

NBER Digitization Tutorial Application  
Alaina Totten  
Due: November 18, 2016  
To: Denis Healy, dhealy@nber.org

**Contact Information:**

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**Course of Study:**

I am a second year PhD student in Economics at Georgia Institute of Technology pursuing a minor in Information Security Policy. My fields are Industrial Organization and International Trade. I am currently taking two elective courses called Internet and Public Policy and Cybersecurity Policy and I hope to take Information Policy and Management in the future. These courses have both sparked my interest in digitization and increased my understanding of new policy concerns which arise with the increase in information. I am interested in how firms must now invest in increased security in order to protect their digitized information, but they can also utilize this information to change their market strategy through methods such as selling data through data brokerages.

Currently, my knowledge on digitization comes from my courses in the School of Public Policy. I would like to learn more about the Economics of Digitization in order to better understand the economists' viewpoint. I think this knowledge is crucial for my intended direction of study, and the meeting at Stanford will introduce me to top economists in this field as well as the frontier of economic research on my area of interest. This could potentially help me define my dissertation topic.

**General Research Interests:**

Currently, I have not yet begun research for my dissertation nor formed a committee. As a second year student, I am currently focused on learning about information security while pursuing my fields of International Trade and Industrial Organization. My research will center on Industrial Organization, and I hope to look at the way firms handle, monetize, and protect their growing resources of data and information. My interests stem from financial crimes and how banking firms must take precautions to protect consumer funds. I am particularly interested in banks' use of data analysis to flag suspicious purchases, but as I learn more about digitization through an economic lens, I hope to expand my research into different applications of digitization.

Since digitization is a growing field which parallels the current growth of technical ability to collect and store more information than ever before, I think it is crucial to research and understand how firms can optimize their decisions regarding this new data. I am faced with a unique opportunity to pursue my PhD during a time of great development where all firms can benefit from an improved understanding of their capabilities with respect to information collection.