

Google adds 'digital estate planning' to its services

April 11 2013



Google on Thursday began letting people plan out what is to be done with their digital photos, documents and other virtual belongings after they die or become incapacitated.

Google on Thursday began letting people plan out what is to be done with their digital photos, documents and other virtual belongings after they die or become incapacitated.

An "Inactive Account Manager" can be used to direct [Google](https://www.google.com) to pass on

data from online venues such as Google Drive, Gmail, [YouTube](#), or social network Google+ to particular people or be deleted after being dormant for too long.

"What should happen to your photos, emails and documents when you stop using your account?" Google said in a message at an account settings page.

"You might want your data to be shared with a trusted friend or family member, or, you might want your account to be deleted entirely," the message continued.

"Whatever the reason, we give you the option of deciding what happens to your data."

Google lets people specify how long to wait before taking action, and the California-based [Internet giant](#) will send account holders email or text message reminders before "timeout" periods are ended.

The feature was added as people increasingly trust their data and memories online social networks, data storage facilities, and other services hosted in the Internet "cloud."

[Facebook](#), for example, allows members to have accounts "memorialized" after they die.

Laws in the United States and elsewhere are vague on the fate of digital rights to online accounts after death, leading to complications and legal wrangling for survivors who want access to the online services of the deceased.

In one case that drew considerable attention, the family of a US Marine killed in Iraq went to court in 2005 after being blocked from getting

access to his Yahoo email account, with the company arguing that it could not release "private" information and that the account was "non-transferable" under terms of service.

Some say a separate document or executor for [digital assets](#) could be useful, with one way to preserve access being to register accounts in the name of a trust, control of which could be transferred on death.

(c) 2013 AFP

Citation: Google adds 'digital estate planning' to its services (2013, April 11) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-04-google-digital-estate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.