

Exploring the Path for Transformation and Upgrading of Traditional Publishing Industry in the Era of Media Convergence (Postprint)

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Abstract

With the continuous development of new media, the traditional publishing industry has undergone tremendous transformation. Publishing houses and other entities have successively adopted digital publishing and other modalities, actively pursuing transformation and upgrading. The advent of the integrated media era has, on the one hand, promoted the development of China's digital industry, and on the other hand, accelerated the transformation of traditional publishing. Against the backdrop of increasingly mature digital and internet technologies, alongside the convergence of various media, the publishing industry has recognized that transformation and upgrading represent the inexorable trend of the times—essential for keeping pace with developmental progress. However, numerous challenges persist during this active transformation process, indicating that the traditional publishing industry still faces a considerable journey ahead. This paper primarily analyzes the current state of transformation in the traditional publishing industry, identifies the problems encountered therein, and explores pathways for achieving transformation and upgrading in the integrated media era based on these identified issues.

Full Text

Preamble

With the continuous development of new media, the traditional publishing industry has undergone tremendous transformation. Publishing houses have actively embraced digital publishing and other methods to upgrade and transform. The arrival of the integrated media era has, on the one hand, promoted the development of China's digital industry, and on the other hand, accelerated the transformation of traditional publishing. As digital and internet technologies mature and various media forms converge, the publishing industry recognizes

that transformation and upgrading represent the inevitable trend of the times –essential for keeping pace with development. However, the transformation process still faces many challenges, and the traditional publishing industry has a long road ahead. This paper analyzes the current status of the traditional publishing industry’s transformation, identifies the problems encountered, and explores pathways for achieving transformation and upgrading in the integrated media era.

1. Current Status of Traditional Publishing Industry Transformation in the Era of Integrated Media

Content and technological innovation constitute crucial drivers for the survival and development of traditional publishing. In terms of content, traditional publishing houses are actively tapping into relevant resources based on their distinctive characteristics in the new media environment. While content transformed from authoritative and professional resources naturally holds market advantages, controversial, trendy, and timely content derived from relevant resources also demonstrates strong market performance. Content resources are gradually exhibiting a trend toward diversification.

Technologically, digital development has significantly impacted traditional publishing. Although many experts have argued that traditional publishing possesses unique characteristics and advantages that prevent its complete obsolescence, there is no doubt that the industry must actively respond to digital development. More effective utilization of electronic resources, combined with innovative integration, provides new ideas for publishing transformation. By consolidating the strengths of both approaches, traditional publishing can achieve greater diversification in business scope and service methods, substantially enhancing competitiveness. Since the advent of the new media era, media communication patterns have become increasingly complex and diverse, with various platforms offering more options for the digital development of traditional publishing. Media convergence and digital promotion have become almost inevitable technical choices for the industry. [?]

2. Common Issues in the Transformation and Upgrading of Traditional Publishing Industry in the Era of Integrated Media

As traditional publishing increasingly emphasizes transformation and upgrading while actively attempting to integrate new media, it encounters several issues. First and foremost, many publishers lack judgment when selecting converged media, failing to properly evaluate existing traditional models and product positioning, often succumbing to herd mentality. Second, most traditional publishers remain in the exploratory learning stage regarding new media technologies in media convergence, limiting their capacity to drive transformation. Third, the deeply entrenched old models and strong dependency on legacy projects

make transformation difficult, restricting the integrated application of media resources. Additionally, the industry chain faces problems such as severe content homogenization, intense competition, and increasingly narrow sales channels. Finally, the absence of unified digital publishing standards and heavy reliance on industry alliances, coupled with unresolved intellectual property issues, amplifies problems during digital promotion and undoubtedly affects the efficiency of transformation and upgrading. [?]

3.1 Breaking Down Barriers Within Alliances

Compared with the previously fragmented and dispersed state of China's traditional publishing industry, recent years have seen the formation of various consortia and alliances. The original intention was to achieve better resource complementarity and sharing, particularly in the integrated media era, where media resources and experiences could be shared to accelerate digital construction. However, reality reveals persistent communication gaps among members, with divergent needs and conflicting interests. For instance, resources are not shared within the same alliance; instead, third-party big data companies compile statistics that members must purchase separately—an obvious waste of resources that can trigger unnecessary competition due to lack of communication. Similarly, at book wholesale events, when individual members cannot meet market demand, they fail to provide information about other alliance members' products (e.g., QR codes). Consequently, alliances remain largely superficial, with cooperation hindered by numerous barriers, failing to achieve genuine “union.” Breaking down these barriers is crucial for transformation and upgrading. [?]

3.2 Promoting Digital Development

Although digital publishing has challenged traditional publishing, the latter's decades of accumulation provide significant content advantages. Traditional publishers should actively advance digitalization, prioritizing the digitization of valuable content with established audiences while strengthening protective measures. This includes expanding copyright licensing scope, analyzing the Regulations on the Protection of Information Network Transmission Rights, and continuously enhancing digital copyright protection to prepare for future product and service development. Furthermore, publishers must recognize that different media channels have distinct characteristics, requiring differentiated presentation even for identical content to enhance brand influence, extend product value chains, and improve competitiveness. [?]

3.3 Optimizing the Publishing Industry Chain

The internet's influence continues to grow, and the imminent arrival of the 5G era will likely bring major changes across industries. Traditional publishing innovation should first incorporate internet characteristics, continuously optimizing industry processes and improving the entire industry chain to meet development demands and prepare for 5G. Particularly as living standards rise

and expectations for products and services increase, traditional publishing must continuously optimize its processes and industry to remain competitive.

