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Social Sciences in China Press

Academic journals: Frontline of Chinese philosophy and social sciences

By CHEN YAJING

At a symposium on philosophy and social sciences in 2016, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping stressed the need to develop philosophy and social sciences with Chinese features. Over the past decade, these fields have undergone a profound paradigm shift in China. What role have academic journals played in this transformation? On July 31, the 10th National Forum on Humanities and Social Science Journals, co-hosted by the Social Sciences in China Press under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Lanzhou University, convened in Lanzhou, northwest China's Gansu Province. Publishers, editors-in-chief, and editors from more than 70 humanities and social science journals nationwide, together with academic experts, held in-depth discussions on the theme “Academic Journals Promoting the Development of Chinese Schools of Philosophy and Social Sciences.”

Forging concerted efforts

At the forum, heads of numerous journals emphasized that academic journals are central to bringing scholarly communities together and fostering Chinese schools of thought. Integrating journal resources nationwide and building a tiered, collaborative network that draws on complementary strengths can reinforce the scholarly communities in which Chinese schools of thought take root and grow.

Wang Yi, editor-in-chief of *Social Sciences in Chinese Higher Education Institutions*, argued that academic journals must uphold sound theoretical guidance and integrate the standpoints,

viewpoints, and methods of Marxism into every stage of journal publishing. On that basis, journals should remain grounded in local realities while coordinating research in basic theory, applied disciplines, and rare and endangered studies.

Cui Fengxiang, editor-in-chief of *Dongyue Tribune*, pointed out that agenda-setting is a key means through which journals can take the initiative and guide academic research. Journals should continually strengthen their agenda-planning capacity and develop original, locally grounded propositions rooted in the vibrant practice of Chinese modernization.

In the view of Han Pugeng, editor-in-chief of *Yuejiang Academic Journal*, academic journals, as public platforms for scholarly exchange, bring scattered research interests together into coherent academic directions. Through rigorous academic review and sustained in-depth discussion, they also help refine original core concepts and theoretical categories.

Charting the direction

To build Chinese schools of thought, journals must shift from the old model of “passively receiving and publishing manuscripts” to a new paradigm of “proactive planning and academic leadership.” This transition is a necessary step in constructing an independent knowledge system.

Liu Shuguang, executive deputy editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, observed that constructing China's independent knowledge system requires optimizing its development at four levels. At the theoretical level, distinctive theories must be developed from local practice. At the disciplinary level, research should shift

toward an integrated logic that serves major national strategies. In balancing tradition and modernity, efforts are needed to advance the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture. In intellectual exchanges between China and the West, the subjectivity of Chinese culture should be upheld while creating new forms of human advancement through exchange and mutual learning.

Tian Mingxiao, editor-in-chief of *Zhejiang Academic Journal*, proposed that academic journals should engage deeply with Chinese practice, focus on genuine real-world problems, and use a strong problem orientation to identify new fields of scholarship and foster new areas of disciplinary growth. Particular support should go to original research, with publication priority given to high-quality work that genuinely responds to China's needs and addresses Chinese problems.

Guo Jiahong, executive editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences)*, held that journals should move beyond the conventional path of passively publishing submissions and instead take the initiative in planning topics and setting academic agendas closely aligned with the practical needs of national development.

Focusing on cutting-edge frontiers

At the forum, editors-in-chief across disciplines likewise emphasized the need to keep pace with developments at the research frontier and continually open up new theoretical space for innovation within Chinese schools of thought.

According to Zhang Chonggang, editor-in-

chief of *Literary Review*, literary journals are keeping pace with changing media by turning their attention to dynamic new forms such as online literature and popular literature and arts. They are also revisiting canonical writers and works in light of key historical moments while broadening research perspectives on interactions between readers and historical materials. At the same time, some journals are embracing digital and intelligent transformation, launching columns on artificial intelligence (AI) and literature and exploring new paradigms such as computational criticism and digital humanities.

