The accidental taxonomist, 3rd edn. Heather Hedden. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2022. 514 pp. ISBN 978 1 57387 586 8 (pbk), US$47.50.

In the third edition of her excellent book, Heather Hedden brings the field of taxonomies and ontologies up to date. Previous editions of *The accidental taxonomist* have been valuable resources, bringing together clear explanations, practical tips, theoretical backgrounds, illustrations, examples, and extensive readings and website listings for newcomers to the field and experienced taxonomists alike. Hedden takes great care to outline the terminology used in the field, which is critical when discussing projects with clients who may not understand key differences between taxonomies and thesauri, or may be using terms incorrectly. It's very helpful for practitioners to have an outline at hand of what differentiates taxonomies from controlled vocabularies, or how manual tagging differs from automatic tagging.

Hedden covers the benefits and uses of taxonomies and ontologies, and outlines nearly everything an accidental taxonomist needs to know to proceed with a project. Also nicely covered are classification, cataloging, indexing and tagging, and the roles of indexers in tagging materials.

The book presents clear rationales for evaluating software, choosing terms and concepts, and planning projects. Hedden's vast experience shows in her recommendations for types

of materials suitable for taxonomies, types of projects one may encounter, and the types of organizations that need taxonomy work. Especially appreciated is her focus on how the ultimate user should guide choices, and how the data set being tagged should determine choices.

This new edition adds more material about the SKOS model, and compares standards for designating the elements of a taxonomy. Mark-up comparisons help to make the differences easy to understand. The new chapter on ontologies and their uses and benefits gives examples of semantic relationships, and distinguishes ontologies from faceted taxonomies. There are new screenshots in this edition, but, as is common practice amongst publishers these days, many images are too small and have not been adjusted for contrast, so they can be difficult to study. Publishers need to make the graphics larger and crisper, or this reviewer needs a better magnifying glass.

The chapters on project planning, implementation, and maintenance are crucial reading for anyone starting a project, providing a road map for successful projects.

One of the best features is Hedden's focus on user interfaces, for the end user, for the taxonomy creator, and for the indexer tagging materials. What the end user can see in the interface dictates how to phrase concepts and terms for most effective retrieval, and Hedden emphasizes the importance of knowing in advance what the user will see. She also covers how multiple taxonomies can mesh to show user-friendly terms to the user, while maintaining a stricter vocabulary for the taxonomist and tagger. Her point that interfaces should not rely heavily on mousing, especially during concept creation or the tagging process, is very much appreciated by this reviewer, who has had to deal with mouse-heavy custom software in the past with much sighing. It would be wonderful if the software manufacturers took to heart her criticism that some software packages emphasize the attractiveness of the interface over their actually usability.

Also of interest are the survey results and quotes from practitioners, how they came to be accidental taxonomists, and the challenges they face. Hedden outlines how to reach consensus in discussions with stakeholders, and quotes from real-world taxonomists help clarify that there can be some intraorganizational politics to manage, such as 'Representatives from business leadership requesting to add certain terms or concepts that are not distinct from existing terms,' or in this reviewer's case, terminology that reflects engineers' understanding of concepts versus a user-friendly orientation to the concepts. Stakeholders may not have enough background to understand the project: 'I work at an agency and often have to walk clients through our thinking.' Again, this is one of the most valuable aspects of the book: while discussing projects and planning, it is helpful to have a guide with clear explanations, rationales, and examples ready to hand to help illustrate the issues and processes.

The accidental taxonomist can serve as a course in taxonomy for the motivated reader. Extensive reading lists and website listings allow further exploration and discovery. There is a full glossary and index. Within the chapters, there are endnotes, and gems such as lists of staffing firms that look for taxonomists, or software packages that have free downloads. It is a valuable reference, and one that this reviewer wishes she had had access to when she was working on projects. It would have saved hours when writing proposals and rationales, and trying to help clients understand the benefits and practice of taxonomy construction and design.

<div align="right">

Jan Wright
Indexer and Taxonomist

</div>