

New Directions in Documentation, Help, and Computer-based Training

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ABSTRACT

With Version 7, the complete library of SAS® reference documentation will be delivered online in HTML. In addition, the SAS help system and computer-based training will migrate to HTML as well. This paper accompanies a demonstration of SAS OnlineDoc™ for Version 7. Examples from SAS OnlineTutor™ for Version 7 and the SAS help system in HTML will also be shown. The demonstration will highlight new features of the interface for these products and give tips for getting the most out of them at your site. *Solutions@Work™*, a continuing series of CD-ROMs that focus on task-oriented usage information with downloadable examples, will be discussed briefly.

INTRODUCTION

SAS help, reference documentation, and computer-based training will migrate to HTML with the release of Version 7. New navigational aids will make it easier to locate and use information, and sites will find it easier and much less expensive to deliver a complete set of reference documentation and training courses to every SAS user in their organization. Mainframe sites will receive, as part of SAS software, an HTML help browser developed by the Institute. Also, tools will be provided for printing pages or chunks of the online documentation, or, if you prefer, you can still purchase books through the Institute's Book Sales Department.

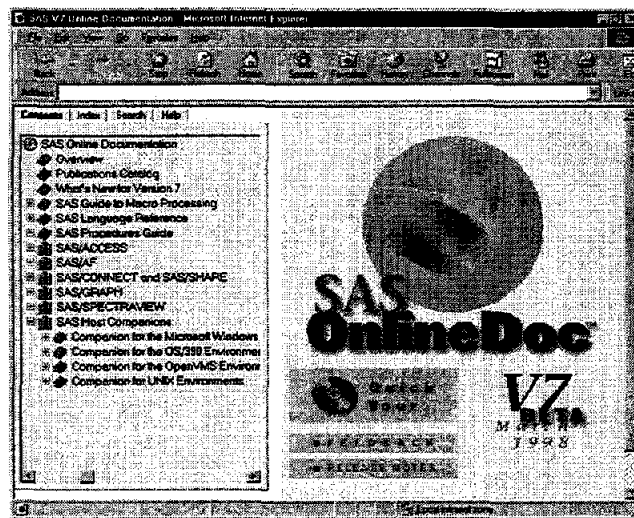
ONLINE DOCUMENTATION

SAS OnlineDoc contains the complete reference library for all Version 7 SAS software products, formatted using HTML. It also includes

- a customized interface for navigating through the documentation
- a search engine
- indexes for each document and a master index for the complete reference library
- Adobe Acrobat and PDF files in order to make it easier to print sections of a document
- if you have internet access, links back to SAS Institute's World Wide Web site, for the absolute latest information.

You access SAS OnlineDoc from the Help pull-down menu in your SAS session, or you can use SAS OnlineDoc by itself. Figure 1 shows the initial page that is displayed when you invoke OnlineDoc.

Figure 1 SAS OnlineDoc Interface



This product comes on a CD-ROM that your site can use in one of three ways:

- install its contents behind a web server so that the documentation is accessible on your intranet
- install its contents in local or networked storage, such as on your hard disk
- run it directly from your CD-ROM drive.

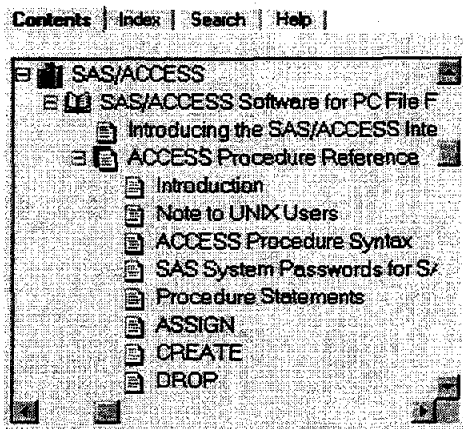
The SAS OnlineDoc interface runs inside either Netscape Navigator, Netscape Communicator, or Microsoft's Internet Explorer. The interface requires that you have JAVA-language support.

Note: If you do not have Java-language support and one of the supported HTML browsers, you can still browse the SAS reference library by using an HTML browser that is compliant with the HTML 3.2 standard. If you use SAS OnlineDoc in this manner, you cannot use the search engine and the SAS OnlineDoc interface.

