



We hope you enjoy this edition of *OLE Nepal Newsletter*, a bi-monthly email newsletter from Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Nepal. It provides current news and information about the organization and its activities and will keep you up to date with OLE Nepal's work to provide high quality education for children in Nepal.

## OLE Nepal's Youth Volunteers

Each year, OLE Nepal provides internship opportunities for young Nepali high school graduates interested in participating in its various projects. The interns, who spend 8 to 9 months of the gap year at OLE Nepal before starting college in Nepal and abroad, play a critical role in the successful implementation of OLE Nepal's programs. Under the guidance of program and technical officers, the interns are expected to demonstrate responsibility and maturity beyond their age group. They are actively engaged in a range of activities both on the field and at the office.

The internship program provides an excellent platform for interns to pick up organizational skills through practical experience. As key members of the team that deploys laptops to schools at the beginning of each academic year, the interns spend significant amount of time at program schools in rural parts of the country. They assist trainers during teacher training programs, and few also conduct extra sessions for teachers interested in acquiring more technical knowledge. They accompany technical staff and network engineers in setting up and maintaining network infrastructure both inside and between schools. They work diligently to prepare and repair laptops as well as fix other technical problems associated with hardware and software. At other times, they help in the *E-Pustakalaya* project by scanning and formatting books that are uploaded to the digital library. They also assist in testing the learning activities *E-Paath* that are developed at OLE Nepal.

The following is a summary of the experiences shared by four current interns who joined OLE Nepal in August 2010.

For all four of us, OLE Nepal was our first experience working in an organization. It was completely different from what we had expected, and the experience has clearly been an exciting one. Though we joined OLE Nepal on different days, we

all experienced the same warm welcome when we started our internship. Initially, we did not have very high expectations. Most of us viewed it as a way to pass time during our gap-year. But over the course of the past half year, we have learned a lot about the nature of work, the state of education in rural schools, and about challenges and obstacles faced by people who work to improve Nepal while living in Nepal. We were thrilled to discover our own individual potentials and have greatly appreciated the trust bestowed upon us by the organization. Realizing all these things has allowed us to reflect on our time here, and feel proud for the service that we have done and for the experience we have gained.

OLE Nepal functions almost as a small family of young and experienced people working hard to uplift the education of children throughout the country, and we have found this enthusiasm to be contagious. It is amazing that everyone here finds time to help us whenever we do not understand our work despite their busy schedule. It is often inspiring to see how everyone works collectively to achieve the goals for the whole organization. It is obvious that the various projects are a large part of the lives of the staff members, and we feel fortunate to be part of a workplace where everyone shares a common goal to improve education in the country. They are more than senior staff members; they are our mentors, advisers and we aspire to be like them in future.

In some respect, we have a unique opportunity that most other staff members do not have. We get to work under every department within OLE Nepal during the course of the internship program. From scanning and editing a good literature book to setting up network infrastructure at remote schools of Makwanpur and Mustang, and from installing new software in the *E-Paati* laptops to establishing Internet

## Latest Developments

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connections at high hills of Kavre. OLE Nepal is a wonderful place where interns get the opportunity to work and learn.



### Swikriti Bashyal

graduated from St Mary's High School. She is interested in reading novels, travelling and swimming. She works extensively with the *E-Pustakalaya* team and has participated in *E-Pustakalaya* workshops. Of late, she has also been assisting the curriculum team in their work.



### Aayoush Raj Onta

finished his high school from Malpi Institute. He is interested in photography, arts, travelling and music. He works with the *E-Pustakalaya* team and has gone to Palpa to attend a literary meet. He has also been helping prepare OLE Nepal's bi-monthly newsletter.



**Shaswot Kharel** is a graduate of St. Xavier's College. He has always been interested in electronic gadgets and his personal interest in gadgets was a key factor that brought him to OLE Nepal. He works in the *E-Pustakalaya* project and been part of the deployment team in Janakpur.



