Exploring the PROC SQL _METHOD Option

Kirk Paul Lafler, Software Intelligence Corporation, Spring Valley, California

Abstract
The SQL Procedure contains powerful options for users to take advantage of. This presentation explores the fully supported _METHOD option as an applications development and tuning tool. Attendees learn how to use this powerful option to better understand and control how a query processes.

Introduction
PROC SQL supports a powerful option called _METHOD. Since its implementation, many SAS® SQL users have expressed very favorable comments for the value-added information it provides on the SAS Log. In fact, the _METHOD option is worth exploring simply due to the benefits associated with gaining a better understanding of the processes during specific PROC SQL operations, including complex table joins and subqueries.

Application of the _Method Option
The PROC SQL _METHOD option can be used as an effective way to analyze a query process as well as for debugging purposes. Information from the _METHOD option is displayed on the Log using a variety of codes. The codes and their corresponding descriptions associated with the _METHOD option appear in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SQXCRTA</td>
<td>Create table as Select.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXSLCT</td>
<td>Select statement or clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXJSL</td>
<td>Step loop join (Cartesian).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXJM</td>
<td>Merge join operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXJNDX</td>
<td>Index join operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXJHSH</td>
<td>Hash join operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXSORT</td>
<td>Sort operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXSRC</td>
<td>Source rows from table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXFIL</td>
<td>Rows filtration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXSUMG</td>
<td>Summary stats (aggregates) with GROUP BY clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQXSUMN</td>
<td>Summary stats with no GROUP BY clause.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following example a _METHOD option is specified to show the processing hierarchy in a two-way equi-join. As illustrated in the SAS Log, the PROC SQL optimizer utilized a hash join algorithm in the performance of the join.

SQL Code

```
PROC SQL _METHOD;
   SELECT MOVIES.TITLE, RATING, ACTOR_LEADING
       FROM MOVIES, ACTORS
       WHERE MOVIES.TITLE = ACTORS.TITLE;
QUIT;
```
Log Results

NOTE: SQL execution methods chosen are:

- sqxslct
- sqxjhsh
- sqxsrl MOVIES
- sqxsrl ACTORS

Conclusion

The SQL Procedure’s _METHOD option provides users with a powerful and effective tool for gaining greater insight into complex join, subquery, and other programming processes.

References


Lafler, Kirk Paul (2002). PROC SQL Programming Tips; Software Intelligence Corporation, Spring Valley, CA, USA.

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Author Information
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 emeritus Advisory Board member. As the author of four books including PROC SQL: Beyond the Basics Using SAS, Kirk has written more than five hundred papers and articles, been an invited speaker and trainer at three hundred-plus SAS International, regional, local, and special-interest user group conferences and meetings, and is the recipient of 19 “Best” contributed paper, hands-on workshop (HOW), and poster awards. His popular SAS Tips column, “Kirk’s Korner of Quick and Simple Tips”, appears regularly in several SAS User Group newsletters and websites, and his fun-filled SASword Puzzles is featured in SAScommunity.org.

Comments and suggestions can be sent to:

Kirk Paul Lafler
Senior Consultant, Application Developer, Trainer and Author
Software Intelligence Corporation
E-mail: KirkLafler@cs.com
LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/in/KirkPaulLafler
Twitter: @sasNerd