



# The First Year in Raanana



The Open University moved to its spacious new campus in Raanana at the end of the 2004-2005 academic year. In many ways, the new campus offers University employees improved conditions: all University units (except for the Center for Continuing Studies) are under one roof, offices are larger, there are abundant additional work spaces (such as conference rooms), as well as two restaurants, a gym and large parking lots, all surrounded by lovely well-kept gardens. Nevertheless, the first year on the Raanana campus was not easy for many of the employees. The distance from Tel Aviv and from Tel Aviv University, the lack of public transportation to the area, the difficulty of leaving the campus to drive north, the debate on the design of the campus (both aesthetic and practical aspects), the incomplete furnishing (the main furniture contractor fell severely behind in meeting his commitments) and the few visitors to the campus – all created resistance to the move at the outset. We also experienced “childhood diseases” of a new building (leaks, malfunctions in air conditioning and electricity, problems with windows, etc.).

During our first year in Raanana, many problems were solved and employee attitudes improved. However, our hopes for a solution to transportation issues were not realized and we are trying to ensure that one of the local bus lines stop at the campus gates and that a solution be found for those who wish to travel north.

## Infrastructure

Thanks to a generous donation from Mr. Stanley Chais, the large 300-seat auditorium was completed. In addition, during the year pergolas were installed in the parking lot, a botanical garden was created, the Senate Hall (“Heart of the Square”) was completed, and the Lamda bookstore was opened.



## The Library

After moving to its new and spacious location, the library received donations of important collections. Especially notable is the collection of the late Prof. Nehemia Levtzion, former OU President, on Islam in Africa; the collection of the late Dr. Ran Marom on international relations; of the late Dvora Adam on Literature and Theater; a Judaic Studies collection that belonged to the late Dr. Meir Bloch; as well as a collection of volumes pertaining to Constitutional Law, Jewish Law, Ethics and historical subjects donated by David M. Levitan who also donated the collection of his late wife, Judith Morley Levitan, which is an extraordinary collection of material on the theatre, poetry, religion and mythology.

## Promoting and Enriching Academic and Cultural Activities on the Raanana Campus

With the move to Raanana and away from the big city and from Tel Aviv University, the need arose to enrich academic, cultural and social activities on the new campus and to create a campus life that characterizes institutions of higher learning. To advance these issues, at a meeting of the President of the University with the academic faculty it was decided to establish a committee composed of members of the senior faculty and the teaching staff. The committee set the following goals:

- To initiate academic activities such as conferences, lectures, seminars, symposia and student get-togethers in disciplinary and inter-disciplinary frameworks.
- To initiate on-campus cultural and social activities.



- To propose means to create a vibrant campus atmosphere.
- To suggest ways to increase informal interaction among University personnel.
- To initiate student activities on campus.
- To propose ways to foster relations with the academic community in higher learning institutions in Israel and with the general public.
- To enhance the ties of the OU community to the University and thus to contribute to improving the campus atmosphere.
- To ensure that the initiatives and activities proposed and approved are implemented.

The Committee met with faculty and teaching staff and received suggestions that could contribute to realizing these goals. A number of activities and initiatives have already materialized: departmental lectures and seminars on disciplinary and interdisciplinary topics open to the entire OU community are becoming a part of the daily campus routine; a noon concert, held once a month, is led by Anat Sharon, of the Department of Literature, Language and the Arts, joined by musicians from outside the University; a "lecture and movie" club showing quality movies accompanied by lectures meets monthly; on the walls in the area near the Neudorfer Auditorium there are changing art exhibits (including a series of exhibits entitled "Gesture to an Alcove" organized by Dr. Alec Mishory of the Department of Literature, Language and the Arts); and art works by OU employees and students are exhibited in the restaurant. In addition, we began to design outdoor meeting spaces and corners in the campus buildings to contribute to interaction among University faculty.

Additional campus activities include academic conferences as well as events marking the opening of new courses or the publication of new books.





## The Warehouse and Distribution Center

Written study materials are the core of distance education in most OU courses. On its way from the printer to the student's home, this material passes through the Warehouse and Distribution Center.

The Open University's warehouses in Raanana are among the most modern and advanced in Israel, spread over an area of 10,500 sq. meters (compared to 4,000 sq. meters in Herzelia), including an operations area. The meticulous planning of the Center applied lessons learned from similar entities, including Open Universities in Europe. Furthermore, creative solutions were found to answer the OU's unique needs; for example, the time limitations on sending out materials before each semester; the different demands of courses with hundreds of students as opposed to courses with few students; and the fact that students can cancel or change course registrations. The investment in automation proved to be a correct and cost-saving decision that eliminated the need to recruit seasonal temporary workers. Service was significantly improved by increasing outputs, shortening the duration of the process, reducing errors, increasing the reliability and availability of information on inventory, and enhancing monitoring, control and management capabilities. Large organizations, like ELAL which is building a logistics center, visit the Center to view and learn about the process.

The study materials that come into the warehouses are transferred to the storage area and stored on shelves more than 9 meters high! The area is divided into units which are easily and systematically accessed. Items are stored and dispensed using special forklifts. A fiber optics system installed under the warehouse floor guides the forklift to the exact location of the items. The entire intake, storage, and tracking process is computerized and automated, with almost no human intervention.

Study materials are distributed mainly to students and teaching teams. The distribution process is facilitated by automatic mechanization, a conveyer system and automatic tying machines. Shipments are

prepared for each course separately based on a daily list. Towards the end of the shipment period and the beginning of the semester, the daily list includes all courses studied in that semester. Each package shipped to a student has a barcode (which includes the recipient's name and address and course number) that can be used by the student as well as the Center and the Postal Authority for tracking the shipment.

For shipments, the Warehouse and Distribution Center uses an innovative computerized procedure designed by the Operations Center and the Computer Unit in collaboration with the Postal Authority. The warehouse automatically prepares material for shipment on a daily basis. The material is already sorted when it is shipped to the Postal Authority central sorting center. At the end of the day a dispatch note is issued to the Postal Authority, listing all items sent to the Postal Authority that day. The Postal Authority confirms receipt of the file in its system via e-mail. Following receipt of the confirmation, an e-mail is sent to students informing them that the study material is on its way and including a link to the Postal Authority to enable tracking the package.

