Community News

A weekly update of One Laptop per Child, August 3, 2008

Learning

Thailand: OLPC held a five-day regional workshop in Bangkok, with more than 50 participants from six countries. The goals of the workshop were to:

- gain a deeper and more pragmatic familiarity with the ideas about laptops and learning from both a micro scale (child-level) and macro scale (national level)
- form next steps for laptop introduction in participating countries
- strengthen network among countries in the region

The workshop went extremely well. Special highlights included sharing of work in the rural areas in Thailand as exemplars of high-quality work, and integration of school and community; storytelling with the XO by Barbara Barry; computational uses of the XO by Roger Sipitakiat; Nicholas's talk on Thursday evening; and the Ban Samkha children's orchestra using their XOs to play traditional Thai music in TamTam.

Along with the Thais, delegations from Bangla Desh and Malaysia both committed to purchase laptops.

Mongolia: The team returned on Monday afternoon from a two-week tour in northern Mongolia, where they ran workshops for local teachers, kids and parents. Together with the Mongolian core team, we worked in one city center and two small villages, introducing the XO and constructionist learning methodologies. The core team teachers designed and ran the last workshop on

their own. They came up with some wonderful and surprising ideas, including a physical activity to teach angles and degrees to students, which they then try in turtle art and etoys. It was amazing to watch.

Tyler worked with the IT team to set up servers in two of the villages that will be receiving laptops. Neither location had school connectivity, but the network worked well.

Nicholas joined us in Khatgal, a small village in the Khuvsgul province on our last day of training. A sheep was slaughtered and cooked in his honor.

It was interesting to note the various dignitaries' motivations for involvement in the project. The new head of ICTA, for example, was inspired by the XO's open source environment. He wants the students in Mongolia to learn Linux and is working to get all government agencies and higher institutes to cross over to a Linux platform.

The prime minister mentioned how moved he was to see children from a poor district in UB receive their individual computers. He felt the project not only will change education, but also what he called the "mental" state of poor children who see their neighbors with the luxuries of life while they go hungry.

Rwanda: The 20-member core team is ready to initiate teacher development. The team discussed ways of introducing generative themes for children to use for developing projects. There also was considerable discussion on the issues of working with schools and communities.

Haiti: The team is currently wrapping up the pre-pilot Camp XO 2008 at Ecole Nationale Republique du Chili. As we entered this final full week we began to look at E-toys.

In our weekly meeting with the teachers, T1 teachers asked what type of assistance they would receive to better understand integration of the XOs into their curriculum. They are naturally concerned because the XO is such a novel tool, so different from their previous experience. The team has been trying to explain to the teachers that their goal shouldn't be to know the technology better than the students, but to seek ways to utilize the tools to further learning objectives and enhance the overall learning experience.

In the tech team meeting, we identified local sources of solar panels for each school that may need them. It is still difficult to determine which schools will receive decent internet connection because of Haiti's mountainous terrain.

Technology

Robert, Chuck, Kim, Michail, Richard Smith and Darah met to discuss and understand upcoming hardware changes and their business implications. OLPC is planning to migrate from Marvell's 88W8388 wireless chip to the 88W8682. The newer chip offers a 50% improvement in power consumption and has more onboard memory which will allow us to implement better mesh algorithms. Additionally, we are preparing a transition to a new supplier and a single-mode touchpad. Both changes are expected in mid-Q1 2009.

Networking

1. Mitch Bradley made further progress on the Windows dual-boot, resolving issues with ACPI support for lid switch handling and battery/AC status reporting. The only remaining issue at this point is chopped-up text during pre-OS chkdsk and blue screen of death displays. He released a new OFW image with an important bug fix for booting in the face of a certain kind of JFFS2 inconsistency; fixed some bugs related to the use of certain SD cards; and mapped the behavior of the Geode GPIO event detection circuit to assist in the resolution of suspend/resume issues.

2. Deepak Saxena spent far, far too much time trying to backport the Libertas thinmac/host mode driver into our 2.6.25 kernel, so we can build it into our released kernel RPMs. He determined that backporting requires bringing in a large stack of changes to the core 802.11 kernel bits. This was very painful.

Thankfully, Luis Cabo Cobo at Cozybit pointed him to a simpler way of doing it. Deepak now has the driver working with our Joyride kernels.

3. Thanks to Mitch's analysis of the CS5536 (#5703), Deepak re-implemented the lid-detect logic in the kernel and, as Chris Ball requested (#7536), added proper handling of the lid when the XO is suspended.