SAS OnlineDoc Interface

The SAS OnlineDoc interface is composed of side-by-side frames. The left-hand side displays navigational aids that remain visible while you are using the documentation. By default, the left-hand side displays the table of contents for all documents in the reference library. Use the tabs across the top to go to the index, search engine, and help information about the OnlineDoc interface.

The table of contents is structured in layers, which you can expand and shrink. Figure 2 shows an example of a table of contents that has been expanded from the highest level—the bookshelf—to the lowest level—an individual chapter.

Figure 2 Expanded Table of Contents

The right-hand side of the interface contains the documentation, which in most cases should look very familiar. It's basically in the same form as the paper documentation you are used to, updated with the latest information about Version 7 of SAS software.

The documentation pages contain navigation buttons at the top and bottom. A context bar at the top of the page helps you track where you are within the reference library. You can also navigate using your browser's forward and back buttons.

Indexes

You can view the index for a single document or a master index to the full reference library. The master index contains entries for the documents contained in SAS OnlineDoc.

The index interface contains a find box to help you locate entries quickly. (Note that this is not a search engine; it simply keys off the first letters of the index entry.)

Search Engine

With the search engine, you can search one document or the entire reference library. The search engine can perform simple searches for a word or string. It can also perform these types of queries:

- *at least one word in list*
- *all the words in list*
- *the phrase*
- *the advanced query.*

An advanced query uses logical operators, such as *and*, *or*, and *not*. Here is an example of an advanced query:

date and format and not Julian
This query looks for SAS formats for date values, excluding formats that use Julian dates.

The search engine attempts to prioritize your hits for you. It orders results based on the relevance to your query. Pages with many matched words or words appearing in the title or near the top of the page are shown before the other pages that contain hits. The search engine will stop processing when it encounters 200 hits. If this happens, you should revise your query to be more specific.

The help for the SAS OnlineDoc interface includes a "Quick Start" tutorial. This takes just a few minutes to work through. Its purpose is to teach you how to use the interface.

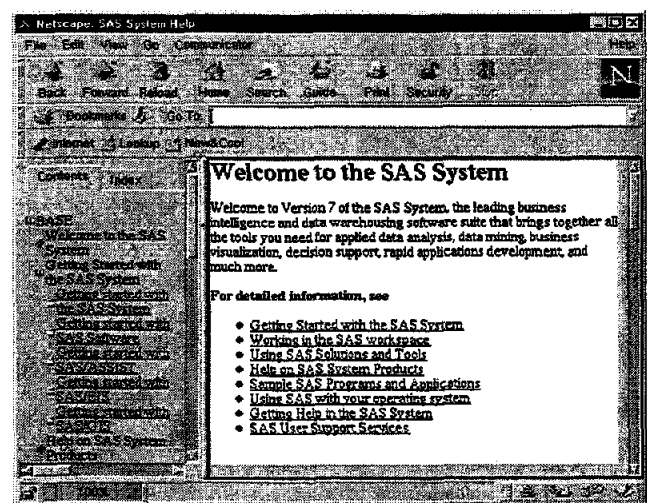
Changes and Enhancements

SAS OnlineDoc contains a "What's New?" section which highlights the changes and enhancements in the most current release of SAS software. This section links to detailed information in the appropriate reference documentation. In addition, you can link from SAS OnlineDoc to a "What's New?" document on SAS Institute's World Wide Web site to see if any additional information has become available.

Similar links throughout SAS OnlineDoc make it easy for you to send feedback to SAS Institute via e-mail, if you have internet access.

SAS HELP SYSTEM

The SAS help system will be delivered in HTML beginning with Version 7. Navigation through the help will be easier with a table of contents and index that stay visible while you read the help topics. Enhancements have also been made to the help system index to improve your keyword searches. No matter where you are located within SAS, you have access to all SAS help topics.

Figure 3 SAS Help System Interface

SAS help in HTML will be available under all Version 7 operating environments. Under Microsoft Windows, help is displayed using the HTML Help viewer. Under UNIX-

based systems, help is displayed using Netscape 4.0. Mainframe sites will receive a custom viewer that is provided as part of SAS software.

