Using LinkedIn and sasCommunity.org as Human Resource Tools for Managing a Network of SAS® Professionals

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Abstract
Social networking and collaborative online communities are enormously popular web applications. With this popularity a growing number of SAS users are connecting and sharing content with others around the world, anytime and anywhere. Organizations, understanding the huge potential these online communities offer their human resource needs, are using LinkedIn and sasCommunity.org to identify and manage a professional network of SAS professionals and experts. This presentation explores the techniques used by organizations to leverage their human resource needs.

Introduction
Today's Internet enables SAS users and other like-minded professionals to use powerful social networking and media resources to connect and collaborate with others around the world. With more than 40 million professionals and a growing number of SAS users currently using the social networking capabilities found in LinkedIn, and the multifaceted media content and collaboration features found in sasCommunity.org provide users everywhere with access to content; learn about upcoming events, forums and user group conferences; and discuss anything and everything related to SAS software.

Social Networking and Media
Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that provide for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media integrates technology and social interaction for the creation of value. Example social networking and media websites include:

- **LinkedIn**
- **Facebook**
- **YouTube**
- **Blogger**
- **Twitter**
- **Myspace**

- **sasCommunity.org**
- **Blogs.sas.com/JMP**
- **SAS-L**
- **Wikipedia.com**
- **FamilySearch**
- **Trivani International**

Social network and media websites can be used for profit, friendships, or both, as illustrated in Figure 1.
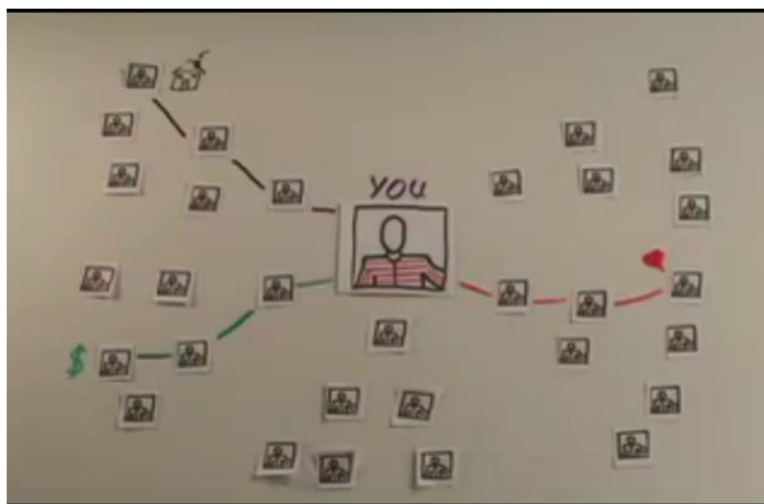

Figure 1. Friends of Friends of Friends

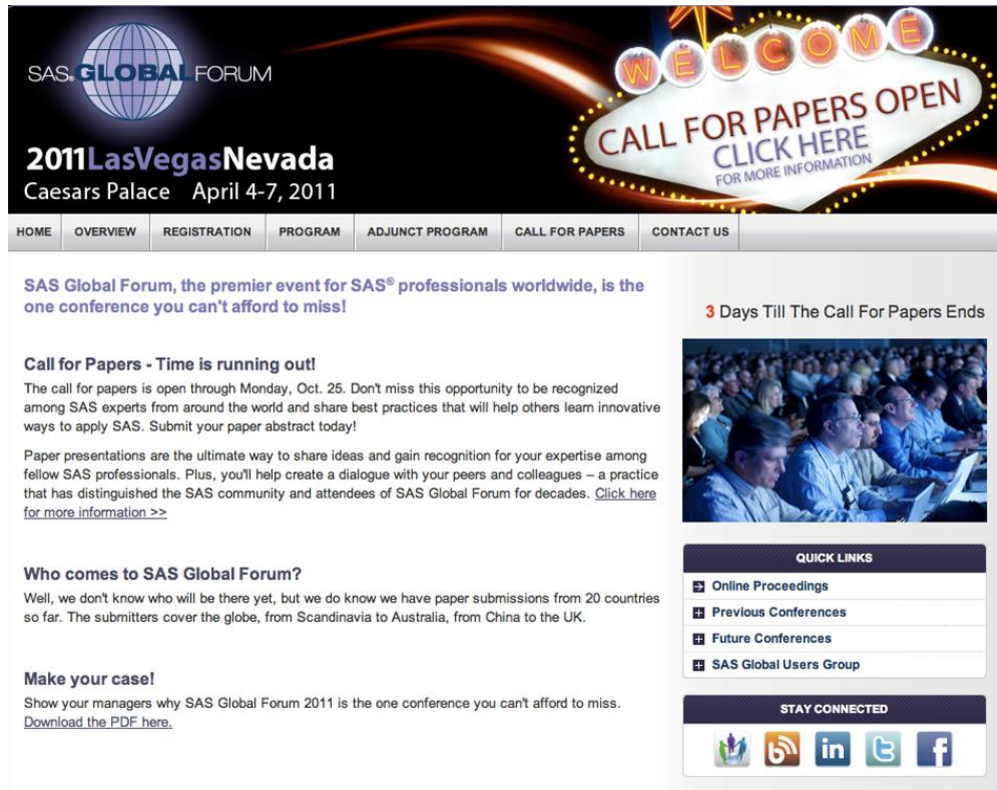The SAS Global Forum (SGF) website uses social media to advantage, shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. SAS Global Forum (SGF) 2011 website

