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Japanese Macintosh System Software: Overview

Article Created: 24 April 1991

Article Change History:

09/29/92 - REVIEWED

- For technical accuracy.

TOPIC -----

Could you please give me an overview of Japanese system software that is now available in the United States?

DISCUSSION -----

The text resources and special features of Japanese Macintosh system software have been translated to fit the Japanese dates, sorting system, and so on. Otherwise, the Japanese system software works like Roman-alphabet system software, and troubleshooting is very similar.

On the other hand, Japanese system software must deal with a total of over 6800 characters in four different character sets. An INIT called KanjiTalk manages this large set; it takes keystrokes and converts them into Japanese. Along with this INIT, a variety of input modules, dictionaries, and fonts files are necessary to support KanjiTalk.

Japanese Macintosh 6.0 system software can be used on any Macintosh system with 2MB of RAM (a hard disk is strongly recommended). However, no special hardware is necessary. Although there is a localized version of the keyboard, KanjiTalk can accept input from a U.S. keyboard. In fact, the only difference between the U.S. keyboard and the Kana keyboard is the addition of the Kana characters silk-screened on the key caps.

Macintosh hardware products were originally made specifically for the Japanese market, with Kanji fonts in ROM. These products have been discontinued.

U.S. applications that abide by the Script Manager interface (TeachText, for example) generally work with Japanese Macintosh system software, but there is no guarantee of full functionality. It takes two bytes (not just one) to represent a Kanji character, and applications that don't take this into account typically don't work without some problems.

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Keywords: <None>

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19960215 11:05:19.00

Tech Info Library Article Number: 6792