

Strategies and Reflections on the Digital Transformation of Traditional Publications: Postprint

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Abstract

Today, as digital technology increasingly becomes the prevailing trend in the publishing industry's development, the enormous market it commands has brought forth broader development prospects for the publishing sector. How to accelerate the digital transformation of traditional publications has become an imperative requirement posed by the current era to the publishing industry. Based on this, proceeding from practical realities and integrating the developmental status of digital publishing, this paper provides a detailed analysis of the opportunities and challenges in the digital transformation of traditional publications, and conducts in-depth reflection and analysis on its specific measures and key pathways, with the aim of offering feasible assistance and recommendations to publishing groups at large.

Full Text

Strategies and Reflections on the Digital Transformation of Traditional Publications

Abstract: In today's era, where digital technology is gradually becoming the dominant trend in the publishing industry, the vast market potential of digital technology has brought broader development prospects to the publishing sector. Accelerating the digital transformation of traditional publications has become an inevitable requirement for the publishing industry in the current age. Based on this reality and in conjunction with the development status of digital publishing, this paper provides a detailed analysis of the opportunities and challenges in the digital transformation of traditional publications, and offers in-depth reflections and analysis on specific measures and key pathways, aiming to provide feasible assistance and recommendations to publishing groups.

Keywords: traditional; digital technology; publishing industry; transformation; innovation; challenges; opportunities

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1. The Meaning of Digital Transformation

The digital transformation of traditional publications has become not only a challenge for traditional publishing units but also a difficult problem confronting the entire publishing industry. Theoretically, we should understand “transformation” as “the fundamental process of change in a thing’s structural form, operational model, and people’s concepts”—that is, transformation should be an active process of seeking novelty and innovation, rather than a passive one. Similarly, digital transformation should be interpreted as “using modern information technologies such as digital and network technology to promote fundamental changes in the structural form, operational model, and publishing concepts of traditional publishing units.” In other words, digital transformation is not simply the digitization of traditional publishing, distribution, and consumption processes, but a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional digital shift in publishing concepts, operational models, and structural forms.

2. Development Status of Traditional Publications’ Digital Transformation

According to recent reports on China’s digital publishing industry, the sector has entered a stage of rapid development, with noticeable improvements in both digital publishing scale and revenue. Facts have proven that the digital transformation of traditional publications brings more benefits than drawbacks and aligns with historical development trends. However, any new development inevitably has both advantages and disadvantages. Although digital transformation has created tremendous opportunities and broader prospects, for most traditional publishing houses in China, it remains a completely new subject that requires continuous exploration to achieve significant results. Therefore, without long-term strategies, tactical planning, and persistent development concepts, achieving the goal of digital transformation would be extremely difficult.

3.1 Growing Demand for Online Reading

According to the annual “Statistical Report on Internet Development in China,” the number of Internet users in China has increased to hundreds of millions, ranking first in the world. This surge in Internet users signifies expanded market demand. On the other hand, China’s national book reading rate has declined rapidly in recent years, while the online reading rate has risen sharply, surpassing the book reading rate as early as 2007. This indicates that the true era of online reading has arrived. Consequently, the enormous market demand for online

publishing continuously stimulates and drives innovation in digital technology, further promoting the development of new digital publishing industries such as online publishing, digital multimedia publishing, and mobile publishing.

3.2 Continuous Stimulation of Commercial Profits

Compared with traditional publishing, digital publishing possesses significant advantages, including higher publishing efficiency and lower costs. These efficiencies inevitably lead the publishing industry toward a new business model—the IP (Intellectual Property) model—which can ensure publishers' profits while minimizing costs, creating substantial commercial benefits for both publishing enterprises and target customers. Currently, China's Internet is developing rapidly, with substantial profits from online games, advertising, music, and other digital products largely paving the way for digital publishing. Coupled with rising national consumption levels and improved quality of life, digital publishing is poised for long-term development, enabling numerous publishing enterprises to obtain commercial profits previously unavailable under traditional models.

3.3 Requirements of the Green Reading Era

Statistics show that as early as 1999, China's textbooks consumed 1.3 million tons of paper. Today, China remains a major paper-consuming country with high annual paper production. Meanwhile, with the development of the publishing industry and modern society, China's demand for paper continues to rise year after year, leading to unsustainable practices such as illegal logging. In response, the state has gradually implemented strict restrictions on domestic timber harvesting and encouraged publishing enterprises to use recycled paper, achieving notable results in recent years. However, these measures only address symptoms rather than root causes. Digital technology development provides a new solution to timber shortages. Through digital reading methods such as e-books, publishing enterprises can significantly reduce publishing costs while maximizing timber resource conservation and promoting sustainable ecological development.

