

# Research

Research is one of the three areas which define the Open University, along with course development and teaching. Faculty members engage in a variety of research in many disciplines, including the Social Sciences, Humanities, Natural and Life Sciences, Exact Sciences, and Engineering.

The Dean of Research serves as the head of the Research Authority (RA) and the various institutes, oversees research and research ethics, and also serves as chair of the OPMop OUI Technology Transfer Board of Directors. Prof. Anat Barnea completed her term as dean of research in April 2013, and has been succeeded by Prof. Miri Souroujon.

## The Research Authority

The Authority encourages research among faculty members by helping identify external sources of funding. It promotes OUI research with direct support from an internal fund providing scholarships and grants for research students, and assistance with the funding of travel to present research findings at scientific conferences. The RA offers information about the latest funding sources, and is responsible for the financial and administrative monitoring of research proposals which have received funding. The Authority also sponsors workshops to assist applicants in submitting grant proposals to external sources. The RA provides physical resources such as lab facilities and computers, recruits research students and assistants, and encourages collaboration between OUI researchers and colleagues in other academic institutions. Annual events showcase the latest OUI research.

The Research Authority's Steering Committee is comprised of four senior faculty members from different disciplines, appointed by the OUI president. The Steering Committee, chaired by the Dean of Research, is responsible for determining criteria for the evaluation of applications to the internal fund, as well as the allocation of funds. The Research Authority administration also handles administrative operations.

## New at the Research Authority

- The online system for submitting applications for internal research grants has been upgraded with the help of the computer unit. The format is similar to systems in place at large external funds, facilitating the submission process and enabling the Steering Committee to monitor adherence to RA policies.
- The computer unit provides assistance in issuing reports, and in calculating expenditures for research from external funds, in order to streamline the financial administration of those funds within the Authority.
- A binding research code of ethics for all OUI researchers was formulated in the past year and an institutional committee and disciplinary sub-committees were created according to procedure guidelines.
- For the first time, a report was delivered to the CHE detailing all research scholarships awarded during the years 2007-2012. The report specified scholarships received from competitive Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) funds and those originating from other research funds.
- An external funding application workshop was conducted with the participation of an outside advisor specializing in the submission of proposals to EU research foundations. Researchers have the option of seeking professional guidance prior to submitting proposals to such foundations.
- A newly-designated OUI research website has now been linked to the main OUI website.
- As of May 2013, Dr. Daphna Idelson replaced Dr. Milly Perry as CEO of OpMop Ltd., the OUI R&D technology transfer subsidiary.

## Research Centers

A research center serves as a scientific, institutional and practical framework for research, which allows interdisciplinary and reciprocal cooperation. The centers help researchers generate new scientific knowledge, participate in the mutual exchange of ideas, and foster cooperation with other researchers and experts in Israel and abroad. Each center is run by a steering committee, headed by a director. The steering committee is composed of senior faculty members from various academic departments, as well as teaching staff and researchers from outside the OUI. The Open University has three research centers:

## **Research Institute for Policy, Political Economy and Society, headed by Prof. Aviad Bar-Haim**

The Research Institute for Policy, Political Economy and Society is an interdisciplinary center. Its goal is to promote the study of issues – theoretical, empirical and applied – associated with the interrelationships between policy-making and implementation, and social, political and economic processes and mechanisms. The Institute was established in 2011 and today numbers 21 researchers.

The Institute supports comparative research and studies that explore international and global dimensions of policy-making and implementation, both in Israel and abroad. In order to foster a vibrant research environment for scholars from different disciplines, the Institute organizes symposia and conferences, publishes a series of working papers and provides research assistance to its members. On the most recent OUI Research Day, studies by eight researchers associated with the Institute were presented via mini-lectures to OUI employees and the general public. In the past year, the Institute submitted three applications for research funding, one of which (on corporate responsibility) has been approved. The other two are currently under evaluation.

The following Institute-sponsored events took place during the past year:

- A workshop for scholars from Israel and Cyprus at Beit Daniel
- A workshop analyzing policy scenarios at Beit Ayala
- "Political Culture: The Case of Business-Government Relations" at the OUI Ra'anana campus
- A workshop for researchers of the summer 2011 social protest, at Beit Daniel
- Two simulation seminars on the relationship between army and society, at the OUI campus (in collaboration with the Israel Sociological Society)
- Second annual conference: "Challenges and Risks in Policy-Making, and its Implementation"

## **The Research Center for Innovation in Learning Technologies, headed by Dr. Nitza Geri**

This research center investigates the integration of innovative learning technologies into teaching and learning processes. The Center encourages studies by faculty members aimed at enhancing the understanding of teaching and learning processes in a technological environment and integrating such technologies into instruction in general and OUI courses in particular.

