technologies needs to be, itself, situated in time and space, since it is the use of an electronic support of individual and collective memories that have, as a methodological presupposition, a truth claim, that is, it intends to graphically establish its historicity, not as a memorial model modifying conduct, but as a subsidy for the public debate of both content, support and method.

There were several actions that led to the creation of the Virtual Memorial, however, formally the project started in 2014, with the Outreach Education Program for the Fourth Italian Immigrant Colony in Rio Grande do Sul (*Programa de Extensão em Educação para a Quarta Colônia de Imigração Italiana no Rio Grande do Sul*) - EDUQCII, Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM). This program, developed along with the communities from the Fourth Italian Immigrant Colony, from

2011 to 2016, aimed to integrate teaching, research and extension activities with the social, cultural and economic development of the town in that region.

Based on this, a proposal was made to produce a virtual instrument that could be interactive, with facilitated public access and that allowed the population of São João do Polêsine, one of the towns from the Fourth Italian Colony. This virtual instrument consisted of a means to register and disseminate part of their memories and cultural knowledge through the World Wide Web. The study was carried out by a partnership between UFSM, through its adjoining technical high school (*Colégio Técnico Industrial de Santa Maria*) CTISM and the town of São João do Polêsine.

Its pertinence is due to the finding, through specific research, of the loss of mnemonic references on immigration and the founding of the community which later became São João do Polêsine town, not only by young residents, but also by many elderly residents, since the new generations no longer recall the historical experiences of their predecessors which could, along with other exogenous factors, compromise the basis of the composition of their identity as an integral group of the Italian Colony. This study makes it possible to offer students and teachers from the initial grades of Elementary School a strategy based on contemporary technologies for teaching local history that meets the guidelines of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) while simultaneously preserving the traditions of this community, showing in practice that the new and the old are not mutually exclusive, but consistent.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The registered memory of a community allows, among other possibilities, the attribution of meaning to its existence as a group that relates to other groups, a relationship which enriches the culture instead of destroying it. It can contribute to its unity even than in the empirical discordance between past (historicity), and the narratives made in the present about this past (historiography), allowing them the discussion of its becoming.

The records of memories may be, among others, in "places of memory", which, according to Augustin and Augustin (2011, p. 12), are linked:

the need to (re)construct and interpret the real intentions of the continuity of memories of a collective or individual character, giving these elements a meaningful social function within their time. The social spaces present in the daily life of a society present an ideal scenario for observations and reflections on this concept in contemporary societies.

Recalling the history of the foundation of the first immigrant communities of the Fourth Colony, one can understand the anthropological value (including several techniques) of their cultural

heritage for the projection of future actions, since, based on, tradition, its population still maintains, in the domestic spaces of living, expressive elements of Italian-Brazilian culture.

Photographs, letters and postcards, garments, culinary recipes, stories that keep symbolic aspects of the cultural traditions produced by the first immigrants in the collective memory and that may be important for understanding the difficulties encountered at the beginning of the settlement of the region were used as tools/instruments for this study.

From these documentary indexes, the Virtual Memorial proposes to offer a set of information that allows the community not only the aesthetic appreciation of a record of its cultural heritage, but above all, that takes it as a comparative link between the possibilities of technical rationality of its foundational past in relation to the present. The very existence of the Virtual Memorial is a sign or mark of this possible comparison, as far as the means of transmitting knowledge is concerned, and also about technical equipment: message-medium (MCLUHAN, 1969, p. 21) of signifiers and meanings not only linguistic, although linguistic communication is at the base of historical narratives, even to rationally explain the content of the iconic narratives such as cave paintings, for example.

However, we are no longer in the era of cave paintings, but the very materiality of the current means of conservation and transmission of messages through the World Wide Web is sometimes questioned when allusions to the virtuality of cyber spaces imply that they are immaterial. Although in this sense it becomes almost impractical to escape from some kind of mystification, the Virtual Memorial has in its form of presentation the pretension to show that the materiality of the current technical production, far from being a gift of some solitary genius, is the result of constant human social work which, in forging its rationality, informs the world around it with the product of its work/thought (PINTO, 2005, p. 71) One of the characteristics of cyber space is the speed of the information, giving the impression of reducing distances, because the current techniques allow the almost instantaneous circulation of information worldwide, but only of information within the network.

This aspect can also be illusory and nourish forms of mystification, because in fact the distances remain exactly the same and what has changed is the speed in which information reaches greater distances; and what has not changed is the physically determined basic speed (like the sound of an old drum), it remains exactly the same and will never change, just as the laws of gravity cannot change by interference of some supposed magical power. Thus, the virtual spaces constitute material support for information about a cultural heritage, but do not mix with them, for cultural information exists only within them, as a closed system, despite its possibility for input and output of information processed electronically suggesting otherwise.

