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In the Era of Media Convergence, Editors Must “Be Capable in the Hall and the Kitchen”: A Case Study of *Health and Life* Postprint

Authors: Wang Shihong

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Abstract

With the rapid development of new media, integrated development has become imperative. Major media organizations have successively launched “central kitchen” models, namely establishing “converged media offices.” Traditional media editors must acquire new technological competencies, strengthen internet-oriented thinking, demonstrate courage in shouldering responsibilities, diligently fulfill their role as “gatekeepers,” master a comprehensive skill set, and be capable of operating at both strategic and operational levels, thereby meeting the demands of converged media development, producing high-quality converged media content, establishing brand influence, and facilitating the robust development of journals.

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In the Era of Converged Media, Editors Must “Command the Banquet Hall and Master the Kitchen”—A Case Study of *Health and Life*

Abstract: With the rapid development of new media, convergence has become imperative. Major media outlets have launched “central kitchens,” establishing “converged media offices.” Traditional media editors must learn new technologies, strengthen internet thinking, have the courage to take responsibility, earnestly fulfill their “gatekeeper” duties, master the “eighteen martial arts skills,” and be capable of both commanding the banquet hall and mastering the

kitchen. Only then can they meet the demands of converged media development, create high-quality converged media products, build brand influence, and ensure better journal development.

Keywords: converged media; editor; versatile competence

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By Wang Shihong

The phrase “capable of both commanding the banquet hall and mastering the kitchen” originally described someone who could handle household chores perfectly and comprehensively, while also being able to work independently and appropriately in professional and interpersonal settings—managing both internal and external affairs. In fact, with the development of internet technology and the continuous emergence of new media, we now live in a converged media era where “everyone is an editor, everyone is a journalist.” How should editors confront the trend of media convergence, reconstruct their thinking paradigms, develop versatile competencies, and achieve cross-boundary communication? [1] Only by mastering these eighteen martial arts skills can editors create high-quality content, produce converged media masterpieces, establish brand influence, and ensure better journal development amidst fierce competition.

1. Learn Technology, Let Text Soar Together with Video, Audio, and Images

The rapid development of new media has profoundly transformed people’s understanding of media communication and modes of thinking. Media has shifted from single-form communication to completely breaking down boundaries between media formats. Any medium can now utilize converged media expression techniques—combining video, audio, images, text, and other elements in a multi-media competitive-cooperative manner—to disseminate information intuitively, three-dimensionally, across multiple dimensions and spatiotemporal contexts, achieving integration and consolidation of resources, content, and interests across networks, radio, television, and newspapers. This “media convergence” phenomenon, emerging alongside new media development, has become the most influential, fastest-changing, most technologically intensive, and most noteworthy trend in the media industry. [2] In the converged media era, editors must actively learn new technologies, such as computer application technology, internet technology, photography, recording, and image processing. The U.S. *Wall Street Journal* hires professional trainers to teach print journalists how to use cameras and video equipment, requiring them to conduct street interviews with digital cameras and video recorders within specified timeframes and then helping them analyze the quality of their footage. Every journalist is taught to produce video content and publish it on mobile devices, learning everything

from how to use tripods to microphones. [3]

Editors in the converged media era can no longer be confined to “embroidery in the boudoir”—that is, merely processing and editing text in the editorial office as in the print media era. Today’s new media reporting is no longer limited to text but combines multiple elements such as video, animation, and sound to give users a more intuitive news experience. Editors must not only master computer technology and learn the backend production and distribution of websites, WeChat, and Weibo but also, most importantly, learn and master video production. For example, before *Health and Life* invites experts for interviews, it arranges a studio setting similar to a television broadcast room. Editors must transform into hosts for interview programs, prepare photography and recording equipment, conduct on-site recording, perform post-production editing of interview content, and then upload it to websites or WeChat official accounts. Editors have moved from behind the scenes in the print media era to front-stage, tracking the entire process from content production to publication. For each video production, editors serve as both television hosts and directors, completely overturning the concept of editors in the print media era. In the converged media era, editors must learn new technologies such as photography, recording, and editing to achieve a magnificent transformation and strive to become versatile editors.

2. Strengthen Internet Thinking to Achieve Personalized and Precise Distribution

So-called internet thinking refers to a mindset adapted to the production, lifestyle, and cultural development trends of the internet era, including user thinking, decentralization thinking, cross-boundary integration thinking, big data thinking, and others. It places greater emphasis on user experience and emotions, stresses openness, equality, sharing, and interaction, and focuses on refined product performance and fast, considerate personalized services. If an editor lacks such thinking, they cannot understand users’ real needs, satisfy users’ personalized emotional experiences, or actively communicate and interact with users, ultimately failing to be competent for news publishing work in the media convergence era. [4] In the converged media era, editors must strengthen internet thinking.

2.1 Use Big Data to Analyze User Preferences and Guide Content Production

American media attach great importance to data analysis. In the newsroom command center of the *Wall Street Journal*, large screens displaying audience analysis data continuously show how many readers come from PC versus mobile terminals, the page views for each article, how long readers stay, and other metrics. For traditional media, data analysis can expand reporting content, determine story value based on data, decide whether follow-up reporting is needed,

and apply data analysis to editorial decision-making—all reflecting media’s user awareness. [5] By using big data analysis from platforms like Toutiao, The Paper, and Sohu to examine readership, click-through rates, and forwarding volumes of health-related articles, editors can identify which types of articles have the highest readership and popularity, promptly plan relevant topics, and solicit contributions from experts. Simultaneously, by using the magazine’s website, Weibo, and WeChat for interaction and analyzing likes and forwarding volumes, editors can determine which published articles are most popular for topic planning and manuscript organization to meet user needs.