The Research Center, founded in 2010, has now replaced the Chais Center for the Integration of Technology in Education, which was active since 2004. It currently numbers 50 faculty members from different OUI departments, plus a part-time research fellow. The Center operates in close collaboration with The *Shoham* Center for Technology in Distance Education and focuses on forging close ties among members of the Israeli research community. To this end, the Center organizes a variety of ongoing academic activities, including research seminars, symposia, and conferences.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Center organized two seminars for the general public: "Is the World a Game? A Multi-Disciplinary Look at the World of Digital Games" and "Law and Order: Ethics and Morality in a Technological Society." Two special conferences were also held to reinforce the link between academic and applied knowledge: "Knowledge Management," held at the OUI in cooperation with the Israeli Knowledge Management Forum, and "Technology, Pedagogy and Policy: Is Systemic Innovation Possible? The Israeli National Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Program – Adapting the Education System to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." The latter was attended by prominent representatives from the academic world and the Ministry of Education, including Prof. Miriam Ben-Peretz, recipient of the Israel Prize for Research in Education. Sessions addressed such issues as the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the potential of ICT programs to bring about systemic changes, creating synergy among stakeholders, and evaluating ICT programs.

## **Chais Conference 2013**

The annual Chais Conference, initiated by the Center for Innovation in Learning Technologies, was the eighth in a series of annual research conferences. The conference provides a forum for prominent researchers and development professionals from the field of innovative learning technologies in Israel, and offers a platform to present their studies and advancements



Posters from Research Day/Scientists' Night

in the field. The event contributes to shaping the Israeli learning technology research community and establishing the OUI as a leader in implementing the latest technologies.

The 700 participants attending the two-day event represented most of the country's academic institutions, as well as organizations and corporations. Forty papers and 32 posters were presented, and guest lecturers included Prof. Douglas Clark of Vanderbilt University, and Prof. Shaaron Ainsworth of Nottingham University. Authors of selected articles were invited to submit elaborated versions for evaluation and publication in a special edition of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects*.

### **The Center for the Study of Relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims, headed by Prof. Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman**

This institute numbers over forty members, most affiliated with the OUI, while others represent a variety of other academic institutions. The Center aims to research the relationships, during different historical periods, between the three major monotheistic religions. It also seeks to advance the understanding and interaction of the three religions, and to present research findings to the general public. This approach attracts many scholars, some of whom have joined the research community, helping advance the activities of the Institute.

#### **Research Groups Sponsored by the Center**

- A group examining Judeo-Christian relations in the early centuries of the Christian era.
- A group investigating the topic of setting boundaries – defining identity in a multi-faith and multicultural environment.

#### **Divan Workshops – Presenting and Discussing Research, and Meeting with Veteran Researchers**

- "Israel, Ethiopia and Ethiopian Jewry in the Time of Haile Selassie"
- "Arab Women in the Israeli Workforce"
- "Bibliography and Limits of Religion: 17<sup>th</sup> Century Jewish and Christian Books"
- "Christianity and Christians in the Jewish State"
- "Al-Khalwatiyya: Sufism in Israel"



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## International Conferences

- "Intercultural Exchanges between Jews, Christians and Muslims," the 2nd Annual Conference of the JCM Center
- "Legal Systems and Their Approach to Religious Minorities"

## Sessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies

In July 2013 the Center organized and sponsored two sessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies:

- "Reciprocal Relations between Talmudic and Christian Biblical Sources"
- "Setting Boundaries: Jewish and Israeli Identity in a Multicultural Environment"

Selected studies conducted with the support of the Center are listed below:

- **Dr. Moshe Naor, Dr. Avigail Jacobson, and Dr. Tami Razi**, "Jews from Moslem Countries and Jewish-Arab Relations in Mandatory Palestine"
- **Dr. Orit Ramon**, "On Turks, Pagans, Jews and Christians – Kristof Harant's Travel Log from Prague to Jerusalem (1598)"
- **Dr. Ephraim Shoham-Steiner**, "Criminal Cooperation between Jews and Christians in Medieval Germany"

## I-Core: Israeli Centers of Research Excellence

During the past year, the OUI joined the I-Core Israeli Centers of Research Excellence program. The program was introduced by the PBC (Planning and Budgeting Committee) and the government as part of a reform in higher education to be implemented over a period of several years, with the goal of strengthening Israel's research infrastructure and broadening its appeal to local and international researchers. The Center aims to promote innovative research, establish cooperative ventures in Israel and abroad, and help integrate and ensure a future generation of outstanding and leading researchers.

