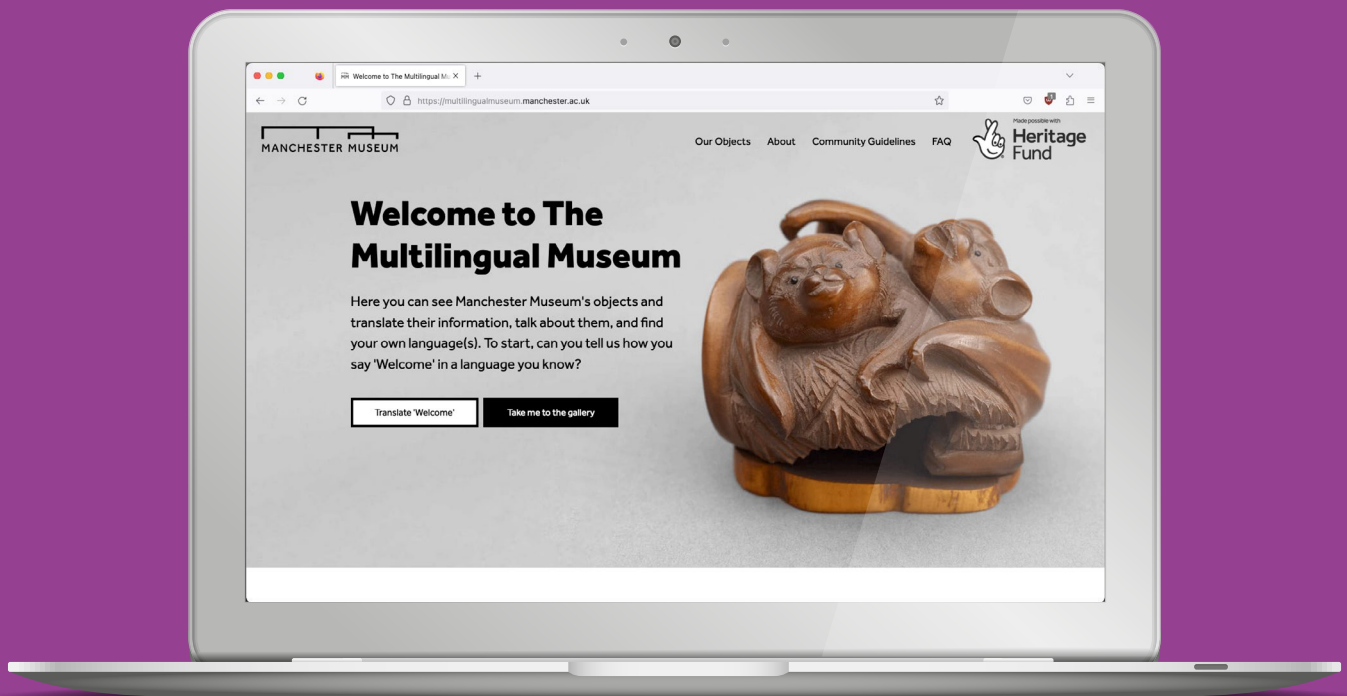


Digitising Multilingual Heritage

Toolkit



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multilingualmuseum.manchester.ac.uk

Introduction

What is The Multilingual Museum?

The Multilingual Museum is a collaborative project between Manchester Museum and the City of Languages, made possible with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

Co-created with digital volunteers from the local community and around the world, it is a space where people can share their languages and connect online with Manchester Museum's collections.

Through a carefully curated selection of objects from the Museum's 4.5-million-strong collection, we invite contributions in the form of translations and comments. New content and translations can be uploaded in text, audio, image, and video format.

Background

The Multilingual Museum project built on a previous collaboration between Manchester Museum and Multilingual Manchester, a research unit based at the University of Manchester's Linguistics Department.

The first version of The Multilingual Museum was designed and launched during the Covid-19 pandemic as a resource that would enable diverse communities to gain digital access to Manchester Museum's collection during lockdown.

The original platform was developed in-house using Wix software to build the website. It was well received by various community groups and individuals, providing the springboard for the Digitising Multilingual Heritage digital volunteering project.

Both the concept and structure can be easily replicated and used in other cultural institutions. This toolkit outlines our approach to digital volunteer engagement and provides an overview of building the Multilingual Museum website.

