

USING DBMS/COPY

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What is DBMS/Copy?

DBMS/COPY is a package for transferring data from one package to another. Currently, we have the 8th version of DBMS/Copy on the sociology LAN.

When should I use it?

If you download a dataset that you want to use from the ICPSR website, you will find that it is generally unformatted raw data. What you need to do is use DBMS/Copy to transfer the raw data into a format that your preferred statistical package can read. Commonly used formats include Stata file, SPSS file and SAS file. If you want to use other statistical packages, you can also tell DBMS/Copy to find the correspondent formats.¹

How to use it?

Raw data → Data in Stata, SPSS or SAS format

DBMS/COPY runs in two modes: Interactive and Batch. We recommend you use the interactive method to transfer data because it is easier and more user friendly than the Batch method. To use the interactive method, go to the start menu, follow the correct link (all programs→LAN STATS→DBMSCOPY) and click the DBMS/Copy V8.

The DBMS/Copy will show a window that has five boxes: Interactive, Open Batch, Run Batch, Skip this, and Exit DBMS/Copy. As we said above, you should click the Interactive box. Then DBMS/Copy will ask you to look in your folder and select an input file that you want to transfer. If you don't see any files or the file that you want to transfer in the window, then you need to specify the correct directory and type of file. The raw data file that you downloaded from the ICPSR website is usually in ASCII format, which is usually shown as ".raw", ".dat" and ".txt". After you locate the file that you want to use, you should choose "open."

Then you will be led to a "Power Panel" that has five boxes: "Record Filter & Equations," "View Data," "Variable Information," "Sort" and "Data Information." We assume that you just want to transfer the data without making any changes. In this case, you should ignore all these boxes and click "ok."

After this, you will be led to a window that asks you to "Select Output Database." If you want to save the file at the same location without renaming it, you don't need to change anything in the boxes of "Directories" or "File name." However, if you want to relocate the file with a different file name, you should change the directory and type a new name for your data. Importantly, depending on which statistical package that you want to use to analyze your data, you need to

¹ Before you decide to transfer any datasets, make sure that our department does not have the copy of formatted data you want to use. Otherwise, you can just get one from faculty or graduates without worrying about the transferring procedure.

specify the output file in the box of “Save as type,” such as Stata SE [* .dta], SPSS 12.0 for windows [.sav] and SAS 9.1 for windows [.sas7bdat].

Then you will be brought to a window that includes “Transfer Verification.” This window will show you the batch program equivalent to the previous procedures that you have done. You won’t have any problems if you don’t understand the batch program. Just click “Do-It!” You will see that DBMS/Copy will process your command. Make sure that the “input records” and “output records” are identical. Meanwhile, you can read the number of records that DBMS/Copy read and the size of record in bytes.

After DBMS/Copy finishes transferring, it will ask whether you need to transfer another dataset. If you don’t have more datasets to transfer, you can simply click “Done” and close the windows. Otherwise, repeat the section of “**How to use it?**” and transfer all the datasets that you want to use.

Data in Stata format → Data in SPSS or SAS format

The procedure of transferring any datasets from one format to another format is similar to that of transferring the raw data. After you open the DBMS/Copy, you should click the Interactive box. Then you will be led to a window that asks you to “Select Input Database.” Specify the correct file type in the “files of type,” find the data you want to transfer, and click “open.” There are two subsequent windows that ask for “Create Extra Formatted Variables?” and “Powell Panel.” Simply click “Done” and “Ok.” Then you will be led to a window that asks you to “Select Output Database.” You need to specify the output file in the box of “Save as type,” such as SPSS 12.0 for windows [.sav] and SAS 9.1 for windows [.sas7bdat]. The last window will show the “Transfer Verification.” Just click “Do-It!” and you will see that DBMS/Copy will process your command. We think that you know how to transfer dataset(s) from the SPSS format to the Stata format without our further illustrations.

Remember, the transferring procedure will yield a dataset(s) with the variable and value labels intact. Now you can open your dataset(s) in your preferred statistical package.

Congratulations!!