

Output Delivery Tips, Tricks, and Techniques Using SAS® Output Delivery System (ODS)

Kirk Paul Lafler, Software Intelligence Corporation

Abstract

Are you looking for ways to improve the way your output appears? The SAS® Output Delivery System (**ODS**) can help turn tired-looking output into great looking information with a purpose. ODS introduces exciting new features for your output. Gone are the days when the only available formatting choice is basic output listings consisting of monospace fonts printed on a white background. Using built-in format engines, ODS addresses the inherent weaknesses found in traditional SAS output by enabling “quality” output to be produced without having to import it into word processors. In Version 8, many new output formatting features and options are introduced for SAS users to take advantage of. Users have a powerful and easy way to create and access formatted procedure and DATA step output.

Introduction

Technology is moving at an astounding pace. With many new features and enhancements introduced in Version 8, users can finally sound the trumpets for what could be the most exciting time for output delivery since the introduction of the color monitor and printer. Never again will SAS users be confined to boring monospace output. Instead, output delivery has entered a new age taking full advantage of font characteristics, color, a variety of output layouts, and numerous other features. This paper and presentation will treat users with the many new and exciting features found in ODS. Sprinkled throughout will be numerous tips, tricks, and techniques that will, hopefully, make the learning process a little easier.

Attendees will learn numerous tips, tricks, and techniques in handling output including the advantages / disadvantages with traditional SAS output; advantages of ODS; how ODS handles raw data; how ODS combines raw data with table definitions; how to open, close, and manage output destinations; how the Results window stores links to ODS output; how selection and exclusion lists are used; how to create output data sets, RTF files, HTML output, and postscript files; and how ODS is integrated with the DATA step.

Output Delivery Basics

The SAS® Output Delivery System (**ODS**) provides many ways to format output. It controls the way output is accessed and formatted. Although ODS continues to support the creation of traditional SAS listing or monospace output (i.e., Listing), it provides many new

features and greater flexibility when working with output.

An early version of ODS appeared in Version 6.12 as a way to address the inherent weaknesses found in traditional SAS output. It enables “quality” looking output to be produced without having to import it into word processors such as MS-Word. In Version 8, many new output formatting features and options are introduced for SAS users to take advantage of. Users have a powerful and easy way to create and access formatted procedure and DATA step output.

Tip #1 – ODS and “Batch” Use

Many of the ODS features found in the interactive side of the SAS Display Manager System (DMS) can also be used in batch processing. ODS has been designed to make exciting new formatting options available to users. In a windowing environment, ODS can send output to the following destinations: the output window (DMS), the listing file, HTML, SAS dataset, rich text format (RTF), postscript file, external output file (non-SAS file), or output device. The only exception for batch processing is having output sent to the output window.

Tip #2 – What if I’m Still Not Using Version 8

First introduced in Version 6.12, ODS offered users the capability to format output to destinations other than traditional line printers. Version 6.12 introduced the ability to deploy output to the web, the creation of SAS datasets and rich text format (RTF) files, and DATA step interaction. ODS was designed to address the inherent weaknesses found in traditional SAS output. It enables the creation of “quality” looking output without having to import it into word processors such as MS-Word. Many new output enhancements were introduced in Version 7 and Version 8 including the ability to create postscript files and output customizations. To take full advantage of the power offered in ODS, it is recommended that users upgrade to Version 8 as early as possible.

Tip #3 – ODS and System Resources

A very important efficiency consideration is to remember that ODS currently supports the following destinations: 1) Listing, 2) HTML, 3) rich text format (RTF), 4) postscript, and 5) Output. (Note: It also provides support in the DATA step.) Each ODS destination can be open or closed at the same time. For each open destination, ODS sends output object(s) to it. System resources are used when a destination is open. As a result, make sure any and all

unwanted open destinations are closed to conserve on resources.

Tip #4 – Closing Destinations before and after use

The Listing destination is open by default at SAS invocation, while the other destinations are closed. If nothing is done to suppress output to the Listing destination, your SAS programs automatically produce Listing output, just as they always have in the SAS System. But if you wanted to suppress printed output from being sent to the Listing destination (or DMS Output window) before the execution of a procedure step, the following ODS statement would be issued:

```
ODS Listing Close;
  Proc univariate data=libref.movies;
    Run;
ODS Listing;
```

By closing the Listing destination before the procedure code, the SAS System is actually suppressing output to that destination until it is reopened. The preceding example shows that at the end of the procedure step, the Listing destination is reopened by specifying ODS Listing; so output from subsequent steps can be sent to the Listing destination.

Tip #5 – Deleting Output from the Results Window

Since the Results window identifies procedure output that is produced and is provided so users can better manage their output, it is customarily a good thing to remove unwanted output to conserve on system resources. The Results window is opened by specifying the command **ODSRESULTS** on the DMS command line or by selecting **View Results** from the pull-down menu.

