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Understanding Attributes And Taxonomies

Heather Hedden demystifies attributes, facets, and hierarchical taxonomies

The Content Wrangler

ZOOMIN

About Heather Hedden

- Data and Knowledge Engineer, Semantic Web Company, vendor of PoolParty software (for taxonomy/ontology management)
- Instructor of online, virtual, and onsite taxonomy courses and workshops, Hedden Information Management
- Former taxonomy consultant; former staff taxonomist at Gale/Cengage Learning, Viziant, First Wind
- Author of *The Accidental Taxonomist* (2010, 2016, Information Today)

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Links of Examples

Why taxonomy matters

- Without a taxonomy: https://help.poolparty.biz/

Types of taxonomies and uses

- Primarily faceted taxonomy: www.linkedin.com/jobs/search
- Primarily hierarchical www.ebay.com shop by category

Difference between facets and attributes

- Facets: https://journals.plos.org/climate/ (select Browse)
- Attributes on products https://www.ebay.com/b/Bass-Guitars/4713/bn_2313818# and www.etsy.com/c/jewelry/

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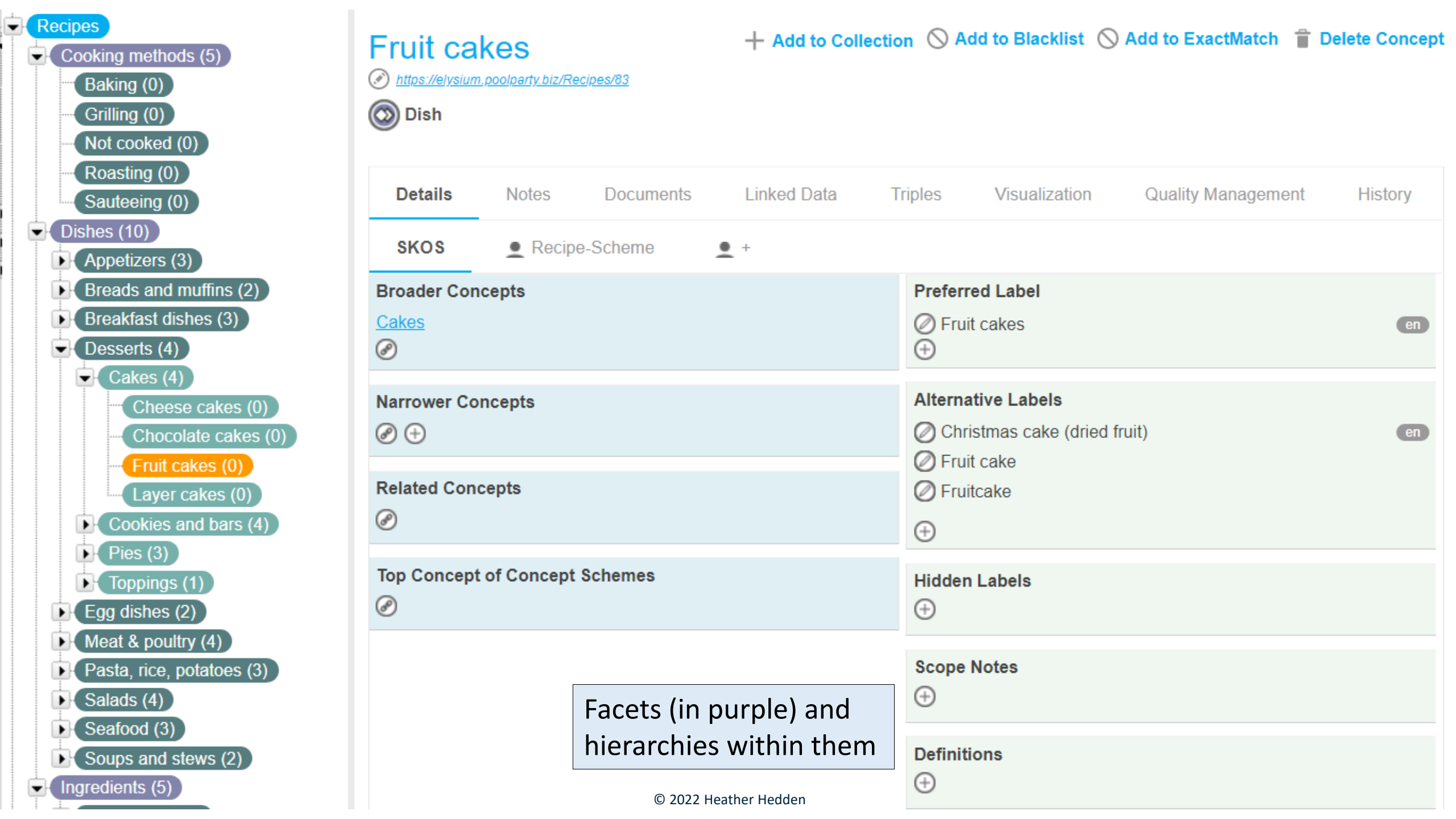

