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**ROTARY FOUNDATION
MONTH****EDITORIAL**

By Candice Klotz-Gleave

Ethiopian kids hack OLPCs (One Laptop Per Child) in 5 months with zero instruction

What happens if you give a thousand Motorola Zoom tablet PCs to Ethiopian kids who have never even seen a printed word? Within five months, they'll start teaching themselves English while circumventing the security on your OS to customize settings and activate disabled hardware. *Whoa*

The One Laptop Per Child project started as a way of delivering technology resources to schools in countries with little or no education infrastructure, using inexpensive computers to improve traditional curricula. What the OLPC Project has realized over the last five or six years though, is that teaching kids *stuff* is really not that valuable. Yes, knowing all your state capitols how to spell "neighborhood" properly and whatnot isn't a bad thing, but memorizing facts and procedures isn't going to inspire kids to go out and learn by teaching themselves, which is the key to a good education. Instead, OLPC is trying to figure out a way to teach kids to *learn*, which is what this experiment is all about.

Rather than give out laptops (they're actually Motorola Zoom tablets plus solar chargers running custom software) to kids in schools with teachers, the OLPC Project decided to try something completely different: it delivered some boxes of tablets to two villages in Ethiopia, taped shut, with no instructions whatsoever. Just like, *"hey kids, here's this box, you can open it if you want, see ya!"*

Just to give you a sense of what these villages in Ethiopia are like, the kids (and most of the adults) there **have never seen a word**. No books, no newspapers, no street signs, no labels on packaged foods or goods. Nothing. And these villages aren't unique in that respect; there are many of them in Africa where the literacy rate is close to zero. So you might think that if you're going to give out fancy tablet computers, it would be helpful to have someone along to show these people how to use them, right?

But that's not what OLPC did. They just left the boxes there, sealed up, containing one tablet for every kid in each of the villages (nearly a thousand tablets in total), pre-loaded with a custom English-language operating system and SD cards with tracking software on them to record how the tablets were used. Here's how it went down, as related by OLPC founder Nicholas Negroponte at MIT Technology Review's EmTech conference last week:

"We left the boxes in the village. Closed. Taped shut. No instruction, no human being. I thought, the kids will play with the boxes! Within four minutes, one kid not only opened the box, but found the on/off switch. He'd never seen an on/off switch. He powered it up. Within five days, they were using 47 apps per child per day. Within two weeks, they were singing ABC songs [in English] in the village. And within five months, they had hacked Android. Some idiot in our organization or in the Media Lab had disabled the camera! And they figured out it had a camera, and they hacked Android."

This experiment began earlier this year, and what OLPC really want to see is whether these kids can learn to read and write in English. Around the world, there are something like 100,000,000 kids who don't even make it to first grade, simply because there are not only no schools, but very few literate adults, and if it turns out that for the cost of a tablet all of these kids can simply teach themselves, it has huge implications for education. And it goes beyond the kids, too, since previous OLPC studies have shown that kids will use their computers to teach their *parents* to read and write as well, which is incredibly amazing and awesome.

If this all reminds you of a certain science fiction book by a certain well-known author, it's not a coincidence: Nell's Primer in Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* was a direct inspiration for much of the OLPC teaching software, which itself is named Nell. Here's an example of how Nell uses an evolving, personalized narrative to help kids learn to learn without beating them over the head with standardized lessons and traditional teaching methods:

Miles from the nearest school, a young Ethiopian girl named Rahel turns on her new tablet computer. The solar powered machine speaks to her: "Hello! Would you like to hear a story?" She nods and listens to a story about a princess. Later, when the girl has learned a little more, she will tell the machine that the princess is named "Rahel" like she is and that she likes to wear blue--but for now the green book draws pictures of the unnamed Princess for her and asks her to trace shapes on the screen. "R is for Run. Can you trace the R?" As she traces the R, it comes to life and gallops across the screen. "Run starts with R. Roger the R runs across the Red Rug. Roger has a dog named Rover." Rover barks: "Ruff! Ruff!" The Princess asks, "Can you find something Red?" and Rahel uses the camera to photograph a berry on a nearby bush. "Good work! I see a little red here. Can you find something big and red?" As Rahel grows, the book asks her to trace not just letters, but whole words. The book's responses are written on the screen as it speaks them, and eventually she doesn't need to leave the sound on all the time. Soon Rahel can write complete sentences in her special book, and sometimes the Princess will respond to them. New stories teach her about music (she unlocks a dungeon door by playing certain tunes) and programming with blocks (Princess Rahel helps a not very-bright turtle to draw different shapes Rahel writes her own stories about the Princess, which she shares with her friends. The book tells her that she is very good at music, and her lessons begin to encourage her to invent silly songs about what she's learning. An older Rahel learns that the block language she used to talk with the turtle is also used to write all the software running inside her special book. Rahel uses the blocks to write a new sort of rhythm game. Her younger brother has just received his own green book, and Rahel writes him a story which uses her rhythm game to help him learn to count.

Taken from:

<http://nbcu.mo2do.net/s/18488/29?itemId=tag%3Advice.com%2C2012%3A%2F%2F3.92265&fullPageURL=%2Farchives%2F2012%2F10%2Fethiopian-kids.php>

MEETING OF 8 NOVEMBER 2012

Attendance

Membership	23
Present	16
Make ups	0
Apologies	6
Attendance	70%

Visitors: Simisha Pather

Rotaractors: Keela, Justin, Lee, Kerri, Jessica, Lauren, Robin, Stephen, Leche, Raihaanah and Johanna Abdullah from Lebanon

Guest Speakers: Jackie Greenberg & Sue Kitsen

Attendance to Biffy 082 468 7504 or aecon.e@mweb.co.za.

The Grace was performed by Biffy, loyal toast by Dennis and Candice performed the International Toast

This was followed by a directionless joke about Albert Einstein by Sergeant David.

PRESIDENT'S ITEMS

Pres Mike welcomed all, and then decided to say as little as possible as we had such a full programme tonight.

SLOTS

Biffy: Sarah's Dad passed away on Monday night. Our thoughts are with Sarah and anyone wishing to send her a message, please send them to Biffy and she will collate them. Bronwyn thanked the club for our donation towards Camp FootPrint to sponsor a child. Biffy had spoken to Lina via Skype about an hour ago and she sends us all lots of love. She is missing us all and will be home again soon probably in December sometime.

String: Big Walk on Sunday. Bibs and flags handed out and positions. The swindle was explained for all the visitors.

Ken: Aubrey is improving.

Kiddies Day on the Beach is on 24 Nov. We may not braai on the beach so we will go back to the school (Perivale). Ken will be organizing everything with Adele (for Aubrey). Members, friends and family will be needed. Biffy will send out a list of where people are needed for Ken. Suggestion was that Mike appear on the beach in a Speedo!!

Jackie: Our social on 29 Nov will be to Anatoli's. R150 per person. List going around.

Kerri: Rotaract last meeting before UP's will be 21st Nov. They will be having a fondue at the hall. Details to follow.

Nominations should be submitted for the membership trophy (a member who has delivered outstanding service) by Wed 14th.

Rosters for UP's will be forwarded to Biffy for Rotary. Rotaract would like us to fill 5 slots each night – 2 traffic, 2 parking + 1 a standby car at the top in case of emergencies.

Keela: Her R1 000 projects will be doing a lunch for the kids at Constantia PS on a Friday. Keela needs help packing the lunch please.

Lee: UP's update. Lots of work has been done. Cleaning up, new wall up, painting. The baboons have been at the rotary Bank so lovingly planted by Rotarians 10 days ago. This will wait until there are guards there to stop the destroyers. Regular work parties are being held and if anyone wants to join in there is ample space and work for all. They will be getting in some help for the heavy work. The piles of rubbish are a problem as they so often catch alight from the flares and the farm is unwilling to burn at the moment because of the grapes growing/ripening. A suggestion was to source non-flammable flares. Thanks to those that have helped so far. They are fully booked with a waiting list.