LinkedIn Social Networking

LinkedIn is a powerful, and free, contact and relationship management application boasting a network of more than 40 million professionals worldwide. After joining LinkedIn and creating an online identity (profile), users can stay informed, exchange information and ideas, and explore opportunities with like-minded individuals. You'll also be able to access a directory of groups sharing a common experience, interest, affiliation or goal, as illustrated in Figure 3.
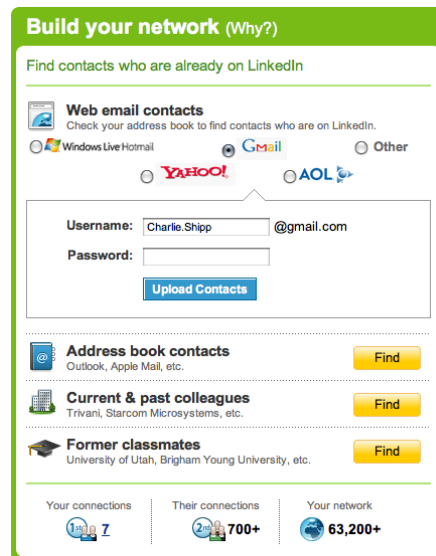

Figure 3. Building Your Professional Network with LinkedIn

Sample LinkedIn profiles are shown in Figure 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Sample LinkedIn Profile

Figure 5. Sample LinkedIn Profile

Your professional use of social networks extends from business to personal networks. sasCommunity.org acts as the hub for SAS, SGF, JMP, LinkedIn, and SAS-L activities when identifying the top SAS-related websites, as shown in Figure 6.
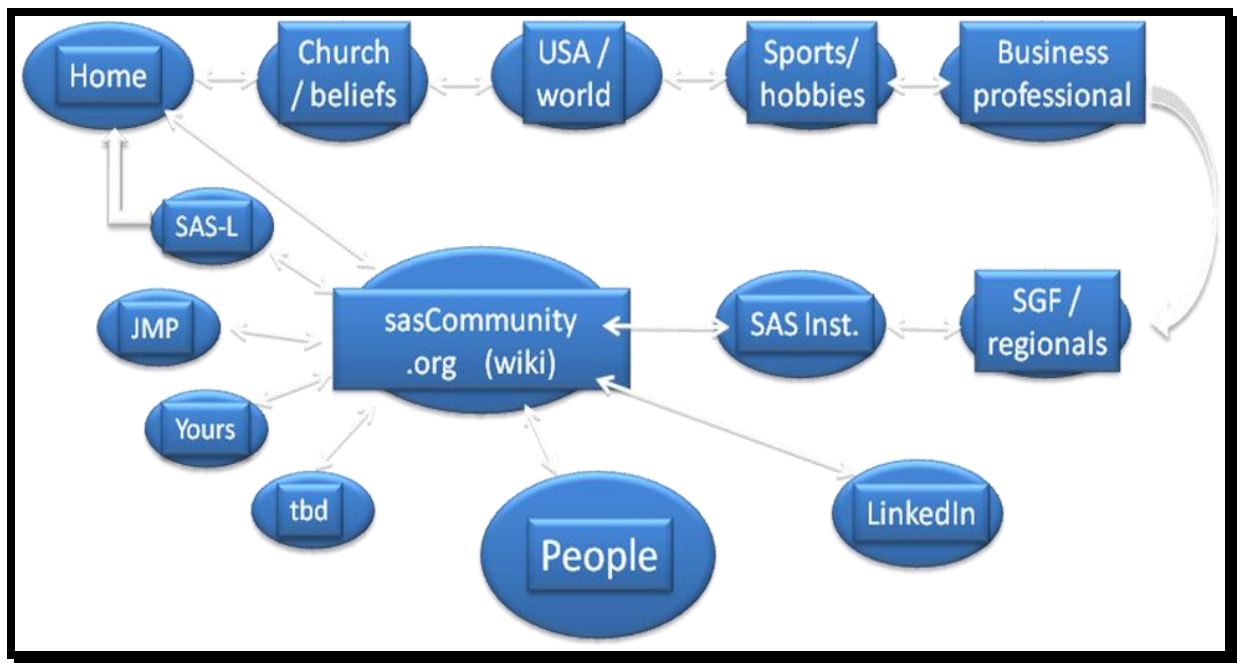
Figure 6. sasCommunity.org and the Hub of SAS-related Activities

