

Unified Information Access System (UIAS)

California State University

Project Description:

The Unified Information Access System is defined as a single, easy to use, integrated and coherent computer-based user interface which provides direct online access to or delivery of:

print resources described in CSU Libraries' Online Public Access Catalogs and described in catalogs of libraries beyond CSU;

print resources described in other bibliographic/abstract databases such as periodical indices;

digital resources, including text, image, video, and multi-media;

Internet-based resources including those on the World-Wide Web.

Integrated access to all these forms of information has become a necessity. Such access maximizes faculty, staff, and student productivity while assisting them in becoming literate, knowledgeable, and critical users of the wide array of digital information.

Beyond dramatic information access benefits for all CSU students and faculty, the UIAS offers the prospect of four other direct and tangible benefits to the CSU.

Invaluable support for a distributed learning environment and flexible degree programs by enabling the design and implementation of virtual library collections."

Ability to capitalize on both existing and future investments in human resources, print and digital collections, and Online Public Access systems. Potential new forms of Digital library cooperation between CSU and other major academic and public libraries and systems within and beyond California.

Assistance in making an orderly transition from the print to the digital world by meeting the users requirements for simultaneous, seamless, and integrated access to all forms of information.

Major commercial providers of automated library services regard the CSU UIAS project as the most advanced of its type, potentially serving as a model for other libraries seeking to integrate information resources. CSU has an opportunity to lead the library and information services community and industry with this project.

Current Status:

A Request for Proposals (RFP) process is underway to identify a vendor to partner with the CSU in developing the UIAS. The RFP is based upon extensive consultation with library automated services providers to both shape the concepts of the UIAS and to determine the feasibility of its design. Ten vendors have responded with proposals and five have been chosen to advance to a demonstration phase before the final selection is made.

RFP evaluation and project management teams have been formed representing CSU library administrative and professional staff. Each library has identified a project liaison to assist in implementation, and a staff readiness program is underway to prepare librarians and support staff for the considerable impact the UIAS will have on the way information services will be provided.

Activities/Deliverables in 1996/97:

Testing and evaluation of the systems selected as finalists in the RFP process will occur through December. Following submission of best and final offers, the successful vendor will be selected in January, with contract execution scheduled for March. The first campus UIAS gateway servers will be installed in the summer of 1997.

The UIAS staff readiness program began with a two-day workshop in November attended by about 100 library representatives from across the system. These representatives are involved in evaluation of the competing vendors demonstrations and will provide input for the final design of the UIAS. Representatives will also participate in additional readiness program activities prior to installation of the system.

Budget and Funding:

Systemwide information technology development funds totaling \$450,000 have been budgeted for UIAS in 1996/97. The overall cost of the project, including installation of gateway server hardware and software at each campus and creation of a CSU union catalog of library holdings, is projected to total \$1,654,000.