Community News

A weekly update of One Laptop per Child   November 23, 2008

OLPC chose buzz over bang for the opening days of the G1G1 launch. There was minimal fanfare from major broadcasting or print media, but plenty of word-of-mouth and chatter in the trade press, and an air of excitement in the blogosphere. Now broadcast ads will begin to run, and a full-fledged media campaign soon will start. Unlike last year's campaign, which began with a splash and then attenuated rapidly, we expect to build interest, and sales, as we move ahead.

A cornerstone of the strategy is our nationwide billboard effort, which is much more extensive than last year's. Here's a map of the deployments:
http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=100772707975304384594.00045b09ae1350c559d9e&z=4

Meantime, OLPC Europe is getting ready for global G1G1. As they await price, shipping and delivery instructions from Boston, the grassroots groups of Austria, Germany, France, Holland and four other European countries working together on the media front. Thanks to loyal fans in Israel, Greece, UK, Dubai, Jordan, Portugal, Italy and Spain - and with the important help of AMD - a media team has been set up and is waiting (patiently) to get started.

Development

The big news out of Washington last week was the announcement on November 20th that American Charities for Palestine (ACP), the Palestinian ministry of education and USAID will distribute 1000 XOs to Palestinian students in the Occupied Territories. OLPC donated the machines. They will be delivered with the help of USAID.

The announcement was made at a launch ceremony held at the Palestinian ministry of education in Ramallah and attended by ACP Chair Ziad Asali, Minister of Education Lamis Alami, and USAID Mission Chief Howard Sumka. Minister Alami stressed the importance of this project in supporting the ministry's five-year plan designed to improve the quality of education in Palestine.

The laptops will be distributed to public, private, and UNRWA schools in the Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus and Salfit regions of the West Bank. In addition to the laptops, the first phase of deployment will also include teacher training by OLPC.

Technology

Support:

1. OLPC hosted a deployment workshop in Cambridge. Participants included representatives from Dubai and South Africa. Through the coordination of Darah Tappitake, we were able to present and review several areas of deployments. Carla Gòmez Monroy focused on the educational aspects of an OLPC deployment, while Reuben Caron explained the technical areas. After introduction into these areas, each group was able to work through a preliminary draft of what their deployment would look like.

2. Adam Holt and Frances Hopkins worked with many members of the support gang to update and review the new help tickets coming into the system. The first donors are receiving their XOs now, and past donors will be contacting us regarding upgrades, so the team has already kicked back into full force.

Testing:

3. The QA team concentrated on learning about actual and future use and design of Sugar (in XO and non-XO machines) by attending parts of the SugarCamp conference.

4. Mel Chua led a good discussion about metrics with the community test team; specifically, she asked, "What data should we be collecting for each test?" Mel split the discussion into two parts. One was smoke testing of Activities, of which Carl is now in charge. Two was finalizing the data we will be collecting for each Activity for this round of testing, which the Wellington test group will be deciding on tomorrow.

5. The Wellington test group has done some spectacular Activity testing. See http://lists.laptop.org/pipermail/testing/2008-November/000585.html and http://lists.laptop.org/pipermail/testing/2008-November/000577.html for the email threads. Brian Jordan also started a test plan for Paint. See http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Tests/Activity/Paint .

SysAdmin:

6. Many people helped out with systems administration of our new website this week and the result is a great new look: http://laptop.org. The next steps are to put a content management system in place to make it easy to update content and to keep the site alive. We would like to express our appreciation to the MIT NECSYS and DOST staff for their assistance last weekend with networking issues associated with the laptop.org website deployment.

This week we handled 3,645,375 hits in 651,632 page views from 76,755 unique visitors.

Software Development:

7. The G1G1 launch kept quite a number of folks from the software development team busy as we monitored new servers and services, implemented Web site updates and enhancements, rolled out better management tools and generally tried to make sure nothing got in the way of folks who wanted to visit our Web sites to learn more about G1G1 and participate.

8. The Fedora Project has invited OLPC to be a co-sponsor of the FUDCON Fedora Conference to be held in Boston in January. We are working with them on ideas for workshops and how we can use the event to get the broader Fedora community active and excited about OLPC software development.

XO OS Software:

9. The team worked on planning for the 9.1 release early next year, and on understanding our priorities for that rollout. Our primary focus will be to remove any software or feature obstacles that are limiting or restricting the ability of our country teams to deploy XO laptops widely. Recent field visits by members of the development team have helped us all better understand those obstacles.