As illustrated in Figure 7, there is overlap between the professional and personal websites available to Internet users.
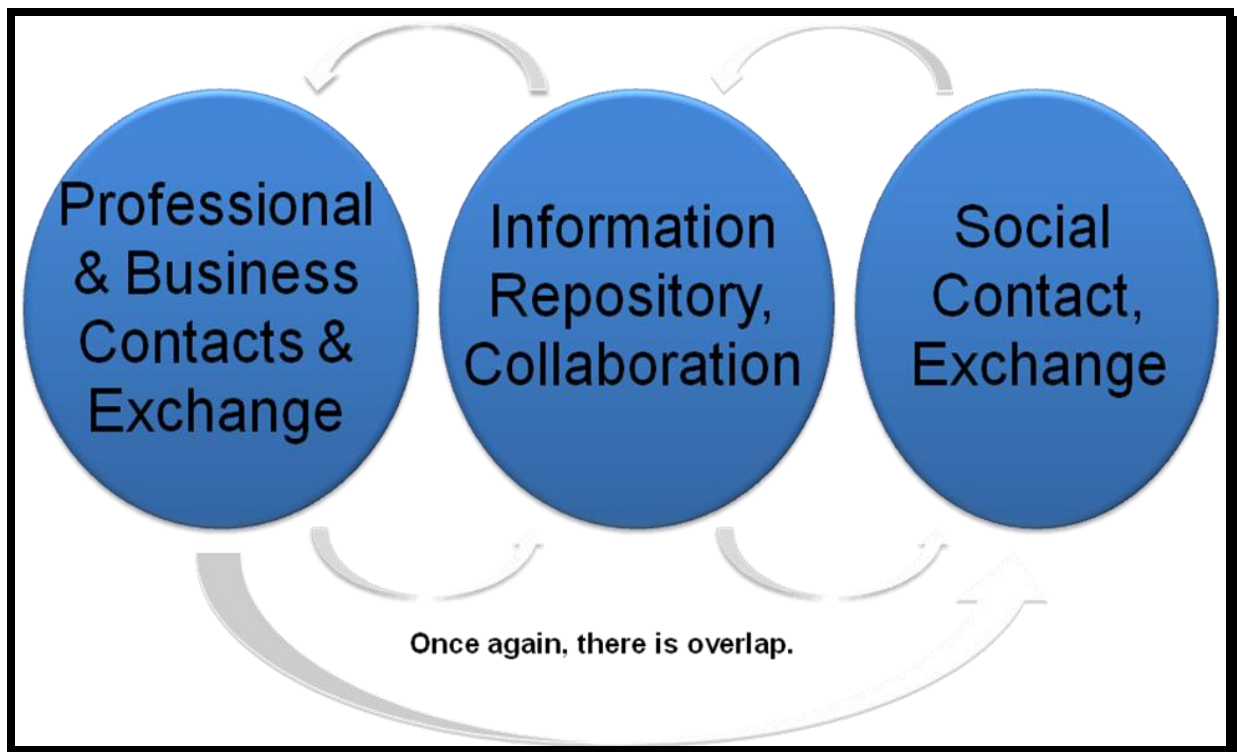

Figure 7. The overlap between professional and personal websites

Figure 8 illustrates leading SAS-related social networks within the social media framework.
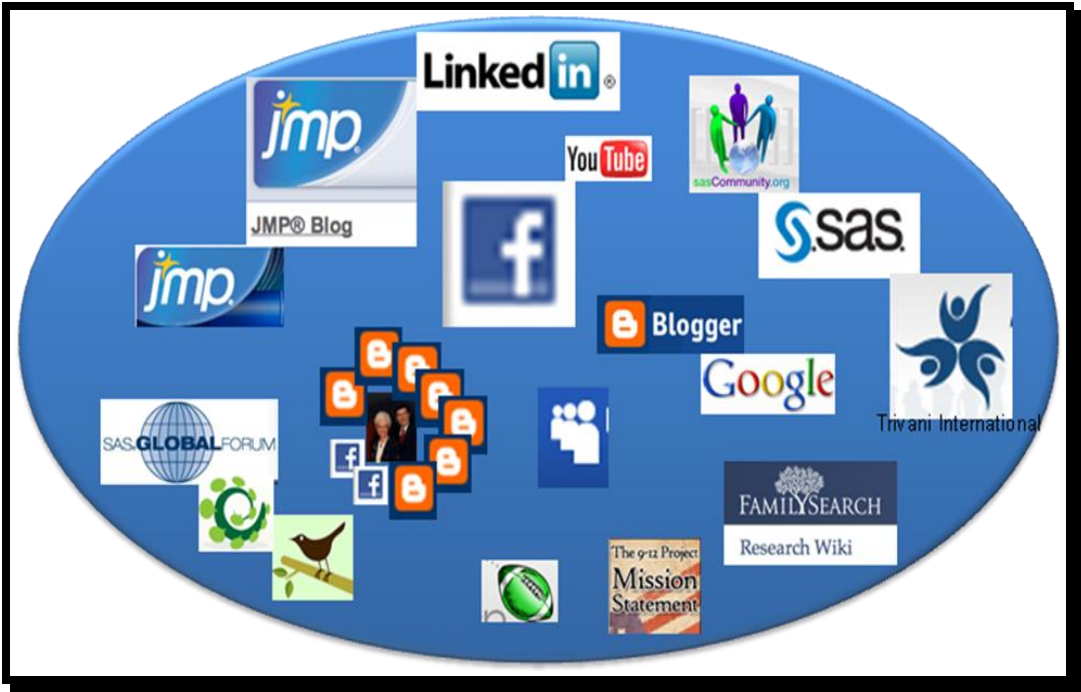

