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## Research on the Competency Structure of Digital News Editors (Post-Print)

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### Abstract

Digital news editing constitutes an emerging profession in the contemporary era, which primarily leverages information technology content and its influence to promote news content, amplify dissemination effects, and satisfy society's ever-increasing information demands. In contrast to traditional journalism, digital news encompasses richer information content, enjoys broader dissemination scope, and employs more diverse technical means, thereby posing substantial challenges for digital news editors. Consequently, this paper will focus on investigating the competency framework of digital news editors in the new era, initially contrasting it with traditional news editing practices, summarizing and synthesizing the current competency status of digital news editors, and conducting an in-depth analysis of their competency structure through case studies, thereby fully demonstrating the significant value of digital news editors for the healthy development of the industry and their pivotal role in leading the era.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

Digital news editing represents an emerging profession that leverages information technology to disseminate news content, amplify communication impact, and meet society's ever-growing information demands. Compared to traditional journalism, digital news offers richer content, broader reach, and more diverse technological approaches, presenting significant challenges for digital news editors. This paper examines the competency structure required of digital news editors in the new era, beginning with a comparative analysis against traditional news editing practices to summarize current capability profiles. Through in-depth case studies of their competency composition, we demonstrate the critical value that digital news editors hold for the healthy development of the industry and its capacity to lead contemporary trends.

**Keywords:** digital news editor; work comparison; capability structure; requirements

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Digital news editors are specialized technical professionals who utilize digital technology for news editing and dissemination. Their responsibilities encompass the entire process of digital news content: collection, production, distribution, reception, and feedback, enabling comprehensive information aggregation and application with strong emphasis on interactivity. In practice, digital news editors must continuously adapt to evolving media environments and audience demands, maintaining dynamic thinking and responsive action throughout their work. This multifaceted role demonstrates superior characteristics compared to traditional news editing and fulfills the requirements of contemporary news editing system construction.

## 1. Current State of Digital News Editors' Capabilities

Digital news editing emerged relatively recently as a profession born from the increasingly developed global internet industry in the 21st century. In China, specialized training mechanisms and educational institutions for digital news editors remain underdeveloped, with many practitioners transitioning from traditional news editing backgrounds. Although both roles share similar professional attributes, significant differences exist in technical content and competency requirements. Therefore, it is essential to reconsider and examine the development path for digital news editors based on a clear understanding of these similarities and differences in their current capability profiles [1].

### 1.1 Comparison with Traditional News Editors

Specifically, in terms of workflow, traditional news editing involves three key stages: information collection, post-processing, and dissemination. Digital news editing adds a fourth critical component—feedback and interaction—leveraging multiple technologies throughout the digital news gathering, editing, and broadcasting process. This enables a more refined editorial workflow that provides audiences with a richer, more immersive experience of the news dissemination process, ensuring no detail is overlooked [2].

Regarding manuscript editing, traditional news editors follow a five-stage process: gathering, writing, editing, reviewing, and final approval. In contrast, digital news editors prioritize timeliness and may streamline or omit any of these traditional steps based on practical circumstances [3].

In layout design, traditional news editing involves relatively simple formatting that typically does not require editors to personally handle design work. Digital

news editing, however, demands complex and diverse web-based layouts that extensively employ modern technologies to attract audiences through richer, more detailed content presentations.

Regarding temporal and spatial constraints, traditional news editors must tailor their work to fixed publication schedules and limited print space, resulting in restricted output volume. Digital news editors, conversely, can publish news in real-time and conduct editing work anytime and anywhere based on where news events occur [4].

Furthermore, digital news editors engage in frequent real-time interactions with readers, whereas traditional news editors face delayed feedback due to technological limitations, compromising interactive effectiveness.

