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Postprint: Cultivating Skills and Qualities of Traditional Media Editors and Journalists in the Converged Media Era

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Abstract

The development of the Internet has brought transformative changes to people's lives, with "Internet Plus" becoming the developmental trend and prevalent form across various industries. The emergence and development of integrated media centers and diverse new media platforms have catalyzed the era of integrated media, which undoubtedly constitutes a significant challenge and disruption to traditional media. Confronted with the novel changes and characteristics emerging in the integrated media era, traditional media editors and journalists must proactively innovate their news gathering and editing methodologies as well as their conceptual frameworks, and make concerted efforts to enhance their professional skills and competencies. This study will examine the developmental limitations of traditional media alongside the novel changes and requirements of the integrated media era, integrate the professional competency requirements and developmental needs of editors and journalists, investigate the cultivation pathways for the skills and qualities of traditional media editors and journalists in the integrated media context, and provide reference for the transformation of traditional media editors and journalists into all-media journalists in this new era.

Full Text

Media Convergence Era: Training Approaches for Skills and Qualities of Traditional Media Editors and Journalists

Abstract

The development of the Internet has brought earth-shaking changes to people's lives, and "Internet Plus" has become a development trend and common form across various industries. The emergence and development of media convergence centers and various new media platforms have given rise to the media

convergence era, which undoubtedly poses an impact and challenge to traditional media. Faced with the new changes and characteristics formed in the media convergence era, traditional media editors and journalists need to actively innovate their editing and reporting techniques and ideological awareness, and focus on improving their own skills and qualities. This paper will focus on the shortcomings of traditional media development and the new changes and requirements of the media convergence era, combined with the professional qualities and development needs of editors and journalists, to explore the skills and quality training approaches for traditional media editors and journalists in the media convergence era, providing a reference for their transformation into all-media journalists.

Keywords

Media Convergence Era; Traditional Media; Journalist; Information Integration; Public Opinion Guidance

1.2 Media Audience Solidification and Difficulty Attracting Young People' s Attention

The arrival of the media convergence era marks a comprehensive transformation and upgrading of China's media industry. The birth and prosperity of new media are important catalysts for this transformation, while the improvement of skills and qualities of traditional media editors and journalists is a necessary and sufficient condition for achieving this change. The public operation of Weibo and various mainstream media Weibo accounts, as well as the dissemination of news information through new media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, further confirm the arrival of the media convergence era and have also created a sense of crisis among traditional media editors and journalists. The media convergence era requires traditional media to actively promote the construction of media matrices, which in turn depends on the enhancement and development of editors' and journalists' skills and qualities.

The solidification of traditional media audiences is an undeniable fact in the media convergence era. Currently, the age group of newspaper readers is mostly 60-70 years old, while television viewers are generally over 45. However, the current era is an era of young people; those around 30 years old are the backbone and main force of society, as well as the mainstream consumer group. The solidification of traditional media audiences mainly stems from their inability to attract young people' s attention. Whether in terms of audience positioning of news content and forms or news planning, they are not based on the actual media needs of young people, making it difficult to make young people stop in the fast-paced information dissemination process, which has largely accelerated the decline of traditional media.

1.3 News Content Limited by Layout Constraints

Newspapers, television, radio, and other traditional media have accompanied people through a long history, but today they have struggled to keep pace with the times. The changes of the era and emerging new needs are difficult to meet, making transformation and upgrading inevitable. Among the shortcomings of traditional media in today's era development, layout limitations are a key factor affecting their development. Taking newspaper news reporting as an example, since a single newspaper needs to cover international news, domestic news, provincial news, and local news—using *Yuncheng Daily* as an example—it also needs to allocate space for advertisements, which places extremely high demands on layout design. How can so much news content be placed in one newspaper? To ensure economic benefits, the necessary advertising space cannot be cut, so news reporting space must be limited. Writing news articles within limited space requires editors and journalists to use the most concise language to clearly explain the news events they need to report. If they fail to grasp the key points during the writing process, it will lead to insufficient breadth and depth of news, making it difficult to guarantee news quality to a certain extent and further weakening the development of traditional media.

1.1 Poor Timeliness in News Reporting

Traditional media suffers from poor timeliness compared to new media. Taking newspapers as an example, they are divided into morning and evening editions, but news reports typically appear in the next day's newspaper. This is because the editing and publishing process for newspaper news is relatively complex, requiring not only investigation by editors and journalists, followed by writing news articles, checking for typos and grammatical errors word by word, but also review by the chief editor, final layout with other news articles, and then sending to the printing house. This complex news editing and publishing process consumes a great deal of time, resulting in poor timeliness of traditional media news reports. In the media convergence era, people may have already learned the gist of the news through the internet the day before the newspaper is published, and they are unwilling to pay to read “yesterday's” news with “already known outcomes.”

