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## Bush becomes the media's forgotten man

By BEN FELLER

They want you, they need you, they lose interest, they leave you for someone else.

So goes the media's approach toward the president. It is always a relationship destined to end.

President Bush -- remember him? He has long ceased to be a hot story. Across all forms of mainstream media, news coverage of the president has fallen significantly this year.

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### THE APPEAL OF POWER

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**"The press follows power," said Bob Lichter, director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs at George Mason University. "I'm sure this goes through the mind of network producers [about Bush] -- he's not popular, he's not influential with Congress, he's not very powerful. So why cover him?"**

**Over the first four months of the year, Bush got about half as much coverage on nightly network broadcasts as he had last year, according to an analysis by Lichter's center. Bush's coverage on major network news is running more than 60 percent below what he got during his first seven years in office.**

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### MEDIA SPECTRUM

More broadly, Bush has faded in the primary places that people get their news: major newspapers, TV networks, cable-TV news, radio and online sites.

The nonpartisan Project for Excellence in Journalism, which conducts an ongoing analysis of those media, found that the presidential campaign is consistently dominating coverage.

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