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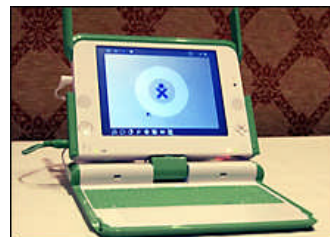
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XO: The final design was unveiled Monday. Price of the laptop, aimed at third world, may fall below \$100 by 2008.
COURTESY OF TOMAS PANTIN

LOW-COST LAPTOP COMPUTER SHOULD BE READY BY SUMMER

By [James Turner](#) | *Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor*

LAS VEGAS—

For the past 40 years, the Consumer Electronics Show has served as a mecca for the latest technological marvels geared to the tastes of affluent first-worlders.

But at this year's show, one new device aims to suit some of the world's poorest consumers. The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Initiative unveiled its final industrial prototype of the XO - a laptop computer with a toylike look. But to say it's a toy is misleading. The device is intended to bring the most isolated tribal village into the Information Age, with the ultimate goal of offering one to every child on the planet.

The XO is designed to survive and thrive in a rugged, power-sparse environment. Whereas a typical modern laptop requires 40 watts of power to use, this power miser needs a meager three watts to browse the Web, and less than a single watt to display an electronic book.

The reason for the emphasis on low-power usage becomes clear when you realize that the power supply for the computer is human. The XO is equipped with a yo-yo-like generator that can be pulled with either a hand or a foot. By keeping power consumption low, the XO can offer between two and five minutes of computing for every minute spent generating power.

"Power was obviously our main concern," said Michalis Bletsas, OLPC's chief connectivity officer, at Monday's unveiling in a small ballroom at the Bellagio Hotel.

But that didn't prevent the designers from making the laptop as powerful as they could manage. The computer includes an innovative "mesh" networking technology that automatically connects every child in a village to each other, as well as to any Internet



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connection that might be available, as in the case of a satellite link or cellular connection. The mesh can link XO's up to 600 meters (one-third of a mile) apart.

The XO's innovative screen can operate in either color or black and white. In black-and-white mode, it can be viewed clearly even in the brightest sunlight, ideal for rural villages where many activities occur outside. The laptop also has a video camera and built-in speakers.

The XO runs a trimmed-down version of the open-source Linux operating system. According to Mr. Bletsas, both Microsoft and Apple offered versions of their operating systems for the project, but neither was compact or secure enough to meet OLPC's needs.

The goal price is less than \$100 per unit, which the initiative hopes to achieve by 2008. "Currently, we're closer to 100 euros [USD \$130] per laptop," Bletsas says.

By keeping the price low, the OLPC initiative hopes that governments in the developing world will be able to afford them. Already, Argentina, Brazil, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Uruguay, and, most recently, Rwanda have committed to participate in the program. Rwanda hopes to have laptops for all of its schoolchildren within five years.

OLPC expects to start delivering the machines this summer, with the goal of delivering 5 million units the first year.

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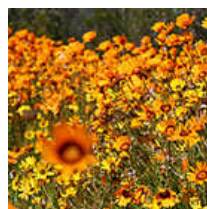
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