Kirby Urner talking about the XO and himself as a "Quaker futurist":

The person in the news most associated with the XO is Nicholas Negroponte, who has made it his personal mission to get state of the art laptop computers in the hands of young children around the world, a way to break the cycle of ignorance and poverty, although we hope not too disruptively.

Outreach with technology is considered very basic to this school of thought. XOs are obviously not food, water, shelter or medicines, but they *are* potentially powerful tools for self-organizing within a community, in part because they double as communications devices, including with one another, have a built-in microphone and camera, web browser etc.

My own path crosses into XO territory thanks to a computer language called Python. I've spoken at many conferences about how to build mathematical and analytical abilities among adults as well as children, through the hands-on activity of programming in Python. Locally, I use this approach in my Saturday Academy classes. I mix a lot of Bucky Fuller's contributions into my curriculum as well, having deeply studied his philosophy.

Although the operating system on the XO is by default RedHat Linux, its simple iconographic interface, called *Sugar*, many of its applications, are written in Python. For example, *Pippy*, a simple front end to the Python interpreter, includes Pascal's Triangle and the Fibonacci Numbers in a form similar to what I share in my classes.

One way North Americans could get an XO was to "give one get one" (G1G1), a successful program in 2007 that developed a large backlog, and so has been discontinued for the time being. I received my XO from a Portland family who had purchased two for their teenagers, then discovered these really are for younger children, in terms of appearance and keyboard. Uruguay, Peru and Birmingham, Alabama are among the early adopters of the XO for classroom use.

One of the high points of my career as an educator came in April, 2006, when I was invited to attend in a small meeting in London, courtesy of Mark Shuttleworth, a South African philanthropist. Alan Kay was also at this meeting, a long time champion of the "Dynabook" idea, along with Guido van Rossum, Python's inventor. Our focus was not specifically One Laptop per Child however, but a broader range of initiatives (the website kusasa.org is one result of this meeting, although I had nothing specifically to do with it).

I mention these autobiographical facts in part to explain how I came to label myself "a futurist" (my dad another influence). In addition, I believe our Quaker faith and practice includes much that will serve people well in the future, so I also label my self a *Quaker* futurist in some contexts, such as here.

Kirby.urner@gmail.com   Sunday, April 13, 2008