## 1.2 Current Development Status

Given its short development history and the predominance of transitioning technical personnel, the digital news editing profession features a relatively complex composition. Analyzing these different backgrounds reveals distinct capability profiles and potential issues. As described in *A Study on the Role of Online News Editors* by Jiang Xiaoli of Sichuan University's School of Journalism, digital news editors can be broadly categorized into three groups [5]: traditional media editors, network technicians, and text or technical editors. Each group demonstrates different capability development patterns. For instance, traditional media editors exhibit strong skills in text editing, information analysis, and planning, but show deficiencies in reader interaction, layout design, and modern technology application. Network technicians display the opposite pattern while also lacking critical thinking skills. Considering the complexity, variability, and technological hybridity of digital news editing work, it is essential to thoroughly examine the core competency requirements and discuss effective cultivation pathways for future digital news editors [6].

## 2. Research on Digital News Editors' Capability Requirements

The digital news editing and dissemination process is complex, encompassing five key stages: information collection, organization, publication, dissemination, and feedback. Compared to traditional news, digital news operates at a faster pace and places greater emphasis on audience feedback and editor-reader interaction. Under the influence of digital news media, the capabilities required of digital news editors have fundamentally changed, breaking the traditional competency framework. To adapt to new environments and technological systems, digital news editors must reconstruct their capability structure. The following sections examine six core competency requirements for digital news editors, using the communication process as the primary analytical dimension [7].

## 2.1 Information Collection Capability

As previously noted, digital news editing involves six interconnected stages that form a complete closed loop. The initial stage, information collection, demands strong gathering capabilities from editors. In the internet era, news generation has accelerated dramatically, with fragmented information fostering brief, rapid consumption patterns that largely replace in-depth reading. In this context, digital news editors must both cater to audience preferences by quickly gathering breaking news and simultaneously establish editorial agendas to guide public discourse, effectively gatekeeping information for readers. Consequently, digital news editors must master not only information collection but also information screening to correctly shape and direct public opinion.

When internet media outlets collectively focus on reporting an event's central aspects, the digital news editor's primary task is to reconstruct the scene and document its developments. However, when multiple outlets produce similar, one-dimensional coverage of the same event, digital news editors must identify alternative perspectives to present the issue and truth. This involves detecting related incidents that occurred at or around the primary scene. Editors must employ keen insight and intuition to capture these critical events, amplifying details and strengthening interconnections through digital news editing. By providing audiences with unconventional angles that transcend mainstream narratives, editors can investigate key elements of the event, ultimately prompting societal attention and demands for thorough investigation into related incidents and peripheral details [8].

The scenario described above demonstrates how digital news editors can effectively leverage their information collection capabilities through unconventional angles, uncovering deeper truths behind seemingly simple events. Such reporting exhibits depth and completeness, positively accelerating issue resolution. Consequently, enhancing information collection skills through news events represents a critical capability worthy of intensive study for digital news editors [9].

## 2.2 Information Organization Capability

Digital news information organization demands both timeliness and accuracy, testing editors' capabilities in information analysis, planning, and layout design. Editors must screen and analyze gathered news content, integrate internal and external elements, organize layouts, and present a cohesive news package to audiences. This requires robust information discrimination skills—the ability to identify necessary and appropriate content for dissemination from vast information pools—representing a crucial filtering and judgment process for setting proper agendas to guide public opinion. To achieve this, digital news editors should adhere to the “Four More” principle: observe more, think more, inquire more, and verify more, striving to deliver correct, authentic, and comprehensive multi-perspective information that fosters reciprocal feedback between media

platforms and audiences [10].

News materials involving civil or criminal law particularly attract audience attention. However, media outlets are prone to reporting errors when covering special events. When such situations occur, digital news editors must respond immediately to correct mistakes. Corrections should be based on scientific verification and legal principles to demonstrate inaccuracies in reporting direction or content, thereby effectively avoiding digital news errors and preventing embarrassment [11].

