

## Exploring the Development Path of Media Convergence for Industry Journals: Postprint

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### Abstract

With the emergence of new media, media convergence has become a breakthrough strategy for many traditional media outlets. Among these, industry journals have attracted particular attention within traditional media due to their distinctive characteristics. Identifying a media convergence development path that aligns with their unique attributes warrants exploration. This paper examines the development path of media convergence for industry journals by analyzing their characteristics and dilemmas, as well as the current state of media convergence development.

### Full Text

### Preamble

### ChinaXiv Partner Journal

### Exploring the Path of Media Convergence Development for Industry Journals

*(People's Mediation Magazine, Beijing 100035)*

**Abstract:** With the emergence of new media, media convergence has become a breakthrough strategy for many traditional media outlets. Among these, industry journals have drawn particular attention due to their distinctive characteristics within the traditional media landscape. Exploring a media convergence development path suited to their unique features is a subject worthy of investigation. This article examines the characteristics and dilemmas of industry journals, analyzes the current state of media convergence development, and proposes viable paths forward for industry journal media convergence.

**Keywords:** media convergence; industry journals; print media; full-text databases; journal-web integration; social media

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## Introduction

The development of internet technology has redefined people's lifestyles and behavioral habits, transforming how they access information. With the birth of emerging media, the media ecosystem has undergone earth-shaking changes. Print media has lost its central position in communication and content production, confronting traditional media with unprecedented challenges. Faced with a severe situation of shrinking audiences and declining circulation, media convergence has become a breakthrough move for many traditional media outlets.

On August 18, 2014, the fourth meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform reviewed and approved the “Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and Emerging Media,” officially elevating “media convergence” to a national strategy. In September 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the “Opinions on Accelerating the In-Depth Integrated Development of Media,” putting forward overall requirements for in-depth media convergence development and calling for the main force to fully advance into the main battlefield, to expand and strengthen online platforms, and to occupy emerging communication positions.

Since embarking on the path of media convergence, traditional media including books, journals, and newspapers have continuously explored and made some achievements, while also encountering bottlenecks. Among these, industry journals have attracted attention due to their distinctive characteristics. Different from both mass publications and academic journals, how to find a media convergence development path suited to their own features is a subject worth exploring.

## 1. Characteristics and Dilemmas of Industry Journals

According to the 2019 Press and Publication Industry Analysis Report by the National Press and Publication Administration, China published 10,171 journal titles in 2019 with a total print run of 2.189 billion copies. While the report categorizes journals into five types—philosophy and social sciences, culture and education, literature and arts, natural science and technology, and general—without a separate category for industry journals, in practice, industry journals

are found across all sectors of social life and wield considerable influence within their respective industries.

Industry journals refer to periodicals that rely on a specific industry or system for their establishment, focus on information from that industry or system as their main reporting scope, target groups related to that industry or system as their audience, and conduct distribution and operations through that industry or system [1]. The characteristics of industry journals represent both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are: First, they possess industry guidance and authority. Most industry journals are sponsored by industry regulatory departments and their affiliated institutions, industry-related research institutes, professional associations, or enterprises. They serve as important vehicles for industry authorities to publicize their work and as key instruments for guiding and managing industry operations, giving them a certain degree of guidance, authority, and influence within the industry. Many industry journals in China have long histories and have played positive roles in promoting their industries' development. Second, circulation is somewhat guaranteed. With support from their industry systems, industry journals enjoy certain guarantees and stability in circulation, making them relatively stable compared to mass media that have frequently faced closure under the impact of new media.

However, these advantages are relative and temporary. As the media ecosystem evolves, the disadvantages of narrow audience reach and limited distribution channels have become increasingly apparent. Industry journals focus on specific industry information and primarily target industry stakeholders, including practitioners, researchers, regulators, and service recipients. Their strong professionalism and specific audience groups create heavy dependence on their industry systems. Many industry journals even self-distribute, selling only within their industry systems. While mass media have actively transformed toward media convergence, industry journals have struggled to find like-minded audiences on new media platforms and have difficulty identifying profit points or forming mature business models, resulting in unsatisfactory media convergence progress. Additionally, as the state pushes forward the transformation of state-owned cultural institutions into enterprises, industry journal publishers must support themselves financially, facing considerable pressure to solve survival issues while fulfilling their role as mainstream media. Confronted with limited communication competitiveness, diminishing industry influence, and declining operating revenues, industry journals urgently need to adjust, upgrade, and explore new development paths.

