Find Your SAS® Sensei 先生

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ABSTRACT

In martial arts, a sensei (先生) is one with more experience who can guide you along the path. When practicing the art of SAS, it is wise to pay heed to the SASensei - for many paths log to darkness.

Fortunately, there are many *communities* to be found. The web is *overflowing* with gurus - you may even have *read it* somewhere. Professionals can be found so long as you are in the right *links*. Rookie's are weLcomed every year! Don't be a *twit* - as a last resort, you can even find Support.

Experience new possibilities in your SAS, with the power of knowing how to find right resources for your needs. Join us to level up your ranking, with not a training course or webex in sight! No matter what your experience level, you can always improve.

Those who can, teach.

#SASENSEI

INTRODUCTION

The sharp eyed among you may have noticed a few hidden references above! This paper will review the major resources available for finding help with SAS, in chronological order. There are many out there who dedicate their (surely valuable) time to this endeavour. If you are seeking your SAS Sensei - be sure to review this guide to smart questions first! (http://www.catb.org/esr/faqs/smart-questions.html)

SAS SUPPORT

The "SAS Project" was started by Tony Barr in 1966, joined by Jim Goodnight in 1967. The first release was SAS 71 (in 1971) followed by SAS 72. It can probably be assumed that "SAS Support" consisted of just 2 people back then!

These days Support is a truly international affair, with tickets routed initially to a country office - and then to Cary HQ or dedicated support team if necessary. One of the great things about SAS Support is - it's FREE! And the support staff have access to the internal ticket repository with decades of support tracks and discussions, not to mention escalation points to relevant engineers.

Every request to support gets a tracking number, and certain site details are logged. As a bare minimum, you need to provide your site number. This can be found by running `proc setinit`. Further details are also helpful, and if you do this by providing colon separated name:value pairs in your email (to support@sas.com), then these are automatically loaded into the system - here is a template:

```
--- Information You Provided ---
  Name:        Allan Bowe
  Sitenum:     0001000121
  Company:     SAS
  Phone:       44-0777777777
  OS:          win2008server
  Product:     Base SAS
  Release:     9.3
--------------------------------
```

An alternative is to make your request via the web form (where values are loaded automatically from your SAS profile) - http://support.sas.com/ctx/supportform/createForm.

SAS USER GROUPS

The first SAS User Group was in 1976. Back then SAS had 100 customers, and 300 people turned up to the event (in Kissimmee, Florida).

The "International SAS Users Conference" became an annual event, first as SUGI and now as SGF. Regional groups also exist around the world, usually with fantastic acronyms - shoutouts to SMUG, WASUP, and our recently formed SUGUKI.

User Groups are a great way to find mentors whatever your SAS discipline, and are pretty much the only way to do so 'offline'. Many organisations also offer internal user groups. If you don't have one - you can always start one!

If you are unable to make an event, worry not, as it is traditional for content to be posted freely online. Lex Jansen receives an honourable mention here for www.lexjansen.com - a site where you can search all papers from all previous SUGI's, PharmaSUG's, and regional US SUG's.

SAS.ONE

PROCEEDINGS OF FIRST
INTERNATIONAL S.A.S
USERS CONFERENCE

JANUARY 26-28.1976

EDITED BY:
JULIAN HORWICH, ABBOTT LABS
EVEY E. HORWICH

SAS-L

Roger DeAngelis	1930
Joe Matise	377
Yinglin Wu	254
Rick Wicklin	148
Nat Wooding	146
Quentin McMullen	106
Arthur Tabachneck	97
Vincent Martin	79
Stanford Mwasongwe	77
Matt Kastin	74

The "L" here stands for "Listserv" - and this was probably the first instance of a publicly available online resource for SAS queries and discussion. The list began on 13 Nov 1986 with a survey mail from June Genis! The thread was revived 25 years later - the results though, are yet to be aggregated.

There are many hardcore (but very friendly) guru's lurking here. The top contributors in 2017 are shown on the left. Each year a SAS-L "Rookie Of the Year" (L-ROY) is selected as the newcomer with the most significant contribution. In 2017 that was our very own Nik Marković!

SAS-L is still a great place to ask questions as you can reach thousands of people with *decades* of SAS experience, including many people who work within SAS Institute. However, apart from the odd hiccup (2008, 2015) it does appear to be in terminal decline - see figures on the right.

