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## Postprint: Development Pathways for University Academic Journals from the Perspective of Supply-Side Structural Reform

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To explore the development path of university academic journals under supply-side structural reform. **Methods:** Starting from the theory of supply-side structural reform, this study analyzes and examines university academic journals within the discourse of supply-side structural reform in terms of content supply, technology supply, talent supply, institutional supply, and other dimensions, and proposes corresponding optimization pathways. **Results:** University academic journals serve as important “suppliers” of academic content; however, stimulated by Internet+ and the demand side’s requirements for high-quality academic content supply, their effective academic supply is severely insufficient, resulting in structural contradictions with national scientific and technological development and social needs. **Conclusion:** To overcome their supply disadvantages, university academic journals require not only top-level institutional design at the national level, but also endogenous innovation within journals themselves, and must rely on technological transformation as a driving force, using mechanism innovation and other means to reshape the new development pattern of university academic journals.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

**Title:** Development Paths for University Academic Journals from the Perspective of Supply-Side Structural Reform

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## Abstract

**[Purpose]** This paper explores the development paths for university academic journals under supply-side structural reform. **[Methods]** Drawing on supply-side reform theory, it analyzes and examines university academic journals in terms of content supply, technology supply, talent supply, and institutional supply, proposing optimization pathways. **[Results]** University academic journals serve as crucial “suppliers” of academic content, yet they suffer from severe deficiencies in effective academic supply when stimulated by “Internet Plus” and demand-side needs for high-quality content, leading to structural contradictions with national scientific development and social requirements. **[Conclusion]** To overcome supply disadvantages, university academic journals require not only top-level national institutional design but also endogenous innovation and technological transformation to reshape their development landscape through mechanism innovation.

**Keywords:** supply-side structural reform; university academic journals; development paths; Internet Plus

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## 1. Research Origin and Problem Statement

Supply-side reform refers to the structural optimization of the economy from the supply perspective to increase effective supply, with the goal of using demand to guide supply-side structural optimization [1]. Although initially proposed in the economic domain, supply-side structural reform holds significant guiding and practical importance for China’s cultural sector, particularly in the academic journal field. In the broader context of comprehensive deepening reform, strengthening supply-side reform represents an essential component of transforming and upgrading China’s cultural industry [2]. University academic journals constitute a vital part of China’s cultural publishing industry, playing a crucial role in disseminating and accumulating academic achievements. However, with the development of internet and new media technologies and the public’s thirst for high-quality academic journals, university academic journals have experienced severe supply-demand contradictions and structural imbalances, necessitating self-revolution and strengthened supply-side structural reform.

In recent years, university academic journals have attempted supply-side structural reforms to address these dilemmas, but these efforts have been too limited in scope to achieve significant results. While the rise of internet and new media technologies has prompted beneficial experiments in media convergence, the overall results have been unsatisfactory. For instance, many WeChat public accounts created by university academic journals have limited reach and influence,

with some becoming “zombie accounts.” Therefore, implementing supply-side reform in university academic journals represents an effective measure to break free from constraints, directly address user needs, and actively embrace emerging publishing models.

## 2. Structural Dilemmas in Academic Supply of University Journals

Within the broader academic journal landscape, university academic journals occupy a non-negligible position in terms of both quantity and status, commanding substantial publishing resources. However, primarily relying on their host universities, most have become “catch-all platforms for disciplinary research,” gradually weakening in influence and failing to fulfill their original mission of academic dissemination and cultural accumulation. The author argues that the fundamental cause of this phenomenon lies in the mismatch between supply and demand in China’s current university academic journal publishing industry, which has created imbalances in academic supply.

### 2.1 Imbalance in Content Supply-Demand Relationship

The entire publishing industry produces products to meet people’s constantly evolving and upgrading reading needs, satisfying their spiritual preferences and pursuits. As university academic journals, they must also meet the needs of people’s work and research. To satisfy these demands, university academic journals must cater to the preferences of readers and authors by delivering high-quality publications and outstanding academic achievements. Nevertheless, China’s current university academic journal publishing industry suffers from severe shortages in effective content supply, with high-quality journals being particularly scarce and unable to meet public demand for premium academic publications. As one analysis notes, “China’s supply system generally features excess mid- to low-end products and insufficient high-end product supply” [3].

China hosts over 2,500 academic journals sponsored by universities—not a small number in terms of supply quantity. However, a considerable portion operates at low quality and standards, with content supply seriously lagging behind public demand for high-quality academic publications. This situation stems from multiple factors. First, many university academic journals are comprehensive journals with numerous columns covering nearly all disciplines, resembling “catch-all publications” that make it difficult to achieve specialization and excellence. This comprehensiveness leads to homogenization, with most university journals featuring highly similar column setups. Such broad but shallow journals fail to meet the academic and research needs of readers and authors. Second, institutional constraints result in low-quality journal operations. University academic journals are subject to their host institutions, which provide limited oversight and restricted human, financial, and material resources. Under this system, university academic journals struggle to deliver high-quality mas-

terpieces to readers and authors, exacerbating supply-demand contradictions.

