

---

AI translation · View original & related papers at  
[chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202310.00077](https://chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202310.00077)

---

## Postprint of the Integration of Traditional Publishing and Digital Publishing

**Authors:** Wang Fengnian

**Date:** 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

Digital publishing occupies an increasingly larger share in the publishing industry structure, and its low-cost advantage poses a tremendous impact on traditional publishing.

**Purpose:** In view of this, it is necessary to approach from aspects such as government industrial planning, readjusting respective positioning, and establishing reasonable profit models to study the integration of both and promote high-quality development of the publishing industry.

**Method:** This article adopts a research methodology combining theory and empirical analysis.

**Results:** It explores the fundamental path for digital transformation of traditional publishing, and on the basis of improving the publishing management system and integrating publishing institutions, promotes the organic integration of traditional publishing and digital publishing.

**Conclusion:** Digital publishing should fully absorb the advantages of traditional publishing, utilize digital technology to empower traditional publishing, and move toward deep integration with traditional publishing through complementarity and mutual learning, forming a diversified publishing industry pattern.

### Full Text

## Integration of Traditional Publishing and Digital Publishing

(Editorial Office of Journal of Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084)

## Abstract

Digital publishing occupies an increasingly larger share in the publishing industry structure, and its low-cost advantage poses a significant impact on traditional publishing. **[Objective]** In view of this, it is necessary to study the integration of the two from the perspectives of government industrial planning, readjustment of respective positioning, and establishment of reasonable profit models, so as to promote high-quality development of the publishing industry. **[Method]** This article adopts a research method combining theory and empirical evidence. **[Result]** It explores the basic path of digital transformation for traditional publishing, and promotes the organic integration of traditional and digital publishing on the basis of improving the publishing management system and integrating publishing institutions. **[Conclusion]** Digital publishing should fully absorb the advantages of traditional publishing, empower traditional publishing with digital technology, and move toward deep integration with traditional publishing through complementarity and mutual learning, forming a diversified publishing industry.

**Keywords:** publishing integration; traditional publishing; digital publishing; transformation of traditional publishing industry

**CLC Number:** G230

**Document Code:** A

**Article ID:** 1671-0134(2023)05-121-04

**DOI:** 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2023.05.028

**Citation Format:** Wang Fengnian. Integration of Traditional Publishing and Digital Publishing[J]. China Media Technology, 2023(05): 121-124.

---

In the process of civilization evolution, human reading carriers have been continuously developing. From oracle bones to bamboo slips, silk books, paper books of traditional publishing, and now to e-books of digital publishing, this has been a long developmental journey. Traditional publishing materializes content on physical media, possessing a clear physical form. Digital publishing refers to a new publishing method that uses digital technology for content editing and processing, and disseminates digital content products through networks. Its main characteristics include digital content production, digital management processes, digital product forms, and networked dissemination channels. Currently, digital publishing product forms mainly include e-books, digital newspapers, digital journals, online original literature, online educational publications, online maps, digital music, online animation, online games, database publications, mobile publications (MMS, ringtones, mobile newspapers, mobile journals, mobile novels, mobile games), etc.[1] At present, information technology and network technology have pushed digital publishing to a higher stage of development, while the low-cost advantage of digital publishing has posed a tremendous impact on traditional publishing. However, regardless of how publishing media evolves,

humanity's pursuit of knowledge will not change accordingly, which constitutes the key to the integration of digital and traditional publishing.

## **1. The Integration of Traditional Publishing and Digital Publishing Has Become an Inevitable Trend**

There is no antagonism between traditional publishing and digital publishing; rather, they are both competitive and interdependent, together constituting two aspects of a unified publishing industry entity. Due to the unique reading advantages of traditional publishing, it cannot be subverted or completely replaced by digital publishing for a considerable period. Therefore, complementary advantages and integrated development between digital and traditional publishing represent the inevitable choice for high-quality development of China's publishing industry.

**1.1 The Recovery of Traditional Publishing** Undoubtedly, in the industrial structure of China's publishing industry, digital publishing occupies a larger share. After experiencing a low point due to the impact of digital publishing, traditional publishing is now recovering its market share based on advantages in reading methods, security, and social credibility.

