

Interview: The People's Laptop

MIT's Nicholas Negroponte wants kids all over the world to use his computer to jump-start learning.

Newsweek International

Feb. 12, 2007 issue - The green and white gizmo is not much bigger than a clutch purse, but when you extend its plastic bunny-ear antennas and flip it open, clamshell style, the screen is colorful and welcoming, ready to network or create. It's even got a video camera and social networking software? It's the \$100 (or so) laptop and its proud parent, the founder of the nonprofit One Laptop per Child, Nicholas Negroponte, believes it is within his sights to equip millions of developing-world children with these gadgets, paid for by governments and grants. NEWSWEEK caught up with the former head of the MIT Media Lab and best-selling author in Germany last month.

NEWSWEEK: How can you make a useful laptop for so little?

Negroponte: There are basically two ways to make a low-cost laptop. One is to take cheap components, cheap labor, cheap design and make a cheap machine. And that's basically what's been done in the world. If you go to China and India, you'll see a lot of that. What we've tried to do is to use very large-scale integration [a method that uses fewer components], use really cool design and then of course make them in really large numbers, so that every kid gets one. [We're suggesting] that in year two, we're going to make 50 [million] to 100 million—that's more than all the laptop production, everywhere, in 2005. So that's like telling you I'm going to build a car, and by the way, in 18 months 50 percent of the cars you'll see on the street will be ours.

When you first announced this two years ago, everyone was skeptical, but now people seem to be taking you more seriously.

As recently as a year ago, when I met with a head of state I would spend 75 percent of my time arguing for one laptop per child as a concept. Now I spend zero time. It's a given.

Bill Gates says that the way to connect the developing world is not with laptops but cell phones.

I'm a director of Motorola, so I know a lot about cell phones. And cell phones, which now are somewhat over 2 billion units, are ubiquitous. But the form factor of the cell phone is not appropriate for a book, it's not appropriate for learning the way kids should be doing. The idea that you'd have a cell phone that connects to a TV with a keyboard and a gaggle of wires is nothing short of silly. Giving the kids a laptop that they can own, that's connected at home as well as at school, is not only the right approach but it is more book-oriented. Which is why we made our laptop convert into a book and convert into a games machine. And we operate on the economy of books: Brazil spends \$19 per year per child on textbooks. So over five years, that's almost a hundred dollars right there. And now you've got Google at your fingertips, and you've

got all this material.

CONTINUED

1 | **2** | [Next >](#)

Rate this story Low  High

Current rating: **4** by **11** users • [View Top Rated stories](#)



Print this



Email this



IM this

MOST RECENT COMMENTS (0 COMMENTS IN TOTAL)



[Read All Comments](#)



[Comment on This Story](#)

Secret Satellite TV on PC

Shocking discovery they don't Want you to know.

www.secretsatellite.com

Weight Loss Breakthrough

NBC Today Show, Oprah, 60 Minutes 100% Hoodia. Safe, Fast, Effective

www.HoodiThin.com