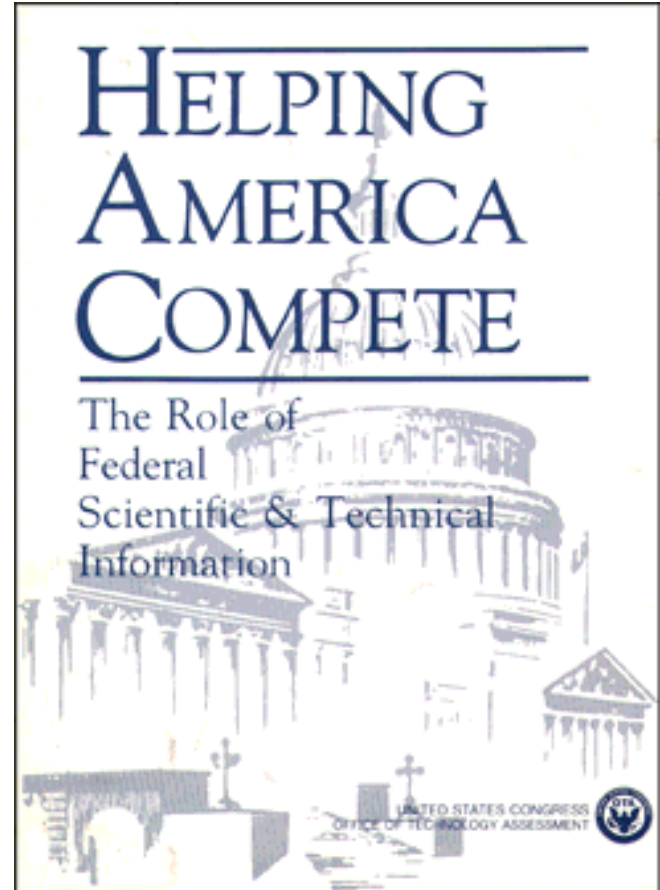


*Helping America Compete: The Role of
Federal Scientific and Technical
Information*

June 1990

OTA-CIT-454

NTIS order #PB90-252537



Recommended Citation:

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, Helping America Compete: The Role of Federal Scientific and Technical Information, OTA-CIT-454 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1990).

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325
(order form can be found in the back of this report)

Foreword


This Special Report assesses how Federal scientific and technical information (STI) can contribute to a more competitive America and what actions are needed to realize this potential. The report was prepared in response to a request from the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

Global change is a fact of contemporary life—whether in the political, economic, or technological spheres. U.S. leadership in all of these areas is being challenged. We need to take actions that can help renew the U.S. competitive edge in the worldwide marketplace of ideas, products, and services, and to provide leadership on global issues such as the environment.

A key area of U.S. strength could and should be our scientific and technical information. The U.S. Government is the largest single source of STI in the world—ranging from technical reports on aerospace propulsion and solar thermal electric systems to satellite data on oceanic and atmospheric trends to bibliographic indices on medical and agricultural research.

Yet the United States is not taking full advantage of opportunities to use Federal STI as part of a strategy to renew the U.S. competitive edge. STI is very important to scientists and engineers in a wide range of research, development, and commercial activities. They spend a lot of time on STI—time that is valued, conservatively, at several billions of dollars per year just for federally funded researchers. When used efficiently, Federal STI pays off handsomely.

The Special Report has benefited from discussion at an August 1989 OTA workshop, several rounds of comments on earlier drafts, and debate on related topics at recent executive branch meetings and congressional hearings. OTA appreciates the participation of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, Office of Management and Budget, and Federal agency officials and members of the scientific, academic, library, business, and consumer communities, among others, who provided useful comments and information. The report is, however, solely the responsibility of OTA and not of those who assisted us.



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NOTE: OTA appreciates the valuable assistance of outside reviewers and contributors. These individuals do not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this Special Report. The report is the sole responsibility of OTA, not of those who so ably assisted us.

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