

Community News

A weekly update of One Laptop per Child September 8, 2008

As reported in the press, Amazon will distribute the laptops for us. Contrary to published speculation, XP will not be offered as a dual boot.

Learning

Rwanda: It was a sunny Friday, September 5th at the Kagugu Primary School in Kigali where the national government officially launched OLPC in Rwanda. Many national officials, the press and various international organizations attended. The ceremony included more than three thousands students who received their XO laptops.



Students exploring their new XOs.

The impressive event included traditional music and dance, performed both by the children and by professional dancers – living reminders of Rwanda’s proud past and abundant future promise. The school was fully prepared for the occasion. The electrical infrastructure had been expanded. Wireless connectivity via Vsat was installed. Decorations were in place.

Education Minister Théoneste Mutsindashyaka and Prof. Romain Murenzi, a senior science and technology official in President Kagame’s office, both spoke to the gathering of their shared vision of how OLPC can improve education in Rwanda, as well as the country’s economy. They also announced that the government will create a fund to support a full XO deployment to all of Rwanda’s two million primary school students within five years.

Jerome Gasana, Director of the Regional ICT Training and Research Center, is providing full support for the national core team as they work in the schools. They have learned that their approach to teacher development is much more important than content. What they do

is much more important than what they say. One small strategy that works well is to discuss and reflect together with the teachers after each practice.

Terms like *projects*, *learning by doing* and *hard fun* are becoming a part of the teachers' vocabulary. It is also important to note how much the local core team is starting to own the project, a positive development reflected in the way they defend the XO against criticisms and advocate the importance of the project for primary education and President Kagame's program of national goals, called Vision 2020

Haiti: Between hurricanes, the recruitment and qualification of potential pedagogical and IT staff at each regional school center (EFACAP) continued. The Haitian OLPC core team visited two of the five regions scheduled to receive laptops. The good news is that one region (the "plateau central") has more electricity than expected. The bad news is that after Fay, Gustav and Hanna, the start of school will be delayed in some regions.

The Haitian team continued to work on designing activities and putting them on the Haitian OLPC initiative wiki. Three XOs were upgraded to Joyride 2388 and to the latest Kreyol translation. These machines will go to professional translators, along with instructions how to test the translation and report errors and suggestions. The team also is designing new materials for training EFACAP technical staff.

At week's end there came more good news with the installation of Michèle Pierre-Louis as Haiti's new prime minister. The previous government was dismissed in April after food riots erupted around the country. Pierre-Louis has been head of the Knowledge and Freedom Foundation (FOKAL), which is supported by George Soros.

Mongolia: The school year started September 1st. In two separate televised speeches, President Nambaryn Enkhbayar reaffirmed his commitment to OLPC in Mongolia, heralding "the year of the success of OLPC." The minister of education and the director of primary and secondary education were both shown using their XOs in televised ceremonies at schools.

The new government is in the process of being assembled. The prime minister will remain the same. Other ministers are expected to be chosen before the end of the month. Schools and districts have begun to pick up the laptops.

A Dutch couple purchased three servers, three switches and 15 access points. They are being donated to help support three schools in the capital.

The director of Project READ is preparing to buy 2000 computers. Their rollout will begin in December.

Cambridge: OLPC will hold a learning workshop on September 17 through 19 at the OLPC offices in Cambridge. This is in addition to the regional workshop to be held in Kigali, Rwanda on September 29 through October 2. Please invite key people involved in learning and project development to both workshops.

Technology

1. Javier Cardona and Ricardo Carrano tested fixes for various wireless radio control "knobs" that were removed or disabled in the driver during the past months of

development. Ricardo's contract was renewed. He will be working for us from Brazil where he returned at the end of the week.

2. Mitch Bradley got the LBA-NAND Linux driver working well enough to do some preliminary performance benchmarks with a conventional filesystem. The read/write speeds now are similar to what we currently get with raw NAND + jffs2. The LBA-NAND driver uses much less CPU time than the current status quo (one percent versus 100 percent) and the in-kernel memory footprint is much smaller. Mount operations are instantaneous. This technology is being strongly considered for future hardware. The concern is that these chips perform a crucial wear balancing algorithm in hardware (instead of in the JFFS2 software). If there are any problems with it we will not be able to fix it with a software upgrade.

Future Hardware:

3. We are aggressively working toward a refresh of the existing XO hardware to appear as early as possible in 2009. The refresh will include larger NAND, improved support for anti-theft measures and power conservation and other features. If you have a particular problem with the XO, this is the time to send your suggestions to John Watlington.

Software Development:

4. The triage team has reviewed all incoming bugs for 8.2 for whether they should be fixed, documented or pushed into the next release. As of this writing there are only nine left with the next action of Diagnose, Design or Code! The triage team continues to meet daily to review all new, incoming or re-review bugs. We are down to a manageable set of blocking bugs which must be fixed. See: <http://dev.laptop.org/report/28> .

