

Using SQL Dictionaries to Research the Global Symbol Table

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Abstract **description:** The sql procedure in SAS® software provides a number of dictionaries that can be used to research entries in the global symbol table. These dictionaries include lists of dataset and variable names, option values, and catalog entries for format values and macro definitions.

purpose: This paper provides example programs to research values in the global symbol table assigned by the global statement options, procedure output from the format procedure, and macro definitions.

 The sql procedure can also be used to create lists of objects for list processing: list of variable names, or dataset names.

audience: all levels

keywords: sql, dictionary.dictionaries, dictionary.catalogs, dictionary.columns, dictionary.tables, dictionary.options; catalog and print procedures

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Introduction

overview

This is the list of topics:

- describe libref.memname
- syntax of sql statements
- syntax of select
- index of usage of sql clauses

describe libref.memname

Program 1 is the syntax of the describe statement; this program is used throughout this paper.

Program 1 sql-describe-libref-memname.sas

```
proc sql; describe table libref.memname; quit;
```

syntax of sql statements

```
proc sql;
proc sql noprint;
    create    table table-name as
              query-expression
              <order by order-by-item
                <, ... order-by-item>>;
    describe table table-name <, ... table-name>;
    select    <distinct> object-item
              <function>(object-item) <as new-name>
              <, ... object-item>
```

```

into      :macro-variable <separated by ' '>
          :macro-variable-A, :macro-variable-B
          :macro-variable1 - :macro-variable&sysmaxlong
from      libref.memname
where     column-char eq 'value'
          and column-char2 eq "%upcase(&mvar)"
          or  column-num eq <num-value>
group by  group-by-item
          <, ... group-by-item>>
having    sql-expression
order by  order-by-item
          <, ... order-by-item>>;

quit;

```

syntax of select

The keyword `select` has one required clause, `from`, and five optional clauses: `into`, `where`, `group by`, `having`, and `order by`, which may be viewed conceptually in this hierarchy:

```

select          col_1 <,col_2, ..., col_N>
into           :mvar   <separated by '<dlim>'
from
              where   col_1 eq 'value'
group by      col_1 <,col_2, ..., col_N>
              having  col_1 eq 'value'
order by      col_1 <,col_2, ..., col_N>

```

index of usage of sql clauses

Note: in this table name is a column (sql) or variable (dataset) name.

<u>object</u>	<u>clause</u>	<u>pg.</u>
name	as new_name label='var label'	3
	count(name) as new_name	9
	distinct name	3
	group by name	9
name	into :mvar separated by ',' .	4
name	like 'prefix%'	12
name eq	"%lowcase(&mvar)"	5
	order by name	12
name eq	"%upcase(&mvar)"	5

How many sql dictionaries?

Program 2 provides a list of the SQLDICT=32 dictionaries. Note that values of datasets (memname) and variables (name) within all dictionaries are in upper case; they are lowercase here for readability.

Program 2 sql-d-dictionaries-memnames-list.sas

```

proc sql; select distinct lowcase(memname)
              as memname label = 'Member Name'
from          dictionary.dictionaries;
quit;
%put &=sqllobs;

```

```

lst
-----
Member Name
-----
catalogs

```

```
check_constraints
columns
constraint_column_usage
constraint_table_usage
dataitems
destinations
dictionaries
engines
extfiles
filters
formats
functions
goptions
indexes
infomaps
libnames
locales
macros
members
options
prompts
promptsxml
referential_constraints
remember
styles
tables
table_constraints
titles
views
view_sources
xattrs
```

notes: The dictionaries reviewed in this paper are: catalogs, columns, options, and tables.

describe each dictionary

Program 3 assembles the statements:
describe table dictionary.(memname);
for each of the sql dictionaries.

