Collaborate with SAS Users Around the World with sasCommunity.org

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Abstract
sasCommunity.org is an exciting and new collaborative online community for SAS users worldwide. This presentation explores a few of the exciting features found in this virtual community. Topics include a Wiki-based web site where anyone can add or change content on any page on the web site, the exchange of ideas on the Blogger's Corner, viewing scheduled and unscheduled events, using the built-in search facility to locate all wiki-content, reading and responding to specific forum topics, and much more.

Introduction
SAS users have a new website where they can collaborate with other users anywhere in the world; access content; learn about upcoming events, forums and user group conferences; and discuss anything and everything that is related to SAS software, from SAS users to SAS users.

The Main Page
To get the most from sasCommunity as well as the numerous features within, you’ll want to become familiar with the Main Page, shown in Figure 1-1. The Main Page is the primary interface that users see as they access and interact with sasCommunity.org. The first thing you will notice about the main page, besides the beautiful graphics, is that it is organized into a number of parts: 1) on the left side is a grouping of hyperlinked keywords related to the main menu, page activity, getting started, search, and toolbox; 2) at the very top-right are two hyperlinks, Log in and Create account; 3) at the top are a grouping of special tabs related to articles, discussions, view source, and history; 4) in the body portion are the Bloggers' Corner and Forums; and 5) at the bottom of the body portion are a number of icons related to joining sasCommunity, getting involved, Sasopedia, events and user groups.

Figure 1-1. sasCommunity.org Front Page
Joining sasCommunity – Creating an Account

At some point during your online experience, and particularly before you are permitted to contribute to sasCommunity, you will need to create an account. To create an account you will need to click the “log in / create account” hyperlink located at the top-right of the Main Page. This will automatically display the Log in / create account special page, see Figure 1-2. Click the “Create an account” hyperlink to proceed. The Log in / create account page will automatically display.

With the Create account page displayed, you are now ready to enter a unique Username, password, E-mail address, and optional Real name. Once this information is entered, click the Create account button, see Figure 1-3. Note: Although an e-mail address is required to be entered, an entry for Real name is optional and can be left blank. A password is your secret sequence of typed characters and is required for accessing your account. Anyone who knows your password can sign on to your account and could potentially cause a world of havoc such as deleting mail messages, sending bogus messages that look like they are coming from you, post messages on public forums that appear to be coming from you, and so on. Also, don’t choose a password that is too obvious or too easy to guess. Because a password is so important, you should really select one with the utmost care.

If your account is successfully created, a special Welcome message will display indicating that your account has been created, see Figure 1-4. You can then click the Return to Main Page hyperlink to display the Main Page.
As part of the verification process, an e-mail containing a confirmation code is automatically sent to the e-mail address you provided during the account creation process. Before you can activate e-mail activities on sasCommunity you will need to open the link displayed in the e-mail by clicking the listed hyperlink, see Figure 1-5.

![Confirmation E-mail message](image)

Figure 1-5. Confirmation E-mail message

After clicking the hyperlink displayed in the e-mail, a confirmation page will automatically display indicating that the account belongs to you. As soon as this confirmation page displays sasCommunity e-mail features will be enabled, see Figure 1-6.

![Confirm E-mail address page](image)

Figure 1-6. Confirm E-mail address page

**Blogger’s Corner**

Blogger’s Corner displays a list of Blogs or articles defined by SAS users. You can access Blogger’s Corner from the Main Page by clicking the **Blogger’s Corner** keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category. Or, click the hyperlink, Visit **Bloggers’ Corner** to see what your sasCommunity.org colleagues are blogging about..., located in the Blogger’s Corner section of the Main Page. Once clicked, the Blogger’s Corner page appears, see Figure 1-7.

![Blogger’s Corner page](image)

Figure 1-7. Blogger’s Corner page
Accessing a blog is as easy as point-and-click. For example, click Consultant’s Corner from the list to display the blog for Consultant’s Corner, see Figure 1-8. Once the blog is accessed (and you are logged in), you will be able to participate in the discussion associated with that blog by clicking the ‘discussion’ tab located at the top of the page.