4. Ricardo worked on active antenna repogramming documentation, and Bill McCormick from Nortel looked into one of the most persistent UI/Network Manager bugs, which often prevents XOs from re-associating with encrypted wireless networks.

5. Marvell brought us a development system for their "Kirkwood" SoC CPUs running Fedora Core 8. It currently sits in Jim's office, where people may play with it. The system will slowly make its way across the continent to Deepak.

Software Development

6. Chris Ball finalized the "failsafe" code for booting with a full NAND. As of build update.1-709, the laptop will interrupt boot when the NAND is full, then warn users in English and Spanish that they will lose data and should first back up their laptop. After confirmation, the machine also will free up enough space to boot by deleting large datastore objects or activities.

7. Sayamindu Dasgupta fixed the Mongolian keyboard layout problems and made some progress on the Dari keyboard issue as well as the Amharic Compose key problems. In order to handle complex scripts like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, he has started to evaluate a possible switch to SCIM (Smart Common Input Method: http://www.scim-im.org/) for the next major OLPC release. Savamindu also created a new getting started page for Pootle administrators: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Pootle/AdministrationQuickStart .

8. Erik Garrison worked with David Woodhouse to verify that test failures encountered while LZO-compressing partition images were spurious and non-fatal. Erik also conversed with Mitch about the process of building and installing a partitioned OS image on the XO.

9. Guillaume Desmottes continued work on Gadget Gabble, improving integration in Sugar by implementing a simple wrapper around views objects, making them easier to use with Sugar. Guillaume also improved presence management.

10. Faisal Anwar added new sections about the clipboard to the Sugar Almanac, and is engaging the community to finalize new sections on the presence service.

We encourage you to peruse and contribute to the almanac, available at http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Sugar_Almanac.

11. Martin Langhoff released build OLPC_XS_165 of the school server (XS), which is our xs-0.3 "release candidate." Thanks to Bryan Berry and David van Assche, who have provided excellent notes on installation steps and shortcomings.

Community

12. At Wikimania 2008, SJ Klein presented recent offline wiki efforts on the XO, including a version of the Arabic Wikipedia which was being finished that week with help from Bassem Jarkas and moulin.org. Many groups in attendance wanted to start OLPC-related projects, particularly extending access to wiki-repositories to offline communities.

13. Adam Hyde and Anne Gentle are organizing a Sugar documentation sprint for the last week in August. Details to be finalized soon. Seth Woodworth wrote up an overview of the current docs projects.
http://lists.laptop.org/pipermail/library/2008-July/000655.html
http://lists.laptop.org/pipermail/library/2008-July/000660.html

Activities

14. Morgan Collett fixed some Chat bugs in release Chat-44.

15. Daniel Drake fixed the Read activity, worked with Victor Lazzarini to fix a csound bug that was breaking TamTam, and worked with TamTam developers to produce new releases.

16. Mohit Taneja and Deepank Gupta now have a working game for Food Force 2, suitable for an alpha. It is being repackaged as an .xo bundle:
http://code.google.com/p/foodforce/

17. Juliana Lipková, working with Thomas Breuel, has mockups and code for her handwriting recognition activity.
http://olpc-dhw.blogspot.com/
http://code.google.com/p/olpc-dhw/

Geography

18. Rajan Vaish finished v2 of his Atlas America activity, working with Nestor Guerrero in Monterrey, and is back in school. The activity needs testing.
http://wiki.laptop.org/go/User:Vaish.rajan/Weekly_Updates

19. VideoEdit: Michael Lew has taken an interest in the video project, and in helping the existing collaboration. http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Talk:VideoEdit

20. Walter Bender's Sugar digest can be found at:
http://lists.laptop.org/pipermail/sugar/2008-July/007455.html

Support/Sysadmin

20. Adam Holt reports that the 100th volunteer for the Support Gang joined this week! The tickets associated with last year's Give One Get One are tailing off as we begin planning for the 2009 G1G1. Going forward, the focus for the Support Gang is on technical issues and helping people use their laptops rather than fielding fulfillment questions.

Some members of the Support Gang are helping out with the upcoming documentation sprint. Adam has identified wifi access points that have been reported as problems. We will purchase these to add to our test environment. He and Kim are working on the details and systems to put in place to help repair centers get spare parts and track their problem reports.

21. SJ Klein and Henry Edward Hardy have updated teamwiki to v. 1.13 and enabled semantic mediawiki. This will facilitate tagging and other Web 2.0 features.