Figure 8. Social Networks within Social Media

The sasCommunity.org Main Page

To get the most from sasCommunity as well as the numerous features within, you'll want to become familiar with the Main Page, shown in Figure 9. The Main Page is the primary interface that users see as they access and interact with sasCommunity.org. The first thing you will notice about the main page, besides the beautiful graphics, is that it is organized into a number of parts: 1) on the left side is a grouping of hyperlinked keywords related to the main menu, page activity, getting started, search, and toolbox; 2) at the very top-right are two hyperlinks, Log in and Create account; 3) at the top are a grouping of special tabs related to articles, discussions, view source, and history; 4) in the body portion are the Bloggers' Corner and Forums; and 5) at the bottom of the body portion are a number of icons related to joining sasCommunity, getting involved, Sasopedia, events and user groups.
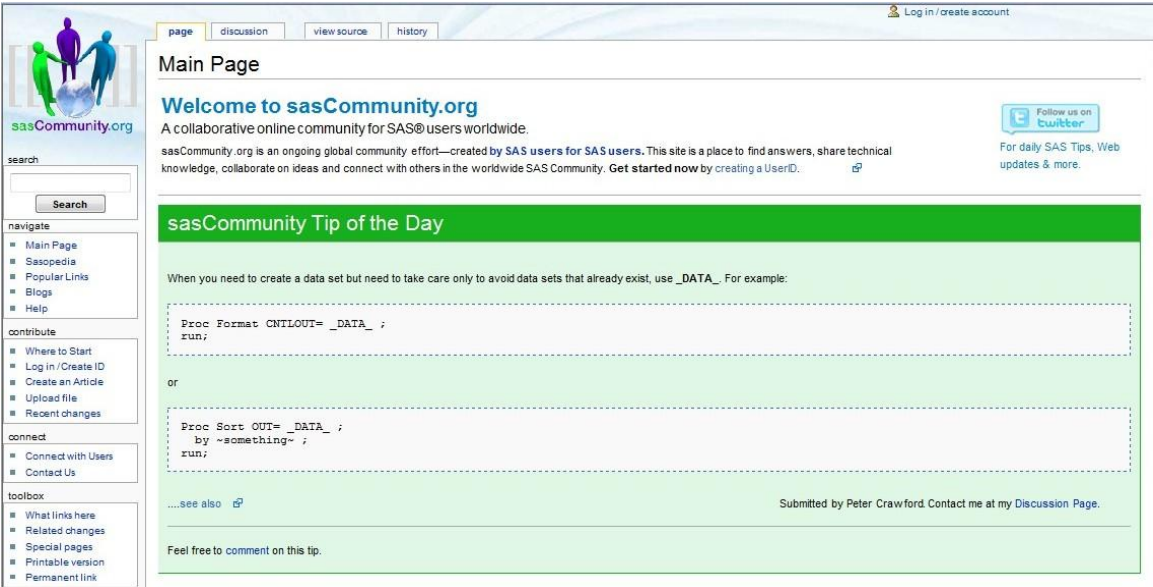

Figure 9. sasCommunity.org Front Page

Joining sasCommunity – Creating an Account

At some point during your online experience, and particularly before you are permitted to contribute to sasCommunity, you will need to create an account. To create an account you will need to click the **"log in / create account"** hyperlink located at the top-right of the Main Page. This will automatically display the Log in / create account special page, see Figure 10. Click the "**Create an account**" hyperlink to proceed. The Log in / create account page will automatically display.

Figure 10. Log in / create account special page

With the Create account page displayed, you are now ready to enter a unique Username, password, E-mail address, and optional Real name. Once this information is entered, click the **Create account** button, see Figure 11. Note: Although an e-mail address is required to be entered, an entry for Real name is optional and can be left blank. A password is your secret sequence of typed characters and is required for accessing your account. Anyone who knows your password can sign on to your account and could potentially cause a world of havoc such as deleting mail messages, sending bogus messages that look like they are coming from you, post messages on public forums that appear to be coming from you, and so on. Also, don't choose a password that is too obvious or too easy to guess. Because a password is so important, you should really select one with the utmost care.
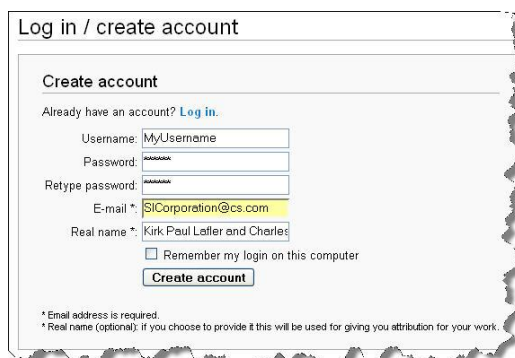

Figure 11. Create account page

If your account is successfully created, a special Welcome message will display indicating that your account has been created, see Figure 12. You can then click the **Return to Main Page** hyperlink to display the Main Page.
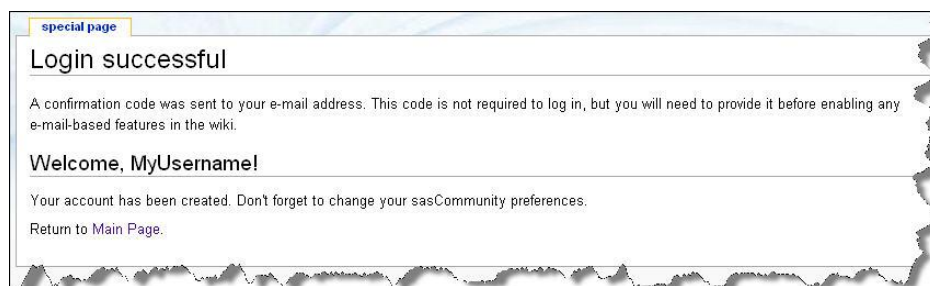

Figure 12. Your account has been created page

As part of the verification process, an e-mail containing a confirmation code is automatically sent to the e-mail address you provided during the account creation process. Before you can activate e-mail activities on sasCommunity you will need to open the link displayed in the e-mail by clicking the listed hyperlink, see Figure 13.

