

Exploring the Transformation and Development of Educational Journals in the Context of Integrated Publishing: A Case Study of *New Curriculum* (Postprint)

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

Abstract

Promoting media convergence has become a significant research topic in contemporary news and publishing studies. As an integral component of China's publishing industry, educational journals play a vital role in educational development. However, confronted with the rapid advancement of convergence publishing technologies and the growing public preference for digital reading, educational journals face considerable challenges in their transformation and development. They must adapt to these trends by advancing towards convergence publishing, collaborating with knowledge service platforms, leveraging new media technologies for dissemination and extended services, and planning convergence publishing projects to drive transformation. Additionally, they should formulate strategic development plans, commence initiatives within their own industry, efficiently utilize high-quality resources, explore sustainable pathways for the transformative development of educational journals, and ultimately achieve both social and economic benefits.

Full Text

Exploring the Transformation and Development of Education Journals in the Context of Convergent Publishing: A Case Study of *New Curriculum*

Abstract: Promoting media convergence has become a critical research topic in journalism and publishing. As an essential component of China's publishing industry, education journals play a vital role in educational development. However, they face significant challenges in transformation amid rapid advances in convergent publishing technologies and the growing preference for digital

reading. Education journals must adapt proactively by developing convergent publishing strategies, collaborating with knowledge service platforms, leveraging new media technologies for dissemination and extended services, and planning integrated publishing projects to drive transformation. By formulating sustainable development plans, focusing on their industry strengths, and efficiently utilizing quality resources, education journals can explore pathways for continuous transformation and achieve both social and economic benefits.

Keywords: media convergence; convergent publishing; transformation and development; education journals; journal transformation

As China continues advancing its national strategies for building a digital nation and cyber powerhouse, the top-level design and overall framework for cyberspace development have been increasingly refined. Meanwhile, the accelerated development of emerging technologies such as 5G commercialization, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things has created a solid foundation for the healthy and orderly growth of convergent publishing. Reading habits have undergone dramatic changes, with digital reading becoming mainstream and demand continuing to surge. In this era of rapid convergent publishing development, traditional education journals must follow the trend, build upon their resource foundations, start from familiar specialties, drive progress through projects, cultivate convergent publishing talent, and actively explore transformation pathways to create new business models for education journal publishing.

1.1 Changing Reading Habits Compel Traditional Journals to Transform

According to the 47th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in December 2020, China's internet user base reached 989 million, with an internet penetration rate of 70.4%. Mobile internet users totaled 986 million, with the proportion of mobile internet usage rising from 81.0% in 2013 to 99.7%. Mobile instant messaging ranked first among all internet applications with a usage rate of 99.0% [1]. Receiving information, learning, and entertainment through new media have become integral to people's daily lives, profoundly transforming lifestyles.

Regarding reading methods specifically, the National Reading Survey conducted by the China Press and Publication Research Institute revealed that in 2019, Chinese citizens' engagement with digital reading methods—including online reading, mobile reading, e-reader reading, and tablet reading—reached 79.3%. Additionally, the 2019 China Digital Reading White Paper reported that China's digital reading user base reached 470 million, with the industry market size growing to 28.88 billion yuan, a 13.5% increase from 2018 [2] (see [Figure 1: see original paper]). These statistics demonstrate that reading habits have shifted significantly, with traditional reading methods being replaced by emerging dig-

ital alternatives. Consequently, traditional journals are being forgotten, experiencing continuous circulation declines and decreasing revenues.

According to the National Press and Publication Administration, compared with 2018, the average print run per issue for all journals decreased by 3.34% in 2019, while culture and education journals saw a 4.58% decline in average print run per issue. Meanwhile, internet-based journal revenues increased by 170 million yuan, representing 8% growth [3] (see [Figure 2: see original paper]). Faced with the rising trend of digital reading, transformation and development have become imperative for traditional journals.

1.2 The Convergent Publishing Trend Provides Direction for Traditional Journal Transformation

With the rapid development of information technology, the pathway for convergent publishing has become increasingly clear, with initial benefits becoming evident. Particularly under the accelerated development of national educational informatization, educational convergent publishing is moving toward standardization and intelligence, and paid knowledge services have become widely accepted.

According to the 2019-2020 China Digital Publishing Industry Annual Report, China's digital publishing revenue exceeded 980 billion yuan in 2019, with mobile publishing reaching 231.482 billion yuan and online education generating 201 billion yuan [4]. Convergent publishing continues to innovate in product forms, service methods, platform channels, and management systems, making the exploration of convergent publishing pathways an inevitable choice for publishing organizations. Publishers are no longer limited to print formats alone but increasingly leverage advanced technologies to integrate text, images, music, animation, games, VR, AR, and other elements based on diverse reader preferences. This approach enables effective value-added realization of content, copyright, and brand value while extending the publishing chain to generate greater revenue. While traditional journal publishing undoubtedly possesses unique content advantages, such value cannot ensure long-term survival through print media alone. The convergent publishing trend thus provides highly feasible reference value for traditional journal development.

