

Enhanced Support Services from SAS Institute's Technical Support Division

Sally Painter, SAS Institute Inc. Cary, NC

ABSTRACT

At SUGI 17, the Technical Support Division announced three new support services available to SAS® software installations. These three new features, in addition to the existing Online Customer Support Facility, offer a full range of electronic support services.

The electronic support services available are:

- Electronic Mail Interface to Technical Support (EMITS)
- Online Customer Support Facility (OCSF)
- TSNEWS-L File and Mail List
- Anonymous FTP

These services allow SAS Software Representatives, Consultants, and users to communicate with the Technical Support Division electronically.

This paper will discuss the services with an emphasis on the best way to utilize each. There will also be a discussion on other enhancements to Technical Support services.

INTRODUCTION

As technology develops, more and more improved support services are surfacing. The Technical Support Division at SAS Institute has been no exception to this theme of expanding technology. In recent years, Technical Support has implemented an electronic facility to upload problem descriptions to the consultants on staff. This facility is known as the Online Customer Support Facility (OCSF). While this facility has been successful, the increased use of electronic mail (E-mail) and network news facilities has demanded more upgrades to our electronic services. Recognizing this need, the Technical Support Division announced a new facility, Electronic Mail Interface to Technical Support (EMITS), in April of 1992.

In addition to the above facilities, there are two new services provided so that SAS Software Representatives, Consultants, and users can download information pertinent to the SAS System. These services are a file and mail list and anonymous FTP.

EMITS

The Electronic Mail Interface to Technical Support (EMITS) service allows SAS Software Representatives and Consultants to use their E-mail facility to send reports of problems using the SAS System directly to the Technical Support Division to be investigated. In addition to SAS Representatives and Consultants, SAS software users can utilize EMITS to submit suggestions to be considered for the SASware Ballot®.

Registering for EMITS

In order to use EMITS, you must be a registered user. To register, you need the capability to send E-mail

to the SAS Institute Technical Support E-mail address **SUPPORT@SAS.COM**. The subject field of the message must contain the characters "EMITS".

The body of the message must start in column 1 and contain the following text:

```
./register=Customer Name  
./company=Company Name  
./site=Valid Site Number  
./phone=Telephone Number
```

Once this message is received at the Institute and the account is ready, you will receive a message confirming your registration.

SUPPORT@SAS.COM is an Internet mailing address. You can send mail to this address from other networks. A partial list of how to address **SUPPORT@SAS.COM** from other networks is provided below:

- MCI
 - To: support(ems)
 - EMS: Internet
 - MBX: support@sas.com
- Compuserve
 - >INTERNET:support@sas.com
- ATTMail
 - !mhs!internet!sas.com!support
- SprintMail
 - (ID:support(a)sas.com,SITE:Internet)

Reporting a Problem Using EMITS

Once you are a registered user of EMITS, you can use this facility to register software problems you or your users encounter. You can also E-mail additional information, such as SAS source code and data, pertinent to previously reported problems.

Note: Only designated SAS Software Representatives and Consultants may use EMITS for these purposes.

When reporting a problem using EMITS, there are two new control statements that you will use. The **./TEXT** statement begins the text that is the description of the problem. Always include this statement followed by text that describes the problem you are experiencing. The **./DATA** statement is optional and should precede any data that you would like to send to support your problem description. Normally, you would use this statement to send a data file or SAS log file.

Note: You should always send a **./TEXT** statement followed by the text of the problem.

To report a problem, send E-mail to the address **SUPPORT@SAS.COM**. The subject field of the message must contain the characters "EMITS".

The body of the message must begin in column 1 and contain the following text:

```
./tn=new  
./phone=Telephone Number  
./site=Site Number  
./area=Area of Your Problem
```

/release=Release of Your SAS Institute Product
/os=Operating System
/text
up to 20 lines of text (limited to 80 bytes per line) describing your problem
/data
optional data lines

The value you specify for the */area=* control card is limited to nineteen characters. This value determines the consultant in Technical Support who will be working on your problem. This value can be the name of a SAS Institute software product, such as SAS/AF® software; a SAS procedure, such as PROC PRINT; DATA for a DATA step problem; or the name of your operating system, such as MVS/SYSTEM. Please be as specific as possible when specifying the value for this control card.

If you need additional help determining the area of your problem, consult SAS Technical Report U-117, *SAS Software Consultant's Guide for the SAS System*.

Once your problem report has been received, you will receive a confirmation message that includes the tracking number assigned to the problem. If you would like to add information or data to the problem using EMITS, you would send E-mail to SUPPORT@SAS.COM with the following text:

/tn=Your Assigned Tracking Number
/text
up to 20 lines of new text (limited to 80 bytes per line)

or

/tn=Your Assigned Tracking Number
/data
lines of data to support your problem

Requesting Help for EMITS

You can receive online documentation by sending E-mail to SUPPORT@SAS.COM with the following text:

/help

Note: The subject field of your message must contain the characters "EMITS".

When to Use EMITS

SAS Software Representatives and Consultants should use this facility to electronically report problems or add additional information to problems previously reported. You should use this facility any time you would like to upload information to the Technical Support Division. Since the only technical requirement for this service is the capability to send E-mail to our Internet address, most SAS software installation sites should be able to use this.