Several actions were required for the production of the Virtual Memorial of São João do Polêsine, to collect data that gives the closest possible notion of reality and that enables preservation despite the contact (subject-object relationship) with cultural practices that are part of the accumulated heritage. The memorial collection is composed of oral testimonies from semi-structured interviews carried out with both old and current residents (implicated with collective memory), as well as the collection of photographic images and written documents representative of local memory and artifacts (instruments and machines).

After being evaluated in their historicity through the method of historical research, the historical-dialectical method, these materials serve both for the community to present itself to the visitor and as a source of new research, that is, for the production of reflexive syntheses that constitute new theses to be challenged by the public critic. This enables the verification and preservation, from the analysis of the actions in the physical environment such as the creation of an anthropic landscape through farming techniques and agricultural labor relations; to the artisanal productions developed by the old generations that were transmitted and assimilated or surpassed by the emerging techniques proper to each historical moment, without changing the dynamics proper to the historical. As Herpich and Tarouco (2016, p. 02) state,

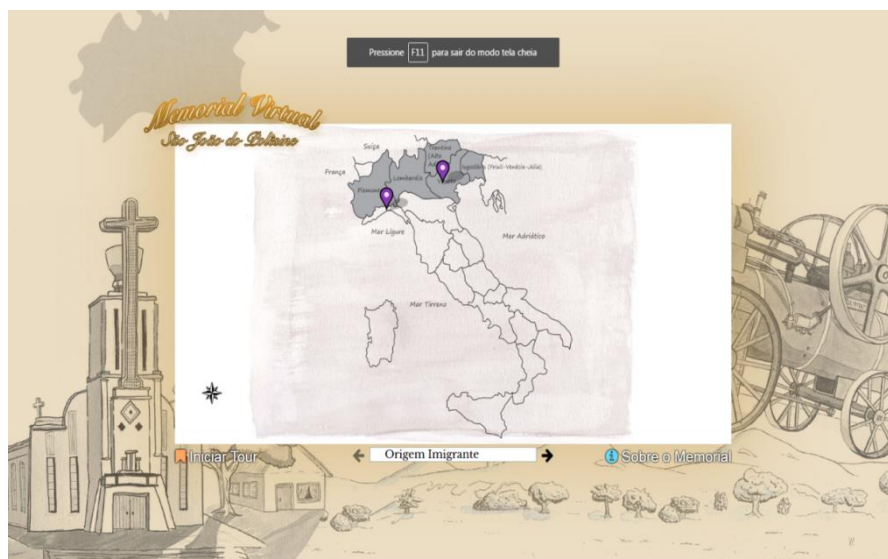
The increased use of virtual worlds in different application contexts has enabled their inclusion in the educational field, from which emerge new opportunities for use of computer resources as an element of support and even demotivation in the learning process of its members.

Thus, the Memorial in addition to serving as a virtual museum can become a laboratory for research activities carried out by different subjects interested by the local historical process and, especially, for the teaching of history.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Virtual Memorial of São João do Polêsine was organized from the representation of the route traveled by the first Italian immigrants who arrived in the region of the Soturno River Valley in the late nineteenth century. Through this route, people have online access, initially, to a text explaining the migratory process of the time. In the sequence, a geographical map of Italy (figure 01) can be accessed, in which markers indicate the regions from where the immigrant groups originally departed, with explanations from texts, photos and written documents.

Figure 01 - Map indicating the Italian origin of the first immigrants.

