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Japanese Macintosh System Software: Overview

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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Macintosh hardware products were originally made specifically for the Japanese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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