



*'Open Books': Giving Free On-Line Public
Access to Academic Digital Books and
Accompanying Study Materials*

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The Open University of Israel (OUI)

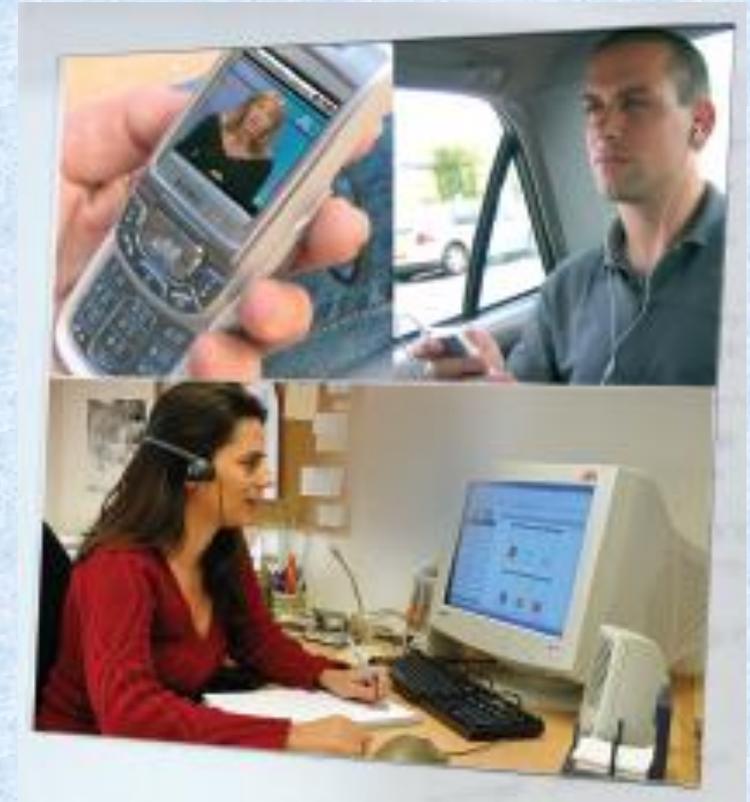
Facts and Figures

- Established 1974, based on the OU-UK model
- Open admission, Distance learning (ODL)
- 45,000 Registered students in Israel & abroad (largest)
- ~ 600 Courses, Undergraduate and Masters (no PhD)
- 2,500 Graduates each year (2007)

- Small faculty (70),
- Heavy reliance on Educational Technology (Hebrew based LMS)
- Largest academic publisher is Israel (prints 1 M copies annually)

OUI students in the 21st century

- Relatively mature (average age 29.5), mobile, employed or wish to enter the work market as soon as possible
- Posses high computer literacy, familiar with on-line technologies (any keyboard size!)
- Have broadband internet access from home and/or workplace (90%) and mobile phone access (100%)
- Expect services from the university 24/7 – both administrative and academic



“... I want to make an efficient use of my time and study and interact from anywhere, anytime..”

Context: the global OER movement

- The Open Educational Resources (OER) movement has become a global force, recognized by the ICDE and UNESCO and defined as “*Web-based materials offered freely and openly for use and reuse in teaching, learning and research including any tool, material or technique used to support access to knowledge*”. (D'antoni, 2007)
- MIT's Open Course-Ware initiative (<http://ocw.mit.edu>) in 2002 marked a major shift in the paradigm of restricted access to academic materials. By 2008, it had 1600 courses open for free use.
- Other major endeavors embracing the Open Courseware approach readily share course contents with outside users.
 - Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative (OLI - <http://www.cmu.edu/oli>)
 - Rice University's Connexions project (<http://cnx.org/>)
 - UK Open University's OpenLearn project (<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk>).

The OUI in the global OCW movement

- In May 2008 the OUI joined to Open Course Ware (OCW) movement and opened its on-line study materials for free viewing and usage to the general public.
- In addition, the OUI is putting 50 of its text-books as e-books on-line, for free use. **This is a unique feature never tried by any university.**
- The e-books are accompanied by audio-versions in MP3 format (free for download or as streaming media) and by video lectures by experts.
- The e-book is personalized, so that a user can create his/her own copy, by putting comments, notes and marking important texts. Each time they return to the book, they get their “own”



“Digital, accessible, portable, personal version of the course text-book”

Tools: search, mark-up, highlight, post, share, bookmark, navigate

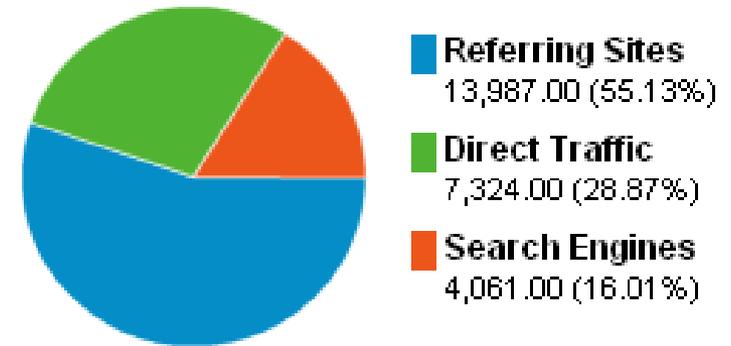
The screenshot shows the Open University of Israel's digital library interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'חדש' (New), 'מחפשים' (Searching), 'אודות' (About), 'קורסים' (Courses), 'ספרים' (Books), 'המנות ידעון' (Information), 'מי אבחנו' (Who analyzed), 'כתוב לנו' (Write to us), and 'עזרה' (Help). The main content area features a book cover for 'בטהובן - מורד ורומנטיקן' (Beethoven - Rebel and Romantic) by אריה ארנון, with a portrait of Beethoven. The page includes a search bar, a table of contents, and a sidebar with 'הרשמה' (Registration) and 'אחרים דומים בעולם' (Others in the world). The bottom of the page shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons.