**1.1.1 Advantages of Traditional Publishing in Reading Methods** Compared with reading digital publications, reading traditional publications offers advantages such as no radiation to the body and less impact on vision. Therefore, reading paper books and periodicals remains a highly popular and widely welcomed reading method. A 2015 study by Harvard University showed that using electronic readers at night affects human biological clocks and next-day alertness.[2] Digital reading is often the preferred choice during fragmented time such as travel or leisure; however, when engaging in systematic and professional learning, most people still prefer traditional paper books and periodicals.

**1.1.2 Storage Advantages of Traditional Publications** In terms of storage durability, although both types of publications possess long-term storage characteristics, traditional publications hold greater advantages. Traditional publications are real, material entities that can be preserved and used for a long time with proper methods. Digital publications are virtual, and the upgrading of electronic technology directly affects their long-term preservation. Except for specially processed digital publications, their preservation durability is somewhat lower than that of paper-based traditional publications.

In terms of storage security, traditional publications are more secure than digital ones. On the one hand, digital publications must be downloaded to computers, mobile hard drives, and other storage devices, and once attacked by viruses or if storage devices are damaged, digital publications may be permanently lost. On the other hand, the easy replicability of digital publications makes their copyright more vulnerable to infringement.

**1.2 What Has Digital Publishing Changed?** Digital publishing has not only changed traditional reading habits and thinking patterns but has also exerted tremendous influence on the future direction of cultural development, affecting everyone's work and life.

**1.2.1 Cultural Attributes** Currently, digital reading exhibits a trend of fast-food, entertainment-oriented, fragmented, and utilitarian shallow reading. The reading of digital publications with chapters, text paragraphs, charts, and concepts has a non-linear characteristic (particularly the design of "hyperlinks"), making it difficult for readers to concentrate and 不利于 rigorous logical thinking. Reading fragmented content daily is less valuable than spending time finishing a book with peace of mind, which may be an important experience.[3] Therefore, compared with traditional publications, digital publications are not conducive to the deep cultivation of humanistic cultivation.

**1.2.2 Reading Habits** Digital publishing has changed traditional paper-based reading methods in terms of sensory engagement, emotional interaction, and information acquisition. The 16th National Reading Survey conducted by the China Institute of Press and Publication shows that the proportion of traditional paper-based readers is declining, with more than half of adults preferring digital reading, and the proportion of readers inclined toward mobile reading has increased significantly. In 2022, the comprehensive reading rate of various media including books, newspapers, periodicals, and digital publications among Chinese adult nationals was 81.8%, an increase of 0.2 percentage points from 81.6% in 2021.[4]

**1.2.3 Thinking Patterns** Traditional publishing uses paper as a material carrier to display content in a planar manner, whereas digital publishing lacks corresponding spatial sense. Analyzing from the publishing process, digital publishing integrates and edits content resources from traditional publishing, and presents them stereoscopically on digital media using digital information technology. Correspondingly, the editorial thinking mode of digital publishing is shifting from planar linear to three-dimensional multi-dimensional. In this process, how to reasonably arrange and combine technologies such as audio, video, and hyperlinks? How to maximize convenience for readers during the reading process? Reflection on these questions helps digital publishing absorb and surpass the editorial processes of traditional publishing.

In terms of scientific rigor, traditional paper-based reading holds significant advantages and benefits abstract thinking. Although digital publishing has the technical advantage of convenient and fast reading, its content is uneven in quality, and its academic value and reputation are generally still difficult to compare with traditional publishing.

## 2. The Integration of Traditional Publishing and Digital Publishing

Traditional publishing has formed a complete and rigorous publishing process in topic planning, manuscript selection, and editing and proofreading, with the “three reviews and three proofreadings” system particularly demonstrating a craftsmanship spirit that ensures the quality of traditional publications. Digital publishing has not yet reached the standards of traditional publishing in key links such as copyright protection and publishing standards.

In 2018, the transformation and integration of the publishing industry continued to deepen. Publishing units have conducted more comprehensive and in-depth thinking on integrated development, planning and laying out around “publishing integration,” and continuously exploring innovation in content, products, brands, and models with the help of new technologies, forms, and media, resulting in significantly enhanced innovation capabilities.[5] An increasing number of traditional publishing institutions are taking digital transformation as an opportunity to reform the publishing management system, integrate publishing institutions, and promote the integration of traditional and digital publishing.

