

Optimizing Post-Print Publishing of Science and Technology Books in the Context of “Internet Plus”

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Abstract

Technology books, as the pillar product of China’s publishing industry, have long been the focus of production and operation for major science and technology publishing institutions. In the “Internet Plus” era, the rapid development of information technology has provided great convenience for the planning and publishing of technology books, while also imposing higher requirements on traditional book editors’ capabilities in topic selection planning, book production conceptualization, marketing competence, and comprehensive abilities. Publishing professionals must transform outdated work philosophies, arm themselves with Internet thinking, and utilize technologies such as big data and cloud computing to innovate in topic selection planning, book production, book marketing, and talent cultivation, thereby producing high-quality books that are market-responsive and integrate both economic and social benefits (“dual effectiveness”), and promoting the integrated development of traditional and emerging publishing.

Full Text

How to Excel in Scientific and Technical Book Publishing in the “Internet Plus” Era

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Abstract: Scientific and technical books have long served as pillar products in China’s publishing industry, representing a key focus of production and operations for major science and technology publishers. The rapid development of information technology in the “Internet Plus” era has not only provided unprecedented convenience for the planning and publication of scientific and technical books but also placed higher demands on traditional book editors’ abilities in topic selection, production conceptualization, marketing, and comprehensive

skill sets. Publishing professionals must transform outdated work philosophies, arm themselves with internet thinking, and leverage technologies such as big data and cloud computing to drive innovation in topic planning, book production, marketing, and talent development. Only through such efforts can they produce marketable, high-quality books that integrate both economic and social benefits, thereby promoting the integrated development of traditional and emerging publishing.

Keywords: “Internet Plus” ; scientific and technical books; book publishing; book marketing

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1. Research Background

Television programs can reflect public opinion trends and consumer intentions. Editors can now gather and filter information across various media platforms from all walks of life via the internet to establish detailed profiles of both readers and books. Based on these profiles, they can identify the most suitable authors from vast databases to commission manuscripts, thereby achieving precision planning. This precision planning represents the first and most critical step toward minimizing returns, reducing inventory, and maximizing book economic benefits. A typical case in point is the book *85 Practical Cases of MATLAB Digital Signal Processing: From Beginner to Advanced*, which I planned and developed. The topic selection for this book was built upon the author’s years of interactive Q&A activities on the MATLAB Chinese Forum (hereinafter referred to as “the Chinese Forum”). By systematically analyzing and categorizing over 2,000 questions he had answered, the author conceptualized and created a volume where each case holds representative value. Consequently, the book was reprinted within its first year of publication and received widespread acclaim from readers. In June 2021, Qingdao Publishing Group signed a strategic cooperation agreement with JD.com, not primarily to sell books but to leverage JD’s data analysis and reader demand analysis platforms to explore customized publishing pathways. This demonstrates that the traditional model of casting a wide net, passively waiting for submissions, publishing whatever comes along, or relying solely on authors’ or editors’ intuitions about what deserves publication is gradually becoming obsolete. In its place, a new planning model is gaining traction—one that keeps pace with the times, satisfies reader demands, anticipates potential readership and purchasing power before publication, and focuses editorial efforts on further improving book quality. This trend represents an inevitable social development.

The concept of “Internet Plus” was first introduced in the 2015 Government Work Report. In the same year, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, together with the Ministry of Finance, issued guidelines on promoting the integrated development of traditional and emerging publishing, calling for extending the influence of traditional publishing into cyberspace. The integration of “Internet Plus” and book publishing has brought disruptive transformations to the industry: paperless offices, reader-centric thinking, book crowdfunding, digital publishing, print-on-demand, live-streaming sales, and more. Overall, although publishing institutions vary in their implementation intensity and reform progress, all are striving to organically integrate book publishing with “Internet Plus.”

