

How to Excel as a Print Media Editor in the New Media Era: The Post-Print Perspective

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Abstract

With the continuous development of the Internet and the rapid proliferation of mobile devices, traditional print media has been subject to certain impacts, and certainly, numerous higher and newer requirements have been imposed upon print media editors. The timeliness of print media lags “a step behind” that of the Internet, and information dissemination is less convenient than that of new media. Therefore, print media editors must pursue innovation and transformation in both content and form to satisfy readers’ demands.

Full Text

How to Be a Good Print Media Editor in the New Media Era

Abstract: With the continuous development of the internet and the rapid proliferation of mobile terminals, traditional print media has faced significant impact, placing higher and more novel demands on print media editors. Print media’s timeliness lags behind that of online platforms, and its information dissemination is less convenient than new media. Therefore, print media editors must innovate and transform both content and form to meet readers’ needs.

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1. Characteristics of the New Media Era

As media portable terminals gradually become universal with media development, the advent of the new media era has not only propelled new media forward by leaps and bounds but also impacted traditional media, prompting the journalism field to continuously innovate in content production and form. As print media editors confront the transformation and innovation required by the new media era, they must first understand its key characteristics.

First, the time required to obtain news information has been greatly shortened. With the popularization and development of the internet and its terminals, the volume of news content has exploded, and timeliness has reached levels traditional media cannot match. Major websites and applications such as Toutiao, Phoenix News, Tencent, and Sina can rapidly report current events, significantly saving readers' time in accessing news. Second, news dissemination methods have changed. The new media era has shifted from traditional single-mode transmission to interactive models, greatly narrowing the distance between news and readers and enabling them to participate in the dissemination process. Through interactions, comments, a few photos, or several messages, news can become widely known instantly. Third, news dissemination exhibits subjective randomness, and everyone has equal discourse power, resulting in a mixture of good and bad, true and false content. While information spreads conveniently and rapidly, some unobjective content is exploited to spread rumors, which not only greatly reduces the authenticity and authority of news but also creates problems for social governance—this is the most prominent issue in today's new media era.

However, this does not mean print media has no room for development. In the new media era, print media still possesses unique strengths, including strong authority, professionalism, and guidance. Therefore, we must strengthen efforts to excavate print media's distinctive features. Taking Zhejiang's *Rural Information News* as an example, since its founding in 1985, its development trajectory—like that of agricultural newspapers nationwide—has been closely related to “three rural issues” work and agricultural publicity. From a four-page weekly newspaper at its inception to its current eight-page and sixteen-page biweekly format, the publication has increased its pages sixfold. Facing new media challenges, *Rural Information News* has steadfastly adhered to its mission of being rooted in and serving the “three rural issues,” giving full play to media's publicity and service functions. Centering on industrial development and work characteristics, it has segmented its readership market and successively launched eight special issues including *Zhejiang Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Medicine*, *Zhejiang Forestry*, *Zhejiang Agricultural Machinery*, *Zhejiang Crop Production*, and *Zhejiang Meteorology*, conducting targeted publicity. Additionally, columns such as “Farmers' Mailbox” and “Ah Niu Hotline” are deeply loved by farmer readers. The newspaper has kept pace with the new media era in both content and form—for instance, its “Legal Section” features “QQ Legal Talk,” which filters information through reader interaction and comments for effective publicity, es-

tablishing its own brand. Many of its reports rank among the most influential in similar newspapers nationwide, with circulation increasing steadily each year. The successful practice of Zhejiang's *Rural Information News* demonstrates that as long as print media managers and editors keep up with the new media era, strive for innovation, and develop their distinctive features and expertise, they can maintain a significant position in the industry.

2. Opportunities for Print Media Editors in the New Media Era

The new media era presents both opportunities and challenges for print media. To understand these opportunities and challenges, we must first define print media in this context. Print media represents China's most traditional media form with a long history traceable to ancient times. It refers not only to newspapers but also to paper-based periodicals and magazines. In today's rapidly developing new media environment, print media faces significant challenges. With the arrival of new media, calls in society to "bid farewell to print media" have grown louder, but such views are one-sided and unrealistic. Traditional print media is not without development space; print media editors must fully leverage their important role in the era of media convergence through continuous innovation, transformation, and integration.