## 2. Current State of Media Convergence Development for Industry Journals

What is media convergence? In 1983, American scholar Ithiel de Sola Pool proposed “convergence of modes” in his book *Technologies of Freedom*, pointing out that electronic information technology would fundamentally change the isolated communication patterns of traditional media and evolve toward a new converged

model. Subsequently, understanding evolved from “media convergence” to “media convergence,” with the latter gradually becoming a development trend and research hotspot in communication studies. Specifically, media convergence refers to the effective integration of traditional media channels such as newspapers, television, and radio with emerging media channels like the internet, mobile phones, and handheld smart devices, enabling resource sharing and centralized processing to derive different forms of information products, which are then distributed to audiences through different platforms. It represents a new operational model under diversified information transmission channels.

Currently, there are approximately four forms of journal-new media integration: full-text databases, self-built websites, social media (WeChat public accounts, Weibo, content aggregation platforms, etc.), and journal apps [2]. Understanding these various forms of media convergence helps us identify the right path for industry journals.

## 2.1 Full-Text Databases

Full-text databases involve digitizing journal content and distributing it through online platforms for users to read and download, mostly on a paid basis. As a model of journal-web integration, full-text databases feature information retrieval functions that enable users to easily find needed content among massive amounts of articles, providing convenient and efficient information services. They also feature statistical analysis functions that can form influence evaluation indicators based on article dissemination and usage data, providing objective assessments of journals’ application value and references for improving article quality. Currently, China’s major journal full-text databases include CNKI, Wanfang Database, and VIP Journal Service Platform. These platforms possess strong technical advantages, resource aggregation capabilities, and market share. Journals cooperating with them only need to sign relevant agreements and provide issues on schedule to achieve digital publishing and online dissemination. This cooperation model can, to some extent, address traditional journals’ shortcomings in network technology talent, research and development, and operational funding [3]. However, this model’s revenue distribution heavily favors channel providers, leaving content suppliers like journal publishers with minimal earnings—insufficient to support the development of industry journals.

## 2.2 Self-Built Websites

Self-built websites refer to websites independently created and operated by journal publishers. Current journal websites generally have several functions and types: First, image building; second, digital publishing; third, online editing; and fourth, business expansion.

Websites for image building generally publish journal tables of contents and article abstracts to attract readers and secure potential subscribers. They also publish magazine updates, industry information, and relevant social news to ex-

pand influence and drive journal circulation. For example, the website of China Torch Magazine (sponsored by the China National Committee for the Well-being of the Youth) uploads journal guide information and promptly releases relevant work information from various regions.

Websites for digital publishing release electronic journals for paid or free download. Some offer trial reading of selected articles to attract users to subscribe to digital or print journals; some provide free downloads of back issues; some require users to log in and accumulate points to obtain download qualifications—the forms are diverse. For instance, the Economic Research Journal website currently offers free downloads of its back-issue database before 2010, while for issues after 2011, readers must accumulate points for downloads.

Online editing through websites enables functions like online submission and peer review. Online editing systems can standardize submission formats through system settings and provide authors with real-time query services for manuscript status, improving processing efficiency. For example, the Publishing Research Magazine website is mainly used for online submission and review, with each submission assigned a number that authors can use for queries, and the website publishes acceptance notices in real time. Similarly, the China Torch Magazine website allows correspondents to independently upload news, which the magazine's back office reviews and publishes, improving information release efficiency.

Websites dedicated to business expansion leverage industry journals' influence within their industries to expand the release of comprehensive industry information, provide industry services, and even operate industry products, forming industry portal websites. For example, the Family Doctor Online website, leveraging the nearly 40-year brand influence of *Family Doctor*, registered and established Family Doctor Online Information Co., Ltd. The website includes various health knowledge, health consultations, and medical services, becoming a professional health portal with independent editorial, technical, and market operation teams.

Many industry journal websites combine the above functions, effectively boosting journal development. However, many other websites suffer from insufficient content construction, vacant columns, delayed updates, and obvious maintenance deficiencies.

