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## Survival Strategies for Book Editors in the New Media Era: Postprint

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### Abstract

Amidst the onslaught of the new media wave, book editors in the traditional publishing industry are confronted with an existential crisis. In response to this issue, this article analyzes the current survival status of book editors, examines the available survival pathway options, and proposes that the key to resolving this problem lies in the digital transformation of traditional publishing and the realization of integrated development as the viable path forward. Through this exploration of editors' survival status and pathways, it is hoped that this study may provide beneficial reference for the industry.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

**Title:** Analysis of the Survival Path of Book Editors Under the New Media Wave

*(Zhengzhou University Press, Zhengzhou, Henan 450000)*

**Abstract:** Under the impact of the new media wave, traditional publishing industry book editors face a survival crisis. To address this issue, this article analyzes the current survival situation of book editors, explores the survival path choices for book editors, and proposes that the key to solving the problem lies in the digital transformation of traditional publishing and achieving integrated development as the way forward. Through the analysis of editors' survival status and survival paths, it is hoped to provide useful references for the industry.

**Keywords:** new media; book editors; digital transformation; integrated development; editorial talent construction

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With the development of digital technology and mobile internet, the new media wave has swept over us. Under the impact of this wave, the traditional publishing industry faces challenges, and book editors face a survival crisis. Where is the way out for traditional publishing? How should book editors survive? This article intends to explore and discuss the survival and transformation path for book editors in the traditional publishing industry.

## 1.1 The Rapid Arrival of the New Media Wave

Today, new media has become a global hot topic. New media is a concept corresponding to traditional media and represents a form of media that utilizes digital technology to provide information and services to users through channels such as computer networks, wireless communication networks, and satellites, as well as terminals including computers, mobile phones, and digital televisions. New media includes mobile phones, digital television, Internet TV, blogs, podcasts, videos, electronic magazines, and is widely applied in instant messaging, search engines, remote office work, online shopping, online payment, ride-hailing, online medical care, online education, online games, online literature, and videos. For instance, short videos and live streaming, which have become immensely popular in recent years, are deeply loved and sought after by people. The new media wave is a transformation of media forms driven by technological progress, bringing about tremendous changes in people's lifestyles.

On February 3, 2021, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released its 47th "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China," showing that as of December 2020, China's internet user population reached 989 million, accounting for one-fifth of global internet users; internet penetration stood at 70.4%, higher than the global average; mobile internet users numbered 986 million, with 99.7% of internet users accessing the internet via mobile phones; online shopping users reached 782 million, representing 79.1% of all internet users; online payment users totaled 854 million, accounting for 86.4% of internet users; and online video users reached 927 million, representing 93.7% of internet users, among which short video users numbered 873 million, accounting for 88.3% of internet users. This series of data demonstrates that China's internet development has reached high growth points in infrastructure construction, high-tech research and development, internet penetration rates, and digital economy scale.

### 1.2.1 Distinct Personalization

The technological and diverse nature of new media determines its personalized characteristics. Today is an era of personalization, and people are no longer

satisfied with receiving the same content as everyone else, while traditional media audiences can only passively read or watch identical content, making traditional media no longer attractive. New media can satisfy people's different interests and needs, segmenting audiences more finely, even targeting individuals and supporting personalized customization.

### **1.2.2 Massive Information Volume**

Due to medium characteristics and technical limitations, traditional media restricts the richness of information content, with limited capacity and insufficient breadth of information. Therefore, in this era of information explosion, print media far from meets people's information needs. New media extends the connotation of information and can expand content without limit. "Theoretically speaking, as long as computer conditions are met, a single new media platform can satisfy the information storage needs of the entire world."

### **1.2.3 Strong Timeliness**

New media information is released promptly and can even be processed and published at any time on various software and web pages. Print media is clearly inadequate in this regard, as paper books generally have long publication cycles that require a series of processes including topic planning, editing, proofreading, and printing, and once printed, modifications are not easy. Digital publishing can overcome this disadvantage, significantly shortening publication cycles, supporting print-on-demand and personalized customization, and making reprints and updates very convenient.