OCSF

The Online Customer Support Facility (OCSF) is a menu driven facility that provides you with dial-up access to SAS Institute's Technical Support services. Using the OCSF, you can:

- upload files

- download fixes
- view Institute announcements
- order SAS Institute publications
- view a schedule of Institute training classes currently offered

In addition, SAS Software Representatives and Consultants can use the OCSF to report new problems or add information to problems previously reported through the OCSF.

Registering for the OCSF

In order to use the OCSF, you need an ASCII terminal (or a combination of hardware and software that emulates one), and a modem that supports either 1200 or 2400 baud. To access the facility, dial (919)677-8155.

You must be a registered user of the OCSF to use any of the features mentioned above. To establish an account, enter the following responses as prompted:

First Name: NEW
 Last Name: USER
 Site Number: 00000000
 Password: NEWUSER

Once the above information is entered, you will be prompted to enter your specific information. Your account will be available for use within 24 hours.

If you would like to use some of the features above but you do not have an account, you can use the Guest Account. This account is available for every function except reporting problems and leaving messages that require a response. You can use the Guest Account by entering the following responses as prompted:

First Name: GUEST
 Last Name: ACCOUNT
 Site Number: 11111111
 Password: SAS

Help for the OCSF

The Online Customer Support Facility and all of its functions are documented in SAS Technical Report U-116, *A Guide to the SAS Notes, Sample Library, SUPPORT Application, and Online Customer Support Facility, Release 6.07*. You can also receive help online by selecting the H(elp) option on any main menu.

When to Use the OCSF

Since several functions of EMITS and the OCSF overlap, you can choose either facility. Keep in mind that you need to have a dial-up capability to use the OCSF; EMITS only requires the capability to send E-mail.

Some services provided through the OCSF are not available currently through other electronic services provided by the Institute. These functions include:

- ordering SAS Institute publications
- viewing Institute training course schedules

If you need these capabilities, you should use the OCSF.

TSNEWS-L FILE AND MAIL LIST

TSNEWS-L is a mail and file list that you can subscribe to in order to receive the latest announcements and technical information from the Technical Support Division. This service provides information in the form of:

- Alert Notes
- Problem Alert Letters
- general Technical Support Announcements
- fixes

Registering for TSNEWS-L

You can subscribe to TSNEWS-L by sending E-mail to the SAS Institute address **LISTSERV@VM.SAS.COM**. The message should consist of the following text:

SUBSCRIBE TSNEWS-L *Your Name*

You can get a listing of available files by sending E-mail to **LISTSERV@VM.SAS.COM** with the following text:

INDEX TSNEWS-L

TSNEWS-L will respond with a message listing all files that are available for downloading. Once you know the filename and filetype of the document you want, send E-mail with the following text to retrieve the document:

GET *filename filetype* **TSNEWS-L**

Requesting Help for TSNEWS-L

You can receive online documentation on commonly used **LISTSERV** commands by sending E-mail to **LISTSERV@VM.SAS.COM** with the following text:

HELP

When to Use TSNEWS-L

You should use TSNEWS-L to automatically receive Technical Support announcements. In addition, you can request specific documents by name. This facility should be used to retrieve Institute supplied information.

FTP SERVICES

Any SAS software user can utilize the Anonymous FTP services for an efficient way to transmit large files. For example, you may use this service to download files such as:

- SAS Notes
- compiled maintenance modules
- technical notes

You can use Anonymous FTP to upload or download files without prior registration.

Accessing SAS Institute's FTP Service

You will need to connect to **ftp.sas.com** to use the FTP service. Once you are connected, enter the following responses as prompted:

Name (**ftp.sas.com:userid**): **anonymous**

Password: *Your E-mail Address*

Requesting Help for FTP Service

Online information is provided in a file stored on TSNEWS-L. You can receive this information by downloading the file **FTP ANNOUNCE** from TSNEWS-L.

When to Use FTP

The most effective use of this service is when transmitting large or binary files. You should also be familiar with standard FTP commands before trying to utilize this service.

Miscellaneous Technical Support Services

As previously mentioned, the Technical Support Division is always searching for ways to improve our customer service. In addition to the new tools discussed above, we also have other service features in place. These features are:

- **Extended Business Hours**
 - The Technical Support Division is available for new problems between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern time. Support for previously reported problems, those with a tracking number, is available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern time.
- **Voice Mail for All Consultants**
 - Each consultant in the Technical Support Division has a voice mail system so that you can leave detailed messages regarding open tracking numbers.
- **Direct Telephone Number**
 - You can dial (919)677-8008 to reach the Technical Support Division directly. This should enable you to get to a consultant more quickly.
- **Automated Call Processing(ACP)**
 - You can dial (919)677-8118 to reach Automated Call Processing. ACP allows any user with a touch-tone phone to reach a consultant directly without going through the Technical Support switchboard. This service should only be used for new problems. For complete documentation on using ACP, consult Technical Report U-117, *SAS Software Consultant's Guide for the SAS System*.

CONCLUSION

The Technical Support Division has expanded support services as technology has increased the available

options. The electronic support services, as well as previously available services, allow us to better serve our customers.

The author would like to acknowledge John Sims for his work on developing the SAS Institute electronic services.

SAS, SAS/AF, and SASware Ballot are registered trademarks or trademarks of SAS Institute Inc. in the USA and other countries. ® indicates USA registration.

Other brand and product names are registered trademarks or trademarks of their respective companies.