Figure 13. Confirmation E-mail message

After clicking the hyperlink displayed in the e-mail, a confirmation page will automatically display indicating that the account belongs to you. As soon as this confirmation page displays sasCommunity e-mail features will be enabled, see Figure 14.

Figure 14. Confirm E-mail address page

Blogger's Corner

Blogger's Corner displays a list of Blogs or articles defined by SAS users. You can access Blogger's Corner from the Main Page by clicking the "**Blogs**" keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category. Or, click the hyperlink, Visit ***Bloggers' Corner*** to see what your sasCommunity.org colleagues are blogging about..., located in the Blogger's Corner section of the Main Page. Once clicked, the Blogger's Corner page appears, see Figure 15.
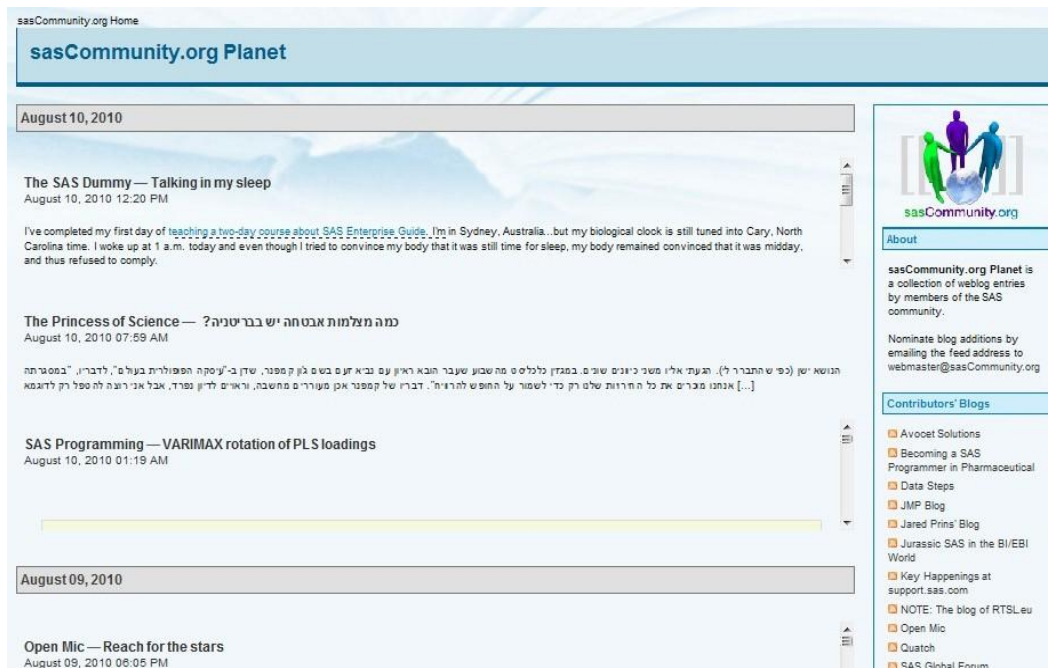

Figure 15. Blogger's Corner page

Accessing a blog is as easy as point-and-click. For example, click "**SAS Global Forum**" from the list of Contributors Blogs in the right panel to display the blog for SAS Global Forum, see Figure 16. Once the blog is accessed (and you are logged in), you will be able to participate in the discussion associated with that blog by clicking the 'discussion' tab located at the top of the page.

Figure 16. SAS Global Forum Blog page

To post a comment to the blog posting, click the 'Comment' hyperlink (and log into your account) located at the top of the blog page. With the Comment page displayed, you will be able to view and post a response (or comment) to the blog message, see Figure 17.

Figure 17. SAS Global Forum comment page

Exploring Popular Links

sasCommunity.org provides a number of popular links for users to access and explore. Click the "**Popular Links**" keyword from the hyperlinks located at the left of the main page to display the Popular Links page, see Figure 18. This listing of popular links is organized as a collection of frequently accessed pages for ease of use.
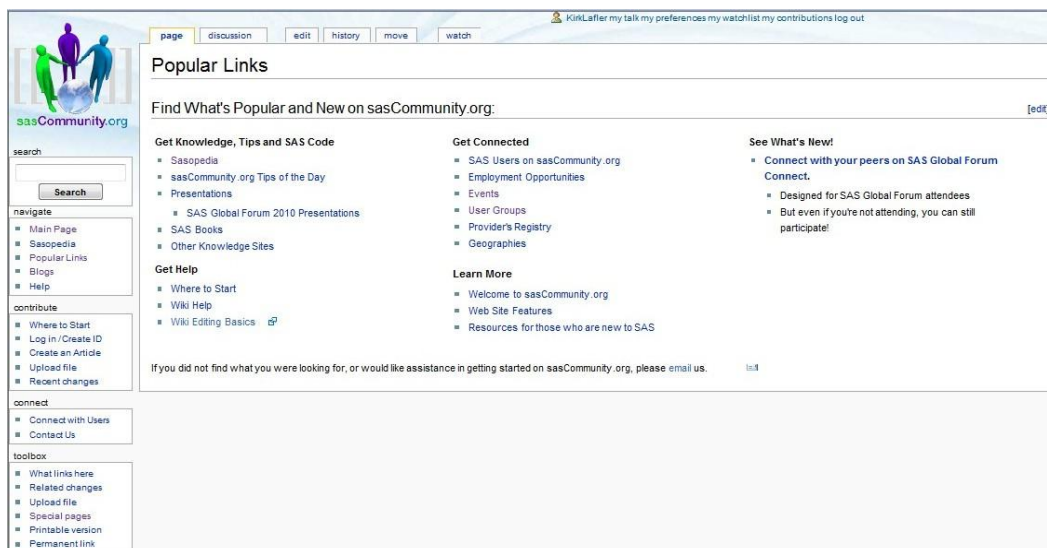
Figure 18. Popular Links page