1.4 Lack of Innovation in News Reporting Forms

The lack of innovation in news reporting forms is an important sign that traditional media cannot adapt to this era. In the media convergence era, young people tend to prefer fragmented reading, and it is rare for anyone to spend a whole morning carefully reading a newspaper. The lack of novelty and appeal in news reporting forms has caused traditional media to gradually lose their audience in the media convergence era.

2. New Characteristics of the Media Convergence Era

The arrival and development of the media convergence era mainly rely on the development of the Internet economy and the improvement of network speed, with new media platforms being a hallmark of this era. The development of the media convergence era has completely overturned traditional news reporting forms, demonstrating many new characteristics.

2.1 Extremely Strong Timeliness in News Reporting

In the media convergence era, the timeliness of news reporting has been greatly enhanced. Typically, the development of a news event can be published on Weibo, WeChat, and news apps within as little as three minutes or even shorter time, allowing people to receive information in real-time through mobile clients or other electronic device clients. Simultaneously, follow-up reporting on news also demonstrates the timeliness of news reporting in the media convergence era. For example, when major geological disasters or typhoons occur, on-site reporters can send back reports immediately and release the latest news very quickly on social networks, achieving a news reporting effect that captures the audience's attention. The 2019 Typhoon Lekima reporting was conducted in real-time through multiple media platforms including the internet, providing convenient and fast information services for people's travel and greatly satisfying their demand for news reporting.

2.2 Short-Form Video News Favored by Young Audiences

In the media convergence era, short-form video news is favored by young people. Whether it is "Pear Video" on Weibo or short videos on news apps, they allow young people to understand the ins and outs of a news story in less than three minutes. Moreover, a news report can be broken down into different short videos, creating continuity and serialization in reporting. This enables young people, who are accustomed to fragmented reading and living increasingly fast-paced lives, to access news anytime and anywhere—even while waiting for a bus or subway—undoubtedly catering to the news needs of young people.

2.3 Enhanced Information Interactivity and Audience Feedback

In the media convergence era, the internet has become an important carrier of news information. In the online world, information dissemination has broken traditional monopolies and inequalities; journalists are no longer the sole insiders of news truth, as ordinary people can also record news events and disseminate them online. For news events published online, netizens can also provide real-time feedback and even offer news leads. In the media convergence era, information interactivity and audience feedback have gradually increased, placing higher demands on the authenticity behind news and on news gathering and editing, while also subjecting news reporting to broader public supervision.

3. Analysis of Skills and Quality Training Approaches for Editors and Journalists

In the media convergence era, people attach greater importance to news truth and can further verify the authenticity of this “truth.” Therefore, traditional media editors and journalists need to meet the “footwork” requirement by going deep into the news frontline to become recorders and disseminators of news facts. In the news gathering and editing process, editors and journalists need real news experiences rather than simply browsing online news in the office and randomly selecting topics. Going deep into the news frontline requires editors and journalists to have good physical and psychological qualities, taking the recording and dissemination of news facts as their mission and responsibility. Only news facts with authentic feelings are more infectious and influential and can generate public opinion influence and guidance in society. Chai Jing is a famous journalist whose book *Seeing* truly recorded her experiences as a journalist going deep into the news frontline, which enabled her to send back on-site reports of major news events such as the SARS outbreak, using journalism to document Chinese history. In the media convergence era, cultivating journalists’ skills and qualities requires establishing an awareness of going deep into the news frontline and personally carrying out the transmission of news facts.

3.2 Conducting Follow-up and Series Reporting to Meet Audience Demand for Truth

In the media convergence era, the exponential increase in news information, the rapid dissemination of major news events, and the facilitation of news reception channels have made people increasingly curious and interested in news follow-ups, with more and more people wanting to explore the truth behind the news. This requires traditional media editors and journalists to conduct follow-up and series reporting to meet audience exploration needs. In the traditional media environment, follow-up or subsequent reports were rarely published. However, in the media convergence era, traditional media editors and journalists need to transform their concepts and working methods to strengthen their attention to the news they are responsible for. Faced with these series of doubts and explorations, editors and journalists should make plans for series reporting and follow-up reporting, maintain contact with news subjects, and improve their language organization and application abilities to help the public explore news truth with more tactful language. In the media convergence era, traditional media editors and journalists also need to master certain news coordination skills and interpersonal communication skills, establish awareness of series reporting and follow-up reporting, and respect and attach importance to the news needs of media audiences.

3.3 Enhancing News Sensitivity to Capture Information Promptly

The development of the Internet era has immersed people in vast amounts of information, but much of this information is worthless. In the media convergence

era, the task of traditional media editors and journalists is to filter out useful or valuable information from the massive amount of data and release it to the public through media matrices. Therefore, the media convergence era requires editors and journalists to enhance their news sensitivity and capture news information promptly. In the news gathering and editing process, editors and journalists are required to improve their observation skills and news sensitivity, drawing on their own news editing experience and professional experience to promptly capture valuable information online and then conduct on-site news interviews, writing news reports with public opinion guidance and influence. This can also demonstrate the professionalism of traditional media editors and journalists and, to a certain extent, help enhance the attention and influence of traditional media in the media convergence era.