## 2.2 Bottlenecks in Technology Intervention

Academic journals serve as bridges for knowledge dissemination, and the smooth flow of knowledge resources depends largely on their positioning and operational models. For a long time, print publishing has dominated China's academic journal industry. However, with the rapid development of new media, internet, and mobile technologies, journal print runs have declined significantly, ending the golden era of print-centered publishing. This decline in print circulation does not indicate weak public reading consumption; on the contrary, cultural consumption demand has grown increasingly robust with the rise of new media and electronic publications alongside higher education levels.

The emergence of new media has liberated reading habits from print constraints, with scene-based media 传播 creating immersive, visual reading experiences for users [4]. For university academic journals, the “new media 倒逼” (driven by new media) effect will become increasingly pronounced. Due to institutional constraints, university academic journals have shown weak willingness to integrate media, creating bottlenecks for new technology adoption. While print journals will not disappear—having their own reasons for existence and space to coexist with electronic publications, complementing each other for mutual prosperity [5]—journal managers must maintain clear understanding, balance the relationship between print and new media, and promptly resolve supply-demand bottlenecks caused by technological intervention.

## 2.3 Declining Professional Identity and Burnout Among Editorial Staff

Outstanding academic journals require excellent and professional editorial teams, as editorial staff quality determines journal quality. Currently, the overall career prospects and compensation in university academic journal publishing remain unpromising, deterring many high-quality editorial talents from entering the field. As university-sponsored publications, host institutions control hiring authority for university academic journals. Compared with teaching faculty, editorial staff face disadvantages in status, compensation, professional development, and title evaluation. The editing profession lacks recognition from institutions and society, and editors' self-worth remains unfulfilled, intensifying anxiety and making professional burnout and talent attrition the norm in university academic journal publishing.

Without high-quality talent willing to join, and with existing staff holding relatively fixed mindsets, university academic journals lack editors with internet and digital communication thinking. This has created severe human resource supply-demand imbalances that constrain effective supply and create development bottlenecks in enhancing content value and achieving self-worth.

## 2.4 Institutional Supply Obstacles

Institutions serve as the most powerful guarantee for industry development, and precise, effective institutional supply constitutes a key element for high-quality academic journal development. Effective institutional supply can stimulate internal motivation and industry vitality. China's journal management system has long implemented a strict approval system with rigorous establishment procedures. While this system facilitates rational layout of journal development scale and enables effective quality and quantity oversight, the resulting scarcity of journal numbers and monopolistic operations have caused academic journals to lose their original development momentum under market competition, increasingly mismatched with China's cultural and scientific development.

Currently, China's university academic journals, particularly university journals, are predominantly comprehensive journals characterized by multiple disciplines and comprehensiveness. This feature severely affects the convenience of information retrieval for readers and authors, hinders journal brand building, and results in a "small, scattered, and uncompetitive" situation. This inability to break traditional operational models and the deviation from reader-centered approaches weaken journals' influence and competitiveness, restricting effective supply. Therefore, only by innovating institutional supply for university academic journal publishing, accelerating management system reforms, and properly managing the three aspects of "delegation, incentives, and supervision" can we promote factor upgrading through institutional advancement and stimulate supply dynamics through "Internet Plus Journal" thinking. Only by enhancing institutional supply timeliness and meeting demand for new systems can university academic journals aim to build first-class journals, enhance competitive initiative and value distribution discourse power, and provide abundant, high-quality academic papers for readers and authors.

## 3. Paths for Supply-Side Structural Reform of University Journals

### 3.1 Strengthening Top-Level Design and Optimizing Institutional Supply

Supply-side structural reform must begin with institutional innovation and reform, making institutions the driving force of reform. Institutions can fundamentally resolve development mechanism blockages and enhance overall innovation motivation and capacity. The core of supply-side structural reform lies in increasing effective institutional supply to stimulate market vitality, resolve structural contradictions, and activate production factors [6]. On one hand, institutional innovation and arrangements can strengthen top-level design for university academic journals. At the national level, authorities should increase approval support for specialized journals, enhance support for university academic journals, and actively introduce policies to guide existing comprehensive university journals toward specialization. This would change the structural

drawbacks of being “small, scattered, and excessive,” remove institutional barriers affecting resource allocation, and release industry potential and vitality. Additionally, authorities should formulate and update policies and regulations affecting industry transformation and sustainable development. Current regulations such as the *Regulations on Publishing Administration* and *Regulations on Journal Administration* offer limited guidance due to their general principles. Although recent policies have benefited journal development, they have not fundamentally removed institutional obstacles hindering university journal development. The state must strengthen national and local legislation for journal development based on existing reforms, using legal means to resolve funding and talent difficulties and stimulate enthusiasm and creativity.

