

A Study on Competency Development for Novice Editors in University Textbook Publishing: Post-print

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Abstract

This article, approaching from the perspective of university textbook publishing, focuses on examining the critical issues that should be prioritized in the professional development and training of novice textbook editors, hoping that the cultivation of novice textbook editors can serve as a positive model for the professional growth of other editors.

Full Text

Preamble

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Title: Research on the Capacity Development of New Editors in University Textbook Publishing

Abstract: This paper examines university textbook publishing from the perspective of new editors' professional growth and training, focusing on key issues in capacity development. It aims to provide a model for cultivating new textbook editors that can serve as a positive exemplar for editorial staff development across the publishing industry.

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New editors represent the vital force driving publishing house development and embody the future hope of the publishing industry. Fresh from academia, these

newcomers face countless unknowns and uncertainties, navigating constant innovation and challenges. They must transition from relying on and imitating others to thinking and working independently—a formidable challenge indeed. Comprehensive guidance is essential in every aspect of new editor development. This paper shares practical insights on cultivating new editors across multiple dimensions: editorial and proofreading skills, planning capacity, commissioning ability, schedule management, marketing acumen, organizational management, and communication skills.

1. Editorial and Proofreading Capacity Development

Our publishing house has always prioritized pre-service training for new editors. Before departmental assignment, training focuses on manuscript processing with strong relevance, practicality, and operability. Upon joining the textbook division, we concentrate on ideological and professional development in the following areas.

1.1 Textbook Publishing Editorial Workflow

New textbook editors typically possess strong academic backgrounds but require intensive training in editorial fundamentals, including topic selection, commissioning, manuscript review, editing, submission, proofreading, and marketing. These constitute essential professional competencies for daily editorial work. First, new editors must familiarize themselves with the textbook publishing workflow. Our press provides each newcomer with a process card (a standard operating manual for editorial publishing) as guidance. New editors systematically study each task, requiring approximately six months before they can independently handle post-editing processes. Second, newcomers must understand textbook publishing and printing processes, as this knowledge is indispensable for comprehensively improving book quality—a mandatory lesson for becoming a professional editor.

1.2 Understanding Basic Marketing Work

New editors must learn marketing models after publication and engage with the market, including key displays, email and database marketing, channel marketing, and emerging online marketing. Over six months, newcomers should master various marketing concepts and methods in the book sector, learning to establish feedback mechanisms and analyze data—skills crucial for developing topic sensitivity.

1.3 Keeping Pace with the Times and Grasping Textbook Publishing Trends

Upon joining the department, new editors must absorb extensive information about textbook publishing and analytical data to rapidly understand macro and micro conditions in their assigned fields. Focusing on the annual publishing

plan and using key projects as breakthrough points, they should develop an intuitive sense for topic selection, analyze products, learn from them, identify “idea combinations” for topic planning, and thereby discover sources for mining new topics.

1.4 Emphasizing Dedication and Cultivating Textbook Publishing Spirit

New editors must prioritize professional ethics development. In textbook publishing, we require newcomers to avoid careless editing and perfunctory work. Early in their careers, they should cultivate passion for editorial work, demonstrate professional dedication, and serve students and teachers wholeheartedly. Always prioritizing book quality, they should maintain initiative and proactivity, communicate frequently with authors, provide regular feedback, and build bridges for high-quality textbook publication.

2. Planning Capacity Development

Regarding current textbook sources for publishing houses, naturally submitted manuscripts often lack strong adaptability to needs, content relevance, and appropriate scope. Consequently, most modern publishers have abandoned relying on natural submissions. The prevailing practice involves planning and commissioning textbooks based on national and local education authorities’ overall planning requirements combined with institutional needs. In essence, textbook development requires greater purposefulness, demanding that textbook editors possess robust planning capabilities.

2.1 Mastering Research Skills for Textbook Planning

First, new textbook editors should understand current national and local education authorities’ overall planning requirements, preparing them to answer “where are the planning demands?” Second, they must familiarize themselves with relevant education policies and regulations, preparing them to answer “what is the planning scope?” Third, they should extensively communicate with experienced frontline teachers, education experts, and other professionals, preparing them to answer “who are the key players?” Finally, establishing and maintaining close communication and cooperation with these departments and individuals is essential for ensuring professional writing and review teams and forms the important foundation for textbook planning.

2.2 Mastering Target Requirements for Textbook Planning

To plan excellent textbooks that students enjoy reading and teachers find convenient to teach, editors must immerse themselves among students and teachers to understand their actual needs—a critical step in textbook planning. Simultaneously, editors must collaborate with outstanding review experts and scholars

to produce high-quality textbooks, rather than basing planning solely on projected sales volume. Practice demonstrates that textbooks with large print runs but poor quality typically survive only one or two editions, with significantly reduced reprint opportunities. Therefore, editors must invest substantial effort in planning high-quality textbooks with broad applicability. Additionally, textbook planning must ensure knowledge structure and framework align with professional teaching standards and curriculum outlines for relevant disciplines. It is crucial to emphasize that developing practical textbooks must first satisfy the talent cultivation objectives and teaching goals of the discipline, while incorporating comprehensive quality development. Practical textbooks developed for various institutions are not short-term training materials or employment orientation manuals—these categories must not be confused.