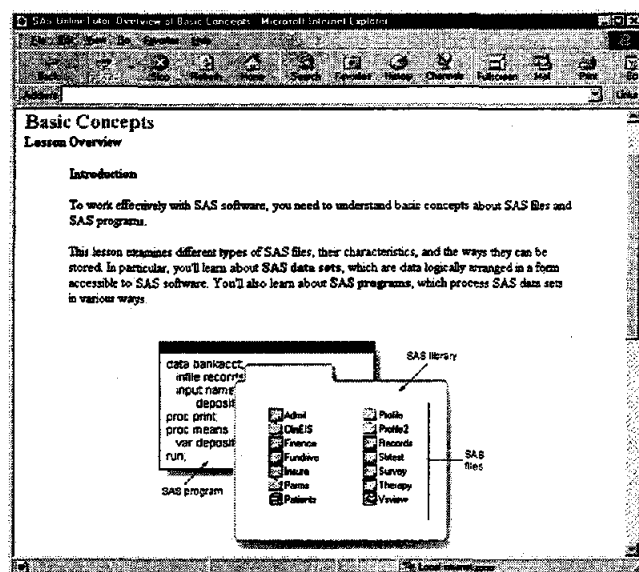
Many users have SAS applications that implement customized help systems. In Version 7, SAS will continue to support these help systems, whether they were developed as CBT catalog entries or developed in standard HTML. The Institute plans to provide tools to help convert, display, and even author help.

The help system includes product tutorials for getting started with the SAS System and for SAS/ASSIST®, SAS/EIS®, and SAS/GIS® software.

SAS ONLINETUTOR

SAS OnlineTutor software is SAS Institute's next generation of online training software. It takes advantage of HTML and Java capabilities to bring you an easy-to-read, easy-to-access method of learning about the SAS environment and SAS programming skills in Version 7. Topics range from basic concepts to producing HTML tables and graphs that have drill-down capabilities. The lessons include both interactive questions and feedback and guided practices. The guided practices enable you to practice your new skills from within the SAS environment. This instruction is appropriate for both mainframe and GUI-based platforms.

Figure 4 SAS OnlineTutor Lesson



SAS OnlineTutor software is available on a CD-ROM that can be loaded on an intranet or accessed directly from the CD or local or networked storage. In order to view the instruction, you must have Internet Explorer 4.0 or Netscape 4.0 or higher, and your browser must be Java and JavaScript enabled. If your site administrator has loaded SAS OnlineTutor on your intranet, you can access the training within your SAS session by selecting Help--> Books and Training--> SAS OnlineTutor. If you use SAS software on a mainframe, you can view SAS OnlineTutor

on your PC or UNIX workstation and use an emulator to practice in SAS software on the mainframe. Plans also include providing Internet access via the SAS Institute World Wide Web site.

SOLUTIONS@WORK

As interactive, visual-oriented applications become a larger part of the computing environment, applications developers need documentation that is designed specifically to support this type of development work.

Solutions@Work is an interactive user-support tool that focuses on graphically-oriented applications. Each Solutions@Work CD provides focused, task-oriented documentation for a single topic. Each title in the series contains

Features

discuss concepts related to the topic in "article" format.

FAQ

compiles questions about the topic that are frequently asked of SAS Technical Support.

Examples

illustrate tasks and applications that relate to the topic of the CD. Each example contains four sections: an overview, questions and answers, a flowchart-like diagram of the example's execution, and a step-by-step explanation of the code in the example.

Resources

list related information such as reference documentation, Web addresses, and training courses.

Solutions@Work addresses a different need from other SAS online documentation. In Version 7, most SAS online documentation contains reference information organized by product. The documentation is oriented toward items such as syntax, descriptions of objects and methods, requirements, and so on. Examples usually illustrate syntax.

Solutions@Work focuses on examples and usage information. The examples combine components of various SAS software products to achieve a result. The example code is stored in catalogs on the CD, and users can download the examples by clicking on a button.

Solutions@Work is a continuing series of documentation. The first titles support Release 6.12, and future titles will support future versions of the SAS System. Most titles are distributed on CD-ROM (downloading from the Institute's Web site is also being investigated).

Solutions@Work requires a web browser that supports the same functionality as Microsoft's Internet Explorer 2.0 and above and Netscape Navigator 2.0 and above.

Solutions@Work is available in single-user and multi-user versions. It does not require the SAS System to view. However, SAS software is required in order to work directly with or to modify the examples provided.

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