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Production Mechanisms, Development Status and Power Relations of Book Industry Podcasts under the Perspective of Integration Publishing

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Abstracts:
Driven by digital technology, the book industry podcast, as an innovative form of convergent publishing, is becoming a key node in the transformation of the publishing industry. According to the 2023-2024 Annual Report of China's Digital Publishing Industry, among the revenue scale of the digital publishing industry, the application of blogs reaches 12.5 billion yuan, which indicates that after years of exploration by China's press and publishing units, the value of the use of content resources and the ability to mine is constantly improving. This phenomenon not only confirms the logic of Paul Levinson's "media resurgence theory" that old media forms are reborn under new technological conditions, but also highlights the transformation of the publishing industry from "paper carrier" to "acoustic scene". The ecological migration of the publishing industry from "paper carrier" to "acoustic scene" is also highlighted. This paper takes the book industry podcast as the research object, explores its power relationship and ecological picture in the production mechanism and the integration of different subjects in the publishing chain, and reveals the internal logic and practical significance of the publishing industry's "sound shift".

Keywords:
book industry podcast, production mechanisms, power relations

1 Introduction

Podcast Generally refers to audio files published on the Internet using technologies such as RSS that are available for download, allowing Internet users to subscribe to these files via electronic devices to receive content. Book industry podcasts, as a product of the cross-border integration of traditional publishing and podcasting, refer to the specialized branding-type podcasts created by publishing practitioners in the name of publishing organizations and distribution companies, and are also known as publishing organization podcasts. According to Ai-Media Consulting, the market size of China's sound economy industry reached 568.82 billion yuan in 2024 and is expected to exceed 740 billion yuan in 2029. As a highly monopolistic and integrated digital infrastructure, podcasting platforms have deeply penetrated into our public cultural life, bringing infinite imagination and possibilities for the transformation of traditional publishing organizations through the medium of "ears".

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2 State of the Art of Podcasting Research in the Book Industry

Since 2020, with the rise of the "ear economy" and the rapid development of the mobile audio market, podcasting, as an emerging form of audio media, has gradually become an important attempt for the digital transformation of the publishing industry. As a product of the cross-border integration of traditional publishing and podcasting, book industry podcasts (or publisher podcasts) have become the focus of attention in both academia and the industry. Scholars generally focus on its content production, business model, user profile and behaviour, etc., but overall book industry podcasts still belong to the category of niche media, and are still in the development and exploration period.

The Book Industry Podcast has various modes of content production, including talkbacks, interviews, readings and other forms. Scholars point out that book industry podcasts enhance the professionalism and attractiveness of their content by inviting writers, scholars and other cultural celebrities to participate in their programmes. In addition, book industry podcasts have enriched the depth and breadth of their content by tapping into tacit knowledge and incorporating guests' personal experiences and professional insights into the programmes. Book industry podcasts have also demonstrated unique advantages in the dissemination and popularization of knowledge by virtue of their long-tail effect. Researchers have argued that book industry podcasts promote knowledge dissemination and cultural sharing by creating an atmosphere of public discussion.

From the perspective of the use of book industry podcasts, Lu, Hazy et al. analyzed 32 book industry podcasts on mainstream audio platforms and found that there are obvious differences in their volume size, category distribution, institutional affiliation and subscription, and the market needs to be further developed. Through in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys of book industry podcast users, Mingxian Fan et al. depicted a basic portrait of book industry podcast users and pointed out their motives for using it, including knowledge-seeking, self-repairing, content quality, social interactions, and publishing preferences.

Scholars have sorted out and summarized the business models of book industry podcasts and concluded that the profit channels and profitability of book industry podcasts are still relatively limited. At present, profitability is mainly achieved through advertising, content payment, commercial customization and selling peripheral products. The current payment model of domestic podcasts is still immature, and advertising revenue has become the main source of profitability, but it is difficult to quantify the effect of advertisement placement, and there is limited advertisement matching for podcasts.