### 2.3 Social Media Platforms

Social media refers to websites and platforms where people can write, share, evaluate, and discuss content. Current social media mainly includes social networking sites, microblogs, WeChat, and information aggregation platforms. Among these, WeChat public accounts have become popular in the industry journal field due to their low entry barrier and ease of use. WeChat content dissemination offers advantages such as high freedom, multimedia communication, timely interactive communication, and strong reading selectivity. However, many industry

journal public accounts have not fully leveraged these advantages, exhibiting problems like monotonous forms, lack of interaction, and extensive construction. Some accounts primarily push original journal articles without utilizing multimedia methods like images, audio, and video to expand new content; some lack interaction with readers, with few comments on posts, essentially remaining one-way communication; some have overly simple menu settings and perfunctory operations and maintenance; others have irregular push frequencies and untimely updates. Overall, they have not achieved true integration between “journal” and “account.”

Information aggregation platforms are essentially large-scale information distribution bases that do not produce content themselves but have content producers join the platform to provide information. After aggregating various information, the platforms distribute it according to different user needs, highlighting personalized information supply. Platforms analyze user behavior and needs, record and identify users’ reading trajectories, calculate each person’ s interests and preferences, and push specific information accordingly. Users can also create their own personalized information interfaces based on their interests, forming a “thousand people, thousand faces” news production model. Currently, many journals have entered information aggregation platforms such as Toutiao, Dayu, and Douyin. *Party History Collection* (sponsored by the Party History Research Office of the CPC Hebei Provincial Committee) entered “Toutiao” early and successfully joined Xigua Video, Douyin, and WeChat Channels during the online video boom, accumulating 7.27 million followers across various aggregation platforms. Between 2018 and 2020, during its two years on Douyin, *Party History Collection* produced over 450 works, received 80 million likes, and achieved more than 2 billion views. However, it should also be noted that popular content on information aggregation platforms is mostly mass-oriented and popular, while highly professional industry articles receive relatively less attention.

## 2.4 Journal Apps

Journal apps are mobile software for journals that can obtain user data, dynamically grasp user needs, and enable online payment. There are two main forms: One is apps independently developed and operated by journal publishers. These apps focus on digital publishing, with some also providing online courses and audiobooks. Mass publications such as *Duzhe*, *New Weekly*, *Yilin*, and *Vista* have developed their own apps, but independent apps for industry journals are extremely rare. The other is comprehensive journal apps that aggregate multiple journals, such as the Bokan Academy app, which includes various journals, books, and newspapers.

### 3. Development Paths for Industry Journal Media Convergence

#### 3.1 Correct Understanding and Proactive Engagement

Many industry journals have long histories and have formed fixed mindsets and work patterns, remaining constrained by conventions and still in a state of wait-and-see hesitation, failing to participate in the media convergence process with a positive attitude. It should be recognized that media convergence is an inevitable requirement of social development and an inevitable trend of the times. No progress means regression. Industry journals should actively meet the challenges of the digital wave, promote reform and innovation, and seize the initiative in development.

At the same time, we must correctly understand the relationship between traditional and new media. We cannot reject or belittle new media because we focus on traditional media, nor can we neglect or abandon traditional media because we develop new media. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, “Traditional media and emerging media are not a relationship of replacement but of iteration; not a matter of primary versus secondary but of mutual growth; not a question of who is stronger or weaker but of complementary advantages.” He emphasized that “we must adhere to integrated development, accelerating the transition from the phase of addition to the phase of fusion.” Traditional and new media each have strengths and weaknesses and must complement each other to achieve mutual benefit and progress.

#### 3.2 Developing Convergence Thinking and Innovating Publishing Models

Media convergence is not simple “addition and subtraction” but a systemic revolution. Journal publishers should develop convergence thinking, explore suitable integrated publishing models, and achieve true integration from form to substance.

The integration of traditional and new media includes multiple aspects: publishing processes, content, channels, platforms, personnel, operations, and management. It requires optimizing resource allocation with internet thinking, rationally deploying advanced technology, quality content, professional talent, and project funding, and conducting comprehensive design and optimization of journal publishing to promote effective and efficient integration between traditional and new media.