On the other hand, universities should strengthen top-level planning, using the “Double First-Class” initiative as an opportunity to help academic journals become first-class publications and activate development potential. Universities should integrate academic journal development into their overall framework, providing policy support to encourage accelerated media convergence and the cultivation and introduction of internet-thinking professionals [7], thereby escaping the “thousand journals, one face” dilemma, gaining competitive advantages, and winning reader and author favor. University academic journals must also innovate their thinking, actively integrate into and serve university development, and enhance their capacity to contribute high-quality academic publications for faculty and students. In summary, through innovative institutional supply, publishing management departments should streamline administration, delegate power, combine management with services, and optimize services while fully leveraging government and university guidance and service functions in supply-side reform. Establishing comprehensive support and guidance mechanisms can release university academic journal potential, optimize supply structure, and improve supply efficiency, enabling healthy development and enhanced service capacity for readers and authors.

### 3.2 Strengthening Quality Control and Optimizing Content Supply

In reality, people always evaluate products by their quality. As a special product, academic journals should pursue a “quality first” development philosophy. The key to supply-side structural reform for university academic journals lies in increasing effective supply and improving quality. Journal operators must strengthen quality management, making quality improvement the lifeline of publishing work to ensure content, editing, design, and printing meet national standards. Within the quality system, content quality always comes first, with other aspects serving as carriers and guarantees. “Content is king” remains an irrefutable truth for university academic journal publishing. To practice content primacy, journals must let content guide all operations and excel in editorial work under this principle.

Therefore, university academic journals must uphold new development concepts, implement “quality first” throughout all publishing processes and fields, strive to

create masterworks with profound thought, artistic excellence, and fine production, build new development patterns, and achieve higher-quality, more sustainable development. First, journals must uphold the Party's overall leadership over publishing to ensure correct development direction. This means implementing Party management principles, strictly enforcing ideological work responsibility systems, tightening responsibilities of supervising and hosting units, and providing political guarantees for high-quality development. Second, journals must optimize topic planning to improve quality. High-quality manuscripts remain scarce resources for university academic journals, and editors have continuously explored how to select and increase supply of premium content. Topics must ensure correct political orientation while maintaining proper value orientation, healthy taste, excellent quality, and rich variety. Although market competition is fierce, accurate self-positioning enabling "what others don't have, I have; what others have, I excel in" can still create competitive advantages. Finally, journals must promote craftsmanship to improve editing quality. A good topic represents only one key link in quality content supply; editing quality constitutes another crucial component. Even the best academic manuscripts require editing activities to accurately, concisely, and standardly express their academic or practical value. Editors serve not only as planners and organizers but also as gatekeepers of quality. Only by strictly implementing editing standards, strengthening professional training, promoting craftsman spirit, improving professional ethics, and continuously enhancing editing quality can university academic journals achieve long-term development and provide readers and authors with premium academic content.

### 3.3 Optimizing Service Supply and Providing Precise Services

Knowledge services represent user-centered information services that extract knowledge and information content according to people's needs to provide solutions. In the "Internet Plus" era, precise knowledge services will become the core requirement of academic journal supply-side reform and decisively influence journal dissemination and impact [8]. As Alibaba's Chief Strategy Officer Zeng Ming noted, precision "requires establishing continuous interactive relationships with users, prioritizing the most accurate choices for users, as this is the only way to be selected by customers in the era of personalized customization" [9]. Therefore, university academic journals should adopt a reader- and author-centered approach, provide warmer services, and regularly deliver precise knowledge services to improve service quality and efficiency.

First, journals must strengthen service concepts to motivate service supply. This requires respecting readers' and authors' principal positions, upholding the philosophy of producing academic excellence for them, and combining service provision with demand satisfaction through deepening supply reform and innovation-driven development to deliver "double high" (high quality, high efficiency), "double effect" (social effect, economic effect), and "double love" (loved by people, loved by society) academic journals. Second, journals must enhance motivation

for precise knowledge services. Meeting readers' and authors' learning and reading needs requires concrete actions rather than slogans. Host institutions should abandon traditional thinking, shifting from passive to active services to enhance motivation and capacity, delivering high-value academic feasts.

Furthermore, journals must improve service supply capacity and methods. With rapid mobile internet and big data development, the era of precise knowledge services has arrived, presenting opportune timing for university academic journal supply-side reform. Journals should leverage media convergence to enhance service capacity and methods, exploring an ecological development path. Scholars have proposed six models for academic journal precise knowledge services: creating knowledge influencer IPs, online video courses, online Q&A, targeted information subscription push, hot topic circles, and online seminar livestreaming [8]. These models align with media convergence goals of meeting personalized needs. In the print era, publishers decided what the public read; in the media convergence era, the public holds 选择权 (choice power). This shift requires journal managers to highlight “user awareness,” stand from readers' and authors' perspectives, reform supply methods, enhance supply capacity, establish demand-oriented development mechanisms, and achieve two-way supply-demand balance.

University academic journals represent an important “piece” in China's entire academic journal industry chain. Activating this piece holds significant and practical meaning for the ecological development of the entire industry. Supply-side structural reform for university academic journals aims to reshape competitive and supply-demand relationships, fully leveraging market allocation in academic supply to resolve weak supply dilemmas. Only through supply-side structural reform—reconfiguring relationships among various entities and resource elements, activating development mechanisms, and improving supply capacity and efficiency—can university academic journals escape their current predicament and achieve strategic balance in supply-demand system construction.

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

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