2.2 Emphasize User Experience and Enhance User Stickiness

Health and Life has accumulated more than 20 years of history since its founding, possesses strong content resources and brand influence, and features medical and health knowledge that lacks the strong timeliness of current affairs news. Using new technologies to expand and extend this content, producing various converged media works such as text, audio-video, H5, graphic illustrations, and VR, will inevitably attract users.

In the new media era, internet thinking is a concept that no enterprise or individual can abandon. Traditional print media must also implement this concept, uphold the principle that users are king, enhance user experience, and ultimately return to the market. [6] While journals have always emphasized “readers first,” relying solely on reader letters to analyze reader needs is slow and has long cycles. Today, websites, Weibo, and WeChat can be used for timely interaction—editors can provide brief professional answers to readers’ questions promptly. Simultaneously, topics can be planned and experts invited to provide answers, which appear as special features in the latest issue to give readers comprehensive solutions and provide personalized, attentive services that enhance user stickiness. When users participate in WeChat interactions and issue evaluations, they can also receive surprise gifts, obtaining exceptional user experiences.

3. Fulfill “Gatekeeper” Responsibilities and Transmit Quality Voices of Health Science

Tencent, jointly with the Data Communication Laboratory of the School of Media and Design at Sun Yat-sen University, released the *2017 Rumor Governance Report*, which shows that health and wellness rumors account for 38.77% of all rumor articles, making it a disaster zone for misinformation. Only by amplifying the “high-quality” voice of mainstream health media and persevering in popularizing scientific knowledge can the “water level” of national health literacy gradually rise. [7] *Health and Life* magazine has been selected for the “China Post Top 80 Bestselling Publications” for ten consecutive years since 2008 and has been selected for three consecutive sessions (2013, 2015, 2017) of the “China Top 100 Publications” because it has always upheld the responsibility and commitment of mainstream health media, with scientific and authoritative content

that has won the favor of readers and users, enabling the journal to remain invincible. Compared with traditional media, the reason why rumors run rampant in new media is mainly the lack of strict content review by editors serving as “first-responsible gatekeepers.” Medical science journal editors must not only have professional medical knowledge backgrounds but also be familiar with publishing policies and regulations, playing a crucial role in gatekeeping political orientation and content scientificity.

4. Advance Toward Expert Editors and Produce In-Depth Reports

In-depth reporting and news commentary are the core competitiveness of media in the mobile internet era. Media professionals should continuously seek survival through depth. This is not achieved through the rapid capture of new media or through live streaming but through the deep professionalism of media. [8] Medical science journal editors must possess professional medical knowledge. When planning specific topics and interviewing experts, they must thoroughly prepare the professional knowledge required for interview content to effectively engage with experts. Simultaneously, they must understand the latest developments in medical research and introduce research findings closely related to people’s health to audiences or users, conducting in-depth reporting and interpretation of health hotspots and events.

5. Enter the “Central Kitchen” to Cook Healthy “Feasts”

In the converged media editing and distribution network, the “central kitchen” is both a hardware foundation and technical platform as well as the brain and nerve center, which should possess basic functions such as centralized command, editorial scheduling, efficient coordination, and information communication. [9] Whether it can function effectively depends on people—whether the “chefs” are good at selecting ingredients, seasoning, cooking, and designing pleasing visual presentations to make the “spiritual food” perfect in color, aroma, taste, shape, vessel, and ingredients. [10] In response to the needs of integrated development, major media have established “central kitchens.” Anhui Science and Technology Publishing House has established a “Converged Media Office,” where editors are the “chefs.” To become a “master chef,” one must possess superb “cooking” skills.

5.1 Carefully Select Ingredients to Ensure Quality

Health and Life has accumulated more than 20 years of history since its founding, possesses strong content resources and brand influence, and features medical and health knowledge that lacks the strong timeliness of current affairs news. Using new technologies to expand and extend this content, producing various converged media works such as text, audio-video, H5, graphic illustrations, and VR, will inevitably attract users.

5.2 Use Seasonings Well to Cook Delicious Food

Medical knowledge is dry, dull, and difficult to understand. In the print media era, *Health and Life* magazine used traditional Chinese medicine legend stories and popular TV dramas as entry points to deeply explore readability, making dry and abstruse medical knowledge light and interesting, stimulating readers' interest, achieving considerable success, and winning widespread reader favor. However, it was ultimately limited to text narratives. Today, with the help of “seasonings” such as different expressive forms like video, audio, or animation, content can be produced into “feasts” (converged media products) of different forms and content, making the “feast” more delicious.

In the converged media era, medical science editors must continuously learn new technologies, strengthen internet thinking, fulfill their “gatekeeper” responsibilities, cultivate professional literacy, conduct interviews, shoot videos, produce animations, draw pictures, speak, write, comment, film, edit, and appear on camera. These are the essential skills for editors in the new era of converged media. Only in this way can they cook delicious and healthy “feasts” of converged media, meet users' health needs, and make due contributions to national health.

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(Author's Affiliation: Anhui Science and Technology Publishing House)

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

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