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A Study on Communication Strategies and Innovative Design for Intangible Cultural Heritage Paper-Cutting in the Context of New Media

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Abstract: The widespread adoption of digital media is transforming the creative processes, forms of expression, and dissemination channels of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage. As a national-level intangible cultural heritage, the art of paper-cutting currently faces practical challenges such as a generational gap in transmission, limited dissemination channels, inadequate digital design capabilities, and lagging database development. This paper adopts a framework centered on preservation, presentation, and dissemination. Integrating research practices in digital preservation, symbol library construction, and innovative design, the study explores two key areas: dissemination strategies and innovative design. Regarding dissemination strategies, it proposes two approaches: creating a dissemination matrix through multi-platform collaboration and ensuring cultural integrity to safeguard the authenticity of the craft. In terms of innovative design, it investigates methods for digital innovation in paper-cutting through four aspects: database construction and standardization, intelligent generation, immersive experiences, and personalized customization. It is argued that the transmission of paper-cutting from a new media perspective must shift from static preservation to dynamic dissemination. By using databases as a foundation, digital technology as a tool, and cultural significance as a baseline—and driven by the dual engines of dissemination strategies and innovative design—the sustainable transmission of paper-cutting art can be ensured.

Keywords: New media; Intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting; Dissemination of intangible cultural heritage; Digital innovative design; Dynamic transmission

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1. Introduction

In the digital age, the media landscape and cultural reception patterns have undergone profound changes. The preservation and transmission of traditional handicrafts cannot be limited to simply replacing tools; rather, they require a profound reshaping in terms of creative concepts, aesthetic standards, and dissemination strategies. Paper-cutting is a major representative of Chinese folk art, boasting a long history and rich cultural heritage. Through long-term exchanges among different regions and ethnic groups, it has developed diverse styles and has been listed as a national-level intangible cultural heritage. However, due to factors such as

neglect stemming from traditional attitudes, the impact of modern lifestyles, and a lack of stable practitioners, many exquisite techniques are struggling to be effectively passed down. Paper-cutting now faces the risk of being lost, and the space for its transmission continues to shrink. Digital technology has opened a new pathway for the preservation and transmission of paper-cutting art. The transmission of intangible cultural heritage should proceed in three steps: preservation, presentation, and dissemination. Digitization extends the duration of preservation, enriches forms of expression, and broadens channels of dissemination [1]. A systematic analysis has identified various issues, including weak awareness of paper-cutting preservation, a generational gap in skills, inadequate digital design, and lagging database development. To address these shortcomings, this study proposes design optimization strategies to enhance digital capabilities, establish a comprehensive database, and utilize virtual reality technology and other methods [2]. Taking practice as the starting point, this study explores innovative design methods such as digital design, interactive design, and AI-assisted generation. While most research has focused on the two aspects of "preservation" and "technology," it also provides more robust technical support for the synergistic mechanisms between new media dissemination strategies and innovative design.

This study approaches the subject from the dual perspectives of communication strategies and innovative design. On the one hand, it explores the new possibilities that new media brings to the dissemination of paper-cutting; on the other hand, it analyzes how digital technology facilitates innovative design in paper-cutting. Building on this foundation, the study seeks pathways for the living transmission of traditional crafts within the contemporary media environment.

2. Dissemination strategies for intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting in the context of new media

With the advent of new media technologies, the dissemination of paper-cutting art no longer relies solely on interpersonal communication but can leverage digital technologies such as the Internet, AR, and VR to achieve multidimensional, multi-channel dissemination, opening up new possibilities for artistic expression. With the advent of new media, traditional hand-cut paper art can now employ alternative methods to create dynamic effects and achieve interactive artistic expression. Furthermore, by integrating modern technology with various other art forms, the scope of artistic expression in paper-cutting has been expanded.

2.1. Multi-platform collaboration to create a multi-dimensional network for paper-cutting dissemination

In the past, the art of paper-cutting was constrained by traditional transmission mechanisms such as the master-apprentice system and workshop-based practices. Its dissemination was limited to specific groups or organizations involved in its transmission, failing to achieve widespread public impact and resulting in limited dissemination effectiveness. With the advent of the digital age, the dissemination of paper-cutting can now rely on various platforms to establish a multidimensional dissemination network. One approach involves creating official websites dedicated to paper-cutting art, social media accounts, and online exhibitions to showcase outstanding paper-cutting works to the public and introduce the techniques and historical background of the art form. Modern media offers diverse channels; traditional folk transmission models—such as word-of-mouth and behavioral imitation—have been disrupted. Mass media has become a vital vehicle for cultural transmission in the dissemination of folk culture, and various electronic audiovisual