2.1 Leveraging Knowledge Service Platforms for Journal Content Digitization

The rapid development of internet and big data technologies has profoundly changed how readers access knowledge, evolving from traditional library searches to Baidu and Zhihu, and now to more specialized intelligent knowledge services. Traditional journal publishers typically have small staffs, with even fewer information technology professionals, making it technically and economically challenging to develop digital knowledge services independently. However, collaborating with large knowledge service platforms for content digitization

proves much simpler [5]. Publishers only need to submit their layout files to these platforms, which then perform digital processing according to journal categories and integrate the data into their resource databases to provide knowledge services to readers. Major knowledge service platforms include CNKI (Beijing) Technology Co., Ltd., Wanfang Data Co., Ltd., Chongqing VIP Information Co., Ltd., and Longyuan Digital Media Group. *New Curriculum Magazine* currently collaborates with all four companies, which fully index its content. While revenue from these platform partnerships may not be substantial, traditional journals gain intangible benefits through promotion and brand value enhancement [6], increasing their resource recognition and relative influence. As technology advances, knowledge service platforms continue expanding their convergent publishing offerings, including priority publishing, open access, collaborative editing, and topic planning. Journals must keep pace with technological developments, actively participating in new technology applications and not missing any opportunities.

2.2 Utilizing New Media Platforms for Dissemination and Service Extension

In March 2020, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee explicitly called for accelerating the construction of new infrastructure such as 5G networks and data centers. Cloud services provide more advanced technical support for new media development, making the “cloud model” an important educational paradigm. New media has become the most important channel for people to access information in daily life, with WeChat, Weibo, short videos, and Toutiao becoming indispensable. New media can disseminate not only text but also audio, images, and video, offering new methods for traditional publishing. Traditional journal publishers must adapt proactively by integrating into new media and developing both online and offline, print and internet-based convergent models [7]. Education journals can make efforts in the following areas: First, use new media platforms to publish curated content, such as operating WeChat official accounts to release daily selected articles and print table of contents. Second, leverage new media for journal promotion and branding. Visual marketing through live streaming and short videos has become a primary brand promotion method. Traditional journals can establish official accounts on short video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou to post videos introducing important articles and attract followers, while also using live streaming as a powerful tool for brand building. Third, expand services through new media platforms, such as opening micro-stores to sell cultural products, journals, and books, thereby developing e-commerce businesses. Fourth, actively develop personalized new media services. Journals are highly specialized, typically serving a single industry with strong personalization. For example, *New Writing* focuses specifically on composition tutoring for primary and secondary students. When developing new media services, journals can target specific aspects for extended services and develop third-party applications (Apps). A notable example is *Sanlian Lifeweek*'s “Zhongdu” App, developed on the foundation of its print

journal as a new-generation content distribution and paid knowledge reading social platform. Since its launch in May 2017, it has attracted a group of potential *Sanlian* users and fans, representing an excellent case of traditional journal publishing extending into personalized internet publishing. Education journals can certainly expand personalized services in their professional fields; for instance, composition journals could research and develop composition grading Apps.

2.3 Driving Journal Transformation Through Convergent Publishing Projects

Projects serve as important vehicles for development and critical drivers for transformation. Under the convergent publishing context, planning and implementing convergent publishing projects can effectively drive journal transformation and development. To promote its own transformation, *New Curriculum Magazine* has actively advanced projects since 2008. In 2012, its project “Building a Digital Educational Resource Database and Establishing a Precise Digital Resource Delivery Platform” was selected for the National Press and Publication Reform Development Project Database. The project’s core objective was to use efficient transmission methods to deliver personalized client needs directly to end-users, sparing them from searching through massive resources. The goal was to provide vast resources with precise delivery to meet educators’ personalized needs. The project employed multiple delivery channels, including wired networks, wireless networks, and satellite transmission, to cover multiple regions, particularly schools and families in remote areas, establishing a “cloud classroom” without walls that never closes. In 2015, *New Curriculum Magazine* was selected as a pilot unit for the National Digital Compound Publishing System Engineering Application, with its project team participating in requirement research and software application for 14 project packages, broadening horizons and training its talent pool. In 2016, the project “Establishing China’s Largest Educational Digital Resource Database” was selected as one of the Top 100 Excellent Cases of National Press and Publication Media Convergence Innovation. In 2017, the magazine planned the project “Building an Educational Digital Publishing Base Based on New Media Technology,” funded by the Shanxi Provincial Cultural Special Fund. This project comprised an interactive animation, video, and paperless testing integrated “Digital Science Laboratory,” and a new media micro-course interactive platform that added user-friendly “application and research” functional modules to the daily micro-course resource “construction and management” foundation, forming a “one-stop” service environment for micro-course construction, management, application, and research.

