

Public Relations

Friends of the Open University in Israel

The Friends of the Open University acts to promote the goals of the Open University by mobilizing supporters, resources and donations. More than 1,500 members and supporters participated in various activities and many joined the Friends Association this year as members and donors. A new computerized customer relations management system was installed.

Open Door (*Shaar Patuach*) Program: The annual activities of the Association are conducted through "Shaar Patuach," which offers a broad range of activities including educational programs in various knowledge fields, tours throughout the country, seminars abroad, cultural events, river boat tours abroad, etc.

"Now, and What Next?": The OUI initiated a new program aimed at attracting and exposing a wide audience from the Sharon area to the OUI Friends Association. The program included a series of discussions on current affairs as well as on political and social issues. More than 700 people took part in this series.

"Opening the Door to the Future" Project: This year as well, through this project, the University recruited donations earmarked for scholarships for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who have difficulty financing their studies, as well as for soldiers studying at the University during and after their compulsory military service.

"Adopt a Student": This year, several companies joined the project through which they adopt OUI students based on geographic and financial criteria.

Friends of the Open University Abroad

United States: The American Friends of the Open University of Israel, headed by Mrs. Ingeborg Rennert, was very active this year. The Association elected a new Council that includes many representatives of the young generation of Jewish leadership in New York. In addition, ties with the large Jewish federations in the US were significantly strengthened this year. The American Friends' activities focus on conducting numerous social events aimed at recruiting new members and increasing donations. Generous donations were collected at an impressive event organized by the Association that took place at the Jewish Heritage Museum in New York.

Germany: An Open University Friends Association was established in Germany this year, and it has already begun to function and raise donations. Its members include key individuals from the political and intellectual sphere, most of them from Berlin.

Canada: Legal limitations create obstacles to establishing an OUI Friends Association in Canada. We are currently acting to receive federal government approval of the OUI as a non-profit organization so that donations to the OUI will be recognized for tax purposes in Canada. Despite this situation, donations from Canada increased this year.

Donations

Donations from private bodies continued to grow this year. Donations began to come from Brazil, Germany and Switzerland. Most donations were directed to increasing OUI scholarship funds to finance all types of scholarships, mainly scholarships for students with financial difficulties, the ultra-orthodox and Arabic-speaking students. This year we also received large and impressive donations for the Rennert Study Center in Ramat Aviv, for Project Russia and for creating student scholarship funds.

Marketing

This year the University invested in marketing activities in order to maintain and expand the number of students. In collaboration with the IDF Education Unit, we expanded marketing efforts among soldiers. We are producing a new promotional film in Hebrew with information about the OUI mainly targeted at prospective students. Promotional material directed at specific population groups was also produced for soldiers, speakers of Arabic and the ultra-orthodox sector. Public relations and informational material about the OUI was also prepared in German and Portuguese to support fund raising activities in Germany and Brazil.



*The Gala of the American Friends of the Open University of Israel, "The Future is Open."
Left to right: Gershon Ben-Shakhar, Elie Wiesel, Inge Rennert, Simha Stern, Marion Wiesel.*

Publicity

Ongoing advertising about registration for OUI academic studies appeared in varied media channels: printed media, Internet, radio, billboards, etc. In the past year, we increased the share of electronic media channels in the OUI advertising budget at the expense of print media. Targeted advertising specifically addressed the ultra-orthodox and Arabic-speaking sectors, and advertising activities were expanded in the latter sector. A survey indicated favorable recognition of the slogan "The Open University – always with you."

Lamda – The OUI Bookstore

Lamda, the OUI bookstore, won the tender of the Public Libraries Training Center for the second consecutive year, and will be able to sell OUI books to more than 200 public libraries in Israel. A computerized Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was installed this year.

The Lamda website displays ongoing updates about new books and enables users to ask that updates on books in their area of interest be sent directly to their email. The site offers a variety of advanced and convenient search capabilities for individuals interested in OUI books, including searches by title, course and topic. Users can order books through the website and modifications were introduced to make purchasing simpler.

Content Sharing Through Rich Site Summary

Rich Site Summary (RSS) technology, the most advanced content sharing technology in the world, was used to build a system enabling computer users to receive updates from the OUI website without surfing the site. Users connected to the system receive all messages displayed on the OUI website in a window on their computer screen.

Guests

Visits of heads of universities from abroad, mainly from Asia and Africa, have become a tradition at the Open University. High-ranking personalities from universities throughout the world visit us to learn about the integration of technology in teaching and university management, and to become acquainted with the OUI.

Relations with Russian Universities

We hosted a delegation from the Moscow City University of Psychology and Education (MCUPE) and signed a declaration of intent for collaboration between the two universities. OUI senior management visited Russia and met with our students at the Sholokhov Moscow State Open Pedagogical University, with which we have collaborated over the past five years.