**Sandesh Pathak** finished his high school from Buddhailkantha School. He is interested in mathematics, rubik's cube and gadgets. He works in the hardware department and has gone on support visit to Makwanpur and on the recent deployment to Mustang.

Both Shaswot and Sandesh have been involved in testing *E-Paath* and laptops in preparation for upcoming deployments.

## Laptops in Janakpur

OLE Nepal has undertaken the project to implement ICT-integrated classes at Saraswoti Namuna Higher Secondary School located in Janakpur, Dhanusha. The school had received 50 OLPC laptops (*E-Paati*) from Mr. Aditya Jha of POA Educational Foundation, and the Nepal Library Foundation (NLF) affiliated with the Non-Resident Nepalese Association (NRNA) had provided the funds necessary for the implementation of the project. OLE Nepal has set up the school network equipped with a server containing *E-Pustakalaya*, loaded all laptops with localized content including *E-Paath* activities, and carried out training program for seven teachers on effective integration of digital content. Trainers from OLE Nepal and the National Center for Educational Development (NCED) conducted the training jointly from January 30 to February 5 at the school. OLE Nepal will provide support throughout the year, includ-

ing regular monitoring visits, maintenance and updating of equipment, and further teacher support at the school.

This also marks the first time that OLE Nepal has implemented a 'shared model' using OLPC laptops. Since there were not enough laptops for each student, OLE Nepal proposed a model whereby each class will take turns using the laptops. Although different classes share the laptops, each student will have direct access to individual laptop when his or her class is scheduled for laptop-based lessons.

Likewise, the training program was designed with extra components on maximizing the use of laptops in a shared setting and on proper management of the laptops and scheduling. Different effective ways to use the laptops in shared setting were discussed during the training, including allocating free time for students to use laptops to explore other educational activities and to read books available in *E-Pustakalaya*.

## Mustang Deployment

### Interaction Program with Headteachers and Focal Persons

OLE Nepal organized a two day interaction program with headteachers and OLPC school focal persons from seven program schools, Mustang District Education Officer, Department of Education representative, and Resource Person on February 25th and 26th. A team comprising of Rajeev Adhikari and Tikaraj Karki from OLE Nepal conducted the program in Lete, Mustang, ahead of the new round of OLPC program deployment in the schools. The primary objective



Mustang DEO Mr. Devendra Khanal with OLE Nepal Staff, DoE representative, headteachers and OLPC focal teachers

of the interaction session was to share the overall program experience from different schools as well as individual experiences from headteachers and focal teachers gathered over the past two years of running the program in the district.

Discussions were also held on how to improve the smooth running of the program and ensure a bigger impact in children's learning. Apart from the experience sharing session, the roles and responsibilities of headteachers and school focal persons in the success and sustainability of

the program in their schools and in the district as a whole were discussed. Both groups spent significant time in discussions and came out with concrete action plan that will be useful not just in Mustang schools, but will serve as a guiding document to schools in other districts.

The active participation by the Mustang District Education Officer Mr. Devendra Khanal was an encouraging sign for all participants. He demonstrated the DEO's commitment by emphasizing that this program is under DEO's ownership, and his office has taken the sustainability aspect of the project seriously and is sincere in their effort to make it a success. He also committed to regular monitoring by his office, and providing support to the schools in various aspects of the project, including support in teacher training.

