Abstract

A new library architecture for SAS® documentation was introduced with Release 6.06 giving you a variety of primary documentation tools to suit different needs and experience levels. And SAS Institute continues to expand that library. In the past year, we’ve published new books for specialized topics, cross-product applications, and instructional uses, bringing you additional tools to help you accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently. Upcoming offerings include new how-to books focusing on applications areas, online information products, and a technical journal, among others. User involvement has been critical to the successful implementation of the new architecture and specialty publications, and we continue to explore ways of working with users to provide the best in software documentation.

Introduction

The SAS System is the world’s premier information delivery system, and the SAS documentation library must deliver information to you, the user, about SAS software. The library is not just a place to record countless details about the software. The books in the library are critical tools to help you accomplish a job. If these tools are going to help you, not hinder you, they must be designed to suit your needs. To improve the usability of SAS documentation tools, we redesigned the documentation library and are publishing books targeted at specialized needs.

This presentation summarizes the new documentation architecture, reviews new publications from the past year, and previews upcoming offerings. We’ll also discuss the important role users play in designing and implementing information products at SAS Institute.

Version 6 Documentation Architecture

Along with the many new software features and products in Release 6.06 of the SAS System came a new library of documentation tools to help you learn about and use SAS software. Previous documentation compiled all the information for a product in one book. But as the SAS System grew and diversified, our audience diversified. The one-book approach became less viable. The software offered more and more functionality, and you found that you needed specialized documentation tools for different kinds of information gathering tasks.

The two principle tasks that you use a software manual for are learning and looking things up. A book that helps you learn explains things step-by-step, using lots of examples. A book that is useful for looking things up quickly is highly structured, concise, and has lots of cues to help you find your way around. So, we designed some books to help you learn and some books to give you quick access to information. Learning books are usage guides and introductory guides. Look-up books are reference guides and syntax guides.

In designing the SAS documentation library, we also had to account for the software’s MultiVendor Architecture. MultiVendor Architecture, or MVA, means that the SAS System is implemented so that SAS applications built for one platform can run on any other platform supported by the SAS System. This portability is achieved by creating core and applications segments that are the same across all operating systems, and an operating system-specific segment that is the interface between the core and applications layers and the host.

The new documentation library is similarly organized with product documentation that can be used by all users on all systems and operating system-specific documentation tailored to the needs of users of a single system. As a result, product documentation is no longer sprinkled with notes about system dependencies. Instead, these dependencies are documented in one, easy-to-use operating system companion.
New Books from SAS Institute

The first wave of books designed for the new library architecture were released with Release 6.06 software in 1990. Many of you are using them now, including SAS Language: Reference, Version 6, First Edition; SAS Language and Procedures: Usage, Version 6, First Edition; SAS/GRAPH Software: Reference, Version 6, First Edition, Volume 1 and Volume 2; and many more.

Since mid-1990, we've continued to publish more tools for Version 6 SAS System users, including some books that were specifically requested by our users. Here's a review of some of the major titles released in the past year.

**SAS Programming Tips: A Guide to Efficient SAS Processing**

SAS users voted overwhelmingly for a book on efficient programming in the 1989 SASware Ballot, and we are pleased to offer you SAS Programming Tips to answer that need. This is a handbook for improving the efficiency of your SAS applications. It addresses programming tasks common to most applications using the DATA step and procedures for data summarization, utilities, and reporting found in base SAS software. The book is a collection of tips suggesting coding techniques, guidelines for their use, and examples of ways to implement them. Each tip identifies the resource or resources improved by that technique. Tips are presented in a concise readable format, no more than one page in length. This book is just the tool for a programmer looking for a quick answer!

**Getting Started with the SAS System Using SAS/ASSIST Software, Version 6, First Edition**

Here is a compact book offering step-by-step instruction for SAS/ASSIST software, the task-oriented, menu-driven interface to the SAS System. Getting Started shows you how to complete the most common tasks with the SAS System using SAS/ASSIST software. This is a book for everyone: from users with no programming experience to applications programmers who are building systems for end users. With this book and SAS/ASSIST software, you'll find it takes just an hour to have the power of the SAS System available to you—without any programming statements!

**Introducing The SAS System, Version 6, First Edition**

In Introducing the SAS System you'll find answers to some of the basic questions about the SAS System's capabilities. You'll learn about the features that make SAS software easy to use and versatile for all your information delivery needs. You'll see how to access, manage, and present data with simple programming statements or windows, and how powerful, customized applications can be created. The book is filled with examples that give you a chance to try your hand at using the SAS System.

**SAS Language and Procedures: Syntax, Version 6, First Edition**

Base SAS software long ago outgrew the reference card format as a quick reference tool for syntax. So we designed a compact, spiral-bound booklet with a readable page layout as a replacement for reference cards. In Language and Procedures: Syntax, you'll find complete syntax information for portable features of base SAS software in a quick summary format. This is a book every SAS user will want on hand when working with the DATA step, macro programming, procedures, display manager, system options, and the text editor.

