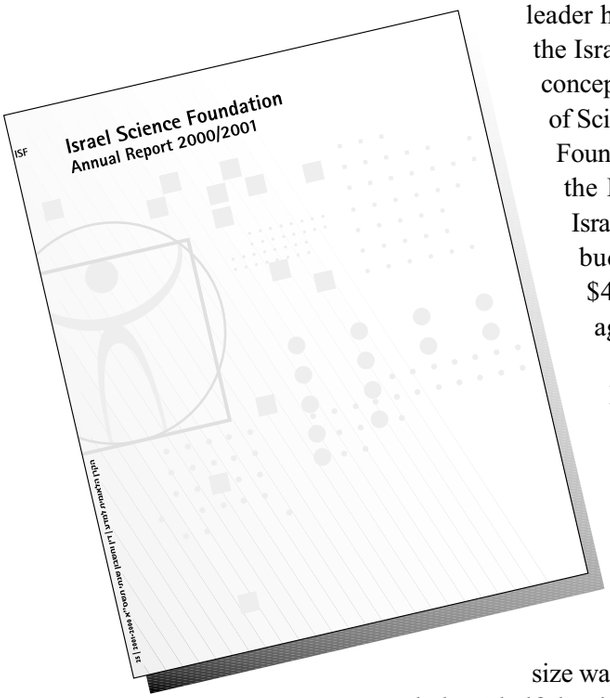
PUBLICATIONS CORNER

Up, Up and Away

Israeli science is taking off. Long responsible for a disproportionate 1% or so of all the world's scientific journal publications, its output jumped almost 30% between 1995 and 1997 alone. The latest figures show Israel now leading the world in the number of scientific papers published relative to its GNP, a measure of a country's overall resources and thus its ability to pay for research. Israel also swept the European Union's Fifth Framework competition, generating about $47 million in contracts for its $34 million annual contribution (see *The FORUM*, Winter 1999/2000). It did particularly well in Physics, Mathematics and Engineering. In Informatics, Israel's highly respected Computer Sciences community broke all records, garnering 2.4% of the entire program's funds, over twice Israel's financial contribution.

These and other statistics reveal much about the growth of Israel's scientific human resources, infrastructure, excellence, innovation-based economy and – as a prerequisite – research funding. Since 80% of all Israeli research, and almost all basic scientific research, takes place in academia, a major factor in Israel's emergence as a scientific quality leader has been the explosive growth in the funding of the Israel Science Foundation (ISF). Thanks to a 1997 conceptual revolution catalyzed by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Charles H. Revson Foundation (USA), and massive financial inputs from the Planning and Grants Committee (PBC) of the Israel Council for Higher Education, the ISF's annual budget has grown from $3.1 million in 1987 to $42.1 million in 2001. It is expected to double again over the next five years.



How the ISF has turned these impressive resources into impressive science has been faithfully chronicled over the years in the ISF's informative Annual Report. Just released, this year's edition is no exception. About 840 regular grant proposals were received and about 300 (35%) were funded, at a cost of about $12 million per year. The average grant size was about $53,000 per year in the Natural Sciences, and about half that in the Humanities. Since many Natural Science projects now last four years and include supplemental equipment grants, total life-of-project commitments of $250,000 or more are not uncommon – another indicator of the maturation of Israeli world-class science.

Then there are all the new ISF special programs. ISF multi-institutional and multidisciplinary Centers of Excellence grants can provide over $1 million per project, spread over 3-4 years, to boost international competitiveness in areas of special strength. New faculty and new laboratory grants help new fields get started, and so on. The grantee listings provide a sweeping view of Israel's current research interests, and the science articles and investigator profiles in the English edition (only) provide interesting insight and a behind-the-scenes human perspective. There are also touching tributes to Hedva Baram, who recently retired after 20 years as the program's Chief Administrative Officer. Complimentary copies of the Report, in English or Hebrew, are available directly from the ISF **(www.isf.org.il)**.

The Forum

is published quarterly by the American Foundation for Basic Research in Israel, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered in the State of New York (USA).

The American Foundation for Basic Research in Israel (AFBRI) supports the development of science in Israel and facilitates the participation of the international donor community in this endeavor.

The Foundation can be reached at:
The American Foundation for Basic Research in Israel (AFBRI)
c/o PDA,
25 W. 45th St.,
New York,
NY 10136
Phone:
(212) 840-1166
Fax:
(212) 840-1514

Editorial Board:
Prof. J. Jortner
Prof. A. Keynan
Dr. M. Zadok

Editor:
Dr. I.M. Asher

Printing:
Unigraph