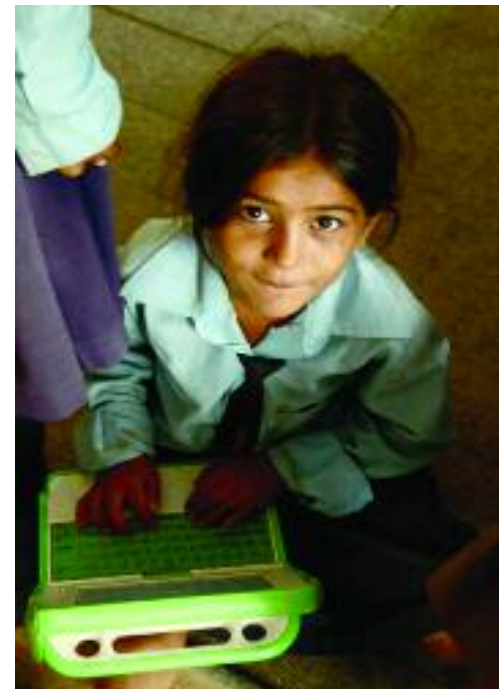
### Laptops for Class 5 students

With this year's deployment the OLPC program in grade 5 in Mustang's seven program schools, we have entered into the fourth year of the OLPC Project in Nepal. A total of 48 new laptops were distributed in the district. The deployment in Mustang district preceded that in other districts by two months since this mountain district follows a different academic cycle to accommodate a longer winter break. Along with the laptops, 184 school bags were also provided to students.

A technical team comprising of network engineer Basanta Shrestha and intern Sandesh Pathak visited all seven schools from February 23th till March 3rd to distribute laptops and provide technical support needed at the school level. They also updated the existing laptops at the schools

with the latest version of OLE Nepal's learning activities, *E-Paath*. As of now, all students in Mustang program schools from grades two to six have *E-Paati* laptops with curriculum-based interactive learning materials for English and mathematics subjects. Grades two to four students have additional content for Nepali, while grade 5 students have science included in *E-Paath*.

As part of the technical routine at the schools, all servers, laptops, chargers, charging racks, classroom routers, long range radios, and Internet connection were examined. The digital library, *E-Pustakalaya*, was also updated at all schools so that students and teachers now have a wider selection of books and other materials. The team also wired the new classrooms and installed routers in class 5.



## OLE Nepal Tech Team in Rwanda

A technical team from OLE Nepal consisting of system administrator Abhishek Singh, software programmers Peter Gijssels and Roshan Karki visited Kigali, Rwanda from January 5th to 17th at the invitation of OLE Rwanda. The primary purpose of the visit were to train the local technical team on OLPC technologies, and to help arrange the infrastructure needed to prepare the laptops and servers as per Rwanda's local requirements. The Government of Rwanda has committed to deploy the OLPC program in a massive scale with the target to reach all students in primary grades. OLE Rwanda has been trying to use few OLPC contents from Nepali deployments, but needed assistance in customizing the contents to fit their needs. Other tasks included the use of SchoolTool for classroom management and tracking student progress, and creating activity templates for Karma, an Open Source software platform developed at OLE Nepal.

The team participated in the content development workshop organized to produce learning materials based on the curriculum for the Learn Sugar activity developed by Tony Anderson\*. During the sessions, the team interacted with local content developers (school teachers and computer students), and discussed various types of activities that they would like to develop.

The team spent significant amount of their time at the OLE Rwanda Office at Ministry of Education developing Karma activity templates, internationalized version of *E-Paath*, and building server technology for Rwanda. Also *E-Pustakalaya* was re-mastered with an English only interface and books in Nepali language were removed.

Finally, the team was involved in organizing a week-long workshop on OLPC technologies and demonstration of various software and hardware systems involved, the Nepali customizations, various administration and usage scenarios. The concepts of Free and Open Source Software Licensing, Creative Commons and fair use were discussed, and an introduction to GNU/Linux, GNOME desktop environment was also given. Other topics included the XO hardware and software, Sugar Desktop Environment, Flashing XO with RWXO image, nand-blasting, etc. The workshop was conducted at the Kigali Institute of Education, and was attended by students from the college.

It is our hope that the workshop helped generate interest amongst local developers in the underlying technologies and create a pool of local volunteers who could play an active role in the deployment in Rwanda.

