In the early 1990s, I was a reporter at the Washington Post. Having just turned 30, I was the “young” person in the newsroom, so when the digital-media start-ups appeared, I got what many reporters looked at as the short end of the beat. They had no interest in understanding the massive changes that were happening. As I learned more, it often fell to me to explain what this newfangled internet was as if I were trying to explain a tree to a child.

The Post did give me the space to report on a broad range of digital topics, largely because no one else would — including the many come-and-gone technologies, like CD-ROMs, that were heralded as “multimedia killers” but would soon be killed themselves.

[...]