

Technological Actants

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Technological actants refer to the material, non-human technologies that make a difference to how something (e.g., news) is produced and disseminated

Technology and News

- Nearly all of today's journalistic work is shaped by technology
 - That has been the case for much of the industry's history
 - Examples: Printing press and the telegraph both shaped the writing conventions used by journalistic social actors

Technological actants can
shape human behaviors

Technology Shaping Humans



Source

Technologically Not Deterministic

- Just because a technological actant is designed in a certain way does not mean users will use them in that way
 - Or even use that innovation at all!
- Journalists often **adapt** innovations to allow them to do the things they are used to doing, in the ways they're used to doing them
 - At least initially

Human actors also shape
technological actants

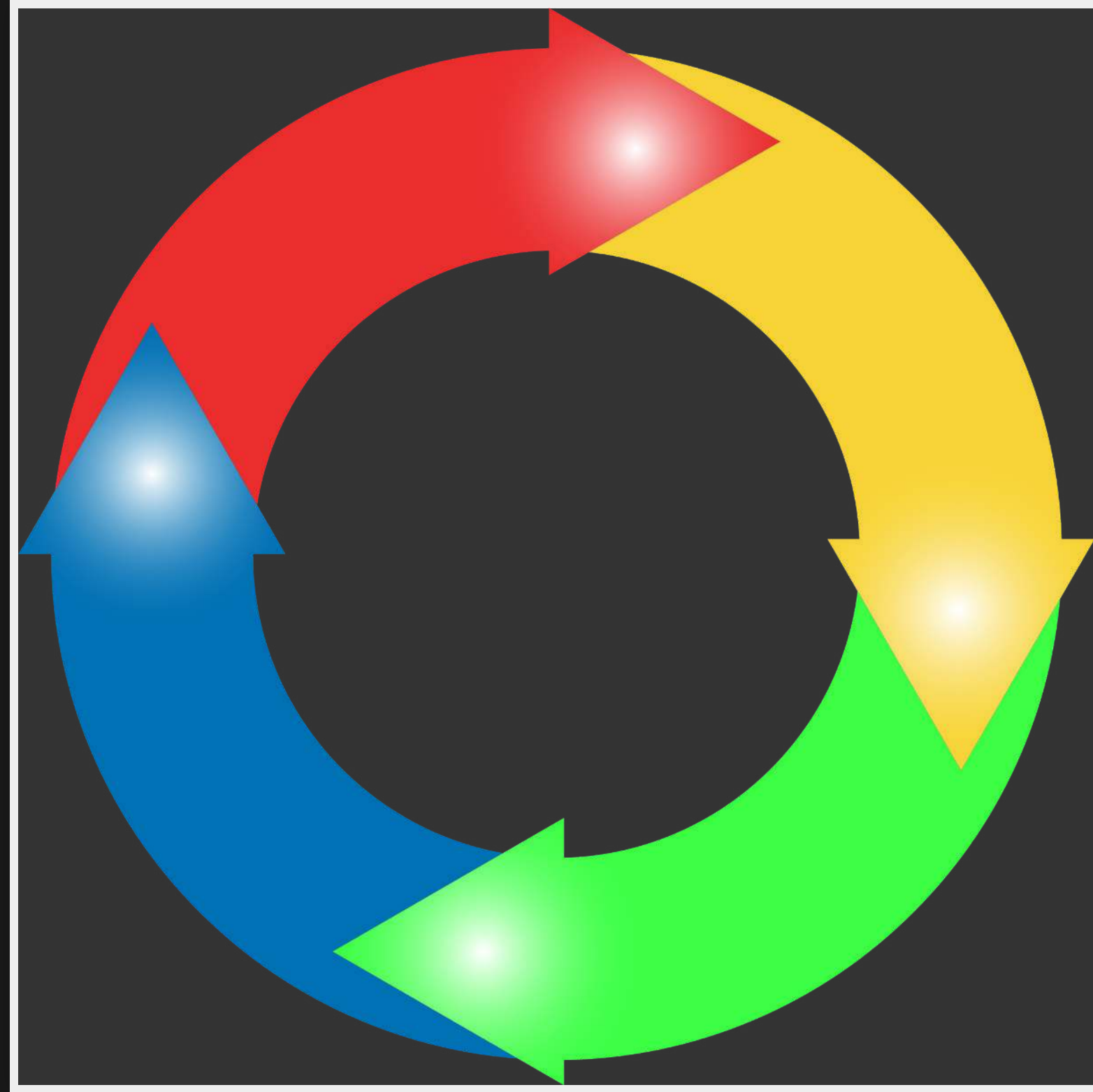
Humans Shaping Technology



Source

Social actors and technological actors
are often mutually shaping one another
through an iterative process

Mutual Shaping



Source

Asymmetric Relationships

- Social actors and technological actants thus develop relationships that can become **asymmetric**
 - This means that one may end up having more power over the other
- Example:
 - News organizations may depend on Google's search algorithms for much of their traffic...
 - ...but that organization may be insignificant to Google (and the quality of its search algorithms)

Key Takeaways

- Technological actants refer to the material, non-human technologies that impact news production, distribution, and consumption
- Technological actants shape human actors and structure their behaviors
- Technological actants are not neutral; they are socially constructed, too
- Mutual shaping creates fluid and dynamic power relationships