

Austin Moss

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University of Iowa, Henry B. Tippie College of Business
21 East Market Street, W343
Iowa City, IA 52242 USA

Phone (Mobile): 563.299.6380
E-mail: austin-moss@uiowa.edu
Web: austinmoss.me

EDUCATION

University of Iowa, Henry B. Tippie College of Business

Ph.D. Candidate in Accounting

Expected May 2022

B.B.A., Accounting & Finance (with honors and highest distinction)

May 2017

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Financial Reporting Information and Individual Investors—I strive to use unique data and settings to study relevant, real-world financial market phenomena with an emphasis on the creation and use of financial information by everyday people.

RESEARCH

Current Working Papers:

1. “How Do Brokerages’ Digital Engagement Practices Affect Retail Investor Information Processing and Trading.” [\[PDF\]](#)
 - Job Market Paper
 - Abstract: I investigate how digital engagement practices commonly employed by retail brokerages on their mobile trading apps, such as push notifications and simplified information presentation, impact retail investor information processing and trading. My identification strategy exploits a unique institutional feature of Robinhood in which it sends push notifications to its customers when stock price movement reaches a certain threshold. Using an intraday event study, I document that push notifications significantly increase retail investor trading by at least 25% in the fifteen minutes following notifications. I then exploit this discontinuous increase in the proportion of investors trading on Robinhood with similar information sets to examine whether the salient display of accounting information induces retail investors to incorporate the information in their trades. By reconstructing the earnings information displayed on Robinhood, I find that accounting information saliency increases the use of earnings surprise information by retail investors. Notably, Robinhood displays earnings information in a way that an investor’s visual perception of earnings news displayed on Robinhood differs from how accounting academics have typically transformed it into a value-relevant information signal (i.e., scaling unexpected earnings by stock price). When I examine whether retail investors use the academic earnings surprise in their investment decisions, I consistently find that they do not. Lastly, I show that the aggregate influence of these digital engagement practices has a small, positive impact on retail investor informativeness.

2. "The Role of Accounting Information in an Era of Fake News." [\[PDF\]](#)
 - Coauthor: Betty Liu
 - Under 2nd round review at the *Journal of Accounting & Economics*
 - Presentations: Midwest Accounting Research Conference (2021)
 - Abstract: We investigate the role of accounting information in deterring the production of financial fake news and attenuating its market impact. Specifically, for firms that have issued more management forecasts, provided a 10-K with higher readability, or released major accounting information more recently, we find an 8-14% reduction in the probability of being targeted by a fake article on Seeking Alpha and an 8-18% reduction in the number of fake articles. We also find a reduction in abnormal trade volume and idiosyncratic return volatility following the publication of a fake article for these firms. Furthermore, analyses using a bunching identification strategy find that fake news production peaks prior to earnings announcements and drops upon announcement, providing evidence that impending accounting information releases induce fake news authors to avoid publishing post-disclosure when the accounting information environment is relatively stronger. Overall, our results are consistent with accounting information reducing the production of and the market reaction to fake news, providing evidence of an ex ante and ex post role of accounting information in safeguarding firms from financial misinformation.
3. "The Irrelevance of ESG Disclosure to Retail Investors: Evidence from Robinhood." [\[PDF\]](#)
 - Coauthors: Jim Naughton and Clare Wang
 - Revision requested by *Management Science*
 - Media: [altsforall.com](#), Investor Relations Magazine
 - Abstract: Using an hourly dataset on retail investor individual security positions from Robinhood Markets, we find that ESG disclosures are irrelevant to retail investors' buy and sell decisions. The response to ESG press releases by retail investors is no different than the routine portfolio adjustments that occur on non-event days. In contrast, these same investors make economically meaningful changes to their portfolios in response to press releases that do not pertain to ESG, especially those that pertain to earnings announcements. Our findings are not due to a lack of statistical power or other data shortcomings. Retail investor indifference persists for ESG announcements that prior research has found to generate long-run shareholder returns. Our conclusions contrast with evidence from experimental studies that retail investors respond favorably to ESG disclosures.
4. "The Impact of Earnings Season on Election Day." [\[PDF\]](#)
 - Coauthor: Clare Wang
 - Presentations: University of Iowa
 - Abstract: Due to the statutory timeline for general elections, U.S. elections always fall in the middle of the third-quarter earnings season. Our analyses exploit voter-level stock market ownership to provide evidence on the impact corporate earnings news has on voter perceptions and behavior. For the five most recent U.S. presidential elections, we show that earnings news released by S&P 500 firms prior to Election Day has a statistically and economically significant impact on the likelihood that stock-owning