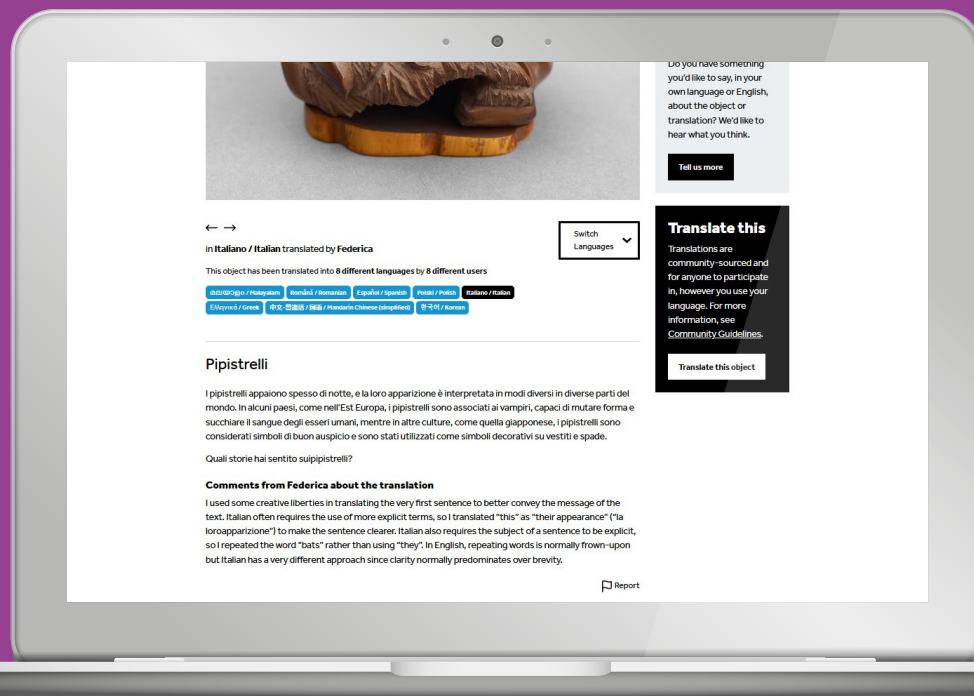
Digital Volunteering

Digital volunteering has become increasingly popular in recent years. This flexible style of volunteering has many benefits for both the individuals involved and the organisation. For volunteers, it can increase digital skills and confidence, as well as removing barriers to physical access. For the organisation, it can increase capacity, resilience and provide a creative way of engaging new audiences.

Storied Translation

At the heart of this project is the concept of storied translation. Audiences are encouraged to share their own stories, experiences and connections to the objects and narratives, and insight into their own translation process. It frames language as heritage and explores how meaning is established via the process of translation and the choices made in that.

This approach is participatory and dynamic, working with the Museum to bring the objects to life. Storied translation was developed in collaboration with academics Prof. Yaron Matras (Linguistics) and Dr. Rebecca Tipton (Translation Studies) from The University of Manchester.



A storied translation about carved bats into Italian, with information about the translation process.

Making a Multilingual Museum

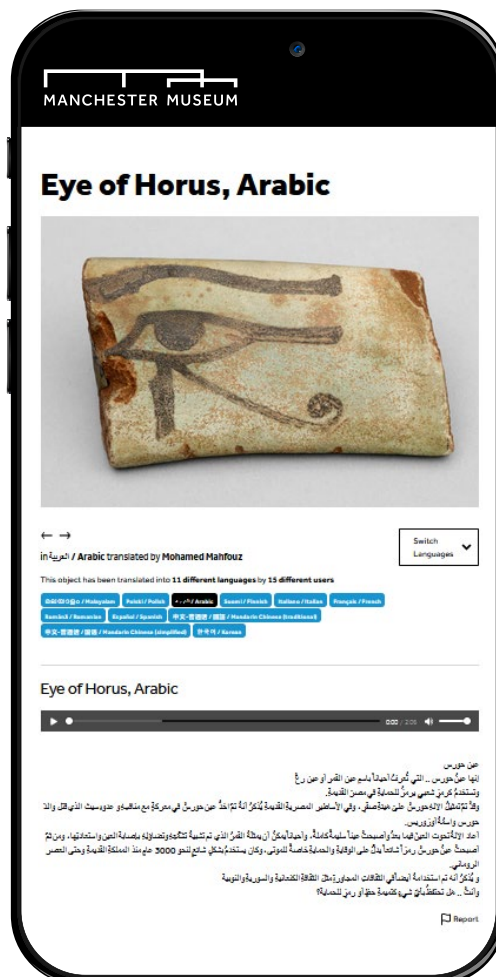
Curating Online Collections

The choice of objects was led by our mission at Manchester Museum.

