

RECIPES FOR COOKIES: HOW INSTITUTIONS SHAPE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

JAY P. KESAN

University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign - *College of Law*

RAJIV C. SHAH

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - *Institute of Communications Research (ICR)*

Abstract:

The ability of communication technologies to favor certain societal concerns, such as privacy, is widely recognized. This paper argues a central factor in how a technology favors a societal concern stems from its institutional origin. A case study of the cookies technology, which allows web sites to maintain surveillance on their visitors, shows the differing influences of universities, firms, and consortia. Each of these institutions acted according to their own norms and processes and differentially shaped the cookies technology. The result suggests societal institutions act in a systematic and predictable fashion in shaping how communication technologies affect fundamental societal concerns.