To delete procedure output, use the following steps:

1. Select the procedure folder you want to remove.
2. Click the Delete button on the task bar.
3. Select Yes to confirm the deletion of the procedure output folder.

Tip #6 – Tracing Procedure Output

Tracing Output

Output producing procedures often create multiple pieces or tables of information. In order to discriminate between the various pieces of information, it is advantageous to know the names assigned to each piece of information. The ability to display the names of individual pieces of information generated on output is referred to as **tracing**. The ODS statement syntax ODS trace output; causes the SAS System to turn the trace feature on and print results to the SAS Listing destination.

ODS Trace ON / Listing;

```
Proc univariate data=libref.movies;
  Run;
ODS Trace Off;
```

The trace record displays information about the data component, the table definition, and the output object. For example, the trace record displays the following output objects to the SAS Listing destination: 1) Moments, 2) BasicMeasures, 3) TestForLocation, 4) Quantiles, and 5) ExtremeObs. A sample trace record containing each output object's name, label, template, and path is displayed for the Univariate procedure. Note that for each output object, the name, label, template, and path is displayed.

Output Added:

```
-----
Name: Moments
Label: Moments
Template: base.univariate.Moments
Path: Univariate.age.Moments
-----
```

Output Added:

```
-----
Name: BasicMeasures
Label: Basic Measures of Location and Variability
Template: base.univariate.Measures
Path: Univariate.age.BasicMeasures
-----
```

Output Added:

```
-----
Name: TestsForLocation
Label: Tests For Location
Template: base.univariate.Location
Path: Univariate.age.TestsForLocation
-----
```

Output Added:

```
-----
Name: Quantiles
Label: Quantiles
Template: base.univariate.Quantiles
Path: Univariate.age.Quantiles
-----
```

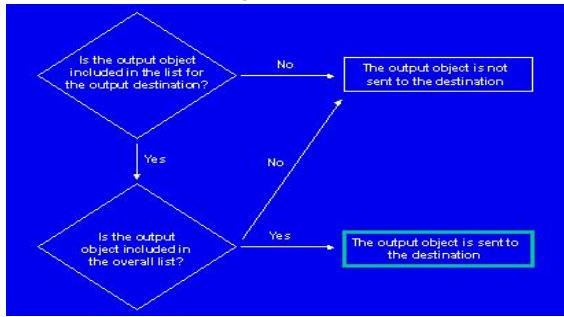
Output Added:

```
-----
Name: ExtremeObs
Label: Extreme Observations
Template: base.univariate.ExtObs
Path: Univariate.age.ExtremeObs
-----
```

Selecting Output with ODS

A selection or exclusion list exists for each ODS destination. These lists determine which output objects to send to ODS destinations. To accomplish this, ODS checks whether an output object is included in a destination's selection or exclusion list. If it does not appear in this list, then the output object is not sent to the ODS destination. If it is included in the list, ODS checks to see if the object is included in the overall list. If it does not appear in this list, then the output object is not sent to the ODS destination. If it is

included in the overall list, then ODS sends the object to the destination. The following diagram illustrates the process of selecting output.



Tip #7 – Selecting Desired Pieces of Information

Once you know the individual names of each output component, you can then select the desired object for reporting purposes. The syntax is:

ODS select *output-component-name*;

where ***output-component-name*** is the name of the desired output object. To select just the output object Moments from the Univariate procedure, the following syntax is specified:

ODS Select Moments;

```
Proc univariate data=libref.movies;
Run;
```

Tip #8 – SAS Output Data Sets

Creating SAS Output Data Sets

Occasionally, output results are needed in a SAS data set rather than in printed form such as the Listing destination. Re-directing SAS procedure output to a data set is relatively simple with ODS. The syntax is:

```
ODS Output output-table-name =
  user-defined-table-name;
< SAS Code >
```

where ***output-table-name*** is the name of the desired output table (component) containing the information you want written to a data set, such as **Moments** in the UNIVARIATE procedure. ***User-defined-table-name*** is the name you supply for the newly created data set. It can be defined as either a temporary or permanent (using a libref) data set. Once an object is selected, specify the object in the ODS OUTPUT statement. For example, the Moments from the Univariate procedure is selected and output to a SAS data set in the following code.

```
ODS Listing Close;
ODS Output Moments = Movie_Moments;
Proc univariate data=libref.movies;
Run;
ODS Listing;
```

When the OUTPUT destination is no longer needed, it can be closed with the following ODS statement:

ODS OUTPUT CLOSE;

Tip #9 – Rich Text Format (RTF)

Creating Rich Text Format (RTF)

Rich text format (RTF) is text consisting of formatting attributes codes, such as boldface, italics, underline, etc. It is principally used to encapsulate text and formatting attributes during copy-and-paste operations. Because word-processing programs use RTF rather than ASCII when handling data, the need to reformat is a thing of the past. The syntax to create RTF output is:

ODS RTF FILE = 'user-specified-file-name';

where user-specified-file-name references a complete and fully-qualified output location for the creation and storage of the RTF file, data, and codes. For example, the following code creates an RTF file using the Univariate procedure output. (**Note:** The RTF extension is required).

