

The Impact of New Media Technology on the Development of the Book Industry: Postprint

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Abstract

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Full Text

Preamble

Title: The Impact of New Media Technology on the Development of the Book Industry

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1. Analysis of the Current State of China's Book Industry Under New Media Impact

The emergence of new media has profoundly impacted Chinese society across all sectors, with the book industry experiencing particularly significant disruption, even creating a confrontational situation. The rise of new media, especially mobile terminals, appeared poised to replace traditional books entirely, relegating them to history museums. However, after years of development, the book

industry has continuously adjusted under new media's influence, and the overall landscape has evolved substantially from its initial state. In this context, in-depth analysis of this evolving landscape, accurate assessment of development trends, and identification of future directions are crucial for optimizing the entire book industry.

From the perspective of the book industry, government agencies and market players alike have been actively adjusting their understanding to promote harmonious development between traditional and new media. Early policy documents such as the *National Cultural Development Plan for the 11th Five-Year Plan Period* and the *Press and Publication Industry 11th Five-Year Development Plan* already identified the national digital composite publishing system as a key digital publishing project. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, the state further intensified efforts to transform the publishing industry toward digital publishing. This series of policy initiatives reflects authorities' accurate judgment and recognition of digital new media's future. However, a superficial reading of these policies might suggest that the book industry is inevitably in a disadvantaged position, facing dilemmas regardless of whether it embraces digitalization. As stakeholders in the book industry, we must clearly recognize that digital new media development is fundamentally neutral—it represents the application of new technology in the media field and does not inherently substitute for or directly threaten books. Only through objective evaluation and deep understanding of new media can we more accurately comprehend the book industry, identify its market positioning and target audiences, and drive its deeper development to rejuvenate its vitality.

Regarding traditional book reading habits, the new media era has witnessed further decline. The younger generation has been exposed to digital screens from childhood, displaying far greater familiarity with them than their parents and becoming a significant force propelling new media's dominance. Since 2005, China's traditional book publishing industry has faced increasingly severe challenges: while the number of new titles continues to grow, per-title print runs decline, inventory remains high, and payment cycles lengthen, with numerous market-dependent small and medium-sized publishers struggling to survive. Meanwhile, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' cultural bluebook also indicates that traditional book publishing returns have dropped sharply, mass-market book publishing shows signs of bubble formation, and systemic reform has stagnated.

In stark contrast to the gradual decline of traditional book publishing, the scale of new media digital publishing continues to surge. According to 2014 data, digital publishing industry revenue reached 254.035 billion yuan that year, representing a 31.25% year-over-year increase and marking a milestone year for China's digital publishing industry. Since then, growth has accelerated further, with not only text-based digital publishing but also audio and video achieving remarkable success—online drama audiences grew exponentially between 2015 and 2016.

In response to this environment, the book industry has begun “embracing” digitalization, primarily through enhanced website development to build brand identity and maintain contact with more readers online. Additionally, publishers have released portions of copyrighted content in digital form as trial readings to attract broader readership. While these measures have injected new vitality into traditional publishing, the overall results remain concerning. Some initiatives, such as trial reading programs, have achieved modest success, while website-based brand building has yielded minimal returns, with some publisher websites becoming financial drains. The subsequent emergence of big data technology has further complicated the publishing environment, with no publisher yet developing effective strategies for this new context—pilot programs by well-funded publishers have also produced underwhelming results.

2. Analysis of Future Directions for the Book Industry Under New Media Technology Trends

Whether new media represents competition or opportunity for traditional book publishing has been a subject of continuous debate. As society progresses toward the big data era, book publishing methods and content have become increasingly diversified. Compared to new media, traditional book publishing appears limited in both content and distribution channels, with relatively fixed production methods. However, the emergence of new things does not necessarily mean complete replacement of existing ones—history has repeatedly demonstrated this, particularly in media. Radio did not render newspapers obsolete, and the big data era is transforming production methods. Diversified communication methods and media transmission forms are gradually constructing a systematic all-media publishing model, which significantly highlights the advantages and functions of book publishing.

2.1 Accurately Grasping the Market

The most profound impact of new media technology on the book industry lies in the market—or rather, competition for readers, and more specifically, competition for readers’ attention and reading time. New media provides more entertainment content, thereby occupying more of people’s reading time. However, those within the book industry should recognize that new media technology’s value extends far beyond this—it can serve as a powerful tool for communication between organizations and audiences, enabling more efficient and rapid transmission of ideas. From this perspective, the era of new media technology should not be met with defensive posturing against new media publishing, but rather with leveraging new media technology to maintain closer contact with readers on open network platforms. This should be the primary activity for Chinese enterprises, and publishing houses are no exception.

Regarding the market, the demand for new knowledge persists. Regardless of whether audiences choose digital media or traditional books, this demand

remains constant—only the medium carrying knowledge changes. Therefore, the critical task for book publishers is to communicate fully with the market, accurately capture market demands, and actively adjust their cultural value offerings while firmly grasping the future direction of advanced culture rather than being blindly led by mass-market trends.

2.2 Reasonable Brand Extension

Many traditional book publishers have already begun brand extension efforts. Under new media technology's impact, this group primarily extends into electronic publications. As an effective product extension, electronic publications align with current online reading habits, but their effectiveness requires deeper consideration. On one hand, if publishers solely pursue digital publishing output and constantly cater to market demands, they risk losing sight of their core mission, raising questions about whether publishing houses can sustain their value in spreading ideas, culture, and knowledge. On the other hand, since new media publications are often low-priced or free, publishers must consider whether this will adversely affect traditional publications' copyright revenues.

As publishing houses, brand extension should focus not only on electronic products but also on strengthening channel and related product extensions. Related products should not be limited to text but should instead utilize multimedia technology to create multi-level offerings—including images, audio, video, and even technical support—centered on publications' core ideas, culture, and knowledge to serve readers' needs and enhance publishing house value and industry vitality. Channel extension should similarly focus on the ideological core of publishing products, establishing diverse communication systems encompassing bookstores, e-commerce, WeChat, Weibo, email, and other forms to maintain contact with reader-market groups at different levels.

2.3 Appropriate Horizontal Cooperation

In the process of achieving extension, traditional book publishers cannot possibly master every detail. In this regard, publishing houses should strengthen horizontal cooperation, establishing connections and communication with specialized units in different fields to learn from each other's strengths, with the goal of spreading ideas and culture and serving reader groups.

3. Conclusion

The emergence of new media technology does not represent pure opportunity or challenge for traditional book publishing. Objectively viewing and accurately judging the situation, deepening understanding of one's own value, fully leveraging technological functions, and clearly identifying the characteristics of target service groups constitute the foundation for the book industry's survival and development.

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