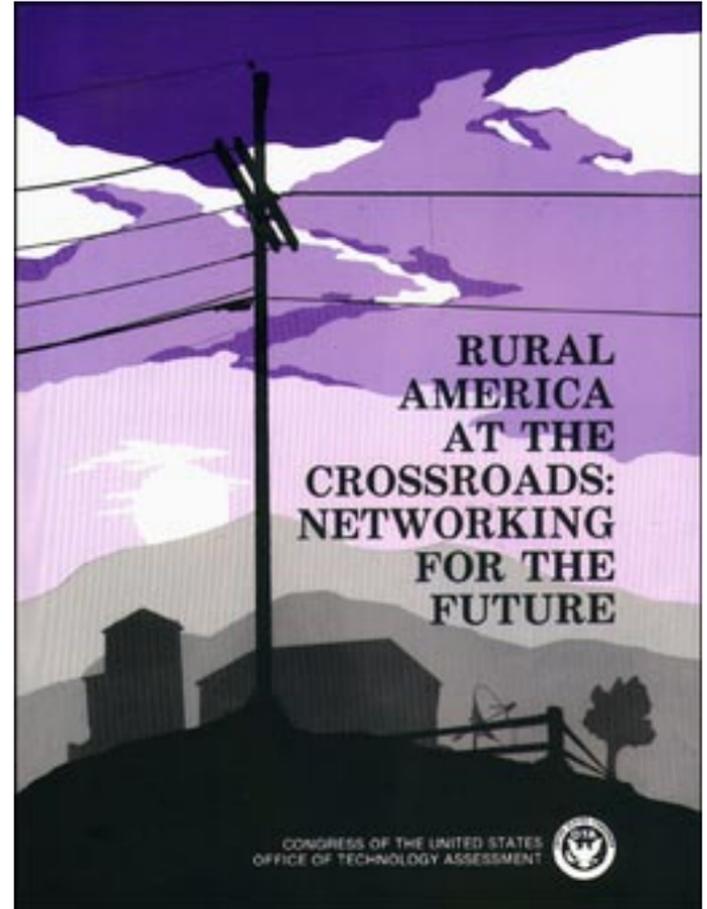


*Rural America at the Crossroads:
Networking for the Future*

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Foreword

Rural America is at the proverbial crossroads. Many rural communities show signs that raise concern for their future: loss of economic vitality, a relative decline in income, high unemployment, low workforce participation, and an exodus of talent. Advances in communication and information technologies, however, hold promise for rural America, by reducing the barriers of distance and space that have disadvantaged **rural areas**. Rural businesses can now link to other businesses or access major markets, even in other countries, just as readily as those in urban areas, while still enjoying the many distinctive benefits of rural living.

This study explores the role that communication technologies can play in securing rural America's future. It develops several policy strategies and options to encourage such development. The study was requested by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress and Senators Charles E. Grassley and Orrin G. Hatch.

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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