2006	32243
2007	26549
2008	27404
2009	24604
2010	15517
2011	11956
2012	9334
2013	8281
2014	7514
2015	7740
2016	5598
2017	5109

This may be due to the fact the posts are no longer indexed on Google, or due to the introduction of many other resources (discussed in this paper). It is still possible to search the previous posts though - see here: https://listserv.uga.edu/cgi-bin/wa?REPORT&z=4&1=SAS-L&L=SAS-L. The search only goes back to 1996 - earlier posts can be searched but from the internal Marist instance of the listserv. Some interesting background into the early days of SAS-L was provided to me by F J Kelley:

F J Kelley — 14:02 (2 hours ago)
to me

OK, some of the basics ...

In late 1986, someone on the old User Services list "Liaison" (gone now) suggested that a list devoted to SAS would be useful. Harry Williams at Marist and Hal Pritchett at UGA agreed and independently set up a "SAS-L" ... within a day or so they found out about the other and used a listserv option to "peer" their lists. With the networks and systems of the day, peering was commonly used to reduce traffic on the backbone.

SAS-L archives at UGA go back to 1996, but at Marist they are continuous (however, you must be subscribed to SAS-L at Marist to view them -- not sure Harry ever implemented the web front end for his listserver and it was run on an IBM VM for longer than I would have thought possible).

After SAS-L was created, a companion "SPSSX-L" was created (at the time, SPSS had released version 10 and styled itself SPSSˣ ... It also renumbered itself). As of about release 3, it went back to "SPSS". By then the lists had been created. It *is* possible to rename a list (have done it), but it was also peered and folks were used to "SPSSX-L".

Anyway, Hal was the first listowner (he was also listserv site manager). He was succeeded by Jean Snow (as both, but she passed SAS-L to Greg Nelson -- at the time, a manager at UGA) who passed it to me when he was leaving. If you see Greg at SGF tell him that you had been told the list "practically runs itself". Tell him Joe Kelley told you that ... (yeah, there's a story).

I subsequently became the listserv site manager as well.

The newsgroups comp.soft-sys.sas and comp.soft-sys.stat.spss were set up later and bidirectionally gated to the lists via a connection at American University. American later dropped the machine (and listserver) doing it. We ran the connection for SAS a bit longer at UGA connecting to the news server at GaTech, but by the end I had to approve every incoming post (the newsgroups are still there, but the last time I checked were overrun with porn (and malware). When Tech dropped the newsreader, we dropped the connection.

For the old "SAS-L BOF" we used to do some annual stats, but I did not do those.

Hope this helps.
--Joe

SAS-L is still a very relevant place to find help with SAS (although it does suffer somewhat with cross postings). Signon is a 3 step process:

1 – Sign up to the listserv service: https://listserv.uga.edu/cgi-bin/wa?GETPW1

2 – Verify your email

3 – Subscribe to SAS-L mailing list: https://listserv.uga.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=sas-l

SAS COMMUNITIES

2006 marked the beginning of SAS Communities, now arguably the biggest and best place to find help with SAS! It's owned / managed by SAS Institute, but we are assured that it is not censored (spam and abusive posts aside). Content is not limited to Q&A - there is also a library of articles and an "Ask the Expert" webinar series.

SAS have recently moved to migrate regional 'community sites' (such as sasprofessionals.net in the UK) to the global community site, resulting in 40,000 new members in 2017 - against a current total headcount of around 160,000.

There are around 80,000 topics, 18,000 of which were generated in 2017 - with 100,000 replies! Whether it's the badges, the community spirit, or the sheer usefulness of the site - SAS Communities is now indisputably the 'community of choice' for SAS issues.

Check it out on communities.sas.com.

SASCOMMUNITY.ORG

In 2007, Joe O'Brien (of SAS Institute) began sascommunity.org, a wiki site for SAS content. Many users contributed content, which was accelerated further by the sascommunity.org/planet blog aggregator. The top 10 contributors (all-time) are shown on the right.

Unfortunately due to dwindling engagement the decision has been made to decommission the site, and it is now in read-only mode whilst the content is relocated.

You are unlikely to find your SAS Sensei here, but it may be worth taking a browse through before the content is gone forever!

