The Library

The Open University library is uniquely suited to distance learning. In addition to printed materials and an extensive collection of multimedia titles, the library houses an especially large selection of electronic resources: bibliographic databases, digital books and periodicals. These resources are available to all Open University students in Israel and abroad, directly from their home computers, through a password.

The New Library in Raanana

In 2003-2004, the University invested considerable efforts in moving the library to its new location in Raanana. The new library has four floors and spans an area of about 2,000 sq. meters (compared to the 292 sq. meters in the library in Ramat Aviv). The library has a loan desk, two reading rooms seating 52 (compared to 15 in Ramat Aviv), a periodicals room, 15 computer stations for information retrieval by readers (compared to 12), a classroom with 15 stations, and a large multimedia room for viewing analog and digital video (as yet not functioning).

Moving a library is a complex project and must be organized in a manner that ensures the transfer of the collections in their entirety and the maintenance of the thematic order of the items. To this end both logistic and specialized-library preparations were required. The move was completed successfully towards the beginning of the academic year 2004-2005 and all the collections transferred from Ramat Aviv are currently in place in the new building.

The Library's Collection of Electronic Resources

In recent years, the Open University library accumulated a collection of electronic resources in all fields of knowledge in which the University offers undergraduate and graduate degrees. The current collection contains 54 bibliographic databases, some of which include full-text; 38 collections of full-text databases; 16,716 electronic periodicals; 10 collections of digital reference books; and two digital collections of academic literature (about 500 titles). One of the library's most important goals is to encourage the use of electronic resources through an extensive training program for both students and faculty. Owing to these activities, the Open University has become the leading university in Israel in the use of electronic resources. For example, Open University students and faculty comprise 26.4% (of all university users in Israel) of the Business and Company Resource Center database, and 83.9% of all university users of the EBSCO Business Source database.

Bibliotech (*Safra*) – The Open University electronic library and collection of sample study units

An electronic library was established within the Open University library that currently contains sample exam questionnaires for all courses and readers for graduate courses. Students can review their course materials from home (using a password). Use of OCR technology, currently applied to textbooks, enables full-text data retrieval. In addition,

all Open University course readers were scanned this year and will be made available on course websites. Also scanned were sample study units for all courses, together with sample assignments. In the near future, students will be able to access this material from their homes.

Upgrading the Library Catalog to Aleph 500 software
The library catalog was upgraded this year to Aleph 500 software. The new software provides a user-friendly and convenient Windows interface, identical in all universities in Israel, for the unified catalogs of books and periodicals in Israel, indices to articles in Hebrew ("Haifa Index") and the database of articles in Judaic Studies (*Rambi*). The software offers new features such as personal identification enabling users to display a list of items borrowed in the past, as well as online book ordering and loan extension. The catalog is also equipped with an answering machine that enables loan extension by telephone 24 hours a day.

Super Search Engine for information retrieval in electronic resources and the library catalog
This year a Super Search Engine was installed in the library that enables users to search for information simultaneously in several databases and collections of electronic journals. After performing the search, the search engine sorts the results by sub-topics and creates a short abstract with a direct link to each item. The search engine facilitates information retrieval, making it faster and smarter.

Online Course in Information Literacy

The development of an online information literacy course was completed. The course has four parts: "Information Literacy", "Aleph 500", "Milestones" and "Databases". It is asynchronous and interactive and includes independent practice and feedback to the student. The first two parts are a collaborative project of all universities, while the last two are the unique development of the Open University library with the assistance of a grant from the Planning and Budgeting Committee. Computer literate students will now be able to acquire information literacy skills from home through the courseware, as an alternative to participation in a face-to-face course.

Campus Libraries

As in the past, the Open University library continues to provide learning aids to campus libraries: books, videos, cassettes, maps, etc. This year, the Wadi Ara campus joined other campuses connected to computers and printers through which students can search library databases.