

Exploring Pathways for Academic Journal Editors to Enhance the Four Capabilities in the Context of Media Convergence: Postprint

Authors: Quanwei Wang, Zhang Haidong

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

Abstract

In the media convergence era, academic journal publishing models are being redefined, requiring academic journal editors to cultivate external capacities of fieldwork and insight, and internal capacities of intellect and writing—the “Four Forces” . This paper summarizes the significance and specific manifestations of the “Four Forces” in academic journal editing work, proposes pathways and strategies for editors to enhance these capabilities, with the aim of providing a reference for fellow editors.

Full Text

Exploring Paths for Academic Journal Editors to Enhance the “Four Abilities” in the Context of Media Convergence

Wang Quanwei, Zhang Haidong

(Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences, Haikou, Hainan 571101)

Abstract: In the era of media convergence, the publishing model of academic journals is being fundamentally redefined, requiring editors to externally cultivate their “foot ability” and “eye ability” while internally developing their “brain ability” and “pen ability.” This paper examines the significance and specific manifestations of these “Four Abilities” in academic journal editing work, and proposes concrete pathways for editors to enhance these competencies, aiming to provide practical reference for fellow professionals in the field.

Keywords: media convergence; academic journal editors; Four Abilities; “converged publishing” ; transformation and upgrading

Introduction

The concept of “converged publishing” originates from media convergence theory in communication studies. Under converged media conditions, higher demands are placed on content production and public opinion guidance. As important carriers for disseminating academic information and achievements, academic journals undergoing transformation from content services to knowledge services depend not only on manuscript quality but also on the comprehensive qualities of journal editors. This necessitates that editors strengthen their cultivation of the “Four Abilities” –foot ability, eye ability, brain ability, and pen ability.

In 2016, at the Party’ s News and Public Opinion Work Symposium, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that good news reporting relies on fine work styles and writing, which are themselves products of robust foot ability, eye ability, brain ability, and pen ability. These “Four Abilities” requirements serve as both an action guide for ideological work in the new era and a practical coordinate system for every academic journal editor. They represent not only fundamental requirements for improving editorial and proofreading capabilities and professional competence, but also crucial prerequisites for enhancing journals’ socio-economic benefits and disseminating advanced culture.

Previous scholars have extensively discussed the “Four Abilities” from editorial and publishing perspectives. Huang Xiaoyang [?] argues that the Four Abilities form an interlocking, mutually complementary, and progressive system, and that due to changes in publishing product formats, dissemination channels, and distribution models, book editors must cultivate these abilities to adapt to new publishing forms. Wang Chuanguo [?] explores building a first-class editorial team for scientific and technological publishing by strengthening the Four Abilities and strictly controlling “four gates,” focusing on internal skill development and quality enhancement. Song Limei [?] contends that in the new era, academic journal editors must break traditional editorial concepts, elevate their political and academic positions, continuously enhance their Four Abilities, build core competitiveness, and cultivate themselves into interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary scholar-type, expert-type, and research-oriented composite editors. This paper analyzes the significance of enhancing the Four Abilities for academic journal editors within the context of media convergence and explores practical pathways for improvement, aiming to provide theoretical reference for peers in the profession.

1. The Significance of Enhancing the “Four Abilities” for Academic Journal Editors

The “Four Abilities” are not new concepts—they have always been fundamental skills for journal editors throughout the print media era. Their current emphasis stems from revolutionary changes in new media environments. Academic journal editors are responsible for receiving submissions, soliciting manuscripts, conducting initial reviews, sending manuscripts for external peer review, perform-

ing scientific and reasonable editing and proofreading on suitable manuscripts, correcting errors, and expanding promotional reach to increase citation rates and impact. After publication, they must collect feedback from readers and authors. These tasks test editors' professional foundation, capabilities traditionally constrained by print media but now expanded into multi-dimensional, multi-directional patterns through media convergence. Therefore, academic journal editors must not only flexibly utilize various media platforms but also continuously hone their Four Abilities to enhance their editorial and writing capabilities through continuous reflection, striving to publish high-quality, high-impact journals featuring excellent papers.

2. Manifestations of the “Four Abilities” in Academic Journal Editing

Foot ability refers to practical engagement—stepping out of the office. For academic journal editors, this manifests in communicating with authors, planning columns, soliciting manuscripts, and expanding journal promotion. To cultivate foot ability, editors must first establish firm political stances, elevate their political awareness, and maintain correct publication orientation while leveraging media convergence technologies. Second, they must immerse themselves in scientific research frontlines, enter authors' work environments, actively participate in academic conferences and forums, grasp academic development trends, understand the latest research achievements, and solicit high-quality manuscripts.

Eye ability encompasses observation, discovery, discernment, and judgment. When soliciting manuscripts, editors must demonstrate information sensitivity to anticipate and identify valuable information from platforms and fieldwork—a crucial test of eye ability. To enhance eye ability, editors must first maintain a broad perspective, taking serving national policies and the overall situation as their fundamental responsibility. They should emphasize both social and economic benefits, disseminate positive energy, promote truth, goodness, and beauty, and publish socially valuable papers. Second, they must skillfully utilize media convergence technologies to collect industry information, analyze development trends, and accurately distinguish manuscripts' academic and social value. This requires continuous learning and reflection to develop “sharp eyes.”

Brain ability represents thinking capacity. Academic journal editors must maintain perpetual readiness to learn new knowledge through various channels—from predecessors, peers, and authors—covering political theory, professional knowledge, and emerging technologies. They must continuously organize and store this knowledge for ready access while emphasizing reflection and innovation. Editing and publishing is essentially a process of thoughtful innovation; only through continuous reflection, consideration, and summarization can one become an expert. Brain ability involves not merely thinking but critically analyzing, judging, and selecting content in manuscripts.

