A Review of "Free" Massive Open Online Content (MOOC) for SAS® Learners

Kirk Paul Lafler, sasNerd

Abstract

Leading online providers are now offering SAS® users with "free" access to content for learning how to use and program in SAS. This content is available to anyone in the form of massive open online content (or courses) (MOOC). Not only is all the content offered for "free", but it is designed with the distance learner in mind, empowering users to learn using a flexible and self-directed approach. As noted on Wikipedia.org, "A MOOC is an online course, content, or other resource aimed at unlimited participation and made available in an open access forum using the web." This presentation illustrates how anyone can access a wealth of learning technologies including comprehensive student notes, instructor lesson plans, hands-on exercises, PowerPoints, audio, webinars, and videos.

Introduction

The age of massive open online content (and courses), often referred to as MOOC, is not only a reality, it is gaining huge popularity among students and professionals. With education costs on the rise, and in many cases increasing out of control, several higher education institutions and organizations are challenging the current education financial model by offering MOOCs for students, professionals and others to choose from. Higher education Universities such as, Princeton University, Stanford University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of Pennsylvania, Duke University, University of Michigan, and organizations in the private sector such as, SAS Institute Inc., Coursera, and a number of other organizations and universities around the world are now offering online courses and certificate programs. A number of public, private, and online universities are now offering degree programs that can be completed exclusively online as well.

What is a Massive Open Online Course/Content (MOOC)?

As technology continues to reach for newer and greater horizons, it is becoming increasingly more important for students, professionals, and those with a curiosity to acquire knowledge to have avenues to continue their quest for learning. Many forward-thinking organizations, universities and degree-granting institutions use the advances that technology provides to help make some of their courses available to the masses around the world. A MOOC offers learners everywhere with an alternative to mainstream courses, degrees, and certificate programs that were once only available through brick-and-mortar classrooms where attendees were forced to commute to supported locations or become a resident on college campuses.

A MOOC allows courses and content to be freely taught by the best and brightest in open- and online learning environments to massive audiences. By delivering education in a MOOC format, anyone with a computer (workstation, laptop or "smart" device), an Internet connection and a web browser, can select or enroll in one of the many "free" courses currently being offered, learn from "real-time" or recorded lessons from the comfort of their living rooms, bedrooms, dorms, offices, beach houses, or anywhere else they are in the world. Needless to say, the availability of "free" resources along with the flexibility they offer has fostered a high degree of excitement, enthusiasm and an ever-growing audience for the MOOC format.

How is a MOOC Structured?

A MOOC is structured very similar to an online course. A MOOCs structure typically consists of a course title, abstract or description of its content, a syllabus, expected learning objectives, "live" or recorded lectures or lessons, reading assignments, hands-on assignments, and quizzes. Students tune in to the "live" or recorded lectures, perform the required reading and hands-on assignments, and take the quizzes, adhering to the required scheduled timeline. At the completion of a MOOC, students receive a grade from the MOOC leader or instructor, just as if they had enrolled in a traditional course.

A Review of "Free" MOOC Resources

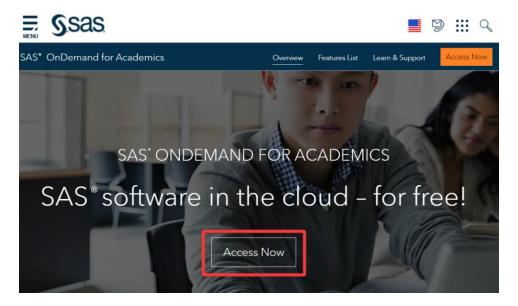
As the age of massive open online content (and courses) is upon us, the world of the SAS user is also being positively impacted with many "free" MOOC resources. Numerous MOOC courses and content are now available to help support SAS users in their quest to effectively improve their analytical, programming, statistical, and reporting skills. For content and courses that may contain a sizeable amount of material, some MOOC offerings may involve splitting larger and more involved topics into smaller, more digestible, pieces, a process known as specializing. So, where can SAS users find "free" MOOC resources? The following list of "free" MOOC resources is available to SAS users everywhere.

