

Research on the Development Path of Academic Journals in the Context of Media Convergence: Postprint

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Abstract

With the rapid evolution of digital and network technologies, emerging media have developed swiftly, ushering in an era of media convergence. In this burgeoning age of converged media, technological advancement has already given rise to a new reading trend. On the one hand, to enhance the efficiency of digital publishing, it is necessary to conduct research on the digital publishing process. On the other hand, it is essential to investigate the characteristics of new technologies, namely, what changes they may bring to the field of digital publishing. Academic journals in China have also been continuously leveraging all available resources to gradually explore their own path of transformation toward media convergence.

Full Text

Preamble

Research on the Development Path of Academic Journals in the Context of Media Convergence

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Abstract: With the rapid advancement of digital and network technologies, emerging media have developed swiftly, ushering in the era of media convergence. In this dynamic media convergence landscape, technological progress has already shaped a new reading trend. On one hand, it is necessary to study the digital publishing process to improve the efficiency of digital publishing. On the other hand, we must examine the characteristics of new technologies and the changes they may bring to the digital publishing field. Chinese academic journals have also been gradually exploring their own transformation and development path in media convergence by utilizing all available resources.

Keywords: digital technology; network technology; emerging media; academic journals; media convergence; transformation development

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1. Research Background

Traditional academic journals and emerging media complement each other. For a long time, academic journals have been industry leaders due to their strong professionalism, reliable information, and standardized formatting—qualities of professionalism, authority, and reliability that other media cannot surpass.

1.1 Analysis of Traditional Academic Journal Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths: Traditional journals maintain stable formats, fixed publication schedules, and standardized layouts with strong continuity. Their content, primarily research papers that have undergone rigorous review and screening, is reliable, authentic, and authoritative. They attract high-caliber authors and enjoy high social recognition. Their readership is relatively stable and purposeful, mainly consisting of researchers with high educational levels.

Weaknesses: Most academic journals are updated periodically, primarily as monthly or even quarterly publications, resulting in long publication cycles and untimely information delivery. Additionally, their content is limited to text and images, predominantly print-based, and costly to produce.

1.2 Analysis of Emerging Media Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths: Emerging media are fast, convenient, and information-rich. They break through temporal and spatial limitations, enabling instant communication. They are open, autonomous, and highly interactive, with diverse and visualized formats.

Weaknesses: Information on emerging media is complex and difficult to verify for authenticity. Posts can be deleted after publication, resulting in poor stability. Authors and audiences vary in levels, leading to inconsistent content quality. Therefore, traditional and emerging media each have their own advantages—they should not replace each other but rather promote mutual support and prosperity.

2. Current Status and Problems of Chinese Academic Journals

2.1 Major Chinese Academic Journal Databases

The “China Excellent Bilingual Academic Journals Database” is a national key digital publishing project jointly undertaken by an electronic magazine publisher and Shanxi Zhiwang Digital Publishing Technology Co., Ltd. It has been published domestically and internationally for two years, currently including over 130 high-quality Chinese-English bilingual journals. In 2019, the database expanded to include more languages and began selecting and including outstanding Chinese-foreign comparative academic papers from other journals.

2.2 Current Problems Facing Chinese Academic Journals

Academic journals primarily target research institutes, colleges, and professional associations, resulting in a narrow readership limited to academic researchers, educators, teachers, and relevant students. Their circulation is limited, small-scale, and highly fixed. From an economic perspective, most academic journal funding comes from government sources, with most journals operating at a loss.

Academic journals in China suffer from serious homogenization [?]. Currently, most prominent and high-level Chinese scientific research and academic achievements are published in internationally renowned journals. According to statistics, in 2013, Chinese universities published over 190 papers in *Nature* and *Science*, with the proportion of total foreign-published papers approaching one-third. This means high-quality content flows to foreign and international publishing markets. International top academic journals are distributed through online markets, and with the popularization of digitalization and networking, their promotion has reached every corner of the world. Some internationally renowned academic journals promote academic achievements through the internet and mobile networks—for example, *Science* has Science Mobile, and Springer has SpringerLink App—putting domestic academic journals under pressure.

China released the “Regulations on the Administration of Online Publishing Services” in 2016, which clarified the concepts, conditions, responsibilities, and safeguards for online publishing, and further encouraged traditional media such as books, audio-visual products, electronics, and newspapers to develop online publishing services to accelerate media integration and development.

3. Media Convergence Publishing Strategies for Chinese Academic Journals

3.1 Emancipate the Mind and Transform Publishing Philosophy

Traditional academic journal organizers should transform and innovate their publishing philosophy and mindset. Even when traditional journals establish websites, they often simply “copy and paste” article content onto the site. While

this does provide a dissemination channel and method, it is essentially old wine in new bottles. For academic journals, internet thinking represents a completely new media convergence publishing philosophy that uses websites as the foundation and mobile intelligent terminals as extensions. All content, processes, dissemination, marketing, and users should originate from the internet first, improving and expanding infrastructure for content review, text editing, data processing, electronic printing, product distribution, and resource preservation.