New Curriculum Magazine’s experience in planning and implementing projects demonstrates that projects are the most important drivers for journal transformation. First, project planning and implementation can cultivate comprehensive talent for organizational transformation. Through these projects, *New Curriculum Magazine* has developed a group of comprehensive professionals in project planning, internet technology, digital editing and processing, digi-

tal product operation, digital product management, and digital product architecture. Second, projects enable journals to accumulate substantial resources. Through project implementation, *New Curriculum Magazine* has accumulated a large database of authors in basic education on one hand, and extensive digital educational teaching resources on the other, which can be restructured and re-edited to develop new products. Third, projects can generate both social and economic benefits for the organization. Due to its outstanding performance in digital publishing, *New Curriculum Magazine* was designated as one of the first batch of National Digital Publishing Transformation Demonstration Units in 2013, achieving good social benefits. Sales of digitally published products have also generated considerable revenue, providing an economic foundation for transformation and development.

3.1 Developing Sustainable Plans for Transformation and Development

Traditional journals cannot achieve transformation overnight; they require long-term commitment and sustainable development pathways. Under the convergent publishing context, journal publishers must plan ahead and strategize early. As early as 2012, *New Curriculum Magazine* formulated a long-term digital transformation plan: its digitalization and media convergence strategy would serve education by providing three-dimensional, digital, all-media solutions for the education field, conducting commercial operations in online educational resource services, electronic educational publications, application databases, and digital animation education, while promoting O2O development in digital publishing. The plan emphasized innovation, brand strategy, integrity, talent cultivation, and self-transcendence. Positioning itself as a pioneer and hoping to become a leader, the magazine aimed not only for profit but also to use digital technology to change people's lives and benefit the nation through new media. *New Curriculum's* transformation projects have been planned and implemented around this vision, achieving notable results and keeping pace with convergent publishing development. As 2021 marks the first year of China's 14th Five-Year Plan, education journals should actively plan their transformation and development strategies around their core business to respond to convergent publishing changes and sustain their transformation efforts.

3.2 Staying Rooted in the Industry and Starting with Familiar Content

The greatest advantage of traditional journal publishers lies in their content specialization. Staying rooted in their industry and starting with familiar content is the most fundamental guarantee for successful transformation. Discussing transformation without regard for the journal's industry risks becoming rootless and significantly reduces the probability of success. Taking *Sanlian Lifeweek's* "Zhongdu" as an example again, it represents a quiet, comfortable, deep reading and expression knowledge community built on the foundation of the print

journal—an extension of personalized services for 20 years of *Sanlian* users. The “Zhongdu” transformation did not deviate from *Sanlian Lifeweek*’s core business. This approach offers several advantages: first, it easily leverages existing author and reader resources; second, it requires relatively less investment and is easier to launch; third, it makes rational use of existing talent and maximizes their potential. Throughout its convergent publishing transformation, *New Curriculum* has consistently adhered to the concept of serving basic education, using the provision of three-dimensional, digital, all-media solutions for the education field as its foundation to develop digital products in the educational domain.

3.3 Efficiently Utilizing Resources for Multiple Returns on Investment

During transformation, journal publishers must leverage their content resource advantages to convert them into benefits. Content resources accumulated over decades can only maximize benefits through efficient utilization. *New Curriculum* Magazine has accumulated extensive basic education resources through years of journal publishing and digitized them through technical means, while also collecting large amounts of digital educational resources through project implementation. These resources are then classified and tagged through technical methods to form a digital resource database. Once established, this database can be combined into different digital publications according to market demand, achieving the goal of multiple returns on a single investment. For example, the resource database formed through the “New Media Micro-course Interactive Platform” project can be used not only to compile science experiment content into micro-courses for the “Digital Science Laboratory,” but also to produce categorized publications by subject and grade level on USB drives or CDs. This approach offers several benefits: first, it fully utilizes resources to leverage the journal’ s content advantages and capture markets; second, it reduces repeated investment and lowers costs; third, it meets users’ personalized needs and realizes resource value in the shortest time possible.

The *Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the In-Depth Development of Media Convergence* has pointed out the direction and clarified the roadmap for accelerating convergent publishing. Convergent publishing has become an irreversible trend, and digital publishing has become an important component of the digital economy. In this context, traditional education journals must recognize the situation, leverage their quality content resources, actively integrate advanced digital publishing and big data technologies, make greater contributions to innovation-driven development, and actively promote their own transformation. By leading with projects and accelerating deep integration, they can explore a transformation path uniquely suited to education journals.

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

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