**2.1.1 Adjusting Respective Positioning** How should traditional publishing transform? In what direction? Some traditional publishing houses have unclear transformation directions, lacking planning for business models, production processes, and talent reserves, let alone overall layout for planning, production, marketing, and distribution. Facing the impact of digital publishing, traditional publishing should identify its positioning based on its resource advantages, clarifying which content is suitable for traditional paper publishing and which is more advantageous for digital publishing. Traditional publishing should make full use of its advantageous content resources and existing brand resources, conduct digital transformation and three-dimensional development of bestseller and steady-selling brands, empower traditional publishing with digital technology, facilitate secondary marketing of content resources, enhance profit margins, and promote the transformation of traditional publishing.

Taking Higher Education Press as an example, in 1999 it integrated and established the Higher Education Electronic and Audio-Video Publishing House; in 2000, it launched digital publishing; in July 2007, it officially opened to the public, integrating over a hundred course websites and more than a dozen discipline websites. Additionally, The Commercial Press also launched digital publishing business in October 2005 and released the “Online Reference Books” in September 2006, offering digital versions of the *Xinhua Character Dictionary*, *Xinhua Pronunciation Dictionary*, *Xinhua Spelling Dictionary*, and *Dictionary of Place Names of the People’s Republic of China*.

**2.1.2 Improving Digital Publishing Regulations** Although China has issued a series of regulations for the publishing industry, existing laws cannot meet the needs of traditional publishing’s digital transformation, nor have they formed a sound digital publishing protection mechanism. It is necessary to

further improve regulations such as the *Copyright Law* and *Regulations on the Administration of Publishing*. Additionally, due to the lack of relevant laws regarding technology and copyright in digital transformation, and the absence of a sound technical certification mechanism and digital distribution standards, copyright disputes over digital works occur frequently. For example, anonymously published digital online novels, music, and art works cannot clearly identify the author, providing opportunities for piracy. Therefore, further establishing and improving digital publishing regulations and related institutional mechanisms is imperative, as Zhang Hongbo of the China Written Works Copyright Society advocates: “Government authorities should sort out the entire chain of digital publishing and promote the resolution of issues such as author authorization, authorization channels, digital publishing technical standards, redundant construction and waste of digital publishing resources, construction of a national unified digital resource platform, business models, settlement methods, and third-party supervision mechanisms.” [7]

**2.1.3 Strengthening Digital Talent Cultivation** Compared with traditional publishing, digital publishing features short publication cycles and strong timeliness, requiring editors to complete editing, proofreading, and release within a relatively short time. Therefore, to complete digital transformation, traditional publishing industry editors need to learn and master corresponding digital publishing technologies, enabling digitalization of topic planning, manuscript solicitation, editing and proofreading, and publication distribution.

In 2008, Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication established China’s first major named after digital publishing—Communication Studies (Digital Publishing Communication). In June 2009, Time Publishing and Media Co., Ltd. established a post-doctoral research workstation and successively signed post-doctoral training agreements with Fudan University, Wuhan University, Communication University of China, and University of Science and Technology of China, promoting the cultivation of digital publishing theoretical talents. However, from the perspective of the booming development needs of China’s digital publishing industry, operational talents for digital publishing remain scarce.

**2.1.4 Establishing Unified Digital Publishing Standards** Strict technical standards are necessary conditions for the internationalization of China’s digital publishing. On the one hand, China’s digital publishing standardization should align with international standards; on the other hand, China should actively transform national standards into international standards. In April 2010, China formally applied to the International Organization for Standardization and submitted the International Standard Document Linking (ISDL) proposal based on MPR encoding. In May 2011, ISDL became China’s first international standard project application, marking that China has taken the lead in the field of documentation standards in international digital publishing.

Traditional publishing units that transformed to digital publishing early, such as

Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, Higher Education Press, and Shanghai Century Publishing Co., Ltd., are conducting feasibility research and development on digital publishing standards. In 2011, Higher Education Press formulated the first domestic set of scientific and technical book content structuring standards (HEPBOOKDTD), which facilitates the automatic release of the same structured content through different publishing templates and tools to various carriers such as paper media, networks, CDs, and handheld reading devices, achieving cross-media publishing.

