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Using Microsoft Access 2007 Description of Field Names in Tables as Variable Labels in SAS® Data Sets

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ABSTRACT

It is a common practice for statisticians and data analysts to import data from Microsoft Access into SAS for analysis. Although it is relatively straightforward to transfer data between the two programs, currently there is not an option in SAS to import the description of field names from Access tables. Any good SAS programmer would be interested in using those descriptions as labels for variables in SAS data sets. This paper proposes a solution using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) and SAS macros, first to generate a table of field names, descriptions, and table names in Access; and second, to use this table to create the labels in the SAS data sets.

INTRODUCTION

The problem arises when statisticians want to use Microsoft Access 2007® description of field names in the database tables as labels for SAS dataset variables. SAS v9.2 does not have the capability of importing descriptions from Access. Also, Microsoft Access does not allow the analyst to copy this information, available from the table in the design view, in a simple manner as each description has to be copied manually field by field. This process can be really cumbersome, especially for large databases.

A Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) macro using Microsoft Access 2007® was created to generate a metadata table, consisting of field names, descriptions, and table names in the database. The new table is used to create labels for variables in SAS datasets. The process is illustrated with an example database.

ACCESS DATABASE

An example of a MS Access database is presented below to mimic a data collection instrument typical of a research study. The database contains 3 tables: Demographics, Test and Questionnaire. **Figure 1** presents the relationships between the tables, and **Figure 2** shows the tables in Design View.

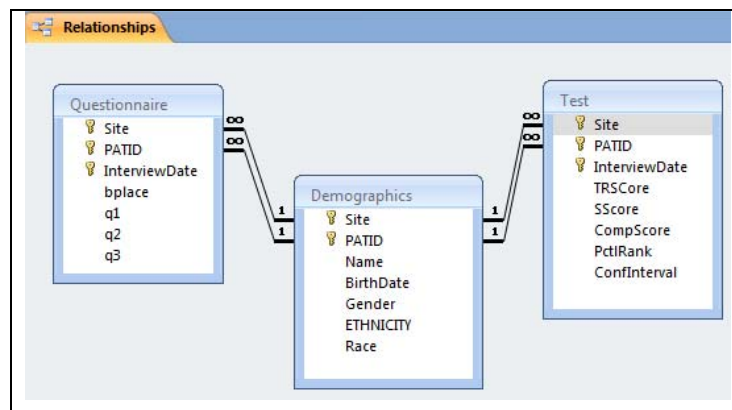



Figure 1. Database and Relationships

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Demographics			Test			Questionnaire		
Field Name	Data Type	Description	Field Name	Data Type	Description	Field Name	Data Type	Description
Site	Number		Site	Number	Study Site	Site	Number	Study Site
PATID	Number	Participant ID	PATID	Number	Participant ID	PATID	Number	Participant ID
Name	Text	Participant's Name	InterviewDate	Date/Time	Date of the Interview	InterviewDate	Date/Time	Date of the Interview
BirthDate	Text	Date of Birth	TRScore	Number	Total Raw Score	bplace	Text	Place of Birth
Gender	Text	Participant's Gender	SScore	Number	Scaled Score	q1	Number	Question 1
ETHNICITY	Text		CompScore	Number	Composite Score	q2	Number	Question 2
Race	Text	Participant's Race	PctRank	Number	Percentile Rank	q3	Number	Question 3
			ConfInterval	Number	Confidence Interval			

Figure 2. Tables in Design View

ACCESS VBA AND SAS CODE

In the Microsoft Visual Basic window, a new Module  Module was inserted to create a VBA macro. The following code will create a new table in the Access database that contains all of the field names, descriptions and names for all the tables in the database. This code should be run first before invoking the SAS code. The macro to be run is *CreateLabels()*; the *CreateTable()* code is a sub routine that creates the blank scheme of the table Descriptions. This code can be used in any database; the only concern will be a database that contains a table called Descriptions (because this VBA macro would delete such table); in this case, the analyst may need to rename such table.

