

# An Analysis of the Transformation Path of Knowledge Services in Academic Journals under the Internet Plus Background: A Case Study of University Journals (Postprint)

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## Abstract

[Purpose] In the context of “Internet Plus,” especially amid the current wave of knowledge services, academic journals—particularly university journals—must fully leverage their existing advantages in resources, talent, and platforms, and transform from knowledge producers to knowledge service providers to survive in the densely populated journal landscape. [Method] This article begins with the current state of knowledge services in academic journals, combined with case analyses of relevant university journals, investigates the functional transformation of journal editors and the competencies required, and proposes corresponding development strategies. [Results] Academic journals need to provide specialized and personalized knowledge products and services tailored to the needs of authors and readers, accurately and thoroughly solving their problems. [Conclusion] Academic journals must establish a service-oriented mindset, enhance journal brand value, change previous publishing concepts, actively pursue media convergence, and increase the influence of academic journals.

## Full Text

### An Analysis of the Transformation Path of Academic Journals Toward Knowledge Services in the “Internet Plus” Era –A Case Study of University Journals

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** In the “Internet Plus” era, particularly amid the current wave of knowledge services, academic journals—especially university journals—must fully leverage their existing advantages in resources, talent, and platforms to transform from knowledge producers into knowledge service providers. This transformation is essential for their survival in an increasingly crowded journal landscape. **Methodology:** This article examines the current state of knowledge services in academic journals, combining case studies of relevant university journals to investigate the evolving functions of journal editors and the competencies they require, and proposes corresponding development strategies. **Findings:** Academic journals need to provide specialized and personalized knowledge products and services tailored to the needs of authors and readers, addressing their problems with precision and depth. **Conclusion:** Academic journals must cultivate a service-oriented mindset, enhance their brand value, shift away from previous publication concepts, actively pursue media convergence, and increase their academic influence.

**Keywords:** academic journals; media convergence; knowledge services; internet; university journals

In a letter to the editorial department of *Journal of Chinese Humanities*, General Secretary Xi Jinping stated: “High-quality academic journals must uphold their original aspirations, lead innovation, and serve innovation” [2], pointing the way forward for the future development of academic journals. In the big data era of media convergence, media and users are no longer bound by a simple “supply-receive” relationship but instead exhibit a complex interactive pattern. Academic journals, particularly university journals, face the question of how to transform and develop under the “Internet Plus” background. Knowledge services may represent one viable path for this transformation. As an essential route for the integrated development of publishing and an important means of innovatively utilizing publishing resources, academic journals can ultimately achieve the transformation from “knowledge production” to “knowledge services” by continuously improving their knowledge service systems, thereby gaining a competitive edge in market-oriented transformation. Although university journals seem to function merely as publishers of academic papers, with editors only needing to complete the standard three-review and three-proofreading process before publication and distribution, they possess the feasibility for transformation as producers of high-quality knowledge content. In the current wave of knowledge services, university journals must capitalize on their existing advantages in resources, talent, and platforms to shift from knowledge producers to knowledge service providers, keeping pace with the times. Without seeking innovation, change, and development, university journals risk rapid obsolescence.

## 1. Background of Knowledge Services

In 1997, the American Special Libraries Association explored issues related to knowledge management and knowledge services in libraries, first proposing the concept of “knowledge services.” Since then, related concepts and practical explorations have flourished. Although the concept of knowledge services was introduced to China relatively late, relevant research has already matured considerably. Zhang Xiaolin proposed that knowledge services are “based on the knowledge and capabilities of information and knowledge searching, organization, analysis, and reorganization, integrating into users’ problem-solving processes according to their questions and contexts to provide services that effectively support knowledge application and knowledge innovation” [3]. Qi Jianlin argued that broadly defined knowledge services are “services that provide users with needed knowledge,” while narrowly defined knowledge services refer to “a deeper level of intellectual services that collect, screen, research, and analyze relevant knowledge according to user needs” [4]. However, research on knowledge services specifically for journals remains limited. As of February 13, 2023, searching for “knowledge services” as a keyword in article titles on CNKI yields approximately 5,000 records, but adding “journal” as an additional keyword reduces this to only about 100 records.