In addition to direct cash, book industry podcasts are not only a channel for book marketing, but also enhance the influence of publishing brands by establishing an emotional connection with listeners. CITIC Publishing Group has successfully created a podcast matrix through podcast programmes such as Island Hopping FM, which has enhanced brand awareness and user loyalty. In the long run, the layout of podcasts by publishing organizations is to use the long-term culminating role of content as a pivot point to transform publishing podcast listeners into publishing organization consumers, promote the output of publishing products, and realize that publishing podcasts feed the publishing organizations.

After combing through the existing research, it can be seen that the research on the content production of book industry podcasts can provide a more intuitive understanding of the head brand of book industry pod-

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casts and the production and operation modes of the audio field, and on the basis of which, through the observation and research on the audience, it can provide a clearer understanding of the characteristics and needs of the users, and then extend the exploration of the profit model and the evolution of the ecological picture. However, in the course of time, this study observes that the survival cycle of book industry podcasts is limited, and the former headline podcasts are not as prosperous as those presented in previous studies, but rather are moving towards being cut off and paid for, and replaced by new programmes associated with the original publishers and original content editors. Under this phenomenon, what are the power relations between platforms, publishers, editors, and guests, in what ways do they work together, and what roles do they play in convergent publishing? This study will explore along this vein.

3 Panoramic Scanning: Production Practices of Podcasts in Publishing Organizations

The penetration of digital technology has changed the technological foundation of the traditional publishing industry, and the publishing industry is gradually moving towards digital communication and knowledge service industry, both in terms of conceptual definition and industrial practice. The publishing industry keenly smelled the opportunity of using podcasts as an extension of paper media, and began to actively layout podcasts and other audio content. Social science publishers have founded a number of literary and cultural podcasts, such as CITIC Dafang's Island Hopping FM, Living Word Culture's Living Word Airwaves, and Ideal Country's Watching the Ideal Roundtable and Eight Points, which have become a fusion product combining knowledge dissemination, book marketing, community operation, and brand building, and have had a sustained and wide-ranging impact.

Against this background, the article takes a group of representative podcasts launched by publishing organizations as the object of study, and explores the production mechanism, media characteristics, and its ecological picture of publishing organizations' podcasts. The table was produced by the study itself through Internet observation, and the data cut-off date is February, 2025.

Table1 The list of representative podcasts

Internet audio subscription service	Affiliations	production mechanism	content preference	body of work	Profit model	Average length	Number of subscribers (small universe platform)	release date	downtime
the eighth percentile	look upon an ideal	Leung Man Tao Single/ Guest Talk	pan-cultural	Wendy Leung and the Look Ideal team create	Brand Placement	70min	508491	August 2018	April 2024
See the Ideal Round Table	look upon an ideal	Anchors talk to editors, with occasional guests.	pan-cultural	From the Audio Department of Watching Ideals	Brand Placement	80min	310559	August 2018	uninterrupted

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No Ideal Editorial	look upon an ideal	Editor's Chat	Living Culture Chat	A production of the new media department of Look Ideal.		60min	346898	March 2020	uninterrupted
Try rebooting.	Shanghai Translation Publishing House	Guest Panel	pan-cultural	Digital Department, Shanghai Translation Publishing House		80min	9502	April 2024	uninterrupted
theory of knowledge (in Buddhism)	CITIC Publishing	Guest Panel	business finance	CITIC Academy		60min	61988	December 2022	uninterrupted
Island hopping fm	CITIC Publishing	Guest Talk	literary	CITIC Academy	Brand placement, paid courses	60min	297640	March 2020	December 2024
The screws are tightening.	read only (computing)	Guest Talk	Social observation, books and films	Podcasts by Single Read Editor-in-Chief Qi Wu	Brand Placement	80min	284590	February 2021	uninterrupted
alternating current	movable type culture	Guest Talk	Hot Topics, Thought Dynamics, Life Reality	Independently created and produced by the editorial team of the Living Character Culture Centre		75min	19250	April 2020	uninterrupted
Readout Stereo	readout	Guest Panel	pan-cultural	Produced by the Reading Library team	Brand Placement, Membership Programmes	60min	94697	July 2021	uninterrupted
blade time	Newsweek (magazine)	Guest Panel	pan-cultural	New Weekly New Media		60min	107204	April 2021	irregularly updated

