I ♥ SAS® Users

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ABSTRACT

This paper is targeted for anyone who has ever used SAS®.

In my 20 some years' experience, I have found SAS® users to be smart, helpful and highly motivated. I would like to share some of the experiences I have had in supporting SAS® users.

INTRODUCTION

I have worked with SAS® and supported SAS® users for a long time. In my current position, SAS® users outnumber our support team 300:1. My first week in this position, SAS® was upgraded from version 8 to version 9. That week, I had 48 Help Desk tickets! Needless to say, I found myself being very dependent upon our SAS® users if only in the hopes they wouldn't bury me in all those tickets. Turns out, they didn't. For this reason and many more, I can whole-heartedly declare that I ♥ SAS® users!

SAS® LOGS

Whenever a SAS® user comes to me for help, I am most likely to ask for a SAS® log. I have learned to be clear that I would like to see the *complete* SAS® log. Usually the first response to my request is a screenshot such as:

```
2298
2299


ERROR: Errors printed on pages 252,276,277,278,279.
ERROR: Errors printed on pages 252,276,277,278,279.
ERROR: Errors printed on pages 252,276,277,278,279.


NOTE: SAS Institute Inc., SAS Campus Drive, Cary, NC USA 27513-2414
NOTE: The SAS System used:
```

Needless to say, that's not very informative in tracking down a SAS® error.

SAS® CODE

After I've gained the confidence of the SAS® user (assuring that I will not laugh at the SAS® code because code is code and can definitely get messy), I can usually get all the information I need to help them with their errors.
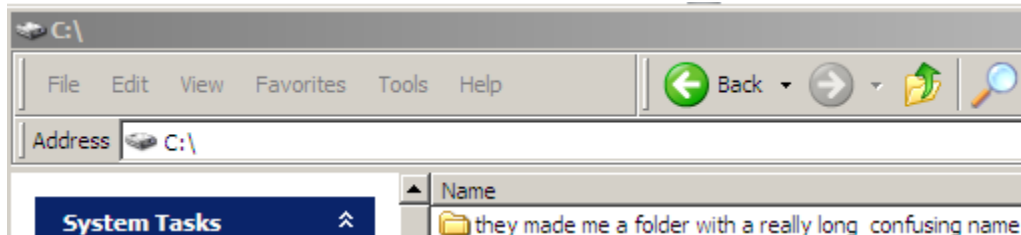
Some errors can appear quite difficult to find. One user sent me the following SAS® error:

```
1     PROC EXPORT DATA = sashelp.air
2     OUTFILE = 'c:\they made me a folder with a really long confusing name\air.xls'
3     REPLACE;
4     RUN;

ERROR: CLI error trying to establish connection: [Microsoft][ODBC Excel Driver]
'(unknown)' is not a
        valid path. Make sure that the path name is spelled correctly and that you are
connected to
```

```
        the server on which the file resides.
ERROR: Error in the LIBNAME statement.
Connection Failed.  See log for details.
NOTE: The SAS System stopped processing this step because of errors.
```

That code looks just fine. However, the error indicates that the destination location for the export does not exist. In browsing through the folders, we found that although our SAS® user typed the folder name into her code very nicely, the folder itself was not named very well.

See the extra space between "long" and "confusing"?

USERID/PWD

Sometimes, I may ask a SAS® user to send me the SAS® program. In these situations, I may need to rerun the code in order to recreate the error. On one such occasion, I received following code:

```
PROC SQL;
connect to odbc(dsn=super_secret_data user=userid pwd=my_password_to_everything);
create table…
```

I don't know about your organization but for mine, the follow-up I needed to do with this user included a reminder on password policies.

WHERE'S THE OUTPUT?

Another SAS® user had some very simple code that ran a PROC EXPORT. The code looked something like:
```
PROC EXPORT = sashelp.air
OUTFILE = 'c:\air.xls'
REPLACE;
RUN;
```

The code appeared to run without any errors; however, the output spreadsheet was never created. My teammates and I took turns running the code and getting perfect output. Finally, we decided we should sit with the user and see if possibly there wasn't something wrong with his machine or the SAS® installation. When he ran the code by highlighting the text and hitting The Running Man, we witnessed:

Golly Gee! The missing `RUN;` statement! That'll get you every time.

NOW THAT'S DEDICATION!

Our SAS® users are very dedicated. At times, we need to apply maintenance to the SAS® server. These maintenance activities usually take place over the weekends during very early morning hours. At times, I've witnessed multiple users logging onto the SAS® server as early as 6:00am on Sundays!

One particular SAS® user was extremely dedicated to his analysis. While monitoring the server one day, I found that he had a SAS® session running on the server for over two weeks. The server was stressing that day and I was looking for older running SAS® sessions that could be terminated. I called the user and he declared that he was still using the SAS® session. You just can't beat that type of dedication. Sadly, my response to him had to include a reminder on server use best practices which state that you should periodically exit all work and logoff the company's servers.

CONCLUSION

I am very humbled when I find a SAS® user snagged in a simple error and am able to be of assistance in helping to resolve the error. It is an honor and a privilege to work with such magnificent people as the much ❤'d SAS® users.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Your comments and questions are valued and encouraged. Contact the author at:

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