

How Journalists Adapt to New Roles in the Context of Media Convergence: Postprint

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Abstract

With the development of the times and societal progress, the modalities of information collection and dissemination have undergone substantial transformations. Traditional media have actively pursued integration with new media, rendering media convergence an inevitable trend in the journalism industry's evolution. This novel media environment presents both advantageous aspects and potential drawbacks for news gathering, editing, and dissemination. Within this context of media convergence, a qualified journalist must advance with the times, reorient their professional role, and adhere to elevated standards, thereby evolving into a versatile journalist possessing robust professional expertise, high comprehensive qualities, and acute news sensitivity to effectively address the myriad challenges emerging in news gathering, editing, and dissemination processes under media convergence.

Full Text

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Today's society is in an era of rapid technological development, and the prospects of media convergence have far exceeded people's imagination. Radio, television, mobile phones, and the internet are gradually merging from their previous separate operations into a unified whole. This not only breaks down barriers between media, providing a platform for resource integration across different outlets, but also facilitates the dissemination of news information, enabling people to obtain the latest information in a timely manner. In this trend of media convergence, journalists must embrace new challenges, continuously improve their media literacy, professional knowledge, and operational capabilities, and become

outstanding news professionals who serve the people in the media convergence era.

1. Characteristics of the Media Convergence Era

Media convergence refers to the integration of different media forms, including the convergence of network with broadcast, network with newspaper, and network with television. With the rapid development of information technology and network technology, the boundaries between media are becoming increasingly blurred, media technology and content are gradually merging, and media forms are undergoing transformation. Various new media have emerged on the social stage, bringing about changes in media production methods and production relations. Media convergence has arisen in response to these developments. It can be said that media convergence is an inevitable trend based on the development of the new media environment, has become a ubiquitous media phenomenon, and satisfies the public's increasingly sophisticated media needs.

2. Challenges Posed by Media Convergence to Journalists

While media convergence brings convenience to journalists in gathering and writing news, it also presents new challenges and creates crises in their professional careers.

2.1 Mixed True and False Information Online

In the context of media convergence, information exhibits a phenomenon of mixed authenticity. Today, anyone can publish news online through the internet, but the accuracy, authenticity, and reliability of such content cannot be verified. While this provides journalists with abundant writing resources, it also brings false information that creates difficulties for their work.

2.2 Blurred Professional Roles and Identities

Journalists are the publishers, disseminators, and gatekeepers of news, with responsibilities to supervise and select information. In recent years, with the development and advancement of media technology, journalists' professional positioning has been adjusted, and the public has frequently voiced calls for "de-professionalization" and "de-specialization," leading journalists to encounter an unprecedented crisis of professional identity. On the one hand, supported by new media technology, everyone can become a news disseminator, instantly and rapidly using various communication tools to publish all kinds of information online, which to a large extent threatens and even undermines journalists' professional identity. On the other hand, supported by internet technology, the threshold for publishing online information has been greatly lowered and has already achieved real-time transmission, which significantly impacts journalists' role as "gatekeepers."

2.3 Journalists' Competencies Need Improvement

Media convergence places higher demands on journalists, requiring not only solid professional knowledge, high operational capabilities, and strong news sensitivity, but also mastery of various multimedia skills to become all-round journalists. However, overall, current journalists have not yet met these requirements. In particular, their news editing concepts remain outdated and have not kept pace with technological changes. Additionally, online news reporting forms are relatively monotonous and lack interaction with users, requiring journalists to actively perceive and explore new approaches in practice.

3. How Journalists Adapt to New Roles in the Context of Media Convergence

With the rapid development of network and information technology today, the forms of news communication have undergone significant changes, and simultaneously, the roles of journalists have also transformed, with their identities becoming more diversified. This requires journalists not only to adapt to new changes in news writing and reporting methods and to master and apply new technologies, but also to update their concepts, reposition themselves, and adapt to their new roles. Only in this way can they produce quality news in the context of media convergence.

3.1 Update Concepts and Keep Pace with Development

Today, the pace of media convergence is accelerating, and the diversification and networking of traditional media represents the general trend. As publishers and disseminators of news, journalists must break away from traditional media thinking, update their concepts, adjust their working methods, and strive to adapt to the new media era. First, journalists must embrace internet thinking and adapt to the characteristics of equal exchange and interactive communication in new media. In the 21st century, internet technology has developed rapidly, and the emergence of new media such as QQ, WeChat, and Weibo has greatly changed people's communication methods, enabling better interaction through these emerging platforms. In this context, journalists should use new media as a vehicle to fully leverage its advantages and achieve equal exchange and interaction with the public. Second, they must establish a user concept and change the past model of one-way media communication. In today's advanced network technology environment, both ordinary people and journalists have dual identities as senders and receivers. Ordinary people have opportunities and channels to publish messages, and journalists are no longer simply message publishers and disseminators but have actually become information receivers as well, screening and selecting useful information from the vast and complex online information to produce high-quality news stories. Third, they must focus on user experience and meet diverse and personalized information needs. In the 21st century, people are concerned about more aspects of life

and have increasingly diverse demands for news. Journalists must proceed from people's actual needs and write different news stories in a targeted manner to satisfy various needs.

