

New Electronic Services offered by SAS Institute's Technical Support Division

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ABSTRACT

The Technical Support Division now offers two new electronic support services available to SAS software installations. These two new features, in addition to the other electronic services announced at SUGI 17, offer a full range of electronic support services. The new electronic support services available are:

- SAS Notes E-mail server
- SAS Institute World Wide Web Site

The other electronic services introduced at SUGI 17 are:

- SAS Institute Bulletin Board Systems (SIBBS)
- Electronic Mail Interface to Technical Support (EMITS)
- TSNEWS-L File and Mail List
- Anonymous FTP
- Electronic FAX Services.

These services allow SAS Software Representatives and SAS Software Consultants to communicate with the Technical Support Division, search and access SAS Notes electronically, and acquire technical information. This paper will introduce new electronic support services and enhancements and it will discuss all of the electronic support services offered by the Technical Support Division with an emphasis on the best way to utilize each. (Note: Most of these services are available for all SAS Software users.)

INTRODUCTION

As more and more SAS users have the ability to electronically transfer and receive information, SAS Institute's Technical Support Division has

expanded its electronic Technical Support services. The Technical Support Division has implemented features on the SAS World Wide Web (WWW) Server to allow users to access SAS Notes, Sample Programs, the FTP Server and TSNEWS-L archives. The Technical Support Division has also implemented the SAS Notes E-mail server to allow the SAS user to search and access SAS Notes electronically.

In addition to the above new support services, SAS Institute Bulletin Board Systems (SIBBS), has been enhanced to include such features as add and resolve existing problems opened via SIBBS; view and download SAS Notes, Problem Alert Notes and ZAPS. For those SAS users who do not have dial-up access, the Download section of SIBBS is now offered under Anonymous FTP.

SAS Notes E-mail Server

The SAS Notes E-mail server allows SAS Software Representatives, SAS Software Consultants, and users to use their E-mail facility to search and access the most current SAS Notes. The SAS Notes data bases contain descriptions of known software problems including circumventions, as well as answers to common questions Technical Support receives. Over 17,000 SAS Notes are available including Version 6 SAS Notes, Release 6.04 SAS Notes, Version 5 SAS Notes and C Notes.

Accessing SAS Institute's SAS Notes E-mail server.

In order to use the SAS Notes E-mail server, you need to be capable of sending E-mail to the SAS Notes E-mail server. Internet address of sasnotes@sas.com.

Once you have sent an E-mail message to the SAS Notes E-mail server with a search request, the mail server receives your request and returns a mail message with a list of SAS Note reference numbers and descriptions of SAS Notes that

satisfy your request. Once you have determined which of the SAS Notes you want to view, you send a mail message to the E-mail server specifying a list of SAS Note reference numbers for Notes to be retrieved. The mail server then processes the request and returns the complete text of the SAS Notes that you requested.

Searching and Accessing SAS Notes

The **SEARCH** command is used to perform searches. Multiple keywords and wildcard searches can be specified on a **SEARCH** request. The following request will return a list of SAS Notes that contain both the keywords **SIGNON** and **APPC**.

```
SEARCH SIGNON APPC
```

The **GET** command is used to retrieve SAS Notes. You can specify multiple SAS Note reference numbers on a **GET** command.

The following **GET** command will retrieve SAS Notes with reference numbers 7744 and 8197. These correspond to SAS Notes with official names of V6-COPY-7744 and V6-ASSIST-8197.

```
GET 7744 8197
```

Each E-mail message sent to the SAS Notes E-mail server may contain a combination of 10 **GET** and/or **SEARCH** requests.

Requesting Help for the SAS Notes E-mail server

You can receive on-line documentation by sending E-mail to sasnotes@sas.com with the following text on the first line of the message.

```
HELP
```

NOTE: The subject is ignored.

When to use the SAS Notes E-mail server

SAS Software Representatives, SAS Software Consultants, and users should use this service to efficiently access up-to-date SAS Notes electronically to aid in problem investigation and resolution.

SAS Institute World Wide Web Site

A SAS Software Representative, SAS Software Consultant, or user with full Internet access and a WEB browser can attach to the SAS Institute World Wide Web Server.

The Technical Support section of the SAS Institute World Wide Web server provides information such as:

- **SAS Notes**
Over 8,000 Version 6 SAS Notes are available. Searches are performed using keywords, full text search of all words in the SAS Note, words in the SAS Note title, or any combination thereof.
- **FTP Access**
Users can link directly to our FTP server and download files via the Technical Support WEB Home page or directly at:
[FTP.SAS.COM/TECHSUP/DOWNLOAD](ftp://ftp.sas.com/techsup/download).
- **Access to SIBBS Download Area** via the Technical Support WEB Home page or
[FTP.SAS.COM/TECHSUP/DOWNLOAD/SIBBS](ftp://ftp.sas.com/techsup/download/sibbs).
- **TSNEWS-L Archive**
Users can now browse the TSNEWS-L archive. As new messages are posted to TSNEWS-L, the TSNEWS-L archive is dynamically updated.
- **Report New Problems.** The Web interface to EMITS can be used to track problems or questions to Technical Support (See EMITS for details)