1. **Developing understanding between cultures;**
2. **Building a more sustainable world.**

In addition, care was taken to provide representation of each gallery space, as well as objects from a variety of countries, as volunteers tended to show more interest in objects they felt resonated with their own culture.

An Egyptian object with a translation (written and spoken) in Egyptian Arabic.



The Importance of Languages

People build connections with language in a variety of ways. We consulted widely on how different groups wanted to engage with the website. Common threads included:

- to promote their own language and culture;
- provide access to collections to others from their community;
- to help inspire younger generations to feel like their language is important, useful and fun to learn;
- a way to improve their English or other languages.

Individual language skills may vary and there are many challenges in securing wider participation. There is also a need for dedicated support for volunteers from certain groups, such as those with limited digital skills and those who are unable to confidently read or write. These volunteers benefitted from dedicated one-to-one support to contribute.

Building the Website

The Multilingual Museum has user-generated translations and comments at the core of its functionality. There are two main options for allowing users add their own comments or translations to a website, either in the form of a blog or a forum.

Blog

Interactive and provides a simple way of allowing users to comment below the post. The comments are usually uncategoryed and it is a simple format to use.

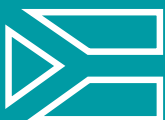
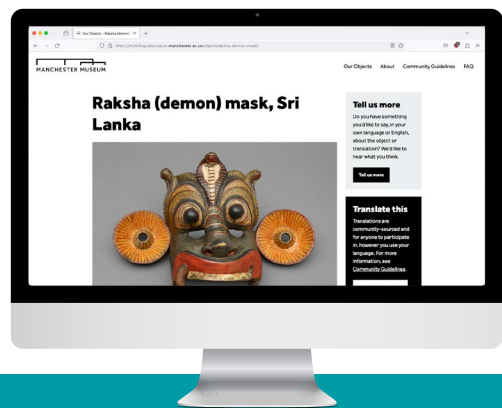
Forum

Has a wider variety of features. Users have a greater capability to upload their own content, and can be appointed as moderators if this is a style of digital volunteering you are interested in building.

By building on the basics of a blog or forum, many things are possible. Whether you have specialist help or not, you can build a website that is useful to open up your collections to translations and other comments.

For a digital volunteering project you would ideally choose a website with forum capabilities to enable threads, comments and media uploads.

The Multilingual Museum started off using free resources to build a website on Wix, and later achieved funding to build a more tailor-made website on Wordpress. Other options you could explore include Squarespace, Flarum, Discourse and Zooniverse.



Cultural Sensitivity in Language Selection

During the initial stage of site design, languages were represented through flags. We made a conscious decision to move away from representations of languages linked to nation states, as there may be political sensitivities in associating a language with a certain country, and because of the complicated migration histories of our volunteers, who may have lived in many countries but not the traditional one associated with that language.

On the objects, languages instead appear in the order they were uploaded. The languages in the dropdown menu are listed in alphabetical order, with the native languages' names for the language listed before the English name. Both of these approaches avoid the promotion of some languages as more important than others.

In order to ensure the list of languages was as comprehensive as possible, it was compiled manually from the Wikipedia list of languages of the world (here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_language_names).

How did we do it?

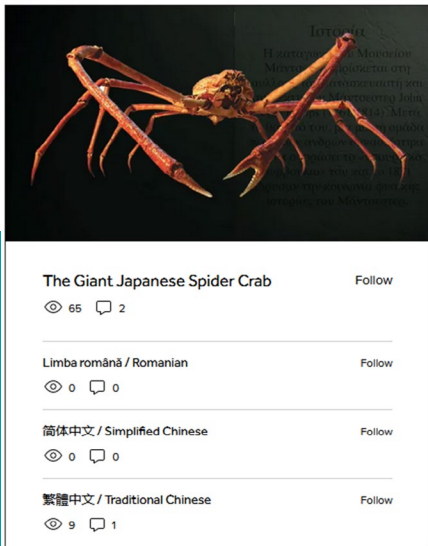
After running the pilot project on Wix software, we worked alongside a web developer to explore several different options to build and manage the new version of the website. Based on their expertise and feedback from volunteer consultation on the previous platform, we decided on Wordpress.

