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Rediscovering Roots in the Stacks

A Brazilian Student's Reconnection through Cataloging

My time at Goldey-Beacom College's Hiron Library working on a recataloging project unexpectedly connected me with my Brazilian heritage, far beyond my assigned copy cataloging tasks. Finding *Dom Casmurro* by Machado de Assis among the books brought me back to my high school days in Brazil, making Wilmington, Delaware, feel closer to home. This experience underlined the crucial role academic libraries serve as cultural bridges, offering students like me the opportunity to explore our heritage and discover new cultural experiences.

Encountering books I'd read back in Brazil made me remember my home and consider reading the library's copy of *Dom Casmurro* in English, aiming to see the story fresh. This wasn't just about rereading a familiar story but about appreciating what I associated with my home, family, friends, and high school teacher.

For me, novels, especially works like *Dom Casmurro*, are a vital link to my cultural identity away from Brazil. These books are more than just texts; they embody my home's history and values. In the diverse setting of an academic library, such literature plays an essential role in maintaining and shaping our cultural identities, highlighting the variety of perspectives that enrich the world.

My work recataloging the books from the weeding project has shown me the impactful role I can have as a library student worker, transforming them into vibrant spaces where culture, education, and personal narratives intersect. Being involved in meaningful tasks like cataloging has improved library operations and fostered spaces for cultural exploration and learning among my teammates. As a Brazilian student worker in the library, my position has provided opportunities for personal growth and cultural engagement, deepening my sense of identity and belonging, and heightening my appreciation for the library as a cultural repository. Furthermore, collaborating with individuals from various cultural backgrounds fosters cultural exchange, enriching our shared environment.

Moving to a broader view, the cultural and literary significance of *Dom Casmurro* not only echoes my personal experiences but also highlights the power of literature to connect cultures and build deep, personal ties to my teammates in the library and peers at the college.

Transitioning from my personal narrative to a broader analysis, let's look at the cultural and literary significance of *Dom Casmurro*. This exploration not only reflects my journey but also serves as a testament to the power of stories in books to bridge cultures and foster deep, personal connections across different communities.

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Literary Bridges Across Borders: *Dom Casmurro*'s Role in Global Understanding

Dom Casmurro, penned by the esteemed Brazilian author Machado de Assis in 1899, is a seminal work in Brazilian literature. Set in Rio de Janeiro in the late 19th century, it tells the compelling story of Bentinho and Capitu, blending rich psychological depth with incisive social commentary. The novel's exploration of themes like love, jealousy, and the unreliability of memory has captivated readers and scholars, fostering ongoing study and discussion.

For me, working in our library's recataloging project and discovering *Dom Casmurro* was a profound moment of personal resonance. Familiar with Machado de Assis's works from my high school days in Brazil, the novel was a link to my cultural heritage in a foreign academic environment. This reengagement with the novel, penned in English, represented a revisiting of a beloved story and an opportunity to gain new cultural and linguistic insights into a translated work of fiction from Portuguese.

In Brazil, Machado de Assis's works, including *Dom Casmurro*, form an integral part of the cultural and educational landscape often featured in high school curricula. They serve as gateways to understanding complex societal themes and the rich tapestry of Brazilian literary heritage. This novel in particular is revered for its critical reflection on Brazilian society, offering perspectives that continue to resonate with modern readers.

My surprise at finding a translated version of *Dom Casmurro* in an American library underscores the novel's international recognition and the expanding global appreciation of Machado de Assis's works. This discovery highlights the vital role of academic libraries in bridging cultural divides, providing a platform for students of diverse backgrounds to explore world literature. For international students, such encounters affirm and enhance our sense of inclusion and representation in academic settings.

The inclusion of *Dom Casmurro* in my library's collection reflects the library's commitment to inclusive collection management, which aims to represent a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and historical narratives. Including world literature enriches our collection and empowers student workers like me by recognizing and valuing my unique cultural perspectives. My teammates and I are diligently engaged in recataloging efforts, which diversify the library's collection and cultivate a broader comprehension and appreciation of global cultures within the student community.

This library's commitment to inclusive collection management and diverse offerings has transformed it into a vibrant hub for cultural exploration and learning. The library's approach is deeply aligned with its mission to be a center for knowledge exchange, where students from diverse backgrounds can find materials that resonate with their heritage and interests, thereby creating an inclusive and welcoming environment. For instance, after recognizing the popularity of Chetan Bhagat among our Indian graduate students, we have acquired his novels, which have become some of the most checked-out print books. This specific response to our students' preferences not only caters to their cultural and literary interests but also exemplifies our dedication to fostering a library space that is attuned to and enriched by the diverse needs of our academic community.

My experience with *Dom Casmurro* illustrates literature's significant role in cultural representation and education. Embracing diverse literary heritages demonstrates how academic

libraries can facilitate personal and cultural discoveries, reinforcing their role as spaces for diverse cultural engagement and learning.

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