Other items under the Technical Support section are:

- Ordering Documentation
- Information on Electronic Mail Interface to Technical Support (EMITS)
- Frequently Asked Questions
- SAS Sample Library
- Telephone Support
- TSNEWS-L Mail and File List

Accessing the SAS Institute World Wide Web server

To access the SAS Institute World Wide Web server, a SAS Software Representative, SAS Software Consultant, or user with full Internet access and a WEB browser can attach to the SAS Institute World Wide server at URL:

<http://www.sas.com/>

When to use SAS Institute's World Wide Web server

SAS Software Representatives, SAS Software Consultants, and users should use this facility to obtain information from Technical Support, view SAS Notes, download files and sample programs, and obtain updated information on other Technical Support electronic services.

SAS Institute Bulletin Board Systems (SIBBS)

The Technical Support Division has implemented SIBBS, a menu-driven facility that provides SAS Software Representatives and SAS Software Consultants with dial-up access to SAS Institute's Technical Support Services. SIBBS supports many functions such as:

- Report new problems for the SAS System, SAS/C, JMP, Infotap or Emulus (This feature is for SAS Software Representatives and SAS Software Consultants)
- Add to or resolve existing problems previously opened via SIBBS
- Review previously reported problems by SIBBS
- Download various files for each Technical Support area such as CONNECT or PC Systems
- Upload files to SAS Technical Support consultants or other SAS employees
- Update, view and download SUGI Consultants Registry

Registering for SIBBS

To use SIBBS, you need an ASCII terminal (or a combination of hardware and software that emulates one) and a modem that supports up to 28,800 baud. To access SIBBS, dial (919) 677-8155.

To establish an account, you must enter the following information when prompted:

FIRST Name?

LAST Name ?

Calling from (City, State)?

When prompted for your first and last names, you must use your actual name and not NEW USER or GUEST ACCOUNT. Those names were used for the older Online Customer Support Facility (OCSF) system and are no longer accepted.

Once you have registered, your account will be available for use immediately.

Help for SIBBS

SIBBS and all its functions are documented in the SAS Consultant's Guide: Supporting the SAS System, First Edition. Any reference to Online Customer Support Facility (OCSF) in that guide really refers to SIBBS. The SAS System for the OS/2 and Windows Release 6.10 also contains on-line help that explains how you can receive technical support via electronic means from the SAS Application Workspace (AWS) Help menu. Here you will receive information on accessing SIBBS, EMITS, TSNEWS-L, and Anonymous FTP.

When to use SIBBS

Several functions of EMITS, SAS WWW, and SIBBS overlap. You can choose whichever facility suits your needs. Keep in mind that you need to have dial-up capability to use SIBBS. EMITS requires the capability to send E-mail and SAS WWW access requires full Internet access with a WEB browser. If you do not have dial-up capability and you can FTP files, you can access the SIBBS download area from Anonymous FTP at <FTP.SAS.COM/TECHSUP/DOWNLOAD/SIBBS>.

EMITS

The Electronic Mail Interface Service (EMITS) allows SAS Software Representatives and SAS Software Consultants with Internet access to communicate with SAS Institute's Technical Support Division via E-mail. EMITS allows you to:

- Report new problems, for the SAS System, SAS/C, JMP, Infotap or Emulus
- Add information to existing problems
- Send files such as a SAS log, data file or source code to help document reported problems.

Registering for EMITS

To become a registered user for EMITS, you need to be capable of sending E-mail to the SAS Institute Technical Support E-mail address of **SUPPORT@SAS.COM**

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

```
./register=<customer name>
./company=<company name>
./site=<valid site number>
./phone=<phone number>
```

NOTE: You can use an equal sign(=) rather than a period(.) in column one, if your mail system strips the period(.).

Once your registration is received, you will be notified by E-mail when your request has been processed. Please allow up to 48 hours (two working days). Note: SAS Institute is closed on Saturday and Sunday.

EMITS uses your E-mail address as your account id. Your E-mail address will be extracted from the mail header of your messages. Therefore, you need to use the same host system for sending mail that you use to register. You can register separately from each of your hosts if you need to correspond with EMITS from different hosts.

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

To report a problem, send E-mail to the address SUPPORT@SAS.COM. The subject field of the message must contain the characters "EMITS". When reporting a problem, SAS Software Representatives and SAS Software Consultants use several control statements which include ./TEXT and ./DATA. The ./TEXT statement precedes 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 text describing your problem.

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 by 80 characters 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 product, such as SAS/SHARE software; a SAS procedure, such as PROC PRINT; DATA for a DATA step problem; or the name of your operating system, such as OS2/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 Consultant's Guide: Supporting the SAS System, First Edition.

