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The \$100 laptop moves closer to reality

By [Mike Ricciuti](#)

Staff Writer, CNET News.com

Published: September 28, 2005, 8:55 AM PDT

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass.--A low-cost computer for the masses moved one step closer to reality on Wednesday.

[Nicholas Negroponte](#), the co-founder of the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, detailed specifications for a \$100 windup-powered laptop targeted at children in developing nations.

Negroponte, who laid out his original proposal at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, said MIT and his nonprofit group, called [One Laptop Per Child](#), is in discussions with five countries--Brazil, China, Thailand, Egypt and South Africa--to distribute up to 15 million test systems to children.

Photos: [click here](#)

In addition, Massachusetts is working with MIT on a plan to distribute the laptops to schoolchildren, Negroponte said.

"This is the most important thing I have ever done in my life," Negroponte said on Wednesday during a presentation at Technology Review's Emerging Technologies Conference at MIT. "Reception has been incredible. The idea is simple. It's an education project, not a laptop

project. If we can make education better--particularly primary and secondary schools--it will be a better world."

He said a goal of the project is to make the low-cost PC idea a grassroots movement that will spread in popularity, like the Linux operating system or the Wikipedia free online encyclopedia. "This is open-source education. It's a big issue."

Negroponte said the idea is that governments will pay roughly \$100 for the laptops and will distribute them for free to students.

The proposed design of the machines calls for a 500MHz processor, 1GB of memory and an innovative dual-mode display that can be used in full-color mode, or in a black-and-white sunlight-readable mode. The display makes the laptop "both an electronic book and a laptop," he said.

One display design being considered is a flat, flexible printed display developed at MIT's Media Lab. Negroponte said the technology can be used to produce displays that cost roughly 10 cents per square inch. "The target is \$12 for a 12-inch display with near-zero power consumption," he said.

Power for the new systems will be provided through either conventional electric current, batteries or by a windup crank attached to the side of the notebooks, since many countries targeted by the plan do not have power in remote areas, Negroponte said.

The machines, which will run a version of the Linux operating system, will also include other applications, some developed by MIT researchers, as well as country-specific software. "Software has gotten too fat and unreliable, so we started with Linux," he said.

For connectivity, the systems will be Wi-Fi- and cell phone-enabled, and will include four USB ports, along with built-in "mesh networking," a peer-to-peer concept that allows machines to share a single Internet connection.

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Five companies are working with MIT to develop an initial 5 million to 15 million test units within the year: Google, Advanced Micro Devices, News Corp., Red Hat and BrightStar, Negroponte said. He said the current plan is to produce 100 million to 150 million units by 2007.

Negroponte admits that his goals are ambitious. Currently, the world production of laptops is just under 50 million, he said.

While the initial goal of the project is to work with governments, Negroponte said MIT is considering licensing the design or giving it to a third-party company to build commercial versions of the PC. "Those might be available for \$200, and \$20 or \$30 will come back to us to make the kids' laptops. We're still working on that," he said.

Others have launched low-cost PC ideas in the past, though MIT's project may be the most ambitious.

Last year, [Advanced Micro Devices](#) announced plans for its Personal Internet Connector--a prototype with a price tag of at least [\\$185, with no display](#). And an [Indian company called Novatium](#) said it plans to offer a stripped-down home computer for about \$70 or \$75.

In addition, Microsoft's [antipiracy-minded Steve Ballmer](#) last year called for a move toward the \$100 PC for developing nations.



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Eric Daddy e Oct 1, 2005, 12:33 PM PDT

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Brian Mcclimans Sep 30, 2005, 5:33 PM PDT

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Sheldon Britton Sep 30, 2005, 6:37 AM PDT

How about if...

Edmundo Mendiola Sep 30, 2005, 12:56 AM PDT

What about American Kids?

Ian Scrude Sep 29, 2005, 5:57 PM PDT

first rename it the Edu-Tab.

Elvis Sobers Sep 29, 2005, 5:19 PM PDT

They can use Portable DVD player as shell

Shailesh Gala Sep 29, 2005, 12:42 PM PDT

one more thing

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Poor nations children need a school and a teacher first!

Gibson Elliot Sep 29, 2005, 9:18 AM PDT

Even So!

Sheldon Britton Sep 29, 2005, 7:05 AM PDT

That's right, but

Donald Duquet Sep 29, 2005, 6:36 AM PDT

Amazing...

Lane Campbell Sep 29, 2005, 6:25 AM PDT

Its Nice.

Hemen Thacker Sep 29, 2005, 6:21 AM PDT

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Bill Sundling Sep 28, 2005, 4:46 PM PDT

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MIT's \$100 laptop

A research project at the MIT Media Lab has a plan for getting \$100 laptops in the hands of millions of people around the world. One notable feature is a hand crank for providing power in places where electricity is undependable or unavailable.

Credit: MIT Media Lab



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Tyn Ong Sep 30, 2005, 5:57 AM PDT

the OS of the computer

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Ace Idea - When can we order one??

