

How County-Level Broadcast News Should ‘Broadcast’ in the Postprint Era of Media Convergence

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Abstract

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Full Text

How to “Broadcast” County Radio News in the Era of Media Convergence

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Keywords: Media Convergence; County Radio; News Gathering and Editing; Communication Effects

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In the era of media convergence, retaining the advantages of traditional media development while continuously absorbing the lessons learned from new media development enables effective integration and facilitates the transformation and upgrading of media, thereby contributing to the in-depth development of traditional media.

1. Current State of County Radio News Gathering and Editing

Established in 1952, Jian'ou People's Radio now operates with only four departments—News, Features, Advertising, and Technical Broadcasting—comprising 10 editorial and broadcasting staff and 3 technical operators after nearly 70 years of development. Insufficient staffing and lack of talent are common problems plaguing county-level radio stations, severely constraining innovation and practice in county radio news gathering and editing. County radio and television news gathering and editing primarily serve county residents, so topics are inherently limited. Meanwhile, the rapid development of network technology has given rise to new media that permeates every aspect of people's lives. Compared with new media, radio lacks flexibility and appeal, causing more and more people to gradually overlook radio's existence and turn to new media for information. Although Jian'ou People's Radio possesses the first digital audio workstation among county-level stations in the province and has achieved radio and television co-cable transmission, its broadcasting methods remain limited to only three forms: radio-television co-cable, point-frequency (street broadcasting), and FM, which cannot adapt to audiences' demand for short, fast, and straightforward news consumption. Therefore, to better develop traditional media, it is essential to fully utilize the advantages of new media development to better meet public needs. However, several persistent problems continue to constrain the dissemination of radio news.

1.1 Deep-rooted Traditional Concepts

Under the influence of traditional gathering and editing methods, radio news workers maintain rigid editorial concepts, resulting in overly limited program content and lagging, inflexible formats that fail to attract listeners effectively. As society develops, people's cultural and spiritual demands continue to rise, requiring media professionals to keep pace with the times and create new programs with contemporary characteristics.

1.2 Heavy Commercialization

In the development of county radio industries, program types are restricted and closely related to local development levels. Most radio programs are essentially commercial in nature and lack social content, affecting audience listening experiences and failing to fully reflect public interests, thereby diminishing public attention to radio.

1.3 Local Development Constraints

Local development limitations have slowed county radio development. Due to constraints in county economic development levels, related equipment remains inadequate and operations are small-scale. Many media professionals have not established serious work philosophies, resulting in low-quality programs that severely restrict county radio development.

1.4 Lack of Clarity in Prioritizing News Content

For traditional news gathering and editing techniques, the era of media convergence places greater emphasis on interview details. Overly complex narratives of event development, unclear distinction between primary and secondary events, and failure to adequately reflect audience listening psychology all hinder radio development.

1.5 Lack of Innovation

Under the premise of traditional news reporting and editing concepts, it is necessary to further improve and optimize news models and content by emphasizing innovation in radio news. Currently, audience demands for news are increasing daily under the background of media convergence. For long-term development, radio news must meet audience needs. However, some editorial workers lack awareness of the importance of innovation, which cannot be effectively demonstrated in practical work, with some news lacking innovation entirely. Although such innovation may not yield noticeable short-term results for news reporting effectiveness, it proves highly beneficial in the long run.

1.6 Lack of Foresight

Timeliness is crucial in news dissemination within the radio industry. If a news item lacks timeliness, it cannot attract audience attention, its news value diminishes substantially, and reporting effectiveness declines. Therefore, news gathering and editing workers must possess strong sensitivity to report on social news events immediately, bringing freshness to audiences and sustaining their attention to news content. However, current realities show that most news reporting lacks foresight, editorial workers lack advanced awareness in news reporting and gathering, and their sense for social news is insufficiently acute,

affecting not only the improvement of news listenership but also the timeliness of news content.

1.7 Overly Monotonous Content

Compared with new media, traditional radio stations lack richness and novelty in news content, which is too dry and monotonous. Some audiences consider listening to news a waste of time and lose interest. Once audiences develop such attitudes, news program listenership declines substantially, resulting in poor listening effectiveness. Currently, most news merely describes events without in-depth reporting on overall content, which will inevitably reduce overall news quality and affect audience numbers over time.