Wordpress is an open-source software that is behind many websites today. There are over 50,000 plugins to help you customise its functionality. After paying for a domain name, business plans range from a free account which has 1GB of space for website content, with options up to 50GB.

For us, hosting was free, which was available through The University of Manchester. The Multilingual Museum website has 19 plugins that it uses, listed in the Appendix.

The structure of the website is a forum-style setup – where the objects are presented in the style of a topic, which users can create discussions around. One of the advantages was being easily able to have a prominent picture of the object, and to list the languages in a way that was easy to read.

Here’s an example of each of these on each version of the website:



An object on The Multilingual Museum Wix site, showing the 'topic areas' open in a forum style.

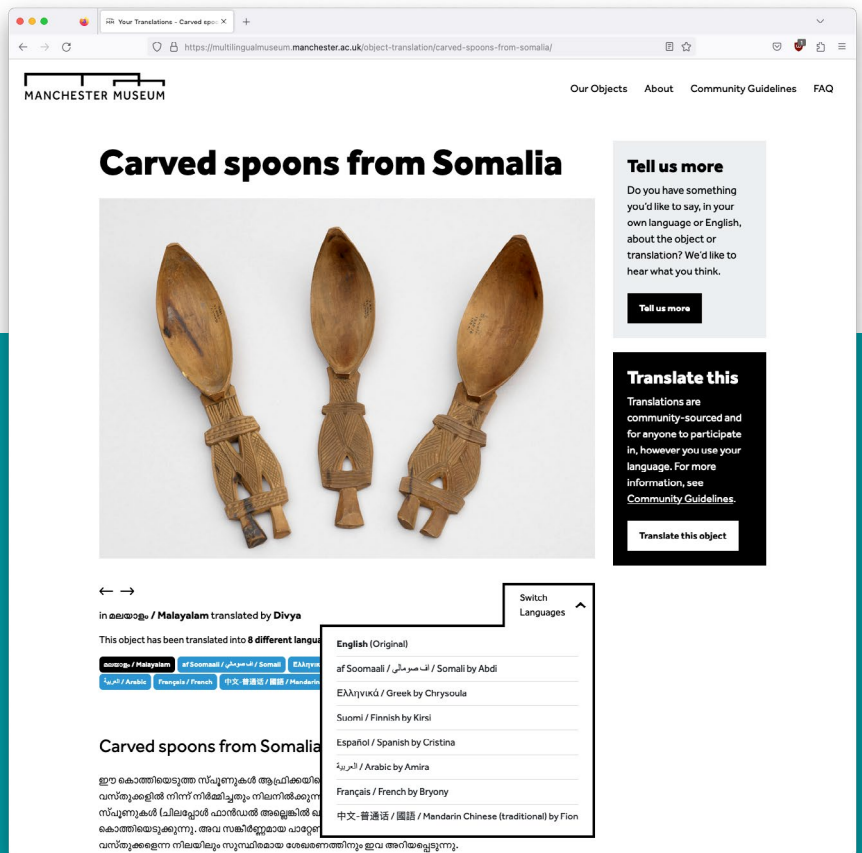


Image of an object on The Multilingual Museum Wordpress site, with a dropdown menu open showing volunteer contributions.

Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer Recruitment

A central aim of this project was to increase the reach of the Museum through digital volunteer opportunities, and involve people from communities who don't traditionally engage with the Museum. It was therefore necessary to carefully plan the recruitment strategy and employ a variety of recruitment tools both online and in person. This involved spending time doing outreach to understand the audience and online volunteer recruitment campaigns to raise the profile of the project.

Here are some ideas for both physical and online spaces to recruit volunteers.

Community Spaces

Perhaps one of the simplest but most effective forms of recruitment is getting out into the community where you would like to expand your volunteer base. By spending time calling into a variety of spaces, you may encounter opportunities to leave information in places such as community noticeboards, local coffee shops or leisure centres.

You can also explore whether there are community centres for certain demographics in these areas and focus your recruitment – these are sometimes religious spaces or community-led groups. Some smaller community centres may struggle to make an online presence of their own, so visiting in person can be the only way to make initial contact.

These kinds of spaces may also have leaflets for other community centres or projects, which may be a good way to build up a base of contacts.

