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How Book Editors in the Big Data Era Should Respond to Challenges: Post-Prints

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Abstract

As technology advances, new technologies have brought new changes and opportunities to book publishing, while also presenting challenges to editors—the vital force of the publishing industry. This article discusses how book editors can respond to various challenges in the new era and new ecosystem from the perspective of enhancing their professional qualities.

Full Text

Preamble

How Book Editors Should Respond to Challenges in the Big Data Era

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Abstract: With technological development, new technologies have brought new changes and opportunities to book publishing, while also posing challenges to editors—the vital force of the publishing industry. This article discusses how book editors can respond to various challenges in the new era and ecological environment from the perspective of enhancing editors' professional qualities.

Keywords: big data; new technologies; professional qualities; book publishing; book editors

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In recent years, as cloud computing and big data have been widely applied across various industries, the publishing sector has also been significantly impacted. Under these new circumstances, book editors must develop a deep understanding of relevant policies and industry trends, particularly in their specialized fields, shift their mindset, broaden their perspectives, and leverage their rich editorial experience to uphold content as king. By ensuring the core competitiveness of books and actively meeting the higher demands that big data imposes on topic planning, manuscript solicitation, editorial processing, marketing, and reader services, editors can contribute to the sustainable development of the publishing industry.

1. Basic Qualities That Book Editors Should Possess

What is an editor? Many books offer descriptions yet provide no unified answer. Some say editors are “catalysts” for works, others call them “decorators” of manuscripts. While these characterizations may roughly outline certain aspects of editing, they are ultimately inadequate upon closer examination. The following description perhaps offers a more profound explanation of this profession [1]: “Editors fully mobilize their entire personality, character, life philosophy, worldview, knowledge, education, skills, and even daily lifestyle to engage in work related to experts, authors, or book creators. Editing requires not just some of these elements but a ‘complete personality’ that integrates all of them. In fact, editing is just one of countless professions in the world and seems to require no special ‘ambition’ or particular demands and criticism. However, people raise various questions about editors because they hope editors possess the spirit to face authors and participate in creation, as well as the conceptual power to deliver it to readers in the form of a ‘book.’ ” —Matsumoto Shōji, *An Editor’s Work Log*

So what specific aspects does this “complete personality” entail? Based on the authors’ long-term work experience, we offer the following summary.

1.1 Firm Political Awareness

China’s publishing industry is an important component of the socialist cause led by the Communist Party of China. Editors must establish correct political and holistic perspectives, adhere to the direction of serving the people and socialism, and promptly grasp national political orientations to disseminate and accumulate positive energy. Editors must properly handle the dialectical unity between social and economic benefits. On one hand, they should provide multi-faceted, multi-level publications to meet readers’ needs; on the other hand, they must prioritize social benefits as the supreme criterion and cannot blindly pursue economic interests or one-sidedly chase market trends. Publications represent

the direction of advanced national culture. Editorial staff must possess high ideological quality, aim to enrich people' s spiritual lives, achieve the perfect combination of social and economic benefits, adhere to the principle of quality first, and persist in arming people with scientific theories, guiding them with correct public opinion, shaping them with noble spirits, inspiring them with excellent works, and providing intellectual support, spiritual motivation, and public opinion environments for socialist modernization [2].

1.2 Noble Professional Ethics

Editors are both organizers of spiritual product production and creators of material wealth, serving as the crucial link between authors and readers. Book editing is a very serious undertaking, and editors shoulder significant social responsibilities. They must enhance their sense of responsibility, maintain a clear and profound understanding of the political, cultural, and content quality responsibilities involved in books, and simultaneously possess the spirit of hard work and selfless dedication. Specifically, in publishing operations, when handling manuscripts and materials, editors must uphold principles of fairness, impartiality, objectivity, and integrity. They should not be extreme or blindly follow trends, must reject personal favoritism in their work, and fully consider the actual interests of books, taking the dissemination of positive social energy as their mission. They should be willing to be “willing oxen” in the publishing industry and “unsung heroes” behind excellent works.