Score ⇕	Pages ⇕	Changes ⇕	Username ⇕
2,683	2,606	4,082	Cameron
2,448	2,359	4,354	Art Carpenter
1,849	1,766	3,509	Don Henderson
1,833	1,762	3,025	Paul Kaefer
861	766	3,013	Lainie Hoverstad
687	648	1,031	Howes
663	632	871	Frank Fry
660	619	1,036	Nancy Wilson
597	543	1,264	Charlie Shipp
552	478	1,836	Ronald J. Fehd

LINKEDIN

One of the largest groups dedicated to SAS is the SAS Professional Forum on Linkedin. Started on 13th March 2008 by Paul Hawley, the group was managed for quite some time by Phil Holland before handing over to Andrew Karp (RIP), Andrew Howell and Nik Markovic. There are currently around 33,000 members. There is a jobs board, as well as an active community - willing to help you with your burning SAS issue.

TWITTER

The earliest Tweet I could find was by Paul Makowenskyj on 5th June 2008. The use of SAS on twitter has grown somewhat since then! The great thing about Twitter is that you can reach out to anybody, and follow updates directly from your favourite SAS superstars. The SAS related account with - unsurprisingly - the most followers (50k) is @SASSoftware. The biggest individual superstar award goes to @cjdinger (Chris Hemedinger - SAS community Manager) with 3,675 followers, followed closely by @HomesAtMetacoda (Michelle Homes).

A special mention goes to @SAS_Cares - this channel is proactively monitored by SAS to provide help with technical matters.

STACKOVERFLOW

The first SAS question here was asked by Martin Bøgelund on 20th September 2008. The site now has over 9,000 questions. Stackoverflow is a great place to ask *questions that relate to SAS programming, that can be answered.* If your question is opinionated, is asking for a recommendation of a particular tool, or otherwise not within the realms of a good question - expect downvotes!

Conversely, well written questions (and answers) can and do receive upvotes, conferring the user with an increasing amount of privileges and access within the site. The top answerer (by some margin) is Joe. The top asker is… yours truly! I'm a big fan of the site (as you can probably tell from my profile). At one point there used to be a dedicated site for SAS (runsubmit.com, courtesy of Jay Stevens) but this was deprecated. The number of posts does seem to be in decline (see right), presumably due to the rise of SAS Communities.

	2016	2017
Questions	1959	1747
Questions with 'upvotes'	636	563
Users who posted a question	1046	980
Answers	2755	2236
Users who posted an answer	438	344

REDDIT

moderators of r/sas

medl_lord (6601)	3 years ago
Adamworks (776)	3 years ago
smileylich (4039)	2 years ago

The SAS Reddit has been around since September 22nd, 2009, and is a place where any question can be asked and will be voted up or down by the community. There are almost 3,000 readers. Occasionally SAS will respond to questions in this forum.

QUORA

The first Quora SAS post was on June 25th, 2010. It is yet another Q&A site with 3,000 SAS questions, and 26,000 followers. "Opinionated" questions are welcome here, and the SAS care team can also be found providing occasional answers.

GITHUB

GitHub is a place where programmers have been sharing their SAS code since 2010. At the time of writing there are 2,500 SAS repositories. The largest organisation is SAS Software with 90 repositories! Many of which enable integration with open source technologies such as Python, R and Ruby.

Our own Boemska organisation also has some interesting repos - the h54s adapter (for building web apps with SAS), worktop (for monitoring SASWORK & UTIL directories) and macrocore (sas macro library for application developers).

SASENSEI

The most recent addition to the bunch is sasensei.com - a quiz based SAS adventure! The aim of the game is to rise through the ranks: Yellow Belt, Green Belt, Black Belt, Sasamurai, Assassin, and finally - Sasensei.

As each rank is achieved, new features are unlocked. Reputation is earned by answering questions on SAS, passing short quizzes, and also - submitting well written questions (and answers / explanations) to the question bank.

It's a great place to test your SAS Skills, as well as compete in a multiplayer SAS game with your colleagues! At time of writing there are 700 players and a bank of around 400 questions (and growing).

Each player gets a public profile, to prove his / her SAS prowess. And the top players are shown on the leaderboard. I may be biased (I built the site) but - this is where I'd look to find my SAS Sensei!

www.sasensei.com/leaderboard

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• F J Kelley (info on SAS-L)

CONTACT INFORMATION <HEADING 1>

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