Twelve new centers have been approved this year, in addition to four that were approved in 2011 after a competitive and rigorous process, including evaluation by international judging committees. **The Center for the Study of Religious Conversion and Interfaith Relations** is a joint project of five Israeli universities: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Bar-Ilan University, the Open University, and the University of Haifa. Prof. Ora Limor, a renowned researcher of interfaith relations, is an active partner in directing the new center on behalf of the OUI.

The center, which will be located at Ben Gurion University, focuses its research on religious conversion from the Middle Ages and the early days of modernity, within the complex framework of relations between the three monotheistic faiths, which have existed for so long and in such close proximity to one another. The center will propose an analytical and comparative platform to investigate the religious, social, political, and legal roles of the disparate communities, and to examine the handling of issues of identity, boundaries, the understanding of "the other," majority and minority relations, and the intercultural exchange of knowledge.

One primary and immediate goal of the center is to establish a comprehensive computerized database to record known cases of conversion between the three faiths, to include all relevant circumstances, motivations, results and other information obtained from historical sources. The database will provide a basis for in-depth research into religious conversion and interfaith relations in broad geographical regions over different historical periods.

## **Research Code of Ethics**

The Open University strives to ensure that research conducted on its behalf abides by Israeli law regarding the ethical pursuit of research, as well as the ethical criteria of the University itself.

The Institutional Ethics Committee is composed of five senior academic faculty members appointed by the OUI President, each representing a different discipline. The role of the Committee is to ensure that studies conducted by OUI researchers comply with OUI research ethics guidelines. The Committee reviews research proposals from an ethical perspective, with strict adherence to the protection of the status and privacy of research subjects where applicable, as well as the approval of questionnaires and surveys, and the utilization of data. It is also responsible for preventing conflict of interest and other potential problems. In certain areas, additional ethics sub-committees operate in conjunction with the main Ethics Committee to review applications submitted by researchers, students and research students in relevant areas.

## **Research Authority Events**

### **Science for the People**

The Science for the People project was instituted by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Space to introduce the public to scientific advancements via a series of lectures in coffeehouses and pubs around Israel. Informal conversations took place with professional scientists and researchers over cups of coffee and glasses of beer and wine. The 2012-2013 event was held on International Research Day, to coincide with the 134<sup>th</sup> birthday of Albert Einstein. The Open University offered 21 lectures in 12 different locations, with 1,500 participants enjoying the informal, yet informative atmosphere.

### **Annual Research Day / Scientists' Night**

Research Day at the OUI is an annual event devoted to showcasing research by senior faculty and teaching staff. As in previous years, this year's happening took place in conjunction with Scientists' Night, which has been held in Israel and Europe since 2007, with funding by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the European Union. The central theme of this year's Scientists' Night was "the Amazing Universe". The Ra'anana campus welcomed the general public to this event, alongside students, fellow researchers, university employees and their families, and youth from surrounding schools. All enjoyed a variety of activities, including a debate between researchers representing different fields. Laboratory demonstrations took place in the Natural Sciences, Life Sciences, and Psychology departments. Visitors attended lectures on outer space, visited an inflatable planetarium, peered through a telescope, participated in a quiz, viewed a film, and more. Eye-catching posters were on display throughout the campus, creatively presenting the latest research by OUI faculty members. The artistic and inventive placards, designed and produced by the graphic designers of the OUI Publishing House, were themed "Research from A to Z."

## Individual Research Grants Awarded by External Funds

In the past year, 22 grants were awarded for external research grants.