2.3 Mastering Textbook Planning Methods

When new editors develop independent commissioning capacity, they can begin observing the market and planning their own desired topics. The following requirements are offered for their consideration: (1) Do thorough preparation with sincerity and diligence. Before planning single books or series, such as marketing textbooks in economic management planning materials, comprehensive preparation is essential. (2) Persevere over years of effort. Editors encounter various problems in their work, and perseverance is the key to ultimately winning over authors, as exemplified by classic computer science courses like *Data Structures*. (3) Develop unique judgment and sensitivity. Focus on professional learning and cultivate reading habits. Broaden horizons, learn to analyze, and develop distinctive judgment and sensitivity, as seen in applied economics textbook planning. (4) Maintain determination for long-term commitment. Textbook development is not accomplished overnight; editors must be prepared for sustained effort, as demonstrated in the South Finance project follow-up. (5) Build bridges and make friends widely. Always consider issues from authors' and readers' perspectives, building bridges between them. New editors grow through exploration and practical accumulation.

3. Commissioning Capacity Development

Possessing solid editorial and proofreading skills provides a foundation for commissioning work. New editors must abandon student-style learning methods and focus on developing skills in the following areas.

3.1 Mass Emailing

Commissioning through mass email campaigns. Early in their careers, editors should leverage information technology tools to send as many emails as possible, investigating book-related situations and expressing commissioning intentions. Solicitation letters should be sent at regular intervals.

3.2 Telephone Communication

Commissioning through follow-up surveys is crucial for developing new editors' commissioning abilities. Telephone communication constantly tests editors' core communication skills and yields higher success rates than mass emailing.

3.3 Face-to-Face Visits

Commissioning through personal meetings. After information collection, key individuals can be approached through face-to-face visits. Locking in potential authors in advance demonstrates editorial commitment; authors generally do not refuse meetings. Knowing both oneself and the other party, and preparing key negotiation materials, typically produces satisfactory results.

3.4 Conference Commissioning

Commissioning through conference participation. Attending academic conferences or organizing proprietary events allows targeted commissioning of desired topics.

3.5 Acquaintance Recommendations

Rapidly entering professional circles. Circle culture is particularly prominent in textbook publishing. Life is a continuous process of trying new things, gaining experience, accumulating insights, and building professional networks—especially so for new editors.

4. Schedule Management Capacity Development

In concrete textbook editing and proofreading work, new editors must first learn to manage their own work schedules, proactively accepting assignments and making daily, weekly, and monthly plans. These plans should include flexible time for handling unexpected events. Schedule management comprises two phases: manuscript development stage management and post-production publication stage management.

4.1 Manuscript Development Stage Management

4.1.1 Establishing the Writing Team Textbooks are generally completed by a writing team typically consisting of a chief editor (sometimes multiple), several associate editors, and contributing authors. Chief editor selection usually proceeds simultaneously with topic confirmation. After confirming the chief editor, other team members must be identified promptly, typically through chief editor recommendations or publisher/university referrals.

4.1.2 Designing Sample Chapters After confirming authors, “sample chapters” must be created to ensure consistent writing style. A sample chapter serves

as a writing template for a single chapter, allowing other authors to “follow the pattern” when writing remaining chapters and thereby maintaining unified style throughout the book.

4.1.3 Developing Writing Schedules Specific submission deadlines should be discussed with the chief editor and jointly determined by the chief editor and publisher. Writing schedules include timelines and division of labor. Both speed and quality must be considered: deadlines cannot be too tight or too loose. Overly demanding schedules prevent completion, while overly lenient ones delay textbook availability for the new semester. Since post-production generally requires approximately four months, manuscripts must be completed at least four months before use. Quality requirements include consistent writing style, controlled typographical errors, and clear figures. Non-compliance with sample chapters necessitates major revisions, wasting additional time.

4.1.4 Progress Monitoring After assigning writing tasks, editors cannot simply let them proceed unchecked. They should proactively communicate with chief editors about writing progress at regular intervals and solicit manuscripts at designated milestones. Only through regular communication can problems be identified promptly and manuscripts delivered on schedule.

4.2 Publication Stage Schedule Management

Only after manuscripts are finalized, cleaned, and confirmed can they enter post-production (publication) stage. The textbook publication stage generally requires approximately four months, undergoing three reviews and three proof-reading rounds before quality inspection permits printing. Schedule management according to publication workflows can shorten each stage’s duration and ensure publication timelines. Particularly when editors manage multiple simultaneous projects, effective schedule management substantially improves publication efficiency, enabling immediate transition between stages and preventing manuscript delays at any point, thereby guaranteeing textbook availability for the new semester.

