AN IN-HOUSE SAS USERS GROUP AS UTILIZED BY AN ELECTRIC UTILITY CORPORATION

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ABSTRACT
The SAS Users Group at Centerior Energy Corporation, an electric utility headquartered in Independence, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, has developed from a single location, one person in charge organization to a multi location, steering committee organization with approximately 200 members. This paper will discuss the evolution of the users group and its current organization along with its goals and objectives.

INTRODUCTION
The Centerior SAS Users Group (CSUG) has evolved along with the Centerior Energy Corporation. Centerior Energy Corporation was formed in April of 1986 upon the affiliation of the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company and the Toledo Edison Company. Centerior Energy serves 2.6 million people in Northern Ohio and is one of the largest electric utility systems in the nation.

SAS was brought into CEI in 1982. The Users Group had its beginnings at CEI in downtown Cleveland, Ohio during February of 1986. The Users Group was an offshoot of the Information Systems Department and was lead by the company SAS representative.

The complexion of the user community underwent a drastic change in April of 1986 when CEI and Toledo Edison merged to form the Centerior Energy Corporation. There were now SAS users in Independence, Ohio, corporate headquarters, in Oak Harbor, Ohio, at the Davis Besse Nuclear Power Plant, in Toledo, Ohio, at the Toledo Edison main office and in Perry, Ohio, at the Perry Nuclear Power Plant. The SAS user community at Centerior Energy found itself spread over a hundred mile stretch of northern Ohio, from Perry to Toledo. Another offshoot of the merger was that the corporate SAS representative was relocated and the locus of the Users Group were now located at Perry.

ORGANIZATION
The CEI SAS Users Group became the Centerior SAS Users Group in 1988 when leadership of the group was passed from the corporate SAS representative to a Steering Committee consisting of an interim chairperson, an interim secretary, and several subcommittees. The first Centerior SAS Steering Committee meeting was held on April 20, 1988, and the following subcommittees were created:

1. Presentation/Tutorial is responsible for organizing and running CSUG meetings and other special programming.
2. Publicity/ICON is responsible for meeting announcements and Information Center Office Newsletter (ICON) articles.
3. Library is responsible for setting up and maintaining the CSUG software library, as well as enforcing standards for software to be included in it. It is hoped that eventually, the library will be a comprehensive database of SAS examples and usable utility routines available to all SAS users.
4. Membership/Survey is responsible for recruiting members, keeping the CSUG survey and mailing list up-to-date and maintaining an on-going tally of the results.

OBJECTIVES
The Steering Committee established the following goals and objectives which were completed in January, 1989 and are as follows:

A. Expand and maintain a library of generalized, usable SAS routines that can help minimize "reinvention-of-the-wheel" coding activities.
B. Support the Information Center (IC) Product Consultant(s).
C. Increase and improve the communications among SAS users.
D. Supplement IC-sponsored training opportunities (e.g. with presentations, workshops, problem sessions, discussions).
F. Work with the Information Systems Department (ISD) to test new versions of SAS and to ensure that all system defaults are set appropriately.

F. Identify all SAS users throughout the Centerior family of operating companies.
   1. Identify "beginners", "intermediates", "advanced".
   2. Note each user's primary SAS interest(s).
   3. Assist the IC to identify "advanced" SAS users and their area of expertise, so that they can be used as a resource for SAS support.

G. Continue to contribute articles on SAS and SAS-related topics to the Information Center Office Newsletter (ICON).

H. Assist the Information Center Education Program (ICEP) in the development of long-range plans for SAS education.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In July of 1988, CSUG launched something called SAS INFO. SAS INFO is a SAS based, interactive system containing the current CSUG and Cleveland SAS User Group calendars, the CSUG library, a tricks and traps section and access to the SAS Survey. The system, which is accessible from TSO, serves as the main avenue of communication for the Centerior SAS user community.

The SAS Survey, an on-line, interactive program composed of a SAS database and SAS/AF® screens was completed in January of 1989. The information obtained from the survey assists the Steering Committee in understanding the needs of the SAS user community, so that useful, pertinent programming can be developed. For example, whether the user considers himself a beginner, intermediate or advanced SAS user: what types of training have the users completed: what topics would be of the most interest for presentations and where should the meetings be held.

The Steering Committee believes that maintaining a high profile and keeping the user community informed is extremely important to the continued success of the Centerior SAS Users Group. One avenue of communication used by the Users Group is direct mailings. The current mailing list, completed in June 1989, was created by the merging of four lists, which were the Old CEI SAS User Group, a listing of logons owning SAS datasets, a listing of SAS trainees from the Information Center, and the SAS Survey. The mailing list is updated, based on survey input and presentation attendance.

Meetings and presentations are publicized by a number of methods: a small announcement is entered into our electronic bulletin board (SASINFO); flyers are mailed to all active members; and, when possible, a Calendar of Events is published in the ICON. Attendance at meetings has averaged between 15 and 20 people. To date all meetings have been for presentations of one sort or another. The following topics have been covered at the presentations: an overview of SAS and its capabilities; a joint meeting with the FOCUS® Users Group on allocations, how to execute FOCUS and SAS, types of data files, and printer use; SAS Processing; PROC FSCALC; Using SAS and the Xerox 3700; Efficient Use of SAS; 4GL Noontime Open Forum (cosponsored with FOCUS Users Group and ICEP).

Also as a means of communication, the Users Group publishes articles in the ICON. The articles deal with a variety of topics. One article dealt with the differences between Version 5.18 and the previous release, while another dealt with PROC FROMFOC and extracting data from a FOCUS database. The articles allow the membership to share their knowledge and get their names in print.

CONCERNS

The Centerior SAS Users Group is ready to meet the needs of the user community, but getting the user community involved has been a major concern. For example, all contributions to the Library have been from Steering Committee members. Presentations have been very well attended, but there are a great many people still to be tapped. Although 100 percent response to a survey may be too high of a goal to aim for, getting as many SAS users as possible to complete the survey is not.

THE FUTURE

The Centerior SAS Users Group has been in existence for slightly over a year. In that year, the users group has organized itself and begun operations. In the future, the CSUG hopes to continue its evolution. Plans are in the works to: Explore the
development of Special Interest Groups with presentations that specifically address the needs of these groups: Have regularly scheduled general business meetings on a quarterly basis. Currently, meetings have been for presentations only. The general business of the user group is being handled by the steering committee. The intent of these meetings will be to get the general membership involved in the operation of the user group: Encourage members to submit articles to the ICON and to SUGI; Assemble and disseminate a listing of advanced SAS users to the support personnel from Information Services Department.

References:

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