



# SAVING THE DEAD

Digital Legacy Planning  
& Posthumous Personhood



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# Outline

1. Facebook
2. Google
3. Emerging Solutions and Future Directions



# I. Facebook

# Remembering Mark Zuckerberg ...



## Remembering Mark Zuckerberg

We hope people who love Mark will find comfort in the things others share to remember and celebrate his life.  
Learn more about memorialized accounts and the legacy contact setting on Facebook.



Mark Zuckerberg

✓ Following ▾

Message



Timeline

About

Friends

Photos

More ▾

November 2016



A look back



### My appeal to Facebook



John Berlin

Subscribe 5,324

+ Add to Share More

3,051,096 views

60,064 645

Published on 5 Feb 2014

## Facebook grants father's wish to see his dead son's personalised video

February 7, 2014

☆ Read later

Lisa Maria Garza

Tweet 4 Recommend 18 Share 1 Share submit

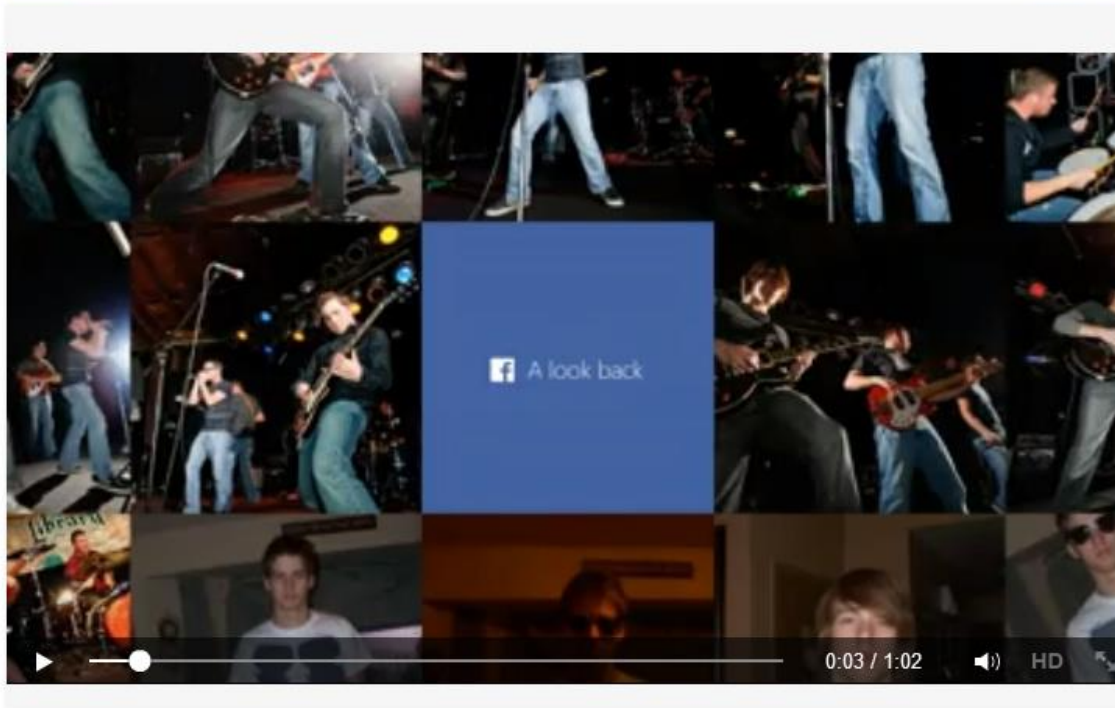
Email article Print



Tearful plea: John Berlin. Photo: YouTube

- Facebook turns 10 years old
- Facebook releases personalised videos

Facebook has granted a US father's tearful request to unlock his dead son's social media page and give him access to a video compilation of photos and posts he had been unable to view.