*\*Tony Anderson is currently volunteering in Rwanda. He had played an active role in Nepal's deployments in 2009 and 2010.*

## E-Paath in Magic Yeti Libraries

*A message from Jeffery Dow & Liesl Clark of the Magic Yeti Library Project:*

Begun in 2007 with the first location at the Khumjung School, Solo Khumbu, Nepal, the Magic Yeti Library Project has now grown to six locations, with the opening of our new location at the Kagbeni School, Mustang, Nepal, in March of 2011. The communities being served in the Solo Khumbu region include Khumjung, Phortse, and Thame, and the those in Mustang include Kagbeni, Tserang, and Chosaar. The library project was started by Director Liesl Clark and Pete Athans of the USA, who had spent many



years coming back and forth between the United States and the mountains of Nepal previous to the project's inception. Working with partners and volunteers in the U.S. in collecting children's books at functions such as book drives and yard sales, as well as The Asia Foundation, which has helped to facilitate book shipments from San Francisco to Kathmandu, as well as local partner Room to Read Nepal, who has graciously donated many great local language books to the libraries, the project has become a great reality for six remote communities.

In furthering the aims of the project of youth literacy and closing the technology gap for the six rural communities where The Magic Yeti Libraries call home, we have found a great partner in OLE Nepal. We wanted to introduce computers into our locations, but were not sure of the most effective way of doing so. In encountering OLE Nepal, the solution was clearly defined. Using donated laptops, we have been able to easily install the fantastic open source *E-Paath* educational software with the help of OLE Nepal in Kathmandu, and bring the loaded machines up to two

of our locations, in Phortse and Tserang. In these remote locations, the donated machines running OLE's *E-Paath* education materials have often been the first encounter the students have had with new computer technology. Thus, they have given a tremendous response to the OLE programs, often standing for hours to get a chance to see and interact with the new educational tools. The lessons and educational support provided by *E-Paath* in the libraries have led to a tremendous amount of self-learning on the part of the students, and have enabled them to supplement their in-class activities with interactive lessons and rich content. We are so excited to have had the opportunity to bring this great technology to a few of our locations, and plan to install donated laptops in all of our locations in the spring due to the great response from the students. OLE Nepal has provided a fantastic resource and has been a great partner to the Magic Yeti Library Project!

## Talk Program in Boston

OLE Nepal's Rabi Karmacharya gave a talk titled *Technological Intervention to Transform Rural Education in Nepal* on February 25, 2011. The event held at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government was organized jointly by Chhalphal-Boston, Nepal Ko Yuwa and Boston Nepali Youth Movement. The talk centred around the potential of using technology to transform education in schools located in remote locations. Most of the efforts in technology-based education have so far focused on technology, rather than on education. Hence, many critics have been quick to write off technology as a viable means to improve education standards. OLE Nepal's experience has proved otherwise; however, it is not as easy as installing computers and connectivity at schools. The challenge lies in integrating technology in daily teaching-learning practice, in ensuring teachers can manage classrooms properly, in maximizing the use of technology to create better learning environment, and in ensuring technology enhances the learning experience for the students. The talk was followed by a lengthy discussion on the topic.



## Upcoming Deployments

Having completed the grade 5 deployment in Mustang in late February, the focus of OLE Nepal's deployment team has now shifted to other districts for the new academic year starting in April 2011. A four-day teacher training is scheduled to take place in the districts ahead of the laptop deployment in Dadeldhura, Kapilvastu, Makwanpur, Kavre, Lalitpur, and Solukhumbu. This training program has been designed for teachers in the program schools who have had some exposure to the laptops and *E-Paati* integrated teaching practices, but have not received formal training from OLE Nepal and NCED trainers over the past two years.

The latest *E-Paath* and *E-Pustakalaya* content will be updated at all program schools by deployment teams sent from OLE Nepal. The teams will also carry out technical maintenance and support at the schools during the visit. With the completion of this deployment, OLE Nepal would have reached a major milestone in saturating all program schools from grades two to six with the OLPC program. The project, started in two grades at the two test schools in April 2008, will have covered 27 schools in seven districts, distributed over 3,000 laptops to students, trained nearly 150 teachers on ICT-integrated teaching methodology, built wireless network in some of the most challenging areas of Nepal, finished

developing content based on our National Curriculum in English, mathematics, Nepali and Science (for grade 5) by May 2011.



