



# Closing the Digital Divide

KIS transforms Latvian libraries, providing citizens with access to knowledge, e-services and increased opportunity

Customer Name: **State Agency Culture Information Systems**  
Industry: **Government**  
Location: **Latvia**  
Company Size: **24 employees**

## Case Study



### Business Impact

- **Social exclusion reduced**
- **Increased opportunities for citizens**
- **Foundations provided for Latvia's information society**

### Business Challenge

Until 2006, the Latvian government's plans to create an information society were being held back by a digital divide. Information and communications technology (ICT) awareness and penetration were still relatively low, with many people living in rural areas unable to afford PCs, and fewer than one in two of the population having access to the Internet. The situation was not helped by the lack of technology in public libraries. Of those libraries that did offer access, very few facilities allowed users to connect wirelessly. Also, because there was no central system linking the libraries together, it was difficult to exchange information and share resources.

Culture Information Systems (KIS) is helping to close this gap. As part of a US\$37 million investment, KIS has implemented the Latvian State Integrated Library Information System project. The aims of the project were to provide citizens with equal access, at no cost, to the benefits of ICT by providing all 874 public libraries with broadband connections, a wireless network, three PCs, and computer skills training for 1800 staff and visitors.

### Solution and Results

KIS has created the largest corporate virtual private network in Latvia. Built using Cisco® routing and switching technologies and security solutions, the IP infrastructure has helped to transform the libraries into highly efficient knowledge centers that cater for the needs of different social groups.

Students can use their laptops and mobile devices to get educational content and digital learning tools. Library users can access e-catalogues and interlibrary databases to obtain a wider range of reading material. Senior citizens now visit in increasing numbers to receive free computer skills tutoring from librarians and to discover the Internet. The unemployed can search for training courses and work opportunities. Entrepreneurs can apply for grants online and explore business networking forums. In addition to social networking and e-shopping and e-banking, citizens can also access e-government services: these services include land registry enquiries, declaration of place of residence in the Population Register, and online payment services.

Future plans include extending the network to connect museums, archives, and 1174 schools, university, and government-funded libraries. Latvia's digital gap is being closed further still by six [Cisco Networking Academies](#) that are helping students prepare for ICT jobs and career certifications.

**“We are already looking at ways to reuse our Cisco network to support new solutions, such as Digital Media Systems, that would enable libraries to create and broadcast multimedia content.”**

**Armands Magone**  
Director, KIS

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