

**Institution-Wide Information Strategies  
(IWIS)  
A CNI Initiative**



**Case Study: The California State University  
Unified Information Access System**

The libraries of the California State University produced in 1994 a comprehensive strategic plan designed to prepare for the educational and information environments anticipated for the 21st Century. That plan, titled *Transforming CSU Libraries for the 21st Century*, identified as its first and foremost strategy a system of linking and integrating for easy access the full range of information resources available in all the CSU and other libraries as well as resources of the Internet. CSU libraries were facing frozen or declining budgets combined with prodigious increases in the rate of publication and in access methods to the expanding information cosmos. A new and innovative use of technology was seen as necessary to leverage the size of the CSU and its existing information resources in order to continue to meet the information needs of students and faculty.

The Unified Information Access System (UIAS) initiative that arose from this strategic planning responds to a vision for the 21st Century that assumes that CSU students and faculty will interact with each other and with information using pervasive technology that will enable every student and every faculty member to access, retrieve, display, and manipulate a vast array of recorded knowledge and information. The barriers of space -- physical location of student, faculty member, or information -- are expected to disappear, as well as the barrier of time.

In this vision, the 21st Century CSU campus library will be the hub of a full-service information and instruction network designed to facilitate the delivery and use of recorded knowledge and information. This transformation is expected to change teaching, styles of learning, and modes of scholarly communication in response to a rapidly changing educational environment and an increasingly diverse student population. Using the services offered by the CSU libraries, every student will be able to take full advantage of the electronic information age without regard to background or economic status.

The UIAS project is presented as a case study of an information strategy encompassing a system of twenty-two campuses. The project is a work in progress; initial implementation is scheduled for fall 1998. The experience of the

CSU in advancing this project, although incomplete, can be instructive for institutions seeking to pursue large-scale and complex information initiatives.