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sasNerd®: Better Searches = Better Results

Kirk Paul Lafler, Software Intelligence Corporation
Charles Edwin Shipp, Consider Consulting Corporation
Richard W. La Valley, Strategic Technology Solutions, Inc.
Lex Jansen, lexjansen.com[1]

Abstract

As SAS®- and JMP®-related content continues to grow to new levels the world's leading search engines (Google, Bing, and Yahoo) and their proprietary software, organizes this information and makes it useful and accessible to everyone. Growing numbers of users benefit from the speed, accuracy, organization, and reliability of these powerful search engines, as well as the capabilities that LexJansen.com provides as a web portal for finding relevant SAS and JMP content. Due to the importance of finding desired content whenever it's needed, users turn to their favorite search engine, or LexJansen.com with its repository of 25,000-plus published papers, for their search needs. This paper introduces the user community to a new application called, sasNerd® that is designed to help find published papers and other searchable content from SAS Global Forum (SGF) and SAS Users Group International (SUGI) conferences; MWSUG, NESUG, PNWSUG, SCSUG, SESUG, and WUSS regional conferences; and PharmaSUG, PhUSE, and CDISC special-interest conferences.

The Next Generation Search Tool -- Better Searches = Better Results

For many users, the importance of conducting successful searches is not only important, it may be an essential activity in conducting effective research required by their job. Because the leading search engines adhere to rules and have built-in algorithms to interpret search requests while delivering the "best" possible results; in the end, the derived results are only as good as the search terms entered. To minimize the challenges of finding the right combination of keywords or phrases along with the frustration associated with unsuccessful searches and massive listings, the authors introduce the next generation of search tools. sasNerd® provides the user community with an application that supports basic and advanced search techniques. A brief overview of sasNerd, its user interface, and how it works, is introduced along with a number of tips and techniques to achieve better searches and better results.

sasNerd's® User Interface

sasNerd's "free" and easy-to-use search application offers a simple and intuitive user interface, as shown in Figure 1. Using your favorite web browser such as, Google Chrome®, Mozilla Firefox®, Internet Explorer®, Netscape Navigator®, or Safari®, users are able to access content by clicking one of the cloud keywords (Area 1) or entering a keyword (or phrase) in the 'Search for' text box (Area 2). Default preferences are preset for all search engines, file types, time periods and conferences, although specific, and "customized", content can be requested by clicking the 'Search Engines', 'Filetype', 'Time Period' and 'Conference' selection lists (Area 3) and making alternate choices. Once the desired selection criteria is specified, results can then be produced and viewed by clicking the "Produce Search Results" button (Area 4).

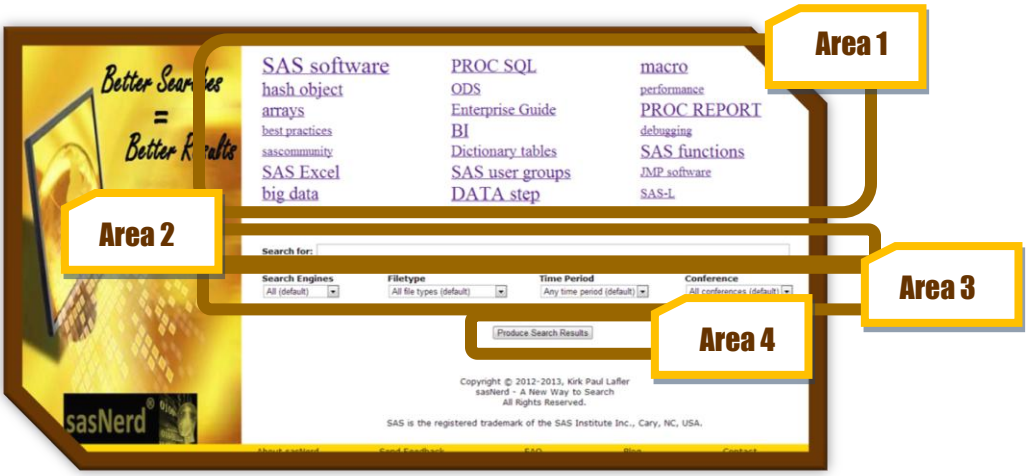

Figure 1. The sasNerd User Interface.

[1] Lex Jansen is a SAS employee. The views expressed in this paper are the authors' own views and do not represent the views of SAS.

sasNerd's Word "Tag" Cloud

sasNerd and its word "tag" cloud hyperlinks provide a visualization representation for text data. Word tags are generally depicted as single or double words using varying size fonts and/or colors to display the importance of the word(s) in a cloud formation. For example, a word or set of words of greater importance often uses a larger font where words of lesser prominence uses smaller fonts, as shown in Figure 2. Users are able to produce search results by clicking the hyperlink associated with a specific word(s).

Figure 2. The sasNerd Word "Tag" Cloud Hyperlinks.

The 'Search for' Text Box

By entering a keyword (or phrase) in the 'Search for' text box, as illustrated in Figure 3, a basic user-initiated search can be requested. A maximum of 250 alphanumeric and special characters can be entered.

Figure 3. "Search for" text box.

The 'Search Engines' Selection Box

The 'Search Engines' selection box provides a drop-down list of available search engines that can be selected to conduct the desired search. The value of 'All' is the default which means that LexJansen.com, Google, Bing and Yahoo will be used in conducting the search and producing the search results, as shown in Figure 4. If desired, the search results can be produced using a single search engine or the LexJansen.com web portal.

Figure 4. 'Search Engines' selection box.