**John W. Berlin II**

First of all I just want to thank everyone for all the shares and support. We couldn't have done this without you. This is the official Facebook video of my son Jesse Berlin  
Share · February 8

Shared with: Public

Report Video

- 482 people like this.
- 6,316 shares
- View previous comments 50 of 142

- Stella Bowman** I wonder how we can ask facebook to have one page we can upload pictures of a child we lost and share our pain. making this will help us with our lost that we can share to others. this was a nice memory of jesse.  
February 8 at 8:43am · Edited
- Kira Black-Widow Rodezno** You truly are an inspiration to all of the families who have lost loved ones. Thank you for speaking out. I'm very sorry for your loss.  
February 8 at 8:43am

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=3856928559695&set=vb.1772805445&type=2&theater>



# 2012 Facebook: Memorialize (Default) or Delete

## ▼ How do I report a deceased user or an account that needs to be memorialized?

### **Memorializing the account:**

It is our policy to memorialize all deceased users' accounts on the site. Memorializing the account set privacy so that only confirmed friends can see the profile (timeline) or locate it in Search. The profile (timeline) will also no longer appear in the Suggestions section of the Home page. Friends and family can leave posts in remembrance. In order to protect the privacy of the deceased user, we cannot provide login information for the account to anyone. However, once an account has been memorialized, it is completely secure and cannot be accessed or altered by anyone.

If you need to report a profile (timeline) to be memorialized, please click [here](#).

### **Removing the account:**

Verified immediate family members may [request the removal](#) of a loved one's account from the site.

- Source: <https://www.facebook.com/help?page=842>

# Facebook: Memorializing Accounts

## Memorializing Accounts

### ▼ What does memorializing an account mean? Does it deactivate or delete it?

When a user passes away, we memorialize their account to protect their privacy. Memorializing an account sets the account privacy so that only confirmed friends can see the profile (timeline) or locate it in search. Friends and family can leave posts in remembrance. Memorializing an account also prevents anyone from logging into the account.

[Permalink](#) · [Share](#)

Was this answer helpful?

Yes

No

- Source: <https://www.facebook.com/help?page=842>

# 2012 Facebook ...

- ALL (memorial) or NOTHING (deleted).
  - No CURATION of the final memorialised page.  
(Many loved ones ‘drive’ the account after someone dies since they’ve been left the password, despite this being a Terms of Use violation).
- CONTEXT COLLAPSE (Marwick and boyd, 2011).
- Memorialised = space to remember, space to *post* about the deceased.
  - There are also memorial pages (created specifically, not timelines) but that brings the *grief trolls*.

# Now (2015): Facebook Legacy Contact

## Legacy Contact

### My Legacy Contact

A legacy contact is someone you choose to manage your account after you pass away. They'll be able to do things like pin a post on your Timeline, respond to new friend requests, and update your profile picture. They won't post as you or see your messages. [Learn more.](#)

Your legacy contact won't be notified until your account is memorialized, but you'll have the option to send them a message right away.

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### Account Deletion

If you don't want a Facebook account after you pass away, you can request to have your account permanently deleted.

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July 2015

Reporting Abuse

Reporting a Problem with  
Facebook

Reporting a Privacy Violation

Hacked and Fake Accounts

**Managing a Deceased  
Person's Account**

**Legacy Contacts**

About Memorialized  
Accounts

Request to Memorialize or  
Remove an Account

Uploading Your ID

Copyright

Trademark

About Our Policies

## Legacy Contacts

If you're a legacy contact, you can manage a memorialized account and will have the option to do things like:

- Write a pinned post for the memorialized profile (ex: to share a final message on behalf of your deceased loved one or provide information about a memorial service)
- Respond to new friend requests (ex: old friends or family members who weren't yet on Facebook)
- Update the profile picture and cover photo

