

*of the director—Roger C. Herdman*

Early in fiscal year 1995 Congress signaled that the overwhelming priority to achieve a balanced budget would require such budgetary restrictions that funds could no longer be appropriated to continue OTA. This communication in the first quarter of the year influenced the agenda for FY 1995 and initiated the events of the last three quarters of the year. During that time:

[▲]OTA and OTA's Board made as persuasively as possible the case that OTA's contributions to Congress were valuable and not obtainable elsewhere. Comprehensive, non-partisan, unbiased, accurate information and analysis on complex science and technology issues are important to informed policy making.

[▲]Expressions of support for OTA's funding came from academia, industry, public interest groups, distinguished citizens and scientific societies. Particularly gratifying and appreciated was written support from the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering and Institute of Medicine, since these institutions by their quality, scope of work and expertise have been scientific colleagues to OTA and now should be the natural places for Congress to turn for help in filling the analysis and information gaps left by OTA's abolishment.

[▲]OTA's Board held press conferences, testified at hearings, spoke on the floor of the House and Senate and in conference, introduced amendments to fund OTA in both houses of Congress and voted for OTA at every opportunity.

[▲]A final decision on OTA funding was not reached until conference committee, at which point it was decided to give OTA a closeout budget which allowed for 60 calendar days severance to staff and a small team to ensure an orderly closeout of the agency and proper conservation and dissemination of OTA work and other assets.

[▲]Few new requests were received and then only for short term projects that OTA could (and did) deliver before the end of the fiscal year.

[▲]OTA staff worked to the final day of FY 1995 and in the process prepared a record 61 reports (full Assessments or Background Papers), either finishing or at least issuing a partial report on almost all requests pending.

In early FY 1996 the closeout staff distributed all Reports, prepared electronic versions for the Internet of recent OTA work and a set of CD-ROMs of all of OTA's work—755 Reports. The completion of OTA's responsibilities and the conservation and dissemination of the agency's work were made possible only by the thoughtful provision of the closeout budget and severance initiated by the Legislative Branch Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The required archiving to the National Archives, financial accounting, and the orderly distribution of OTA's physical assets to other congressional agencies were also enabled by this appropriation.

A complete set of OTA reports was made available for the University of Maryland (College Park), George Mason University in Fairfax, VA., the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the Library, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Sets of recent reports (1991-1995) were made available to a number of academic and technology assessment centers: Princeton University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Cornell University, Stanford University, University of Oklahoma, Washington University, St. Louis, MO., NAS/NRC, George Washington University, Harvard, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Carnegie Mellon University. Internet websites for 1994 and 1995 electronic reports were arranged at the Government Printing Office (<http://www.access.gpo.gov/ota>), the National Academy of Sciences (<http://www.nas.edu>), and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University (<http://www.wws.princeton.edu>). OTA's archival CD-ROMs are available from the Government Printing Office.

OTA's FY 1995 productivity was at record heights as staff met their responsibility to complete millions of dollars of work in progress and provided almost without exception a report on every pending congressional request—some by the regular process, sixteen that were distributed on return from the Government Printing Office after the close of FY 1995, and some by in-house desktop publishing or photo duplication.

This final body of work covering the spectrum of science and technology issues coming before Congress and the American people completes the legacy of OTA—a legacy of quality and commitment.

“OTA soon will be a memory, and we will discover what is lost. But we can salvage something. Those of us who have used OTA reports know that most of them have long shelf lives. The really important issues—the issues OTA worked on—do not get solved and go away in one Congress. In January 1996, all of OTA's reports will be issued on CD-ROM—OTA's final legacy. We should be proud of it.” Amo Houghton, M.C., Congressional Record, September 28, 1995.