Regardless of whether in traditional print media or today's emerging media, news content cannot do without editors. Professionally edited news possesses greater persuasive power and influence. The temporary lag in print media development will not affect the development of print media editors. In the media convergence era, print media editors must give full play to their vital role, continuously innovating, transforming, and integrating. Moreover, the proliferation of self-proclaimed "contributors" online who are spurned due to low professional competence and poor professional ethics proves the importance, capability, and necessity of print media editors. Both online and offline platforms require a professional team of print media editors to plan, gather, and edit content, issuing authoritative information and voices for the Party and the people and guiding public opinion.

For example, in July of last year, with the highly anticipated G20 Hangzhou Summit just over a month away, numerous rumors appeared online. Editors at the *Zhejiang Daily* editorial department promptly wrote commentaries to refute these G20-related rumors. Whether for Party newspapers and periodicals or professional newspapers and journals, the most important editorial force is the print media editor—equivalent to the heart and blood vessels of a person, or a chef who processes various ingredients into delicious dishes, demonstrating their critical importance. Naturally, print media editors must also actively integrate with new media, and their writing methods must keep pace with the times and continuously innovate to adapt to development.

3. What Print Media Editors Must Do in the New Media Era

Despite the vigorous development of new media, print media editors must, above all, adhere to content as king—emphasizing both policy orientation and service functions while also speaking out for readers and giving voice to vulnerable groups. No matter how new media develops, editors must consistently “sit their buttocks on readers’ benches,” remaining steadfast in serving and helping readers with quality content. To be a good print media editor, several areas of awareness must be strengthened.

3.1 Enhance Awareness of Public Opinion Guidance and News Acuity

For print media editors to develop effectively, they must adapt to new requirements by both “reaching for the sky” and “standing on the ground.” “Reaching for the sky” means correctly guiding public opinion and maintaining high consistency with the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core. “Standing on the ground” means promptly understanding what readers need and care about. Editors must also enhance their news acuity. In today’s society with its surplus of news information, where good and bad, true and false coexist, making news widely known requires novel topics that catch readers’ eyes, attract them, and move them.

3.2 Enhance Awareness of Image Selection and Matching Current fast-paced lifestyles have created a phenomenon where readers “glance over” news content. Consequently, readers prefer direct, concise, and easy-to-understand news. This not only tests print media editors’ capabilities but also presents new requirements for them. While text constitutes the main body of print media content, determining its characteristics, there are cases where, for readers, vivid text proves less impressive than one or several cartoons or images. Therefore, when editing news, editors must effectively combine text and images, especially for content that is difficult to express in words yet highly specialized, requiring appropriate illustrations to enable readers to obtain information quickly.

For example, *Popular TV* magazine used illustrated explanations for financial news events in 2013, employing bar charts to reflect non-performing loans at eight banks and pie charts to show net profits of five major banks, transforming highly specialized terminology into simple, understandable information that not only facilitates reader comprehension but also captures their attention.

3.3 Enhance Awareness of Innovation and Differentiation Innovation and differentiation awareness is crucial for any industry. Differentiation awareness is the prerequisite for innovation. Print media editors must possess the courage to question, be adept at identifying problems, and work through multiple channels to solve them to improve news authenticity. To innovate news, editors must have unique ideas and perspectives, continuously strengthening their innovative capabilities.

3.4 Enhance Aesthetic Sense and Decision-Making Ability The process of news processing and editing is not merely simple handling and arrangement of content but also a process for editors to improve news aesthetics. Editors are the first readers of news, and an excellent news editor can achieve artistic effects in news layout, understanding how to reasonably match text and images. Through artistic editing of news content, editors can enhance readers' aesthetic sense and, through the application of aesthetics, increase news value, allowing readers to perceive the beauty ubiquitous in life.

Furthermore, print media editors' decision-making ability constitutes extremely important work. When editing news and reporting breaking events, editors must consider not only how to highlight stories and what social benefits they will bring but also how to increase reader attention—all of which reflect editorial decision-making ability. Therefore, improving print media editors' decision-making capacity and competence is essential.

Conclusion

In summary, the new media era presents not only challenges but also more opportunities for traditional media editors. Print media editors must keep pace with the times, continuously innovate and integrate, improve their professional capabilities and qualities, and inherit and develop their fine traditions. In doing so, print media editors will play an increasingly significant role with a broader development path ahead.

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

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