VBA CODE

```
' Auxiliary sub routine CreateTable

Sub CreateTable()
    Dim wspDefault As Workspace, dbs As Database
    Dim tdf As TableDef, fld1 As Field, fld2 As Field
    Dim idx As Index, fldIndex As Field

    Set wspDefault = DBEngine.Workspaces(0)
    ' Open Current database.
    Set dbs = CurrentDb()

    ' Create new table with three fields.
    Set tdf = dbs.CreateTableDef("Descriptions")
    Set fld1 = tdf.CreateField("VariableName", dbText)
    Set fld2 = tdf.CreateField("VariableDescription", dbText, 50)
    Set fld3 = tdf.CreateField("tblNAME", dbText)

    ' Append fields.
    tdf.Fields.Append fld1
    tdf.Fields.Append fld2
    tdf.Fields.Append fld3

    ' Append TableDef object.
    dbs.TableDefs.Append tdf
    dbs.TableDefs.Refresh
    Set dbs = Nothing
End Sub
```

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```

' Main VBA subroutine
Sub CreateLabels()
  Dim tdf As TableDef
  Dim db As Database
  Dim fld As Field
  Dim prp As Property
  Dim pos As Integer
  Dim repl, replwith As String
  Dim repldesc, repldescwith As String
  Dim tname As String
  Dim rst As Recordset
  Dim i As Integer
  Dim SQL As String
  Dim DescrAvailable As Boolean

  Set db = CurrentDb()

  'If the table descriptions exist then delete it

  For i = 0 To db.TableDefs.Count - 1
    If db.TableDefs(i).Name = "Descriptions" Then
      db.TableDefs.Delete "Descriptions"
      db.TableDefs.Refresh
      Exit For
    End If
  Next

  'the macro CreateTable will create a table with the Descriptions
  Call CreateTable
  Set rst = db.OpenRecordset("Descriptions")

  For Each tdf In db.TableDefs
    For Each fld In tdf.Fields
      DescrAvailable = False
      For Each prp In fld.Properties
        If prp.Name = "Description" Then
          With rst
            .AddNew
            !Variablename = fld.Name
            !VariableDescription = prp.Value
            !tblNAME = tdf.Name
            .Update
            DescrAvailable = True
          End With
        End If
      Next
      If DescrAvailable = False Then
        With rst
          .AddNew
          !Variablename = fld.Name
          !tblNAME = tdf.Name
          .Update
        End With
      End If
      DescrAvailable = False
    Next
  Next
  db.Close
End Sub

```

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SAS V9.2 CODE

The first part of the SAS code was created to import the three data tables available in the database, as well as the Description table. The second part of the code takes the Description table and uses it to create labels into the three newly created SAS data sets.

To make this code useful for any specific data analysis, the analyst would need to modify the database path, and create as many `%ImportTables()`, and `%Labels()` macro invocations as tables in the database.

```

/*****
/* Import access tables*/
*****/

%Macro ImportTables(TableName);
PROC IMPORT OUT= WORK.&TableName
           DATATABLE= "&TableName"
           DBMS=ACCESS REPLACE;
           DATABASE="C:\SUGI\Databases\SUGI.accdb";
           SCANMEMO=YES;
           USEDATE=NO;
           SCANTIME=YES;
RUN;
%mend;

%ImportTables(Demographics);
%ImportTables(Test);
%ImportTables(Questionnaire);
%ImportTables(Descriptions);

/*****
/* Macro to Create Labels using table Descriptions */
*****/

%macro Labels(TableName);
proc sql;
  select count(*) into:numvar from Descriptions where
tblNAME="&TableName";
  %let numvar =&numvar;
  select VariableDescription into :varlab1-:varlab&numvar from
Descriptions where tblNAME="&TableName";
  select VariableName into :varname1-:varname&numvar from
Descriptions where tblNAME="&TableName";

  Data &TableName;
    set &TableName;
    %do i=1 %to &numvar;
      label &&varname&i="&&varlab&i";
    %end;
run;quit;
%mend;

%Labels(Demographics);
%Labels(Test);
%Labels(Questionnaire);

```

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CONCLUSION

It is a common practice between statisticians and data managers to import data collected in Access into SAS for analysis. The current paper shows that the capabilities of SAS can be expanded by the use of VBA macros.

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