3.1 Dialogue as the core

The production mechanism of book industry podcasts generally adopts the "guest talk" format, inviting cultural celebrities, scholars and writers from different fields to participate in the dialogue, which is flexible and adaptable to different topics to meet the needs of listeners from different vertical fields. According to Habermas' theory of "communicative rationality", communicative rationality is the process of mutual understanding between subjects through language, which emphasises authenticity, correctness and sincerity. In the book industry podcast, the dialogue between guests achieves the collision and fusion of different views through

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equal and free communication, which meets the requirements of "intersubjectivity" in the rationality of interaction, and achieves the in-depth excavation of the content and the enhancement of authority. In addition, the dialogue form of the book industry behind the podcast relying on traditional publishing institutions, the use of their own author resource base, low-cost access to high-quality guests, so that the podcast continuously injected into the flow. For example, "Screws in Tightening" is hosted by Qi Wu, editor-in-chief of Single Reading, and invites scholars, writers, and socially influential cultural celebrities to discuss the corresponding topics, breaking the limitations of the traditional unidirectional interpretation through the long and in-depth dialogues of more than one hour, and shifting the production of knowledge from "authoritative output" to "common output". This mode not only reduces the pressure on the content output of a single host, but also enhances the freshness of the audience through the collision of multiple perspectives.

The sense of privacy and companionship of podcasts makes them an emotional bond for users. The two programmes, "No Ideal Editorial Office" and "Living Word Radio", have a high degree of freedom in choosing topics and conversations, so listeners do not need to pay full attention to receiving intensive knowledge output during the listening process, and often choose to open the podcasts in some resting and leisure scenarios. Over time, the listener establishes an emotional connection with the anchor through the medium of sound, and gradually learns about the anchor's real-life personal experiences, which leads to the formation of a virtual social relationship and thus enhances loyalty to the podcast.

3.2 Integration as the path

Wang, Z.and Lu, B. argue that podcasting combines the media characteristics of both content and channel, which is conducive to the deep integration of publishing and podcasting. Henry Jenkins' theory of Convergence Culture points out that media convergence is not only technological integration, but also a dynamic process of cultural practices and user participation. In the book industry podcast, this convergence is reflected in the production process, media form and and scenario design.

Traditional publishing organizations have formed "editorial communities" with new media platforms and independent creators, realizing production mechanisms. For example, the "Culture Limited" podcast was initiated by three media people, and through cooperation with publishers to recommend books, it not only makes use of the publishers' content resources, but also attracts young audiences with the personal IP of the hosts. This collaborative model reflects the trend of "platform publishing", in which the publishing industry has shifted from content production to resource integration and relationship management.

Most of the book industry podcasts are centred around hot social and cultural broad topics, which are close to listeners' lives and easily resonate. According to the Podcast Industry Report 2024, listeners usually choose to listen to podcasts during commuting, housework, bedtime, etc. These scenarios have strong accompaniment, making podcasts a habit. For example, the "Eight Points" podcast introduces environmental sound effects (e.g. the sound of turning a book, the sound of a bell) in conjunction with the content of the narration, simulating the scenarios of "study conversation" and "temple practice", which fills in the level of detail of the podcast, activates the listeners' spatial imagination, and realizes the integration of the scenarios. From the perspective of Baudrillard's "theory of mimesis", this kind of scenario design constructs a sense of virtual reality through auditory elements, so that the listener feels as if he or she is in a specific scene. This kind of mimetic

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scene design not only enhances the immersion of the podcast, but also realizes the embodied embeddedness of knowledge dissemination through emotional resonance, which further promotes the in-depth integration of publishing and podcasting.