"Free" MOOC Resources for SAS Users

- 1) SAS® On-Demand for Academics software
- 2) Online SAS documentation in PDF and HTML format on support.sas.com
- 3) SAS Proceedings "White" papers on LexJansen.com
- 4) SAS YouTube Channel Videos

SAS® On-Demand for Academics Software

The SAS® On-Demand for Academics software is "free" to anyone. Available for PC, Mac, or Linux Workstations, the SAS On-Demand for Academics software includes SAS® Studio, Base SAS®, SAS/STAT®, SAS/IML®, SAS/ACCESS® for Windows, SAS/ETS, SAS/OR, SAS/QC, and other SAS-provided products.



Base SAS Features

The Base SAS software contains a built in DATA step programming language, the ability to access a wide-range of data sources, comprehensive set of functions to handle data manipulation, an assortment of "canned" and ready-to-use procedures, a comprehensive SQL language, reporting and customization feature for reports and results using Output Delivery System (ODS), data display informats and output formats, comprehensive data visualization features known as ODS Statistical Graphics, data management capabilities, and much more.

SAS/STAT® Features

The SAS/STAT software supports the application of the latest statistical techniques. It supports the following statistical routines: Analysis of Variance, Bayesian Analysis, Categorical Data Analysis, Cluster Analysis, Mixed Models, Multivariate Analysis, Nonparametric Analysis, Regression Analysis, Survey Sampling and Analysis, Statistical Graphics, and much more.

SAS/IML® Features

The SAS/IML software is an interactive matrix programming language and supports the ability to conduct Exploratory Analysis, the integration with the R programming language, dynamically linked graphics, and much more.

SAS/ACCESS® Features

The SAS/ACCESS software supports the ability to read, write, and update data sources; provides a flexible query language; supports the access to a variety of data sources including text files, dat files, CSV files, Excel spreadsheets, Microsoft SQL Server, and ODBC; and much more.

SAS Studio

The SAS Studio software serves as the user interface; supports Web applications; the access to data files, libraries and programs; the ability to recover files; dynamically link graphics; and much more.

SAS' Technical Support Website

SAS' technical support website, <u>support.sas.com</u>, contains a wealth of "free" SAS technical support content. Users are provided with access to timely information pertaining to: Admin, Programmer, Statistician and User content; the "best" in class comprehensive technical support content; training and books; what's happenings including User Group Information; access to "free" webinars and podcasts; access to code samples; access to SAS comprehensive documentation; and much more. The support.sas.com user interface is illustrated in Figure 2, below.

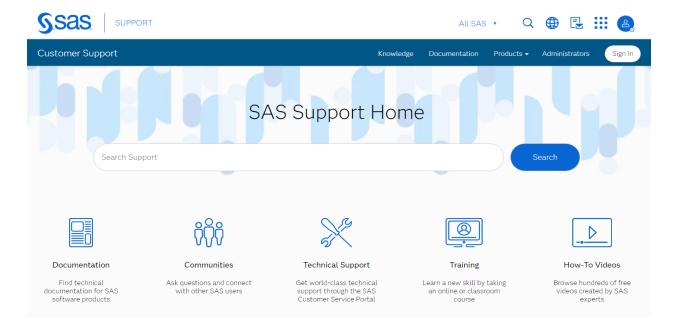


Figure 2. support.sas.com Home

Knowledge Base - SAS Products and Solutions

Users can easily explore the Knowledge Base of SAS Products and Solutions, System Requirements, Install Center, Third-Party Software Reference, Documentation, Papers, Samples & SAS Notes, and Focus Areas by accessing http://support.sas.com/software/, illustrated in Figure 3, below.

