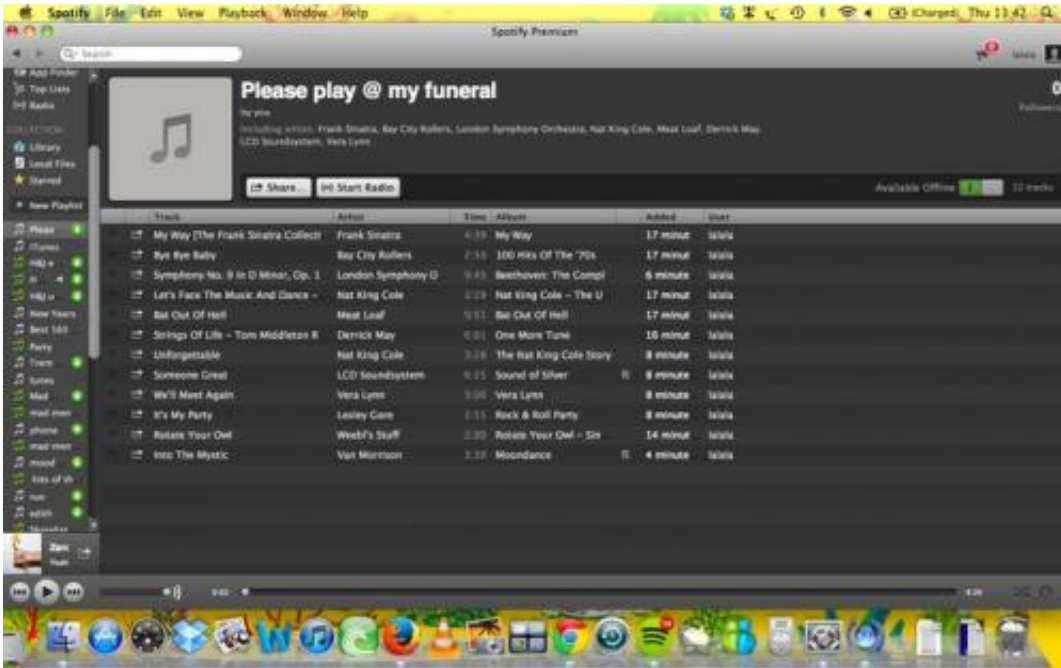


You can linger longer with a digital death

September 6 2013, by Wendy Moncur



Ashes to ashes, pixel to pixel. The latest tech means you can do it your way.

Digital life now begins before birth, with excited expectant parents sharing ultrasound images of their unborn babies online. But your digital life also continues after you die, and can come in handy in the first week after your death in particular.

Recent discussions about our digital footprints have focused on how the information we leave online can be used against us, but there is a bright side too, and, perhaps surprisingly, it relates to death.

Throughout your life, more and more [personal data](#) builds up on the internet. It is a mix of "official" data such as birth and marriage records, work data (all those emails from the boss), and personal data such as emails, photos and Spotify playlists. There is a lot of it, and it is changing the way we do the final "send off".

It's your funeral

Tech-savvy [relatives](#) and friends are starting to use online data to help paint a vivid picture of the life that has passed when someone close to them dies. The order of service can feature photos of the departed that were tagged on Facebook during their life and music may be drawn from their Spotify favourites. A background film may show eventful moments from their life, such as doing a charity parachute jump. Much like weddings, there are plenty of companies out there to help to personalise the event and make the day special. They can produce a polished event incorporating your digital content, and even film the [funeral](#), producing an edited take-home DVD for mourners afterwards.



You want a Viking pyre, a voluptuous angel and multiple sacrifices? No problem. Credit: bascha

You can even have a say in your own funeral. End-of-life planning tools such as LegacyOrganiser allow you to "record your life defining moments, soundtrack, bucket list and farewell" in advance. All online, of course.

Businesses are rarely slow to catch on to trends that could make them money and funeral directors are no different. They can even get training on how to build their online business through the web.

Organising a funeral with a digital dimension is much easier if your funeral director and celebrant have embraced the digital age. This means

that they can help to include [digital content](#) in the service. They can even help far-flung friends and relatives to participate in the funeral remotely. This is being practised in the UK, where military funerals can be live streamed to those still on active service, gathered at base to honour a fallen comrade.

Churches, particularly evangelical ones, are getting in on the act too. Many are embracing technology and broadcasting live links to services, including funerals.

Making contact

So your funeral has been organised. But how do your loved ones let all the right people know the time, date, place or website? If you have kept all of your contact lists online and on your smartphone, let's hope that someone knows your password so that they can access these details. Otherwise they may have a difficult job.

And if you have led another life online, perhaps as a warlock on Second Life, how on earth will your loved ones update them? Perhaps your Second Life buddies will hold a separate funeral for you in cyber-space, honouring your warlock self.

After your funeral, the story of your life in words and pictures can be embedded in your headstone, accessed by visitors with smartphones through a QR code or a radio frequency identification tag. If you are cremated, your loved ones can have an urn made to hold them which looks just like you, based on a digital photo sent to an online company.

Even though you are gone, your personal data can help to make sure that you are not forgotten.

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