

Why I switched to the OLPC?and why I dropped it

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Created *04/11/2008 - 3:03am*

Submitted by srlinuxx on Tuesday 4th of November 2008 03:03:51 AM Filed under [OLPC](#) [1] [OSS](#) [2]

The One Laptop Per Child project, launched by MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte in 2003, was supposed to lead millions of children around the world to information technology and freedom. The plans aimed for low cost, enabling many children to use the machines, and free software, so they would have freedom while using them. I thought it was a good idea; I even planned to use one myself when I found in the OLPC's promise of free software a way to escape the proprietary startup programs that all commercial laptops used.

But just as I was switching to an OLPC, the project backed away from its commitment to freedom and allowed the machine to become a platform for running Windows, a non-free operating system.

What makes this issue so important, and OLPC's retreat from free software so unfortunate, is that the 'free' in free software refers to freedom of knowledge and action, not to price. A program (whatever job it does) is free software if you, the user, have the four essential freedoms:

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