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## Digital Development Status and Optimization Pathways for Journal Editorial Work: Postprint

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**Date:** 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

Against the backdrop of China's rapid economic development, the modality of journal editing is also undergoing subtle transformations. Overall, the digitalization of journal editing work represents an inevitable trend. This paper takes the current status of digital development in journal editing and existing issues as its entry point, providing a detailed analysis of the characteristics of journal editing digitalization in China and its future development directions, aiming to offer assistance to relevant practitioners.

### Full Text

## Digital Development Status and Optimization Path of Journal Editorial Work

**Abstract:** Against the backdrop of China's rapid economic development, the form of journal editing is undergoing subtle yet profound changes. Overall, the digitalization of editorial work represents an inevitable trend. This paper takes the current status and existing problems in the digital development of journal editing as its starting point, providing a detailed analysis of the characteristics and future development directions of digital editorial work in China, with the aim of offering assistance to relevant practitioners.

**Keywords:** journal editing; digitalization; development direction

**CLC Number:** G232

**Document Code:** A

**Article ID:** 1671-0134(2019)06-077-03

**DOI:** 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2019.06.021

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## Introduction

The 21st century is the century of information. With the popularization of high-speed networks and the emergence of information resource sharing platforms, the ways people acquire knowledge and reading habits have changed dramatically, exerting a profound impact on the development and working methods of traditional publishing. This paper employs an “analytical synthesis” approach to deconstruct the problems arising during the digitalization of journal editorial work and identify areas for optimization to accelerate industry development. In traditional editorial workflows, authors typically submitted handwritten manuscripts by mail, which extended submission cycles and increased the risk of loss or damage during transit. Additionally, editors often struggled to decipher individual characters due to handwriting variations, complicating the review process. Digital editing transforms this paradigm: authors compose manuscripts on computers and transmit them instantly via the internet, dramatically improving submission efficiency. Storing manuscripts on computer hard drives or in cloud storage also effectively reduces the risk of loss. For editorial staff, traditional editing relied on personal knowledge and manual reference consultation, often limited by the editor’s knowledge constraints or outdated information, preventing professional revision of key content. In a digital editing environment, editors can leverage the robust internet and information sharing platforms to quickly research difficult concepts, substantially improving manuscript quality and ensuring the journal’s professionalism and authority.

### 1.1 Optimization of Editorial Workflow

In traditional publishing models, the three stages of editing, typesetting, and review each suffered losses due to staff errors. First, in the editing stage, traditional workflows required journal editors to perform secondary processing of submitted manuscripts, making additions and deletions from an academic perspective according to the journal’s overall style. Since efficient communication mechanisms between editors and authors were often lacking, this process could compromise manuscript integrity and reduce usability value. Second, in the typesetting stage, the normal workflow required editors to collaborate with typesetters, but in practice, editors’ heavy workloads often prevented their involvement, leaving typesetters to work alone. This frequently resulted in errors and reduced efficiency. Finally, both editing and typesetting required text input, which easily introduced typographical errors that created significant obstacles for review, extending review cycles and reducing manuscript quality. Digital editing streamlines this workflow by eliminating the independence of these three stages, allowing manuscript revision, typesetting, and review to be completed within a single integrated process. This significantly shortens review cycles while preserving manuscript integrity and enhancing academic and reference value.

## 1.2 Improvement of Review Efficiency

Digital submission and storage systems enable instantaneous manuscript transmission to editorial offices, greatly improving submission efficiency. Manuscripts stored in digital formats remain accessible and secure, minimizing loss risks. For editorial personnel, traditional editing methods depended on individual knowledge and manual reference consultation, often constrained by limited or outdated expertise that prevented professional revision of critical content. In digital editorial environments, editors can utilize advanced internet resources and information sharing platforms to rapidly research challenging concepts in manuscripts, thereby substantially improving overall manuscript quality and ensuring the journal's professionalism and authority.

## 1.3 Enhancement of Work Value

Traditional editorial work required enormous effort in manuscript organization, proofreading, and verification, leaving editors exhausted under heavy pressure with little time for knowledge expansion and learning. Digital editing modes enable editorial staff to conduct rapid and efficient manuscript editing and review online. This approach significantly reduces editorial pressure, freeing editors from tedious error correction to engage in higher-value tasks such as supplementing knowledge points and enriching case studies in manuscripts, thereby improving overall quality. Additionally, it provides editors with mental relief, allowing them to expand their knowledge during leisure time. This is particularly beneficial for editors working on cutting-edge scientific and technological articles, as they can devote adequate time to reading the latest international research reports and mastering current industry knowledge and trends to better fulfill their editorial responsibilities.

## 2.1 Lack of Guiding Policy Documents

The popularization of digital publishing models represents a major transformation for the traditional publishing industry, fundamentally changing both working methods and management systems. To meet these evolving demands, relevant state departments must issue a series of guiding documents to regulate publishing industry activities. The conditions for digitalizing journal editorial work in China are now mature, and authorities have recognized its importance. In response, the General Administration of Press and Publication issued the "Digital Publishing 'Twelfth Five-Year' Development Plan" in 2011, which provides macro-level guidance on industrial layout and industry cooperation for editorial work. This document holds significant meaning for digital editorial work, charting a broad course for China's journal editing digitalization and helping the field avoid detours. However, it also reveals certain problems: these policy documents typically only provide macro-level regulation and guidance for the digital publishing industry. In practice, the digitalization of editorial work still depends on individual publishing houses to implement, meaning that while state documents establish the general direction for digital publishing, the spe-

cific improvement process remains the responsibility of the publishing industry. This has led to a degree of blindness in publishers' digital transformation efforts, lacking specific guiding principles and resulting in inefficiency. Simultaneously, due to inadequate technical support and slow progress in personnel training, publishers' editorial digitalization efforts have remained in an exploratory phase without significant advancement.

