

Paving the way for literacy through the OWL Jr.

WRT 394 Class Project, Part I - Fall 2011 – Dr. Dana Driscoll, driscoll@oakland.edu

Background: Six months ago, I was approached by John Tierney, who leads efforts for Sugar Labs in educational outreach about a crucial need. This need was his organization's desire to have a group develop literacy resources housed within the Sugar Operating system. These resources would eventually be available both online and in Sugar for the 2,000,000+ plus children worldwide, primarily in developing nations, using the Sugar OS in their schools. Sugar is the operating system that runs on the XO, the low-cost, low-power laptops distributed to children in developing nations through the One Laptop Per Child Initiative (www.olpc.org). We'll be learning much more about Sugar and OLPC through this project.

Student Learning Goals: When we think about the core goals and values of our field, our department, and our university, the intersections of literacy, technology and civic engagement become crucial. This course project asks you, as students to:

- explore intersections between literacy, technology, and civic engagement through a real-life application
- apply and transfer skills and knowledge from various WRT coursework in all three tracks and WRT394 this real-life application
- make a difference in promoting literacy and increasing writing knowledge worldwide
- address and understand how issues of cultural values, the westernization of education, and literacy impact this project

Project Goals: To develop a set of literacy resources, targeted toward the 3rd – 5th grade level, to be housed on the Sugar OS, and possibly the Internet. To introduce Sugar OS users to the writing process, writing to learn, reflective writing, and rhetorical concepts.

Project Goals for WRT394: A project of this magnitude cannot take place in one semester. As the first class at Oakland University working on the OWL Jr. project, our goal will be to lay the groundwork for future content developers, usability testing, and eventually implementation of this initiative.

Our job in WRT394 is to lay the groundwork for the OWL Jr. Project by preparing materials and information on the project—its goals, users, and needs. Towards that end, students in WRT394 will:

1. Determine the magnitude and scope of the OWL Jr. Project.
2. Introduce potential content developers, usability testers, and teachers to the OWL Jr. Project, Sugar Labs, and the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative.
3. Create documentation to help other users contribute to the OWL Jr. Project.
4. Determine where the OWL Jr. Resources will be integrated into the Sugar OS (e.g. live inside Sugar activity, live inside Sugar itself in the library, and potential online counterparts)
5. To determine the most needed areas for content development.

6. To reflect upon our own learning through this process and project, and consider connections to other WRT curriculum and course readings.

Teams: Each team will tackle different aspects of the project—the first I have determined in advance; later aspects will be determined by the class and/or individual teams. After our first month of the project, we will re-evaluate our needs, the progress of the project, and will reassess our current teams.

Each team needs to identify the following two positions.

- 1) **Team Leader.** Team leaders delegate tasks, keeps track of who is doing what, when it will be done. For this, team leader should be someone who is organized and efficient. Because of this additional responsibility, they should have a smaller share of the distributed “group” responsibilities.
- 2) **Documentation specialist.** Documentation specialists keep notes on team meetings and ideas. Documentation specialists are responsible for posting regular weekly “team updates” to our blog. Because of this additional responsibility, they should have a smaller share of the distributed “group” responsibilities.

Teams: Project Month 1

Team 1: Introducing Understanding Sugar Labs and the Sugar OS (software)

(Focus: Research, Multimedia Content Development)

- This team will develop materials (a textual guide, in both PDF and HTML, with graphics, and/or video) that introduces potential content developers to Sugar, as both a non-profit organization and also as an operating system. The created materials will be used within the OWL Jr. Project and potentially by Sugar Labs outreach.
 - While Sugar has a website that provides this information, as John Tierney has suggested, the website is very, very difficult to navigate and understand. He suggest that this is because they have few documentation specialists on board; the content been geared towards software developers, rather than educators or content developers.
 - Monitor educational mailing list
 - You should also include information on why this initiative is important.
 - Deliverable: Developed report/video and short presentation to the class.

