



January 20, 2006

Dear FDI Macintosh user:

Our FDI registration records show you have requested a Macintosh computer this year. Apple recently made a significant change in their computer architecture with far-reaching implications. Your attention and possible action is needed to insure you that the computer you receive from FDI remains appropriate for your situation.

The Bottom Line

By default, your computer selection will be upgraded to the new Intel-based architecture. If you want a newly announced Intel-based Mac, you do not need to do anything – **again, FDI will provide the new models by default.** However, if you do not want the new computer (i.e. you prefer the previous PowerPC platform), you must “opt-out” and, by Thursday, January 26, change your computer selection in the FDI Registration System (<http://www.fdi.vt.edu/register/>). Very limited quantities of the older models remain. We will try to obtain them but cannot guarantee results. Those of you that have requested the 17” Powerbook, please continue reading this note, as Apple has not yet been announced an Intel-based version of this model.

Please read the information below and act today if you need to “opt-out” of the new Intel models. Contact John Moore, FDI Director, (jmoore1@vt.edu) if you have questions.

The Situation:

Last week Apple announced the availability (six months ahead of schedule) of computers that are based on Intel processors, rather than PowerPC processors (e.g. G4, G5) they have used for years. This is an important change in the product, as it promises better performance and, in the long-term, more flexibility. Software vendors are beginning to modify their products to fully use the Intel systems in the new Macs. Existing software running today on OS X will run on the new Apples in an emulation mode, the performance of which has been reported as adequate for most people. As updated versions of software become available, they will likely be designed to run “natively” (i.e. at full speed rather than in emulation mode) on the Intel models. Very early reviews and tests of the new iMacs are generally positive; no major issues have emerged.

What is Available:

- * The 17” iMac and the 20” iMac are now Intel-based and are shipping.
- * Older PowerPC G5 iMacs remain available as long as supplies last. Apple stated January 17 that no more are being built.
- * The 15” MacBookPro (i.e. Powerbook) is slated to ship in February. Apple is already warning to expect delays in availability because of high demand for the product and competition for parts. Expect delivery to VT sometime in the spring.
- * Older PowerPC G4 15” Powerbooks remain available as long as supplies last.
- * The 17” Powerbook remains a PowerPC G4 computer so far and is shipping. Apple has not announced when it will be converted to an Intel chip.

Recommendation:

My recommendation for most faculty is to get an Intel-based Macintosh, in recognition that the FDI computer we supply must be viable for several years. All forthcoming Apple and third-party hardware and software new development will likely be targeted at the Intel computer platforms. The speed increases are important, particularly for future performance / value over several years. Realistically, while it is almost certain that some early bugs will exist in the platform, Apple should be expected to provide remedies in a timely manner.

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The only exception to this recommendation is if you use a Macintosh for intensive graphic design, art, video editing, or similar tasks; in that case we should discuss your options in a telephone call.

ACTION NEEDED:

* If you requested a 17" iMac (FDI 2006-07) or a 20" iMac (FDI 2006-08) and want the new Intel-based iMac, no action on your part is needed – we will update your order automatically. This is the default for iMacs.

* If you requested a 17" iMac or 20" iMac and want FDI to try to purchase the older PowerPC G5 version of these computers, you need to change your request to a 2006-07A or 2006-08A. Go to <http://www.fdi.vt.edu/register/> and make this change on your FDI registration. Make this change no later than Thursday, January 26. Orders will be sent to Purchasing that day. (Note: we will attempt this option but cannot guarantee availability. If the older computers are sold-out, you will be switched to the Intel platform and notified.)

* If you requested a 15" Powerbook (FDI 2006-09) and want the new Intel-based MacBookPro, no action is needed – we will update your order automatically. This is the default for the 15" portable.

* If you requested a 15" Powerbook and want FDI to try to purchase the older PowerPC G4 Powerbook, you need to change your request to a 2006-09A. Go to <http://www.fdi.vt.edu/register/> and make this change on your FDI registration. Make this change no later than Thursday, January 26. Orders will be sent to Purchasing that day. (Note: we will attempt this option but cannot guarantee availability. If the older computers are sold-out, you will be switched to the Intel platform and notified.)

* If you requested a 17" Powerbook (FDI 2006-10) and still want that model, no action is needed – we will update your order automatically. This is the default for the 17" portable. If you want to change from the 17" Powerbook to the 15" MacBookPro, go to <http://www.fdi.vt.edu/register/> and make this change on your FDI registration. Make this change no later than Thursday, January 26. Orders will be sent to Purchasing that day.

Questions? Please contact John Moore, Director FDI (jmoore1@vt.edu), 231-8991.

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