preferences

August 15, 2005

Abstract

Infrastructure library supporting the concept of task preferences

1 Description

1.1 Concept

In the following the notion of SAS task preference parameters is introduced. A preference parameter, like an ordinary task parameter (see documentation of package **param**) is a string-key/value pair through which the user controls the run time behavior of the task. Unlike the latter however, preference parameters are user-customizable, i.e., their default values can be changed by each user according to his personal preferences.

A list of preference parameters that logically belong together can be put in a preference group with a dedicated name. The name identifies the group and serves as the key of a new group preference. Please note that this is a recursive definition: A preference group is a preference parameter, so groups can contain normal parameters and other groups which in turn can contain other groups and parameters, etc. The level of nesting is a priori unlimited.

1.2 Usage

A task that possesses preference parameters reads those from a global preference file `sas.pref` in the SAS configuration area. Parameters are treated fully optional by the task, hence, if a parameter is not found, e.g. because the preference file does not exist, a hardcoded default value will be used.

For a first-time SAS user the preference file does not exist yet but has to be created by running the task *sasprefgen* without any arguments on the command line. This will scan the SAS task packet directory structure along the `SAS_PATH`+`SAS_DIR` path and compile the global file from individual preference files in the respective task packages.

Unlike ordinary task parameters preference parameters cannot be specified on the command line. Their values are always read from the user-specific preference file. Any modifications to this file, like adding, removing, re-grouping, or changing the values of individual entries will be done by a TBD editor task.[1] It is foreseen that all interactive GUI tasks will comprise the editor as an integral part.

[1] Please note: The preferences formalism is experimental and as such the preference editor does not exist yet. At the moment the only workaround is to edit the preference file with a text editor manually.

References