### Grants from the Israel Science Foundation

- **Dr. Vadim Grinshtein**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, (with Prof. Felix Abramowitz, Tel Aviv University) for research on "Model Selection in Regression for High-dimensional data and Related Issues"
- **Dr. Baruch Ziv**, Dept. of Natural Sciences (with Prof. Hadas Saroni, Tel Aviv University) for research on "Synoptic-Climatic Study of Evolution Scenarios of Drought Events Over the Levant"
- **Dr. Ido Levitan**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, for research on "A construal level analysis of judgments, decisions, and actions within intergroup versus intragroup contexts"
- **Dr. Mati Meyer**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts, for research on "Resisting Bodies: Female Corporeality in the Byzantine Illuminated Book, 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries"
- **Dr. Adi Amit**, Dept. of Management and Economics, for research on "A Group's Perception of Representative Negotiations: The Importance of Uncertainty Reduction"
- **Dr. Elad Paran**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, (with Dan Haran, Tel Aviv University) for research on "Patching of Galois groups and Debes-Deschamps conjecture"
- **Prof. Zeev Rosenhek**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, for research on "Diagnosing and Explaining the Global Financial Crisis: Central Banks, Epistemic Authority and Institutional Change"
- **Dr. Iris Shagrir**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, for research on "Jerusalem and the Crusades: New Trends in the Study of the Crusading Movement and the Medieval Levant"
- **Dr. Menachem Katz**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, for research on "Talmud Yerushalmi Tractate Qiddushin: Critical Commentary"
- **Dr. Chaim Saadon**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, for research on "North African Jewry during World War II"

### Grants from other external funds

- **Prof. Aviad Bar-Haim**, Dept. of Management and Economics, and **Dr. Orr Karassin**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, received a grant from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for research on "Corporate Social Responsibility in the Israeli Industrial Sector."
- **Dr. Anat Herbst**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, received a grant from the National Insurance Institute for research on "Welfare to Work Programs and their Impact on Mothers from Various Ethnic-National Groups."
- **Dr. Avner Caspi**, and **Dr. Ido Levitan**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, received a grant from the Gandyr Foundation for research on "The Motivational Basis of Political (non-)participation of Israeli Youth."
- **Prof. David Lorenz**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, received a research grant from the Marvell Technology Group Ltd. for research on "DSL for Packet Switching Control."
- **Prof. Yoram Eshet** and **Dr. Ina Blau**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, received a grant from the Ministry of Education for research on "Digital Academic Dishonesty: Perceptions and Coping Strategies of Israeli Teachers, Parents, and Students."
- **Dr. Noam Shental**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, (with researchers from the Dead Sea and Arava Science Center) received a grant from the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources for research on "Microorganisms with a Potential for Energy Production in Extreme Habitats in The Dead Sea Area."
- **Dr. Orit Ramon**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, **Dr. Varda Wasserman**, Dept. of Management and Economics, and **Prof. Sonia Roccas**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, received a research grant from the Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations for research on "Guiding Narratives on Christianity and Christian Sites."
- **Prof. Amir Horowitz**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, (with researchers from the University of Pittsburgh and Rutgers University) received a grant from the John Templeton Foundation for research in "Intellectual Humility and Cultural Diversity in Philosophy."

- **Dr. Yair Ben Haim**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, received a grant from the National Institute of Psychobiology in Israel, for research on "Does the Allosteric Binding Site Play a Pivotal Role in Governing the Voltage Sensitivity of the m2 Muscarine Receptor?"

### Other grants

- **Dr. Tzahi Weiss**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts, received an Alon grant for distinguished young scientists.
- **Mr. Igor Smolyar** received a scholarship from the Ministry of Science in the field of cyber defense and advanced computing for study towards a master's degree, under the guidance of Prof. David Lorenz of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science.

Two of the studies awarded grants from external funds are briefly described below.

- **Prof. Zeev Rosenhek**: "Diagnosing and Explaining the Global Financial Crisis: Central Banks, Epistemic Authority and Institutional Change"

This research seeks to examine from a comparative perspective the diagnoses and causal accounts of the global financial crisis formulated and voiced by the four most important central banks in the world – the Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank, the Bank of England, and the Bank of Japan, mapping and analyzing changes over time in the ways in which these central banks made sense of the crisis by defining its character and explaining its causes in its different phases. The main topics to be addressed in the research are the content and the structure of the accounts offered by the central banks, particularly the extent to which they diagnosed and explained the crisis in ways that challenge the dominant policy paradigm and its conceptual assumptions, or rather in ways that serve to ratify them. The research will explore also the reciprocal links between the accounts of the events, the concrete steps taken by the central banks along the crisis and their proposals for broad policy and institutional changes. The analysis will be based on a qualitative examination of the main arguments, themes and notions appearing in reports issued by the central banks and in public statements addressing the crisis made by their senior officials between 2007 and 2012.

