CHAPTER 15

Working with Taxonomy

Taxonomy is the practice and science of classification. It’s an oft misunderstood and under-utilized feature, meaning that there are a lot of people out there who are missing out on a powerful feature that will make their lives as developers and site administrators easier. A few quick examples may make it easier to understand what taxonomy is and why you might want to use it.

One of the most common usages of taxonomy is to “tag” content with words or phrases. You might tag a piece of content with the phrase “great for teens.” If you wanted to find all content that was great for teens, you would simply click the tag. Drupal finds all content tagged with the phrase “great for teens” and renders it as a list. Another way that I use taxonomy is to make it easy for people creating content on a web site to define where that content will end up on their web site by picking from a list of predefined terms that I’ve set up. For example, I might have a taxonomy term called “homepage announcements.” If a content author assigns “homepage announcements” to a content item he or she is creating, the view that I created that displays homepage announcements on the homepage renders that article without the author having to do anything other than selecting a taxonomy term.

While Drupal provides a wealth of out-of-the-box taxonomy features, there may be cases where you want to leverage taxonomy from within a module or expand on the functionality provided by the Taxonomy module. In this chapter, I’ll show you how to leverage the taxonomy APIs, leveraging taxonomy within a module.

The Structure of Taxonomy

Taxonomy consists of two primary elements, vocabularies and terms. I often think of vocabularies as a container for a set of words or phrases that are related. For example, I might create a vocabulary named professional sports, and within that vocabulary I might create words or phrases such as football, basketball, hockey, cricket, rugby, and golf. Each word or phrase is a term. After creating the vocabulary and associated terms, I can then create a field on the content type(s) that I want.

Creating a Vocabulary

To create a vocabulary, navigate to Structure -> Taxonomy and click the “Add vocabulary” link. The form for creating a vocabulary consists of a Name and Description field. Simply enter the name of the vocabulary and optionally a description, and then click Save.
Creating Terms

To create terms, navigate to Structure -> Taxonomy and click the add terms link for the selected vocabulary. On the create terms page, enter the Name of the term (e.g., basketball) and optionally a description and URL alias. By default the URL used to access all content associated with a taxonomy term is structured as taxonomy/term/9. You may want to use the URL alias field to create a more user-friendly such as professionalsports/basketball.

Assigning a Vocabulary to a Content Type

Taxonomy vocabularies are assigned to content types so that authors can select or enter terms to associate with the piece of content they are creating. Taxonomy vocabularies are assigned to content types as a field. To associate a vocabulary with a content type, navigate to Structure -> Content types and click the manage fields link for the content type that you want to add the vocabulary to. Figure 15-1 shows the interface for creating a new field that is of the type Term reference, which is the field type associated with taxonomy.

**Figure 15-1. The form for adding a vocabulary to a content type**

The next step in the process is to select the taxonomy vocabulary that the field is associated with. The next screen in the process is a simple select list where you pick the vocabulary you wish to use. Select the vocabulary and click the “Save field settings” button.

The final step in the process of creating a taxonomy-based field is to specify whether the field is required, meaning the author must select one or more terms, the help text that will be displayed below the list of terms, the default value that should be selected when the content creation form is displayed, and the number of values that an author can select. Figure 15-2 shows the options that may be set on this last screen in the taxonomy field creation process.