

# Closing Plenary

## Got a Minute? How Technology Affects the Economy of Attention

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It is impossible to get information in or out of our head without paying attention. Yet attention, as Herbert Simon has noted, is a limited resource. As a result, exchanging attention for information not only defines communication, it is also provides the sufficient conditions for an economy of attention based on principles rather different than those taught in traditional economics courses. Some of these principles allow us better to understand the recursive evolution of information, communication and attention technologies, the first two assisting us to produce and distribute information, the last assisting us to consume it. Other principles allow us to speculate about the social and organizational consequences of this recursive evolution by distinguishing information that reduces demand for additional attention from information that increases it. My talk will outline some of the principles of attentional economics and sample some of their implications for Computer Supported Cooperative Work.

***About the speaker:***

Following an unsuccessful career as a classical guitarist, Warren Thorngate received his BA in Psychology and Mathematics from the University of California, Santa Barbara, then fled to Canada to obtain two more psychology degrees at the University of British Columbia, specializing in the study of human decision making and social behavior. Twenty-five years ago he began to write about evidential statistics, the limits of research methods, the evolution of adjudicated contests and the economics of attention, ideas leading him to a term as president of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology but otherwise ignored. A chance opportunity for adventure led him to spend over a decade developing and evaluating computer mediated communication and information science projects in Latin America, culminating in the creation of Internet facilities at the University of Havana. While working on these projects, he became a founding member of the Computer User Research and Evaluation (CURE) group at Carleton University. Good fortune and helpful colleagues allowed him to serve as visiting professor in Berkeley, Leningrad, Melbourne, Havana, Santiago, Warsaw and Tehran. He is currently writing a book on the Economics of Attention which will include ideas from this presentation.