media provide a more comprehensive and in-depth presentation of folk culture, breaking through the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional folk transmission [1]. By creating dedicated webpages for the promotion and dissemination of paper-cutting art to organize information about the art form and related materials, we can effectively expand dissemination channels and garner greater public attention. Second, short videos and live streams can be used to showcase the paper-cutting process, teach techniques, and share the stories of master artisans. Artists utilize online videos, images, and text to impart paper-cutting techniques and creative inspiration, encouraging more people to participate in the creation and preservation of this art form [2]. Through online teaching platforms, live streams, and remote conferences, teachers and students can interact with one another; pre-recorded videos and online courses can be used to convey knowledge of paper-cutting art to a wider audience. Digital technology can create a relatively comprehensive database of intangible cultural heritage, preserving relevant information through various formats—including text, images, video, and audio—to achieve the goals of preserving, documenting, and disseminating cultural heritage through new media and computer information technology [3]. Multi-platform collaboration not only breaks down geographical, linguistic, and temporal barriers but also leverages the complementary nature of various media forms to build a vast audience outreach network.

2.2. Upholding cultural standards: Drawing the line between viral content and the authenticity of artistic craftsmanship

While new media dissemination offers broad reach to audiences, it also carries the risk of diluting cultural significance. Fragmented dissemination typically extracts only the most visually striking elements while neglecting the underlying cultural logic. For the art of paper-cutting—which is rooted in traditional craftsmanship and regional knowledge—this approach poses a potential threat. It results in the superficial symbolization of paper-cutting, leading to a phenomenon where technical spectacle replaces cultural depth. The paper-cutting industry is driven by profit motives, often neglecting the cultural charm inherent in the art form itself. The blind pursuit of economic and commercial gains diminishes the cultural value of this traditional artistic heritage and hinders its development [3]. Under traditional models of transmission, the preservation of paper-cutting art has not received sufficient attention from the academic community. The meanings behind the patterns are recorded as isolated cases; this unsystematic approach fails to reflect the intrinsic connections between designs or the universal principles of design, thereby complicating systematic research [1]. Therefore, the establishment of a cultural oversight mechanism is of paramount importance.

This mechanism should be constructed on three levels: first, by establishing a database support system and creating a comprehensive database to record the latest paper-cutting artworks and related information in real time; second, by organizing the collected information according to different categories and themes, and formulating a complete set of cataloging rules and classification methods to improve search speed while ensuring data is well-organized [2]A copyright protection and licensing mechanism should be established to form a scientific protection system. This will address data licensing management and access control issues, implement security strategies to prevent data theft, leakage, and tampering, and effectively safeguard the integrity and uniqueness of paper-cutting art [2]. Establish a content review and value-guidance mechanism; facilitate dialogue among inheritors, scholars, and disseminators to define the scope of protection for core techniques and spiritual symbols; determine which elements must be passed down in traditional ways and which may undergo a certain degree of artistic adaptation and reinterpretation; thereby striking a balance

between creative freedom and the authenticity of cultural heritage. Only by maintaining firm principles amid openness and exercising caution in innovation can the art of paper-cutting preserve the integrity of its cultural essence in the face of the pressures of the "traffic-driven" logic.

3. Pathways for innovative design of intangible cultural heritage paper-cutting in the context of new media

In the new media environment, innovative design in the art of paper-cutting should not merely involve simple imitation of traditional patterns; rather, it should utilize digital technologies to conduct systematic exploration across various aspects, including design methods, forms of expression, and application scenarios.

3.1. Intelligent generation: Moving from manual tracing to human-machine collaborative design

Traditional paper-cutting requires a great deal of time and effort, whereas digital technology can automate complex production processes, making it convenient and efficient for more people to understand and learn the art of paper-cutting[2]. Digital innovation in design primarily involves methods such as interactive design and virtual reality. Interactive design emphasizes user engagement, making paper-cutting artworks more interactive, while virtual reality technology provides users with an immersive experience of paper-cutting art, effectively sparking creative inspiration [4]. In practical design, combining traditional and modern elements—as well as static and dynamic aspects—for visual expression not only holds aesthetic value but also helps the audience gain an intuitive understanding of key stages in the paper-cutting process, thereby promoting the development and dissemination of paper-cutting techniques to a certain extent.

In terms of tools, artists can utilize drawing tablets, digital cutting tools, computers, and tablets to create more artistic and innovative paper-cutting works. This not only broadens the creative possibilities of paper-cutting art but also attracts young people and a new generation of artists to join the field, infusing the art form with fresh vitality and creativity [2]. Intelligent generation is not intended to replace manual craftsmanship but rather to liberate designers from repetitive tasks through human-computer collaboration, allowing them to focus their energy on creative conception and cultural expression, thereby achieving dual improvements in both efficiency and quality.