After accumulating a loyal fan base, book podcasts have chosen to expand their radius of distribution and the shape of the medium through online and offline integration. The CITIC Bookstore in Shanghai organized a "podcast reading exhibition", where readers could scan a code to listen to book guides, realizing the superimposition of physical space and digital content, and dissolving the boundaries of the medium.

3.3 Profit as the guidance

The book industry podcast is a useful exploration of publishing organizations in the field of sound publishing. Publishing organizations can use the podcast platform to communicate their cultural products and business philosophy to listeners and promote quality books. As a carrier of in-depth content dissemination, the operation of book podcasts requires long-term investment in human costs and funds for editing, production, guest invitations, copyrights and other expenses, and has gradually explored diversified profit models in the process of production practice. Currently, the profit mechanism of book industry podcasts mainly covers oral advertising, single-episode payment, column payment or brand membership and other forms. Among them, the most mature payment model is represented by "Look Ideal". Not only has it formed long-term cooperation with brands such as Mercedes-Benz and Blancpain, but also launched the "Eight and a Half Minutes" paid column to replace the previous "Eight Minutes", created its own brand APP "Look at the Ideal", and launched the membership model, and the "30 Will of Comparative Politics" will be published in the form of a book to organize the content of podcasts, which realizes the podcasts to feed the publication. With the precipitation of time, publishing organizations are gradually not satisfied with cultivating listeners' loyalty to podcast columns, but also planning offline exhibitions and listener meet-ups by building communities and cooperating with One Direction Space, thus establishing deeper connections.

However, while the book industry podcasts are growing vigorously, they are also frequently discontinued and cut off, such as the discontinuation of well-known columns such as "Island Hopping FM" and "Backwave Theatre". Behind this phenomenon involves multiple factors such as resource allocation, market logic, creative ecology, etc. Some organizations have adjusted their development strategies due to low listenership, choosing to stop or reduce their investment, which is essentially an imbalance between resource investment and revenue, which to a certain extent also reflects the high cultural value of current book podcasts and the lack of profitability. Publishing organizations such as Gomai Culture have chosen to shift their budgets to highly efficient realization channels such as live e-commerce, which directly pulls in revenue. Publishing podcast updates need to rely on the anchor long-term high-frequency output, when the "producer" is empty, innovation encountered bottlenecks, the fate of the column is also easy to go to the end. In addition, team changes and personal factors are also one of the reasons why podcasts are discontinued. "Island Hopping FM", as an early resident podcast of the Little Universe app with a good influence in the field of literary podcasts, announced the news of team disbandment at the end of 2024, and updated the podcast's last instalment.

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4 Dependence and Gaming: Collaborative Networks between Book Industry Podcast Subjects

4.1 Technologically mediated reconfiguration of actor networks

In the ecological environment of book industry podcasts, technology platforms play an intermediary role, based on Bruno Latour's "Actor Network Theory", the production and dissemination of book industry podcasts are highly dependent on the intermediary role of technology platforms, and the interactions between the hosts, listeners, and non-human actors, such as the platform algorithms, user behavioural data, and product features form a dynamic collaborative network centred on "human-non-human actors". "Human-nonhuman actors" as the core of the dynamic collaboration network.

The current podcast platform structures the connection between listeners and book industry podcasters through recommendation algorithms and subscription methods, and the logic of recommendation algorithms directly affects the content selection and planning of podcast columns. As a sound medium, podcast is a representative of "slow media", and its communication law has obvious "long-tail effect", however, the intervention of technology will significantly erode its content autonomy. In order to pursue homepage exposure and attract listeners' clicks, podcast column planners will actively cater to the flow rules in terms of topic selection, frequency, speed of speech, expression, etc., give up the overly niche cultural issues, and control the frequency in a reasonable range through post-production technical editing, so as to ensure subscription, broadcasting, and completion rates with fluent expression and more easily triggered empathy issues. It can be seen that technology is not only a tool, but also an "actor" that reconstructs power relations.