## 2.2 Lag in Digital Publishing Practice

The lag in digital publishing practice constitutes a major obstacle to the development of the news publishing industry during the digitalization promotion process. This manifests primarily in enterprises' misinterpretation and distortion of digital editing concepts. Many companies view editorial digitalization merely as a change in content carriers—from paper to information networks displayed through various monitors and mobile terminals. This notion is extremely one-sided and represents a serious misunderstanding of editorial digitalization. Furthermore, to respond to calls from higher authorities, publishing enterprises have simply established their own websites, transplanting print content verbatim without leveraging internet advantages. This results in monotonous website content lacking appeal, creating a mismatch between website construction and actual returns. The reasons for this lag are multifaceted but ultimately stem from insufficient understanding of digital work and complacency. On one hand, enterprises have not developed a profound understanding of editorial digitalization, remaining at the literal interpretation level without deeper exploration of the “digital” concept. They also demonstrate inadequate comprehension and implementation of relevant national policies, maintaining conservative attitudes toward editorial improvements. On the other hand, complacency plays a role: since the publishing industry, particularly journal publishing, benefits from continuous readership habits (many subscribers purchase annual subscriptions), publishers enjoy attractive financial reports. Under these circumstances, enterprises perceive little significance in digital reform, believing it will not substantially increase profits. Moreover, editorial digitalization involves numerous aspects, requiring significant investment in personnel training and structural improvements. Consequently, publishers often adopt passive attitudes toward digital editorial work. Influenced by these two factors, China's editorial digitalization exhibits serious lag, not only failing to align with international standards but actually widening the gap, thereby affecting the entire news publishing industry's development.

## 2.3 Low Technical Proficiency Among Editorial Staff

In the process of journal editorial digitalization, editorial staff are the direct participants and implementers—the core element of editorial work. Advancing editorial digitalization requires training more professional digital editors. However, in practice, editors remain accustomed to traditional working modes and 不适应 digital workflows. This situation arises from three main factors: First,

China's editorial digitalization is characterized by its phased implementation. Although the state has vigorously encouraged the transition to digital editing in recent years, practical implementation involves numerous aspects and considerable difficulty, requiring gradual, staged progress. Consequently, the digital content editors currently encounter is relatively monotonous with scarce resources, preventing them from enhancing their digital creation capabilities through extensive practical work. Second, significant differences exist between traditional and digital editing methods. While younger editors adapt quickly to digital workflows, older editors lack capacity to accept new technologies, demonstrating insufficient proficiency in computer office software and internet applications, which requires prolonged, intensive practice. This contributes to the generally low digital technical level among China's editorial staff. Finally, editorial personnel tend to have introverted personalities and show limited interest in external environmental changes, particularly editors of scientific and technological journals. To ensure content rigor, they typically devote most of their energy to data and experimental research, maintaining very passive attitudes toward editorial method improvements. Believing that sufficiently professional content alone will attract readers, editors often choose their most familiar production methods, which proves highly detrimental to improving their digital competencies over time.

### **3. Optimization Approaches for Editorial Digitalization**

#### **3.1 Clarifying the Position of Digital Editing**

As previously discussed, editorial staff constitute the core of editorial work. Successfully advancing editorial digitalization requires cultivating more professional digital editors. At the national level, establishing digital editing training bases can continuously supply the publishing industry with excellent talent. From the publisher's perspective, companies should provide more training programs for employees, enhancing digital capabilities through hiring professional instructors or conducting seminars.

#### **3.2 Increasing Capital Investment**

Given the lag in China's editorial digitalization, development momentum remains insufficient. Addressing this problem requires substantial capital investment in digital publishing. On one hand, this ensures appropriate compensation for editorial staff. During the transition from traditional to digital models, technical unfamiliarity may reduce editorial efficiency, and sustained financial investment can subsidize editors' income, allowing them to confidently learn digital editing methods. On the other hand, funding facilitates the purchase of advanced digital equipment and access to more professional knowledge channels. Advanced equipment improves editorial efficiency, while expanded knowledge channels enhance the authority and practicality of published journals, strengthening their competitive position.

### 3.3 Emphasizing Integration of Traditional and Digital Publishing

During the digitalization process, publishers should fully utilize the advantages of traditional publishing models. Research indicates that people trust content on paper media more than electronic displays and demonstrate better memory retention. In response, publishers can cleverly integrate digital and traditional paper editing by establishing regular cycles—publishing quarterly or annual “collected editions” of digitally-produced content through print and distributing them via mail or offline sales. Alternatively, publishers can print special paper editions when major breakthroughs or transformations occur in relevant fields, facilitating collection. These approaches strike a delicate balance between digital and traditional publishing models, laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of editorial work.

China’s journal editorial digitalization still faces numerous problems, including developmental lag and low practitioner competency. To resolve these issues requires actively guiding publishers to update management concepts and increasing funding and energy investment to ensure the publishing industry’s sustained and stable development.

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