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 text (limited by 80 characters per line) describing your problem.`

or

`./tn=Your Assigned Tracking Number`

`./data=lines of data to support your problem`

Requesting Help for EMITS

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

`./help`

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

EMITS can process one type of message for each E-mail message sent. For example, you would need to send two separate E-mail messages to SUPPORT@SAS.COM to register and to get help. You will receive E-mail confirmation of all requests. If we have a problem identifying or processing your request, you will be notified and will receive additional reference information on available commands.

When to Use EMITS

SAS Software Representatives and SAS Software 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, many SAS software installation sites should be able to use the facility.

TSNEWS-L Mail and File List

Any SAS user with an Internet network connection can subscribe to the TSNEWS-L mail and file list. Subscribers automatically receive information from the Technical Support Division such as:

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

To subscribe to TSNEWS-L, you must send E-mail to the SAS Institute address **LISTSERV@VM.SAS.COM**. The body of your message should consist of the following line:

SUBSCRIBE TSNEWS-L your name

You can receive a listing of previously posted files by sending E-mail to **LISTSERV@VM.SAS.COM**. The body of your message should consist of the following line:

INDEX TSNEWS-L

TSNEWS-L will respond with a message listing all files that are available for downloading along

with instructions. Once you know the filename and filetype of the document you want, send E-mail to LISTSERV@VM.SAS.COM with following line in the body of your message.

GET filename filetype TSNEWS-L

You may send more than one GET command in a single mail message.

Requesting Help for TSNEWS-L

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

HELP

TSNEWS-L is documented in SAS Consultant's Guide, Supporting the SAS System, First Edition.

When to Use TSNEWS-L

We recommend that every user subscribe to TSNEWS-L. You will automatically receive announcements whenever we encounter a data integrity problem or incorrect statistics with our software.

FTP Services

Any SAS user with an Internet network can utilize the Anonymous FTP Services for an efficient way to download information from the Technical Support Division such as:

- SAS Notes
- Compiled maintenance modules
- Technical Notes
- Information from the SIBBS download area is available for FTP access at:
FTP.SAS.COM/TECHSUP/DOWNLOAD/SIBBS

In addition, you can use this service to upload requested information to a consultant who is working on a reported problem. This service provides an efficient way to upload or download large files without prior registration.

Accessing SAS Institute's Anonymous FTP Service

To use the Anonymous FTP facility, you must connect to ftp.sas.com. Once connected, enter the following responses as prompted.

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

Password: Your E-mail address

Requesting Help for the Anonymous FTP Service

On-line information on the Anonymous FTP service can be obtained by downloading the file **FTP ANNOUNCE** from the TSNEWS-L mail and file list.

When to Use Anonymous 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. This service is also useful if you don't have dial-up capabilities and want to download information available in the SIBBS download area.

Anonymous FTP service is documented in SAS Consultant's Guide, Supporting the SAS System, First Edition

ELECTRONIC FAX SERVICE

There are no special requirements for using our Electronic FAX service. If you have the ability to send faxes to the Institute, this new service will be completely transparent to you. The fax number is (919) 677-4444.

Using the electronic access version will be faster for most users since it eliminates the need for human intervention. When the fax is received in Technical Support, a consultant is notified immediately that a fax has arrived. The consultant can then review the fax on-line and act accordingly, including faxing back a response immediately if appropriate.

Many documents in the Technical Support Series are available via the FAX service as well.

If you have an open problem entry, you should not send faxes unless you are asked to do so by a consultant. In many cases, a fax is not required

and one without a header page with the name of a particular consultant and/or reference to a specific tracking number may fall through the cracks.

The Technical Support Division hopes that this service will eliminate the time lag often necessary for information to pass back and forth between consultants and our customers.

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 tools discussed above, we also have other service features in place. These features are:

- **Suggestion Facility**
This E-mail facility allows you to submit suggestions to be considered for the SASware Ballot. To use this E-mail facility, you must be capable of sending electronic mail to the SAS Institute E-mail address of: **SUGGEST@SAS.COM**
- **Business Hours**
The Technical Support Division is available for discussing new problems and previously reported problems (those with a tracking number) between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The Technical Support Division also offers limited support for new problems between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time.
- **Voice Mail for All Consultants**
Each consultant in the Technical Support Division has voice mail 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 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 Technical Support Switchboard. For complete documentation on using ACP, consult SAS Consultant's Guide: Supporting the SAS System, First Edition.

CONCLUSIONS

SAS Institute's Technical Support Division offers a wide range of electronic services. The SAS Software Representative, SAS Software Consultant, and user should determine which of these services will allow them to efficiently communicate the Technical Support Division as well as use these services as a tool to investigate and resolve problems themselves.

References

Painter, Sally (1993) "New Directions in Technical Support", *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual SAS Users Group International Conference, 1180-1182*

SAS Institute World Wide Web Site (1995)

SAS Consultant's Guide, Supporting the SAS System, First Edition

Note: This paper was originally written by Janice R. Kolb and John Hansen and presented at SCSUG by Mason Nichols.