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## Pathways to Enhancing the Impact of General Scientific Journals: Postprint

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### Abstract

When “building world-class scientific journals” has become the dominant theme, ordinary scientific journals face numerous difficulties in enhancing their influence, necessitating breakthroughs of existing bottlenecks. The article first establishes the important position of ordinary scientific journals in the development of China’s scientific journal ecosystem. Secondly, focusing on enhancing the influence of ordinary scientific journals, it identifies prominent problems currently encountered in journal operation, while simultaneously analyzing related issues. It respectively proposes multiple viable pathways from various aspects, including: application of mobile technology; building a young reviewer team; participating in the organization of large-scale academic conferences; strengthening communication with industry associations; and targeted adjustment of distribution strategies. Finally, it suggests that attention should be paid to social feedback, using it to identify gaps, continuously improve, and gradually enhance the influence of ordinary scientific journals.

### Full Text

## Pathways to Enhancing the Influence of Ordinary Scientific Journals

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**Abstract:** As “building world-class scientific journals” becomes the mainstream agenda, ordinary scientific journals face numerous difficulties in enhancing their influence and urgently need to break through existing bottlenecks. This article first establishes the important position of ordinary scientific journals in the development of China’s scientific journal ecosystem. Centering on the

core issue of influence enhancement for ordinary journals, it identifies prominent challenges currently encountered in journal operation and analyzes related problems. The paper proposes multiple viable pathways, including: leveraging mobile technologies; cultivating a young reviewer team; participating in large-scale academic conferences; strengthening communication with industry associations; and strategically adjusting distribution practices. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of attending to social feedback to identify gaps, make continuous improvements, and gradually enhance the influence of ordinary scientific journals.

**Keywords:** ordinary scientific journals; influence; young reviewers; industry associations; manuscript sources

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## Introduction

Some experts argue that China's journal structure resembles a “工” shape: a small group of high-quality journals at the top, few in the middle, and a large accumulation of journals with limited influence at the bottom. Only by unblocking this middle pillar and creating optimized upward channels can the overall structure form a golden triangle [?]. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China more than 70 years ago, the number of Chinese scientific journals has grown from over 80 to more than 5,000. With support from government management departments through policy incentives and funding programs, China's scientific journals have achieved remarkable progress. However, due to over-reliance on traditional operational models, they still suffer from weak dissemination capacity and incompletely realized influence, leaving a considerable gap compared to international journals. According to the *World Academic Journal Impact Index 2018 Annual Report* (WAJCI 2018) released by CNKI, a detailed disciplinary analysis reveals that Chinese mainland journals (with CN numbers) feature numerous comprehensive journals but low specialization. Among 240 disciplines, 135 have no journals ranked in WAJCI-Q1 or WAJCI-Q2 zones [?].

In August 2019, the China Association for Science and Technology, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Science and Technology jointly issued the *Opinions on Deepening Reform to Cultivate World-Class Scientific Journals*, an important document implementing the spirit of the fifth meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform and promoting the reform and development of China's scientific journals. The Opinions advocate building world-class scientific journals as the goal, strengthening forward-looking layout around reform frontiers, scientifically compiling key construction journal catalogs, and compre-

ensively advancing digitalization, specialization, grouping, and internationalization. As “building world-class scientific journals” becomes the mainstream theme, numerous ordinary scientific journals find themselves in an awkward position. Among China’s thousands of scientific journals, ordinary journals constitute a significant proportion and serve as the main force driving journal development. They urgently need to break through bottlenecks, develop distinctive operational characteristics, build brand value, comprehensively enhance influence, and establish high-quality journals that become important hubs for global academic exchange and scientific culture dissemination. This article focuses on how ordinary scientific journals can enhance their influence, analyzing the issue and summarizing practical pathways to provide reference for similar journals.

## 1. Current Situation Analysis of Ordinary Scientific Journals

**1.1 The Dilemma of Quality Manuscript Sources** With impact factors lower than core journals, ordinary scientific journals are disadvantaged in terms of influence and authority. Influenced by conventional thinking, researchers believe that outstanding achievements must be published in core journals to gain widespread attention and citations and to demonstrate scientific value. Consequently, ordinary journals struggle to attract high-quality manuscripts from industry frontiers. Currently, most universities and institutions maintain their own journal publication catalogs, making it even more difficult for journals not included in these lists to receive submissions—they are rejected before being understood. Low annual publication volume and few high-level articles result in impact factors that cannot be sustainably improved.

**1.2 Editorial Team Talent Shortage** Most editorial departments rely on their sponsoring organizations for funding and staffing, resulting in small, fragmented teams. Due to tight budgets, few have established incentive mechanisms, leading to diminished enthusiasm and initiative among editors and weakening the journal’s innovative development momentum. Team building requires both experienced senior editors and creative younger members. However, many editorial departments, operating as service units under their sponsors, lack autonomy and decision-making power, preventing them from injecting fresh talent as needed and leaving them unable to meet the demands of expanded work.

**1.3 Lack of Operational Awareness** Influenced by traditional operational models, distribution still relies on postal public issuance and self-distribution, with circulation ranging from several hundred to a few thousand copies. In the digital publishing era, publication costs have decreased significantly, especially through online dissemination, which greatly reduces printing and mailing expenses compared to the print era. Commercial publishers believe that pure online digital publishing can save 10%-20% of costs [?], thus print circulation has faced unprecedented challenges. Confronted with this impact, some editors can only let developments take their course, lacking the power to resist. The reason

lies in years of focusing solely on publishing itself while neglecting to cultivate operational awareness and market sensitivity. When the once-natural operational environment disappears, they find themselves ill-equipped. Few editorial departments have recruited professional marketing talent in their staffing frameworks, resulting in single operational models and insufficient market-driven momentum.