SAS/GRAPH software is another product whose capabilities have grown by leaps and bounds. The reference documentation for SAS/GRAPH software now requires over 1300 pages, bound in two volumes. It's comprehensive and it's thorough. But how can a new SAS/GRAPH software user hope to learn from this reference documentation? The answer is: you can't, it's not a learning tool. The tool you need to get started with SAS/GRAPH software is the new SAS/GRAPH introductory guide. In usability tests, subjects were able to work through the instructions and examples in this book in just four hours. If you want to be able to use the powerful SAS/GRAPH product for charts, maps, plots, and text slides in just half a day, this task-oriented, step-by-step book is the tool you're looking for.

Books In Progress

In coming months, we’ll be publishing still more books to help you make the most of your SAS software tools. Coming up are more task-oriented how-to books designed to make building applications quick and easy. Here are some of the books you can look forward to.

SAS Roadmaps: A Tour of SAS Software Applications

We’re pleased to be publishing the work of two outside authors, SherriJoyce King and Laurie Burch, SAS consultants and principles at Business Resource Group, Inc. In SAS Roadmaps, Burch and King take you on a tour of SAS software products that crosses many applications and industries. They’re interviewing SAS users in a wide variety of settings to find out how SAS software is used for information delivery in business, industry, government, and research. SAS Roadmaps will show you plenty of sample applications to help you find new ways to put SAS software to work in your organization.


Another book authored by a SAS user is SAS System for Statistical Graphics by Dr. Michael Friendly from York University, Toronto, Canada. This book shows how to apply SAS software to produce meaningful displays of statistical data. The emphasis is on displays that reveal aspects of data not easily captured in numerical summaries or tabular formats, and on diagnostic displays that help you decide if assumptions of an analysis are met. Whether you have a basic to intermediate level of experience with SAS software and statistics, or you’re an experienced SAS programmer who wants to refine your use of statistical graphics, SAS System for Statistical Graphics will provide the information you need.


For SAS users working on time-series analysis, forecasting, financial analysis, and econometric analysis and modeling, SAS/ETS Software: Applications will be the right tool for learning new ways to use SAS/ETS software. This task-oriented applications book will be published in two volumes; Volume 1 includes time-series, forecasting, and financial analysis, while Volume 2 is devoted to econometrics.

SAS Solutions: Basic Data Processing with the SAS System

Still another user-authored book is in the works. Tom Miron is a SAS consultant with years of experience in industry and government designing and implementing SAS applications, and training SAS users. Mr. Miron is writing SAS Solutions: Basic Data Processing with the SAS System, a collection of example SAS programs categorized by task and accompanied by detailed annotation and usage notes in a format that allows information to be located easily. The book will be particularly useful for users who want to be able to modify the example programs presented in the book to fit their specific needs. Novice SAS users can use the book to learn how the SAS System solves data processing problems, while advanced SAS users can learn from examples that fall outside their normal range of expertise.
Still More How-To Books


Observations*: A Technical Journal For SAS Users

In the 1990 SASware Ballot, SAS users voted for a technical journal as their number-one choice in the Documentation section. We’re pleased to announce that the new technical journal Observations* is coming your way later this year in response to that vote. Observations will be published quarterly and will be filled with articles covering a wide range of topics on SAS software. The content of the articles will be technical and more in depth than is possible in SAS Communications. There will be articles of interest to users of all experience levels, from all operating systems, and for all SAS System products.

Online Information Products: the Master Index

SAS Institute has been conducting a research and development program in online information technology to prepare to deliver the best and most usable online information products to SAS users. Our first offering in online information products, to be called SAS/LOOKUP™ software, will be shipped later this year with Release 6.07 software: an online version of the SAS Master Index for Version 6.

The Online Master Index has an easy-to-use interface that allows you to query the index database to find out where the topics you’re interested in can be found in the SAS documentation library. This tool is an ideal quick-access method for the material in the hardcopy library for the SAS System.

New Directions

We’re striking out in new directions for 1992 and beyond. We’ll continue to expand the library of primary SAS documentation with more how-to books, syntax guides, and of course, reference documentation. But we’ll also expand our efforts in other areas, including a new line of books that are collections of examples, books oriented toward SAS applications in specific industries and businesses, and more online information products, including a primer for the SAS/C® compiler and documentation for SAS/ACCESS® products.

To do all this, we’ll listen to and work with SAS users. We’re gathering your feedback on existing books through our user-review pool. We’ll continue to listen to your ideas through the SASware Ballot, user’s groups, and letters. We’ll continue to study your needs through research and development programs like the one for online information. And we’ll let you speak up and share your expertise through our program to publish the works of SAS users.

Conclusion

We’re excited about the SAS library for Release 6.06, and even more excited about what’s ahead. It means keeping your best interests in mind and working with users to ensure that our books are the tools you need and want. Recently, we received top honors for a number of books in an international competition for software user documentation. We’re very proud of those awards; we see them as testimony to the fact that we’re succeeding in meeting our users’ needs because we listen to you. SAS Institute will continue to listen to you, and will continue to set the industry’s standard for delivering information.