

New Models of Scientific Journal Publishing and Distribution: A Preliminary Discussion on Post-prints

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Abstract

Currently, scientific journals in China generally exhibit low circulation and limited influence. How to leverage new media technologies to improve the current state of journal publishing and distribution, and to enhance journal influence in the digital publishing process, is a critical issue that journal publishers urgently need to address. This paper, in light of the new situation in the publishing market, proposes several preliminary recommendations regarding the aforementioned issues for reference by fellow professionals.

Full Text

Abstract

At present, Chinese scientific and technological journals generally suffer from low circulation and limited influence. How to leverage new media technologies to improve the publishing and distribution status of journals during the digital publishing process and enhance their impact is an urgent issue for publishing professionals. This paper proposes several preliminary recommendations to address these challenges in light of new market conditions, offering a reference for colleagues in the field.

Keywords: scientific journals; publishing and distribution; new media; digital publishing

In recent years, as China's economic and scientific strength has continuously grown, scientific journals have also developed significantly, with substantial improvements in both quantity and quality. According to the *Blue Book of Chinese Sci-Tech Journals Development (2017)*, by the end of 2016, China had 5,020 scientific journals, surpassing many advanced nations and entering the

ranks of major journal-producing countries [1]. From 2004 to 2012, the number of journals indexed by SCI approximately doubled, reaching over 100 [2]. However, this development process has also revealed numerous problems, such as a lack of high-impact top-tier journals, generally low and declining circulation numbers, and insufficient academic influence. Meanwhile, since the beginning of the 21st-century digital publishing transformation, most Chinese scientific journals have only achieved digitization in their editorial processes, while their publishing and distribution models remain at outdated stages, failing to realize true digitalization. How to improve the entire digital publishing workflow and utilize this new technological means to create greater development space for scientific journals, increase circulation, and enhance influence has become a critical challenge. This paper offers several recommendations regarding new models for journal publishing and distribution in light of emerging trends, providing a reference for colleagues in the field.

1. Refining Editorial Process Division and Extracting Core Editorial Value

Traditional scientific journal publishing and distribution relied entirely on the journal office's own resources and channels, which were limited and yielded mediocre results. The new situation demands diversified, specialized, and even internationalized distribution channels, leveraging professional teams to increase circulation and visibility. Some newly established journals have begun active experimentation in this area. For example, *Gastroenterology Report*, launched in 2013, chose to partner with Oxford University Press, which holds a massive market share and possesses strong technical capabilities. The experienced partner handles the journal's publishing and distribution, helping the magazine expand its market and enhance its influence. Large publishers like Oxford University Press have professional distribution teams that can identify target distribution fields based on the journal's positioning (editorial content, special issues, planning direction, impact factor, etc.), and conduct timely and targeted promotion and push notifications to customer groups and potential customer groups. They also provide detailed and accurate analysis of reader responses to journal products, enabling editorial offices to adjust journal development directions promptly. Additionally, they can fully utilize distributors' resources to set up journal booths at domestic and international academic lectures, conference exchanges, and brand promotion activities, thereby increasing magazine recognition and customer acceptance.

A review of operational models from internationally renowned journals and some emerging excellent journals reveals that refined division of labor and collaboration with professional forces represent the trend in scientific journal development. Expanding distribution channels and achieving integrated publishing are important pathways for scientific journals to enhance influence and expand circulation under new circumstances. Only by mastering new changes and patterns in the publishing environment, updating concepts in a timely manner, and ad-

justing development strategies can we truly promote journal development and create high-quality journals with broad dissemination and significant academic impact.

3. Leveraging New Media Technologies to Strengthen Online Distribution

In the digital age, readers' habits have changed dramatically. Online reading and mobile reading have gradually become the primary means for the public to obtain information, while print media circulation has generally declined. Online distribution (manifested specifically as online views and downloads) has become an important indicator for measuring a journal's dissemination power and influence. At present, online distribution mainly relies on three major carriers: computers, tablets, and mobile phones, with official websites, apps, and social media tools such as Weibo and WeChat serving as the primary channels. Taking WeChat official accounts as an example, some astute scientific journals have already used them for solicitation, editing, services, and operations. Searching with the keyword "journal" yields over 100 scientific journal official accounts [5]. Using the push function to regularly send the latest table of contents, excellent papers, or industry dynamics can not only enhance user stickiness but also effectively increase the visibility of journal articles. When brand building reaches a certain level, the fan effect can be leveraged to achieve comprehensive marketing of the journal, completing a series of activities including distribution, academic event planning, and industry exhibitions.

In addition to WeChat official accounts, WeChat stores have also begun to play an active role in the publishing industry. Research by domestic scholar Cao Jidong [6] shows that the characteristic interactive functions developed by WeChat stores based on "user needs" and "user experience" greatly enhance the appeal of publishing enterprises after they enter the store. Since the comprehensive launch of WeChat Pay in March 2014, numerous publishing enterprises such as Huawen Tianxia and Duku have entered the store, setting up micro-shop sections to sell books and derivatives, forming effective complements to physical bookstores. This business model is also worthy of reference for scientific journals, especially for clustered scientific journal societies/publishing groups.

Meanwhile, apps have gradually become an important means to expand the dissemination of scientific journals. As an extension of digital publishing to mobile devices, apps offer convenience, interactivity, and real-time features, providing excellent user experience [7]. A study on apps for journals of the Chinese Medical Association showed that apps have advantages such as diverse functions, strong timeliness, high stickiness, and preferential pricing in the digital publishing of medical journals, indicating optimistic application prospects [8]. However, another study also pointed out that although domestic and foreign scientific journals generally adopt three or more new media technologies to achieve integrated publishing, it is still difficult to deeply develop the advantages of various new media at the current stage, requiring further mastery of new media

technologies and fuller understanding of the integrated publishing concept [9]. Integrated publishing is not a simple superposition of multiple publishing forms but rather, on the basis of content construction, fully leveraging the different advantages of new media, maximizing strengths and avoiding weaknesses, and focusing on user needs and experience to truly achieve transformation in publishing and distribution models.

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