10. Erik Garrison spent the week working on a thin X window manager for the XO based on dwm and attending some of the SugarCamp meetings. http://dev.laptop.org/git?p=users/erik/xodwm;a=summary

XS School Server Software:

11. At the end of his three-week visit to Cambridge, Martin Langhoff, together with Douglas Bagnall wrapped up the school server 0.5 release and began planning for the 0.6 release and for 2009 development work.OLPC XS 0.5 is ready, and awaiting a formal release announcement! The new version includes a lot of additional functionality. Overall, the School Server is still an 'early adopter' tool, and not a complete product. Some features are partially implemented; work continues fast and furious towards a 1.0 . The core functionality is well tested and reliable, however, and can support early deployments and pilots.

The release was followed by planning for the 0.6 cycle, which starts next Monday and should end 20th of December. The focus isdeployability in Peru (lease mgmt) and Rwanda (scalability). Some valuable features lost in the triage, features that are fun and easy to tackle -- they are now tagged "grabme": https://dev.laptop.org/query?status=assigned&status=new&status=reopened&group=milestone&component=school+server&order=priority&col=id&col=summary&col=status&keywords=~grabme&row=description

At SugarCamp, Martin gave a talk about the XS and participated in discussions about networking infrastructure and the collaboration stack that will shape 9.1. At the countries meeting with Dubai and South Africa a workshop on XS was held; both teams said that they are now confident in their skills to install and upgrade the XS.

The education team met with Martin to flesh out a plan for how to make Moodle useful for OLPC users. We now have a much better understanding of the educational and technical challenges, and a draft plan forward (to be posted soon).

Sugar / Activity Software:

12. All members of the team have worked on the move to Fedora 10 as our base, updating to new packages as required. Marco Pesenti Gritti and Tomeu Vizoso visited Cambridge for the SugarCamp events. Sayamindu Dasgupta made considerable progress on an improved input method for Amharic (#8494). He also modified the PO file checker used in the Pootle installation so that it allows him to publish a list of incorrectly formatted PO files. In the Sugar department, Sayamindu worked on and released a new version of the ImageViewer activity, and helped Simon track down a localization issue which was making Sugar unusable in the Russian locale. Simon Schampijer finished the frame device support for wireless devices in Sugar. He updated the radio off code in the control panel to work with NM 0.7 and fixed several small issues in the mesh code. Morgan Collett worked on sugar-presence-service, including porting it to Network Manager 0.7.

13. Walter Bender's Sugar Digest can be found at: http://lists.laptop.org/pipermail/sugar/2008-November/010003.html

Deployment Workbook:

14. John Watlington and Joshua Seals continued to refine the deployment workbook, with input from the visiting team from South Africa. The manual now takes power factor into account and illustrates additional power savings if using the Multi Battery Charger or Belkin's XOP (multiple laptop charger) in schools. The latest version of the workbook is available at: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Deployment_Guide/Workbook

Gen 2:

15. Jim Gettys started work on design issues in extending the Linux /dev/input driver and X Window System X Input Extension to support touch devices. He also worked on tracking down problems in the Linux USB HID driver for the multi- touch digitizer.

Laptop Firmware:

16. Mitch Bradley continued to refine the multicast NAND update program. It now handles partitions, displays progress graphically, automatically chooses the wireless channel, and can be started by pressing game keys after power-up. Richard also briefly resumed work on finishing the new keyboard auto detect code (which allows use of the new touchpad without changing higher levels of software) and looked at some hardware suggested by Paul Fox for controlling relays via RS232 connection, allowing for automation of the EC and system firmware testing.

Wireless:

17. Ricardo tested combinations of Internet Sharing with Wakeup On Lan and aggressive Suspend/Resume enabled on the laptop. Although it doesn't make much sense to have Internet Sharing and Suspend/Resume enabled on the XO acting as the gateway, the combination is a good exerciser of the whole system and the tests were successful overall, pointing to the increased maturity of the software stack. He also coordinated the first tests in the Sparse Wireless Testbed in UFF, in Brazil (results to be published next week).

18. Michail tested Pidgin presence, instant messaging and file transfers over the mesh interface and looked into interoperability with Windows and OS X.

From the Field:

Rodrigo Arboleda headed south to Uruguay and Paraguay to familiarize himself with both a mature and a nascent national deployment, the better to represent OLPC on visits other countries. In Uruguay, he met with Miguel Mariatti and several of the inspectors and teachers and visited three different schools in different regions of the country. He reports an efficient operation smoothly deploying more than 1300 laptops each day.

