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Building the Superconducting Super Collider, 1989-1993: The Problem of Project Management[1] MICHAEL RIORDAN, University of California, Santa Cruz, and Stanford University — In attempting to construct the Superconducting Super Collider, US particle physicists faced a challenge unprecedented in the history of science. The SSC was the biggest and costliest pure scientific project ever, comparable in overall scale to the Manhattan Project or the Panama Canal - an order of magnitude larger than any previous particle accelerator or collider project. Managing such an enormous endeavor involved coordinating conventional-construction, magnet-manufacturing, and detector-building efforts costing over a billion dollars apiece. Because project-management experience at this scale did not exist within the physics community, the Universities Research Association and the US Department of Energy turned to companies and individuals from the military-industrial complex, with mixed results. The absence of a strong, qualified individual to serve as Project Manager throughout the duration of the project was a major problem. I contend that these problems in its project management contributed importantly to the SSC's 1993 demise.

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