1.3 Solid Professional Competence

The current state of China' s publishing industry requires book editors to possess extremely broad and extensive cultural knowledge, enabling them to “cross boundaries” rather than being limited to a single category or level of publishing. They must be able to handle professional academic works in many fields while also possessing profound writing skills, language expression abilities, and aesthetic capabilities to create works with excellent connotation and external presentation. Editors are the first readers of works, and when facing manuscripts, they serve as both readers and editors. Editors must be thoroughly familiar with the entire publishing process and understand their responsibilities at each stage to ensure publications are specialized and refined. Throughout the publishing process, editors remain the central link and must take full responsibility for the entire workflow.

For instance, when planning books, editors must accurately grasp industry trends, utilize existing resources to develop topics that align with current market conditions, and fully explore potential author resources. They should communicate effectively with authors, offering macro-level insights on work structure and hierarchy to submit excellent proposals. During the writing process, editors must provide “field management,” regularly communicating with authors based on topic characteristics, offering constructive suggestions on content logic and accessibility, and skillfully urging manuscripts to ensure smooth progress. After

authors submit manuscripts, editors must conduct thorough preliminary reviews before formal editing, serving as the first critical gatekeeper by comprehensively evaluating manuscripts against “complete, clear, and finalized” requirements, orientation, writing style, and existing problems to make timely and correct decisions on manuscript selection. This lays a crucial foundation for creating quality books while being responsible to both authors and readers.

For books entering the processing stage, editors must delve deeply into manuscripts, examining political and scientific aspects to create works truly useful for target readers. They must analyze every detail, maintain overall control of chapter structure, and ensure works are complete, systematic, well-structured, and high-quality—not only from publishing standards but also from content logic and systematic perspectives. Simultaneously, editors must possess high aesthetic ability to provide beneficial suggestions on binding design and packaging formats, along with excellent marketing and promotional skills to conduct market promotion after publication and serve readers effectively.

1.4 Acute Planning Perspective

Improving book quality first depends on optimizing topic selection, which begins with effective topic planning. Planning is a crucial link in book publishing, closely related to book sales, and places high demands on editors’ planning capabilities. Editors must conscientiously fulfill their duties and actively participate in topic planning. When developing topics, they should extensively collect and accumulate relevant materials in their responsible fields, carefully study market needs, conduct comprehensive analysis and sufficient demonstration, and strengthen connections with experts and authors in the field to listen to their opinions and suggestions. Editors must possess an acute planning perspective, skillfully utilizing the conveniences of the big data era, making full use of massive information resources and collective knowledge resources, promptly understanding national policy orientations and readers’ real needs, closely monitoring book market conditions and competitors, and mastering topic feasibility to continuously improve planning levels.

1.5 Strong Communication Skills

Communication ability is a basic quality for editors. The characteristics of the editing profession require practitioners to possess strong social skills. This includes four main aspects: First, communication with authors, which runs throughout manuscript solicitation, review, and marketing. Editors must fully understand and respect authors, demonstrate empathy, and objectively propose reasonable suggestions on manuscript issues for effective revision to improve readability and content quality. Second, communication with readers. The communication barriers between readers, publishers, and editors have now disappeared, with the internet becoming an important platform for all parties. As a bridge between authors and readers, editors can effectively feed back reader feedback and reading difficulties to authors, which significantly helps improve book

quality, optimize subsequent topics, and inspire planning perspectives. Third, communication with personnel responsible for various process stages. Book publishing involves numerous human resources, including legal affairs, three-review personnel, proofreaders, printing departments, and distribution departments. Editors must actively and efficiently communicate with corresponding personnel at each stage to ensure smooth publication and distribution. Fourth, engaging with society. Quality books require effective dissemination methods, so editors must communicate with all kinds of people, such as promotion media, book reviewers, and recommenders, requiring quick response capabilities and flexible handling methods.

1.6 Excellent Marketing Capability

“Good wine also fears a deep alley.” The wide dissemination of excellent works cannot be separated from editors’ promotional and marketing abilities. In publishing houses, editors understand books most profoundly, and their cooperation with distribution departments plays a vital role in book promotion. Editors must understand publicity, write marketing copy, and accurately push publishing information about excellent books to readers, building a spiritual civilization bridge between publishers and readers while increasing book sales and generating considerable economic benefits for publishers.