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Groups

A digital volunteering project and resource such as The Multilingual Museum can also be an important way for ESOL communities to make connections with shared cultural heritage and increase digital literacy through enabling access to collections online.

Job Centres

Job Centres are a great place to advertise and advisors can also help in spreading the word and advocating the work you do.

Volunteering is a great way to build up work experience. The advantage of digital projects and those that encourage native language skills is that they are accessible to people who might otherwise find it difficult to access regular volunteering, such as parents of young children and those wanting to improve their English. Volunteering opportunities can build skills and confidence, and help people to get more involved with their wider community.



A taster session run in one of the Museum spaces.

Online Spaces

As a digital project, you don't need to be limited to just your geographical area. By using the digital realm to your advantage and spreading the word about your project, you might be surprised how far you can reach!

Email Campaigns

Email campaigns can be an easy, cost-effective way of reaching large audiences. Local volunteer centres are a brilliant resource and can help promote opportunities, tapping into different networks.



Social Media

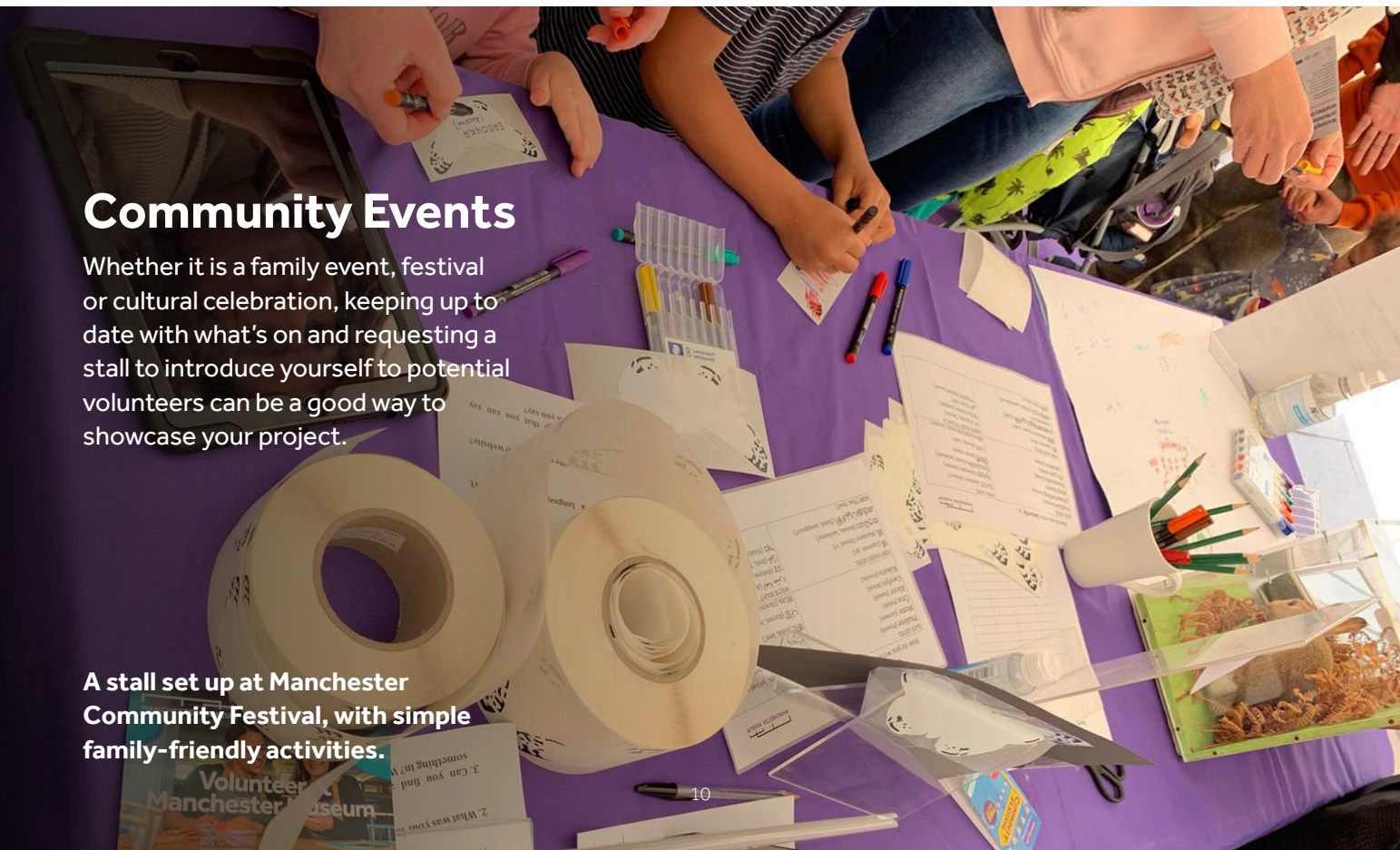
If your organisation has to promote your project on social media, use that as a resource. Different social media platforms will reach out to different audiences, so consider using multiple platforms when recruiting and adapt your message accordingly.

