You Could Be a SAS® Nerd If . . .

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Abstract

Are you a SAS® nerd? Wiktionary, a wiki-based Open Content dictionary, defines "nerd" as a person who has good technical or scientific skills, but is generally introspective or introverted. Another definition is a person who is intelligent but socially and physically awkward. Obviously there are other definitions for "nerd", many of which are associated with derogatory terms or stereotypes. This presentation focuses not on the negative descriptions associated with being a nerd, but on the many positive traits SAS users possess. So let's see how nerdy you actually are using the mostly unscientific, but fun, "Nerd" detector.

Introduction

Could you be a SAS nerd? Here are a few questions to ponder. Do you find that you have an intense interest in technical things related to the SAS software? Do you consider yourself adept at technical matters, particularly when it comes to SAS software? And finally, would you rather be working on a piece of SAS code or solving a technical SAS problem than being at a social gathering? If you found yourself answering "yes" to these questions, then perhaps, there's a little SAS nerd in you. At least that's what some people would say.

You Could Be a SAS Nerd If . . .

The following scenarios offer you a way to determine whether you could be a SAS nerd. They are real scenarios based on actual events or experiences by the author and/or comments shared by other SAS users. Could you be a SAS nerd? Let's see.

1. You own every SAS manual ever written dating back to SAS 76.

2. You own a personal copy of the SAS 76 manual, and you still use it.

3. You refuse to lend any of your SAS manuals to colleagues' level your computer desk.

4. When you discovered that your wife/husband put an ad on Ebay to sell all your SAS manuals you secretly submitted the "winning" bid.

5. You're convinced that the beginning of recorded history is January 1st, 1960.

6. You celebrate January 1st, 1960 with family and friends.

7. You not only enjoy reading the SAS Log, but you purposely make coding mistakes to examine the different types of errors generated along with a description of the error messages.

8. You blog SAS-related comments and technical solutions frequently.

9. You have more than five SAS blogs in your RSS feed.

10. Your home page is support.sas.com, sasCommunity.org, SAS-L, or LexJansen.com.

11. You know more than ten SAS keyboard shortcuts.

12. You get excited when you find a new match-merge technique that performs better than the one you developed the week before.

13. You set your computer alarm to alert you to any and all messages on SAS-L.

14. You keep a notepad and pen in the master bathroom or in your top dresser drawer so you can capture any new technical programming technique without drawing too much attention from your spouse.

15. You wake up in the middle of the night working out minute details on match-merging, table lookup, and sort techniques.

16. Your dog or cat's name is Hash, SeQueL, PROCie, Mergellan, Univariate, or Transpose.

17. You refer to your spouse as "SASSYpoo", "SASGladiator", "SASinator", or some other endearing name.

18. Your screen name, nickname, or avatar is "Macro Maven", "SASMan", "SASGuru" or some other alias containing or referencing SAS software.

19. You prefer being called "SASMan", "MacroMaven" or "SASGuru" by your colleagues rather than by your real name.

20. You proudly drive your car to work, to school, to the grocery store, and everywhere else with a license plate that reads "SASMAN", "SASYMAN", "SASYDAD", "SASLADY", "SASYGAL", "SASYMOM", "SASGURU", "ILUVSAS", or "SASNERD".

21. You have more than one version of SAS on your machine or network so you can compare and contrast program, processing and output differences.

22. You performed a Hash join on your wedding, or your son's or daughter's wedding invitations.

23. You automatically find yourself rewriting code even when the owner just wants you to look at sample output.

24. You can't help but to look over a colleague's shoulder while they write code, and no matter how proficient they are, you're pretty sure you can do it better.

25. You see your colleague's code and think, "hmmmmm . . . . . what an amateur!".

26. You have set up watchlists or alerts on more than a dozen "hot" SAS topics.

27. You provided a colleague who attended SGF 2010 in Seattle with a completely sorted and catalogued data set of nearly 300 Starbucks with their proximity to the Seattle Convention Center and the neighboring hotels.

28. You spend your Friday evenings and weekends responding to SAS-L posts, entering sasCommunity blog entries, and reading the latest "hot" SAS topic on LexJansen.com.