For example, while readers frequently inquire by phone or email about publication dates or upcoming editions, few publishers publicly announce their popular book release schedules—third-party Taobao vendors often possess better information. Although online sales pages currently feature excerpts and previews, the adoption rate remains low and formats are monotonous. Implementing video-based guided reading or interactive video previews could yield new discoveries from both innovation and future 5G technology integration perspectives. Integrated media publishing represents an inevitable outcome of era development, enabling publishers to present content through new forms and technologies, consolidating advantages across different media beyond print books, such as mobile phones, computers, and radio. Persisting in media convergence is essential for optimizing the publishing industry chain and promoting transformation. [?]

3.4 Emphasizing Self-Examination

Every entity in traditional publishing should examine its positioning based on target audience characteristics and unique features to achieve innovative development. Only choices aligned with their own attributes can maximize advantages and smooth the transformation path. Market research must be emphasized to achieve accurate positioning and formulate scientific publishing plans. Publishers must understand their own circumstances while strengthening market research. Given the intense competition in children's books and examination-related publications in China's current market, relevant publishers must conduct extensive research to decide whether to avoid competition by exploring new niches or to confront it head-on and make their products stand out.

When selecting appropriate terminals and media for promotion, traditional publishers must also pay attention to market research and product reflection, not blindly pursuing integrated media without considering suitability. The question of “whether it's appropriate” should precede “whether to do it.” For instance, during the live-streaming sales boom, many publishers adopted live-streaming or short-video promotion without sufficient analysis, falling into the trap of “how would we know if we don't try” while neglecting the importance of “first thinking about whether it would work.” Using live-streaming for specialized books with small audiences is clearly inappropriate, and serious-positioned publishers using starkly contrasting short videos also require careful consideration. Simultaneously, traditional publishing enterprises must consider what talent they need for transformation and media convergence, adding corresponding positions.

3.5 Actively Integrating Multiple Resources

Traditional publishing must first prioritize multimedia topic resources, combining its positioning to select suitable content resources for excavation and drive product modernization. Second, during digital development, media resources

should be emphasized, building on current development models to integrate timely and appropriately with new media, fully exploiting media functionality to capture the digital publishing market. Third, in the information age, traditional publishing should build its own online platforms to interact more with readers, understand their needs, and adjust development models and future directions accordingly—rather than merely using official platforms as simple book display cases. Additionally, creating multi-functional online platforms can serve as effective self-promotion and even exert a siphon effect, attracting audiences from competing units.

3.6 Establishing an Interactive Platform Strategy

The internet era has provided many new interactive platforms through social software like Weibo and WeChat. On one hand, published content can be presented in more diverse ways; on the other hand, editors can communicate with audiences and collect feedback through these platforms. Moreover, traditional publishing has more choices for promotion methods and platforms. Strategies such as customizing publishing plans based on user feedback, soliciting opinions on multiple plans and adopting the most popular one, or purely operating interactions to attract more fans for better promotional effects are all viable options. Publishing enterprises must establish their positioning in advance, formulate corresponding policies, demonstrate their content advantages, ensure alignment with their business development models and paths, and consider feasibility and organizational capacity. [?]

3.7 Providing Security Safeguards in the Digitalization Process

As traditional publishing actively advances digitalization, copyright protection becomes the prerequisite for normal digital publishing operations—without security guarantees, healthy development is impossible. Currently, China’s digital publishing copyright protection is inadequate, with numerous problems including rampant piracy, incomplete regulations, serious talent shortages, and reliance on third-party “intellectual property protection” companies that charge fees to help publishers combat piracy and file complaints. Therefore, achieving rapid digital development requires strengthening copyright protection and improving the security of digital publishing resource operations through technical, social, and legal dimensions.

Technically, current copyright protection technologies primarily prevent unauthorized copying of publications. Widely used technologies include DRM, digital content encryption, and watermarking, with DRM being the most effective and widely adopted. DRM can effectively prevent unauthorized alteration and copying of digital publications and monitor printing, reading, and download counts. Although technical protection of digital copyright somewhat restricts resource and content sharing, it effectively protects the interests of authors, readers, publishers, and technology operators, ultimately promoting the transformation

and development of traditional publishing while maintaining a healthy industry ecosystem. [?]

Socially, both the traditional publishing industry and relevant authors should establish proper copyright protection awareness, creating a “supervision and reporting network” among authors, the public, publishing administration departments, and publishing units. Additionally, continuous strengthening of digital copyright publicity and knowledge popularization should promote public awareness to resist piracy and cultivate copyright protection consciousness.

Legally, ensuring secure digital publishing operations requires not only joint efforts from authors and publishers but also support from relevant Chinese authorities. This includes accelerating revisions to regulations such as the Regulations on Publishing Administration and Interim Provisions on Internet Publishing Administration, and promptly formulating management measures for database publishing services, internet literature publishing services, and mobile media publishing services. These would define the scope and usage rights of digital publications, establish infringement determination standards, and incorporate new media platforms like WeChat and Weibo into the legal supervision system to protect the legitimate rights of authors and other stakeholders in the digital publishing industry chain. [?]

3.8 Improving Personnel Competencies

The transformation and upgrading of traditional publishing represents a comprehensive, diversified development approach where publishers retain traditional advantageous businesses while formulating strategies based on their development needs and reinforcing managers’ understanding of integrated media era concepts. This continuously enriches service functions and expands media convergence thinking. In the integrated media era, cultivating professional teams is crucial. Relevant traditional publishing units need to provide targeted training and education for different new job directions, promoting real-time updates in skills and concepts while continuously improving employees’ information literacy to better apply integrated media technology, carry out integrated media work, and effectively accelerate the transformation and upgrading process. [?]

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

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