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Special points of interest:

- Ride the tide; SESUG comes to the Tidewater area of Virginia this October!
- Kirk Lafler talks about ways to play with data

The SESUG Informant

Riding the Tide to SESUG '05!

It's been a while since SESUG has been to Virginia. SESUG '98 was at the beautiful Sheraton Hotel in Norfolk. The SESUG Executive Council got an interesting sense of *déjà vu* as we returned to the Tidewater area, and looked across the Elizabeth River and saw our old site—while standing in the home of SESUG 2005, the Portsmouth Renaissance Hotel.

Co-chairs Jenine Eason (AutoTrader.com) and Deb Cassidy (PPD, Inc.) have already invested over a year in planning, preparing, and building the groundwork for this conference. They have pledged to provide an even better educational opportunity than the year before—which is not going to be easy to top! On the other hand, listening to this team talk; they are going all out to provide the very best of everything possible.

Last year's Pre-Conference Workshops in Nashville were very successful, so they will continue at the \$99 price on Saturday, October 22nd and Sunday, October 23rd. We have the benefit of fine instructors from throughout the region, currently offering up abstracts and outlines for the classes they'd like to offer. Keep



an eye on www.sesug.org; we'll be posting the class schedule as soon as it is confirmed.

We'll have networking opportunities Sunday evening; we'll even offer suggestions of local restaurants where you can spend a little time with old friends and meet new ones over dinner. Then we invite you back to the hotel for our Opening Session, featuring a keynote speaker from SAS,

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=== Errata ===

In our Fall newsletter, we thanked our sponsors and vendors for their participation in the 2004 conference. In the printed version, the blue logo for ASG, Inc. did not reproduce—and left a blank spot in the middle of the ad, which was not caught until after we distributed the newsletter. We apologize to ASG Inc., and want them to know we appreciate their participation!



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Words From the Prez

The chairs for Nashville are breathing a big, tired sigh at this point... Imelda (Mel) Go and Neil Howard worked very hard on making 2004 a great conference—and boy (girls?) did it showed.

You wouldn't think that winter is a busy season for SESUG; but it sure is. The meetings at the conference, working on ensuring the current one is great and the next is even better; doing all the business of selecting sites and hotels for future conferences; participating in the Regional User Group (RUG) Summit with SAS; our own Winter meeting, where the Executive Council looks over the next year's conference site and takes care of wrapping up the prior year's conference; planning speaker sharing, so we can go visit and make new friends at Local User Groups (LUG) all over the region; and most important, ensuring that every dollar that comes into SESUG goes toward continuing to build a strong, solid educational experience for the region!

It's a lot of work... and most people don't realize that SESUG is entirely a volunteer organization. All the monies coming into SESUG are spent on building the next conference(s) and supporting

local users and user groups.

So, I'd like to express my appreciation here for not only the people who support SESUG by coming to our conferences, but a hearty thanks for *all* the people who give so generously of their valuable time, incredible talents, and tireless effort. Without you, SESUG would be just an interesting idea, instead of the positive organization we have become.



A special note of thanks and appreciation is due—and hereby given—to S. David Riba and Greg Nelson. Dave chaired the very first SESUG back in 1993, and was literally one of our founding fathers; Greg hosted 1999, and has poured time and effort into SESUG ever since. Both have retired from active duty on the SESUG EC, though both will continue to participate in SESUG activities. Thanks, gentlemen.

And now, there's more work to be done; if there's going to be a conference in 2006, 2007, 2008, and beyond—I better go make sure all their planning is on track!

See you in Portsmouth!

- Dan Bruns

"... most people don't realize that SESUG is entirely a volunteer organization."

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and a Meet and Greet reception following.

On Monday and Tuesday, we continue the hallmark of SESUG conferences; six concurrent rooms, with ten tracks of papers, demos, and presentations. We have long recognized that some of the finest SAS programmers, analysts, statisticians, and instructors are guests at SESUG; even a few who travel just to exhibit at our conference.



2005 Co-chairs Deb Cassidy (left) and Jenine Eason

Hospitality! Our presenters always make themselves available for questions, discussions, and chat after their presentation; many will also host tables at our Meet the Presenter luncheons on Monday.

Time to relax and enjoy the company of our colleagues is another fine SESUG tradition. We'll also have the chance to feud just a little bit - at the first SESUG Family Feud! Come join host Barrett Joyner and teams of SAS users from all over the

region as we enjoy an evening of friendly feuds

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Of course, we continue the tradition of Southern

Conference Wrap-Up... Our Attendees Speak!

