



Early artist's conception of the \$100 laptop

The \$100 Laptop

How the \$100 computer can change the world—or not.

What if every child in the world—even in the poorest of nations—had access to a computer and the Internet? Would the world suddenly be a better place? Is it really possible?

Making a real computer that sells for \$100 is clearly possible. Actually, there's competition to make it. However, distributing the computer to people in developing countries is a huge challenge. Whether or not it would make a difference is still a question.



The \$100 Laptop

Changing the world one laptop at a time



one
laptop
per
child

There are nearly two-billion children in the world that receive little or no education.

Without education, nearly all of these children are condemned to living in poverty.

Nicholas Negroponte thinks that giving these children an inexpensive computer can make a difference. Negroponte is the founder and chairman of the ***One Laptop per Child (OLPC) Project***. The project's goal is "to provide children around the world with new opportunities to explore, experiment and express themselves."

The project grew out of many years of

research at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology Media Lab (MIT Media Lab). They know that developing countries cannot afford to pay much for children's education. These countries often spend less than \$20 per year per child. So even if they doubled their spending, not much would change in the children's education.

But Negroponte and others think if these kids could get their hands on the right kind of computer with the right kinds of software, they could learn a lot more and have a better chance for a better life.

So they set out to design that computer. Here's what they came up with.

The XO-1 (\$100+ Available Now)



The XO-1 laptop is different from the original design shown on the cover. It lost the crank for generating electricity and it gained

“rabbit ears” antennas for wireless communication. It’s rugged, flexible, and over 600,000 of them have been sold or distributed to countries around the world.

It’s Not Perfect And There Are Problems

The project has run into problems. In order to keep costs down and reduce memory needs, it originally didn’t run Windows, the software that runs on most computers. (It’s now available for \$30 dollars more.)

The XO-1 doesn’t support key Internet-based software such as Flash. Private for profit companies have jumped in to make their own inexpensive computers. In general these competing computers cost two to three times as much as the XO-1 and lack many of its creative design features.

Perhaps the biggest criticism of the XO-1 is that it still cannot be built and sold for the target price of \$100. It’s currently priced just under \$200.

The One Laptop per Child Project continues to improve the XO-1 and seeks to bring the price down further. In addition, it plans to develop a brand new, radically different design.

The XO-2 (\$75 Available 2010?)



The XO-2 has a very different design from the XO-1. It is smaller, has two touch screens, and folds up like a book. It looks much more like an electronic book than a regular laptop.

There is a good reason for this. The project’s research shows that the children need to focus on reading materials. The XO-2 can hold thousands of books.

Moreover, its two touch screens can be used in many ways. For instance, it can be used like a laptop with a virtual keyboard as shown in the picture above or as a game board as illustrated on page 2.

So, Can I Get One?

If you live in Canada, the U.S. or Europe and want to buy one, you’ll have to go through the Give One—Get One program. This means you will have to pay nearly \$400. You will get one computer and another one will be given to a child in a developing country.

The laptops and their unique software offer hope for a better life to millions of young people around the world.

The \$100 Laptop | Vocabulary List

Flash	A program used on computers that supports animation. Many Web sites use Flash to show animations and videos.
MIT Media Lab	A technology research and development program at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT).
virtual	An interaction with other people or places that is not face-to-face. A virtual meeting is held between people in different places.
Windows	A computer operating system created by Microsoft. Most computers in the world use Microsoft Windows.

Discussion Points

1. Do you think the One Computer per Child Project is a good idea? How do you think it can help children learn better?
2. What if every man, woman and child in the world, even in remote places, had access to the Internet. Do you think it would improve their lives? In what ways?
3. Even if individual laptops are inexpensive, it would be very expensive to distribute them in countries around the world. Do you think it would be worth the effort and cost? Why or why not?
4. Would you like one of these computers? Which one? How would you like to use it?