Program 3 sql-d-dictionaries-memname-describe-each.sas

```
proc sql; select distinct catt(
                        'describe table dictionary.',memname,')
                into :list      separated by ' '
                from dictionary.dictionaries;
                &list
                quit;
%symdel list;
```

```
lst describe table dictionary.CATALOGS;
describe table dictionary.CHECK_CONSTRAINTS;
describe table dictionary.COLUMNS;
...
describe table dictionary.VIEWS;
describe table dictionary.VIEW_SOURCES;
describe table dictionary.XATTRS;
```

! → Save this log! and review to find the description of each dictionary.

log

```
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.CATALOGS was created like:
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.CHECK_CONSTRAINTS was created like:
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.COLUMNS was created like:
...
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.VIEWS was created like:
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.VIEW_SOURCES was created like:
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.XATTRS was created like:
```

Dataset, variables: columns in tables

overview

This is the list of topics in this section:

- columns: variable names
- making list of (variable) names, sql
- tables: dataset names
- making list of (dataset) memnames, sql
- compare to proc contents
- make list names, contents
- make list memnames, contents

columns: variable names

Refer to the log saved from program 3, shown on pg. 4,
or use this program to write notes to the log.

```
proc sql; describe table dictionary.columns; quit;
```

log

NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.COLUMNS was created like:

```
create table DICTIONARY.COLUMNS
(libname   char(8)   label='Library Name',
 memname   char(32)  label='Member Name',
 memtype   char(8)   label='Member Type',
 name      char(32)  label='Column Name',
 type      char(4)   label='Column Type',
 length    num       label='Column Length',
 npos      num       label='Column Position',
 varnum    num       label='Column Number in Table',
 label     char(256) label='Column Label',
 format    char(49)  label='Column Format',
 informat  char(49)  label='Column Informat',
```

making list of (variable) names

Program 4 creates a dataset from sql dictionary.columns.

Program 4 make-list-names-sql.sas

```
%let libname = sashelp;
%let memname = class;
proc sql; create table list_names as
      select libname, memname, varnum, name, type
      from dictionary.columns
      where libname eq "%upcase(&libname)"
            and memname eq "%upcase(&memname)"
            and memtype eq 'DATA';
      describe table &syslast;
      select * from &syslast;
      quit;
```

log

NOTE: SQL table WORK.LIST_NAMES was created like:

```
create table WORK.LIST_NAMES
(libname char(8) label='Library Name',
 memname char(32) label='Member Name',
 varnum num label='Column Number in Table',
 name char(32) label='Column Name',
 type char(4) label='Column Type'
```

lib	Library Name	Member Name	Column Number	Column Name	Column Type
	SASHELP	CLASS	1	Name	char
	SASHELP	CLASS	2	Sex	char
	SASHELP	CLASS	3	Age	num
	SASHELP	CLASS	4	Height	num
	SASHELP	CLASS	5	Weight	num

notes: Column varnum is a *natural key*; its values are integers and are in (1–n(columns)). Column type values are in ('char','num'); compare to the contents procedure output, which are in (1:char,2:num), and shown in make-list-names-contents.sas, pg. 7.

tables: dataset names

Refer to the log saved from program 3, shown on pg. 4, or use this program to write notes to the log.

```
proc sql; describe table dictionary.tables; quit;
```

log

```
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.TABLES was created like:
create table DICTIONARY.TABLES
(libname      char(8)   label='Library Name',
 memname      char(32)  label='Member Name',
 memtype      char(8)   label='Member Type',
 dbms_memtype char(32)  label='DBMS Member Type',
 memlabel     char(256) label='Data Set Label',
 typemem      char(8)   label='Data Set Type',
 crdate       num       label='Date Created',
 modate       num       label='Date Modified',
 nobs         num       label='Number of Physical Observations',
 obslen       num       label='Observation Length',
 nvar         num       label='Number of Variables',
```

making list (dataset) memnames, sql

Program 5 creates a dataset from sql dictionary.tables.