My Own Digital Copy

OER inventory and user data (1.6-30.9.08)

- Registered Users – 4784
- Different visitors – 35,163
- Average visits per day – 263
- Total unique views – 147,558

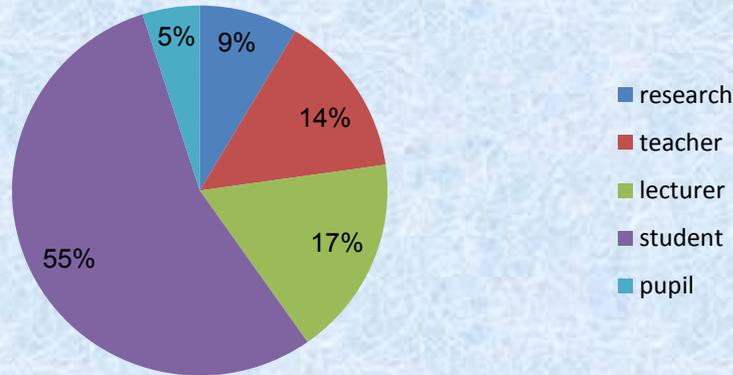
| Page Views | Academic Department |
|------------|------------------------------|
| 2939 | Economy and Management |
| 2778 | Education and Psychology |
| 2548 | Mathematics |
| 2425 | Computer Science |
| 2340 | History and Philosophy |
| 1279 | Literature and Art |
| 1197 | Sociology and Communications |
| 1157 | Natural and Life Sciences |



Total OCW courses – 100 (of 500)
OERs - 4710
E-books – 20 courses (50 volumes)
Audio books – in 10 courses

Registered User statistics

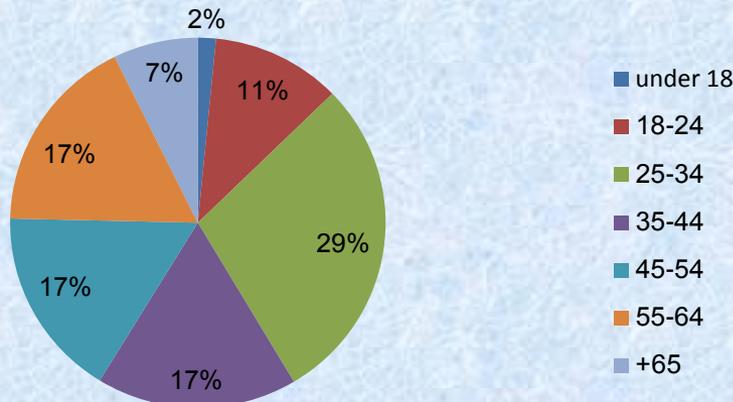
User distribution by academic status



•Open University students and faculty are not included, the data refers to external users only.

•The vast majority (55%) of users are **students from the other universities in Israel**, who regularly utilize our books (loan or buy).

User distribution by Age



•Lecturers / Teachers (combined) are 1/3 of the users

•Adult learners (35-65 years) constitute half of our users, an **educated audience seeking high-quality materials** studying and out of intellectual curiosity

Inter-university processes initiated by the OCW project

- Opening the existing learning materials forced updates, quality control, clearing copyright issues and careful monitoring of the academic level
- Greater involvement of senior faculty and the university's management in the quality-control of on-line materials
- The sales of print books of the titles that were offered free on-line are being closely monitored (no intention of financial suicide!)
- Usage patterns and traffic are being monitored for correlations with numbers of new students in specific courses whose books are offered free

A major issue: IPR

- A large part of the project's budget is dedicated to accommodate the costs of IPR requirements
- Even the availability of resources proved sometimes to be insufficient for overcoming the resistance of copyright holders to digitize and publish certain items which they own.
- This forced replacement or deletion of the object (picture, text) from the e-book version, or completely abandoning the conversion of that book.
- We protect our own IPR by not allowing download or print of the total book. The books are under Creative Commons license.
- The audio books are free for download.

Budget, Sustainability, Future

- The project was initiated based on a 750 K \$ endowment, to be used by 2009. Matching funding by OUI was ~150 K\$.
- The OUI is presently debating how to sustain the project. Some of the options are (Downs, 2007):
 - Incorporation of the costs into the running budget of the university
 - Donation model (Wikipedia) – ask all users to donate small sums
 - Conversion model – start charging for services given for free
 - Commercial partnerships / Google Books partner program
- Book sales: if losses are significant, it may force us to abandon the “open and free” model. [We hope to show the opposite]
- Portability: electronic-paper and thin, loadable mobile platforms
- New development model for OUI courses: directly to web publishing
- Audio/E-books for students – print copy only optional? [saves trees...]

Summary

- A bold and risky endeavor which is in line with the Open University's ideology of openness and broad outreach
- *Our vision is to enable people with a thirst for knowledge to access OUI books and learning materials from anywhere in the world.*

*'Open Books': Giving Free On-Line Public Access
to Academic Digital Books and Accompanying
Study Materials*



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PE'ER

Opening the Treasures of the Mind
Open Access to Textbooks and Study Materials

<http://ocw.openu.ac.il>