

PREFACE

On April 5, 1979, the Department of Geography at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev held a symposium under the auspices of the Israeli Geographical Society. The purpose of the meeting was to examine recent and future trends in geographic research in Israel, the United States and Europe and to strengthen the professional contacts between the five geography departments in Israel. The symposium was attended by geographers from the Ben-Gurion University, the Hebrew University, Haifa University, Bar Ilan University, Tel-Aviv University and, as a guest of honour, the editor of the Professional Geographer, Prof. Edgar C. Conkling from New York State University at Buffalo.

The first session of the symposium was devoted to several presentations followed by a question-and-answer period led by a panel of participants from three universities.

The second session was an around-the-table type of discussion moderated by a participant from Haifa University. The discussion basically was devoted to three problems: the relevance of geography to pressing social and planning needs of current society, the trends in quantitative geography, and the future of regional

geography. The content of this issue of the Occasional Papers Series (OPS) follows the themes and the structure of the two symposium sessions.

We hope that this first OP departmental issue will encourage more inter-departmental professional meetings and discussions, and will stimulate more theoretical and applied geographical analyses in Israel.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the participants in the symposium and hope they share our enthusiasm for this type of scholarly interaction. Many thanks must go to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Ben-Gurion University for providing financial assistance. We would also like to thank Mrs. Penina Bakimer and Mr. Dov Gelbert for their technical assistance.