3.2. Immersive experience: Recreating the paper-cutting process with digital technology

Traditional paper-cutting artists use static forms to depict dynamic imagery, lending their works a sense of movement. With the advent of the digital media era, the ability of animation technology to depict time and space has breathed new life into the art of paper-cutting. In paper-cutting animation, artistic forms are no longer confined to a single static frame but can be presented from all angles. Through the visual language of animation, paper-cutting art has gained more vivid and rich dimensions of expression. The judicious use of modern animation design software and techniques can comprehensively showcase every aspect of paper-cutting animation—from spatial composition and character transitions to scene choreography—thereby completely breaking through the limitations of traditional paper-cutting animation, which could only be expressed on a two-dimensional plane [1]. This brings paper-cutting techniques, related historical facts, and cultural significance to the public's awareness.

An immersive experience places users within a virtual digital environment, allowing them to personally

experience the paper-cutting process and thereby gain a more comprehensive and clear understanding of the art form [2]. By substituting virtual reality technology with paper-cutting elements, symbols, tools, and paper materials, the design and creation of paper-cuttings are completed on a computer. This virtual approach opens up a broader market for paper-cutting techniques and contributes to the better preservation and development of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage [3]. Dynamic visual content transforms the characteristics of paper-cutting craftsmanship into looping visual sequences that possess aesthetic value and help audiences understand key stages of the production process, thereby overcoming, to some extent, the communication dilemma of "seeing but not understanding" [3]. The primary purpose of immersive experiences is to transform the audience from passive observers into active participants, deepening their understanding of and connection to the art of paper-cutting through physical perception and hands-on practice.

3.3. Personalized customization: Expanding the application scenarios of paper-cutting through user participation

Digital technology not only protects and preserves the cultural heritage of paper-cutting but also ushers in a new era for the art form. Through digital preservation methods, paper-cutting works can transcend traditional boundaries to create more innovative and creative pieces, thereby driving continuous innovation and the ongoing transmission of paper-cutting techniques [2]. At the application level, innovative digital designs for paper-cutting can extend to various areas such as cultural and creative products, digital collectibles, cultural tourism experiences, and urban cultural IPs. They also allow users to participate in personalized customization, utilizing platforms such as the internet and mobile apps for digital creation and application. This breaks through the geographical, linguistic, and temporal constraints that once limited the dissemination of paper-cutting art, reaching a much broader audience [2]. Personalized designs tailored to user preferences can enhance user engagement and retention, convey rich cultural content to the audience, and ultimately establish a comprehensive digital resource library, laying a data foundation for future innovative designs. This not only promotes the innovative development of paper-cutting as an intangible cultural heritage but also facilitates its living transmission [4]. During the design process, a balance between tradition and modernity should be maintained to prevent homogenization and excessive commercialization, allowing traditional aesthetics to integrate into contemporary life in a more subtle way. The application of innovative digital design can broaden the channels for disseminating paper-cutting, opening new avenues for its teaching and transmission. This not only helps enhance learners' interest and innovative abilities but also strengthens the reach and influence of paper-cutting [4].

4. Conclusion

From a new media perspective, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) paper-cutting should shift from static conservation to dynamic dissemination. Framed by the concepts of preservation, presentation, and dissemination, this article explores pathways for dynamic transmission through the dual lenses of dissemination strategies and innovative design. In terms of dissemination, multi-platform collaboration forms a multidimensional dissemination network that reaches a broad audience, while cultural curation draws a line between the logic of traffic and the authenticity of the craft, jointly ensuring both the breadth and depth of dissemination; The establishment of databases and standards provides a resource foundation; intelligent generation promotes human-machine collaboration; immersive experiences transform

audiences from observers into participants; and personalized customization expands application scenarios and enhances engagement. Driven by the dual engines of "dissemination strategies and innovative design," the vitality of paper-cutting in the present can be revitalized.

However, as dissemination increasingly relies on visual impact and the logic of traffic, the regional, environmental, artisanal, and historical memories embodied in paper-cutting are prone to simplification or misinterpretation. A truly vibrant tradition does not simply follow the crowd, but rather remains steadfast in an open environment while proceeding with caution in the face of innovation. Heritage bearers, designers, and communicators should collectively shoulder the responsibility of interpretation—making full use of the narrative potential of new media while maintaining reverence for and discernment regarding the cultural essence. Only by striking a balance between technological empowerment and cultural preservation can paper-cutting continue to thrive in the digital age and achieve sustainable transmission.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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