ODS Select Moments = moments;

ODS RTF FILE='ods rtf-univariate.rtf';

```
Proc univariate data=libref.movies;
  Title1 "Delivering RTF Output";
  Run;
```

ODS RTF Close;

The results of the RTF output are displayed below:

Delivering RTF Output
The UNIVARIATE Procedure
Variable: Year

Moments			
N	22	Sum Weights	22
Mean	1982.909 09	Sum Observations	43624
Std Deviation	15.21249 2	Variance	231.4199 13
Skewness	-2.110647 3	Kurtosis	4.418072 09
Uncorrected SS	8650728 6	Corrected SS	4859.818 18
Coeff Variation	0.767180 51	Std Error Mean	3.243314 2

Tip #10 – Creating and Naming Postscript Files

Creating Postscript Output

ODS enables the creation of a postscript file from SAS output to help ensure that formatting and content is preserved while maintaining complete printer independence. The next example shows the creation of a postscript file from Print procedure output.

```
ODS Listing Close;
ODS Printer Postscript;
Proc print data=libref.movies noobs n;
  Title1 "Example Creating a Postscript File";
  Run;
ODS Printer Close;
ODS Listing;
```

Since the postscript file was created without assigning a filename, ODS assigns the name: **SASPRTPS** and is created in the following directory (under Windows 98):

c:\My Documents\My SAS Files\V8.

Frequently, a user-defined filename is desired rather than the default name. In these cases, the ODS statement and **File=** option can be used to assign a name to the postscript file.

```
ODS Listing Close;
ODS Printer Postscript
  File='Beginning_tutorials.ps';
Proc print data=libref.movies noobs n;
  Title1 "Example Creating a Postscript File";
  Run;
ODS Printer Close;
ODS Listing;
```

Tip #11 – The Custom Reporting Interface

ODS and the DATA Step

To provide greater capabilities when working with custom output created in the DATA step, ODS has been integrated into the DATA step. Two new options are necessary to take advantage of ODS: 1) the ODS option in the FILE statement and 2) the _ODS_ option in the PUT statement. These two options are used to direct the results of a DATA step to ODS. For example, the following code directs output from a DATA step through the RTF format engine to create a RTF file.

```
ODS RTF FILE='ods-DATA-step.rtf';
Title1 "Great Movies";
Data NULL;
  Set ods.movies;
  File print ods;
  Put _ods_;
Run;
ODS RTF Close;
```

The RTF file created in the previous DATA step code is illustrated.

GreatMovies						
Title	Length	Category	Year	Studio	Rating	
Brave Heart	177	Action Adventure	1995	Paramount Pictures	R	
Casablanca	103	Drama	1942	MGM / UA	PG	
Christmas Vacation	97	Comedy	1989	Warner Brothers	PG-13	
Coming to America	116	Comedy	1988	Paramount Pictures	R	
Dracula	130		1931	Columbia TriStar	R	
Dressed to Kill	105	Drama/Mysteries	1980	Filmways Pictures	R	
Forrest Gump	142	Drama	1994	Paramount Pictures	PG-13	
Ghost	127	Drama/Romance	1990	Paramount Pictures	PG-13	
Jaws	125	Action/Adventure	1975	Universal Studios	PG	
Jurassic Park	127	Action	1993	Universal Pictures	PG-13	
Lethal Weapon	110	Action/Cops & Robber	1987	Warner Brothers	R	
Michel	106	Drama	1997	Warner Brothers	PG-13	
National Lampoon's Vacation	98	Comedy	1983	Warner Brothers	PG-13	
Pottergeist	115	Horror	1982	MGM / UA	PG	
Rocky	120	Action/Adventure	1976	MGM / UA	PG	

Tip #12 – Pagesize / Linesize Settings

Output Delivery Goes Web

The Options PS= and LS= have no effect when used with the HTML destination (opposed to most other output-producing steps that generate output to a print destination). If the PS= and/or LS= options are used with the HTML destination, they are simply ignored. The SAS System creates a type of “streaming” or continuous output and adds elevator bars (horizontal and/or vertical) for easy navigation.

The SAS System does provide a way for users to paginate through output displayed in a body file. The HTML destination provides a way to designate an optional description of each page of the body file. The PAGE= file (when specified) recognizes each new page of output produced by ODS. What ODS does is create a section called **Table of Pages** containing links to the body file for easy navigation through output.