3.4 Gradual Shift in Reading Methods

With the increasing popularity of the Internet and mobile phones, traditional reading methods and cultural demand patterns are quietly changing. New media development has not only quickly broken the market monopoly of the five traditional media (radio, television, newspapers, books, and magazines) but has also formed a diversified competitive landscape for mass media within just a few years. The broad information channel advantages of new media provide more convenient ways for people with increasingly fast-paced lives to obtain information, gradually transforming reading habits. Today, more and more people are willing to and accustomed to digital reading, which undoubtedly greatly promotes the digital transformation of traditional publications.

4.1 Impact on Traditional Production Processes

Fundamentally, digital technology has changed the production process of traditional publishing by eliminating the printing process and making tasks such as manuscript solicitation and editing more convenient and efficient. In the new era, publishing personnel can organize and compile digital content simultaneously or interactively, without repeatedly reviewing manuscripts alternately. Additionally, with more advanced editing software, staff efficiency improves significantly while waste of human and material resources decreases substantially. However, from another perspective, digital publishing development may make traditional publishing more difficult to sustain, and some traditional cultures such as paper books may gradually disappear, sounding an alarm for the industry.

4.2 Severe Shortage of Publishing Talents

Throughout the digital transformation process, the rapid pace of change has meant that existing publishing talents cannot adapt to the development needs of the digital publishing industry. According to former Director of the General Administration of Press and Publication Liu Binjie, strengthening the cultivation of composite publishing talents has become an urgent priority for digital publishing development. However, China's current publishing industry operational mechanisms cannot connect with the new digital publishing industry. Coupled with some publishing enterprises sticking to conventions and being unwilling to progress, this not only affects the cultivation of new publishing talents but also restricts the development of the entire publishing industry.

4.3 Lack of Copyright Protection Systems

Whether in traditional or digital publishing, piracy remains a persistent problem. Especially as informationization continues to advance, copying publications has become easier. China's shortage of copyright protection systems and relevant laws and regulations enables phenomena that harm publishers' interests to occur frequently. Additionally, relatively weak public awareness of copyright protection and insufficient support for legitimate publications have to some extent encouraged lawbreakers and made combating piracy even more difficult.

5.1 Staying True to Our Original Aspiration and Exploring Deeper Publishing Content

The development of digital publishing does not signify the decline of traditional publishing. Publishing enterprises and staff should stay true to their original aspiration and fundamentally improve publishing quality. First, they should correctly understand the opportunities and challenges that digital technology brings to the publishing industry, learn from each other's strengths, and organically combine the advantages of traditional publishing with those of digital publishing to ensure the industry enters a stage of benign development. Second,

publishing staff should be dedicated to their duties, perform publishing work responsibly, and maximize the innovative capabilities of traditional publishing enterprises to welcome the new digital publishing trend with a more positive attitude. Finally, they should transform their concepts, gradually break the shackles of the traditional system, continuously explore deeper-level publishing content, and bring higher-quality publications to audiences.

5.2 Innovating Mechanisms and Cultivating More Publishing Talents

In the new era, the state should pay greater attention to cultivating composite publishing talents and continuously build a professional and responsible talent team. First, it should strengthen professional knowledge education and enhance publishing personnel's mastery of traditional publishing technologies to equip them with the ability and foundation to master other new technologies and concepts. Second, it should firmly grasp the key to digital publishing, deeply improve the technical capabilities of publishing personnel, and cultivate truly composite talents. Finally, it should improve management mechanisms and schemes, using effective reward and punishment measures to guide publishing personnel to learn and progress, enabling them to better play a leading role.

5.3 Strengthening Cooperation and Building a Complete Industrial Chain

For the digital publishing industry, the industrial chain should include multiple basic elements such as authors, publishing houses, digital libraries, online bookstores, and readers. Therefore, publishing enterprises should gradually increase exchanges and cooperation, timely understand the advantages and disadvantages of their publications, and continuously carry out innovation and reform. First, they should adopt advanced domestic and international experiences, cooperate with or acquire technology providers to gradually develop toward digitalization, giving full play to their own advantages while accelerating digital transformation. Second, they should strengthen cooperation with other publishing enterprises, learn from each other's strengths, and jointly explore new technical and management fields. Finally, they should use online platforms and other media to timely understand readers' opinions, correct mistakes promptly, and further improve publishing quality.

In summary, the arrival of digital technology has brought both opportunities and challenges to the publishing industry. For publishing enterprises and personnel, only by seizing opportunities while welcoming challenges with a more positive attitude can they truly promote the better digital transformation of traditional publications and enable their enterprises to remain invincible in the future broad digital publishing market.

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

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