

Chapter Community Service
ACM - University of the Philippines Student Chapter (UP ACM)
<http://www.upacm.org>

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It has oft been said that when you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but when teach him how to fish, you feed him for life. This axiom is especially pertinent for a Third World country such as the Philippines, where some of the more expensive physical resources, i.e. computers, are luxuries. These tangible assets must give way to an intangible one – knowledge. In our country, knowledge is of the utmost value; it has no price tag, but is priceless. It does not crash, it does not break down, and it will serve you for life. Practicality dictates that in lieu of supplying people with computers, we must educate them about these machines. And who better to educate than the youth, on whom the hopes of the nation are pinned?

This is what our local Student Chapter has proudly accomplished through our **Summer Computer Literacy Outreach Program (SCLOP)**. The SCLOP is basically a short introductory course on computers for underprivileged children. It was held last April 11-12, 2005 and consisted of four (4) sessions (two per day, 9am-12pm and 1pm-4pm). The two morning sessions were allotted for kids aged 8-12, while the afternoons were for the 12-18 year-olds.

The SCLOP website can be found at:
<http://upacm.org/activities/sclop.jsp>

Preparations

First we had to secure a venue for the SCLOP. Our University's Department of Computer Science [<http://www.engg.upd.edu.ph/cs/>] provided us with one of its laboratories having thirty (30) computers. We were also able to obtain the funds for the children's snacks from the Diliman Computer Science Foundation, Inc.

After procuring these resources, about a dozen members of our Chapter visited the community hall of nearby Barangay UP Campus, a densely-populated neighborhood consisting of people coming from social classes C to E. We formally invited the community officers, through a letter and verbal discussion, to participate in the SCLOP by sending its computer-underprivileged youth to our program. We restricted the possible trainees to those who had little to none computer experience.

After our visit, our Chapter remained in contact with the community officers in the days leading to the SCLOP to fully flesh out the program logistics. It was agreed upon that the children will be brought to our venue by representatives from the community (which is a mere five to ten minutes ride from our College).

Teachers and Teaching Material

Our Chapter assigned from our ranks the SCLOP instructors, and finalized their teaching material. We decided upon one overseer for each of the two days, and one officer-in-charge for each of the four sessions. Throughout the two-day training, seventeen (17) Chapter members served as teachers and aides.

The gist of the SCLOP was about basic hardware, basic UI navigation, basic file management, typing, basic graphics, and basic Internet. For the 12-18yo age group, we added OpenOffice.org to the lesson plan, as the handling of documents, presentations, and spreadsheets are a prime requirement in the Philippine job market. The children were exposed to the open source Fedora Core 2 environment and other open source software such as TuxType, TuxPaint, and Mozilla Firefox.

The Sessions

Each of the four sessions followed the same format: registration, warm up lessons, snacks, (relatively) advanced lessons, and awarding of certificates.

The sessions for the 8-12 year olds began with a brief rundown of PC hardware (and how to turn it on and off). The children were made to login to the OS, familiarize themselves with the mouse and keyboard, and navigate the UI. They created, typed into, and saved a text file. They enjoyed the educational typing tutor game TuxType, and made their first computer graphics with TuxPaint. Finally, we introduced them to the Internet – using the web browser, manipulating the URL on the address bar, and navigating a website. They visited sites featuring educational games and community-oriented ones such as Friendster. We even gave them free Gmail accounts, and let them send email to their peers within the room.

The sessions for the 12-18 year olds basically followed the above arrangement, with of course a crash course on OpenOffice.org being added to the end. A total of sixty (60) children attended the SCLOP for the two days.

In the end, we are proud to state that our Chapter is committed to this community service, and is already excited to hold next year's edition of the SCLOP.