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Macintosh: Rocky Mountain BASIC Equivalent Needed

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TOPIC -----

I use Rocky Mountain BASIC on an HP. Is there a similar package for the Macintosh?

DISCUSSION -----

The only implementation of BASIC for the Macintosh that is remotely similar to "Rocky Mountain BASIC" for the HP9000 series is Microsoft QuickBASIC. There are numerous differences, especially considering the machine-specific details of each BASIC. Rocky Mountain BASIC uses many commands and parameters that mean nothing to computers other than HP9000 systems. Likewise, Microsoft QuickBASIC uses Macintosh-specific commands that do not exist on other computers and a command syntax in traditional Microsoft BASIC style--a style much different than that of Hewlett-Packard's BASIC.

They do share the important ability to use subprograms and functions, but the method of implementing these is quite different between the two languages. Microsoft QuickBASIC would give you a powerful BASIC. However, porting anything other than the simplest programs from Rocky Mountain BASIC will not be a trivial task. This is especially with programs that are I/O-intensive, because these tend to be the areas where the languages differ the most.

There are some definite benefits to using Microsoft QuickBASIC over HP's BASIC, like advanced debugging features (breakpoints and animated tracing for source-level debugging) and a simpler mouse interface. Users can quickly grow accustomed to the Microsoft QuickBASIC product, while Rocky Mountain BASIC has a cruder interface and takes more time to master. Of course, you are already using Rocky Mountain BASIC, so the change in programming environment will have an impact to the degree that you are familiar with Macintosh user interface conventions.

If you need additional information on Microsoft QuickBASIC, we suggest that you contact Microsoft directly. They should be able to provide more up-to-date information and could, perhaps, assist in deciding if their product will fit your requirements. For more details, search the Technical Info library under "Microsoft Corp AND WA"

We should mention that at least one company sells what is essentially a clone

of Rocky Mountain BASIC for MS-DOS computers. These products provide a command set and environment that is very similar to HP's. Unfortunately, we do not know of any plans for similar products for the Macintosh. The closest would be to use one of these BASIC clones on an MS-DOS emulator, like SoftPC or Mac286--not a very elegant solution.

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