Kanji Keyboard for PowerBook 500 Series (9/94)

Article Created: 13 September 1994

TOPIC ---

Are Japanese PowerBook computers sold with a Kanji keyboard or do you enter
Kanji phonetically, like with the Japanese Language Kit and WorldScript?

I have a customer who wants a PowerBook with a Kanji keyboard. I thought the
answer was that you have to go to Japan to buy one, but then I thought about it
and remembered that with the Japanese Language Kit you enter Kanji phonetically
from an English keyboard, so now I'm not even sure we make a Kanji keyboard,
much less a PowerBook with one.

DISCUSSION --

Yes, as with all Macintosh computers sold in Japan, they all come with the
Japanese (actually called "kana" since only the phonetic alphabet, not Kanji, is
marked) keyboard.

In fact, starting with the PowerBook 500 series, a new JIS Keyboard was
introduced. This keyboard follows the key layout of NEC and other vendors such
as IBM. It was done to "Japanize" our system, so it fits into the industry
standard used over here. A side note, this keyboard is also available as a
separate ADB peripheral for desktop systems.

You are correct in that a kana keyboard is not necessary to input Japanese. I
believe all Japanese input methods (including Japanese system software,
KanjiTalk 7 which uses the same input method as the JLK) support using the US
keyboard layout. So this person can get a US PowerBook with System 7, add the
Japanese Language Kit, and effectively do the same work as if it were bought in
Japan.

If they want a fully localized system (all menus and dialog boxes in Japanese),
they would need to get the KanjiTalk 7 system software kit, but I believe the
PowerBook 500 control panels and System Enabler are not part of this kit.

However, the kana keyboard can be faster for those familiar with the layout.
With the exception of about half a dozen characters, one kana keystroke is
equivalent to two Roman keystrokes. Thus, using the kana layout can be much

faster for those who are used to it. But this is dependent upon the user.

To make the situation even a little more complicated, as I had mentioned on the
PowerBook 500 series, a new keyboard layout was adopted. There is no option for
the old Japanese layout keyboard. There have been complaints from people that
they didn't like the new layout. In addition, there have been compatibility
problems with some Japanese applications. So please explain to the interested
party.

I suppose if one was creative, one could take a stock US PowerBook 500 and just
add the kana keyboard. However, since the keyboard layout changed, a new
keyboard resource is needed for the system. Since the PowerBook 500 systems
which need it, come with it installed, I don't think either the Japanese
Language Kit nor the KanjiTalk 7 system software kit have this keyboard resource
available.

So looking at the previous two points, it may be better off to find some way of
getting the Japanese PowerBook 500 from Japan.

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Keywords: kpbook

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19960215 11:05:19.00
Tech Info Library Article Number: 16263