Digital publishing standard systems and data standards are not static and should be continuously improved and upgraded with the development of digital technology. In May 2005, the International Organization for Standardization approved PDF as an internationally universal digital journal document format. This format not only supports XMI but also authorizes content usage in layers: printable, non-printable, full-text copyable, partially copyable, read-only, etc. Some digital journals still adopt the double-column layout of traditional paper publications, requiring readers to read the left column from top to bottom and then return to the top of the page to read the right column. In reality, the layout of digital academic journals need not be constrained by traditional paper journal layouts but should be arranged according to electronic reading methods, using single-column layout to improve reader comfort.

**2.2.1 Adjusting Respective Positioning** In its initial stage, digital publishing relied on the digitization of traditional publishing resources for development, which objectively created an advertising effect for traditional publishing and increased sales of traditional publications. Traditional publishing was once regarded as a content provider, while digital publishing was positioned as a content service provider. Neither traditional publishing nor digital publishing alone can achieve the complete operation of the digital publishing industry chain. Therefore, a digital publishing industry chain jointly established by traditional publishing, digital publishing technology manufacturers, and channel operators should be built. After traditional publishing transfers copyright to digital publishing, the powerful function of repeated retrieval of digital publishing can be fully released. E-books can drive readers back to paper books, a prediction and speculation that has been verified.[9] The traditional publishing industry can publish supporting e-books while producing paper publications to meet readers' reading needs.

Random House, the world's top mass publisher, published *Fifty Shades of Grey* in 2012, selling 50 million copies in just five months. Random House publishes 10,000 new titles annually and currently has 40,000 e-books, with e-book revenue accounting for 22% of the total.[10] Since 2010, China Publishing Group Corporation has launched the on-demand printing equipment "CP Flash Printer," which has successfully achieved global digital publishing cooperation. As a cooperation platform, readers can print, search, and purchase excellent best-selling books from various countries on demand, realizing circulation on

the “CP Flash Printer” equipment. Compared with traditional printed goods circulation, the integrated on-demand printing of “CP Flash Printer” not only has a wider dissemination range and faster speed but also better meets the needs of readers worldwide. Digital publishing and traditional publishing running neck and neck and deeply integrating can continuously enrich publishing forms.

**2.2.2 Establishing Reasonable Profit Models** When traditional publishing institutions sell content resources to digital publishers, they are essentially handing over core resources and main benefits. For example, digital resources of many university journals are included in CNKI. Therefore, core resources must adhere to independent development. Digital publishing requires substantial initial capital investment, and such investment may not even be profitable. In fact, traditional publishing and digital publishing can achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. Taking paper academic journals as an example, while paper academic journals are digitized online, the visibility and academic reputation of paper academic journals are also enhanced, increasing the added value of digital journals. Therefore, the free use of more databases and other digital publishing content should be gradually promoted.

For example, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary in the United States freely opened access to the *Digital Journal of Ophthalmology* (<http://www.djo.harvard.edu>), enhancing the hospital’s profitability by improving the visibility of its experts through the digital journal. However, such cooperation still faces practical issues because as database profits increase, paper academic journals also demand economic returns. Since paper academic journals cannot participate in the download statistics of literature databases, they cannot propose accurate and reasonable profit-sharing ratios, making the starting point of such cooperation unfair.

**2.2.3 Effective Integration of the Industry Chain** Some traditional publishing houses merely promote digital transformation by building websites and purchasing digital technology, an approach where investment exceeds output and seriously affects transformation efficiency. Therefore, strengthening cooperation between traditional publishing and digital publishing technology operators and service providers is particularly necessary. For example, adopting advanced digital publishing technologies and novel operational methods to build digital publishing platforms can promote the secondary processing of traditional publishing resources. Experience in digital publishing industry development, planning, production, and operation helps build a digital publishing “one-stop” operation platform, mastering the dominant position in the industry chain and becoming a digital platform operator. With the help of digital publishing’s multimedia platforms, traditional publishing can digitize high-quality content resources, expanding readers’ reading scope.

