

SAS-L: An Electronic SAS* Discussion Group
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SAS-L is an electronic discussion forum available through the BITNET network. Communications in the group take place through electronic mail. The purpose of this group is to discuss applications, problems, and changes in the SAS products. Conferences and meetings such as SUGI, MWSUG or other regional group meetings are announced through the network along with summaries of such activities as SUGI. The group provides a SAS program archive and a server for up-to-date SAS Usage Notes and Zaps.

SAS-L is a very good user support method. More than a thousand people belong to the group from more than 25 countries. If you have a SAS problem, are considering licensing a SAS product, want to know about hardware requirements or need to find application type information, just send electronic mail to the group and you'll receive replies from various SAS experts who use SAS every day.

The people subscribed to SAS-L come from countries all over the world. Membership includes people who are scientists, statisticians, researchers, data analysts, application programmers, system programmers, technical support personnel, consultants, and of course the every day end users. They can be from an academic area, business, or research area. Membership is free, the only cost involved is according to your connection method.

The forum operates through the use of electronic mail. Logs of communications are kept and past communications can be retrieved and reviewed. This is helpful if a method or problem has been discussed in the past and you are now confronting the same situation.

Joining the SAS-L Discussion Group

Now that you know what SAS-L is, the next question is how do I join the group. To subscribe to the group from the Bitnet network you must first communicate with the list server at the computer site the list is located on (referred to as the node name). This may all seem complicated at first, but you'll soon discover that there is not much to it at all.

Since SAS-L is a large group, membership is divided between many host computers. This is done to keep use of the network efficient, avoiding traffic jams and make the mail distribution faster. BITNET will determine what it considers to be the closest node. In my case, it considers UGA (University of Georgia at Athens) to be nearest to CMSUVMA (Central Missouri State University). The network determines the nearest node according to how it routes the mail

(number of computers it passes through) not according to traveling distance. You do not need to worry about this because if you try to subscribe at a node it does not consider the closest it will tell you and then forward your request to what it considers the proper node. When you send mail to the group the network will handle sending copies to all members whether they are subscribed to the same node you are or not. Everyone on SAS-L at every node of the group will receive a copy of anything that is sent to SAS-L group at any location.

One common mistake made by people new to working with electronic forums is communicating with the group-id in place of the list server or vice versa. The list server is the one that controls mailing lists, contains the copies of the discussion logs, and handles the distribution of the mail to members. The group-id (in this case SAS-L is the group-id) is the one to communicate with when you are actually wanting to ask questions of the people, send out information, etc. Think of it as the people contact name.

To subscribe to SAS-L interactively issue the following command:

```
VM/CMS      Tell Listserv at UGA Subscribe SAS-L firstname lastname
VMS/JNET:   Send Listserv@UGA "Subscribe SAS-L Firstname Lastname"
```

For example, I'm on Bitnet working on a VM/CMS system, so I would send the command

```
TELL LISTSERV AT UGA SUB SAS-L Nancy J. Hill
```

Note that the way you send your name is how your mail will show your name on the TO line and group list. It will use both upper and lower case characters, exactly as you sent your name in the subscribe command. If you misspell your name when entering a SUBscribe command, simply re-send it with the correct spelling. You will receive a mail file back telling you that you have been accepted and reviewing some of the commands with the functions they perform.

To delete your name from the group interactively issue the following command:

```
VM/CMS      Tell Listserv at UGA UNSUBscribe sas-l
VMS/JNET    SEND Listserv@UGA "UNSUBscribe sas-l"
```

You may abbreviate the SUBscribe and UNSUBscribe commands to SUB and UNSUB respectively.

NOTE: If you are on a VAXcluster, you should send SUBscribe and UNSUBscribe commands to LISTSERV via MAIL. Likewise if you are an INTERNET site you should send the command via MAIL. This is true for all the commands I discuss. If you issue the command to SUBscribe interactively and a link between any of the computers on the network between your node and the one which you are issuing the command to are not operational then you must issue the command again when all links are up again. You may also issue the command as electronic mail. If you send the command as electronic mail and

a link is down the mail will wait until the link is up again and then continue to the destination. In this case you do not need to repeat the command. Make sure you address the mail to the listserv and not SAS-L at the node nearest you, then for the text of the mail enter the following:

SUBscribe SAS-L FirstName LastName

Do not send a signature file or any other text as the listserv is only looking for commands.

If you wish to know who is subscribed to the list enter the command:

VM/CMS TELL LISTSERV at UGA review SAS-L

VMS/JNET SEND LISTSERV@UGA review SAS-L

This will return a list of subscribed members (people who send a conceal command will not be listed). There is a BITNET guide to help you get started. To retrieve the guide issue the command:

VM/CMS Tell Listserv at MARIST get BITNET USERHELP

VMS/JNET Tell Listserv@MARIST get BITNET USERHELP

You should receive a message saying the file is being sent to you in netdata form. After the file arrives you must tell the system to load or receive the file. If your are using a VM/CMS operating system you would use a RDRLIST, RECEIVE or PEEK command to review it. On a VAX/VMS system you would use a receive command. You should talk to your computer support personnel or check local documentation for further help of working with these files.

