

Applying Internet Thinking to Promote Academic Journal Development in the New Media Era (Post-print)

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

Abstract

As internet technology and mobile internet new media platforms continue to mature through constant innovation, they profoundly influence the development of academic journals while also presenting new requirements. We should actively transform our mindset, taking the characteristics of internet thinking as the point of departure to integrate fragmented thinking, fan thinking, and focus-and-speed thinking into all aspects of journal operation. This will steadily advance a new publishing model of comprehensive integration between traditional academic journals and multi-platform internet, construct a higher-level academic communication platform, serve scientific research, disseminate academic achievements more efficiently, and continuously enhance the influence of journals.

Full Text

Preamble

Promoting the Development of Academic Journals through Internet Thinking in the New Media Era

Abstract: As internet technology and mobile internet new media platforms continue to mature through constant innovation, they profoundly influence the development of academic journals and present new requirements. Academic journals should actively transform their thinking by integrating internet thinking characteristics—fragmented thinking, fan thinking, and focus with speed thinking—into all aspects of journal operation. This approach steadily advances a new publishing model where traditional academic journals comprehensively integrate with multiple internet platforms, constructing a higher-level academic communication platform that serves scientific research, disseminates academic achievements more efficiently, and continuously enhances journal influence.

Keywords: academic journals; internet thinking; new media; publishing model; fragmented thinking; fan thinking; focus and speed thinking

Classification Code: G24

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2019)07-036-03

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2019.07.007

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Since 2000, desktop computers and the internet have rapidly proliferated and developed across China. Following 2010, smartphones and mobile internet began to spread with unstoppable momentum. By 2012, smartphones had surpassed desktop computers as Chinese netizens' primary internet access terminal, ushering in a new internet era—the new media era. Leveraging internet technology and new media platforms, an endless stream of new media formats and forms has brought unprecedented convenience to all aspects of social life while posing severe challenges to traditional operational models across industries. Academic journal publishing is similarly deeply affected, experiencing an evolution from traditional print journals to initial internet attempts dominated by databases, and in recent years, facing continuous impact from new media integration development.

In our database literature investigation, we found that before 2010, published literature on “dissemination” and “journal branding” was scarce but showed a slow annual increase. After 2011, the number of relevant publications rose significantly, peaking in 2015 and maintaining high levels with steady annual growth. Among the top 10 most downloaded and cited papers [2-15], all focused on new media or cross-media integration development fields such as “WeChat public platforms,” “Weibo,” and “Internet Plus.”

Evidently, during the past two decades of continuous internet and new media development, especially the rapid popularization of mobile internet and the flourishing of emerging new media forms in the last decade, new opportunities have emerged for the effective dissemination of academic achievements. This has attracted significant attention from the journal community, which has actively sought innovative practices utilizing internet technology and platforms to enhance dissemination impact and brand appeal.

1. Impact of the Internet and New Media Era on Academic Journals

Academic journals serve as a crucial platform for researchers to publish findings and record and disseminate academic achievements, facilitating academic exchange within the scientific community. In the traditional publishing period before the internet era, China's academic journal community generally operated under the conventional understanding and operational norm of print publishing. This involved meticulously processing and refining submitted manuscripts

through the traditional three-review and three-proofreading process according to the journal's column settings and manuscript requirements, organizing and determining the issue's contents, conducting layout and proofreading, and finally printing and distributing to complete the publishing task for that issue. This cycle would then repeat for subsequent issues.

Since 2000, as desktop computers and the internet rapidly applied and proliferated in China, the convenient and fast advantages of cross-spatiotemporal internet communication gradually attracted the attention of the journal community and prompted adaptive adjustments. The rational utilization of internet technology and platforms, along with actively seizing historical development opportunities, gradually transformed various aspects of academic journal publishing work [1]. This effectively promoted industry development during the initial stage of internet growth and played a positive role in more efficiently disseminating academic achievements from scientific journals.

However, during the more vigorously developing mobile internet era (the new media era) of the past decade, the endless emergence of various new media platforms has profoundly impacted traditional academic journal publishing and dissemination. Our investigation reveals that academic journals currently show insufficient development. If they fail to keep pace with the times, they will be unable to meet researchers' needs for fragmented reading anytime and anywhere.

2. Applying Internet Thinking as a New Requirement for Academic Journal Development in the New Media Era

After nearly two decades of rapid development and popularization in China, especially during the later mobile internet new media era, continuous technological and platform innovations have formed strong technical and platform support. While the new media era provides unprecedented development opportunities for academic journals to disseminate academic achievements more efficiently, it also poses severe challenges to the survival and development of traditional academic journals, presenting new requirements for operational and publishing models and creating the risk of being marginalized without effective dissemination.