3.4 Improving Multi-Channel Information Acquisition and Integration Capabilities

In the media convergence era, traditional media editors and journalists should improve their multi-channel information acquisition and integration capabilities, moving beyond single information acquisition channels. The development of the media convergence era has given everyone the opportunity to become recorders and disseminators of news events. In addition to paying attention to online information and receiving news leads from call centers, editors and journalists also need to understand news information and truth from multiple perspectives, obtaining information from news comments and people around news subjects, and integrating the acquired information. This requires editors and journalists to improve their interpersonal communication skills. After obtaining news event leads, they should not be overly credulous of the news subject' s one-sided statements but should establish dialectical thinking, actively understand news facts and truth from the side or multiple perspectives, and provide multiple news perspectives for media audiences. This can effectively prevent the occurrence of reversed news, greatly enhance the credibility and influence of news reporting, and also help improve the public' s trust in editors, journalists, and traditional media.

3.5 Flexibly Editing News Forms and Enhancing All-Media Editing Capabilities

In the media convergence era, many traditional media have actively promoted the construction of media convergence centers and media matrices to adapt to the characteristics of the times. Under media matrices, editors and journalists can more deeply understand the needs of audiences on different media platforms and conduct targeted news editing and format changes based on audience needs and positioning. *Yuncheng Evening News* is a traditional media outlet in China that underwent media convergence reform relatively early. It established WeChat public accounts, Weibo accounts, and developed the Yuncheng News Network app, which together with the original *Yuncheng Evening News*

and other traditional media, built a media matrix. In such a media convergence environment, editors and journalists are required to proactively improve their mental and writing abilities, flexibly edit news forms, and enhance their all-media editing capabilities. For example, in the process of editing WeChat public account articles, the audience is relatively broad, but their common characteristic is that they are unwilling to read large amounts of text on WeChat public accounts. Therefore, image or chart editing forms like those used by *People's Daily* are more intuitive and can cater to audience needs. Thus, when editing public account articles, editors and journalists should improve their Excel image integration capabilities and Photoshop image editing capabilities, using charts as much as possible to illustrate factual news, such as Shanxi Province's 2018 economic statistics. On the Weibo platform, which faces young people, serious discourse and lengthy text cannot attract their attention. Therefore, editors and journalists need to adapt to the characteristics of the Weibo environment and introduce short-form video news editing. In this process, editors and journalists need to collaborate with video production departments to handle video editing and clipping. On the Yuncheng News Network, the audience is mostly business people or professionals who pay more attention to the systematic nature of news, so editors and journalists need to properly categorize news and ensure its professionalism. In summary, the media convergence era has put forward new requirements for traditional media editors' and journalists' mental and writing abilities, requiring them to continuously learn and improve their personal capabilities and qualities.

3.6 Strengthening Literary Cultivation to Enhance News Reporting Impact

Good news should criticize social ills and point out the essential problems of events in a penetrating manner. However, influenced by the current entertainment news environment, the impact of news reporting has been greatly weakened, even becoming a mere scratch of the surface that fails to exert the guiding power, influence, and credibility of news. Long-term news editing and writing can easily trap journalists in formulaic language, leading to hollow and boring news content that lacks effective public opinion guidance. Therefore, the media convergence era requires traditional media editors and journalists to strengthen their literary cultivation, improve their literary editing abilities, and thereby enhance the impact of news reporting. Traditional media can organize editors and journalists to hold reading clubs or discussion groups to enhance their research on European realism and critical realism literature, thereby strengthening their writing power. They can also help editors and journalists discover their own shortcomings through mutual evaluation of manuscripts. Most importantly, they should enable editors and journalists to calm down and write news reports with sharp pens, especially for major news events, to give society a strong shock.

Conclusion

In summary, the arrival of the media convergence era is an unstoppable trend of the times, a product of the Internet era, and an inevitable result of the renewal and replacement of the media industry. This paper points out that traditional media in the media convergence era already suffer from insufficient information timeliness, solidified audiences and news formats, and also notes that the media convergence era better meets the media needs of young people, with short-form video formats receiving significant attention and favor. As the core and backbone of traditional media, editors and journalists in the media convergence era should actively improve their own skills and qualities to contribute their strength to the development of traditional media in this new era. Following the “Four Abilities” requirement, traditional media editors and journalists should not only go deep into the frontline and do a good job in follow-up and series reporting but also enhance the depth, breadth, and strength of news editing to play the social role of news in criticizing social ills. Editors and journalists are important transmitters of news truth. News has strong social credibility, guiding power, and influence, and news writing and dissemination are very important for our country’ s development and people’ s lives. Improving the capabilities and qualities of editors and journalists is also an inevitable choice in the media convergence era.

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

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