Using the UICSTAT SAS Program Archives

You do not needed to be a member of SAS-L in order to use the archives. It is a good idea to belong to SAS-L to become involved in the discussion of the development of the tools residing there. The SAS program archive is located at UICVM (University of Illinois at Chicago) and is maintained by Barry Grau (Bitnet address for Barry is U42054@UICVM). The collection of statistical software programs are available over BITNET, Internet and other networks gatewayed to BITNET. The archives contain SAS macros, metagraphics device drives, a variety of drawing programs, SAS communications, and the SAS Usage Notes and Zaps. There are routines to convert SPSSX files to SAS for various operating systems, several SUGI papers along with the 1990 SASWARE Ballot results. This is only a small sample of what you can find in the collection. A large number of people involved in SAS-L has made this collection possible.

The following are the guidelines for the SAS archives.

1. Nothing in the archive is officially supported by Barry Grau or by its author. If you want to use it, go ahead. If you want to modify it, go ahead. If you have problems and the author doesn't want to help you out, tough luck.

2. Nobody can re-sell anything in the archive (except the program's author).
3. Everything in the archive must have some documentation - what it does, and how to use it - either as an internal block of comments or as a separate memo.
4. Everything in the archive has to conform to programming standards acceptable to an objective reviewer - Barry Grau or someone else designated to review it. This means the person must be able to follow what you're doing by reading the programs.
5. Everything in the archive has to be accepted by the objective reviewer.
6. Include your name, e-mail address and overland mail address, make sure to include a date.

The following information deals with working with the archives through BITNET. The collection is also available through INTERNET.

To get a complete list of the files along with the short description of each file available from the archive, send an interactive message or electronic mail to the listserv at UICVM containing the following command:

INDEX UICSTAT

You will receive a message saying the file is being sent to you in netdata from, this means it is not being sent as a mail item, but a regular text file. If you're working from a VM/CMS system, to load the file onto your Mdisk, you will need to do a receive command and browse or Xedit the file named UICSTAT FILELIST. If you wish to review it, but not load it onto your disk, you will need to use the PEEK command. See the earlier information about the file BITNET USERHELP for more information or if on a VM/CMS system use a help command for more system type information.

The files will be listed as a filename and a filetype. Once you've found the name of the file you wish to retrieve all you need to do is issue a GET command. For example, the file UICSTAT README (where UICSTAT is the name and README is the filetype) is the description of the UICSTAT archives and directions for using the archives. To retrieve that file I would issue the command:

TELL LISTSERV AT UICVM get UICSTAT README

If there is a set of related files, there will be a file with a filetype of \$package. You can request the whole set with the command GET filename PACKAGE

To retrieve more information about working with a LISTSERV issue the following commands to the listserv:

INFO GENINTRO

INFO REFCARD

These commands will cause LISTSERV to send you some documentation explaining what LISTSERV is and how to use it.

Using Internet and FTP to Access the UICSTAT SAS Archives

If you are an INTERNET site the following information can be used to make working with file transfer (FTP) easier.

FTP to host UICVM.CC.UIC.EDU and log in as user ANONYMOUS (no password is necessary). The files are stored in the UICSTAT directory, make it your working directory by issuing the command CD (change directory). If you wish to list the files in the directory enter the DIR command. Once you have located the files you wish to retrieve enter the command get filename filetype (notice the period between filename and filetype must be there). When asked for the local name enter the filename filetype and disk for where you wish it stored.

Close the session with an quit command. The following is an example session.

FTP UICVM.CC.UIC.EDU

ANONYMOUS

CD UICSTAT

DIR

Get filename.filetype

enter local filename

B:filename.filetype (this would be putting the file on your b disk on a pc)

filename.filetype.a (this would be putting the file on your a disk under a VM/CMS system).

Access the SAS Usage Notes and Zaps over BITNET

Thanks to an agreement between SAS Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago, SAS users on BITNET nodes can now access the latest version of the SAS Usage Notes and Zaps. Barry Grau has written a 6 page document on how to search the notes or zaps using electronic mail or interactive messages. It is stored at UICVM under the file name of SASUSAGE and type of MEMO. See the section on retrieve files with the GET command for how to receive a copy of the directions. Rather than try to summarize the details, I would like to indicate reasons why one would want to use this system.

The leading reason is of course that the notes and zaps are more likely to be up-to-date. At many installations usage notes are not updated regularly. Searching and finding information is more automatic and easier than using system commands to scan manually through the list avoiding more human errors. Indexes are available for searching the notes. Important notes about other notes which should be read for that particular SAS component are flagged.

Summary

I would suggest retrieving the following files from the corresponding locations to get a great start with SAS-L and the UICSTAT SAS Archives. Once you have started working with it, you'll find it is one of the best user support tools.

UICSTAT README at UICVM (Instructions on how to UICSTAT Archives)

BITNET USERHELP at MARIST (instructions on how to use BITNET)

SASUSGE MEMO at UICVM (instructions for searching usage notes and zaps)

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