- **Dr. Adi Amit**: "A Group's Perception of Representative Negotiations: The Importance of Uncertainty Reduction"

Intergroup conflicts among large groups such as organizations and unions are typically resolved through representative negotiations. Representative negotiation is a distinct form of negotiation, in which the interplay between the representative and the constituency adds complexity. The group both (a) influences the way the representative conducts the negotiation and (b) judges the agreement formulated by the representative. The proposed research focuses on the latter, investigating the role of the motivation to reduce uncertainty as a primary restraint on the groups' willingness to ratify and comply with agreements formulated by their own representatives. People seek certainty as a means of establishing a meaningful existence. Research on group processes indicates that the higher the motivation to reduce uncertainty, the more group members entrench in the group positions and the less tolerant they are to deviation from group norms. In representative negotiations, I hypothesize that uncertainty will increase constituents' entrenchment in the group positions as reflected in (too) high expectations regarding the outcome of the negotiation and a reduced willingness to accept compromises, leading to lower ratification of the agreement. I will focus on three sources of uncertainty: (a) the representative (e.g., expertise); (b) the group (e.g., cohesiveness); and (c) the content of the negotiation (e.g., riskiness).

### Institutional Research Grants from External Funds

- **Prof. Yoram Eshet, Dr. Avner Caspi, Dr. Gal Ben-Yehuda, and Dr. Chana Shalev**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, will administer a grant from Yad HaNadiv for the development of multi-platform educational content in reading instruction.
- **Dr. Yoram Kalman**, Dept. of Management and Economics, and **Prof. Yoav Yair**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, will administer a grant from the European Union for research on "Higher Education Online: MOOCs the European Way."

## Research Grants and Scholarships from the Internal Fund

The Open University places funds at the disposal of researchers to leverage their research projects so they can be submitted to external funds. During the 2012-2013 academic year, 118 applications were submitted to the RA for funding from the internal fund, of which the Steering Committee approved 108 (91.5%).

## Appointments and Promotions

- **Prof. Yagil Levy**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was promoted to the rank of Full Professor.
- **Prof. Motti Regev**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was promoted to the rank of Full Professor.
- **Dr. Zeev Rosenhek**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.
- **Prof. Elad Paran**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, joined the Senior Faculty with the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Yishai Landa**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, joined the Senior Faculty with the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Avner Caspi**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Yael Munk**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts, was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Adiya Mendelson-Maoz**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts, was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Inbal Tovi-Arad**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Tal Hassner**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, was promoted to the rank of Senior Lecturer.
- **Dr. Gal Ben Yehuda**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, was promoted to the rank of Lecturer.
- **Dr. Nurit Melnik**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts, was promoted to the rank of Lecturer.
- **Dr. Orr Karassin**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was promoted to the rank of Lecturer.

## New Senior Faculty Members

- **Dr. Iris Suleimani** joined the Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies.
- **Dr. Eran Fischer** joined the Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication.
- **Dr. Einat Chezkani-Kovo** joined the Dept. of Natural Sciences.

## Collaborative Agreements

The Open University does not possess infrastructure for experimental research, therefore collaboration with outside academic institutions is imperative in order to enable OUI faculty members to conduct research. Several years ago, the OUI and Tel Aviv University signed a joint agreement allowing OUI faculty members from various scientific and experimental fields to conduct ongoing research using the infrastructure available at Tel Aviv University. In addition, a contract with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was extended, which enables Dr. Yair Ben Chaim, of the OUI Dept. of Natural Sciences, to conduct research in the Department of Neurobiology at the Institute of Life Sciences of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

## Honors and Awards

- **Prof. Yagil Levy**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was awarded the Annual Shapiro Award for Best Book in Israel Studies, for *Israel's Death Hierarchy: Casualty Aversion in a Militarized Democracy*.
- **Alon Cohen, CPA** and **Yehuda Orbach, CPA**, were awarded a prize from the scholarship fund of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Israel, for the book *Information Technology Auditing in C.P.A's (Isr.) Auditing*, (The Open University of Israel, 2012).