GUEST SPEAKER

David introduced Jackie and Sue who have been in stem cell research for many many years.

Fascinating; very medical and technical talk was given about the different kinds of cells, the advances in stem cell research and how the ethics of our country (and many other countries) prohibits the exploration of these advances in humans. These cells act very differently in humans to animals and therefore the research cannot be implemented yet at this stage and is also a long way off being implemented.

Jackie and Sue were thanked by John with a few of his normal chirpy quirks and we were all glad to see Candice did not faint.

PRESIDENT'S QUOTES

Celebrating Christiaan Barnard's birthday today, the quotes were based on Christiaan Barnard:

1. I don't believe medical discoveries are doing much to advance human life. As fast as we create ways to extend it we are inventing ways to shorten it.
 2. It is infinitely better to transplant a heart than to bury it to be devoured by worms.
-

JACKPOT

The pot has risen to just under R2 500, with just 22 cards left. Despite such good odds, Francois had his name drawn but could not find the K♥. Ag Shame!! John Vivian won the generous R25 attendance prize.

PROGRAMME

November 2012	Committee: Barnard, Bird, Hovstad, Michalowsky, Wetmore
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Thursday 15 **Karin Webber, Claremont Rotary Club, Business Ethics**

Thursday 22 **Board meeting**

Wednesday 28 **Uncle Paul's starts**

Thursday 29 **Social @ Annatoli's**

December 2012	Committee: van Wyk, Gowdy, Overbosch, Todd
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Thursday 6 **Charity night at Uncle Paul's / possible DG's visit**

Saturday 8 **Christmas party at The Palms**

Thursday 13 **Normal meeting / Xmas meeting (gifts and no speaker)
No further meetings in December**

Sunday 23 **Uncle Paul's ends**

January 2013	Committee: Knight, Cleveland, Munday, Orsmond
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Thursday 3 **No meeting**

Thursday 10 **Annette Jahnel: The first woman to drive solo once around the planet is coming your way**

Thursday 17 **Dean Hand (PH): "Impact Investing and a new way to think about philanthropic/grant/charitable donations..."**

Thursday 24 **Board Meeting**

Thursday 31 **Social**

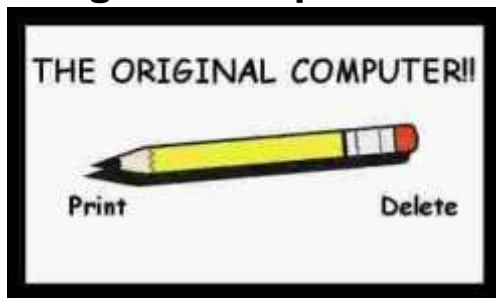
DUTY ROSTER

	15 November	29 November	6 December	8 December	13 December	20 December
Sergeant	Cleveland	SOCIAL: DETAILS TO BE ADVISED	CHARITY NIGHT AT UNCLE PAULS	FAMILY CHRIST- MAS PARTY AT THE PALMS	CHRIST- MAS MEETING: NO SPEAKER & CHRIST- MAS GIFTS	NO MEETING
Attendance Officer	Danckwerts					
Wynpress Editorial	Michalowsky					
Minutes for Wynpress	Knight					
Compilation of Wynpress	Danckwerts					
Door Duty	James					
Grace	Gowdy					
Loyal Toast	Hovstad					
International Toast	Knight					
Speaker Introduction	Van Eeden					
Speaker Thanks	Gowdy					

IF YOU CANNOT MAKE YOUR ROSTERED DATE, PLEASE SWAP WITH ANOTHER ROTARIAN AND INFORM THE SERGEANT WHO IS ON DUTY THAT DAY

TAILPIECE

Original Computer!!!!



Memory was something you lost with age

An application was for employment

A program was a TV show

A cursor used profanity

A keyboard was a piano

A web was a spider's home

A virus was the flu

A CD was a bank account

A hard drive was a long trip on the road

A mouse pad was where a mouse lived

And if you had a 3 inch floppy