At the national level, relevant authorities attach great importance to knowledge services in the publishing industry and have made early arrangements and plans. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television issued the “Notice on Launching Pilot Work for Professional Digital Content Resource Knowledge Service Models” in 2015 and 2017, designating 55 publishing units, including Geological Publishing House, as pilot units. In 2018, the third batch of pilots expanded the scope to include broadcasting and film units, internet content enterprises, research institutes, and higher education institutions, ultimately selecting 55 enterprises and institutions to participate in the pilot work, further expanding the professional fields and pilot unit scope [5]. However, reviewing these three batches of pilot units reveals that publishing houses and publishing companies account for the vast majority, with almost no academic journals among them. While there are reasons related to the small size of journal societies, complex backgrounds, and policy orientation, the fact that most academic journals remain complacent and do not seek new development is also an undeniable reality.

## 2. The Necessity of Knowledge Services

In this era of information explosion, while the internet has brought numerous conveniences, it has also led to information overload, declining information quality, and trust deficits. Consequently, people have “higher demands for the precision, practicality, and comprehensibility of knowledge” [6] and place greater value on the process of acquiring knowledge, giving rise to professional, authoritative, and convenient knowledge services. Meanwhile, based on internet technology development, long-tail niche products have become a considerable

and substantial market. In this context, previously fragmented, unpopular, and personalized user needs have gained sufficient market attention, and customized, personalized, and niche “unpopular” products are sufficient to constitute an immensely broad long-tail market [7]. Moreover, with the development of artificial intelligence, big data, and other technologies, traditional editing and proofreading work will be largely replaced—for instance, by software such as Heima Proofreading, Phoenix Intelligent Proofreading System, and Shanfeng Automatic Reference Checking System. The most important work for editors is no longer editing and proofreading words and sentences; their value is increasingly reflected in planning topics, organizing authors, attracting readers, and building brands, all of which are closely related to knowledge services.

The traditional publishing model is unidirectional and linear, moving from manuscript submission to review, editing, proofreading, printing, and finally distribution. In this fixed “knowledge production” process, editors select and organize content to publish print journals and then passively wait for readers. Knowledge services differ fundamentally. University journals cannot merely guard their own small territory but must actively “go out” to cooperate with research institutions, social organizations, other universities, relevant enterprises, and government agencies, thereby providing more valuable, targeted, and higher-level services. Through multi-level interaction and integration, they can form a complete academic ecosystem, which also promotes the accelerated construction of the disciplinary system, academic system, and discourse system of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics. For university journals, knowledge services primarily refer to leveraging their own resource and platform advantages to provide knowledge, information, and services for their university’s teachers, researchers, and research organizations.

### **3. Internal and External Cooperative Development of University Journal Knowledge Services**

According to relevant survey reports, China’s digital publishing industry has experienced explosive growth in recent years. As an important component, knowledge payment has also developed rapidly and possesses broad market prospects. Although definitions, analyses, and practices of knowledge services have not yet been standardized, several basic consensuses have emerged, such as “knowledge services are built upon the knowledge foundation of relevant service personnel” ; information, knowledge, knowledge products, and solutions all fall within the scope of knowledge services, with the goal of “solving users’ specific and practical problems” [8]. Based on these characteristics of knowledge services, market conditions, and the inherent features of university journals, their knowledge services can be divided into internal and external aspects.

### 3.1 Internal Knowledge Services

Internal knowledge services target the university community, serving the institution's faculty, researchers, and students. The editorial office of a university journal occupies an awkward position within the university—it is not directly connected to the university's main affairs and has limited contact with students, teachers, and researchers, primarily engaging with external experts, scholars, researchers, and institutions. However, the academic, knowledge-based, and research characteristics of university journals can synergistically develop with the university's research work, requiring close communication and enhanced cooperation between the editorial office and various internal departments. For instance, university journals can collaborate with libraries, technology offices, and information centers to provide services in literature retrieval and project application.