The 'Filetype' Selection Box

The 'Filetype' selection box provides a drop-down list of available file types that will be allowed in the search results. The value of 'All' is the default which means that all file types (pdf, doc, rtf, ppt, xls, htm, html, gif, jpg, tif, YouTube videos, ps, and Google Earth) will be allowed in the search results, as illustrated in Figure 5. If desired, the search results can be produced using a single file type by selecting an alternate value from the list.

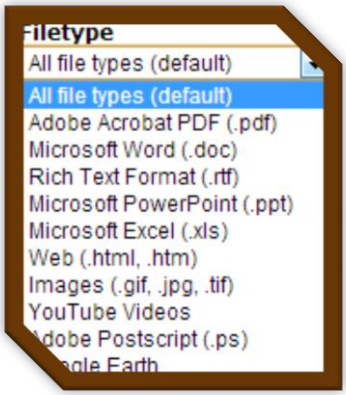

Figure 5. 'Filetype' selection box.

The 'Time Period' Selection Box

The 'Time Period' selection box provides a drop-down list of available time periods that will be allowed in the search results. The value of 'All' is the default which means that all time periods (past 24 hours, past week, past month, past 3 months, past 6 months, past 9 months, past year, past 2 years, past 3 years, past 4 years, past 5 years, past 5 – 10 years, and past 10-plus years)) will be allowed in the search results, as shown in Figure 6. If desired, the search results can be produced with a more limited time period by selecting an alternate value from the list.

Figure 6. 'Time Period' selection box.

The 'Conference' Selection Box

The 'Conference' selection box provides a drop-down list of available conferences that will be allowed in the search results. The value of 'All' is the default which means that all conferences (SGF / SUGI, NESUG, SESUG, MWSUG, SCSUG, PNWSUG, WUSS, PharmaSUG, PharmaSUG China, PhUSE, CDISC, and SEUGI) will be allowed in the search results, as illustrated in Figure 7. If desired, the search results can be limited to a specific conference (or event) by selecting an alternate value from the list.

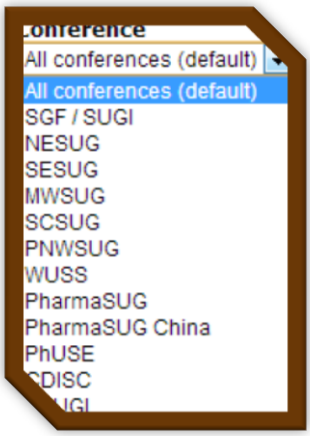

Figure 7. 'Conference' selection box.

The 'Produce Search Results' Button

A search request can be initiated by clicking the 'Produce Search Results' button, as shown in Figure 8.

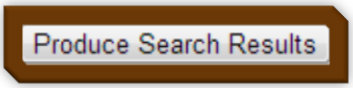

Figure 8. 'Produce Search Results' button.

Conclusion

As the quantity of SAS- and JMP-related content continues to grow, the importance of producing successful searches is not only important, it may be an essential activity in conducting effective research required by an employer. The SAS and JMP user community will greatly benefit from having powerful and quality search tools to help perform better searches and achieve better results. The next generation search tool, sasNerd, aims to reduce frustration levels often produced from ineffective searches and search results. sasNerd offers the user community with a tool to take advantage of the speed, accuracy, organization, and reliability that a "quality" search and the results require.

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Trademark Citations

About the Authors

Kirk Paul Lafler is consultant and founder of Software Intelligence Corporation and has been using SAS since 1979. He is a SAS Certified Professional, provider of IT consulting services, trainer to SAS users around the world, and sasCommunity.org emeritus Advisory Board member. As the author of five books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, Second Edition (2013); PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS (2004), Kirk has written more than five hundred papers and articles, been an Invited speaker and trainer at three hundred-plus SAS International, regional, special-interest, local, and in-house user group conferences and meetings, and is the recipient of 22 "Best" contributed paper, hands-on workshop (HOW), and poster awards.

Charles Edwin Shipp is a programmer, consultant and author, and has been using the SAS and JMP software since 1980. He is credited in the original JMP manual for his roles in the early days. He has written more than one hundred papers and has been an invited speaker at more than one hundred International, regional, local, and special-interest groups. He is the recipient of 12 "Best" contributed paper and poster awards. Charlie is the co-author of three books including the ever-popular Books by Users (BBU) book, Quick Results with SAS/GRAPH Software. Currently, Charlie is involved as an eBook author, App developer for Apple iPad, sasCommunity.org Advisory Board member, consultant for 4Life, AdvoCare, Genesis Pure, Melaleuca, Trivani Foundation International, and consultant in JMP and JMP Genomics.

Richard W. La Valley is the founder and president of Strategic Technology Solutions, Inc. in Arlington, Virginia. As a SAS user since the mid-1970's, Richard has been involved with many of SAS users groups and was the Conference Chair of the 1989 SAS Users Group International (SUGI) Conference in San Francisco, California. He also is responsible for spearheading the projects which have resulted in the additional 60% of SAS community content from the various proceedings.

Lex Jansen has been using SAS software for more than 20 years and works for SAS Institute as a Principle Software Developer. As the developer of LexJansen.com, the web portal for all published SAS and JMP-related content since the beginning of time, Lex has written and presented numerous papers at international, regional, special-interest and local SAS users group conferences and meetings.

Comments and suggestions can be sent to:

Kirk Paul Lafler
E-mail: KirkLafler@cs.com
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/in/KirkPaulLafler
Twitter: @sasNerd

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Charles Edwin Shipp
E-mail: CharlieShipp@aol.com
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=38962944&locale=en_US&trk=tyah
Twitter: @ShippAhoy

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Richard W. LaValley
E-mail: rwlavalley@gmail.com
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=2119474&locale=en_US&trk=tyah

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Lex Jansen
E-mail: LexJansen@gmail.com
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/in/LexJansen
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