3.2 Be Good at Thinking and Dare to Innovate

The convergence of old and new media has accelerated the speed of information transmission while also leading to information overload. Countless news stories with identical content flood the internet, which obviously cannot attract the public's attention. In reality, many new things happen in society every day, and these can all serve as news material—it all depends on whether journalists can record and report them from a new perspective. Specifically, while ensuring the authenticity, accuracy, and reliability of news, journalists must be observant and alert, identifying valuable news from social life and daring to innovate by using diverse methods such as text, sound, and video to record, edit, and disseminate news material. They should screen, process, and integrate numerous beneficial news materials and conduct multi-angle, comprehensive reporting on news events, thereby providing the public with richer, more attractive, and more influential news masterpieces.

3.3 Transform Identity and Reposition Roles

With media convergence, news communication forms and channels have become increasingly diversified, and journalists are no longer simply news publishers and disseminators—their identities have become more varied. Journalists must have a clear understanding of this and reposition their roles in their future careers. First, expand from being information publishers to information discriminators. In the context of media convergence, information is growing exponentially. What was previously done by journalists—news investigation and reporting—can now be completed anytime, anywhere by ordinary people through computers and mobile phones, resulting in a massive surge of information. While this ensures the timeliness of information, it poses a huge test for its correctness and objectivity. Because the authenticity of this information cannot be verified and it may have been subjectively altered during forwarding, such information often brings unpredictable consequences to society when disseminated. This requires journalists to transform from information publishers to information discriminators, classifying and distinguishing massive amounts of information to timely deliver valuable and worthy information to the public. Second, expand from being information disseminators to information interpreters. In the era of massive information, the public is no longer satisfied with merely knowing the facts—they also want to know the stories behind the news. This requires journalists to become information interpreters, conducting in-depth analysis of certain news stories and, through meticulous unraveling and progressive exposition, exposing the essence of matters and the crux of problems to the public, allowing them to understand what lies behind the news. Third, expand from being historical recorders to agenda setters. Journalists are

historical recorders, documenting major and minor events in society. With media convergence, this identity has changed—from historical recorders to agenda setters, transforming from simply reflecting and stating facts like a mirror to consciously selecting and setting communication directions based on social reality, thereby transmitting ideological consciousness to the public and completing the shaping of contemporary thought.

3.4 Continuously Learn and Develop High Competencies

Today, against the backdrop of media convergence, news media that previously controlled communication channels are no longer the sole creators, publishers, and disseminators of information—everyone has the potential to become a news source. However, the principle of “content is king” remains unchanged, which places higher demands on journalists’ qualities and abilities. First, strengthen professional knowledge. In the era of media convergence, the audience for radio and television journalists has changed from one to multiple, and they may need to work simultaneously for newspapers, television, radio, networks, and other media. Under such circumstances, journalists cannot accomplish their work without solid professional knowledge. Therefore, journalists must continuously learn and enrich their professional knowledge. On the one hand, they must be familiar with modern news communication methods, skillfully apply various multimedia devices, and release news through different platforms to provide useful information to the public. On the other hand, they must strengthen their learning of news gathering and editing, master interviewing skills, and simultaneously gain understanding and knowledge of the fields they cover, possess considerable professional knowledge, and improve their ability to identify and screen information in complex environments. Second, possess extremely strong news sensitivity. Every journalism practitioner, especially journalists, should have news sensitivity. In today’s media convergence environment, journalists cannot discover valuable news from massive amounts of information without sensitivity. Only with extremely strong news sensitivity can journalists make judgments about important scenes and images, capture them, dig out news stories, and timely transmit information to the public. Third, establish a global awareness. In today’s world, network communication has broken the limitations of time and space, becoming another form of “globalization.” Moreover, as China’s foreign exchanges increase, journalists encounter foreign nationals on many occasions. Therefore, journalists must establish global awareness and master one or more foreign languages to better conduct interviews, exchanges, writing, and other news reporting activities. Additionally, they must have good professional ethics. The key to benign interaction between news communication and society lies in journalists’ professional ethics. In today’s society of information overload, if journalists lack professional ethics and casually publish and disseminate false news, it not only prevents the public from learning the truth but may even cause social disorder. Therefore, journalists must have good professional ethics, adhere to the spirit of journalistic professionalism, and follow humane reporting requirements to deliver accurate and authentic information

to the public.

In the context of media convergence, journalists have multiple identities as information publishers, disseminators, discriminators, and interpreters. To adapt to these roles, they must become all-round news talents, produce and create differentiated news products that meet the needs of different audiences, and provide more targeted content services for the public.

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

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