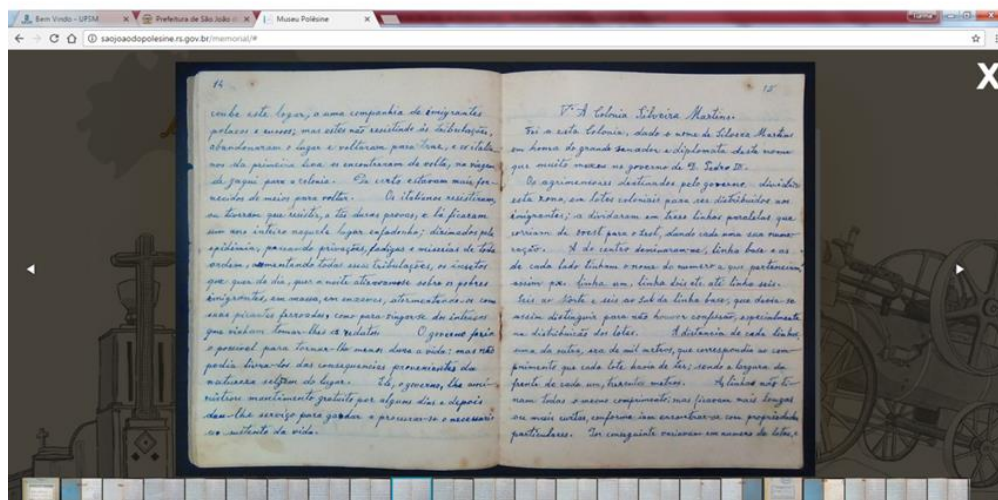


<http://saojoaodopolesine.rs.gov.br/memorial>, accessed in 12 April 2017.

Then, the one is directed to a map of Rio Grande do Sul state, where the location of the Rio Grande harbor and the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Colonies of Italian immigration are highlighted. In the window of the Fourth Colony it is possible to access to the manuscripts of Antônio Ceretta (figure 02), an immigrant who came from Veneto with his family at the age of eleven. In 1894, Ceretta registered his impressions on the process of colonization of Vale Veneto, today district of São João do Polêsine. This document is part of the Pallottine Archives of Santa Maria and is now available to the community in the Venetian dialect through the Memorial. In the same window, the Internet user has access to Antônio Ceretta's manuscripts on the colonization of São João do Polêsine, written in 1936 and also kept in the Pallottine Archives.



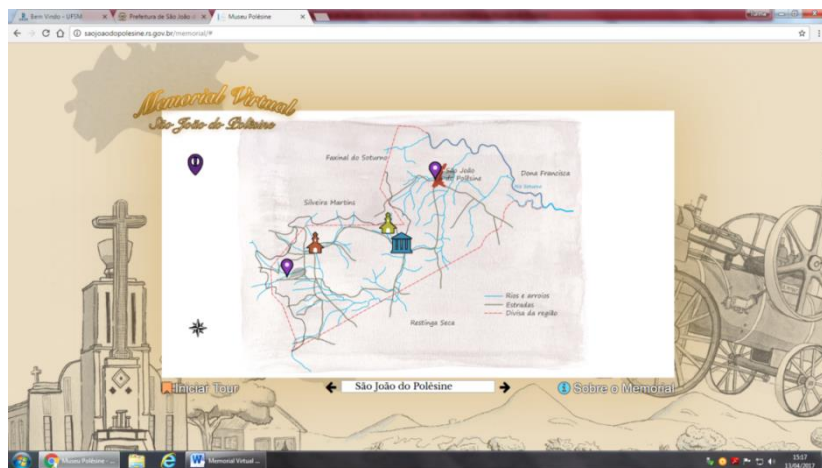
Figure 02 - Manuscripts written by Antônio Ceretta.



<http://saojoaodopolésine.rs.gov.br/memorial>, accessed in 12 April 2017.

In the sequence, the visitor can access the map of São João do Polésine (figure 03), and is invited to travel through its districts through photos, texts and testimonies indicative of their history.

Figure 03 – Mapa of São João do Polésine.



<http://saojoaodopolésine.rs.gov.br/memorial>, accessed in 12 April 2017.

Finally, the user will have access to the map of the city whose markers indicate its landmarks and main historical references. In this window, it is possible to take a walk through the city, from old photos (figure 04) and recent, testimonials of residents and reproduction of documents and periodicals that intend to contextualize the local history in its entirety.

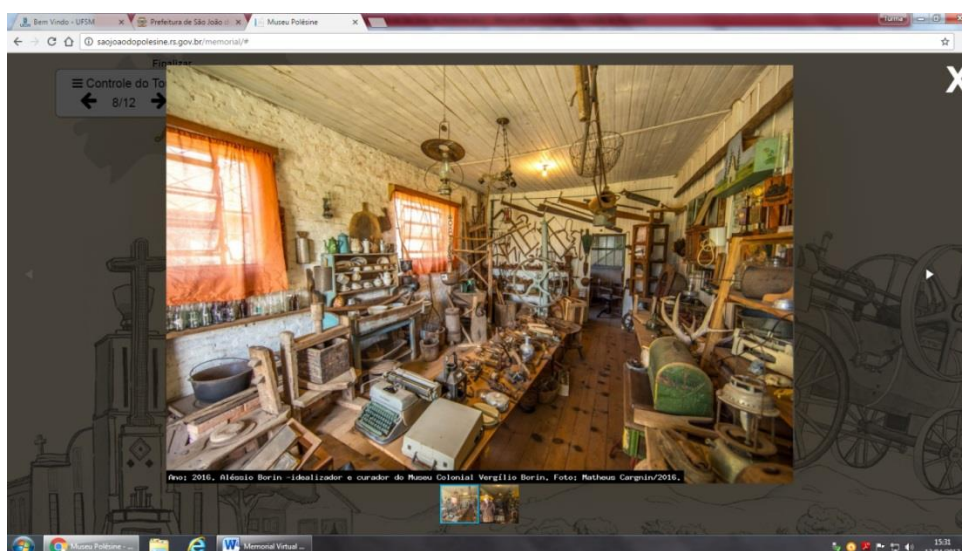
Figure 04 - Picture of Religious Festival Held in São João do Polêsine.



