

Visualization Exploration in the Context of Media Convergence: An Interview with Wu Ying, Visual Director of People's Daily Media Technology Co., Ltd. (Postprint)

Authors: Chen Xuguan, CAO Yuwei

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

In the process of advancing media convergence, visualization has emerged as a mainstream exploratory direction. As Wu Ying observes, “Visualization represents the last mile of news production.” Over the past decade—spanning transitions from traditional to new media, from media practitioner to media educator, and from domestic to international contexts—Wu Ying has consistently sought the intersection between visual communication and the journalism industry. “Ultimately,” she notes, “media converg...

Full Text

Preamble: Visualization in the Context of Media Convergence

In the process of advancing media convergence, visualization has emerged as a mainstream exploratory direction. As Wu Ying observes, “Visualization represents the last mile of news production.” Over the past decade—spanning transitions from traditional to new media, from media practitioner to media educator, and from domestic to international contexts—Wu Ying has consistently sought the intersection between visual communication and the journalism industry. “Ultimately,” she notes, “media convergence is fundamentally about the convergence of people.”

Visualization Exploration Under Media Convergence: An Interview with Wu Ying, Visual Director of People's Daily Media Technology Co., Ltd.

On Development Philosophy and Technical Capabilities

China Media Technology: What is the development approach for data visualization at People's Daily Media Technology Co., Ltd.?

Wu Ying: We operate as a converged media technology company that prioritizes technological R&D and the application of technology in convergence development. Among our 200-plus employees, more than half are technical staff with an average age of under 30. In terms of data and visualization technology applications, we employ not only H5 and short video formats but also develop mini-programs and apps, providing full-process technical services from granular details to overall architecture. Our technology department comprises not only visual design talent but also product and operations specialists. Overall, we support converged reporting through visualization backed by technology.

China Media Technology: Could you describe the current operational mechanism for visualization reporting?

Wu Ying: We adopt a project-based, cross-departmental collaboration model. Visual designers are embedded within various content creation teams, tightly integrating content production with visual design and ensuring designers maintain constant engagement with the content. Consequently, our visual designers participate in multiple converged media products across different media studios, focusing closely on visualization design for converged reporting.

China Media Technology: In this converged mechanism, do designers also participate in content conceptualization and creation?

Wu Ying: This has been an evolutionary process. Initially, we still relied on traditional approaches, but in practice, we discovered new methods. For instance, when designers discuss with content editors how to make something more engaging and disseminable, these conversations often spark new ideas. This represents a truly collaborative approach—a team crafting a product together—rather than having text, editing, and design function as separate, isolated units. Such interaction and exchange prove excellent methods for producing quality work.

China Media Technology: How do you understand “converged media reporting” within this operational framework?

Wu Ying: My understanding of convergence is essentially the convergence of people—whether through physical space integration or mechanism adjustments, the focus remains on human fusion. This principle also guided my teaching experience abroad. In cultivating journalism talent, we first provide students with a macro-level understanding of the industry, then allow them to pursue in-depth study in a specific technology or professional skill that interests them.

This approach essentially cultivates versatile, multi-skilled professionals for the future. “Converged media reporting” cannot succeed without the convergence of people.

China Media Technology: What unique perspectives or characteristics emerge when conducting visualization reporting at a company that possesses both traditional media reporting advantages and a technological foundation?

Wu Ying: First, we start from the content itself, focusing primarily on interpreting national policies and conveying positive national energy through lively, engaging methods. We enjoy natural advantages in preliminary research and data source acquisition. In terms of presentation, we experiment with and explore various visualization formats including animation, H5, and 3D effects. During this year’s Two Sessions, for example, we produced numerous influential works. In April, I shared some of our H5 works as a keynote speaker at the SND (Society for News Design) conference in the United States, which generated considerable excitement. With 730 million internet users in China—95% of whom are mobile users—we have been consistently exploring visualization for mobile platforms. In my view, China has already taken a leading position globally in mobile visualization reporting.

China Media Technology: Current mainstream visualization reporting trends in China primarily focus on time-sensitive news. How do you view the application of visualization in in-depth reporting?