Exploring Upcoming Events

SAS users have a convenient way to find out about upcoming events including user group meetings, conferences, training classes, webcasts, and other interesting events relevant to the user community. Click the "**Events**" keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category to display the Events page, see Figure 19.
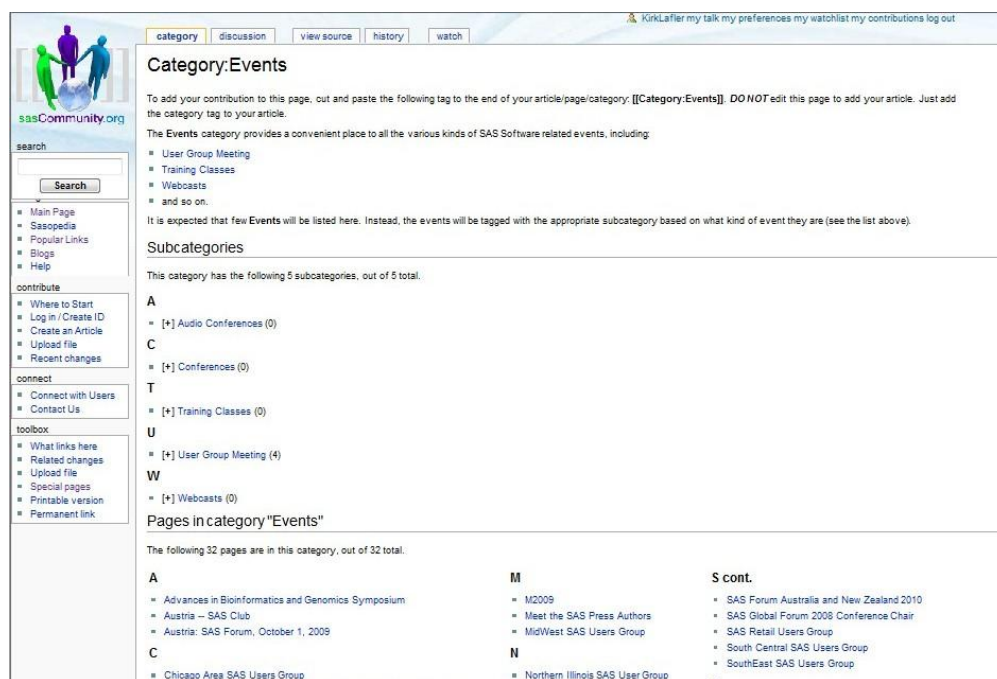
Figure 19. Events page

Using the Sasopedia

The Sasopedia is the place where users can access factual information and tips on using the SAS software. To access this fact-based resource, click the "**Sasopedia**" keyword hyperlink under the Popular Links category to display the Sasopedia page, see Figure 20. Although Sasopedia is currently being reorganized, it displays the following categories: 1) Language Elements, 2) Procedures, 3) Products, and 4) Topic for user convenience.

Figure 20. Sasopedia page

Staying Connected with User Groups

Users can access the latest goings-on with in-house, local, regional, and SAS Global Forum anytime, and anywhere. To access this fact-based resource, click the "**User Groups**" keyword hyperlink under the Popular Links category to display the User Groups page, see Figure 21.