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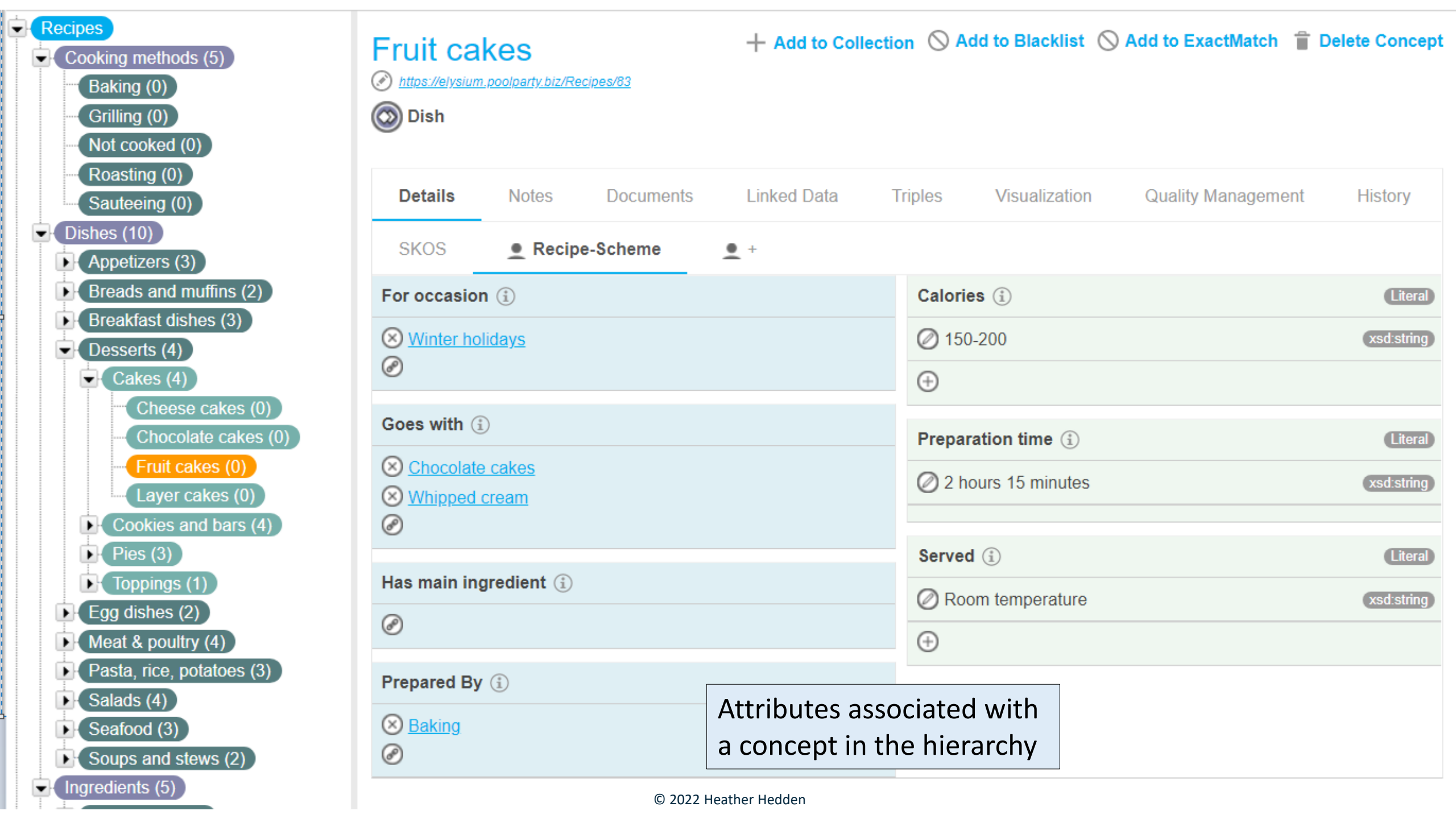

