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# Researchers Look to Create a Synthesis of Art and Science for the 21st Century

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The juxtaposition of digital art with next-generation science and technologies like wireless networks, biosensors and optical supercomputers gives Calit2 a degree of panache that has largely been lost in the American scientific and corporate research worlds in the face of financial cutbacks over the last decade.

The project and the new Atkinson building invite comparisons to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Laboratory, founded by Nicholas Negroponte in 1980, which came to define a broad vision about the possibilities inherent in computing and technology through the rise of the dot-com era.

Now, however, it is possible that the torch of a new technology for the 21st century will be passed to Mr. Smarr and his laboratory.

"When I first heard about Calit2, I thought it was Media Lab West, but the context is so much larger," said Shahrokh Yadegari, a member of the music faculty who also has a degree in electrical engineering and is a former M.I.T. Media Lab student.

Having overseen the creation of the Web browser and watched its ensuing impact, Mr. Smarr has a good sense of the profound effect new technology can have on society.

He also has a sense that the United States is at a crossroads as a leader in technological and scientific innovation. Increasingly during the last decade, American corporate laboratories and government agencies have pulled back from supporting basic research. Mr. Smarr worries that the shift may have deeper consequences for the country than a decline in simple economic competitiveness.

"A society that doesn't support science is one that will be very different than the one we have known for the last 500 years," he said.

In that sense, the Calit2 project has its own Medici family in La Jolla. Although the bulk of the money supporting the center has come from state and federal grants, the Jacobs family and its telecommunications company, Qualcomm Inc., have contributed \$16.5 million. Irwin Jacobs, a former faculty member at the University of California, San Diego, was the founder of Qualcomm, now run by his son, Paul.

"California and the U.S. cannot rest on our laurels," Paul Jacobs said at the dedication of the Atkinson building on Oct. 28. "We need this kind of investment in infrastructure to do the kind of visionary research that will keep us competitive."

Moreover, in contrast to earlier academic research efforts, which have kept corporate enterprises at arm's length, the charter for Calit2 is to integrate its research efforts deeply with start-up companies as well as with larger technology corporations.



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Mr. Dominguez, the political activist and actor, says he believes that Calit2 can deliver partly by bringing society closer to his artistic ideal of unifying humans with representations of humans in cyberspace.

For Ramesh R. Rao, the director of the U.C.S.D. division of Calit2, the challenge is in picking up where the Media Lab left off.

"We have created Italy," he said. "Now all we have to do is create Italians."

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