

The Bittersweet Facts about OLPC and Sugar

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Recently, I had to fact-check some older articles I wrote about One Laptop Per Child in order to bring them up to date. This meant digging through the controversy in 2008, and what I found was some pretty appalling human behavior. That's the 'bitter'. The 'sweet' is that both OLPC and Sugar (now separate projects) are both doing a lot of good in the world. Sugar, in particular, is doing a better job of connecting with the community. That's a challenge for us in the community to step up and do a much better job connecting with Sugar. We need to make it the best thing ever, and that's going to mean more than lip service. So we all need to get it installed and start contributing.

The vocal people involved in this controversy (Nicholas Negroponte, Walter Bender, Ivan Krstić, and Richard Stallman) have done some great things in the world, for which they all deserve respect, no matter what human frailties they may have shown recently. It is therefore very frustrating to see them choosing not to show much respect for each other. Yet again, the victims could only be the kids caught in the middle.

In brief, my opinion of the affair is this: Scuttling the potential of the next generation of the Human race for programmer politics isn't any better than scuttling it for proprietary profits. Either is execrable behavior and it needs to be stopped.

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