I had the privilege of being raised in an especially information rich environment. Besides the towers of books that my parents and other relatives provided to me, both of my parents were medical professionals, so copies of The New England Journal of Medicine and other scientific periodicals were abundant at home. I remember opening up each issue as a child and examining the colorful charts, tables, and the occasional gory photograph of some surgical procedure. As a child I was of course ignorant of most of what was being discussed in these articles, but my biggest blessing might have been that my parents always seemed happy to answer my questions and to explain scientific concepts in terms I could understand. One of the biggest gifts I received growing up was the repeated encouragement from my parents to admit - and to not be ashamed of - my ignorance of a subject.

My life at home was starkly different from my life at the local public schools I attended. I was part of a small group of children who were always pushed to excel, but even at a young age it seemed like the vast majority of my classmates were being left behind. Part of the reason for this disparity was a lack of access to information. We had fraying textbooks and maps from before the fall of the Soviet Union, but by the time I reached high school the building was stocked with computers. In order to visit a website the site had to be on a pre-approved list which wasn't updated often. This was frustrating for teachers who wanted to show students video or content they had found at home so I developed a system where I could boot a Linux operating system from a CD which included a web browser that allowed teachers to visit any site they wanted. I wish I had more deeply realized my passion for open access to information back then.

Helping others is one of the core actions that keeps me motivated and moving forward, so over the past several years I have focused on developing methods for distributing information and education as cheaply and as accessibly as possible. The field of Information Science seems like a natural home for me to pursue this goal because it sits at the intersection of data, computer, and cognitive sciences, all of which I believe are necessary to spread information and education. It's clear to me that participating in the graduate program at the University of Michigan is the best opportunity for me to pursue my goals because of the incredible work and scholarship being done by the faculty in the School of Information.

As a concluding remark, I want to say that the biggest personal struggle I've had to face is years of living with anxiety which can be debilitating and has no clear origin. I've made substantial progress in the last year and I've subsequently learned some techniques that I aspire to apply in my work.