Figure 21. sasCommunity User Groups page

Using a Wiki

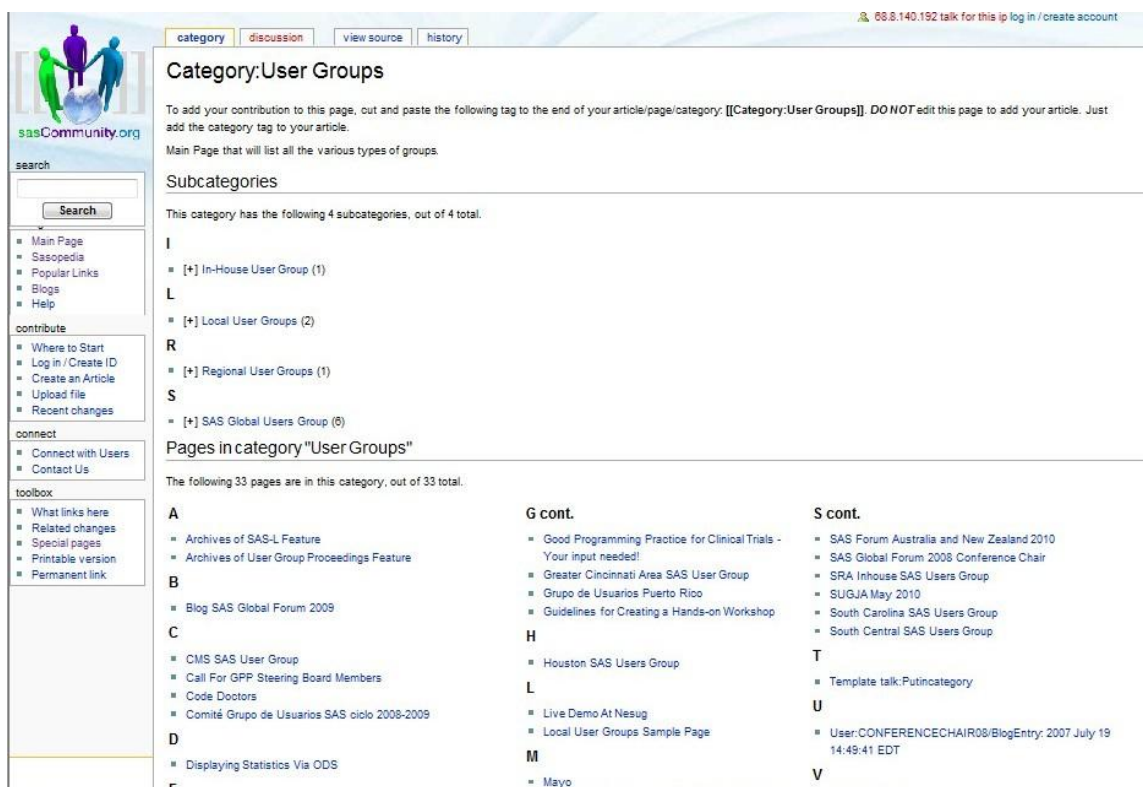sasCommunity uses Wikimedia software to improve the overall user experience while using the virtual community. Wiki features include: a consistent look and feel with navigation bars and short-cuts, file upload capabilities, mathematical formulas using LaTeX syntax, automatic image resizing, maintain and create a watchlist to track changes to articles, show changes using side-by-side diffs, ability to link to individual sections, support of subpages, comprehensive editing capabilities, support of discussion pages, comprehensive backend database-driven and cookie-based support, permission and security capabilities, and comprehensive full text search and query capabilities. For additional information about a Wiki and its capabilities, you are referred to the following URL http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Help#Feature_list, see Figure 22.
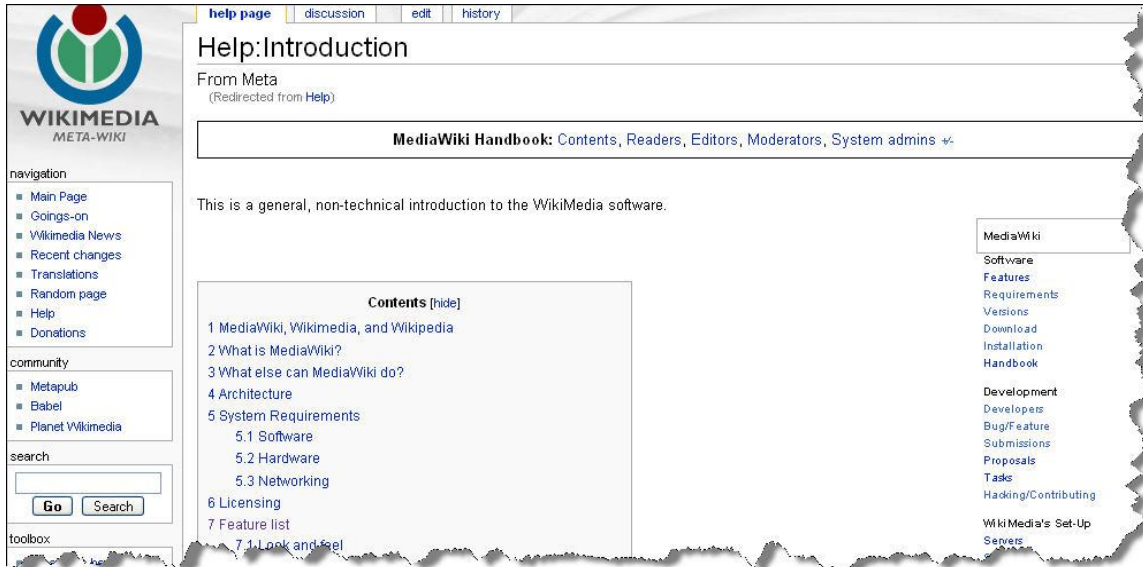
Figure 22. Wikimedia website

Using the Search Feature

The built-in search feature lets you search topics on anything SAS, and/or SAS-related topics. In the Search dialog box, located on the left side of the Main Page, character-string information can be entered, and either the **Go** or **Search** buttons clicked. For example, say you are searching for anything 'consulting' as illustrated in Figure 23.