### **1.2.4 Wide Selectivity**

New media offers broad selectivity, allowing people to simultaneously choose multiple media to meet their work, study, and entertainment needs—watching programs while listening to music, retrieving information while publishing information—all thanks to rapidly developing digital and mobile internet technologies. People can also interact with new media, no longer being passive recipients but becoming active participants.

### **1.2.5 Diverse Forms of Expression**

Traditional media has a single form of expression. Taking paper books as an example, even the best content can only be presented through text, images, or tables. In the new media environment, "information dissemination content is no longer limited to images and text; it can comprehensively utilize audio, video, images, and text, greatly enhancing the sensory experience of audiences." [1] It can be said that new media truly brings content to life.

### 1.3 The Declining Traditional Publishing Industry

The decline of the traditional publishing industry has emerged alongside the development of new media. For a considerable period after the reform and opening up, with the rapid growth of the national economy and driven by supply-side structural reform, China's publishing industry continuously improved and expanded its development speed and scale, with sustained growth in the number of publications and a thriving book market. However, in recent years, with advances in digital technology and mobile internet technology, the vigorous development of new media "has squeezed the development space of traditional media to a certain extent. As an important part of traditional media, the traditional book publishing industry is facing unprecedented challenges." [2] The new media wave has changed readers' reading habits, significantly reducing the competitiveness of print media, causing the traditional publishing industry to lose its market and face a bleak prospect. Some have even loudly proclaimed that "print media will die" or "print media is already dead," suggesting that traditional publishing has entered a winter period.

#### 2.1 Increased Work and Life Pressure

Book editors face heavy daily workloads with insufficient editorial staff, leaving everyone struggling to cope. Publication cycles are tight, often requiring books to be published within strict deadlines, making it normal for editors to work around the clock, carrying manuscripts wherever they go. Although large workloads and poor manuscript quality are objective reasons, once book quality is substandard, the responsible editor cannot escape blame. Consequently, editors often feel physically and mentally exhausted. The downturn in the publishing industry directly affects the wages and benefits of book editors when publishing houses experience poor economic performance. Impacted by the new media industry, book editors also face the risk of unemployment, and their career prospects are concerning. Over time, editors lack motivation, merely treating their work as a means of livelihood rather than a career.

#### 2.2 Un guaranteed Manuscript Quality

The quality of publications is largely determined first by manuscript sources. While high-level editorial processing can improve manuscripts, if the manuscript itself is not "good," editors have no foundation to work with, and this problem appears particularly prominent in the traditional publishing industry. China's publishing industry boasts many outstanding publishing houses; however, even among some university presses and in the field of academic publishing, the reality is far from satisfactory. Regarding manuscript sources, editors encounter numerous "academic achievements" rushed out for professional title evaluation each year, as well as manuscripts based on personal connections. Since authors pay for these publications themselves, since the content is not anti-human, and since publishing houses must consider economic benefits, editors can only reluc-

tantly accept these “pulping books” with “saved” print runs, driven by both personal connections and workload pressures.

### **2.3 Loss of Editorial Professional Advantages**

Many people engage in the tedious work of editing with dreams in their hearts, motivated by the aspiration to contribute to culture and the greater good. Editors who were once needed and respected have seen their professional advantages completely disappear today. With traditional publishing in decline, where lies the passion of book editors?

### **2.4 Knowledge Gap and Editorial Generational Discontinuity**

Book editors in traditional publishing suffer from a knowledge gap, generally lacking experience with new media, weak in digital editing capabilities, and insufficient in big data utilization. They still use old knowledge reserves to process rapidly changing information, making their work feel inadequate. Today’s young people are attracted by the emerging new media industry and typically are unwilling to join publishing houses when making career choices; even if they do come, they are difficult to retain. Mentorship has always been a tradition in publishing houses, but with a generational gap between old and new editors, how can the publishing industry continue its legacy, and how can publishing houses develop?