As a crucial segment of China’s publishing industry and the core signature product of many publishing houses, scientific and technical books have always faced intense competition. An examination of China’s scientific and technical book publishing landscape reveals that despite recognizing the necessity of “Internet Plus Book Publishing” and attempting to adjust their workflows, many publishing professionals have only achieved superficial reforms. The stringent standards and constraints on technical content, the serious image of such books, and the professional nature of their readership have resulted in conservative thinking and a reluctance to fundamentally transform established practices. Therefore, exploring how to excel in scientific and technical book publishing under the “Internet Plus” framework holds significant practical importance for the development of this sector.

2. Key Explorations for Scientific and Technical Book Publishing in the “Internet Plus” Era

2.1 Leveraging Big Data for Precision Planning

Under the traditional publishing model, scientific and technical book planning relied heavily on editors’ sensitivity and personal experience, making the process somewhat speculative. However, in the “Internet Plus” era, information on various online platforms (including domestic and international professional websites, forum communities, Douban, Zhihu, and WeChat) is exceptionally rich. Sales data, click-through rates, and page views from both online platforms (major book sales websites, e-book sites) and offline platforms (such as Xinhua Bookstore networks) are readily accessible and usable. News reports and television programs also provide valuable data sources. By harnessing this wealth of information, editors can establish reader profiles and book profiles, then identify the most suitable authors from big data to commission manuscripts, thereby achieving precision planning. This precision planning is the first and most critical step toward zero returns, minimal inventory, and maximizing book economic benefits.

The book *85 Practical Cases of MATLAB Digital Signal Processing: From Beginner to Advanced*, which I planned, exemplifies this precision planning ap-

proach. The topic was developed based on the author's years of interactive Q&A with netizens on the MATLAB Chinese Forum. By meticulously analyzing and categorizing over 2,000 questions he had answered, the author conceptualized and created the book, with each case possessing representative significance. As a result, the book was reprinted within its first year and garnered numerous positive reviews from readers. In June 2021, Qingdao Publishing Group entered into a strategic cooperation agreement with JD.com, with the primary objective not being book sales but rather leveraging JD's data analysis and reader demand analysis platforms to explore customized publishing pathways. This illustrates that the traditional publishing model—characterized by casting a wide net, passively awaiting submissions, publishing whatever arrives, or relying solely on authors' or editors' subjective judgments about what merits publication—is gradually being phased out. A new planning model that keeps pace with the times, satisfies reader demands, anticipates potential readership and purchasing power before publication, and directs editorial efforts toward further improving book quality is now prevailing in the industry, representing an inevitable societal trend.

2.2 Skillfully Applying New Technologies to Enliven Traditional Books

In the “Internet Plus” context, the integration of new technologies with book publishing can be achieved through several approaches.

First, innovation in publishing formats. Under the traditional model, books were primarily paper-based, occasionally accompanied by a CD-ROM. Today, leveraging “Internet Plus,” paper books can be made more three-dimensional, content-rich, and value-maximized. The “MATLAB & Simulink Development Examples Series” published by Beihang University Press and the “interactive publishing” model with the MATLAB Chinese Forum represent excellent attempts. “Interactive publishing” involves affixing the Chinese Forum's URL and a verification code on paper books. Readers can log in to the forum using the code to access a dedicated discussion section for that book, where the author serves as the moderator and can upload value-added materials at any time (program codes, courseware, instructional videos, or new examples). All readers can freely download these materials and engage in discussions about the book's content with the author and fellow readers. Both authors and readers can post errata for discovered issues in this section. This publishing format endows traditional paper books with new vitality, transforming flat texts into three-dimensional experiences and using online resources to compensate for the slow update cycle of paper books. This approach has proven highly popular among readers, who praise such books as “living books” or “growing books.” The digital resources in the forum not only add value to the books but also serve as natural online advertisements for the paper versions, creating a long-tail effect that significantly enhances the benefits of print books. Evidently, in the “Internet Plus” era, planning editors must shift their mindset from “finding

top authors” to “creating books that truly help readers,” thereby securing their share of the market.