4.2 Accumulation and transformation of cultural capital

"Cultural capital" refers to any tangible and intangible assets related to culture and cultural activities. Bourdieu divided it into three basic forms: physical, objective and institutional. The form of cultural capital determines that its accumulation is a slow process, and experts and scholars continue to accumulate personal cultural capital through academic reputation, public influence, and publications. The act of participating in podcast recording is also a process of accumulating cultural capital, as experts and scholars express their views with their authoritative attributes to enhance the depth of discussion, and the exposure brought by the platform also feeds the public influence of the guests. The subjects in the podcasting field achieve symbiosis of interests through capital exchange, but the conversion of capital types is always accompanied by power games, the most direct manifestation of which is that writers who are about to publish a new book will frequently participate in the recording of podcasts during the period of promoting their works, thus realizing the exchange of "cultural capital" and "power of dissemination". The most direct manifestation of this is the frequent participation of writers in the recording of podcasts during the publicity period of their forthcoming books, realizing the exchange between "cultural capital" and "communication power".

In the dialogue of participating in the podcast, the publishing organisation will dynamically adjust the content of the later columns because of the feedback from the listeners. For example, Xiaoqing Chen in "Reading Library Stereo" often comes to participate in the recording of the podcast as an old friend of the editor-in-chief, Lixian Zhang, and his identity as a well-known documentary director attracts more listeners

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to the podcast, and the Reading Library chooses to customise the series "Six Must Be Black in Chinese New Year" with Chen, which realizes the network of relationship through cross-discipline interaction Through cross-disciplinary interaction, it expands the relationship network and accumulates personal IP, and ultimately empowers his documentary series, realizing the closed loop from cultural capital to economic capital.

4.3 Compromises and checks and balances on creative freedom

Power relations are fluid and fluid, constantly adjusting and changing through co-operation and interaction. The power game between publishing organizations, platforms, advertisers and cultural celebrities and writers never stops. Publishing organizations want to deliver content in their podcasts that matches their brand positioning, while cultural celebrities and writers may pay more attention to the professionalism and thoughtfulness of the content. As a result, many podcasters also adopt a multi-section business model. From the table, it can be seen that the construction of head book industry podcasts started in 2020-2021, and has now entered a stable period, while the long period of precipitation also allows individual anchors to accumulate personal influence. Subject to the constraints and interventions of column positioning and publishing organizations, individual anchors are often limited in their freedom of expression as well. Thus, the column anchor often guest other podcasts, or set up their own personal column, differentiated expression, to achieve the accumulation of personal IP, this kind of while the anchor another portal or publishing agencies continue to launch new columns, reflecting the industry on the flow of competition, content innovation and commercial sustainability of the exploration, but also exacerbate the risk of the anchor to leave the collateral. In addition brands will also be required to avoid sensitive topics through sponsorship agreements to ensure the effectiveness of the placement.

5 Asymmetry of Power Relations

5.1 Inter-subjective power mechanisms: knowledge production and discourse games

Under Foucault's micro-power perspective, the inter-subjective power mechanism in the book industry podcasting field presents a decentralized network characteristic. Publishers and hosts, as podcast operators, dominate the overall planning, theme setting, and production process of podcast content, and hold the right to set topics and control editing, which not only frames the scope of expression of the invited guests, but also shapes the cognitive framework of the audience. However, power is not a one-way flow. Guest scholars invariably construct an authoritative position in the process of exporting their views during the dialogue, and the interaction with the anchor is a kind of struggle for discourse dominance. Listeners interact in the comments section and speak in the community to express their views on the podcast content, forming a "knowledge community". This power mechanism is different from the traditional publishing form of gatekeeping between editors, authors, and readers, and is characterized by multiple nodes and mobility, with each discourse practitioner playing the dual roles of power exertor and power taker at the same time.