The Colombian ambassador, Claudia Turbay, hosted a dinner party in Rodrigo's honor. U.S. Ambassador Frank Baxter and his wife attended, as did Luis Alberto Lacalle, the former president of Uruguay, and his wife. Lacalle is preparing to run for president once again. Rodrigo treated the dinner guests to a full OLPC presentation, and received unanimous pledges of support. Ambassador Turbay specifically promised to promote OLPC at a Colombian government meeting she will attend in Bogotá at the end of this week.

Merani Foundation representatives traveled to Uruguay as well to learn about this experience so they can provide some of these services to the Colombian government.

In Asunción, Rodrigo joined Antonio Battro and met with Cecilia Alcalá and other members of the very energetic and dedicated Paraguay *Educa* Foundation. Antonio and Rodrigo were interviewed by the ABC newspaper, which reaches 80 percent of the Paraguayan newspaper audience. The new U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, Liliana Ayalde, a personal acquaintance, hosted a reception for Rodrigo at the embassy. Paraguay's vice president, Frederico Franco, attended. He is a firm OLPC advocate. U.S. Deputy Trade Representative, John K . Veroneau, also was on hand. Other guests included several prominent Paraguayan businessmen and women who are pledging several million U.S. dollars to this project.

By coincidence, the Swiss AVINA Foundation was then meeting in Asunción. The foundation invited Rodrigo and Antonio to a dinner party at the home of their

Paraguayan head. Guests included AVINA's president, Brizio Biondi-Morra, who is also president of the board for INCAE and Fundes Internacional. Arboleda and Battro made a complete presentation to the group. They promised their support and want to set up a trip to Montevideo and Boston to become better acquainted with OLPC.

On Thursday, Antonio and Rodrigo, along with Cecilia and other members of *Educa*, met with President Lugo, Vice President Franco and Education Minister Horacio Galeano Perrone at the Presidential Palace

Vice President Franco, Rodrigo, President Lugo, Antonio, Education Minister Perrone and Cecilia Alcalá

The conversation ranged from an update of the September meeting President Lugo held in New York with Nicholas and Cecilia, to discussion of the 4,000 laptops, donated by SWIFT, that are being deployed in the city of Caacupé. Lugo reiterated his support for OLPC, and asked Minister Perrone to create a road map for a full deployment next year.

On Friday, Rodrigo and Antonio traveled to Caacupé, where the local governor repeated his support for a 50,000-unit deployment planned for the province next year.

President Lugo held a town meeting in Caacupé, where Vice President Franco delivered a passionate speech about the benefits of our project. The gathering included a cabinet minister and Mons. Claudio Gimenez, the local bishop and a very powerful figure, as well as other leaders of the community.

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Pakistan: On November 14th, Habib Khan gave a half-day workshop on XOs to a group of selected heads of commerce colleges gathered together from all over Pakistan. The event was sponsored by the International Islamic University in Islamabad. In the first part of the workshop, he laid out the pedagogical foundation of OLPC based on constructionist theory. The second part of the workshop provided hands-on opportunity to the participants. Habib reports the participants were "fully mesmerized" by the machines.

The president of the All Pakistan Private Schools Association dropped by for the last part of the workshop. More than 4.5 million children in Pakistan attend private schools. (Even more attend no school at all.) The president was very enthusiastic about constructionism, and he wished to learn more about the XO laptop and olpc as a system. Habib looks forward to fruitful meeting with him in the OLPC office later this month, and will encourage the early deployment of OLPC in his schools.

OLPC volunteer Iffat, a recent convert from the Microsoft platform to Python and Sugar, has developed a set of exercises in Basic Math. It is available at: http://wiki.laptop.org/go/Image:BasicMaths.xo. OLPC has provided the activity to their (Atlas) pilot school located in slum area of Rawalpindi. This school has given them useful feedback to help improve software that was developed in Islamabad.

AVT Khyber, a popular Pashto/Dari language channel, aired a program on education and how OLPC has influenced children's learning, thinking and lifestyles, using the Atlas School as an example. The program aired last Friday to about 50 million viewers in northwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan.

And in Other News…

Nicholas and Calestous Juma drew an attentive crowd of 400 Cantabrigians at Harvard's Science Center on Thursday night in a two-hour program devoted to the XO. Read all about it in *The Crimson,* which ran the story under a pretty fair headline. http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=525494

To catch Nicholas in a very different forum, go to:
http://askmen.com/celebs/interview_250/299_nicholas_negroponte_interview.html