Program 5 make-list-memnames-sql.sas

```
%let libname = sashelp;
proc sql; create table list_memnames as
select libname, memname, nobs, nvar
from dictionary.tables
where libname eq "%upcase(&libname)"
and memtype eq 'DATA';
describe table &syslast;
select * from &syslast;
quit;
```

log

```
NOTE: SQL table WORK.LIST_MEMNAMES was created like:
create table WORK.LIST_MEMNAMES
(libname char(8) label='Library Name',
 memname char(32) label='Member Name',
 nobs num label='Number of Physical Observations',
 nvar num label='Number of Variables')
```

lst

Library Name	Member Name	Number of Physical Observations	Number of Variables
SASHELP	AACOMP	2020	4

SASHELP	AARFM	130	4
SASHELP	ADSMMSG	426	6
...			
SASHELP	ZIPCODE	41140	21
SASHELP	ZIPMIL	560	21
SASHELP	ZTC	18161	6
SASHELP	_CMPIDX_	44	13

compare to proc contents

Program 6 creates a table of (variable) names using the contents procedure.

Program 6 make-list-names-contents.sas

```
%let data = sashelp.class;
PROC contents data = &data          noprint
              out  = list_names
                (keep = libname memname varnum name type
                 memtype
                 where= (memtype eq 'DATA'));
run;
proc sql; describe table &syslast; quit;
proc print data = &syslast(drop = memtype);
run;
```

log

```
NOTE: SQL table WORK.LIST_NAMES was created like:
      create table WORK.LIST_NAMES
      (LIBNAME char(8) label='Library Name',
       MEMNAME char(32) label='Library Member Name',
       NAME char(32) label='Variable Name',
       TYPE num label='Variable Type',
       VARNUM num label='Variable Number',
       MEMTYPE char(8) label='Library Member Type'
```

lst

Obs	LIBNAME	MEMNAME	NAME	TYPE	VARNUM
1	SASHELP	CLASS	Age	1	3
2	SASHELP	CLASS	Height	1	4
3	SASHELP	CLASS	Name	2	1
4	SASHELP	CLASS	Sex	2	2
5	SASHELP	CLASS	Weight	1	5

notes: The contents procedure output table is sorted alphabetically by column: name; see the column varnum which is not in ascending order. Column type is in (1:num,2:char); compare to dictionary.columns.type in ('char','num') shown above in program make-list-names-sql.sas, pg. 5.

make list memnames, contents

Program 7 creates a table of memnames and attributes using the contents procedure.

Program 7 make-list-memnames-contents.sas

```
%let libname = sashelp;
PROC contents data = &libname._all_  noprint
              out  = list_memnames_contents
                (keep = libname memname nob memlabel
                 memtype varnum
                 where= (memtype eq 'DATA'));
```

```
run;
proc sql; create table list_memnames_&libname as
      select      distinct memname, nobs,
                  max(varnum) as nvars label='n vars',
                  memlabel
      from        &syslast
      group by   memname;
describe table  &syslast;
select *       from  &syslast;
quit;
```

log

```
NOTE: SQL table WORK.LIST_MEMNAMES_SASHELP was created like:
      create table WORK.LIST_MEMNAMES_SASHELP
      (LIBNAME char(8) label='Library Name',
      MEMNAME char(32) label='Library Member Name',
      MEMLABEL char(256) label='Data Set Label',
      NOBS num label='Observations in Data Set',
      nvars num label='n vars'
```

lst

Obs	LIBNAME	MEMNAME	NOBS	nvars	MEMLABEL
1	SASHELP	AACOMP	2020	4	
2	SASHELP	AARFM	130	8	
3	SASHELP	ADSMMSG	426	14	
4	SASHELP	AFMSG	1090	20	
5	SASHELP	AIR	144	22	airline data (monthly: JAN49-DEC60)
...					
196	SASHELP	ZIPCODE	41140	16711	US Zipcodes; Source: zipcodedownload.com Jan 2017
197	SASHELP	ZIPMIL	560	16732	US Military Zipcodes-lat/long NA-assigned missing;
198	SASHELP	ZTC	18161	16738	
199	SASHELP	_CMPIDX_	44	16751	

Options overview

This is the list of topics in this section:

- syntax, proc options
 - list groups
 - find word in options
 - find group of an option
-

Refer to the log saved from program 3, shown on pg. 4, or use this program to write notes to the log.

```
proc sql; describe table dictionary.options; quit;
```

log

```
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.OPTIONS was created like:
      create table DICTIONARY.OPTIONS
      (optname char(32) label='Option Name',
      opttype char(8) label='Option type',
      offset num label='Offset into option value',
      setting char(1024) label='Option Setting',
      optdesc char(160) label='Option Description',
      level char(8) label='Option Location',
      optstart char(8) label='Option Set',
      group char(32) label='Option Group'
```

syntax, proc options

```
proc options define value = <optname>; run;
proc options group      = <group> ; run;
```

list groups

Program 8 lists the option groups and number of options in each.