Taking new media era public accounts as examples, many have massive fan bases reaching 100,000 or even millions [16]. For traditional academic journals, such numbers are virtually astronomical and unattainable. Currently, as internet technology and platforms become increasingly mature, the key bottleneck restricting academic journals' effective use of the internet is no longer technical limitations but rather the need to apply internet thinking to break through the barriers and constraints of traditional journal operation concepts. As scholar You Hong [17] stated, whether to treat the internet merely as a tool or to elevate it to the level of thinking represents the most critical question facing traditional media transformation.

Therefore, academic journals in the new media era must employ internet innovation thinking, emphasize and adjust the supply side of academic journals,

attempt new practices and measures, and establish a new operational and publishing model that combines traditional print publishing with comprehensive integration across multiple internet platforms. This will actively promote more efficient and convenient dissemination of academic journal achievements. This new thinking and model also represent new requirements for academic journals in the internet era. Journals should break through the traditional model focused primarily on completing print publications, nor should they remain limited to the initial digital operation state of merely establishing journal websites. Instead, they must actively transform their operational philosophy and integrate internet thinking into all aspects of journal operation.

3. Application of Internet Thinking in Academic Journals in the New Media Era

To effectively utilize internet technology and new media platforms, academic journals must make targeted adjustments to their operational strategies according to the characteristics of the internet and new media. They should actively contemplate and innovate, integrating internet thinking into all aspects of journal operation and permeating the entire operational cycle—including information collection and refinement, topic determination and manuscript organization, content arrangement, form expression, media combination, information linking, and journal derivatives—to vigorously expand development space and promote new attempts at integrating traditional academic journals with comprehensive internet multi-platform publishing.

3.1 Application of Internet Fragmentation Thinking

In the early stages of internet development, most academic journals passively pushed entire print issues to readers. On this foundation, they published full texts and abstracts of published papers through literature databases such as CNKI and Wanfang. Subsequently, journals gradually established websites to publish entire papers online, and in recent years, have further strengthened cooperation with academic databases to release single, finalized papers online in advance through priority digital publishing. These measures facilitated literature downloading and reading, promoting effective dissemination to a certain extent and achieving good results.

However, as is well known, with the comprehensive and rapid internet access of smartphones and iPads in the new media era, various new media platforms such as WeChat public accounts and Toutiao accounts enable faster information transmission, making it more convenient for the public to utilize fragmented time for reading. They rely on scattered leisure time to read and obtain interesting information on mobile internet terminals. Academic journals have currently shown developmental insufficiency; if they fail to advance with the times, they will be unable to satisfy researchers' needs for fragmented reading anytime and anywhere.

Therefore, academic journals should continuously make targeted adjustments, gradually shifting from simple passive release through traditional printing and full-text digital distribution to actively pushing information by fully utilizing the fragmented thinking characteristics of the internet. They should emphasize developing and transforming into a new publishing model that combines multi-channel, multi-platform active distribution, adapting to fragmented reading to maximize academic dissemination effectiveness.

First, academic journals should actively adjust their literature release platforms and layout models. When pushing journal papers, they should adopt multi-platform simultaneous release and targeted distribution as much as possible according to readers' interests and needs. This includes: (1) selecting or establishing various internet platform terminals in different forms, such as academic databases, journal websites, WeChat public accounts, and Chaoxing learning platforms, to create more opportunities for serendipitous encounters with readers, authors, and researchers, thereby disseminating journal academic achievements to a broader research community; (2) replacing traditional PDF documents with streaming media layout to meet and adapt to readers' needs for adaptive screen adjustment when reading literature on different internet terminals, ensuring smooth and convenient reading regardless of electronic screen limitations; (3) adopting HTML or XML layout for journal papers to transform the "fixed" reading model of entire documents from traditional Founder typesetting into a "flexible" network model where various sections such as methods and results appear in directory form, enabling readers to quickly skip "uninteresting points" and directly access "interesting" sections through quick-click "guide" bars, such as charts and key data in the results section. This approach allows readers to efficiently and rapidly capture valuable paper information, stimulates their reading interest, saves time, and facilitates easy sharing with peers while reading, attracting more new readers to continue following the journal and reading its published literature in relevant fields.

Second, academic journals should strengthen the re-creation, integration, and upgrading of literature content, focusing on targeted push of relevant content and information to actively serve researchers and win their attention. This involves: (1) digitally re-splitting, reorganizing, and integrating entire papers or past journal issues according to specific characteristics or needs to create more targeted digital content pushed to various internet platform terminals; (2) reorganizing core content, important data information, and key charts from certain papers into independent information and releasing them as fragmented information on different internet platforms simultaneously or sequentially; (3) publishing relevant experimental information beyond the literature content, such as experimental videos and raw data, on relevant internet platforms to provide further enrichment and supplementary information for published papers; (4) proactively pushing similar research information or news related to certain papers or journals across multiple platforms to win attention from more interested researchers.