"This was my first conference. I enjoyed it. Thank you for the experience"

We at SESUG don't like to toot our own horns... welllllll, maybe a *little* bit... but this year, the feedback we got said it all. Yes, we really do read every evaluation form, right after the conference, and discuss how to make next year's even better. But this year, the complaints were minor, and few and far between—and the praise was extraordinary. So, it seemed appropriate to let our attendees do a little of the talking.

"The whole conference was great"

Words that warm the heart of any member of the cast of SESUG '04; the knowledge that the attendees got their money's worth—and more.

"This day and a half has probably been the most worthwhile use of time recently"

Co-chairs Neil Howard, Imelda "Mel" Go, their crew of volunteers, and the SESUG EC spent almost two years in preparation for SESUG '04. The quotes listed here are comments from people who attended our first full conference in the Volunteer State.

"I liked every session that I attended throughout the 1 1/2 days. There were interesting topics at all times"



Over 100 papers, presentations, demos, and classes were offered to the attendees. SESUG once again proved that it was a resource second to none for SAS education in the region.

"Lots of folks obviously did a lot of work (planning and org) to make this conference so good"

We did, and we do—and we're glad you noticed!

"My boss probably thinks I'm just getting out of the office but he's getting a good return on investment"

We hope that everyone will keep that particular argument in mind when you request your trip to Portsmouth for SESUG '05! It's always our goal to give as much "bang for the buck" as we can.

"Terrific conference – my compliments to everyone who made this conference a success"



Imelda "Mel" Go (left) and Neil Howard, SESUG 2004 co-chairs

And thanks are indeed due; to Mel and Neil; to the hard-working section chairs for the conference; the many volunteers who helped in a thousand ways; and to our sponsors and vendors who provided us support. SAS Institute Inc, with a special tip of the SESUG hat to our liaison, Lorraine Rizzon; Destiny

Corporation; SGI; Comsys; Qualex Consulting Services Inc; Smith Hanley Consulting Group, Inc; MedFocus; Intel; and ASG Inc—thank you all!

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Marje Fecht is with Prowerk Consulting LLC, and is a new member of the SESUG EC. She is a frequent presenter at regional conferences and SUGI, and is scheduled to co-chair SESUG '06 in Atlanta GA.

Finding new speakers and new topics for User Group presentations isn't always easy due to the schedules and commitments of the participants. SESUG can help.

SESUG's Speaker-Sharing Program

Do you attend or serve as an organizer for a SAS User Group in your area?

If yes, then you have experienced the benefits of a group of users sharing their SAS knowledge, problems and experiences. (If no, be sure to visit SAS's web page for user groups, <http://support.sas.com/usergroups/nafrica/us.html>)

Finding new speakers and new topics for User Group presentations isn't always easy, due to the schedules and commitments of the participants. SESUG can help! Speaker sharing is one of the many ways SESUG supports local SAS user groups. SESUG will sponsor and provide user groups in the South East with one speaker annually. We have a number of speakers and their presentations available; the bios and abstracts are listed on our website, www.sesug.org. The presentations cover a broad range of topics and are delivered by our SESUG featured speakers. You can select from a list of over 25 presentations representing beginner through advanced topics.

The SESUG speaker-sharing program supported the following user groups with recent presentations:

JASUG (Jackson, Mississippi)
18Nov2004 meeting

Frank Dilorio presented ***Program Comprehension: A Strategy for the Bewildered*** and ***The SAS Debugging Primer***

VASUG (Richmond, Virginia)
16Feb2005 meeting

Marje Fecht presented ***Fun with Functions***

MASUG (Memphis, Tennessee)
17Feb2005 meeting

Andrew Kuligowski presented ***Pruning the SASLOG***

Would you like to arrange a speaker for your User Group meeting? Be sure to plan ahead (2-3 months lead time is appreciated) so that we can help you to arrange your first choice of **topic**, **author**, and **date**. See the Speaker Sharing link on www.sesug.org to view the list of presenters, topics, and logistics.

Contact: Marje Fecht at Marje.Fecht@prowerk.com

Local User Groups in Virginia—Come Visit!