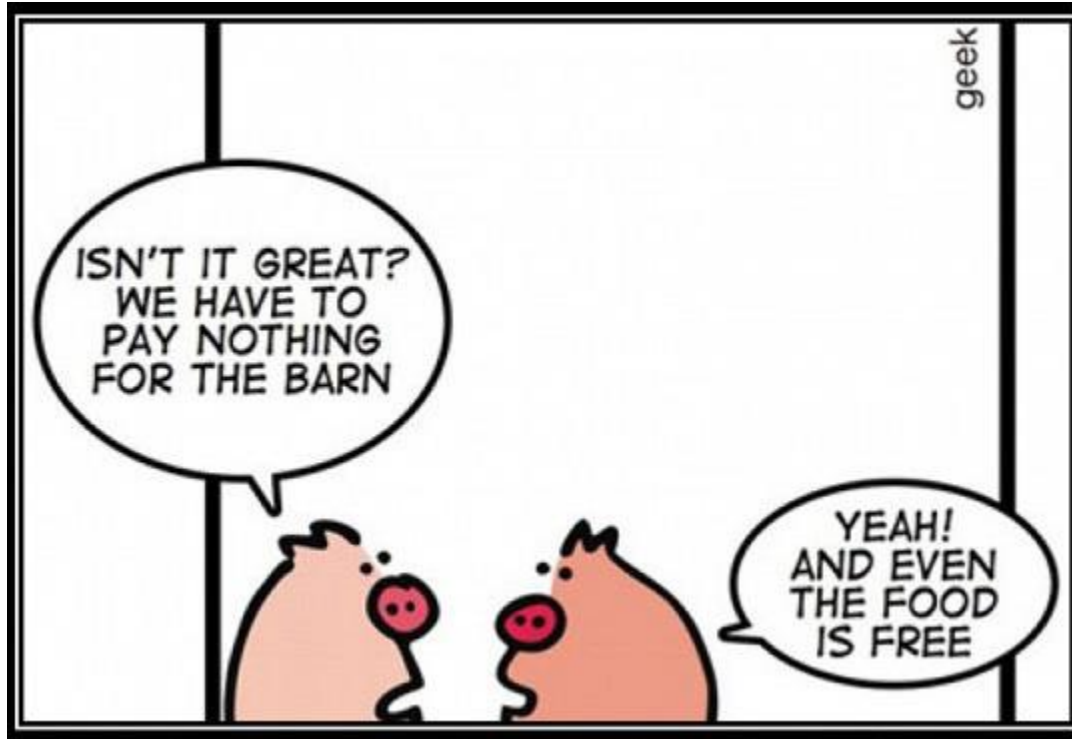
Legacy contacts can't:

- Log into the memorialized account
- Remove or change past posts, photos and other things shared on the Timeline
- Read messages sent to other friends
- Remove any friends

If you're not a legacy contact, you can submit a request to [memorialize](#) or [remove](#) a deceased loved one's account.

<https://www.facebook.com/help/241237032913527/>

# Sustainable?



Facebook can't sell ads to dead people.

But it can sell ads at memorials.

## II. Google

# 2012: To access a deceased relative's Google account ... (1/2)

## Part 1

We require the following information:

1. Your full name
2. Your physical mailing address
3. Your email address
4. A photocopy of your government-issued ID or driver's license
5. The Gmail address of the deceased user
6. The death certificate of the deceased user. If the document is not in English, please provide a certified English translation prepared by a competent translator and notarized
7. The following information from an email message that you have received at your email address, from the Gmail address in question:
  - The full header from the email message. See [instructions](#) on how to find headers in Gmail and other webmail email providers. Copy everything from 'Delivered-To:' to 'Content-Type:'
  - The entire content of the message

Mail or fax this information to:

Google Inc.  
Gmail User Support - Decedents' Accounts  
c/o Google Custodian of Records  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043  
Fax: 650-644-0358





# 2012: To access a deceased relative's Google account ... (2/2)

## Part 2

Upon receipt of this information, Google will review your request and notify you by email as to whether or not we will be able to move beyond Part 1 to the next steps of the process. If we are able to move forward based on our preliminary review, we will send further instructions outlining Part 2. Part 2 will require you to get additional legal process including an order from a U.S. court and/or submitting additional materials. *Please note that submitting these materials will not guarantee that we will be able to provide Gmail content so we recommend not embarking on Part 2 until you hear back from us regarding Part 1.* Because of our concerns for user privacy, if we determine that we cannot provide the Gmail content, we will not be able to share further details about the account or discuss our decision.

updated 11/08/2012

Source: <http://support.google.com/mail/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=14300>



# NB: Single Google Privacy Policy ...

- 1 March 2012: 70 different privacy policies for Google products (Gmail, Blogger, Picasa, YouTube, etc.) merged into a single Privacy Policy.
- +ve simplification
- -ve deep integration across all Google databases about you (watch something on YouTube, see related ads on Blogger).
- <http://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>



# And: A Single 'Delete' Button, Too ...

What happens to YouTube if I delete my Google Account or Google+?