voters will cast an incumbent vote. We conclude that corporate earnings announcements serve as a timely and relevant signal influencing voter perceptions of economic performance at a critical time in the election cycle. In addition, our findings suggest that firms with a September 30th fiscal quarter-end may have a disproportionate impact on voters' behavior on Election Day.

5. "A Corrupt NBA Referee and the Sports Betting Market: Quasi-Random Tests of Informed Trading and the Price Formation Process." [Draft Available Upon Request]

- Coauthor: Dennis Hamilton
- Abstract: We study price formation in the presence of market participants who hold a significant private information advantage using betting contracts on National Basketball Association (NBA) games. During the 2006-07 season, an NBA referee (Tim Donaghy) sold information about his games to a big-time bet broker who subsequently traded on the private information. Our identification strategy exploits that a referees' game assignments are effectively random, resulting in the random assignment of an information-advantaged trader to the games Donaghy refereed. Using measures of betting market quality with analogous stock market counterparts, we find strong evidence that informed trading causes significant increases in long- and short-term price movements as well as decreases in measures of market liquidity. Our price informativeness evidence is less conclusive, suggesting either a slight increase in informativeness or no effect. Lastly, we find evidence consistent with the informed trader engaging in strategic price bluffing. The unique details of our setting allow us to: (1) directly observe informed trading and assets' true, exogenous terminal values, (2) identify random variation in private information trading, and (3) overcome the joint hypothesis problem that plagues asset pricing research in other markets.

HONORS & AWARDS

Keith Lantz Colleague Improvement Fellowship, 2019-2020 & 2021-2022

University of Iowa Recruitment Fellow, 2017-2022

University of Iowa Accounting Faculty Scholar, 2017

AICPA Legacy Scholar, 2016

Tippie 21 Under 21 Award, 2016

University of Iowa President's List, 2015-2016

University of Iowa Dean's List, 2015-2017

Muscatine High School Valedictorian, 2014

CONFERENCES & DISCUSSIONS (*by invitation/nomination)

University of North Carolina Tax Doctoral Seminar (2020)*

University of Iowa Sidney Winter Lecture Series (2019)

FARS Mid-Year Meeting & Doctoral Consortium (2019)*

VIRTUAL CONFERENCES

Midwest Accounting Research Conference (2021)
Future of Financial Information Conference (2021)
FARS Mid-Year Meeting (2021)
NYU Topics in Empirical Household Finance (Open PhD Course, Fall 2020)
Stanford University COVID-19 and AI: A Virtual Conference (2020)
Georgetown Financial Markets Quality Conference (2020)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

University of Iowa, Henry B. Tippie College of Business

- Student Member. Dean Interview Committee (Spring 2020)

TEACHING

University of Iowa, Henry B. Tippie College of Business

- Instructor. Introduction to Financial Accounting, Online (Fall 2018-Spring 2020)
- Teaching Assistant. Financial Statement Analysis (Spring 2018)
- Instructor. Introduction to Financial Accounting (Fall 2017)

NON-ACADEMIC INTERESTS

Hawkeye Sports – Artisanal Coffee – Mindfulness – Biotech Investing – Craft Breweries

REFERENCES

Paul Hribar
Dissertation co-chair
Henry B. Tippie Excellence Chair in Accounting
Tippie College of Business
University of Iowa
paul-hribar@uiowa.edu

Clare Wang
Dissertation co-chair
Associate Professor of Accounting
Leeds School of Business
University of Colorado Boulder
clare.wang@colorado.edu

Cristi Gleason
Dissertation committee member
Carlson KPMG Professor of Accounting
Department Executive Officer
Tippie College of Business
University of Iowa
cristi-gleason@uiowa.edu