Abstract

Although information centers seem to be flourishing and continue to grow in number in business and academic settings across the country, clients and information center staff identify training as a weak point in most information centers. At The University of New Mexico we have made training a focal point for improvement within the Information Center by designing a multilevel, integrated SAS® training program to meet the diverse needs of our great variety of academic and administrative users. This paper demonstrates how we are successfully achieving our two main objectives: quality training and self-sufficient clients.

Introduction

According to the 1986 American Management Association Report on Information Centers, one of the major concerns of information centers at present is the lack of success in meeting training goals. Information center staff across the country are still experimenting with a variety of training methods in attempts to better meet the training needs of their varied clients.

Traditionally, the support of administrative and academic computer users at UNM has been kept separate (although both classes of users have competed for resources on the same machines). Over the last couple of years, UNM has been reconsidering its computing function on campus. We have moved toward a consolidation of support services for Academic and Administrative computing. These services have been merged in the form of an Information Center.

Training under the previous Academic User Support staff had been regarded as a strong point, especially for SAS System products. However, greater diversity of users to be served by the new organization as well as new chargeback and marketing proposals created a need for a major upgrade in training services. We have tried to work toward a training environment in which any user from any background can receive the kind of training they need and want. In addition, the underlying goal of our training effort at the Information Center is to educate users to be able to help themselves in the future rather than rely on IC consultants for assistance. When an IC supports a user base as large as ours, consultants can not afford to be indispensable to every user.

Because the SAS System is the most heavily used application on campus for academic and administrative users, it was decided to use SAS as the model to produce an integrated system of SAS training offerings to serve the needs of our diverse users. Where appropriate, the SAS model will be applied to training for other products over the next several years.

Our SAS System users at UNM come from all disciplines and backgrounds, e.g. faculty, staff, students from the Sciences, Engineering, Humanities, Physical Education, the Arts and so on; Administrative users from the City of Albuquerque, Albuquerque Public Schools, The Forest Service, The Veterans Hospital, Sandia Laboratories and others. In fact, we are as likely to see a Biology faculty member in class as a Psychology student or staff person from an administrative office.

To be successful in this kind of environment, we have to provide a variety of training options. The IC provides different levels of support for various products on the basis of usage. As a general rule, IC training is offered according to level of support. Since the SAS System is by far the most used application we have on campus, it is, of course, fully supported in training, consulting, and documentation. We support the SAS System on an IBM 3081D under MVS®, a VAX 8650 under VMS® and now on personal computers. Obviously, courses must be updated and new courses designed to meet the needs of a great variety of users across all systems - not an easy plan to design or implement, to say the least. Since the IBM 3081D is currently the center for the majority of SAS System users, they receive the most varied training program.

Introductory Level Training

At the entry level we provide a staff-written, elementary hands-on tutorial. It is 35 pages long and takes the user approximately two hours to work through on his own. This tutorial subtly incorporates basic use of the VSPC® editor/time share interface and simple JCL. In addition, we urge new users to work through our self-paced VSPC Tutorial before attempting the SAS Tutorial.

The SAS Tutorial takes the beginning SAS user on a tour of the SAS System beginning with the concept of a SAS data set. Basic Data Step statements then are introduced, followed by some examples of data transformation and subsetting. Then the user is allowed to try his hand at some simple but useful procedures such as PRINT, FREQ, PLOT, and UNIVARIATE. Because the
SAS PC users who can utilize the Display Manager. We have found this course especially useful for our internal SAS System users because of the discussions with SAS in its relationship to SAS/FSIP. Where departments have multiple copies of SAS PC, we train and consult with one departmental representative and they act as a liaison person with the rest of their staff. Further, we are finding that the SAS Institute's video tapes, Introduction to the SAS System: Building Your Basic Skills are beneficial to our extensive library of working SAS/GRAPH procedure tapes which discuss at length the Display Manager and its relationship to SAS/FSIP, we also offer individualized training in SAS/FSIP to meet the needs of users as they arise. Most of our users are interested in FSEDIT or FSBBROWSE at this point. We have also written a self-paced TSO/ISPF Tutorial to allow users to become familiar with this before tackling SAS/FSIP. SAS/FSIP workshops for specific groups such as the data entry staff for one of the UNM art galleries will begin to be offered this Spring.

SAS PC

We have just recently obtained a license for the SAS System on PCs and thus have not yet formally incorporated it into our training schedule, but we see many possibilities for the future. Currently we offer individualized training and consulting to SAS PC users. Where departments have multiple copies of SAS PC, we train and consult with one departmental representative and they act as a liaison person with the rest of their staff. Further, we are finding that the SAS Institute’s video tapes, Introduction to the SAS System: Building Your Basic Skills are beneficial to our SAS PC users because of the discussions on the Display Manager. A SAS PC introductory short course will be offered in the Fall, 1987. We also offer microcomputer short courses in all supported microcomputer software, including DOS. Therefore, we are encouraging SAS System users new to personal computers to attend the DOS short course to become familiar with.
directory structures, etc. We also plan to review SAS Institute’s PC video training tutorial, SAS PC System for Experienced Users, for consideration to be incorporated into the overall training plan.

Conclusions

In conclusion, our objectives in designing a comprehensive SAS training program within an information center environment are twofold. First, we aim to provide quality training that conforms to clients' needs and wants. A training program is unsuccessful, no matter how much time, money and good intention are put into it unless, it is convenient, varied to fit different learning styles, unintimidating and interesting. Second, we want to encourage our clients to become reasonably self-sufficient in their use of the SAS System without needing to constantly rely on the IC consultants.

In attaining these two goals we can serve the needs of new SAS users as well as experienced ones. By incorporating and building on progressive levels of training and documentation, we are able to provide a flexible and interesting training system for all of our users. The neophyte benefits from introductory level training while the experienced SAS user gains training in upgrades and modifications to the SAS System, new procedures and updates to existing procedures and using the SAS System across different operating systems.

For More Information:

Sandra Robinson or Dusty Teaf
CSIS Information Center
University of New Mexico
2701 Campus Blvd. N.E.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

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