In the context of media convergence, knowledge services are inseparable from information technology, yet university journal editorial offices rarely have professional IT talent. Constrained by staffing limitations, it is difficult to establish relevant departments or recruit such personnel internally. However, universities generally have information centers or similar departments. Editorial offices can jointly design and develop corresponding knowledge distribution and sharing systems with these centers to ultimately achieve precise knowledge push. Additionally, university journals can cooperate with technology offices—indeed, many university journal editorial offices fall under the jurisdiction of technology offices. Technology offices are generally responsible for internal research development and fund project applications. University journal editorial offices can leverage their academic advantages to integrate and provide cutting-edge information resources on academic development, hot topics, and difficult issues, offering knowledge support and planning services for the university's research development, talent recruitment, research advantages, key focus areas, support directions, and project applications.

Furthermore, editorial offices can directly guide students, teachers, and researchers within the university to understand disciplinary research trends and plan project applications, helping researchers quickly grasp hot topics, difficult points, and gaps in relevant disciplines. Based on their experience, they can also guide university students and teachers on submission standards, paper writing norms, and how to select target journals. All these efforts help enhance the university's research strength and promote high-quality disciplinary development. Academic journals must not only unite the core forces of academia but also assist in cultivating academic echelons. In the current environment where many compete for few publication slots, it is not difficult for many new academics to discover new research findings—the challenge lies in transforming these findings into rigorous academic papers and successfully publishing them. To address this widespread need, journal editorial offices can provide targeted knowledge services to support the development of outstanding academic talent.

### 3.2 External Knowledge Services

External knowledge services refer to how university journal editorial offices serve local cultural, economic, and technological development, typically through cooperation with provincial and municipal social science federations and think tanks in the regions where their universities are located. In the context of media convergence, cooperative development between university journals and social science federations or think tanks represents a win-win situation. On the one hand, university journals tend to be relatively insular. Apart from unsolicited submissions, editors often have to rely on their personal networks or attend various academic conferences to solicit contributions—a process that still faces significant limitations. However, cooperation with social science federations and think tanks can proactively bring together experts and scholars, expanding the scope and caliber of contributing authors. On the other hand, although university journal content possesses professionalism and authority, this can also lead to a certain disconnect from practical application. The knowledge they provide often emphasizes research over practice, while think tanks' primary function is to publish policy consultations and interpret development trends. Combining these strengths can make university journals more grounded. Editorial offices can organize relevant authors to provide suggestions for regional cultural, economic, and technological development based on their own research advantages and key development areas, offering practical and actionable research findings to serve local governments. For example, *Finance & Economics National Weekly* and the Outlook Think Tank have formed a new media pattern of “one journal, one think tank,” which is highly instructive. Similarly, the *Journal of Suzhou College of Education* and its affiliated Shihu Think Tank have numerous collaborations—journal editors serve as think tank researchers, while the think tank provides the journal with numerous topic resources and expert resources, creating mutual benefits and joint development.

University journal editorial offices can also cooperate with university libraries to jointly develop research assistance tools. Contemporary scientific research can no longer be completed with just pen and paper; it requires full utilization of various literature and data. While libraries provide corresponding services, they are indeed less professional than editorial offices in research topic selection and paper writing. A joint effort can better serve the university's teachers and researchers. For example, “Yixuezhe” from Renmin University of China and Yingke's “Qingli AI Research Service Platform” are currently well-executed examples, providing powerful service guarantees for researchers in literature investigation, academic writing, hot topic tracking, and academic influence dissemination.

#### 4. Innovation in Knowledge Service Models for University Journals

First, fully utilize media such as audio and video. In the 5G era, audio and video storage and transmission are faster and more convenient, and people are more easily attracted to audio and video content on mobile internet. Lengthy textual narratives struggle to achieve good dissemination on the internet. Therefore, while high-quality paper content remains the foundation of university journals, editors must keep pace with the times to learn how to use multimedia formats and related software algorithms to disseminate and promote quality content to broader audiences. For example, *Nature* publishes free weekly audio summaries outlining the core content of current articles and commentary from renowned scientists. The *Chinese Journal of Cardiology Video* reports research findings in professional fields through video and audio, presenting the latest medical research results through more intuitive, vivid, and visual forms, achieving good dissemination effects.