5. C. Scott Ananian shepherded the builds this week, putting together 8.2-758 and 8.2-759 and updating the Joyride builds to match our new "Fedora-like" koji configuration. He also fixed bugs in the Paint, Scratch, and Bounce activities, as well as in OLPC-update, OLPC-contents, and Sugar-update-control.

6. Brian Jordan, Adam Holt, Seth Woodward, Cynthia Solomon, Michael Stone, Tom Boyle, Faisal Anwar and many volunteers have continued the effort from the doc sprint last week to finalize a manual that we can deliver on the XO as part of 8.2 release. Please contact holt@laptop.org and seth@laptop.org if you can help in any way. Also if possible join our mailing list discussion: <http://lists.laptop.org/listinfo/library> . Brian also followed up with Physics Jam participants <http://physicsjam.blogspot.com/>.

7. Morgan Collett started asking for activity authors' comments and questions and is responding to feedback from his survey (<http://tinyurl.com/olpcsurvey>). He worked on documentation and docstrings, as well as testing 8.2 builds.

8. Michael Stone spent some time documenting procedures such as the Trac ticket work flow. He also restored an XO to factory-default and released new versions of Rainbow and OLPC-utils with several small improvements and publicized 8.2-759 as the weekly testing build for 8.2.

9. Greg Smith has been collecting features and design ideas for 9.1 release, which will be the first major release of 2009. He is getting help and ideas from deployments as well as the development, test, and learning teams. Before the end of the year there will also be a

minor release - 8.2.1 - to pick up a number of bug fixes, translations, and polish for the 8.2.0 release.

10. Erik Garrison worked from the PLAN CEIBAL headquarters at LATU in Montevideo, Uruguay. There he acquired information about the current needs of the deployment and also discussed possible plans for a deployment-wide upgrade to a future 8.2.x release. Additionally, Erik worked on Sugar performance issues and prepared for an overhaul of the Sugar - NetworkManager interface to be completed with volunteers at this weekend's CEIBAL Jam: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Ceibal_Jam .

11. Sayamindu Dasgupta is the champion for OLPC SW-ECO 7, Release 8.1.3, with fixes for the Amharic keyboard layout. He has also looked into SCIM and started a discussion on the localization mailing list of a possible migration from XKB in future releases. He also completed the addition of plural-forms related information to all the 8.2 translations. There are new projects for Danish and Swahili in Pootle. Those interested in helping out should get in touch with Sayamindu at laptop.org.

12. Faisal Anwar of Media Modifications researched the presence service and tubes so that he can better document Sugar networking. Please contribute your expertise and best practices to the Sugar Almanac (http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Sugar_Almanac). Faisal also contributed to the Sugar Booksprint, focusing on user guides for Building Custom Activities (<http://en.flossmanuals.net/bin/view/Sugar/CreatingActivities>).

13. Jim Gettys and Sebastian Dziallas worked on a Fedora spin for XO. It currently is 470MB. Join the Fedora-OLPC mailing list at <https://www.redhat.com/mailman/listinfo/fedora-olpc-list> to get your two cents in on the contents of the spin.

14. Jeremy Katz has fixed a number of bugs in the live CD tools. A tentative decision to go with Fedora 10 for support and development reasons has been taken. A spin for more serious testing should be available this week.

School Server:

15. Martin Langhoff reports that the new Fedora 9-based school server build installs and upgrades following the same defaults as the previous versions. There are a few minor issues still to resolve, but the F9 port is pretty much done. Next week is going to be focused on feature work for XS-0.5. Martin worked on F9 - the new Fedora 9 based School Server build installs and upgrades following the same defaults as the previous versions. There are few minor issues still to resolve, but the F9 port is pretty much done.- Lots of help from Jeremy Katz, Robin Norwood and others from the Fedora side

16. Douglas Bagnall mostly worked on enabling the laptops to update activities from their local school server, but he also had time to refactor the registration server and work on the XS-activation package.

17. Martin Langhoff is trying really hard to wrap up remaining F9 issues. This week is going to be focused on feature work for xs-0.5! (Woohoo!), and we have until the end of the month to work on xs-0.5 . The roadmap looks roughly like this: <https://dev.laptop.org/query?group=status&milestone=xs-0.5> , which is an optimistic roadmap. We'll put a ton of work in, and yet quite a few things will not make it. If you care about the XS, **now** is the time to show your hand and help a bit...

Support:

18. Adam Holt has continued working on the spare parts and repair centers processes. We have established a relationship with two e-commerce vendors, XOexplosion.com and iLoveMyXO.com to provide spare parts to people in the US and Canada.