Objectively speaking, certain cases have demonstrated that some digital editors severely lack information discrimination abilities, misleading audiences and damaging media authority while creating negative communication effects. Therefore, in this new era, digital news editors must seamlessly integrate information collection and organization processes while reasonably judging information accuracy. This approach not only enhances dissemination effectiveness but also reduces controversies and prevents potential legal issues. Additionally, editors should possess layout design and organizational planning skills to restructure potentially mundane or visually dull content using digital technologies, presenting it in vivid formats that improve audience reading experiences and elevate news quality—competencies that many current digital news editors need to develop.

### 2.3 Information Publishing Capability

Digital news publication extends beyond text to include images, videos, interactive links, and other multimedia content enabled by modern technologies, presenting a significant challenge for digital news editors. Editors must utilize platform technologies to transmit news content and web code online, demonstrating their information publishing capabilities. Currently, the digital information technologies involved in digital news editing have become increasingly diverse, encompassing audio coding technologies like AAC, video coding technologies like AVC, and programming languages such as JavaScript and CSS, all flexibly applied in digital news networks. In covering breaking news or social phenomena, digital news editors should integrate media resources from various sources, employ digital technologies to describe events based on verified facts, enrich content beyond the original reporting, and distribute news across multiple platforms including Weibo, WeChat, and self-media channels, generating nearly a million comments and shares [12].

This process primarily tests digital media editors' ability to publish non-textual elements, which are crucial for enhancing overall news quality. In digital news editing, editors specifically apply coding knowledge to integrate, edit, and publish page content, producing digital news based on their understanding of modern information technologies. This illustrates both the differences and similarities between digital and traditional news editing, demonstrating that contemporary digital news editors require modern digital science and technology as foundational support to fulfill their role in societal news dissemination.

## 2.4 Information Dissemination Capability

During digital news dissemination, editors must possess critical thinking skills to compose news, guide public opinion, and direct audiences, representing a process of rational viewpoint organization. In concrete dissemination processes, digital news editors undertake numerous tasks, including writing news content and rationally analyzing information by managing diverse perspectives on digital platforms. Consider complex digital news stories that reflect social and ethical phenomena: editors should first analyze the causes and consequences of the core event and related incidents, highlighting positive elements to capture audience attention and generate social discourse. Simultaneously, they must monitor narrative turning points, as self-media individuals may reveal different aspects of the event from alternative perspectives. These “side issues” can become subjects of media ethics criticism, sparking controversy, creating confusion, and generating new digital news material. To disseminate both news content and ethical standards, digital news editors systematically trace entire event narratives, providing multi-faceted explanations, inferences, and descriptions to steer public opinion back toward fairness. Such cases clearly demonstrate that beyond technical skills, rational thinking capability—enabling professional judgment and timely publication to accurately grasp and even correct public discourse—represents a key component of the digital news editor’s competency structure.

## 2.5 Feedback and Interaction Capability

This paper argues that digital news editors require specific competencies in information feedback and interaction. During the news production process, they must incorporate feedback and interactivity into their work, demonstrating teamwork capabilities among multiple editors to jointly manage the feedback and interaction process. Digital news editing teams must collaborate on comprehensive investigations to achieve effective information feedback and interaction, organizing and planning relevant data from reported events to enhance the possibilities and readability of digital news production. This is essential because digital news is not merely for reading but for participation, increasing mutual interaction between audiences and media. Editors present all information while selectively showcasing audience participation to collect valuable data, organizing it according to logical frameworks to make presentations more intuitive and reading more convenient. This case exemplifies the critical importance of teamwork among digital news editors, who collectively stimulate audience feedback and strengthen interactive processes, suggesting substantial room for future development in digital news communication [13].

## 2.6 Summary of Capability Structure

In summary, the competency structure of digital news editors manifests across multiple dimensions, creating significant contrast with traditional news editing. This evolution stems from the rapidly developing information age and

society's diverse and multifaceted demands, which have altered the profession's developmental trajectory. Therefore, digital news editors must demonstrate exceptional capabilities in information collection, discrimination, planning and organization, publication and dissemination, and interactive feedback—proving their indispensable value in guiding industry health and leading contemporary trends.

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