Traditional marketing methods include media advertising, bookstore posters, offline lectures, book giveaways, reading events, forwarding promotions, and book reviews. In the new era, marketing methods have become flexible and diverse, leveraging the rapid development of the internet to achieve multi-platform, multi-level, and multi-method marketing. Editors need to use various technical means to accurately grasp book positioning, identify precise target groups, ensure effective advertising, and find corresponding reader communities. For example, by placing short videos on online bookstore detail pages, editors can display books comprehensively, attract target readers, help them intuitively understand book content and features, and quickly determine whether a book suits their needs, thereby achieving more precise and effective sales.

Editors should also stand at a higher level to deeply develop product intrinsic value, truly mastering authors’ writing intentions to better communicate with multiple parties and achieve zero-distance resonance between authors and readers. Furthermore, editors can utilize existing reader resources through precise classification, sending mass emails, establishing reader groups, and other channels to quickly deliver the latest publishing information to readers and facilitate more sales.

1.7 Strong Learning Ability

Excellent editors must possess broad and extensive knowledge. The era is developing rapidly, and the publishing industry has undergone transformation and reform. Editors need the spirit of courageous exploration and continuous im-

provement, perfecting their knowledge structure and updating their knowledge base according to the times' development. Editors are not omnipotent and will inevitably encounter unfamiliar fields and have their own shortcomings. They must constantly ask themselves: What types of books will sell well? How can they better present authors' ideas? What domain knowledge do they need to supplement for a particular topic? Maintaining a constant learning state and curiosity and sensitivity toward technological development are also important aspects of improving professional competence.

1.8 Excellent Innovation Capability

In the book publishing process, excellent editors do not merely follow authors but excel at using divergent and reverse thinking, fully leveraging their subjective initiative and creativity. This requires editors to keep pace with the times, transform inherent concepts, and promote innovative spirit in all publishing process stages. For instance, during topic planning, editors should conduct "brainstorming" to control overall publishing quality through source quality control. Editors should actively adjust their thinking according to market characteristics, filter and refine useful information through comprehensive methods, consider reader needs, investigate existing market products, avoid homogenization and blind following, select unique perspectives, create distinctive products with remarkable content and form, produce books that align with contemporary trends and reader preferences, thereby enhancing work reputation and publisher influence to achieve both fame and fortune.

2. Actively Responding to Challenges in the New Situation

Although editors' workflows may seem unchanged from before—still encompassing research, material selection, manuscript solicitation, commissioning, urging, editing, proofreading, review, printing, distribution, and marketing—each stage has actually changed significantly from traditional publishing upon closer examination. How can editors improve themselves and actively respond to these numerous changes? This article elaborates from the following perspectives.

2.1 Enhancing Political Cultivation and Professional Ethics

As publishing professionals, editors must maintain clear minds, prioritize political correctness, improve political sensitivity, and create products that align with mainstream values and positive energy. Editors must consciously abide by national laws, regulations, and policy documents on press and publishing, take disseminating advanced knowledge achievements as their mission, and maintain diligent, meticulous, dedicated, humble, and pragmatic work styles. In the new era, editors must promptly embrace new changes, keep pace with the times, improve their political cultivation and professional ethics through various channels, and become editors who meet contemporary requirements and demonstrate new demeanor.

2.2 Improving Professional Competence and Communication Skills

In the big data era, book editors have richer resources to utilize, more diverse channels for knowledge acquisition, and can fully leverage advanced internet development technologies to guide their work. For example, science and technology editors facing constantly updated technical tools, software versions, and emerging new terms and terminology must keep pace with technological development, maintain active learning attitudes, broaden their horizons by continuously learning and understanding industry trends, adjust their topic structure to meet technological development and reader needs, and enhance their professional competence. Simultaneously, editors must be adept at using advanced tools, such as new proofreading software like Heima (Black Horse) to assist in editing and reduce common errors in text and punctuation, thereby improving editing efficiency. They can also use online databases for retrieval and query to ensure content accuracy and professionalism.