29. You wear Conference Name badges and those precious ribbons like a badge of honor.

30. You save all your Conference Name badges and ribbons from the many conferences you've attended since 1981 so someday you can reminisce about your conference experiences.

31. You carefully arrange your conference ribbons so no two colors clash with one another.

32. Your favorite clothing is one of the many conference t-shirts that you've collected since 1981.

33. Rather than part with your conference t-shirts due to space issues, you purchase one or more rolling storage racks with covers and relocate everything to the garage along with all your other SAS memorabilia.

34. You devote no less than an entire room in your house or apartment for SAS memorabilia.

35. You spend no less than 60 minutes writing a macro routine to do something you could have done by hand in 2 minutes or less and don't think it was a waste of time.

36. With all the different reality shows on television, you wonder why there isn't one showing the exciting life of a SAS user.

37. You read more SAS books and manuals than your spouse reads novels.

38. The first thing you read in the morning is the "Tip of the Day".

39. You've created a Google or Bing search called "My SAS Search".

40. You employer will not allow you to install games, so instead you write your own in SAS.

41. You seldom become angry but when a colleague omits an "Else" condition in a series of IF-THEN or an "Otherwise" condition in SELECT-WHEN scenarios, you barely can contain yourself.

42. You use a semi-colon in your emails to end a sentence.

43. Family members and friends wonder why you end every sentence with a semi-colon instead of a period.

44. You can't wait to read the SAS book you won at a conference give-away on the plane home.

45. You subscribe to five or more SAS groups on LinkedIn, sasCommunity, and Facebook and you use a tabbed browser so you can be online with all of them at the same time.

46. You frequently excuse yourself during family vacations, from the dinner table, during family time, and special events so you can read and post responses to SAS-L topics.

47. You spend your evenings and weekends SAS-L'ing, Googling and Binging looking for elegant SAS technical solutions.

48. You not only know the number of SAS System options there are in SAS 9.2, but you've personally experimented with each.

49. You cringe at the thought of performing a Cartesian Product join on a Library of 200 tables, hundreds of columns, and billions of rows.

50. You proudly proclaim that you're a SAS programmer when asked by a fellow passenger, "What do you do for a living?"

51. You're amazed when your fellow airline passenger replies, "What is a "SAS programmer?".

52. You first look at the upcoming SAS conference schedule before scheduling your family's vacation.

53. All your vacations for the past twenty years have coincided with local, regional, special-interest, and International SAS user group conferences, educational forums and symposiums.

54. You're aware that ""))%*"))*/;" sequence of characters may offer a way to kick-start the SAS interpreter when it stops responding to program steps that have been submitted.

55. You anxiously agree to be a conference Code Doctor so you can dazzle and impress your colleagues with your SAS skills.

56. You're amazed that there still aren't any Universities offering a Ph.D in SASology.

57. When your wife says, "IF you don't shut down SAS and come to bed, THEN I'm going to leave you!", and you chastise her for omitting the ELSE condition.

58. To stay somewhat current with all my younger nerd colleagues, I now connect using LinkedIn, tweet with Twitter, and collaborate on sasCommunity . . . And who ever said "older nerds can't learn new tricks?".

Conclusion

Prior to reading this paper you probably thought, "no way I'm a SAS nerd." In fact you may still feel that way. But for the rest of us, the prospect of sharing one or more of the scenarios presented in this paper puts a different perspective on the topic. Whether you're a totally hip SAS user with no hint of being a nerd, a little bit of a SAS nerd, or a complete SAS nerd, the important thing to remember is that you've found something you can devote such passion to. So be happy and enjoy the journey.

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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 Advisory Board emeritus member. As the author of four books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, Kirk has written nearly five hundred papers and articles, been an Invited speaker and trainer at more than three hundred SAS International, regional, local, and special-interest user group conferences and meetings throughout North America, and is the recipient of 19 "Best" contributed paper, hands-on workshop (HOW), and poster awards. His popular SAS Tips column, "Kirk's Korner of Quick and Simple Tips", appears regularly in several SAS User Group newsletters and Web sites, and his fun-filled SASword Puzzles is featured in SAScommunity.org.

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