Figure 23. Search dialog box

Results matching the user-supplied character-string 'consulting' are automatically displayed and grouped as Article title matches and Page text matches. A partial listing of results for 'consulting' is displayed in Figure 24.
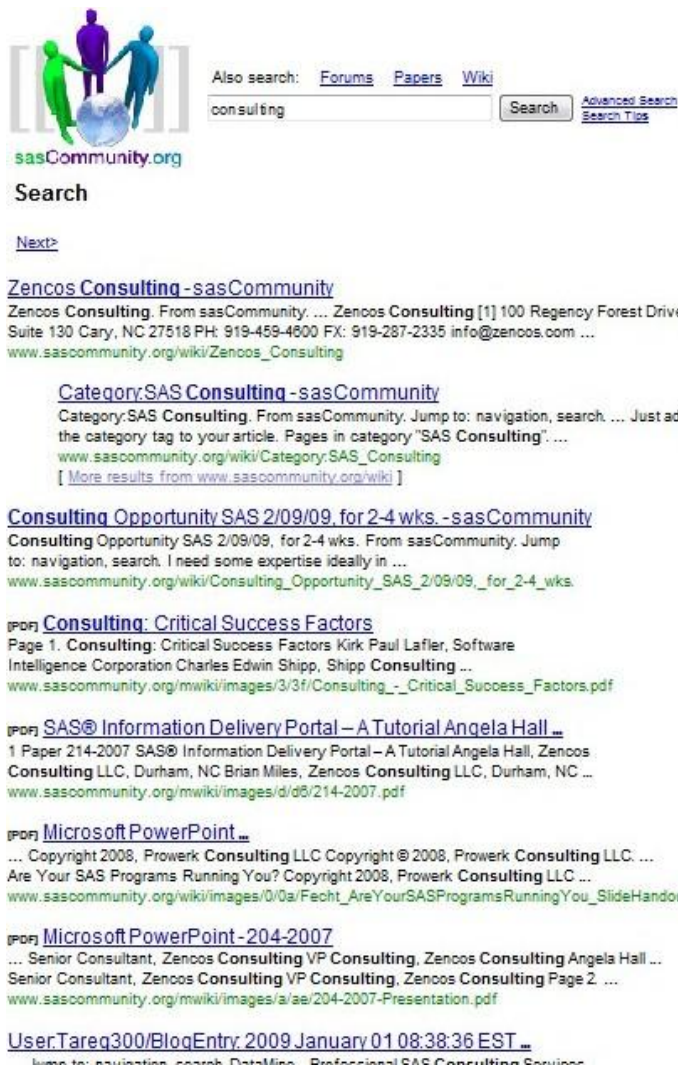
Figure 24. Page text matches for 'consulting'

Logging-out of a Session

Our quick tour of sasCommunity.org would not be complete without showing you how to log out (or sign out) of the virtual community. Although you probably have already guessed how to do this, we thought we would complete our tour and show you how anyway. Logging-out of a session requires you to click the **Log out** hyperlink that is located at the very top of any page in sasCommunity.org. Once clicked, the following Log out page displays as illustrated in Figure 25.

Figure 25. Log out page

Conclusion

With the features found in LinkedIn and the comprehensive content in sasCommunity.org, users have amazing social network and content applications for connecting with SAS professionals worldwide. Those already participating are finding it to be a great resource for social networking, collaboration, tips, code example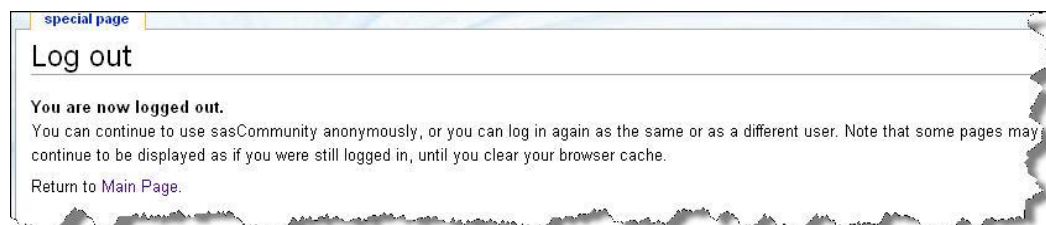s, user group and webcast events, forums, and much more. The Wiki technology fosters user participation. As described at the annual 2007 SAS Global Forum (SGF), sasCommunity.org is a resource for all SAS users, and is not just relevant for one event. sasCommunity.org should prosper well into the future as organizations experience declining travel budgets and technological advances occur in the area of Internet access. Here's your chance to make the most of this virtual user community – explore, learn and share.

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Acknowledgments

Trademark Citations

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Kirk Paul Lafler is consultant and founder of Software Intelligence Corporation and has been using SAS since 1979. He is a SAS Certified Professional, provider of IT consulting services, trainer to SAS users around the world, and sasCommunity.org Advisory Board member. As the author of four books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, Kirk has written more than four hundred peer-reviewed papers, been an Invited speaker and trainer at more than three hundred SAS International, regional, local, and special-interest user group conferences and meetings, and is the recipient of 17 "Best" contributed paper awards. His popular SAS Tips column, "Kirk's Korner of Quick and Simple Tips", appears regularly in several SAS User Group newsletters and Web sites, and his fun-filled SASword Puzzles is featured in SAScommunity.org.

Charles Edwin Shipp is a programmer, consultant and author, and has been using the SAS and JMP software since 1980. He is credited in the original JMP manual for his roles in the early days. He has written more than one hundred papers and has been an invited speaker at more than one hundred International, regional, local, and special-interest SAS and JMP conferences and meetings, and is the recipient of 10 "Best" contributed paper awards. Charlie is the co-author of three books including the ever-popular Books by Users (BBU) book, Quick Results with SAS/GRAPH Software. Currently, Charlie is involved as an eBook author, sasCommunity.org Advisory Board member, app developer, consultant for Trivani Foundation International with his lovely and brilliant wife, Lynnette, and consultant in JMP Genomics.

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