New supercomputer design planned

March 20 2006

Seattle-based Cray Inc., a manufacturer of high performance computers, announced Monday a radical design change for its supercomputers.

Cray says its future supercomputers will take the concept of heterogeneous computing to a new level by integrating a range of processing technologies within a single platform.

The new systems will be adaptable for particular computing chores by plugging special-purpose circuit boards, known as blades, into a standard chassis, The Wall Street Journal reported Monday. Software then will direct computing jobs to be handled by the most suitable blades.

"Different applications run best on different types of processors, but high-performance computers typically offer only one type of processor," said Cray Chief Technology Officer Steve Scott. "Even today's heterogeneous computing environments really just loosely link differently architected computers, rather than offering true processing heterogeneity and adaptability.

"Cray will build supercomputers that can adapt to the applications, instead of forcing the applications to adapt to the supercomputers," he added in a statement. "Over time, these systems will include intelligence that can examine an application, determine which processing technique will work best with it and then handle the application accordingly -- without user intervention."