Program 8 sql-d-options-groups.sas

```
proc sql; select  distinct lowercase(group) as group,
                  count(optname) as count
                from    dictionary.options
                group by group;
quit;
```

lst

group	count
animation	8
cas	11
codegen	1
communications	52
dataquality	2
email	9
envdisplay	30
envfiles	35
errorhandling	21
execmodes	21
extfiles	3
graphics	5
help	8
inputcontrol	15
install	1
languagecontrol	19
listcontrol	13
log_listcontrol	10
logcontrol	22
macro	29
memory	5
meta	13
odsprint	34
pdf	9
performance	33
sasfiles	36
security	11
sort	11
sql	9
svg	9
tk	2
unknown	1

find word in options

Program 9 shows how to find a word in any of the columns in dictionary.options.

Program 9 sql-d-options-find-word.sas

```
%let word = macro;
proc sql; %let word = %lowercase(&word);
          select group, optname, setting, optdesc
          from dictionary.options
          where index(lowercase(optname), "&word")
                or index(lowercase(setting), "&word")
                or index(lowercase(optdesc), "&word");
quit;
```

lst

Option Group	Option Name	Option Setting	Option Description
MACRO	CMDMAC	NOCMDMAC	Checks window environment commands for command-style macros.
MACRO	IMPLMAC	NOIMPLMAC	Checks for statement-style macros.
MACRO	MACRO	MACRO	Enables the macro facility.
...			
MACRO	SASMSTORE		Specifies the libref of a SAS catalog for stored compiled SAS macros.
MACRO	SERROR	SERROR	Issues a warning message when a macro variable reference does not match a macro variable.
MACRO	SYMBOLGEN	NOSYMBOLGEN	Displays the results of resolving macro variable references in the SAS log.
COMMUNICATIONS	SYSRPUTSYNC	NOSYSRPUTSYNC	Sets the %%SYSRPUT macro variables in the client session when the %%SYSRPUT statements are executed.

find group of an option

Program 10 shows how to find the group associated with an option in dictionary.options.

Program 10 sql-d-options-find-group.sas

```
%let optname = mprint;
proc sql; select  group
                into :group
                from dictionary.options
                where optname eq "%upcase(&optname)";
quit;
proc options group = &group;
run;
```

log

```
Group=MACRO
NOCMDMAC Does not check window environment commands for command-style macros.
NOIMPLMAC Does not check for statement-style macros.
MACRO Enables the macro facility.
...
SASMSTORE= Specifies the libref of a SAS catalog for stored compiled SAS macros.
SERROR Issues a warning message when a macro variable reference does not match a macro variable.
NOSYMBOLGEN Does not display the results of resolving macro variable references in the SAS log.
```

Name collisions in catalogs

overview

Name collisions describes the problem of having two objects with the same name in different locations. In SAS software this can occur when the two entities are in different catalogs.

This is the list of topics in this section:

- describe dictionary.catalogs
- formats
- demo name collision formats
- finding name collisions in format catalogs
- catalog delete format
- macro definitions
- demo name collision macro definitions
- finding name collisions of macro catalogs
- catalog delete macro definition

describe dictionary.catalogs

Refer to the log saved from program 3, shown on pg. 4,

or use this program to write notes to the log.

```
proc sql; describe table dictionary.catalogs; quit;
```

log

```
NOTE: SQL table DICTIONARY.CATALOGS was created like:
      create table DICTIONARY.CATALOGS
      (libname char(8) label='Library Name',
       memname char(32) label='Member Name',
       memtype char(8) label='Member Type',
       objname char(32) label='Object Name',
       objtype char(8) label='Object Type',
       objdesc char(256) label='Object Description',
```

formats

The format procedure creates lookup tables in the default catalog: `work.formats`. The catalog name may be described in the `library=` option of the format procedure. There are three possible catalog names:

```
library = work.formats                                the default
library = libref                                     memname: formats
library = libref.memname                             e.g.: same name as dataset
```

The option `fmtsearch` defines the search list; the default value is (`work library`).

