

- Document handling and management systems for processing passport applications (including integration of digitized photographs, signatures and other identifying characteristics) and archiving.

Although digitization techniques have been in use for a number of years, the recent trends that have had most impact are:

- improved OCR software to enable reading of many different fonts, including hand printed text, and text "zoned" by an operator after scanning.
- sophisticated software emulation of many document management functions (e.g. annotation, linking of documents, handling of documents as if they were paper files, file forwarding systems, etc.)
- lower product costs, especially in the area of optical disk storage devices and workstations
- increased computing power of PCs, workstations and minis and increased sizes of optical disk storage systems.

All of these trends are likely to continue in the future. More functionality will continue to be provided and at lower costs. The most significant cost reductions in future are likely to be in the area of optical disk storage systems, since this is a relatively new technology and since it is the most expensive component in most imaging systems today.

Although imaging may be considered an "emerging" technology, it has already found use in several government departments, some of them very similar to applications such as passport or identification documentation. The following examples were reported to the study team during the course of the review, and have been confirmed