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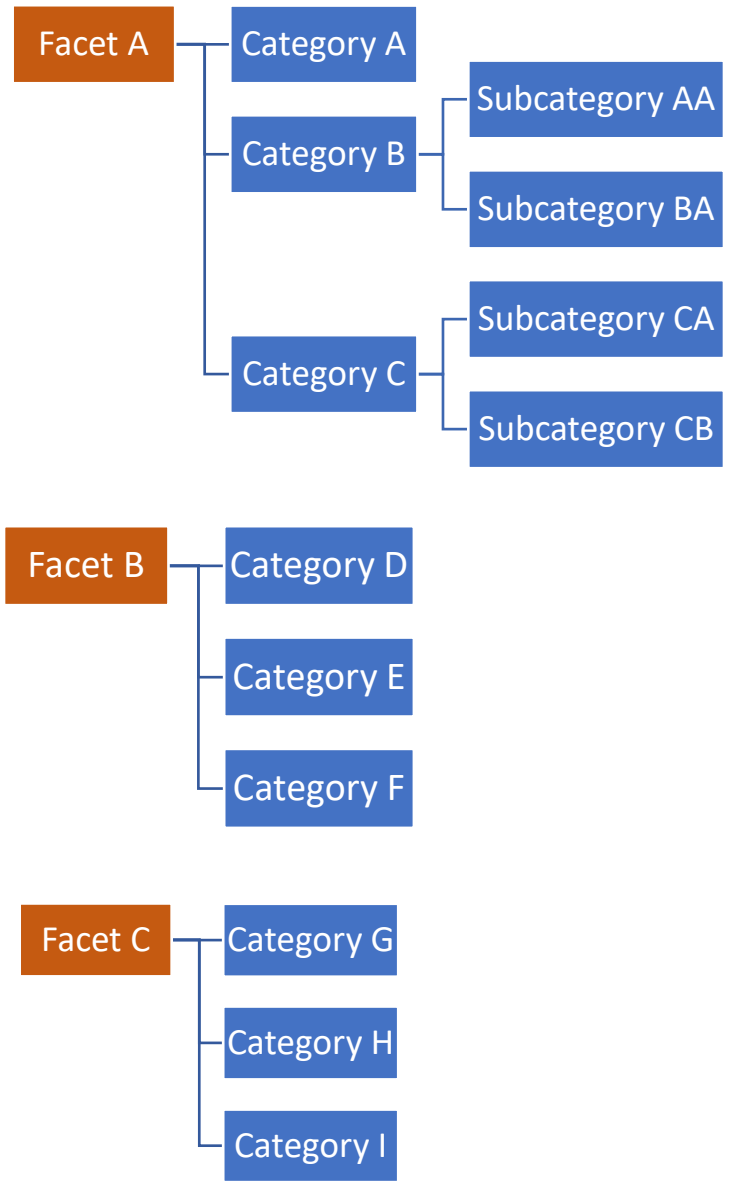
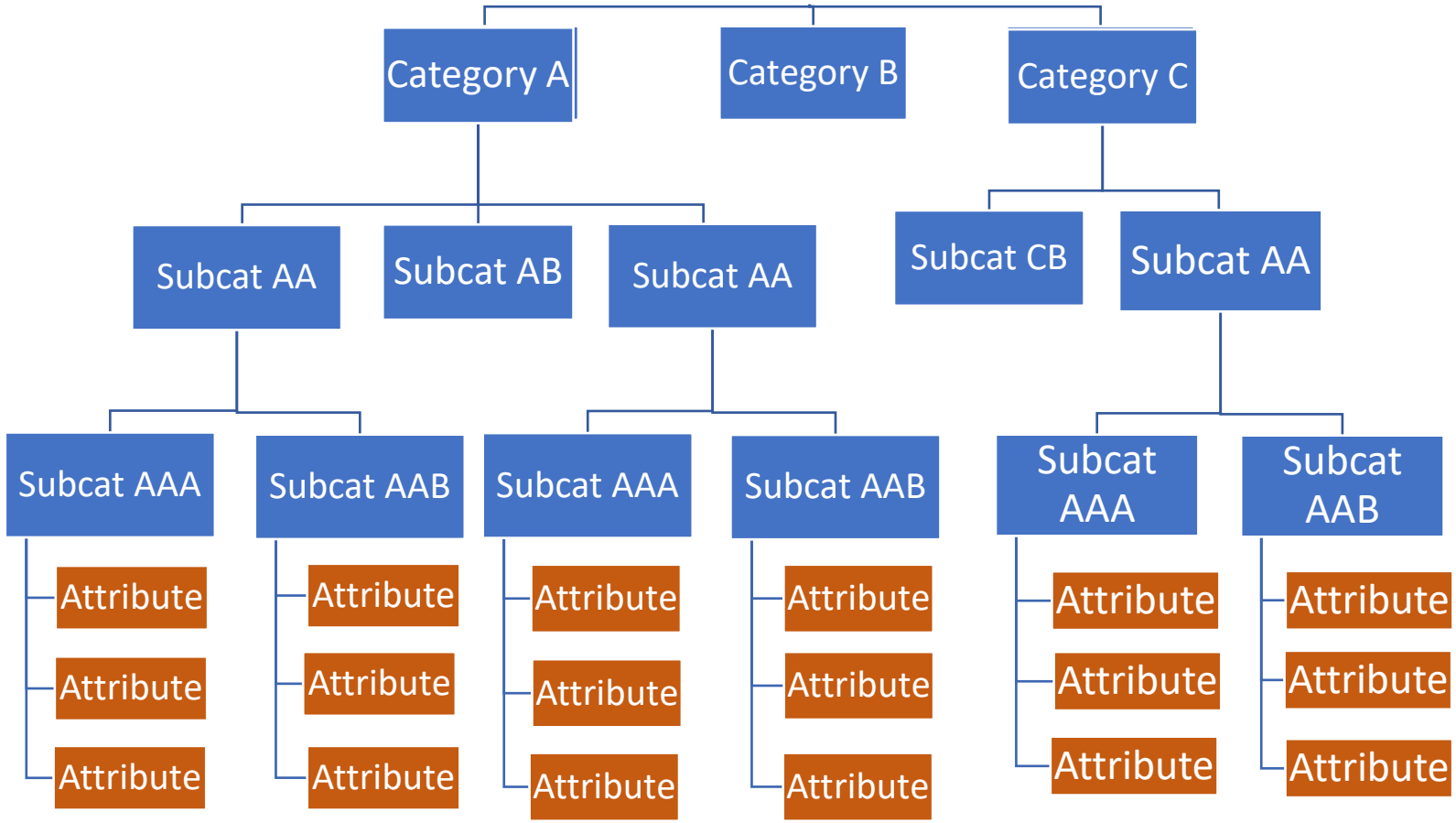
Facets in a taxonomy