Wu Ying: I believe in-depth reporting is exceptionally well-suited for visualization. Data visualization, in particular, lends itself perfectly to investigative reports—what we might call core or research reporting—because such work requires extensive data cleaning, filtering, and analysis to derive valuable news points before visualization can even begin. The encoding process during visualization is also crucial. Topics with long-term trajectories, such as environment, agriculture, or finance, are all highly suitable for in-depth reporting.

China Media Technology: Does visualization in in-depth reporting impose higher requirements on journalists, editors, and designers?

Wu Ying: Certainly. Editors working on visualized in-depth reporting must possess visual thinking. As we say, visualization is the last mile of news production—no matter how excellent the preliminary planning, readers won’t engage without strong visual presentation. Designers must also have certain journalistic competencies and understand where news value lies. Only with genuine understanding can you present content using the most appropriate techniques. This embodies the concept of “fusion”—both visual designers and journalists must understand each other’s domains. Journalism professionals in the convergence era must adopt this mindset. Editors and journalists need to envision the final visual state during the planning stage, purposefully seeking relevant materials. Similarly, designers’ level of news understanding directly impacts the final visual presentation.

China Media Technology: What differences do you observe between Chinese and Western approaches to converged reporting and visualization production?

Wu Ying: The development of technology and social media compels news organizations to continuously redefine their positioning and rediscover their value. Visualization has remained a hot topic throughout our convergence transformation—a point that can directly drive innovation—yet visual communication hasn’t received the same respect as textual content. Visualization is part of content, but some still view it merely as content’s decorative wrapping. These transformations reflect a shift in thinking patterns and represent the convergence and transformation of people.

China Media Technology: How do you understand user experience?

Wu Ying: Experience is intangible; vision is merely one component of experience. As McLuhan said, media extends human senses. We can experience through not only hearing and smell but also through touch-based interactive experiences. Therefore, we shouldn’t limit information to text or vision alone but should transmit it through multi-dimensional experiential approaches.

China Media Technology: What future trends will visualization reporting exhibit as media convergence progresses?

Wu Ying: Going forward, we need to reconsider what constitutes communication and interaction—how people connect with one another. This includes the development of wearable devices and sensors. Where will our visualization ultimately reside? How will changes in terminals affect visualization methods? These remain unknown. Currently, we’re on mobile terminals, but with future internet development, information visualization will appear on multiple terminals—even on devices we don’t currently consider terminals, such as refrigerators, cars, and walls. We need to rethink the relationship between information and people, and redefine what constitutes information, news, and value. Much remains to be imagined, but the core of design remains human-centered. User experience must be paramount—regardless of how terminals evolve, information serves people, and user experience always comes first.

Biographical Note: Wu Ying is a highly interdisciplinary professional. She studied visual communication in university, then worked at *The Beijing News* before pursuing graduate studies in communication and media abroad. Having experienced the internet’s impact on traditional media and the rise and decline of portal websites, she chose to deepen her industry understanding through advanced studies in communication rather than pursuing a visual arts MFA. After graduation, she worked in user experience design at *The Boston Globe*, designing portfolios for Pulitzer Prize entries, including an arts criticism piece that won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize. She later served as an assistant professor and graduate advisor at the Missouri School of Journalism and as an international judge for the Society for News Design (SND), evaluating works including *The New York*

Times’ “Snow Fall.” During the judging period, her profile was featured in English and Spanish on the front pages of *The World’s Best News Design* annual publication. Her news design work *The Vanishing Colors of Beijing* received an Excellence Award at the 31st International News Design Competition. Reflecting on her journey across disciplines, countries, and roles—from practitioner to educator—she recognizes this as the path media professionals must take during this era of deep media convergence. The current advocacy of “you are me, I am you” ultimately demands the convergence of people, which requires mutual understanding of the entire industry and each other’s professions. Only when seeing the whole picture does everything naturally converge. Many journalism practitioners in the United States already represent this fusion of diverse backgrounds, possessing not only deep industry understanding but also professional capabilities in writing, design, technology, and communication strategy.

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.