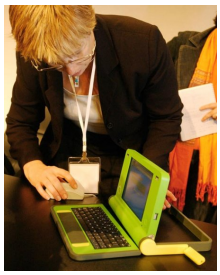
16 February 2008

By: Bogdan Botezatu, Hardware Editor

# Ex-OLPC's Jepsen to Foresee $75 Laptops Until 2010

*The OLPC departure was smooth and friendly*



Mary-Lou Jepsen when she was with the OLPC
OLPC

The former ex-CTO of the One Laptop Per Child organization, Mary-Lou Jepsen, has left in order to start her own profit-company, Pixel Qi, in an attempt to create a $75 sub-notebook with the technologies she invented during her stay at OLPC.Jepsen claims that Pixel Qi still keeps some of the OLPC's philosophy and develops cheap products such as power-efficient LCD displays, but most important, the company pursues the $75 sub-notebook for the emerging markets. The small startup is now a month old, but it already has products that are ready for shipping, which is pretty unusual for such a young company. The $75 notebook is not ready yet, and according to Jepsen, it won't be ready in the next year either. "I'm focused on getting the screens and power management into other people's small laptops and cell phones right now. I think the [$75 laptop] will happen pretty soon, but again, I'm not really focused on the $75 laptop right now, while the innovations that I'm working on can go into that," she claims. Jepsen's statement leaves the impression that she left the OLPC charity in order to privatize the technology, rather than to follow the pursuit of cheap laptops for the developing countries. However, the ex-OLPC CTO says that the organization has been informed in due time, and all the details have been set up between she and Nicholas Negroponte before her departure."I arranged it with Nicholas [Negroponte]. My departure has been well planned and organized with OLPC. It was in place since spring of 2007, and I was committed to delivering the XO into high-volume mass production. But as somebody who ... invents, develops, and gets hardware into mass production, there wasn't much more for me to do at OLPC after ... that. "The $75 notebook seems a difficult target, given the fact that Negroponte failed to produce a $100 machine by now. However, Jepsen's confidence is based on the fact that prices are continuously dropping. For instance, the cost of flash and DRAM, they go down 50 percent year over year, while LCD panels usually get 30 percent cheaper. Moreover, the market is full of $10 CPUs, that may not be the latest trend in computing, but they are able to do their job. "It's not that hard. It will take about two years. Realistically, it does need that time because what you have to do first is make the components and then you put them together. At OLPC, it took three years because we had to start with the disbelief, but now people believe. Now cut that down to about two years, it's about reasonable. It's 2010 we're looking at," she concluded.