Figure 1-8. Consultant’s Corner Blog page

To access the blog’s discussion area, click the ‘discussion’ tab (and log into your account) located at the top of the blog page. With the discussion page displayed, you will be able to view and participate in the discussion associated with the blog, see Figure 1-9.

Figure 1-9. Consultant’s Corner discussion page
Exploring Upcoming Events

SAS users have a convenient way to find out about upcoming events including user group meetings, conferences, training classes, webcasts, and other interesting events relevant to the user community. Click the Events keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category to display the Events page, see Figure 1-10.

Figure 1-10. Events page
Fostering the Virtual Community with Forums
The user community has a way to hold discussions and post user-generated content (similar to the popular SAS-L) on any topic of interest. Click the Forums keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category to display the Forums page. Once the Forums page is accessed, you can view the list of all Forums by clicking the Forums hyperlink to display the sasCommunity Forum page, see Figure 1-11. Currently, the following sasCommunity Forum categories exist: 1) sasCommunity.org – site feedback, 2) SAS Software issues, 3) SAS on the Mainframe, 4) Biomedical Research, and 5) User Groups.

Using the Sasopedia
The Sasopedia is the place where users can provide factual information and tips on using the SAS software. To access this fact-based resource, click the Sasopedia keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category to display the Sasopedia page, see Figure 1-12. Sasopedia is organized into the following categories: 1) Procedure, 2) by Product/Solution, 3) by Statement, and 4) by Topic for user convenience.
Using a Wiki

sasCommunity uses Wikimedia software to improve the overall user experience while using the virtual community. Wiki features include: a consistent look and feel with navigation bars and short-cuts, file upload capabilities, mathematical formulas using \LaTeX{} syntax, automatic image resizing, maintain and create a watchlist to track changes to articles, show changes using side-by-side diffs, ability to link to individual sections, support of subpages, comprehensive editing capabilities, support of discussion pages, comprehensive backend database-driven and cookie-based support, permission and security capabilities, and comprehensive full text search and query capabilities. For additional information about a Wiki and its capabilities, you are referred to the following URL http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Help#Feature_list, see Figure 1-13.
Using the Search Feature
The built-in search feature lets you search topics on anything SAS, and/or SAS-related topics. In the Search dialog box, located on the left side of the Main Page, character-string information can be entered, and either the **Go** or **Search** buttons clicked. For example, say you are searching for anything ‘consulting’ as illustrated in Figure 1-14.

Results matching the user-supplied character-string ‘consulting’ are automatically displayed and grouped as Article title matches and Page text matches. A partial listing of results for ‘consulting’ are displayed and illustrated in Figure 1-15.

**Figure 1-14. Search dialog box**

**Figure 1-15. Page text matches for ‘consulting’**
Logging-out of a Session

Our quick tour of sasCommunity.org would not be complete without showing you how to log out (or sign out) of the virtual community. Although you probably have already guessed how to do this, we thought we would complete our tour and show you how anyway. Logging-out of a session requires you to click the Log out hyperlink that is located at the very top of any page in sasCommunity.org. Once clicked, the following Log out page displays as illustrated in Figure 1-16.

![Log out page](image)

Figure 1-16. Log out page

Conclusion

The new virtual community for SAS users, sasCommunity.org, has an amazing start and such great potential. Those already participating are finding it to be a great resource for collaboration, tips, code examples, user group and webcast events, forums, and much more. The Wiki technology fosters user participation. As described at the annual 2007 SAS Global Forum (SGF), sasCommunity.org is a resource for all users, not just at one event. sasCommunity.org should prosper well into the future as organizations experience declining travel budgets and technological advances occur in the area of Internet access. Here’s your chance to make the most of this virtual user community – explore, learn and share.

References


sasCommunity Kirk Paul Lafler’s PROC SQL Blog World (Kirk Paul Lafler), sasCommunity.org – 2007.

sasCommunity Kirk’s SASword Puzzles (Kirk Paul Lafler), sasCommunity.org – 2007.


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About the Authors
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Charles Edwin Shipp is a programmer, consultant and author with 30 years of experience working with the SAS and JMP software. He has written numerous articles and co-authored the popular Books by Users (BBU) book, Quick Results with SAS/GRAPH Software. Charlie is currently involved with sasCommunity.org, consulting content creation, and web development.

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