## E-Pustakalaya Update

### Young Adult Literature Creation Workshop

OLE Nepal organized a two-day writer's workshop to create literary materials for Young Adult (YA) on February 4th and 5th. The workshop, held in Nagarkot and supported by the Nepal Library Foundation, built on the information gathered from participants at the seminar held on December 22, 2010 in Kathmandu. A total of twenty-one writers and literary figures were in attendance. OLE Nepal's *E-Pustakalaya* advisers Churamani Bandhu, Dhurva Ghimire, Geeta Keshary, Hiranya Kumari Pathak, Rambabu Subedi and Vinaya Kasajoo moderated and facilitated the program while Prof. Dr. Mahadev Awasti representing the National Academy's Children's Literature wing served as member of the Editorial Board.



Writers in Nagarkot

As Young Adult literature is a new genre in the world of Nepali literature, the workshop began with the accepted definition of the genre in foreign literary scenes. It was established that literary works targeting YAs were urgently needed in order to help them make right choices. A summary of the discussions and papers from the December seminar was also shared at the workshop.

After discussing several famous YA novels, a brainstorming exercise was conducted where participants recalled their adolescence and recounted a moment in their life which was symbolic of being a YA. Participants were also shown video clips of R. K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* and S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. Further discussions were carried out on how these novels developed the nature of a first person narrator being an adolescent and how this adds authenticity to the genre of YA literature. Finally, participants broke up into small groups and discussed what themes would be appropriate for their novels.

Having had a whole night to organise their thoughts, the second day brought about a remarkable number of written stories and ideas. Character development, plot lines, style and tones were also discussed. Importantly, constructive ideas were presented to convert the abundant short stories into a larger, coherent novel. Creating a YA novel was deemed vital in order to steadily depict the changes and challenges an adolescent faces and teach YAs how to better navigate through these obstacles.

In concluding this first phase of writing workshop, participants were given a target of writing around 100 pages of literary material before the second phase that will be organized couple months later. This workshop turned out to be highly productive in terms of inspiring the participating writers to write for Young Adults, brainstorming for themes for their work, and making certain that a good support system was created for the participants.

### Literary meet in Palpa

OLE Nepal's E-Library coordinator Gaurav Thapa and intern Aayoush Onta attended Nepal Society for Children's Literature's

(NESCHIL) 21st Annual Bal Sahitya Samelan (26th and 27th Feb) held in Tansen, Palpa. Altogether eighty-five authors, artists, publishers, journalists and librarians traveled from Kathmandu to Tansen for the event. The local event organizer was Dhawal Pustakalaya (library), which was aided by the District Development Committee, Palpa Municipality Office, all the schools within Tansen and various local literary associations.

One of the books launched during the event was Indra Prasad Adhikari's *Hiuko Sirak*. The electronic version of this book was simultaneously launched online, and it can be read freely on OLE Nepal's *E-Pustakalaya* at [www.pustakalaya.org](http://www.pustakalaya.org). This was the first time in Nepal's history that a children's book was simultaneously launched online and in print. We hope other authors will follow suit and launch their books in this manner.

A total of nine papers on various aspects of children's literature in Nepal were presented during the Samelan. Our *E-Pustakalaya* advisor Prof. Dr. Churamani Bandu presented a paper titled *Nepalima Kishor Sahitya* (Young Adult Literature in Nepali) based on the presentation he had made at the Young Adult Literature seminar organized by OLE Nepal last December. All of the papers presented at the event will soon be uploaded to *E-Pustakalaya*.

Demonstrations of *E-Pustakalaya* were conducted throughout the two-day event. Several artists and authors have also expressed their interest in making their works available via *E-Pustakalaya*. Likewise, Story-teller's society has shown interest in creating audio books and making them available online on *E-Pustakalaya*.

*E-Paath* is a set of curriculum-based interactive digital learning materials developed by OLE Nepal

*E-Pustakalaya* is OLE Nepal's education-centered digital library consisting of books, reference materials, school wikipedia, etc.

*E-Paati* is the Nepali name for the XO laptops used in OLPC program schools