Attributes in a taxonomy



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Facets vs. Attributes

Facets

- A top structure of a taxonomy hierarchy, a way to organize a taxonomy by term type
- Contain controlled vocabulary terms
- May contain hierarchies within
- Suitable for documents, web pages, digital assets
- Tends to be content-driven
- A default front-end implementation in many CMSs, SharePoint, etc.
- UI filters contain all facets + more metadata
- Content is “tagged” with terms from facets; tagging can be manual or automated (based on NLP or ML auto-categorization), with possibly some derived metadata

Attributes

- A supplemental controlled vocabulary to a hierarchical taxonomy
- Mostly controlled vocabulary, but could also have yes/no, numbers, or descriptions
- Do not contain hierarchies within
- Suitable for data about specific things: products, courses, contracts, digital assets
- Tends to be data-driven
- Plugin implementation with PIM and ecommerce software, otherwise custom developed
- UI filters may contain only a subset of attributes
- Content or records are assigned attributes based on metadata, often entered manually in an upstream application

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Summary

Facets

- Sets of taxonomy terms, providing the user the option to select from multiple taxonomy terms of different types to construct or limit/filter their search

Attributes

- Custom properties or characteristics pertaining to a specific term or category in a taxonomy, providing the user the option to select from multiple to filter.

Filters/Refinements

- A collection of taxonomy facets or attributes and relevant non-taxonomy metadata and automatically generated data, which the user can select from to refine results.
- Includes all taxonomy facets but not necessarily all attributes

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Resources

- “Attributes in Taxonomies” blog post, November 27, 2021
  https://accidental-taxonomist.blogspot.com/2021/11/attributes-in-taxonomies.html
- “HR Recommender” Interactive demo of a Recommender system based on a taxonomy/ontology of skills and job roles
  https://hr-recommender.poolparty.biz
- Taxonomy/thesaurus standards: ANSI/NISO Z39.19-2005 (2010) *Guidelines for Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Controlled Vocabularies.* Bethesda, MD: NISO Press.
  www.niso.org/publications/ansiniso-z3919-2005-r2010
- Taxonomy Boot Camp Conference
  November 7-8, 2022, Washington DC
  www.taxonomybootcamp.com/2022

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Questions/Contact

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