The media convergence publishing process differs from traditional academic journal publishing. From content and publishing carriers to network technology, editors responsible for different tasks participate together in promoting and publishing manuscripts, forming a mature article through online-first publishing and online advance publishing. The multi-channel, multi-reviewer publishing process represents a form of collaborative publishing. In addition to traditional print distribution, it provides multimedia platforms such as websites, mobile apps, and WeChat, creating true “Internet + Academic Journals.”

3.2 Focus on User Thinking and Service Philosophy

The emergence and development of mobile technology have changed many readers’ reading habits. Many readers have transitioned directly from print reading to mobile reading without even experiencing computer or electronic versions. Traditional academic journal official accounts used to push single-content updates at irregular times. Instant publishing and hyperlink pushing are significant advantages of official accounts and important reasons for attracting followers. The top three types of content on official accounts are current tables of contents, key recommendations, and selected original articles. Thus, we can see that most journal official accounts still serve as supplements to print publications. Official accounts also suffer from delayed and unplanned pushing, resulting in poor user stickiness.

For journals, besides readers, authors, reviewers, and even publishers should all be considered users throughout the entire media convergence publishing process. Therefore, we must fully consider user attention and participation throughout the publishing process. We should expand development to make content publishing and pushing methods more “flexible.” Academic journals can use technical means to stratify and organize content, then integrate, refine, and push it to achieve precise dissemination and enhance academic journal influence. Digital journals will become more active in the future by analyzing readers’ reading habits and online reading traces to understand what issues and which authors readers care about, enabling accurate personalized 推送 of academic articles.

Academic journals serve national development strategies and academic prosperity. In the long run, we must improve service awareness for readers, authors, and reviewers, attracting, discovering, and cultivating various types of readers and authors through high-quality services, striving to turn ordinary journal users into loyal readers. Service thinking and interactive thinking should run through

all aspects of editing, reviewing, and publishing.

Focusing on user thinking and service philosophy requires dynamic presentation of website content. Currently, domestic academic journal websites suffer from single-function journal retrieval and online manuscript processing, lacking distinctive features. We need to strengthen the construction of Chinese academic journal websites, expand their functions, establish scientific and novel columns, and enhance promotion through various forms and channels to attract more readers and expand academic journals' influence and visibility.

3.3 Strengthen Institutional Reform and Improve Supporting Systems and Measures

Research shows that insufficient investment is also an important reason why academic journals remain “small, scattered, and weak.” Domestic academic journals are primarily print-based, requiring low equipment and technology investment. Apart from basic personnel costs, wages and printing fees are paid by higher-level department allocations. Currently, except for four types of academic journals, the vast majority have no external funding. Funding shortages make traditional publishing difficult.

Currently, referring to the development history of some successful advanced journals at home and abroad, most journals operate through market mechanisms with clear division of labor and collaboration among editorial, printing, and marketing departments. In China, subscription, payment, download, and advertising marketing represent true “Internet + Academic Journals.”

Some journals are sponsored by social organizations, and the sponsors' recognition and emphasis directly determine the journals' character and are key to their survival and development [?]. Editorial departments often depend on sponsors and lack autonomous management authority in talent utilization and cultivation.

3.4 Strengthen Cooperation and Take the Path of Intensive Publishing

Under the general trend of academic journal networking, Wang Zipu proposed the concept of establishing a Chinese academic journal portal in 2007. Although this was only a preliminary idea for establishing a portal website, it essentially represented industry cooperation and an intensive idea and appeal. This goal has not been realized but still had positive significance at the time. Scientific and technological development and progress have brought new opportunities and challenges to academic journals.

In the media convergence era, intensive publishing has become an important model for journal development. Academic journals must have the courage to break through institutional barriers and strengthen the construction of academic journal groups to form disciplinary clusters as soon as possible. Currently,

some Chinese academic journals have conducted preliminary explorations and attempts, forming three types of journal clusters: those hosted by Science Press, those hosted by the Chinese Medical Association, and those hosted by the China Optics Journal Network.

3.5 Strengthen Brand Building

Through academic journal branding, we can establish the image, philosophy, and characteristics of excellent academic journals to make them 深入人心. Outstanding journals can also utilize their brand effect to develop their own derivative products, further improving social and economic benefits. This also promotes changes in publishers' roles (from traditional print publishers to content service providers), copyright awareness (from print copyright to digital copyright), models (from print-centered to digital-centered), and working methods (from offline to online journal production and operation processes). The digitization of academic journals is still being explored, with the development direction being to extend academic journals to in-depth processing and development of knowledge resources, combined use of multiple media, and digital construction services.

4. Conclusion

Academic journals under the traditional publishing model face significant challenges in this media convergence era, which brings both pressure and new development opportunities.

In terms of mechanisms, the internationalization process of Chinese academic journals has been slow, and they lack distinctive features. From the perspective of academic journals...

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

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