Second, innovation in book production formats. In the information age, reading habits have become increasingly personalized: some readers remain loyal to paper books, accustomed to annotating and flipping through physical pages, while others have shifted to online sources, e-readers, mobile reading apps, and short-video platforms, prioritizing convenience and search-based reading. Scientific and technical book editors should adapt to these evolving trends by coordinating book production formats according to diverse reader needs, adopting a matrix approach to publishing. This strategy enables content dissemination across multiple media forms—print, internet, and mobile—embodying the principles of “one content, multiple creative expressions,” “one product, multiple formats,” and “one production, multiple releases.” This approach fully satisfies readers’ learning requirements for “viewing,” “reading,” “listening,” and “interacting,” thereby enhancing the dissemination efficiency of scientific and technical books. “Cloud textbooks” represent an innovation in traditional teaching materials under the internet background. Based on learners’ needs for contextualized, dynamic, and visualized learning experiences, they reorganize high-quality paper textbook content through rich media layout design and interactive design, presenting it in a completely new format across multiple devices (mobile phones, tablets, PCs). This provides students with a rich, extensible, interactive, and trackable learning experience, exemplifying cross-boundary publishing.

Third, changes in book promotion methods. Even the best products require effective promotion, and books are no exception. Traditional promotion relied heavily on extensive placement in physical bookstores, author signing events, book fairs, and newspaper reviews. In the internet model, promotion channels and methods have diversified: engaging industry influencers (on Weibo or WeChat official accounts) for promotion, distributing book introductions in targeted communities (WeChat groups, QQ groups, Zhihu, Douban), and leveraging short-video platforms such as video channels, Douyin, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu. Combining celebrity live-streaming with publisher self-broadcasting enables comprehensive and multi-dimensional book introductions. Regardless of the format, the completeness of basic book information (such as “Book Details” pages on JD.com and Dangdang.com) is crucial. Innovative and thoughtful promotional copy can intuitively showcase a book’s content and features, helping readers understand the book and stimulating purchase desire—this deserves serious attention from planning editors.

Fourth, transformation of book service concepts. To enliven books in the new era, we must shift from the previous “author-centric” concept to a “reader-oriented” service philosophy. For instance, flexibly applying QR codes in mechanical or programming books allows readers to scan and view color images or video demonstrations for content that is difficult to explain through text alone or would require excessive space. Deep integration with WeChat official accounts—providing value-added material downloads, errata, sample book and chapter re-

quests, and return/exchange services for damaged books—substantially enhances readers’ convenience and sense of belonging. This solves the drawbacks of traditional publishing models where readers and publishers could not connect or communicate effectively, while also increasing reader stickiness to the publisher’s WeChat official accounts. Reader thinking is the core of all internet thinking; only by prioritizing reader experience and emphasizing readers’ sense of gain can we plan and produce grounded, marketable books.

2.3 Strengthening Whole-Process and Market Awareness for Effective Book Marketing

In traditional publishing workflows, editing, printing, and distribution operate relatively independently, resulting in poor information flow and limited sales feedback. As the soul of the book publishing process, planning editors must possess whole-process and market awareness: conducting thorough research on author backgrounds, book features, and target readers during the topic selection phase; considering sample chapters, promotional copy, and cover and interior design during the editing phase; and staying informed about printing technology trends (such as digital publishing, e-books, print-on-demand, and digital printing) during the production phase to minimize inventory while maximizing reader satisfaction and benefits.