<http://saojoaodopolesine.rs.gov.br/memorial>, accessed in 12 April 2017.

It is noteworthy in this window, the label on the Colonial Museum Vergílio Borin (Figure 05). This museum is maintained by its curator, Aléssio Borin, whose purpose is to preserve the tradition of his father, Vergílio, to gather instruments representative of the work done by immigrants in the region.

Figure 05 – Colonial Museum Vergílio Borin.



<http://saojoaodopolesine.rs.gov.br/memorial>, accessed in 12 April 2017.



In May of 2015, when the community from São João do Polêsine reedited its most traditional activity, the Sixtieth Edition of the Regional Rice Festival, the Memorial Production Project was presented to the population. It was possible to collect several testimonies, including those of former residents who no longer reside there. In February 2016, having already defined the structure of the Memorial, a training course was offered to the teachers of local Elementary Schools, whose objective was to publicize it and to enable the teaching staff of the town in the use of Memorial as educational-pedagogical instrument.

In the second half of 2016, with the intensification of discussions about the production of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), it was possible to interconnect the purposes of the base with the objectives of the virtual memory space. Thus, the Memorial became a resource which serves the purposes of the human sciences area in elementary education,

to contribute to the development of cognition in situ, that is, without leaving aside the contextualization marked by the notions of time and space, fundamental concepts of the area. [...] Space-time reasoning is based on the idea that the human being produces the space in which he lives, appropriating him/herself in a certain historical circumstance. The capacity to identify these circumstance is imposed as a condition for the human being to understand, interpret and evaluate the meanings of the actions carried out in the past or present, which makes him responsible both for the knowledge produced and for the control of the natural and historical phenomena of the which is agent (Brazil, BNCC, p. 305).

The Memorial also complies with the interdisciplinary precepts laid down in BNCC, to "understand the language as a cultural phenomenon, historical, social, variable, heterogeneous and sensitive to contexts of use" (Brazil, BNCC, p. 66), competences of the Portuguese language Or, by "developing spatial thinking, exercising the production and reading of diverse representations (thematic maps, mental maps, sketches and paths) and the use of geotechnologies to solve problems involving geographic information" (Brazil, BNCC, p. 319), competence of geography.

In the early years of elementary school, when students should expand the scale of social perception, from the family to social groups at schools and neighborhoods, the Memorial appears in theory as a possibility of contact with consolidated historical experiences. The discussions about the problems and the challenges experienced by generations that preceded the current historical moment can, through a virtual instrument, be promoted so that the student can, according to the BNCC:

develop research procedures in human sciences, such as research on different document sources, observation and recording - of landscapes, facts, events and testimonies - and the establishment of comparisons. These procedures are fundamental to understanding themselves and to those in their environment, their life histories, and the differences of their social groups. The learning process must progressively take into account the school, the community, the State and the country. It is also important that students perceive the relationships with the environment and the action of human beings with the world around them, reflecting on the meanings of these relations (p. 307).

Thus, the Virtual Memorial presents itself as one of the instruments that students can use in elaborating the interpretation of their own history, because the technical conditions allows students to be taken beyond the traditional spaces of memory, such as of museums. As in traditional museums, the visitor has access to photographs, maps, written documents, as well as recorded oral statements to reflect on the historical development of the community. However, understanding history as the process of human social relations mediated by work, we sought to emphasize the collective action of the agents involved in coping with the difficulties experienced since the founding period, looking for correlations between images and texts, the multiple realities that compose the history of the town.