3.2 Application of Internet Fan Thinking

Internet fan thinking represents another crucial key point that cannot be ignored in the development of academic journals in the new media era. Taking the WeChat subscription account of *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* as an example, since its launch in May 2014, it has published relevant information combining the latest scientific and technological achievements published in the print journal with hot topics in traditional Chinese medicine public opinion. By 2017, its readership reached 4.05 million views with 34,000 likes, surpassing 90% of the 20 million registered WeChat accounts in comprehensive scoring [18]. This demonstrates that the construction, development, and operation of WeChat public accounts have formed mutual integration and promotion with traditional print publishing, cultivating a huge loyal fan base that creates tremendous impetus for enhancing the journal brand's visibility and social influence, with media integration causing earth-shaking changes in the communication field [19].

Applying internet fan thinking can effectively promote the transformation of traditional journals from one-way literature pushing to a two-way interactive active operation model involving both journals and readers. This new operational model uses journal brand and influence as the engine, organizing online surveys, establishing online micro-communities for discussion and exchange, mobilizing readers' enthusiasm and participation, and subsequently guiding them to actively contribute ideas for jointly seeking development space and methods for the journal's future. This breaks through the limitations of traditional journal operation that relied on editorial staff or editorial board members and experts, enabling broader listening to more opinions and suggestions and realizing a new operational model where journal readers, authors, experts, and academic editors jointly participate in journal operation.

Currently, some academic journals have begun exploring adjustments to actively seek reader and author participation for two-way interaction, but certain issues remain to be improved. For example, some academic journals have public accounts but with weak interactivity; some journals have established WeChat or QQ groups for authors or experts, but these lack sufficient exchange and fail to effectively stimulate researcher participation.

To address this situation, journals need to further strengthen and guide efforts to effectively mobilize enthusiasm for active participation and create conditions and atmosphere for two-way interaction. First, utilize certain time points or periods of particular significance—for instance, journals with relevant positioning can release greetings and information about the origins of festivals such as Physicians' Day or Teachers' Day; or during the start of school, graduation season, defense season, and fund application season, organize and publish relevant content information on journal micro-communities or new media platforms for discussion and exchange. Second, select appropriate hot topics and new achievements in relevant research fields, and while pushing information on journal websites or public accounts, conduct "set research theme" hot spot analysis

and paper literature pushing in micro-communities, stimulating and encouraging researchers to share and exchange their viewpoints. Through interactive enthusiasm and fan stickiness, expand the journal's influence and timely launch relevant topic solicitation and organization to attract more readers to follow and understand the journal, further reading or submitting manuscripts.

Additionally, academic journals can actively attempt using social platforms such as blogs and microblogs to establish research groups for interactive exchange and promotional dissemination. Alternatively, they can leverage newspapers, well-known media personalities, or academic influencers to vigorously promote journals to researchers and the public through their microblogs, public accounts, or personal friend circles, thereby enhancing journal influence and efficiently disseminating academic achievements.

3.3 Application of Focus and Speed Thinking

Focus and speed thinking represents a higher requirement for academic journal professionals in the new media era, shifting traditional journals' steady and unhurried results release toward seizing the timeliness of information release by capturing hot spots first. This helps academic journals seize dissemination opportunities in the new media era. This requires academic journal operators to possess high market acuity, insight into and capture academic hot spots and public focus points, and replace the step-by-step processing flow of academic journals with news-reporting timeliness as the starting point. Time is efficiency—seizing the initiative means first come, first served.

For example, when emergencies occur, first, actively seek connections with professional fields relevant to the journal's positioning, rapidly determine the direction of manuscript organization and solicitation, establish expert teams in relevant fields, and expedite writing and publishing related content papers as quickly as possible. Second, at the first moment of emergency occurrence, rapidly screen previously published relevant scientific research papers or achievement information, digitally reorganize the content, and timely release it on multiple new media platforms such as public accounts and journal websites to form a powerful focus aggregation effect that attracts researchers and public attention to the journal. Third, provide advance notice and release information about relevant domain papers that the journal is organizing and will publish later, using the focusing amplification and stickiness effect of hot spots to attract readers to continuously follow the journal and subsequently read related follow-up published papers, creating a butterfly effect.

Conclusion

In the new media era, applying internet thinking represents the necessary path for academic journals to transform their operational philosophy. While continuing to strengthen meticulous cultivation and uphold the philosophy that quality content is the foundation, academic journals should simultaneously maintain

both traditional print publishing and digital publishing models. By closely integrating internet technology platforms and various new media forms, organically fusing the high-quality content produced under traditional models with convenient new internet dissemination channels, journals can leverage respective strengths to supplement the shortcomings of traditional academic publishing and dissemination. This ensures that content remains king while guaranteeing unobstructed dissemination channels, with both aspects promoting each other and bringing out the best in each other. Only by doing so can journals seize opportunities, promote development, remain invincible, and win greater development space.

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

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