

that agree with them—sources that reinforce and exaggerate their political predispositions.

And the whole system is based on a kind of intellectual theft. Internet aggregators (who link to news they don't produce) and bloggers would have little to collect or comment upon without the costly enterprise of newsgathering and investigative reporting. The old-media dinosaurs remain the basis for the entire media food chain. But newspapers are expected to provide their content free on the Internet. A recent poll found that 80 percent of Americans refuse to pay for Internet content. There is no economic model that will allow newspapers to keep producing content they don't charge for, while Internet sites repackage and sell content they don't pay to produce.

I dislike media bias as much as the next conservative. But I don't believe that journalistic objectivity is a fraud. I was a journalist for a time, at a once-great, now-diminished newsmagazine. I've seen good men and women work according to a set of professional standards I respect—standards that serve the public. Professional journalism is not like the buggy-whip industry, outdated by economic progress, to be mourned but not missed. This profession has a social value that is currently not reflected in its market value.

What is to be done? A lot of good people are working on it. But if you currently have newsprint on your hands, thank you.

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Consider the source and the audience: Michael Gerson, as he indicates in his column, is a conservative. A former speechwriter and adviser to President George W. Bush (as well as other Republicans), he now writes a syndicated column that appears, among other places, in the widely read *Washington Post*. How might this background affect his views of the media and journalism?

Lay out the argument, the values, and the assumptions: Gerson is nostalgic in this column for the *profession* of journalism. How does he define that? What does he mean by the “democratization” of the media? What damage does he think it has done? In what way is it based on “intellectual theft”?

Uncover the evidence: Does Gerson offer any evidence for his view in this column? Does the fact that most of his audience probably watches TV, reads some news, and participates in social media mean that he doesn't need to do more than to refer to their shared culture?

Evaluate the conclusion: Gerson, like many others, concludes that objective news gathering as an honorable profession is getting lost in the scrum of sloppy and parasitic cable TV shows, blogs, and tweets. Is he right? Can the profession of journalism endure in that environment?

Sort out the political significance: If Gerson is right, what is to be done? Is there a business model that will keep journalism alive while allowing the myriad voices that have been generated in the modern media to thrive? If it is in all of our interests to have people doing good, solid reporting on the events of the day, how is it to be paid for?