NORTHERN VA SAS USER GROUP (NOVASUG)

Contact: Gary McQuown
Fairfax, VA
email: gmcquown@dasconsultants.com
URL: <http://www.novasug.org>

VIRGINIA SAS USERS GROUP (VASUG)

Contact: Andrea Wainwright
Richmond, VA
email: liaison@vasug.org
URL: <http://www.vasug.org>

WASHINGTON DC SAS USERS GROUP (DCSUG)

Contact: Roger Goodwin
Fairfax, VA
email: Roger_Goodwin@nass.usda.gov
URL: <http://www.dc-sug.org>



Just a friendly reminder—
our 13th annual SESUG conference is to be held in lovely
Portsmouth, Virginia, October 23rd-25th, 2005.

See you in Portsmouth!



"Hampton Roads, Tidewater, Coastal Virginia, metropolitan Norfolk—all these terms are used to refer to Portsmouth and the many surrounding cities you can explore on your trip to SESUG'05. Plan to arrive by car, plane, or boat!"

For questions or comments on SESUG '05, including how
to get involved, please contact the conference co-chairs:

Deb Cassidy
Academic Chair
debcsesug@usa.com

Jenine Eason
Operations Chair
Jenine.Eason@Autotrader.com

Please visit us at the SESUG Conference website for contacts and other questions.

www.sesug.org



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and fun! One hundred people surveyed, top five answers on the board, here's your question—"Name the finest regional educational opportunity for practitioners of SAS?"

"SESUG!" **ding** Number one answer...



Family Feud and the Family Feud logo are ©2002 Fremantle Media Ltd

Our friends at SAS Institute will be offering their hospitality in wonderful ways this year, as they always do. They will be hosting the SAS Demo Room, where you can go to see new SAS products, watch software demos, and purchase publications and Books By Users (several BBU authors are scheduled to be in attendance as well). Most important, you can ask questions of the knowledgeable and effective SAS team

members; and if they don't know the answers, they can sure find them! Of course, we will also have a host of sponsors and vendors, supporters of SESUG that are always delighted to chat with our attendees! SAS will also be cordially inviting everyone to a mixer on Monday night, giving you a chance to mix and mingle in a relaxed atmosphere.

We cordially invite you to join us for our Tuesday Keynote luncheon, with Barrett Joyner as our featured speaker. Barrett will provide wit, wisdom, and a laugh or two, as we wind SESUG down for another year...

But it's not quite wrapped up yet! Never to be missed is our Closing Session; surprises, giveaways, and a preview of our return to Atlanta, Georgia for SESUG '06, provided by co-chairs Marje Fecht and Deborah Skinner. They'll outline their plans for the excitement in Atlanta!

The list goes on as to what SESUG can offer. We will offer a display of Posters from noted SAS users. This year, Destiny Corp. adds to their popular interactive learning kiosk with video posters. We can also provide information on how to get to the local scenic and cultural attractions, to give you a full and well-rounded trip. Visit us at www.sesug.org; we'll post new information as soon as we have it!

Most important, we'll have the opportunity to share ideas and learn from some of the greatest SAS minds of the region, as we exchange what we've learned with one another.

The SESUG conference is an annual event; this year's celebration of knowledge is not to be missed. We look forward to seeing you in Portsmouth!



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Kirk Paul Lafler is with Software Intelligence Corporation. He is a published author on SAS, a frequent contributor to the SAS Informant, and has presented and taught workshops at local, regional, and SUGI conferences.



Quick & Simple Tips

INTRODUCTION

PROC SQL provides numerous arithmetic, statistical, and summary functions to manipulate numeric data. With one numeric data type to represent numeric data, the NUMERIC or NUM column definition is automatically assigned a default length of 8 bytes, even if the column is created with a numeric length less than 8 bytes.

The variety of functions and operators available to PROC SQL can be used for character data manipulation including words, text, and codes using the CHARACTER or CHAR data type. The CHARACTER or CHAR data type allows ASCII or EBCDIC character sets and stores fixed-length character strings consisting of a maximum of 32K characters. This paper will illustrate how columns based on the numeric and character data types are defined; how string functions, pattern matching, phonetic matching techniques, and a variety of other techniques are used with numeric and character data.

PROC SQL OPERATORS AND FUNCTIONS

PROC SQL users have a number of ways to accomplish their objectives, particularly when the goal is to manipulate data. The SELECT statement is an extremely powerful statement in the SQL language. Its syntax can be somewhat complex because of the number of ways that columns, tables, operators, and functions can be combined into executable statements. There are several types of operators and functions in PROC SQL: 1) comparison operators, 2) logical operators, 3) arithmetic operators, 4) character string operators, and 5) summary functions. This tip will illustrate concatenation, character alignment, and phonetic and pattern matching character-string operations in manipulating data.

