

Book Review

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Title: **The Little SAS Book: a primer**
Authors: Lora D. Delwiche and Susan J. Slaughter
Publisher: SAS Institute, Cary NC, 1995
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Introductory SAS publications inherently represent a compromise between giving the reader just enough direction to start using the SAS system while not omitting essential information. Hence, to judge whether The Little SAS Book successfully fulfills its mission, one should try to identify what this book covers well and contrast it with those subjects that should have been better explained.

The authors have strived to make The Little SAS Book more readable by covering each new subject on facing pages. Several of the of the tables span facing pages as well. The format works well for most subjects but the table rows shift up on the second page. This layout makes it more difficult for the eye to flow along a row. Good use of graphic symbols is made in referring readers to other SAS materials that may be consulted for more information on the current subject and to symbolize the SAS activity being described.

The Little SAS Book contains several treasures. The most valuable section, Chapter 8, covers debugging SAS programs as well as or better than any other publication one might consult. Appendix C, "Coming to SAS from SPSS"; Appendix D, "Coming to SAS from a Programming Language"; and Appendix E, "Coming to SAS from SQL", are subjects not often covered in introductory SAS publications and valuable to those who wish to learn SAS and are familiar with one of these other points of reference.

In this reviewer's opinion, the two page section in the front of book, "Introducing SAS Software", puts both his attempts to explain the SAS System and the Institute's marketing materials to shame. This introduction section is as clear, compact and insightful as any explanation of the SAS System he has previously seen.

As much as the reviewer enjoyed reading The Little SAS Book, there were subjects that cried for more emphasis. These are usually caused by the facing page format used throughout the book. For example, Section 2.7, "Using Display Manager Command and Windows", fails to mention the minimize and maximize window buttons available within nearly all Windowing environments.

A couple of sections quote observations posted on SAS-L. However, in Appendix A, "Where to Go from Here", the reader is directed to contact the site's SAS software consultant. The authors seem to have assumed that all SAS software consultants are informed about SAS-L and using the Internet. A paragraph on how to subscribe to SAS-L and obtain the Listserv help files would have been more helpful.

Despite these minor misgivings, The Little SAS Book is a wonderful addition to the Books by Users series and an excellent investment of one's SAS publications budget.