Shanghai Century Publishing Co., Ltd. launched the “Cihai” e-reader on September 3, 2010, announcing the successful transformation of traditional publishing

digitalization. On January 23, 2020, Guangdong Science and Technology Press released *Novel Coronavirus Infection Protection*, with the first print run exceeding 1 million copies and donating hundreds of thousands of paper books for free. Simultaneously, the publisher linked paper content with extended content such as integrated media videos and official accounts through QR codes, with WeChat official account clicks exceeding 25 million. The e-book was freely downloaded on e-commerce platforms such as Dangdang, JD.com, Tmall, Zhongyue, and Bookuu, with downloads exceeding 1 million copies.[11]

Internationally, traditional publishers such as Elsevier and Springer have transformed into digital publishing giants by leveraging digital publishing platforms to integrate and deeply process content resources and provide online and value-added services to traditional publishing, achieving a win-win situation for both traditional and digital publishing. Andrew Wylie, the most influential literary agent in the world today, bypasses traditional publishers and directly signs e-book contracts with Amazon to grant copyrights.

Due to advantages such as large information capacity, convenient reading, and rapid updates, digital publishing has become a new driving force for the development of the publishing industry. At the same time, digital publishing also faces issues such as lack of effective quality assurance, copyright disputes, information risks, and poor reading effects, which are precisely the advantages of traditional publishing. To adapt to the trends of digitalization, informatization, and intelligence in the publishing industry, digital publishing should fully absorb the advantages of traditional publishing, use technology to empower traditional publishing, and move toward deep integration with traditional publishing through complementarity and mutual learning, thereby promoting high-quality development of the publishing industry.

**References:** [1] General Administration of Press and Publication. Several Opinions on Accelerating the Development of China's Digital Publishing Industry [R]. Xin Chu Zheng Fa [2010] No. 7. [2] Anne-Marie Chang, Daniel Aeschbach, Jeanne F. Duffy, Charles A. Czeisler. Evening use of light-emitting eReaders negatively affects sleep, circadian timing, and next-morning alertness[J]. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2015(4). [3] Wen Jing, Yang Lei. "Internet Plus" Is Here, How Will Reading Thinking Change? [N]. China Education Daily, 2015-08-15. [4] Survey: In 2022, Chinese Adult Nationals' Per Capita Paper Book Reading Volume Was 4.78 Books [EB/OL]. <https://cj.sina.com.cn/articles/view/2090512390/7c9ab006020027fwu>, 2023-04-23/2023-04-28. [5] China Digital Publishing Industry Annual Report Research Group, Zhang Li, Wang Biao, Li Guangyu. China's Digital Publishing Moving Toward In-Depth Integrated Development—2018-2019 China Digital Publishing Industry Annual Report (Abstract) [J]. Publishing and Distribution Research, 2019(8): [6] Xi Jinping. Accelerate the Promotion of Media Convergence Development and Build an All-Media Communication Pattern [J]. Qiushi, 2019(6): 8. [7] Sun Cuiting, Tong Jun. Scientific Life: Can "Book Digitization" Open a New Era of Reading? [N]. Science and Technology Daily, 2009-11-12. [8]

Zhang Zhongkai. Reflections and Explorations on Constructing Digital Publishing Profit Models for Traditional Publishing Industry Under the Background of Media Convergence [J]. *Publishing Wide Angle*, 2015(6): 28-29. [9] Zhao Lei. The Decline of E-books and the Return of Paper Books: Analysis of Recent U.S. Book Market Sales Trends and Readers' Media Choices [J]. *Editorial Friend*, 2019(1): 96- [10] Li Xu. Digital Publishing Is the Most Popular “Mass Publishing” [N]. *China Reading Weekly*, 2013-03-27. [11] Yan Fengqiang, Yang Minshan. 48 Hours Without Sleep, Fully Demonstrating Responsibility, Mission, and Commitment—Publication Record of *Novel Coronavirus Infection Protection* by Guangdong Science and Technology Press [N]. China Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television News, 2020-02-10.

**Author Introduction:** Wang Fengnian (1964-), male, from Hengshui, Hebei, Ph.D., Editorial Department of *Journal of Tsinghua University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), research interests include editing studies and ecological philosophy.

**(Responsible Editor: Zhang Xiaojing)**

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.*