#### **3.1.1 Conceptual Integration**

Traditional publishing concepts lag behind, with publishing houses emphasizing content and taking editors as the main body. In a seller’s market for publications, readers’ needs are neglected. Paper books suffer from serious homogenization and monotonous forms, losing their appeal to readers. New media possesses inherent advantages that align with the trends of the times—on the internet, anyone can become an author without going through publishing houses, as evidenced by the prosperity of online literature. Traditional publishing must learn from the new media industry’s user-centered and service-oriented concepts, break the editor-dominated model, and focus on user experience. Here, the user base includes not only readers but also authors, and book editors must provide high-quality, timely services to users at both ends, offering them platforms for communication and interaction.

#### **3.1.2 Technological Integration**

The popularization of digitization has led traditional media to join the new media camp, with continuous technological transformation in media. Whether in terms of digital content storage or digital dissemination, media communication efficiency has been greatly enhanced. “From the perspective of work efficiency,

the digital transformation of publishing houses not only alleviates the workload burden of editorial positions but also further improves editing and proofreading quality, optimizing publishing processes to the greatest extent.” [3] Against the digital backdrop, publishing houses have begun digital transformation, expanding from single paper books to audiobooks, short videos, mobile apps, and other forms, broadening publication formats. For example, adding QR codes to books not only increases content space but also enables timely updates, compensating for the shortcomings of paper books. Additionally, new online sales models can be developed, integrating online and offline channels through network platforms. Simultaneously, publishing houses should also “combine their actual conditions, establish specialized digital publishing departments to advance digital publishing business, and enhance the standardization of transformation and development.” [4]

### 3.1.3 Content Integration

“Content is king” –both traditional and digital publishing must rely on high-quality content to attract readers. “In the all-media era, the traditional publishing industry must focus on content quality, depth of connotation, and reading experience to achieve integration with new media, deepen structural reform on the supply side of content production, and achieve high-quality development centered on content innovation.” [5] Content has always been the advantage of traditional publishing, with publishing houses possessing excellent resources, editorial strength, and social evaluation. Book editors in the new media era should fully utilize these advantages, constantly establish a consciousness for producing quality works, and publish more excellent books. Publishing houses should also focus on enhancing their brand image, supported by high-quality content to increase user stickiness. Based on maintaining their own advantages, book editors should actively pay attention to the cultural market and use network platforms to find high-quality content resources.

### 3.1.4 Talent Integration

Book editors must keep pace with the times, as stagnation means regression in the tide of the era. Under the new media wave, publishing houses need a large number of interdisciplinary compound talents who understand publishing, master new technologies, and have broad knowledge. Only by strengthening their theoretical and professional levels, utilizing big data to analyze reader needs, and enhancing their digital editing capabilities can book editors meet the requirements of new jobs.

### 3.2.1 Improving Political and Ideological Quality

Book editors should enhance their political sensitivity, study national laws and regulations, abide by professional norms, uphold professional ethics, produce more good books for the people, and achieve both social and economic benefits. For long-term interests, book editors can delay short-term gains, shed

impetuosity, avoid seeking quick success, and possess a vision for “planning for eternity.” They should overcome external disturbances and material temptations with a positive mindset.

### **3.2.2 Enhancing Academic and Professional Competence**

Professional technical ability is the foundation of book editors’ careers and the key to determining publication content quality. “When editors re-create manuscripts, in addition to strong language skills, they must also deeply understand the frontiers and development of relevant professions, strive to make their knowledge structure refined, deep, broad, and extensive, and continuously strengthen their academic cultivation.” [6] Book editors must diligently study book publishing standards, research editorial and proofreading expertise, train their editing and proofreading skills, and expand their knowledge base to cope with the changes of the information age. Faced with rapidly updating and massive amounts of information in society, editors must have the judgment to process information. In the era of 5G, big data, cloud computing, Internet+, and artificial intelligence, editors must also have the ability to structure knowledge and continuously strengthen their learning of new knowledge and skills in practical work to form high comprehensive professional competence.