As an example, Facebook posts should usually be slightly longer and more detailed, while Instagram posts should use visual imagery have minimal text . Consider paid-for advertising on these platforms if budget allows.

Community Events

Whether it is a family event, festival or cultural celebration, keeping up to date with what's on and requesting a stall to introduce yourself to potential volunteers can be a good way to showcase your project.

A stall set up at Manchester Community Festival, with simple family-friendly activities.



Online Volunteer Networks

Here are some examples of online volunteer databases. These are a mix of national and local networks that can push your opportunities to large numbers of registered volunteers. Local universities and colleges also often have online resources that may be worth connecting with.

Here are some examples of online volunteer databases:

Database	Good for	Web address
Do It	General volunteers, the largest database. Nationwide	doit.life/volunteer
Reach Volunteering	Volunteers with previous professional experience (3+ years). Nationwide	reachvolunteering.org.uk/i-want-volunteer
Vinspired	Younger volunteers, 18-30. Nationwide	vinspired.com/volunteer
Volunteering Culture Manchester	Volunteers interested in heritage opportunities in Manchester	www.volunteeringculture.org.uk
The University of Manchester Volunteer Hub	University students in Manchester	find-volunteering.manchester.ac.uk
Manchester Metropolitan University Student Union	University students in Manchester	theunionmmu.org/get-involved/volunteering



Word-of-mouth

Volunteers linked to the project can be your best advocate! Word-of-mouth is a powerful tool to encourage more people to get involved and can be useful to inspire enthusiasm and help dispel any uncertainties. One of the key aims of this project was to create a community of volunteers that would share the platform and encourage contributions from family and friends.

Training Programme

A core team of volunteers were recruited, and invited to take part in three training sessions delivered at Manchester Museum by project staff. Each three-hour session covered key skills to prepare volunteers for their role including translation and language awareness, digital skills and an introduction to Museum objects. They also gained an insight into Manchester Museum and the breadth of our collections.



Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<p>Introduction to Manchester Museum and tours</p> <p>Volunteer role and commitment (flexible, 2 hours per week)</p> <p>How to contribute to the Multilingual Museum online platform</p> <p>Introduction to platform and objects, including opportunity to shape development</p>	<p>Translation and language awareness skills</p> <p>Basic translation tasks around the museum</p> <p>Website consultation session with web designer</p>	<p>Digital skills session with the Manchester Museum digital content creator</p> <p>Mobile phone content creation task</p> <p>Practice translating text and objects on camera</p> <p>How to use basic editing apps such as CapCut and uploading videos</p>





Building Volunteer Skills

Volunteers gained a broad range of skills through engagement with the project. These included digital skills, translation and language awareness and insights into curating heritage.

Through the training and subsequent volunteering, we aimed to:

- develop digital skills, including how to access a different language keyboard;
- provide deeper understanding of digital skills such as how to use a range of technologies, including capturing video, video editing apps, sound recording and capturing images.
- increase confidence with their varying levels of language ability;
- highlight the importance of sharing and preserving language, with a focus on pride in volunteers' multilingualism and cultural heritage;
- provide knowledge on how to use the platform specifically, and moderate content using the inbuilt tools;
- Empower volunteers to take an active part in the curation of cultural heritage, engaging with audiences from a variety of backgrounds with digital tools to document heritage.

Ongoing Support

To keep momentum going through the lifetime of the project and the sustained engagement of digital volunteers, a programme of continuous support and training was employed.



Drop-in sessions

Online zoom sessions and in-person sessions that were delivered at the Museum on a weekly basis.



Phone and email correspondence

Project leaders kept in touch with the volunteers through regular phone and email correspondence.



Volunteer-initiated group chat

The volunteers set up a WhatsApp group chat to stay in touch with each other.