The ways digital and intelligent technologies are reshaping research paradigms in philosophy and the social sciences have drawn close attention across the journal community. Yang Guo, executive editor-in-chief of *Reform* magazine under the Chongqing Academy of Social Sciences, stated that digital and intelligent technologies provide a new pathway for nurturing Chinese schools of thought in the new era. Journals should build human–machine collaborative evaluation systems suited to domestic research while guarding against superficial and formulaic AI-generated content. Yang added that journals should also use big-data technologies to uncover and systematically organize large volumes of dormant, fragmented resources in ancient Chinese texts, grassroots surveys, and fieldwork records.

Yang also advocated using multilingual intelligent communication tools to disseminate original research from Chinese schools of thought to overseas academic communities and think tanks. Intelligent journal clusters should also be developed to coordinate topic planning and peer-review expertise at the national level.

How AI facilitates high-quality academic development

By YUAN HUAJIE

Since the convening of the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and the High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance, discussions surrounding advances in artificial intelligence (AI), global governance, and human subjectivity have continued to intensify. With these questions drawing increasing attention, *CSST* spoke with several scholars about how AI can contribute to knowledge discovery, how its outputs can withstand academic scrutiny, and how it can support the development of China's independent knowledge system in philosophy and the social sciences.

Machines move to front end of knowledge production

In July, Fudan University, the Shanghai Academy of AI for Science, and Nature Research Intelligence, an AI-led service helping research decision-makers under Springer Nature, jointly released the report “AI for Science 2026.” The report shows that AI is already widely used in research for gathering materials and presenting findings and is increasingly extending into analysis and judgment.

Shen Si, a professor from the School of Economics and Management at Nanjing University of Science and Technology, noted that the key development is not simply that models “can perform more tasks,” but that machines are moving beyond back-end work such as retrieval, classification, and statistics into prob-



A parcel-sorting robot developed by Chinese embodied intelligence company ROBOTERA, on display at the Embodied Intelligence Hall of the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, July 19, 2026 Photo: CFP

lem decomposition, material organization, and preliminary interpretation.

Within philosophy and the social sciences, AI has moved beyond data entry and literature retrieval into organizing historical materials, establishing knowledge connections, identifying research questions, and cross-verifying evidence. Wang Dongbo, a professor from the College of Information Management at Nanjing Agricultural University, described the change as a reorganization of research materials: Ancient texts, archives, and academic papers are no longer solely for human reading but are also becoming computable, linkable, and traceable resources. Wang cited a large language model (LLM) specialized in ancient texts relating to renowned Confucian philosopher Xunzi as an example, noting that it can perform intelligent indexing, information extraction, automatic

punctuation, classical Chinese translation, and reading comprehension.

At the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the “Longshui Character Recognition System” now covers over 10 writing systems, including Tangut, Uyghur, Manchu, Tibetan, and Yi scripts, and its associated platform has recorded over 100,000 cumulative uses. The Qinghai–Xizang Plateau Cultural Knowledge Base compiles and correlates more than 800,000 records. Scattered and difficult-to-decipher materials are thus gradually being transformed into searchable, comparable, and verifiable research resources. Long Congjun, a research fellow at the institute, noted that machines do not draw conclusions for scholars; rather, their value lies in dismantling barriers between source materials and making connections among language,

culture, mentality, and behavior accessible to research and cross-validation.

AI-generated outputs face academic scrutiny

As machines move further upstream in the knowledge production process, how should their outputs acquire epistemological validity? Yin Jie, Party secretary of Shanxi Normal University, argued that content generated by LLMs is better regarded at present as “data in a preliminary form of knowledge” and should not be granted the status of established knowledge without scrutiny. Yin described the transformation in knowledge production as a shift from “production and validation” to “generation and recognition”: AI generates texts, datasets, and candidate hypotheses, while the academic community is responsible for examining, questioning, and verifying them. For a hypothesis to attain scientific standing, it must demonstrate both factual validity and explanatory power while also showing what new knowledge it contributes.

Yan Hongxiu, a professor from the School of Marxism and the School of History and Culture of Science at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, argued that AI-assisted research must pass four key tests: Source materials must have reliable provenance and proper authorization, methods must preserve records of model versions and human intervention, results must be cross-validated against independent data and real-world investigations, and responsibility must be assigned to the specific actors involved in selecting research questions, adopting conclusions, and publishing findings.

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