Second, fully utilize live streaming. Under global pandemic conditions, hosting various offline academic conferences and seminars has become difficult, and the live streaming industry has developed rapidly. Software such as Tencent Meeting, DingTalk, and Zoom have been widely applied to online academic seminars and courses in recent years. Due to lack of funding and personnel, university journal editorial offices find it difficult to independently organize offline academic seminars. However, online academic seminars are low-cost, time-efficient, and feature a “short, flat, fast” characteristic, making them very suitable for the scale of university journal editorial offices. They could even host a small online academic seminar monthly, which would benefit both manuscript solicitation and strengthen the bond between the journal and experts.

Third, organize academic communities and groups. Since high-quality academic resources are limited, competition among university journal editorial offices to attract quality scholars and manuscripts is intense. To gain the favor of experts and scholars, editorial offices must form strong interactive relationships with authors and readers. Moreover, under the current journal evaluation system, it is extremely difficult for non-CSSCI or non-core journals to obtain high-quality manuscripts and enhance their competitiveness. Therefore, these “non-core” university journals need to improve their service awareness and capabilities to increase their attractiveness. Organizing academic communities and groups is an excellent approach, such as establishing WeChat or QQ groups for readers and authors where editors can promptly answer authors’ questions, provide the journal’s topic directions, and push article summaries and weekly topics. Through regular online and offline activities organized via these communities, editorial offices can increase community activity and user stickiness. Simultaneously, through communication among community members, editors can obtain first-hand academic resources and topic directions, accurately grasping reader and author needs. In this regard, the Renmin University Book and Newspaper Information Center and the *Journal of South China Agricultural University* have

made positive attempts. For instance, the editorial office of the *Journal of South China Agricultural University* operates a WeChat academic community, providing pre-review topic selection services—authors can submit recent research topic plans for pre-submission, and editors can determine whether they align with the journal’s scope and requirements. If not, neither party wastes time; if they do, editors can provide specialized assistance and follow-up. This essentially moves editorial services forward, constructing a user-centered editing and publishing process.

Fourth, provide different content according to the attributes of different media platforms. Currently, most university journals have opened multiple platforms but still directly copy and paste print content onto different platforms, obviously ignoring that each platform has its unique attributes and user base. Therefore, editors need to possess internet thinking: on WeChat Official Accounts, they can publish more complete and in-depth long-form content; on Weibo, they need to publish short, fast argument abstracts and article summaries; on short video platforms like Douyin, they should focus on images and videos with minimal text, such as inviting authors to shoot brief videos explaining their articles. Through this content repurposing, quality content can be widely disseminated across the full media platform.

Fifth, in the “Internet Plus” context, the influencer economy has risen rapidly, including academic influencers and intellectual influencers. This is not entirely about pursuing traffic and fame—many academic influencers have popularized more scientific knowledge to the public by expanding their influence. For example, Professor Luo Xiang from China University of Political Science and Law has over 20 million followers on Bilibili, disseminating high-quality content and conducting legal popularization through video. In fact, universities have many knowledgeable experts and scholars whose teaching audiences and influence are limited to campus, representing significant resource waste. Therefore, university journals can cooperate with willing and capable experts to jointly create knowledge-based key opinion leaders (KOLs), 进行二次加工 (reprocess) their research findings and experiences for dissemination. They can also use online knowledge Q&A methods, such as paid online questions or one-on-one exchanges, to break down barriers between authors and readers, enabling effective communication. For instance, “Wenkan Research” is a research paper writing platform providing one-on-one customized guidance courses for journal paper writing and publication, matching researchers in the same field for private customized guidance to address weaknesses in paper writing and publication. Similarly, the “Academic Circle” section of “Yixuezhe” provides services such as expert editorial consultation, manuscript quality review, and intelligent journal submission recommendations.

Currently, the product forms, service models, and profit schemes of university journal knowledge services remain relatively singular. However, with the development of artificial intelligence and big data, traditional editing will inevitably be replaced. Therefore, editors must prepare in advance, utilizing new tech-

nologies to keep pace with the times. Innovation is needed not only in content but also in user engagement, promotion, dissemination, and management. University journals should not merely be content intermediaries but should serve as bridges connecting readers and authors, continuously providing knowledge services for users and becoming an irreplaceable link in scientific research, content production, and distribution. Meanwhile, university journals also need to explore their own profit models—relying solely on administrative appropriations makes genuine development difficult and creates dependencies. In the process of providing knowledge services, there is considerable room for exploration in transaction services, membership services, and online advertising.

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