The Memorial, therefore, does not intend to revive the past or to encourage some naive nostalgia, but rather to represent, for present interpretation, some aspects of its past-present considered relevant after careful analysis of the sources used in its composition. This is due to the fact that a representation is, according to Chartier (1988, p.21), the "(...) relationship of a present image and an absent object, being worthy of being present." The representation of the past revealed through the photographic eye brings with it both an individual sense of choice that produces it and a collective sense that implies its context. To the historian, photography poses a great challenge: how to get to what was not revealed by the photographic eye? Such a challenge imposes on him the task of unraveling an intricate network of meanings, whose elements-men and signs-interact dialectically in the composition of reality (CARDOSO, et al., 1997, p.405).

Similarly, the Memorial yields, due to its technical composition, more or less the same function or result. Through what it represents, it is necessary that the visitor search for what could not be represented explicitly. That is, being aware that the difficulty presented in the interpretation of the technical images, such as photography (FLUSSER, 2002, p. 13), can be transferred to the interpretation of the Virtual Memorial. It is therefore open to interpretation from a closed information system which gives the impression of being open. In addition, the idea of providing several documents for the teaching of history is foreseen in the BNCC, which aims to be

essential to consider the use of different sources and types of document (written, iconographic, material, immaterial) capable of facilitating the understanding of the relationship of time and space and the social relations that generated them. The records and traces of the most diverse natures (furniture, work tools, music, etc.) left by individuals carry within themselves the human experience, the specific forms of production, consumption and circulation, both of objects and of knowledge. In this dimension, the historical object becomes an exercise, in the laboratory of memory directed to the production of knowledge of history (Brazil, BNCC, p. 348).

This seems to be one of the central premises of the BNCC: to seek better understanding of the relations between memory and identities, since each group produces memories that can converge to establish identities and the notion of belonging to a particular social group, not only as an adaptation

to the group. As a narrative of what seems to be true, historiography has made use of individual and collective memories as subsidies of cultural formatting and legitimation of a particular discourse to the detriment of others, because, usually, the production of collective memory occurs from the interference of socially dominant groups, through their action on the mechanisms of ideological configuration, especially of historiography, because if History affirms that a certain fact or action happened, then it is true. But the true role of the historian is that of questioning and problematizing, reinterpreting the historicity of individual and collective memories, in order to arrive at those that can be taken as truth, without prevailing the conception of truth of one social class over others. In this case, historiography will be fulfilling its purpose and, as Le Goff (2003, p. 110) explains, may lead students to understand the "power structures of a society; the power of the dominant categories by leaving ... testimonies capable of guiding history in one or the other sense; the power over future memory, the power of perpetuating, should be recognized and taken apart by the historian. "

This way of thinking also seems to be in accordance with another of BNCC's precepts, specific about the past/present relationship. This definition of what is intended with the historical knowledge in the BNCC was taken into account in the elaboration of the Virtual Memorial, as follows:

The past/present relation does not take place automatically; it requires the knowledge of theoretical references capable of bringing intelligibility to the selected historical objects. An object becomes document only when appropriated by a narrator who gives it meaning, making it capable of expressing the dynamics of the life of societies. Therefore, what interests us in historical knowledge is to perceive the way in which individuals have constructed, with different languages, their narratives about the world in which they lived and live, their institutions and social organizations (Brazil, BNCC, p. 346).

Therefore, it can be stated that the results from the Virtual Memorial composition, tend to manifest themselves over time, both in formal education in elementary school, and both in the discussions that arise from it as well as in the process of updating its contents. This type of result cannot be quantified, since there are no adequate measuring instruments and, in this case, making any prediction of positive or negative results would be no more than a mere exercise of futurology.

## CONCLUSIONS

As inferred from the title of this article, its intention is to report the experience of an outreach and research project that may positively contribute to teaching, since it was thought within the guidelines that underpin formal education; however, it intends to go beyond that. This "going beyond" has a pedagogical addition: the medium used to expose the memories of a small community can make it a large community and the large community can return it to the small community through the Computers.

In this exchange of information provided by a contemporary medium (MCLUHAN, 1969, p. 27) one does not, however, want to mystify historiography with the magical charm of the medium. The media has always been part of the message, although this has only recently been realized. Therefore, the electronic medium means as much as any other medium (PINTO, 2005, p. 29). And if by chance the Internet user does not know how to read and write properly (POMMER, 2006, p. 312), even with the addition of the images and a virtual travel script, he will have little understanding of the subject. This means that the most elaborate instrument produced by human rationality alone will not produce the desired effect. Hence came the conviction that the Virtual Memorial should be linked to the formal process of education and teaching. To create the conditions for the most complex learning, both in the Portuguese language and in other languages and their technologies, seems to us not only a goal to be achieved, but a moral imperative such as is put in Kant (1995, p. 29). ) "*Sapere aude!*", that is, "dare to know!".

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