KNOWLEDGE BASE / SAS PRODUCTS & SOLUTIONS

KNOWLEDGE BASE SAS® Products and Solutions o Products & Solutions SAS 9.4 SAS® 9.4 • SAS 9.3 The second maintenance release for SAS 9.4, which includes the Analytical Products 13.2, is the most recent release of SAS software. SAS 9.4 TS1M2 (9.4M2) is available to customers starting in August 2014. It delivers a more highly available and resilient platform for deploying SAS in traditional on-site environments Maintenance & Product Upgrades System Requirements along with additional support for private and public cloud deployments » Read more about SAS 9.4 and the Analytical Products • Third-Party Software Reference SAS Product Listing: Index A-Z • Papers o Samples & SAS Notes The product listing offers a one-stop shop for documentation, samples, training and news provided by • Focus Areas product A B C D E F G H I J L M O Q R S T U V W SAS/ACCESS SAS Activity-Based Management SAS Add-In for Microsoft Office SAS Anti-Money Laundering SAS/AF SAS Analytics Pro SAS AppDev Studio Base SAS

Figure 3. Knowledge Base - SAS Products and Solutions

Knowledge Base - Documentation

Users have the ability to access a comprehensive set of SAS product documentation in either HTML or PDF format and can be accessed at http://support.sas.com/documentation/index.html, as shown in Figure 4, below.

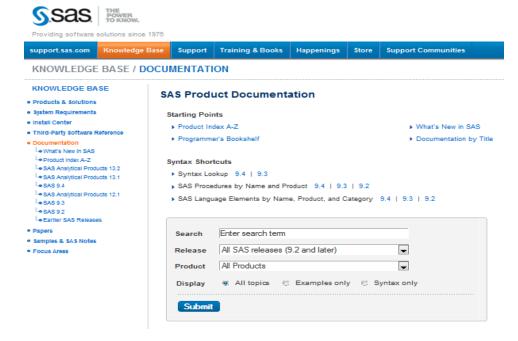


Figure 4. Knowledge Base – SAS Product Documentation

Published SAS Proceedings and "White" Papers

Users are provided access to more than 38K "free" published SAS "white" papers all in the form of PDF documents. Provided with a built-in Google® search applet, users are able to search for content from 1976 to the present from SGF / SUGI, SUEGI, the various Regional conferences, PharmaSUG / PharmaSUG China, PhUSE, CDISC Forum, and other venues. Papers can be accessed using the http://www.lexjansen.com/ user interface, as shown in Figure 5, below.



Figure 5. Published SAS Proceedings on lexjansen.com

LexJansen.com - Search Feature

LexJansen.com provides a built-in Google search applet that can be used by users to find papers of interest, as shown in Figure 6, below.

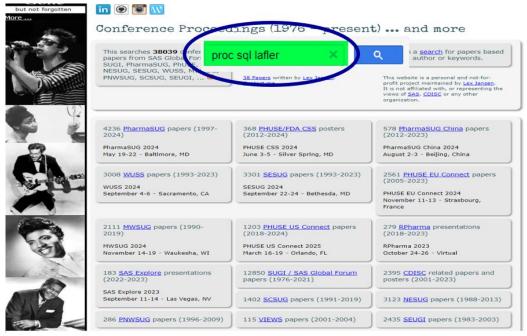


Figure 6. Built-in Google Search Applet in LexJansen.com

LexJansen.com - Search Results

LexJansen.com's search results display the most relevant results first, based on the search keyword or phrase entered in the search box, as illustrated in Figure 7, below.