Pen ability refers to writing and editing capability—the comprehensive skill of

expressing information acquired through foot, eye, and brain abilities. Academic journal editors must excel at editing, treating authors' papers as their own by editing, revising, reviewing, and polishing them to present near-perfect work to readers—this represents the ultimate manifestation of pen ability. In the media convergence era, pen ability further emphasizes selecting presentation methods that comprehensively meet user needs. Additionally, editors must be skilled writers, demonstrated through professionally crafted rejection letters, paper evaluations, annual journal reviews, and various reports.

Overall, the Four Abilities constitute a closely integrated whole. Emphasizing any single aspect in isolation cannot produce high-quality publications. Only through continuous cultivation of all Four Abilities can academic journal editors publish excellent papers.

3. Pathways to Improve the “Four Abilities” in the Context of Media Convergence

3.1 Deepening Engagement with Research Frontlines to Enhance “Foot Ability”

Currently, many academic journals still passively wait for submissions. Due to position constraints, some editors confine themselves to their offices, preferring isolated work and merely editing what arrives, resulting in insufficient understanding of disciplinary developments and technological advances. Over time, this leads to outdated knowledge structures, causing inadequate grasp of manuscripts' academic quality and innovation, and even knowledge-based errors. Therefore, academic journal editors must stay connected to the ground, utilizing all available resources and opportunities to engage with research frontlines and intentionally enter authors' and experts' circles. Through WeChat public accounts, mini-programs, microblogs, micro-videos, and other channels, editors can learn about research teams' ongoing work, new business ventures, and funded projects. Through site visits, phone communications, academic exchanges, and conference participation, editors can build genuine relationships with experts. Only by truly entering authors' and experts' circles can editors actively solicit manuscripts from outstanding scholars, particularly top experts, to improve submission quality and give the journal a stronger foundation. Only through such engagement and communication can editors enhance their professional expertise and provide objective, constructive feedback during editing. Only by understanding authors' and readers' preferences and acceptable reading formats can editors cultivate local authors, encourage promising contributors, retain established ones, and align with all-media development trends to 挖掘优质稿件和优秀作者群 (excavate high-quality manuscripts and outstanding author groups), ensuring content remains king and promoting secondary processing and dissemination of quality content to enhance journal impact and attract premium submissions [?].

3.2 Sharpening Observation to Enhance “Eye Ability”

In the media convergence era, content competition has become increasingly fierce, and traditional print media has entered a new period of comprehensive technological integration. This era favors visual and screen-based reading, where traditional static “text + image” formats cannot satisfy contemporary demands for speed and novelty. Audio-video content, particularly short videos, has become more popular. Faced with massive fragmented information brought by new technologies, academic journal editors must maintain clear political positioning while possessing discerning eyes to identify valuable papers among numerous submissions and solicited manuscripts. To achieve this, editors must first elevate their political stance, accurately gatekeep manuscripts’ political orientation, adhere to the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, comply with Party and state policies and regulations on news publishing, maintain correct political, value, and academic directions, and continuously improve political literacy through online platforms like the “Study Strong Nation” App and the CPC News Network, as well as offline political lectures. They must accurately identify and firmly reject manuscripts with political problems or content covertly harming national interests and ethnic unity. Second, editors must ensure manuscripts’ academic quality. Content is the foundation of a journal, and excellent journals require excellent manuscripts and outstanding editorial staff. Publishing units should organize editors to use various new media platforms, WeChat groups, QQ groups, and other social platforms to exchange questions about editing and proofreading processes, while collecting information through different channels to stimulate reflection and consciously exercise eye ability, enabling them to identify truly valuable papers among numerous submissions and extract information helpful for improving editorial capabilities.

3.3 Cultivating Critical Thinking to Enhance “Brain Ability”

Academic journal editors must continuously study national policies, editorial publishing standards, and disciplinary professional knowledge, internalizing this learning while consciously strengthening problem-solving abilities to ensure high-quality publication. Some lower-tier journals receive submissions primarily from grassroots researchers and students of mixed quality. While some papers contain figures, tables, formulas, and data that appear sophisticated, actual data errors and chaotic charts are common. This requires editors to possess high professional expertise and, through deep thinking and systematic verification, eliminate falsehoods and retain quality. Editors can utilize popular “two micros and one terminal” (WeChat, microblog, and news client) formats to continuously learn new knowledge, understand new technologies, apply new thinking, engage in deep reflection, and enhance professional competence, academic level, and innovation capacity, becoming scholar-type and composite editors who elevate manuscripts’ social value and journal impact.

3.4 Diligent Practice in Writing to Enhance “Pen Ability”

In the media convergence era, academic journal editors’ pen ability extends beyond simple writing skills to encompass editing capabilities according to academic and publishing standards, and the capacity to communicate with authors using professional language to write persuasive review comments. Editors can extensively review disciplinary literature through the internet, mobile internet, live audio-video platforms, and professional apps, applying digitalization and paper visualization technologies to document and organize cutting-edge, innovative content with high social and practical value, thereby broadening academic thinking and enhancing manuscript review and editing capabilities. Simultaneously, editors can improve writing proficiency by authoring academic papers.

In summary, against the backdrop of media convergence and utilizing internet technologies, academic journal editors must continuously cultivate their Four Abilities to meet the evolving demands of scholarly publishing and maintain relevance in a rapidly changing information landscape.

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

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