Claude Elwood Shannon Encyclopedia Article

Claude Elwood Shannon

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1916-

American mathematician who founded the field of information theory with his 1948 paper "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," published in the *Bell System Technical Journal.* Shannon graduated from the University of Michigan and proceeded to MIT for further study. He was intrigued by the use of George Boole's algebra to analyze and optimize relay switching circuits, a topic he later wrote about. In 1941 he accepted an offer to work for Bell Telephone as a research mathematician; he remained with the company until 1972. In 1952 he proposed an experimental system that demonstrated the capabilities of phone relays. Shannon was awarded the National Medal of Science in 1966.