The *name collision* problem occurs when same-named format definitions exist in two different catalogs, e.g. `work.formats` and `library.formats`.

demo name collision formats

Program 11 shows the naming collisions problem with the same-named format in both the `work` (default) and `library` format catalogs.

Note the example contains a numeric format saved to `work.fmt_num`; this is provided to show that a numeric format has `objtype=FORMAT`, not `formatN`, when compared to character format where `objtype=FORMATC`.

Program 11 demo-name-collisions-formats.sas

```
*see autoexec for: ;
*libname library '.';
proc format library = work;
    value $sex 'F' = 'female'
              'M' = 'male';
proc format library = work.fmt_num;
    value sex 0 = 'female'
           1 = 'male';
proc format library = library;
    value $sex 'F' = 'Feminine'
              'M' = 'Masculine';
options fmtsearch = (work library);          * default list;
%put echo: %sysfunc(getoption(fmtsearch,keyword));
%put echo: %sysfunc(putc(F,$sex.)) %sysfunc(putc(M,$sex.));
options fmtsearch = (library work);
%put echo: %sysfunc(putc(F,$sex.)) %sysfunc(putc(M,$sex.));
```

log

```
NOTE: Format $SEX has been output.
...
NOTE: Format SEX has been written to WORK.FMT_NUM.
...
NOTE: Format $SEX has been written to LIBRARY.FORMATS.
...
echo: FMTSEARCH=(WORK LIBRARY)
81 %put echo: %sysfunc(putc(F,$sex.)) %sysfunc(putc(M,$sex.));
```

```

echo: female male
82  options fmtsearch = (library work);
83  %put echo: %sysfunc(putc(F,$sex.)) %sysfunc(putc(M,$sex.));
echo: Feminine Masculine

```

find naming collisions in format catalogs

Program 12 shows how sql extracts information from dictionary.catalogs about the formats in catalogs named in the `fmtsearch` option.

Program 12 sql-d-catalogs-name-collisions-formats.sas

```

proc sql; create table list_formats as
  select objname, objtype,
         libname, memname, memtype
  from dictionary.catalogs
  where libname ne 'SASHELP'
         and memtype eq 'CATALOG'
         and objtype like 'FORMAT%'
  order by objname, objtype, libname;
quit;
proc print data = &syslast;
  by objname objtype;
  id objname objtype;
  title 'exist duplicate objname+objtype? '
        "%sysfunc(getoption(fmtsearch,keyword))";
run;

```

```

lst exist duplicate objname+objtype? FMTSEARCH=(LIBRARY WORK)
objname  objtype  libname  memname  memtype
-----  -
SEX      FORMAT   WORK     FMT_NUM  CATALOG

objname  objtype  libname  memname  memtype
SEX      FORMATC  LIBRARY  FORMATS  CATALOG
                WORK     FORMATS  CATALOG

```

notes: The print procedure with both `by` and `id` statements is used to highlight the duplicate formats.

catalog delete format

Program 13 shows the use of the catalog procedure to remove a format definition.

Program 13 catalog-delete-format.sas

```

/*name: catalog-delete-format.sas;
objname  objtype  libname  memname  memtype
-----  -
SEX      FORMATC  LIBRARY  FORMATS  CATALOG
                WORK     FORMATS  CATALOG

**** */
proc catalog catalog = work.formats;
  contents;
  delete sex          %*objname;
        / entrytype=formatc; %*objtype;
quit;

```

log

```
NOTE: Deleting entry SEX.FORMATC in catalog WORK.FORMATS.
```

macro definitions

Macro definitions are defined by the `%macro` and `%mend` statements. The default catalog name is `work.sasmacr`. The *compile+store* macro facility may be used to add a catalog name to the search path of macro definitions. The options enabling the *compile+store* macro facility are:

```
sasmstore          allow storage
sasmstore=libref   location: catalog-name.sasmacr
```

There is no option to change the search path of macro definitions; the default catalog `work.sasmacr` is always searched first; if the *compile+store* facility is used then the *libref* specified by the option `sasmstore` is searched next.