Team 2: Introducing the OLPC Initiative & the XO Laptop (hardware)

(Focus: Research, Multimedia Content Development)

- This team will develop materials (textual, graphic, and/or video) that introduces potential content developers to OLPC—the mission, educational philosophy, vision, and what is happening now. Your team is also responsible for describing the relationship between Sugar and OLPC to users. The created materials will be used within the OWL Jr. Project and potentially by Sugar Labs outreach.
 - The OLPC has a website, blog, and wiki that provides most of the information you will need, yet it is hard to understand and navigate. Your job will be to distill this information into a clear and readable introduction.

- You should also include information on why this initiative is important.
- Deliverable: Developed report/video and short presentation to the class.

Team 3: Investigating the Sugar OS to find a place for OWL Jr.

(Focus: Software/Usability/User Needs Assessment)

- This team, with the assistance of two XO laptops and access to the Sugar OS in various formats, will conduct analysis of the Sugar OS and prepare a report detailing their recommendations for how and where to integrate potential OWL Jr. resources into Sugar. Your report will be posted on the Sugar Wiki as well as our own website.
 - Your team will need to work coordinate with Team 4 to understand common core standards and user needs during this process.
 - Deliverable: Short report detailing your findings and suggestions. Presentation to class on your results.
 - Communicating with Sugar Labs Technical mentor (TBD).

Team 4: Investigating the Common Core and Literacy Needs

(Focus: Education, Ethnographic Research, User Needs Assessment)

- This team is responsible for investigating basic information on Sugar users, including their needs, wants, and current ways of using the Sugar OS. TO do this, they will need to interview and/or observe teachers (and possibly students) using Sugar in schools (possibly locally, but certainly with our contacts in NY, ND, and possibly Dominican Republic), interview the Sugar Labs Educational Outreach Director (John Tierney), and investigate common core standards for literacy education that can be applied to this project.
 - Deliverable: A report with your findings (posted to website and Sugar Wiki) and presentation to class with your results.
 - Coordination with our Sugar Labs Educational Mentor John Tierney.

Team 5: The Face of the Project

(Focus: Web development, Graphic Design, Multimedia)

- Team 5 is our web development and graphics team. This project needs a virtual home in which to live, and Team 5's job is to develop that home using rhetorical web design principles. We'll also need a logo and some snazzy graphics, and depending on the abilities of our team members, a short introductory video to promote the project.
 - Present the class with viable options for a public face to this project (e.g. a website connected to a blog, a Facebook page, etc.).
 - Deliverable: Short presentation on options for a public face of the project with negatives/positives. Presentation due September 20th.
 - Develop a website to house the content that other teams are producing.
 - Create a logo for the project.

Deadlines: Polished drafts of materials for stage 1 of the project are due on October 15th.

Documentation Requirements:

Because we are laying groundwork for a project that will span multiple semesters, we need to think carefully about delivery options for our material. We want material that is detailed and descriptive, yet concise enough to be read by volunteers looking to join the project. We also need to abide by academic integrity standards, which means using clear citations and references and research support where necessary (read: APA format).

Public Nature of the Project:

Our team progress will be tracked on a publically visible website. Our deliverables (final materials, introduction to the project, etc.) will be housed on the Sugar Labs Wiki as well as on the web (possibly the Department of Writing and Rhetoric website, possibly our own website). You can choose whether or not you want your name displayed with our contributions.

Grading – Stage 1.

The class project will be worth 40% of your total grade for WRT394. All team members will be required to submit a team evaluation form at the due dates for major pieces of the project.

- **Individual Worklog:** 10%. All team members will be required to keep a personal worklog that documents their progress on the project (using the “Blog” feature in Moodle). I will be reviewing these for completeness and your own assessment of your contributions.
- **Individual Reflection:** 20%. All team members will write an individual reflection on their learning experiences with the course project at each stage. As part of this reflection, you must integrate and discuss at least three course readings from WRT394.
- **Group grade:** 70% - This is the grade for your actual documents, prototypes, and/or reports that your group is creating.
 - Coherence: clear focus, clear organization, easy to read and follow
 - Research: Integrating and synthesizing sources, as appropriate and Use of Sources
 - Ethos: Appropriate tone/register, non-biased use of language, evidence of editing/proofreading
 - Audience awareness
 - Delivery: Manner in which material is delivered