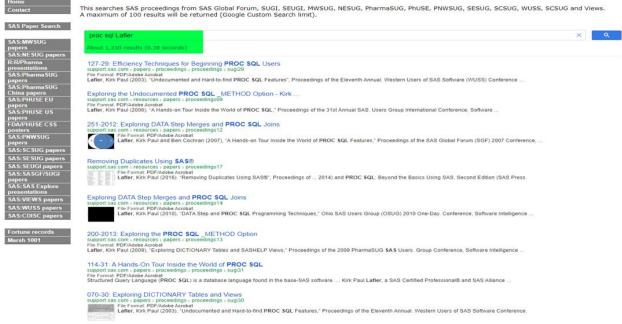


Figure 7. LexJansen.com Search Results

Viewing a Paper from LexJansen.com

Any paper of interest that is found with the built-in Google search applet and/or displayed in the search results can be viewed, saved, or printed as needed. A "sample" paper from LexJansen.com is shown in Figure 8, below.

Paper 930-2017

Advanced Programming Techniques with PROC SQL

Kirk Paul Lafler, Software Intelligence Corporation, Spring Valley, California

Abstract

The SQL Procedure contains a number of powerful and elegant language features for SQL users. This hands-on workshop (HOW) emphasizes highly valuable and widely usable advanced programming techniques that will help users of Base-SAS® harness the power of the SQL procedure. Topics include using PROC SQL to identify FIRST.row, LAST.row and Between.rows in BY-group processing; constructing and searching the contents of a value-list macro variable for a specific value; data validation operations using various integrity constraints; data summary operations to process down rows and across columns; and using the MSGLEVEL= system option and _METHOD SQL option to capture vital processing and the algorithm selected and used by the optimizer when processing a query.

Introduction

The SQL procedure is a wonderful tool for querying and subsetting data; restructuring data by constructing case expressions; constructing and using virtual tables known as a view; access information from Dictionary tables; and joining two or more tables to explore data relationships. Occasionally, an application problem comes along where the SQL procedure is either better suited or easier to use than other more conventional DATA and/or PROC step methods. As each situation presents itself, PROC SQL should be examined to see if its use is warranted for the task at hand.

Example Tables

The examples used throughout this paper utilize a database of two tables. (A relational database is a collection of tables.) The data used in all the examples in this paper consists of a selection of movies that I've viewed over the years. The Movies table consists of six columns: title, length, category, year, studio, and rating. Title, category, studio, and rating are defined as character columns with length and year being defined as numeric columns. The data stored in the Movies table is depicted below.

Figure 8. A "Sample" Paper from LexJansen.com

SAS YouTube Channel Videos

The SAS YouTube Channel Videos are available to all users and can be accessed at, http://www.youtube.com/. With more than 2,400 videos, the available video include: Analytics 2014, Featured SAS Customer Stories, SAS Customer Stories, SAS Visual Analytics, SAS Customer Intelligence, SAS Data Management, SAS High-Performance Analytics, Popular Uploads, and Created Playlists. The SAS YouTube Channel also provides access to various featured SAS channels, as shown in Figure 9, below.

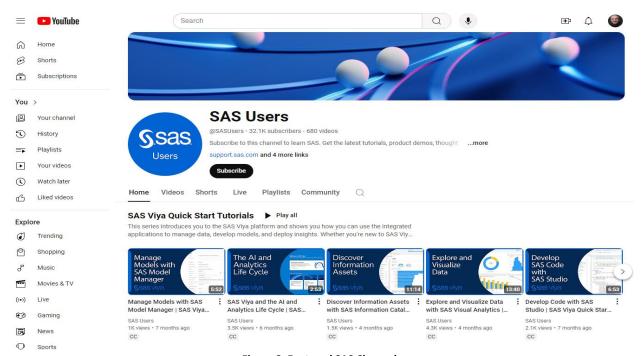
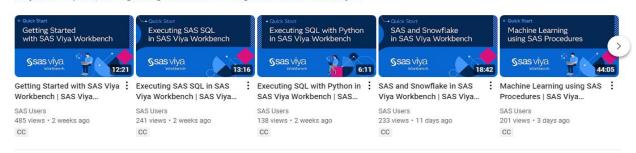


Figure 9. Featured SAS Channels

The SAS YouTube Channel supports a number of channels, as shown in Figure 10, below.