5.2 The penetration of micro-power: from discipline to self-censorship

The content production of book industry podcasts is subordinated to the regulation of algorithms and publishing institutions. Foucault pointed out that power realizes the double discipline of body and discourse

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through details. In terms of the production practice of book podcasts, book podcasters actively avoid overly sensitive social opinion issues, controversial authors, and overly sharp gender issues in the process of selecting topics, which is a silent compromise of discursive discipline while avoiding risks. In addition, this kind of discipline is materialized through the platform's algorithmic reward mechanism, which makes it easier for programmes that can cater to hotspots and resonate with listeners to be recommended by the podcast platform and gain more exposure and clicks, thus prompting the anchors to constantly revise the direction of biased topics according to the feedback of data flow. After determining the topic, framing the scope of the discussion, and grasping the direction of the dialogue, the act of keeping or deleting the guest's viewpoints in the later editing process also constitutes an implicit power mechanism, and such practices are constantly undergoing "self-censorship" in the production of the content to ensure that the cultural product is more in line with the interests of the publisher. The pervasiveness of power does not require coercive measures, but rather internalized discipline that leads to active compliance by participants, resulting in "gentle violence".

5.3 Minor resistance strategies: sustained resistance under power structures

The book industry podcast is both a capillary extension of traditional publishing power and a new type of resistance. According to Foucault, there is an interdependent relationship between power and resistance, and both exist simultaneously. Localized micro-power can be understood as a relationship between two positions, a two-way relationship whose special value lies not in subverting macro-power structures, but in the continual creation of "micro-revolutions" that destabilize the established order, just as Foucault said: "Wherever there is power, there is resistance, but the resistance is never outside of power." In the production practice of the book industry podcast, the hosts have never given up their resistance to the power of the platform, and have endeavoured to maintain the diversity and autonomy of their knowledge products in the gap between compromise and resistance. In order to reduce the podcast's dependence on the platform, the column anchors often synchronously update their content on multiple podcast platforms, forming an audio media matrix, and "Look at the Ideal" and "Read the Library" have also created their own content apps to direct regular Listeners are guided from podcast platforms to their own platforms. The podcaster's choice to set up a new column maps out his resistance to the publishing agency, adopting a "guerrilla" strategy to make discourse expression freer, thus extending the "third space" in the digital sense, where both parties can find a place to relax freely in the transmission of sound, spirit and mind. It can be seen that the resistance of the power mechanism of the book industry podcast does not lie in complete subversion, but rather in achieving dynamic balance through continuous negotiation and confrontation.

6 Conclusion

Under the wave of digital technology and media convergence, book podcasting, as an innovative form of transformation of the publishing industry, has reconstructed the path of knowledge production and dissemination through the medium of sound. This paper reveals the ecological landscape of book podcasting and its internal logic from three dimensions: production mechanism, collaboration network and power relations. The study finds that book industry podcasts, with "dialogue" as the core mechanism and relying on the resource advantages of publishers, achieve in-depth excavation and emotional resonance through guest conversations, scenario design and multi-platform integration. At the same time, the intermediary role of the technology

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platform and the dynamic transformation of cultural capital have shaped a complex collaborative network among publishers, anchors, guests and listeners, which not only promotes content innovation but also intensifies the power game.

The practice of book industry podcasts shows that their development is always in the tension between cultural values and commercial demands. Although the profit model is still immature, publishing organizations have gradually explored a feasible path to feed traditional publishing through multiple attempts such as brand placement, paid content and community operation. However, the long cash cycle, the limited life cycle of the columns and the implicit discipline of the platform algorithm are still the key challenges that constrain its sustainable development. In the future, book industry podcasts need to further optimize the production mechanism, balance the depth of content and dissemination efficiency, and at the same time strengthen the resilience of collaboration between multiple subjects, seek a dynamic balance between technological empowerment and humanistic perseverance, and inject enduring vitality into the publishing industry's "voice shift".

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