Character String Operators and Functions

Character string operators and functions are typically used with character data. Numerous operators are presented to acquaint users to the power available with the SQL procedure. You'll see a number of operators including string concatenation and character alignment.

Concatenation and Character Alignment

The default alignment for character data is to the left, however character columns or expressions can also be aligned to the right. Two functions are available for character alignment: LEFT and RIGHT. The next example combines the concatenation operator "||" and the TRIM function with the LEFT function to left align a character expression while inserting blank spaces and a dash "-" between two character columns to subset "PG-rated" movies.

PROC SQL Code

```
PROC SQL;
  SELECT LEFT(TRIM(title) || " - " || category) AS
         Concatenation_Alignment
  FROM movies
  WHERE rating = "PG";
QUIT;
```

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Results

Concatenation_Alignment

```
-----
Casablanca - Drama
Jaws - Action Adventure
Poltergeist - Horror
Rocky - Action Adventure
Star Wars - Action Sci-Fi
The Hunt for Red October - Action Adventure
```

Phonetic Matching (Sounds-Like Operator = *)

A technique for finding names that sound alike or have spelling variations is available in PROC SQL. Although not technically a function, the sounds-like operator "=* " searches and selects character data based on two expressions: the search value and the matched value. Anyone that has looked for a last name in a local telephone directory is quickly reminded of the possible phonetic variations. To illustrate how the sounds-like operator works, we will search on the movie title in the MOVIES table using the string "Rucky" for any and all phonetic variations related to the movie title "Rocky".

PROC SQL Code

```
PROC SQL;
  SELECT title, rating, category
  FROM movies
  WHERE title =* "Rucky";
QUIT;
```

Results

Title	Rating	Category

Rocky	PG	Action Adventure

Finding Patterns in a String (Pattern Matching % and _)

Constructing specific search patterns in string expressions is a simple process with the LIKE predicate. The % acts as a wildcard character representing any number of characters, including any combination of upper or lower case characters. Combining the LIKE predicate with the % (percent sign) permits case-sensitive searches and is a popular technique used by savvy SQL programmers to find patterns in their data. The next example finds patterns in the movie category containing the uppercase character 'D' in the first position followed by any number of characters in the CATEGORY column.

PROC SQL Code

```
PROC SQL;
  SELECT title, rating, category
  FROM movies
  WHERE category LIKE 'D%';
QUIT;
```

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

Results

Title	Rating	Category
Casablanca	PG	Drama
Forrest Gump	PG-13	Drama
Michael	PG-13	Drama
Dressed to Kill	R	Drama Mysteries
Ghost	PG-13	Drama Romance
Titanic	PG-13	Drama Romance
Silence of the Lambs	R	Drama Suspense

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like more information or have any questions about this tip, please contact: Kirk Lafler, Software Intelligence Corporation at KirkLafler@cs.com. Kirk, a SAS Certified Professional® and SAS Alliance Partner® (1996 - 2002) with more than 25 years of SAS software experience, provides consulting services and hands-on SAS training around the world. Kirk has written four books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS by SAS Institute, Power SAS and Power AOL by Apress, and more than one hundred articles in professional journals and SAS User Group proceedings. His popular SAS Tips column appears regularly in the BASAS, HASUG, SANDS, SAS, SESUG, and WUSS Newsletters and websites. Kirk can be reached at:

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If you would like to be a part of the next Informant, we always welcome articles, perspectives, and new ideas. Contact the editor, Gary E. Schlegelmilch, via e-mail at sesug03@juno.com. Advertising information is also available upon request; contact Imelda Go at igo@sde.state.sc.us.

We're on the Web!
Come visit us at www.sesug.org

Editor's Afterwords

I just got back from our winter meeting in Portsmouth VA; it is just a lovely town. The Renaissance Hotel is located right on the bank of the Elizabeth River, it is a beautiful facility for the fall conference. Walking around the area, we found a number of charming restaurants and just wonderful places to sightsee.

The meeting was abuzz with our plans for the Fall. Presenters we were contacting, Chairs laying out their sections, activities and events; people may not be willing to leave the hotel, despite the delightful area!

Our attendees are going to have a marvelous conference. I have no doubt that they will come away with a wealth of new knowledge that can be taken home and put to work. Best kind of time!

Speaking of the best of times—the worst keep popping up. Last issue, I asked that everyone remember those whose lives were so damaged by the hurricanes all through our Region. I don't need to detail the recent tsunami disaster, so I won't. But I will ask that, if you can—give a little to help.

Thanks. Be safe, be well—and we look forward to seeing you all in Portsmouth!



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