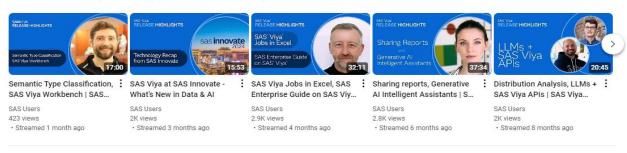
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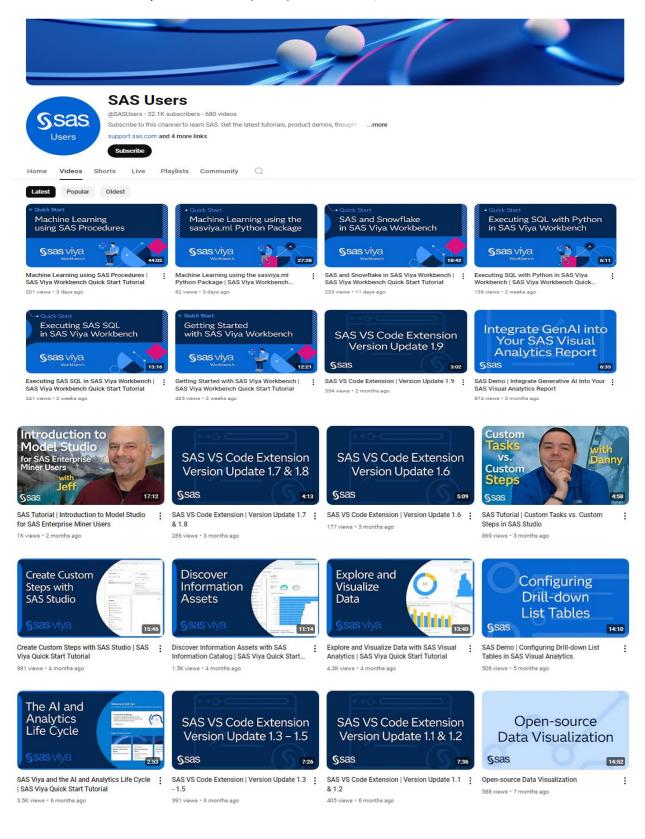
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Conclusion

As technology reaches for newer and greater horizons, many forward-thinking organizations, universities and degree-granting institutions are making some of their courses available to the masses around the world. The MOOC format allows courses and content to be freely taught by the best and brightest in open- and online learning environments to massive audiences. By delivering education in a MOOC format, anyone with a computer (workstation, laptop or "smart" device), an Internet connection and a web browser, can select or enroll in one of the many "free" courses currently being offered, learn from "real-time" or recorded lessons from the comfort of their living rooms, bedrooms, dorms, offices, beach houses, or anywhere else they are in the world. Needless to say, the availability of "free" resources along with the flexibility they offer has fostered a high degree of excitement, enthusiasm and an ever-growing audience for the MOOC format.

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Kirk Paul Lafler is a data scientist, consultant, developer, programmer, and educator; and teaches SAS Programming and Data Management in the Statistics Department at San Diego State University. Kirk also provides project-based consulting, programming, and training services to client organizations in a variety of industries including healthcare, life sciences, credit card processing, technology, energy, research, and business; and teaches "virtual" and "live" SAS, SQL, Python, Database Management Systems (DBMS) technologies, AWS, Excel, R, and cloud-based technologies and software. Currently, Kirk serves as the Western Users of SAS Software (WUSS) Executive Committee (EC) Open-Source Advocate and Coordinator and is actively involved with several proprietary and open-source software user groups and conference committees. As the author of several books including the popular PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, Third Edition (SAS Press. 2019), Kirk is an Invited speaker, educator, keynote, and mentor, and is the recipient of 29 "Best" contributed paper, hands-on workshop (HOW), and poster awards.

Comments and suggestions are encouraged and can be sent to:

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