Adam has also announced this Sunday's community meeting (Sept 7th 4PM EDT) will be a Panel on Repairs & Spare Parts Successes. Contact holt@laptop.org in advance if you would like to join the public conference call, or participate in person. Also consider backchannel #olpc-help on irc.freenode.net if you can join us over live IRC chat!

19. Daniel Drake continued working on bug fixing for the upcoming 8.2.0 release, including fixing some bugs relating to the X display server and the issue where wireless networks appear twice on the neighbourhood view. He also spent time testing Amharic and working with the Ethiopia team on their technical issues as they prepare to roll out laptops. He is preparing to join the team in Ethiopia starting the week of the 15th to help with this roll out over the next several weeks.

20. The sugar team has been working on the 0.82.1 Sucrose stable release [1] which has been released today. Owners of an xo can test it in in latest joyride or the stable 8.2 branch >= 758.

21. Walter Bender's Sugar digest can be found at:
<http://lists.sugarlabs.org/archive/iaep/2008-September/001621.html>

22. Guillaume Desmottes tested Gadget with hyperactivity, found, debug and fixed various bugs in the Gadget component and the presence-service. Buddy views should now be pretty usable. By debugging activity views, he noticed a weird behaviour of ejabberd's muc service and reported it as a bug [1].

Testing:

23. Joe Feinstein and Frances Hopkins ran smoke and mesh tests on the latest 8.2 candidate build (757). Bugs are being logged and reviewed every day. Joe reports that Sugar's stability has improved substantially, but running the Write activity both in mesh and school server networks caused some machines to suddenly restart Sugar. Also, the sudden disappearance of Write was observed in some of the collaborating laptops. We also see an increased participation of community testers in the test effort.

The Wellington volunteer test team, in particular, has done a fantastic test run to check that off-the-beaten-track activities work correctly on 8.2 - find a detailed report at - thanks to Tabitha, Grant, and Alastair! If you want to help test, click here: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Friends_in_testing .

Community:

24. SJ Klein is working with Paul Fields of Fedora to co-host a FUD/OLPCcon over the first or second weekend in December. We expect to draw more than 100 people from outside our core teams, from a number of countries.

25. OLPC is sponsoring travel for a few attendees to support the Perú Game Jam/tech conference. Hernan Pachas is coordinating the event, being held at Universidad de San Martín de Porres in Lima, October 23-25. We also will sponsor some local travel for developers in Perú.

26. Some of the European Sugar team met at FUDCon in Brno, Czech Republic, this week. It is great to be able to work with the Fedora community to make Sugar available as an alternate desktop on Fedora and to get input on outstanding issues:
<http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/FUDCon/FUDConBrno2008> .

27. Seth Woodworth worked on the organization structure of a final XO+Sugar manual from materials produced at the recent Documentation Sprint. Several people have been making substantial contributions to the information content and structure, including Adam Holt and Cynthia Solomon. Many other remote and external contributors have participated as well, including many people from SugarLabs and the OLPC Boston group. Seth made substantial edits to the [[Participate]] sections of the wiki in advance of the DailyMotion press release.

From the Field

Uruguay: CEIBAL is starting an ambitious program on disabilities, tentatively named CEIBAL ESPECIAL, that will target children with sensory, motor, mental and learning disabilities. Uruguay is of course unique because every child and teacher will receive an XO, and CEIBAL offers a common digital environment for everybody, including the disabled. As a result, from an early age these kids share the same resources as other children, a key factor in promoting proper rehabilitation, socialization and education.

Edith Morais, the highest education official in CEIBAL, explained last week to Antonio Battro that CEIBAL ESPECIAL aims to provide the best possible OLPC training to teachers of pupils with disabilities. They will receive some 8,000 XOs in the next months. The initial focus will be on the 400 deaf children who attend Uruguayan public schools.

Another focus will be on motor disabilities. Antonio and Miguel Mariatti, the CEO of LATU/CEIBAL, met in Montevideo with José E. Zeballos, the general manager of TELETON, Rehabilitación infantil, (www.teleton.uy) and his staff to start a joint program. The first objective is to use the XO to control the engine of a wheel chair. A team of CEIBAL and TELETON engineers will work to complete what they hope will be a working prototype by November, when it would be unveiled on national television.

Ben Petrazzini, Regional Director of the International Development Center (IDRC), has also pledged his support. The Canadian NGO has already financially supported CEIBAL in the first stages of the XO deployment. IDRC has a large world network and can help CEIBAL ESPECIAL in many ways, to be established case by case.

Antonio envisions CEIBAL ESPECIAL as a node from which to grow an informal, international OLPC network for disabled children and their teachers. As part of that effort, he is arranging for a series of international experts to visit Uruguay. For example, two PhD. candidates from Milano-Bicocca University in Italy will arrive next year to collaborate with CEIBAL. Others will follow from Argentina, Brazil, France and the United States.