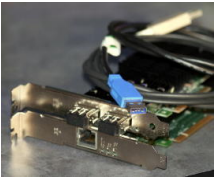


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Nvidia and AMD Go Against Intel over USB 3.0 Specification

While Intel says the specification cannot be released yet, competitors threaten they will make their own

AMD and Nvidia plan to force Intel to release a crucial PC specification regarding the upcoming USB 3.0. The companies argue that Intel tries to eliminate them from the scene when on the edge of a new era of faster peripherals. The USB 3.0 is the new-generation connection standard expected to burst in 2009. The future PCs will surely use connectors based on standard, and the best part is that the new connection will offer ten times more speed than the present USB 2.0, which is used on all the machines introduced in the past few years, getting roughly to five gigabits per second. Together with other industry players, Intel based the USB Implementers Forum back in 1995 "to support and accelerate adoption of USB-compliant peripherals," as it is stated in an overview of the specification on the company's site. "The challenge is that Intel is not... giving the specification to anybody that competes with CPUs and chipsets," told an AMD source familiar with the conflict. AMD, Nvidia, Via Technologies and other manufacturers may be forced to create their own USB 3.0 specification. "We are going to be forced to create a secondary specification which would come along with the Intel spec," said the source. "To create a new open host controller standard for USB 3.0." "We are starting development on it right now," the AMD insider added. An Nvidia source said that a meeting of members of the alternate "open" specification would take place next week. "We fully intend to productize this spec." AMD and Nvidia refused to make an official comment. On Intel's part, all seems well and sunny. The company claims that things are moving with due speed. "Just as with previous generations of USB, Intel is working hard to get the complete spec to the industry with as little delay as possible in order to drive the wide adoption of USB 3.0," it stated. The USB 3.0 specification has been issued by the USB 3.0 Promoters Group, which includes Intel as a member, besides Microsoft, HP, Texas Instruments, NEC and NXP Semiconductors. Voices coming from Intel say that, in fact, AMD and Nvidia are looking to grab the technology beyond USB 3.0 specifications. "Think of it as a guide to building hardware for USB 3.0. This is the part that Intel invests dollars and engineering man hours in and then licenses to the industry (so far, for zero dollars). We will give this out as soon as it is finished (or close to finished)," the Intel source said. A source from AMD said about USB 3.0 that it is "essentially PCI Express over a cable. And that intellectual property came from the PCI SIG". The idea is that there is not intellectual property for Intel to defend. PCI Express is just data transfer specification for add-in card slots used for PCs at the moment. The PCI SIG (Special Interest Group) promotes a standard used on all PCs today, mainly the Peripheral Component Interconnect specification. AMD and Nvidia fear that Intel will eventually get into position to own the USB 3.0 market for quite a while if they just sit and wait for the company to release the host controller specification. "Tack on six to nine months. Then we get USB 3.0," the AMD source said. This situation would create a strong advantage for Intel. On the other hand, Intel claims that AMD and Nvidia will just not work as much as they should. "They could spend the time, engineers and money developing their own host controller spec (...). In the past they have chosen to let us do the work and then benefit from the fruit of our labor." "Intel only gives it out once it's finished. And it's not finished," said the source. "If it was mature enough to release, it would be released." AMD and Nvidia say that, according to their information, Intel began working on silicon, meaning that the part of the specification they are looking for is mature enough to be released. "If you have an incomplete spec and give it out to people, these people will build their chipsets and you'll end up with chipsets that are incompatible with devices. That's what (Intel) is trying to avoid," the source added.

Intel is "a little bit behind and that's what might be causing some of the resentment. You could take the opinion that Intel is giving stuff out for free and people are complaining because (Intel) isn't giving it out fast enough." "We're not doing anything differently now than we did with USB 2.0 and USB 1.1." According to AMD, Intel made the same move when the earlier USB 1.0 specification was released, but the company denies the accusation. The AMD source said that a possible separate specification may cause incompatibilities with Intel's USB 3.0 spec. And added, "This is not good for users. But we have no choice".