Tip #13 – Deploying Output to the Web

With the popularity of the Internet, you may find it useful to deploy selected pieces of output on your web site. ODS makes deploying procedure output to the web a simple process. Syntactically-correct HTML code is automatically produced and made ready for deployment using one of the Internet browser software products (e.g., Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, etc.).

Tip #14 – HTML Destination Files

Four types of files can be created with the ODS HTML destination: 1) body, 2) contents, 3) page, and 4) frame. Each file is described below.

The **Body** file contains the results from the procedure embedded in ODS-generated HTML code. Horizontal and vertical scroll bars are automatically placed on the generated page, if necessary.

The **Contents** file consists of a link to each HTML table within the body file. It uses an anchor tag to link to each table. By using your browser software, you can view the contents file directly or as part of the frame file.

The **Page** file consists of a link to each page of ODS created output. By using your browser, you can view the page file directly or as part of the frame file.

The **Frame** file displays the body file and the contents file, the page file, or both. The next example shows the creation of Web-ready Univariate procedure output using the HTML format engine with the body=, contents=, page=, and frame= options.

```
ODS Listing Close;
ODS HTML body='ods-body.htm'
contents='ods-contents.htm'
page='ods-page.htm'
frame='ods-frame.htm';
Proc univariate data=libref.movies;
  Title1 'Creating HTML Output with ODS';
  Run ;
ODS HTML Close;
ODS Listing;
```

The location of each HTML file created by the previous example code (under Windows 98) is:

c:\My Documents\My SAS Files\V8.

The HTML output appears below:

Tip #15 – Testing Web Output

Before transferring your Web files to a Web server, users should thoroughly test any HTML code to make sure they are problem-free. Many viewers will not return to Web pages that contain errors or do not work according to design. A word of caution: **Not all Web browser software handles web pages the same way.** Microsoft Internet Explorer may display your web page differently than Netscape Navigator and others.

Before deploying web-based output to the Web or Intranet, it is important to visually inspect and test your output to see how your Web pages behave. Web validation services are available for users to check web pages for errors or inconsistencies. The following recommendations provide a few items to consider before deploying Web output.

1. Check spelling – check the spelling on each of your Web pages before making them available on the Web.
2. If possible, use a validation service to identify errors in your use of HTML.
3. Test the Web pages to see how easy they are to access and browse through the information. You should verify that each Web page has a consistent design and layout.
4. Turn off images to test how Web pages will look and what information is displayed when viewers use Web browsers that cannot display images or when they turn off images.
5. Verify links to make sure each link takes you to the intended destination and that each link contains information of interest to your viewers.
6. Enlist a test audience to check out your Web pages and to solicit their feedback. This feedback is very important since it will enable you to improve the way your Web pages look and operate. It is also important that you compare your test audience's feedback with your own objectives to determine which areas require more work.
7. Test your Web pages with different Web browser software to evaluate how they will look. The two most popular Web browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator.
8. Test Web pages on different computers because they can look and sound differently when the content consists of animation.
9. Determine the speed of transferring Web page content. If the content is too text-rich or image-rich, the excessive transfer speeds may cause viewers to tune-out rather than tune-in.
10. View your Web pages at different resolutions to determine the amount of information a monitor can display.

Conclusion

The time has come to turn tired-looking output listings into great looking information. The SAS® Output Delivery System (**ODS**) provides new and exciting ways to improve the way output is generated. Gone are the days when the only available formatting choice for output was basic output listings consisting of monospace fonts printed on a white background. Using ODS' built-in format engines, it addresses the inherent weaknesses found in traditional SAS output by enabling "quality" output to be produced without the need of importing it into word processors. Version 8 boasts many new format destinations including Postscript, RTF, HTML, SAS data sets, and DATA step interfaces, while supporting traditional Listing output as well. Users have a powerful and easy way to create and access formatted procedure and DATA step output.

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About the Author

Kirk is a SAS Quality Partner® and SAS Certified Professional® with 25 years of experience working with the SAS System. He has authored over one hundred articles on computing and technology which have appeared in professional journals including Enterprise Systems Journal, SAS Users Group International (SUGI) since 1981, regional User Groups, and local User Groups. His popular SAS Tips column appears regularly in the SANDS and SESUG Newsletters. His expertise includes application design and development, training, and programming using base-SAS, SAS/SQL, ODS, SAS/FSP, SAS/AF, SCL, FRAME, and SAS/EIS software.



Comments and suggestions can be sent to:

Kirk Paul Lafler
 Software Intelligence Corporation
 P.O. Box 1390
 Spring Valley, California 91979-1390
 E-mail: KirkLafler@cs.com