Meetings and social events

Volunteers were invited to attend events such as coffee mornings as part of the wider volunteer programme at Manchester Museum.

Conclusions

Why is a project like this important?

This project has provided a powerful tool to expand the reach of Manchester Museum to diverse communities both locally and further afield through remote volunteer opportunities. It has empowered individuals to take an active part in the curation of cultural heritage, engaging volunteers from as far away as China, Romania and Brazil, as well as establishing itself as an important language resource for the local community.

Ultimately, it has played a significant role in increasing access to collections in a variety of languages and improved volunteer diversity immensely.



Next Steps

It is important to embed projects like this into the wider organisation and ensure that a resource such as The Multilingual Museum has a legacy beyond the lifetime of the project. At Manchester Museum, the website will remain active, and volunteers will be encouraged to engage, adding translations and comments on an ongoing basis. The project will have a visible presence on gallery, including in the Belonging Gallery, where we have introduced an iPad on a fixed stand providing visitors access to the website and the ability to translate while at the museum. We have also secured one of the cases in the Collections Reimagined gallery, where objects and translations will feature promoting the project and website. A future volunteer opportunity will be centred around this display, with volunteers showcasing The Multilingual Museum website and delivering object handling sessions with collections from the platform.

By doing this, we hope to have created a long-lasting tool that will be used by many for years to come, it is our ambition that this toolkit helps other heritage venues create the foundations to open up their own collections to multilingual communities.



An iPad with access for visitors to The Multilingual Museum on Belonging Gallery at Manchester Museum

Appendix

List of plugins used in The Multilingual Museum Wordpress site. You can search for these and plugins like these on the main Wordpress website: en-gb.wordpress.org/plugins

Plugin name	What does it do? (Wordpress description)
Zeno Report Comments	This script gives visitors the possibility to flag/report a comment as inappropriate.
Yoast SEO	The first true all-in-one SEO solution for WordPress, including on-page content analysis, XML sitemaps and much more
Yoast Duplicate Post	The go-to tool for cloning posts and pages, including the powerful Rewrite & Republish feature.
WP Migrate	Migrate between any two environments. Push, pull, and export full sites. Find and replace content including serialized data. Import and back up the database.
WP Mail SMTP	Reconfigures the wp_mail() function to use Gmail/Mailgun/SendGrid/SMTP instead of the default mail() and creates an options page to manage the settings.
WP All Import Pro	The most powerful solution for importing XML and CSV files to WordPress. Import to Posts, Pages, and Custom Post Types. Support for imports that run on a schedule, ability to update existing imports, and much more.
WP All Import – ACF Import Add-On Pro	Import to Advanced Custom Fields. Requires WP All Import & Advanced Custom Fields.
WP All Export Pro	Export any post type to a CSV or XML file. Edit the exported data, and then re-import it later using WP All Import.
WP All Export – ACF Export Add-On Pro	Export ACF data from WordPress. Requires WP All Export Pro.

Plugin name	What does it do? (Wordpress description)
Wordfence Security	Wordfence Security - Anti-virus, Firewall and Malware Scan
Updraft Plus – Backup-Restore	Backup and restore: take backups locally, or backup to Amazon S3, Dropbox, Google Drive, Rackspace, (S)FTP, WebDAV & email, on automatic schedules.
SVG Support	Upload SVG files to the Media Library and render SVG files inline for direct styling/animation of an SVG's internal elements using CSS/JS.
Regenerate Thumbnails Advanced	Regenerate thumbnails fast and easy while removing unused thumbnails of existing images; very useful when changing a theme.
MainWP Child	Provides a secure connection between your MainWP Dashboard and your WordPress sites. MainWP allows you to manage WP sites from one central location. Plugin documentation and options can be found here https://kb.mainwp.com/ .
Contact Form CFDB7	Save and manage Contact Form 7 messages. Never lose important data. Contact Form CFDB7 plugin is an add-on for the Contact Form 7 plugin.
Contact Form 7	Just another contact form plugin. Simple but flexible.
Akismet Anti-Spam: Spam Protection	Used by millions, Akismet is quite possibly the best way in the world to protect your blog from spam. Your site is fully configured and being protected, even while you sleep.
Advanced Custom Fields Pro	Customise WordPress with powerful, professional and intuitive fields.
ACF Content Analysis for Yoast SEO	Ensure that Yoast SEO analyses all Advanced Custom Fields 5.7+ content, including Flexible Content and Repeaters.



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