

*The Social Security Administration and
Information Technology*

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The Social Security
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Special Report



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Foreword

The Social Security Administration in 1982 announced its Systems Modernization Plan (SMP), designed to restructure and extensively upgrade its data-handling systems. The agency told Congress that, without this major upgrading, there might be serious disruption of its services, which are essential to the welfare of millions of Americans. The SMP was one of the most expensive civilian information projects ever undertaken; it has since become a "rolling" 5-year plan with projected costs currently estimated at nearly \$1 billion.

The disruption of services that the Social Security Administration feared in 1982 has been averted, but the SMP and its implementation have been the subject of continuing controversy and criticism within the Administration and in congressional oversight committees. The Social Security Administration has scheduled major procurements in fiscal year 1987 that are central to implementation of SMP.

In this special report, OTA examines the objectives and technical strategies embodied in the SMP and the progress that the Social Security Administration has made toward its implementation. The report calls attention to some general problems faced by both SSA and other Federal agencies that are increasingly dependent on communications and information technology in carrying out their missions.

OTA appreciates the participation of the advisory panelists, workshop participants, Federal agency officials, and interested citizens, without whose help this report would not have been possible. The report itself, however, is the sole responsibility of OTA, not of those who advised and assisted us in its preparation.



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