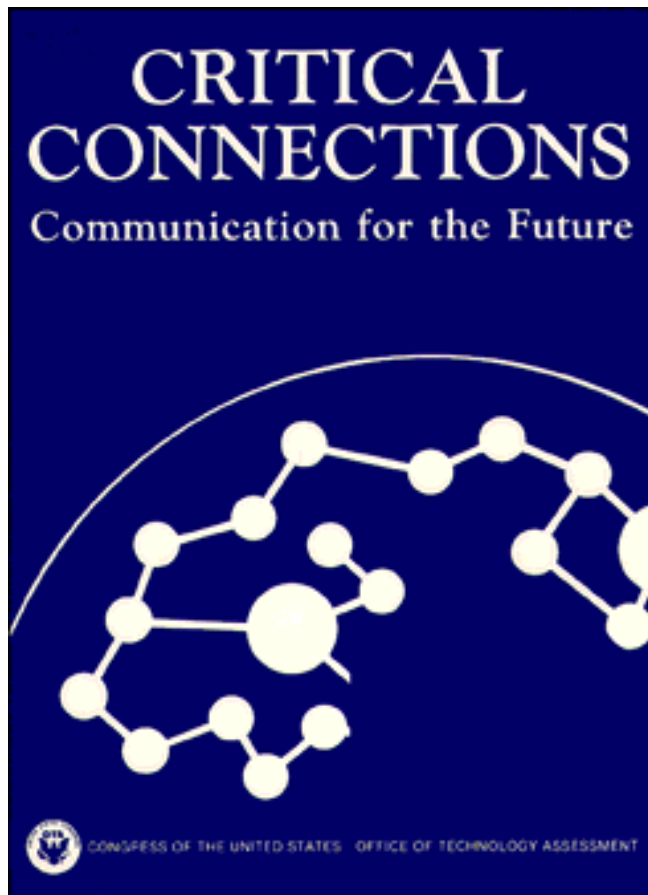


*Critical Connections: Communication for  
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# Foreword

The U.S. communication infrastructure is changing rapidly as a result of technological advances, deregulation, and an economic climate that is increasingly competitive. This change is affecting the way in which information is created, processed, transmitted, and provided to individuals and institutions. In addition, the lines that historically have divided domestic and international communication systems and markets are gradually disappearing. Today, decisions concerning communication systems and industries must reflect a global perspective.

While new technologies have the potential to effectively meet the needs of an information-based society, they will undoubtedly generate a number of significant social problems. In some areas they will create opportunities; in others, they may constrain activities. How these technologies evolve and are applied—as well as who will reap their benefits and bear their costs—will depend on decisions now being made in both the public and private sectors.

To provide a broad context for evaluating the impacts of new communication technologies, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce asked the Office of Technology Assessment to undertake this study. The report analyzes the implications of new communication technologies for business, politics, culture, and individuals, and suggests possible strategies and options for congressional consideration.

OTA gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the Advisory Panel, workshop participants, contractors, reviewers, and many others who provided information, advice, and assistance. However, OTA bears sole responsibility for the contents of this report.



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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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