After publication, editors should work closely with distribution staff to develop practical and feasible marketing promotion plans. First and foremost, editors must provide distribution personnel with comprehensive book information, including content introductions, marketing headlines, editorial recommendations (highlighting the book’s strengths as much as possible), compelling sample chapters, and relevant information about competing titles. This ensures that book descriptions are clear and detailed, allowing readers to immediately understand how the book can help them when they encounter it in searches. Second, in today’s highly networked environment, besides selling books directly through online stores like JD.com, Dangdang, and Tmall, editors can utilize publisher blogs, author blogs and social circles, publisher WeChat official accounts, and industry celebrities’ blogs for book promotion. Third, planning editors can leverage big data and cloud computing to identify target reader groups and conduct targeted community marketing (such as in QQ groups, WeChat groups, Zhihu, and Douban). In the internet era, every planning editor is part of multiple “groups,” and the ability to effectively utilize and activate these groups tests editors’ organizational and planning capabilities. Beihang University Press maintains numerous reader groups comprising teaching assistants (mostly teachers) and learning assistants (mostly students), where information on teaching seminars, new book introductions, or live-streaming lottery events is regularly posted. This facilitates information exchange, technology integration, and fosters a sense of community belonging among readers, representing a thoughtful example of niche marketing using the internet. Additionally, short-video platforms such as video channels, Douyin, and Xuexi Qianguo have become im-

portant battlegrounds for book marketing in recent years, with multi-platform 联动 (linkage) recommendations delivering superior results that warrant serious research into better marketing strategies from publishing professionals. For example, the book *Wave Makers: What Internet Big Shots Haven't Told You*, planned by the “Chaping” team, achieved sales exceeding 50,000 copies through 联动 (linkage) recommendations across multiple platforms including the “Chaping” WeChat official account and influencers on Douyin, Kuaishou, video channels, and Xiaohongshu.

Although the primary sales battlefield in the “Internet Plus” era has shifted from traditional offline to online channels (for instance, online sales at Beihang University Press now account for approximately 80% of total sales), and the industry consensus is that planning editors must emphasize online services, I maintain that offline sales remain a crucial arena that cannot be neglected at this stage. Offline display and promotional functions serve as important foundations for achieving online sales success. Only through the dual development of online and offline channels can book marketing be healthy and deliver results that satisfy all stakeholders.

2.4 Cultivating New Talent and Building a Rational Talent Structure

The digital wave is transforming people’s reading and purchasing habits, presenting severe transformation challenges for publishing houses. At the editorial level, although traditional scientific and technical book editors generally possess high academic qualifications and solid professional knowledge, their previous work models leave them facing difficulties during transformation: insufficient internet application skills, vague concepts about implementing relevant technologies and product functions on new media platforms, inadequate understanding of planning strategies and traffic attraction tactics required in the internet era, and rich editorial experience but severe lack of marketing knowledge. At the institutional level, traditional publishing houses often suffer from an overabundance of administrative staff relative to editorial talent, a surplus of single-skilled professionals compared to versatile talents, and insufficient communication and coordination opportunities between positions. As the core force of publishing houses, these issues significantly hinder the development of the book publishing industry in the “Internet Plus” context.

Therefore, strengthening talent cultivation and optimizing talent structures in publishing institutions has become particularly important. From the publisher’s perspective, while learning from and drawing on other organizations’ talent development systems, they should also increase financial investment, conduct publishing professional skills innovation competitions, and enhance training programs to provide strong support for cultivating high-quality composite talents and information technology professionals, thereby ensuring a rational talent structure that meets the needs of book publishing in the new media era. From the editor’s perspective, they must continue to advance their professional skills and publishing knowledge in step with the times, as the fundamental principle

of “content is king” in books will never change. Simultaneously, editors need to proactively learn internet application skills and internet thinking—essentially, reader thinking, a mindset centered on readers that builds publishing value upon reader value. Furthermore, editors in the new media era should give equal importance to marketing and planning capabilities, as marketing ability is an extension and manifestation of planning ability, while marketing data provides the basis and support for future planning activities. The widely known WeChat official account “Hunzhi” (混知) exemplifies this approach, with its products fully utilizing internet technology to achieve diversified operations and publishing matrix development, representing an excellent case of integrated planning and marketing.

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

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