The *name collision* problem occurs when same-named macro definitions exist in the `work` and `sasmstore` catalogs, e.g. `work.sasmacr` and `libref.sasmacr`.

demo name collision macro definition

Program 14 shows the naming collisions problem with the same-named macro definitions in both the `work` (default) and library catalogs.

Program 14 demo-name-collisions-macro-definitions.sas

```
*see autoexec for: ;
*libname library '.';
options mstored sasmstore = library;
%macro demo(data=sashelp.air)
    /des = 'demo in library'
    store source;
%put _local_;
%mend demo;
%demo
%macro demo(data=sashelp.class)
    /des = 'demo in work';
%put _local_;
%mend demo;
%demo
```

log

```
69 *name: demo-name-collisions-macro-definitions.sas;
70 options mstored sasmstore = library;
71 %macro demo(data=sashelp.air)
72     /des = 'demo in library'
73     store source;
74 %put _local_;
75 %mend demo;
76 %demo
DEMO DATA sashelp.air
77 %macro demo(data=sashelp.class)
78     /des = 'demo in work';
79 %put _local_;
80 %mend demo;
81 %demo
DEMO DATA sashelp.class
```

finding name collisions in macro definitions

Program 15 shows the use of `dictionary.catalogs` to find duplicate macro definitions.

! → Note the fetch of the *libref* from the option `sasmstore`; this *libref* does not have to be `library`.

Program 15 sql-d-catalogs-name-collisions-macro-definitions.sas

```
%let sasmstore = %upcase(%sysfunc(getoption(sasmstore)));
%put echo &=sasmstore;
proc sql; create table list_catalogs_macro_definitions as
  select  libname, memname, memtype,
         objname, objtype, objdesc
         from dictionary.catalogs
         where memname like 'SASMAC%'
            and memtype eq 'CATALOG'
            and objtype eq 'MACRO'
            and libname in ('WORK', "&sasmstore")
         order by objname, libname;
quit;
data &syslast;
set &syslast;
by objname;
if not ( first.objname
        and last.objname );
proc print data = &syslast;
  title 'exist duplicate objname? in WORK'
  "%sysfunc(getoption(sasmstore))";
  by objname;
  id objname;
run;
```

lst

```
exist duplicate objname? in WORK LIBRARY
objname libname memname memtype objtype objdesc
-----
DEMO    LIBRARY  SASMACR  CATALOG  MACRO    demo in library
        WORK    SASMAC1  CATALOG  MACRO    demo in work
```

notes: Note that the where clause included memname like 'SASMAC%'; this listing shows the memname in the libname=work is SASMAC1; your operating system ! → may differ from the documentation which specifies memname=SASMACR.

catalog delete macro definition

Program 16 shows the use of the catalog procedure to delete a macro definition.

Program 16 catalog-delete-macro-definition.sas

```
/*name: catalog-delete-macro-definition.sas;
objname libname memname memtype objtype
-----
DEMO    LIBRARY  SASMACR  CATALOG  MACRO
        WORK    SASMAC1  CATALOG  MACRO
**** */
proc catalog catalog = work.sasmac1;
  contents;
  delete demo %*objname;
             / entrytype=macro; %*objtype;
quit;
```

log

NOTE: Deleting entry DEMO.MACRO in catalog WORK.SASMAC1.

debrief

Remember that values of most columns are UPCASE and that a list of column names must be delimited by commas.

Suggested reading

Fehd, "An Autoexec Companion, Allocating Location Names during Startup"
Code-Crafters-Inc.com, *Summary of SAS Dictionary Tables and Views*
Fehd, "How To Use proc SQL select into for List Processing"
Koopmann Jr., "%LibDoc: A library documentation macro"

Conclusion

The sql dictionaries provide a unique look into the global symbol table which can be used to research some difficult problems.

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