⚠ If you delete the Google Account to which your YouTube account is linked, you will delete both the Google Account AND your YouTube account, including all videos and account data.

⚠ If you are using your Google+ identity on YouTube, and you delete your Google+ profile, your YouTube Channel **will be affected**. Find out more in our article about [the effect of disabling Google+](#).

Source: <http://support.google.com/youtube/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1151740>



# Single Sign-On.



## One password. All of Google.

Want to enjoy the best of Google? Just stay signed in. One username and password is all you need to unlock more features from services you use every day, like Gmail, Maps, Google+, and YouTube.

All your Google eggs in one basket.

# Now: Google Inactive Account Manager

Inactive Account Manager

OFF

What happens to your account when you stop using it?  
Google puts you in control. [Learn more](#)

## Alert Me

Provide a mobile phone number to be alerted before any actions will be performed on your account.  
You can also add an additional email address.



[Add mobile phone number](#) (Required)

Email address

tamaleaver@gmail.com

[Add email](#)

# Minimum Timeout Period 3 Months ...

## Timeout period

Set a timeout period for your account. Google will alert you **1 month** before this period expires.



Your account will time out if you haven't signed in to your Google account for:

3 months ▾

# Share or Delete.

## Notify Contacts and Share Data

Add up to 10 trusted friends or family members who should be notified that your account is inactive. You can also share data with them if you like.



[Add trusted contact](#)

[Set auto-response in Gmail](#)

## Optionally delete account

If you wish, instruct Google to delete your account once all requested actions have been completed.

All data associated with your products will be deleted. This includes your publicly shared data like YouTube videos, Google+ posts or blogs on Blogger. [Learn more.](#)



Delete my account:



The  
**Social Media**  
Contradiction





# A Social Media Contradiction

“a *social media contradiction* may arise where **users focus on the *social elements*** – often acts of communication and sharing which are thought of as ephemeral and in the moment, comparable to a telephone conversation – while the **companies and corporations creating these apps are more focused on the *media elements***, which are measurable, aggregatable, can be algorithmically analysed in a variety of potentially valuable ways, and can last indefinitely.”

(Leaver & Lloyd, 2014)

# III. Emerging Solutions and Future Directions

# Perpetu (and other legacy managers)

## Who is Perpetu for?



### Online Savvy Folks

You use social networks. You upload photos and share content. You write emails, not letters. You have an “online presence” that you want to preserve. You need Perpetu.



### Legacy Leavers

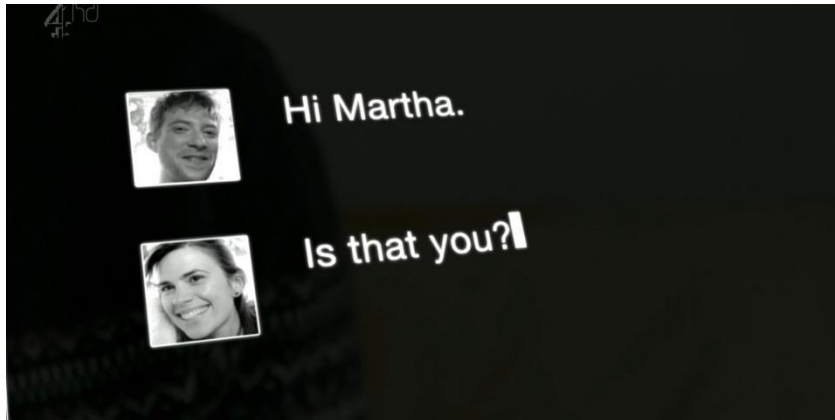
You want to post a last tweet, publish a last Facebook update, or send a final email to your loved ones, in case you pass away. You wish to be remembered, in a certain way. You need Perpetu.