5. Marketing Capacity Development

As textbook editors, while emphasizing textbook quality, they should also focus on social and economic benefits, requiring cultivated marketing awareness and capacity. Marketing capacity development significantly accelerates new editors’ growth. If every new editor can approach textbook topic selection and promotion with “scholar-merchant” thinking, it greatly exercises and develops their core competitiveness in integrating “planning” and “marketing,” maximizing the organic combination of social and economic benefits in textbook publishing.

Since all national primary and secondary school textbooks are uniformly published by People’s Education Press, other publishers primarily focus on the uni-

versity textbook market. Textbook marketing operates along two dimensions: professional marketing and regional marketing, with professional marketing being more important for textbook editors.

5.1 Professional Marketing

Professional marketing represents the vertical dimension. Textbooks are categorized by discipline, with editors typically responsible for one or two fields. Editors should strategize how to market and promote their assigned professional textbooks nationwide. (1) The commissioning process itself constitutes marketing. Textbook writing is usually completed by author teams, and publishers typically require authors' institutions to adopt the textbook. If authors write textbooks without using them, they cannot identify usage problems, preventing subsequent improvements. (2) More comprehensive professional textbooks facilitate easier promotion. In universities, textbook selection is not determined by procurement offices but by instructors teaching specific courses. Therefore, more comprehensive professional textbook offerings increase selection probability. (3) More complete textbook packages facilitate easier promotion. In teaching, the textbook is merely the foundation; instructors also need supporting courseware, videos, and case studies to improve teaching effectiveness. High-quality textbooks with comprehensive supporting materials more readily convince instructors to replace existing textbooks. (4) Listen to feedback and complaints, handle them properly, and transform complaints into secondary marketing opportunities. All newly published textbooks inevitably have problems, with regional variations in emphasis. When instructors complain or express dissatisfaction, editors should first listen patiently, record feedback, express gratitude, and obtain contact information. Then they should quickly communicate feedback to authors, evaluate the issues, and if serious flaws exist, document them and propose improvements for future revisions. If not serious, they can gather opinions from multiple institutions and, when market demand exists, develop alternative versions, inviting complaining instructors to participate in writing or using the textbook—transforming complaints into secondary marketing opportunities.

5.2 Regional Marketing

Regional marketing represents the horizontal dimension, typically handled by regional representatives or distributors, with professional editors providing support and technical assistance. Common university textbook regional marketing methods include visits, book exhibitions, and training sessions. Greater support for representatives and distributors yields better promotion results.

6. Communication Capacity Development

For textbook editors, effectively coordinating and communicating with both internal and external parties not only secures excellent manuscripts but also

substantially benefits publication schedule management. Communication comprises internal press communication and external press communication.

6.1 Internal Press Communication

After manuscripts enter the publication process, they require typesetting, three reviews, three proofreading rounds, and quality inspection—all consuming internal resources. Many other editors' books are also in simultaneous production, creating competition for resources. To ensure smooth progress, editors must maintain good relationships with staff across all press departments, facilitating effective schedule management.

6.2 External Press Communication

Textbook planning, commissioning, and promotion all require communication with external personnel, including university instructors, institutional representatives, and distributors. Maintaining good communication with them creates virtuous cycles in textbook planning and marketing. Listening, thinking, and communicating frequently are powerful tools for new editors' growth, using methods such as face-to-face visits, QQ, WeChat, telephone, and email.

7. Mentorship and Self-Improvement

7.1 Guidance from Senior Editors

New editors' growth depends on guidance from senior editors through mentorship, an essential link between theory and practice. With senior editors' help, newcomers can avoid detours, grow rapidly, and reduce exploration time.

7.2 Implementing a Mentorship System

Specifically, the mentorship system represents an effective approach to new editor training, enabling rapid understanding of workplace norms and experience while providing constant reminders and assistance regarding foreseeable errors and risks, thereby immunizing new editors against negative information. Most importantly, mentorship teaches new editors not just how to perform publishing tasks but how to function within the team collective, helping them understand what to do, how to do it, and constantly motivating them.

7.3 Self-Improvement for New Editors

Once new editors find their optimal survival and development approaches, harmonious publishing house development follows naturally. New editors must also stay attuned to industry trends, be adept at learning, and continuously improve themselves through ongoing study.

In conclusion, as textbook editors in publishing houses, they must not only possess the aforementioned common competencies but also continuously strengthen

learning and improve their cognitive levels against the backdrop of increasingly popular information-based teaching, emerging new media technologies, and digital transformation of books. Only then can they perform textbook publishing work solidly and comprehensively.

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