Graham Sivill Sep 30, 2005, 1:55 AM PDT

Sweet

John Stegeman Sep 29, 2005, 6:28 PM PDT

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MIT's \$100 laptop

In the design for the laptop, the power pack also functions as a handle. The system is still in the design phase, and a prototype is due Nov. 15, 2005. A preliminary schedule calls for the systems to reach the market by the end of 2006 or early 2007.

Credit: MIT Media Lab

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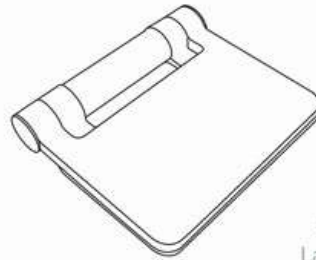
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MIT's \$100 laptop

The Media Lab portable is expected to perform several roles, as laptop, handheld and e-book.

Credit: MIT Media Lab



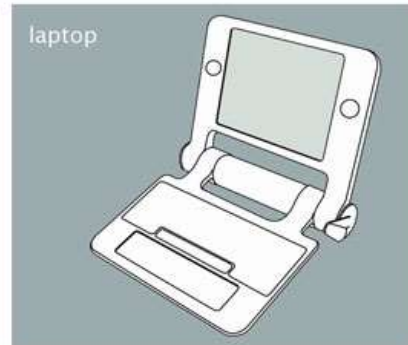
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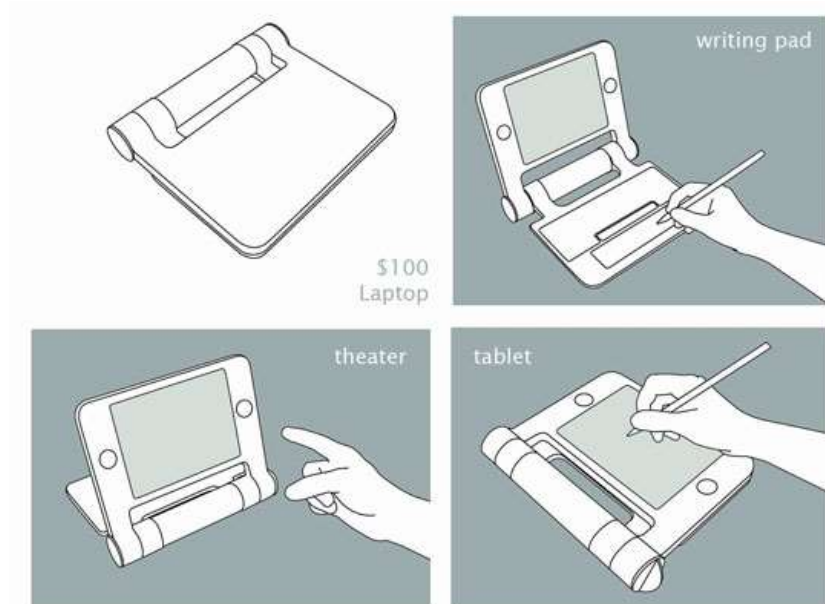
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MIT's \$100 laptop

The laptop will prominently feature electronic ink capabilities, in addition to its keyboard functions.

Credit: MIT Media Lab

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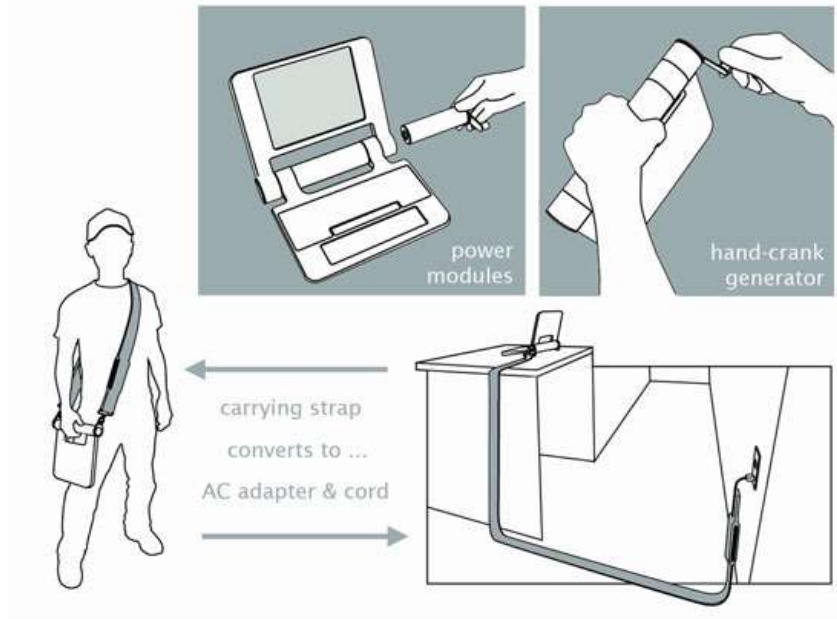
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MIT's \$100 laptop

Power modules are intended to slide into the thick hinged section of the laptop, and a carry strap doubles as a cord for plugging the system into wall outlets.

Credit: MIT Media Lab



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