It is necessary to build an internal organizational structure and new editorial process adapted to all-media production and communication, forming an intensive and efficient content production system and communication chain. We must shift from an “audience” consciousness to a “user” consciousness, deeply advance the structural reform of content production supply, and not limit ourselves to simply moving original journal content. Instead, we should actively

provide personalized and specialized information products. We must fully utilize new media's characteristics that integrate visual, audio, reading, and writing functions, incorporating new creativity, technology, and methods to enrich the forms of digital publishing content and enhance communication effectiveness. We should actively adopt online editing and review, strengthen online and offline interaction with readers and authors, and innovate interaction models.

Different forms of new media platforms should support each other, with websites, public accounts, and social media accounts linking to each other to form multi-terminal communication synergy. For example, adapting to new media's characteristics of fragmented, fast, and shallow reading, journal articles can extract key information for users, who can then subscribe to digital or print journals through links if they want more detailed coverage. We should expand new channels for journal distribution in the mobile internet era, achieving online and offline, multi-mode subscriptions.

Media convergence forms must adapt to one's own circumstances—neither standing still nor blindly expanding. Many journals hastily launched new media platforms but failed to maintain them with sufficient human and material resources. Journals with adequate resources can build their own websites and develop apps, while those without such conditions can also thrive using social media.

### **3.3 Highlighting Professional Features and Strengthening Content Integration**

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: “Content is always fundamental. Integrated development must adhere to content as king, using content advantages to win development advantages.” In the era of information explosion, with unprecedented abundance of information, media convergence must form its own content characteristics to be viable. Industry journals' greatest feature is their expertise in professional content, which plays an irreplaceable role for users seeking comprehensive and accurate industry information. Therefore, industry journals must adhere to their foundation in industry and system development, give full play to their professional advantages, provide content resources with industry influence, and consolidate their authoritative position within their industries and systems.

According to different user needs and new media communication characteristics, industry journals should identify the most effective information service methods to achieve precise publishing. For example, using new media technology to reorganize journal content and push it to different reader groups can provide diversified and personalized services [3]. The author's own *People's Mediation* magazine, supervised by the Ministry of Justice and dedicated to publicizing people's mediation work, faces readers including both mediation work supervisors and frontline mediators. Due to different job responsibilities, their focus on industry information varies. To meet readers' different needs as much as possible, the magazine has expanded article types and established var-

ious columns including high-level information, experience exchange, theoretical discussion, mediation stories, mediation arts, mediation case analysis, model figures, and legal Q&A. Through digital publishing, articles from the same column scattered across different issues can be combined and provided to users. Content on different themes can also be aggregated, such as reports on people's mediation system construction, mediator team building, family dispute mediation, medical dispute mediation, traffic accident dispute mediation, and the construction of industry-specific and professional mediation organizations, mediation centers, and mediation rooms. After classification and aggregation, this effectively improves the pertinence and accuracy of information services.

In the internet era, the traditional model of "people finding information" has transformed into "information finding people." To attract and retain users, industry journals must take traditional journals as their root, solid content as their foundation, grasp industry resources tightly, and stay close to industry users. Only then can new media products highlight their characteristics and become competitive and irreplaceable in the market.

On February 19, 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the Party's news and public opinion work symposium that "the key to media competition is talent competition, and the core of media advantage is talent advantage," requiring journalists to "strive to become all-media and expert talents." New media is time-sensitive and fast-updating, making it difficult to do well. Without dedicated talent guarantees, relying solely on traditional editors working part-time is unsustainable. Media convergence requires support from a composite, all-media talent team adapted to integrated publishing.

This team must possess good topic selection and planning abilities and strong writing skills, be proficient in computer and mobile media technologies, be able to provide personalized services for authors, readers, and peer reviewers using new media, and be capable of using big data to analyze and maintain author and reader databases [4]. However, most industry journals currently still follow the production process of print publishing and lack experience in integrated publishing production, communication, promotion, and operation, making them unable to adapt to the publishing ecosystem of the media convergence era. To change this situation, on the one hand, we must strengthen editors' integrated publishing skills training through centralized training, self-directed learning, and mentorship to help editors master new media skills. On the other hand, we must increase the recruitment of integrated publishing talents to prepare for the sustainable development of industry journals.

The media convergence era presents both opportunities and challenges for industry journals. Industry journals must open up the landscape of media convergence publishing, uphold integrity and innovation, actively explore, and embrace the arrival of the "convergence" era. As long as they persist in deep cultivation, discover with dedication, and make unremitting efforts, they will surely carve out their own space in the new era of media convergence.

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

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