### Estate Planners

Whether you are a lawyer, a will-writer, or an insurance firm - you don't have the tools to manage your clients' online assets, or execute their wishes on those assets. We can help. [Contact us now.](#)

# NB: 'Be Right Back', *Black Mirror*



# LivesOn



Current population:

## LIVESON®

Your social afterlife

 Sign up with Twitter



LIVESON will keep tweeting even after you've passed away. But to do that, you need to teach it.



LIVESON A.I analyses your original Twitter feed. Learning about your likes, tastes and syntax.

(coming soon: recommendation engine)



Tweets will appear via your LIVESON hashtag. Help it become a better you by giving feedback.



Nominate an executor to your LIVESON 'Will'. They decide whether to keep your account 'live'.

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**When your heart stops beating, you'll keep tweeting**

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## What if...



### **You could preserve your parents' memories forever?**

And you could keep their stories alive, for your children, grandchildren and for many generations to come?



### **You could preserve your legacy for the future?**

And in this way your children, friends, or even total strangers from a distant future will remember you in a hundred years?



### **You could live on forever as a digital avatar?**

And people in the future could actually interact with your memories, stories and ideas, almost as if they were talking to you?

# The Problems with Social Media Resurrection ...

- LivesOn, Eterni.Me & similar start-ups **presume that human beings can be meaningfully reduced to patterns of information.**
- They presume that social media is either unambiguous, transparent, or that multiplicity can be algorithmically understood.
- They presume that re-animating people in digital forms is a goal which justifies itself.

# Conclusion I: Ethics

- If social media traces can be amalgamated to inform bots, avatars or anything else, what are the ramifications?
- What a 'resurrected' bot be alive?
- Would 'they' have any rights (legally or morally)?
- Could a 'resurrected' digital person have their own assets? (Or are 'they' an asset themselves?)



# Conclusions II: History

- Currently, social media services are conceptualised and regulated in terms of the **active user**, but questions of legacy, history, and assets require more collective or transferrable models
- If the **bulk of user-generated content is 'owned' by individuals**, does this material have to, or should it, be erased when they pass away?
- In what circumstances does the *historical record* supersede individual terms of use?
- At what point do big data aggregates speak more of the dead than or the living?

## HOW WE REMEMBER OUR ANCESTORS:

I FOUND THIS OLD PICTURE  
OF MY GREAT GRANDFATHER.  
HE LOOKS SO COOL AND  
MYSTERIOUS!



SHOEBOXBLOG.COM

## HOW FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL REMEMBER US:

I JUST DOWNLOADED AN  
ARCHIVE OF MY GREAT  
GRANDFATHER'S FACEBOOK  
UPDATES.  
EVIDENTLY HE HATED MONDAYS  
AND LOVED TELLING PEOPLE  
WHEN HE WAS BORED.



-brian

CHUCK & BEANS

FACEBOOK.COM/SHOEBOXBLOG

# Conclusions III: Design of Social Media Platforms

- *All* social media and digital platforms need to **be designed with the potential death of users in mind** from the beginning;
- at present the official policies of social media companies and online corporations regarding deceased users are minimal and **relatively blunt**;
- where a single account or authentication service is a gateway to different tools, services and content, there **should be some ability to separate and curate these posthumously**, allowing final curatorial decisions by digital executors;
- private corporations will increasingly need to **officialise their position** on the maintenance of posthumous profiles, and **re-evaluate these positions in light of actual uses**;
- Companies should **commit to either maintain or export** the user data of deceased users in accordance with their wishes.

# Conclusion IV: Wills & Legacies

- **Set up, use, and leave a notes in your will saying you've set up, any available tools** (Facebook Legacy, Google Inactive Account Manager, etc.).
- Given the legal ambiguities of most legal systems currently wills should **leave ideal instructions** (ie what users would like to happen), hoping that the laws will catch up before they die;
- Due to the lack of available options and the lack of awareness of official options, many users may still resort to **ad hoc responses**, such as transferring control of online profiles to immediate family members after a user's death (**ie leaving the password**) which currently violates most Terms of Use etc;
- **Do NOT leave passwords in wills** (they are searchable documents, and passwords change!).

# Questions or Comments?

**Or find me later ...**

[http://www.tamaleaver.net/  
research/the-ends-of-identity/](http://www.tamaleaver.net/research/the-ends-of-identity/)



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