In terms of social interaction and communication, editors also have more improvement methods. They can utilize more communication tools such as Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok to conduct broader exchanges and cooperation with authors and media while better showcasing themselves through these platforms, providing greater convenience for promoting in-depth mutual understanding.

2.3 Enhancing Planning and Marketing Capabilities

Big data development provides more effective manuscript solicitation methods and broader solicitation spaces. Previously, even with excellent proposals, finding suitable authors was extremely difficult. In a vast sea of people, matching topics with authors was challenging. Now, with big data and cloud technology, everything is possible. Modern people live in various “grids” on the internet, and self-media is developing rapidly. Editors can post solicitation needs to more platforms and display them to more people. Meanwhile, through news materials, blogs, Weibo, personal websites, WeChat official accounts, and TikTok channels, they can quickly find target authors, and publishing houses can establish their own author databases, making cooperative publishing, series publishing, and large-project collaborative publishing much easier than before.

For example, by leveraging authoritative institutions’ book sales ranking data, editors can extract needed information, identify hotspots, analyze characteristics of bestsellers, and combine various rankings from book sales websites to provide more data basis and references for planned topics, achieving targeted and efficient results. Additionally, whereas planning editors previously attended offline technical conferences to understand industry trends and contact authors through business card exchanges—often inconvenient due to budget and distance constraints—technological development has brought new possibilities. Many conferences now offer live streaming and rebroadcasting, allowing editors to participate without leaving home, saving transportation, accommodation, and time costs. Through online learning and communication, editors can more quickly

grasp technological development trends, timely understand social hotspots, form more forward-looking topic planning proposals, and increase the probability of publishing bestsellers.

Through big data technology, book editors can obtain real-time data on book browsing records, download records, and click-through rates, enabling accurate analysis and grasp of reader needs. This provides greater convenience and success possibilities for selecting planning directions and achieving more precise customization and marketing. Publishing books aims for reading, and network development has made real-time interaction between publishers and readers possible. Maintaining readers and providing follow-up services for book products are also important aspects of sustainable development for publishing houses. Editors can both discover potential planning directions and maintain publishing brands by mining readers' potential needs to form targeted topic planning and achieve personalized customized publishing.

Marketing is an extremely important link for any industry. In the big data era, book editors should also quickly adapt and transform their roles in marketing, actively think comprehensively, and utilize multiple marketing methods to promote book sales. Traditional marketing often focused on single-work marketing, but nowadays, flexible use of various methods such as extended reading, bundled sales, digital publishing, audiobooks, and short videos has diversified book marketing. For example, by placing short videos on online bookstore detail pages, editors can display books comprehensively, attract target readers, help them intuitively understand book content and features, and quickly determine whether a book suits their needs, thereby achieving more precise and effective sales.

2.4 Improving Learning and Innovation Abilities

Editors' professional qualities and abilities are not formed overnight but require long-term practice, timely summarization, and continuous learning. Publishing houses need to conduct regular training for editors based on business needs, and editors should also constantly focus on learning to respond to environmental changes. In the big data era, learning methods have become diverse. Previously, editors improved their skills through offline seminars and reading, but now online training has become more common. Through the internet, editors can more efficiently and conveniently obtain needed professional knowledge. Meanwhile, through various online resources, editors can acquire substantial knowledge supplementation and updates.

Editing is a highly creative job, and the editing process is also an innovative process. Big data technology has significantly impacted the diversity of book publishing. Book editors can discover new ideas, revolutionize inherent book editing methods, utilize information technology effectively, and skillfully employ new media technologies to serve book publishing, adapting to new trends in publishing industry development. By integrating these approaches into their

work through greater participation in academic activities and understanding of the latest technological trends, editors can develop acute professional instincts to create newer, more refined works that better meet contemporary needs.

The big data era has placed higher demands on editors. Editors must keep pace with development, establish stronger service consciousness, actively transform their thinking patterns, take disseminating more advanced knowledge and meeting reader needs as their mission, fully utilize the conveniences brought by modern network technology, and comprehensively improve their professional qualities. Only then can they avoid losing themselves in the wave of the times and contribute more and better publications to readers and society, ensuring the healthy and stable development of the publishing industry.

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