### **3.2.3 Developing Innovative Thinking**

Innovation is the inevitable result of development and comes naturally. For traditional publishing to survive, it must have innovative thinking. “Editors’ innovative capabilities cannot be achieved overnight, but an open mindset, sufficient sensitivity to information, and pursuit of novelty are basic requirements.” [7] Book editors should have vision, introduce and disseminate new ideas and technologies to serve the people. They should pay attention to society, actively develop new topics, enrich publication content, and strengthen content innovation. They should combine with the times, utilize new media to develop various new publication forms and resources, and broaden their thinking to use network platforms for communication and interaction with readers and authors, fully leveraging the subjective initiative of both.

### **3.2.4 Cultivating Talent Teams**

Talent cultivation is a systematic project, and nurturing competitive compound talents is an inevitable condition for the successful transformation of traditional publishing. First, cultivate book editors’ editing and proofreading skills—these are core competencies and fundamental guarantees for publication quality. Second, strengthen training on new media theory and skills for book editors, enabling them to master digital editing processes, marketing methods, and management approaches. Third, establish a digital publishing talent team with introduction mechanisms to attract digital publishing professionals. Additionally, the practice of having senior editors mentor junior editors is a good tradition.

The “mentor” system newly launched by our publishing house is a positive initiative for talent cultivation. “Mentors” must have excellent skills and capabilities to bring out good “apprentices.” Our publishing house has carefully selected a group of mentors with high political quality and strong academic abilities. Through one-on-one mentoring, editors have greatly improved their academic abilities and publishing skills, enhancing the 梯队建设 (echelon construction) of the talent team and achieving excellent results.

### 3.3.1 Overcoming Psychological Panic

People inevitably fear unfamiliar new things. Faced with the aggressive new media, some book editors develop avoidance psychology, fearing and unwilling to engage with it. At the other extreme, some editors overly rely on new media, not understanding integration, and abandon publishing traditions and original aspirations. Both approaches are unacceptable. Book editors must eliminate distractions, maintain focus, and be able to sit on a “cold bench” (work patiently and diligently).

### 3.3.2 Overcoming Ability Panic

The world is changing so rapidly that editors universally experience ability panic. Editors lose confidence, believing their knowledge and skills lag behind the times, fearing being abandoned by the era, and often feeling inferior and anxious—this is also unacceptable. The solution lies only in confronting the panic, developing new skills, improving editorial work efficiency, and charging head-on toward new media.

### 3.4 Strengthening Institutional Guarantees

One must be strong to forge iron. For publishing to go far and steady, it must emphasize institutional construction, with all operations based on law. University presses should have professional division of labor and assessment methods for editorial staff, quality assurance methods for publications, and incentive methods for outstanding research projects. The important role of editors’ publishing concepts and professional cultivation in book publishing goes without saying, and specialization must become a keyword for both publishing houses and editors. Editors with professional standards and knowledge of operational norms are precisely the amulets of traditional publishing against the new media wave—advantages that traditional publishing has but online publishing lacks. Although new media technology is aggressive, traditional publishing can still accomplish much, and book editors are far from reaching a dead end. The 论调 (argument) that “print media will die” has been sung for years, but paper books remain the first choice for many readers, and digitization has not completely replaced paper, seeming to have a more advantageous position only in journalism. Digital panic is fundamentally psychological panic and ability panic.

## Conclusion

In summary, solving the survival problems of book editors in the traditional publishing industry requires systematic and continuous transformation, with changes needed in both the external environment and among book editors themselves. Faced with a survival crisis, only by breaking through difficulties and 突围 (breaking out of encirclement) can book editors in the traditional publishing industry gain new life.

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