## 2. Pathway Exploration

**2.1 Mobile Technology Applications Create New Opportunities for Journal Development** The online release of the 17th National Reading Survey by the China Publishing Research Institute shows that in 2019, the national reading rate across all media reached 81.1%, with digital reading (online reading, mobile reading, e-reader reading, Pad reading, etc.) reaching 79.3%, a year-on-year increase of 3.1%. Mobile terminal reading rates have grown continuously for 10 years, with mobile reading reaching 76.1%, up 2.4 percentage points from 73.7% in 2018 [?]. These figures indicate that reading habits are evolving with the times, simultaneously offering new possibilities for ordinary scientific journals to rapidly enhance their influence. Currently, many scientific journals have launched their own WeChat public accounts, but they generally suffer from slow update speeds, few original articles, and lack of dedicated maintenance, with some even ceasing updates altogether, failing to seize opportunities effectively.

Technological development has changed human behavior. In the mobile internet era, reading predominantly occurs via smartphones and mobile devices, making the print era and PC 端 unable to meet the requirements of precise targeting and effective dissemination. To accommodate readers' fragmented reading needs, ordinary scientific journals can make bold attempts in mobile publishing. They should operate their own knowledge service platforms. Referencing successful platforms such as "Dedao" and "Ximalaya," ordinary scientific journals can start by planning original articles, selecting topics based on their disciplines and editorial directions, launching quality columns on WeChat public platforms for precise push delivery, and gradually accumulating users. The key to building a unique knowledge service platform lies in consistency. First, team responsibilities should be clearly defined, assigning tasks across topic planning, information collection, organization and synthesis, summary writing, and manuscript proof-reading. Second, editors should continuously monitor industry trends, reintegrate massive amounts of information to form their own content style, publish articles daily on schedule, and ultimately cultivate good reading habits among users to increase stickiness.

Open access layout enables online-first publication. Many journals, aiming to enhance influence, collaborate with major databases such as CNKI and Wanfang for priority publication. Similarly, ordinary scientific journals can also achieve online-first publication through their own websites and WeChat platforms. They should skillfully adapt content processing to the communication characteristics of the media convergence era, including long abstract writing, OSID creation, and video recording, while fully utilizing AI, big data, cloud com-

puting, blockchain, and other technical means, integrating new media such as WeChat and Apps to enhance online visibility, strengthen dissemination capacity, and expand influence [?], thereby attracting author submissions or platform cooperation.

**2.2 Building a Young Reviewer Team** Every industry has outstanding young professionals. Journal editors can deeply identify technical backbones from authors or readers, ideally aged 35-40, as professionals in this range have accumulated rich work experience, engage with cutting-edge science and technology, and possess abundant energy. They can not only complete review work effectively but also promote the journal. As editors, they should help these individuals understand publishing, develop a passion for it, and participate in it, building an exclusive young reviewer team for the journal. This can narrow the distance between editors, authors, and readers, improve journal quality, and demonstrate commitment to peer review.

**2.3 Hosting Large-Scale Academic Conferences** Beyond regular publishing work, increasing numbers of journals are participating in hosting or organizing large academic conferences. Such conferences can quickly draw attention to the journal in the short term and enable editors to have close contact with industry professionals to understand industry dynamics. By examining major databases to analyze citation and download rates of published literature, editors can identify current industry hot topics and determine conference themes. Building brand conferences helps drive the journal's influence within the industry, break down publishing barriers, and broaden promotional platforms. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the specific social environment triggered explosive growth in live streaming, including live commerce, online classrooms, and video conferences, bringing infinite convenience and efficiency. As the pandemic subsides, academic conferences can still adopt live streaming formats, combining online and offline models to expand conference influence.

**2.4 Communication and Engagement with Industry Associations** Given that publishing units often face tight budgets and insufficient manpower, limiting the number of conferences they can hold annually, establishing relationships with industry associations becomes particularly important. As journal editors, they should constantly monitor annual award activities organized by industry associations, as these events both represent industry development trends and enhance journal exposure through participation. By leveraging associations' communication advantages across industries, more peer institutions can learn about and become familiar with the journal, establishing brand advantages and enhancing brand value.

**2.5 Nationwide Journal Distribution** The key to enhancing the influence of scientific journals lies in breaking through regional limitations and reaching toward national and international audiences. For ordinary journals, gaining

broad industry recognition is particularly crucial. This can be achieved through targeted big data collection by adjusting distribution practices. First, using existing big data platforms such as CNKI, Wanfang, and VIP, journals should track the geographic locations and institutional affiliations of authors whose cited articles have been published, then conduct online searches to understand these units' main business activities and organizational structures, and mail journals based on contact information. This method, in addition to the journal's fixed distribution clients, can through accumulated daily review and mailing help more readers or institutions who have previously shown interest in the journal gain deeper understanding, ultimately establishing preliminary impressions and transitioning from expanding the reader base to expanding the author base to attract more manuscript sources.

## Conclusion

While “building world-class journals” has become the current mainstream topic, creating high-level academic journals represents only one of several development paths for scientific journals. China's scientific journal development requires more exploratory pathways. The vast number of ordinary scientific journals provides more possibilities for China's scientific journal development while simultaneously supporting the industrial ecosystem. For ordinary scientific journals, in increasingly fierce competition, they should affirm their own value and maintain firm editorial direction. Additionally, they should value social feedback, potentially issuing annual questionnaires covering editorial quality, reader experience, and journal awareness channels. By summarizing feedback information, identifying gaps, making continuous improvements, and gradually enhancing influence, they should always believe that even without being SCI-indexed, they can still become excellent journals.

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