2. Innovation Strategies for County Radio News

2.1 Diversified News Gathering and Editing Models

Based on current media convergence development patterns, single communication forms can no longer effectively meet radio development needs, as traditional broadcasting methods restrict audience demands to some extent. Developing county radio in the era of media integration requires innovating communication methods and further expanding dissemination channels. First, news gathering and editing staff must familiarize themselves with current development characteristics of the media convergence era, possessing strong audience psychology research and new media application capabilities to integrate perfectly with traditional media, thereby effectively innovating communication channels. For instance, given intense online competition pressure, radio stations can collect information online and appropriately conduct questionnaire surveys to scientifically improve news gathering and editing efficiency while making more effective contributions to future work. Second, during radio program broadcasting, simultaneous broadcasting can be implemented using software such as live streaming platforms, forums, WeChat, and Weibo. Radio news editors must therefore combine images with text and sound with pictures to edit radio news programs into finished products within the shortest time possible and disseminate them through online channels. Additionally, since programs uploaded online can be easily saved, audiences can access program information promptly without time or space constraints, laying a solid foundation for county radio development. Third, news gathering and editing staff must possess broad knowledge to flexibly 挖掘潜在价值 and guide new public opinion. When organizing broadcast content, news workers must demonstrate the ability to fully excavate potential information value, conducting investigations, interviews, recordings, and production before broadcasting on new media platforms. This approach enables the rapid creation of a series of radio products, enhances audience listening and viewing interest, and helps increase attention to county radio.

2.2 Innovation in County Radio News Content

First, traditional radio stations primarily convey party and state policies and regulations to the people, serving as the mouthpiece of the party and government. However, the rapid development of the new media industry has witnessed the birth of various self-media platforms that have diminished radio's dominant position to some extent. Therefore, radio news gathering and editing work must transform, shouldering the mission entrusted by government decrees while simultaneously feeding back public interests and popular sentiment to government departments, bearing the responsibility of reflecting public interests, and fully demonstrating media value to secure sufficient audience support. Second, against the backdrop of rapid radio and television development in the 1990s, program formats became more diversified, encompassing news programs, entertainment programs, and more. However, due to limitations in county radio development levels, most county radio programs are strongly commercial, with increased numbers of advertising programs becoming the main economic support for county radio, while neglecting audience listening needs and resulting in weak mass foundations. Therefore, radio news gathering and editing staff must innovate content by producing popular programs that resonate with people's lives to better improve program quality and satisfy audience listening demands. Third, traditional radio news gathering and editing work relied solely on single-party narratives and recordings, with reporters' manuscripts and program content based entirely on objective facts and relatively superficial viewpoints. Today's audiences possess varying comprehension and cultural levels, leading to different perspectives on program broadcasting effectiveness. Consequently, news editors must dare to express subjective opinions and reveal invisible content when working, providing reasonable, evidence-based commentary on emergencies or hot topics from audience perspectives while grasping key points to avoid social conflicts caused by arbitrary comments that could affect media image. This approach better demonstrates media status and effectively improves news editing work levels and radio influence. Fourth, news gathering and editing personnel must change content expression forms. Traditional radio program production remains rigid with fixed content that cannot effectively attract listeners, requiring changes in content expression. For example, regarding interview content, editors should increase information volume and deeply excavate valuable news information to make news more compelling and in-depth. Additionally, increased investment in program production should incorporate interesting elements, using sound effects, special effects, program segments, and music to enrich program formats, enhance program listenability, and attract audience attention and interest, thereby better promoting county radio development. For instance, Jian'ou People's Radio's "Hopeful Fields" program primarily targets farmers, so its content should strive to be accessible, concise, clear, and authentic to arouse farmers' interest. Therefore, under new circumstances, radio stations should not use simple propaganda methods when publicizing policies but should instead adopt forms and language that audiences can more easily understand.

2.3 Improving Professional Quality of Radio News Staff

First, with the rapid development of media convergence, county radio program content has gradually diversified, placing increasingly higher demands on radio news editors and transforming them toward 复合型人才. Therefore, radio news editors must strengthen news gathering and editing capabilities, better organizing and producing program content through writing and editing to achieve perfect alignment with audiences, guide public opinion appropriately, improve program quality, and ultimately expand county radio influence. Second, radio news editors must possess strong news sensitivity to better excavate valuable news clues from daily life and utilize personalized editing capabilities to intensify local characteristics of radio news programs, which helps cultivate fixed audience groups and contributes to stable, healthy, and prosperous county radio development. For example, interviews require questioning respondents, and whether journalists ask appropriate questions directly affects news interview and reporting quality. Therefore, during actual interviews, journalists should focus questions on respondents' conversation content, capture details, and provide correct guidance and inspiration to obtain needed news information. Third, radio news editors must be able to apply multi-functional software. In traditional radio program production, they could only disseminate through sound. Today, as news editors, they must not only master various audio editing software and communicate effectively on the internet but also grasp a series of image editing software to better integrate sound and pictures, thereby improving audience listening and viewing rates. Fourth, radio news gathering and editing staff must strengthen program supervision by implementing both online dissemination supervision systems and traditional media dissemination supervision systems, determining program monitoring indicators according to different dissemination standards to better monitor program quality and lay the foundation for improving county radio news gathering, editing, and dissemination quality.

2.4 Strengthening Integration with New Media

Compared with traditional radio news, new media news content features openness and richness that more easily attract public attention. Through online platforms, audiences can express their views on news events and obtain more timely news, achieving immediate feedback and interaction. However, traditional radio news possesses characteristics of accuracy, authenticity, and high credibility that new media news cannot match. The optimal path for the common development of traditional radio news and new media news is strengthening integration between the two. In future work, radio station editors and new media workers should achieve complementary advantages, combining the two to broaden news information sources and utilizing new media advantages to better disseminate radio news to the public. For example, traditional radio recorded news can be edited for new media WeChat public accounts with text descriptions and image demonstrations to compensate for radio news' s limitation of being audible-only, effectively improving news broadcasting effectiveness, increasing news attention,

and enhancing both social and economic benefits.

2.5 Pursuing Regional Cooperation and Resource Integration

Based on current conditions, county radio news gathering and editing work should pursue regional cooperation and emphasize resource integration, with multiple regions concentrating manpower and financial resources to jointly complete interviews and editing for certain topics or themes. For example, radio news gathering and editing staff and township correspondents can be periodically gathered to jointly plan themes and conduct related gathering and editing work, which can both solve staffing shortages and integrate resources to excavate more and better frontline news clues. Regional cooperation also facilitates normalized cooperation and sustained innovation. Meanwhile, considering that each county radio station has its own strengths, including announcers, editors, and production staff, as well as independent operating systems, the process of regional cooperation should value each party's demands and select capable personnel from township correspondent teams to jointly complete program production. Integration of inter-regional resources can overcome current resource scarcity problems in county radio, optimize resource allocation, and enable sustained and better county radio development.

2.6 Identifying the Right Angle and Reporting Format

In the process of news gathering and editing, journalists must grasp the right entry point and find solutions. For news gathering and editing personnel, it is essential to flexibly express audience-favorite content based on actual conditions and audience research analysis. Different audiences have different focuses on news content. For example, urban and rural areas have different economic levels and radio program listening groups. Therefore, news gathering and editing work should strive to base itself on audience perspectives, grasp the right entry points, and select suitable formats for reporting.

2.7 Rooted in Grassroots, Serving the People

Being rooted in grassroots and serving the people represents the fundamental principle that county radio news gathering and editing work innovation should follow. To achieve this goal, county radio news gathering and editing staff should go deep into grassroots, establish roots among the masses, conduct field visits, adopt news gathering and editing expressions that the public needs and is willing to accept, explore a path combining practical application with news gathering and editing work, and innovate program formats and content based on this foundation. In the process of being rooted in grassroots and serving the people, news gathering and editing workers must maintain firm positions, always standing with the party and the people. In this process, editorial workers play a bridging role: on one hand, they are responsible for conveying party and government administrative directives and measures to the people in appropriate

ways; simultaneously, they must reflect public opinions and voices to higher authorities through program production to help solve problems.

In summary, under the background of media convergence, county radio must continuously innovate according to audience preferences and strengthen news gathering and editing reform to facilitate audience acceptance of program dissemination and continuously improve market competitiveness. Journalists and editors must enhance their professional qualities according to social development trends, continuously innovate and develop, create popular programs, and cultivate fixed audience groups. Only in this way can traditional radio media fully meet social development needs and contribute to the vigorous development of county radio.

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

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