

Digital afterlife

Group “As long as it is unique”
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Mapping controversies
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Overview

The chosen topic for this semester's project is Digital Afterlife and essentially what constitutes it. It was also decided to use the course "Mapping Controversies" as our digital method to understand the current situation around data control.

To understand how the topic of digital afterlife is viewed by the general public we chose to start by examining this topic through Wikipedia the open and free encyclopedia. Moreover, to explore what dilemmas, problems or controversies surround this topic we started our protocol with examining the key word "death and the internet" in Wikipedia. It is important to mention that when searching "Digital Afterlife" in Wikipedia it redirects you to the wikipedia page called "Death and the Internet".

Next we scraped google trends with the searchword "Death and the Internet" in order to examine if the trends from google would fit the interest from the public in the topic of death and the internet through wikipedia. With the data from wikipedia and google trends we created some timelines which we will be comparing further down in the papier.

Finally a network of the wikipedia page "Death and the Internet" was created using Seealsology to get a visual representation of the field we are interested in and the related topics that affect digital afterlife. Which further led to digital inheritance a key-word we used to filter data from the revisions.

In conclusion we will present the current situation of the controversies we found using the different data we have collected via the various digital tools which will be presented further down the papier as well.

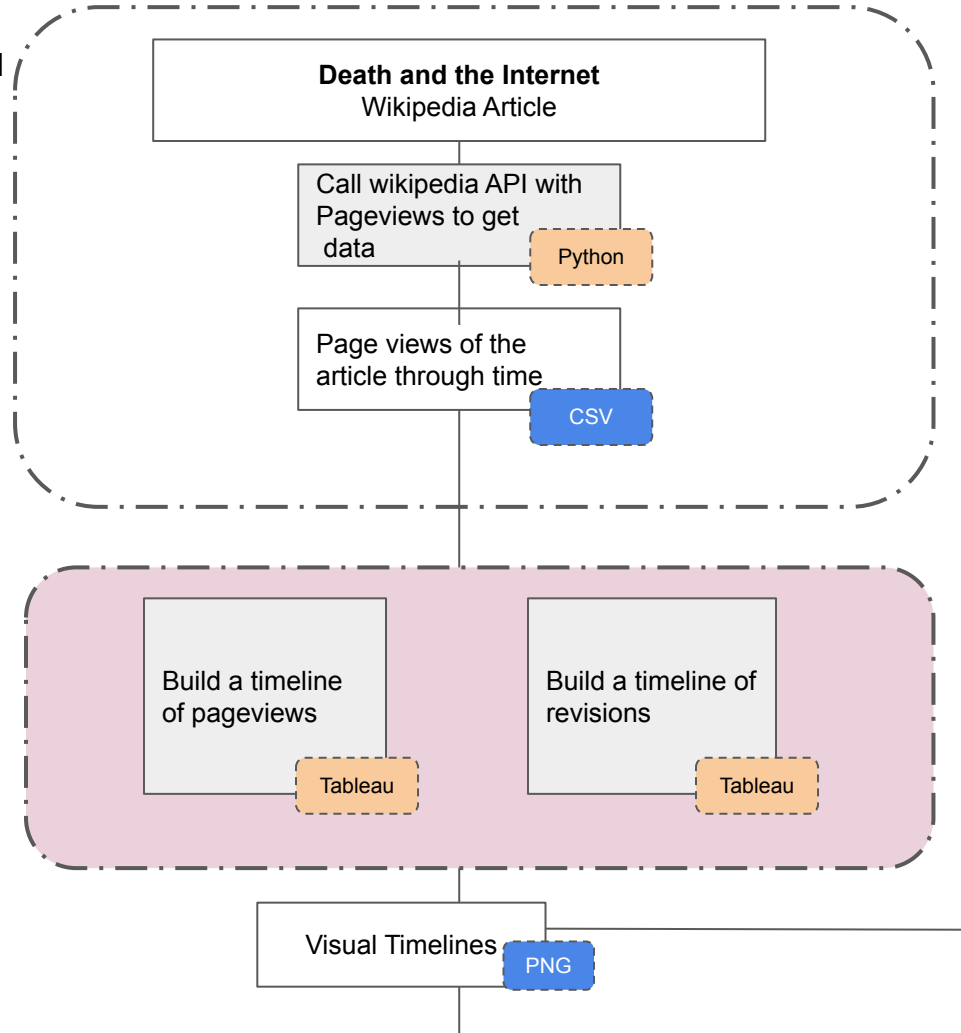
Wikipedia

Pageviews, for the article **Death and the Internet / Digital Afterlife** since 2015 and history of revisions since 2010.

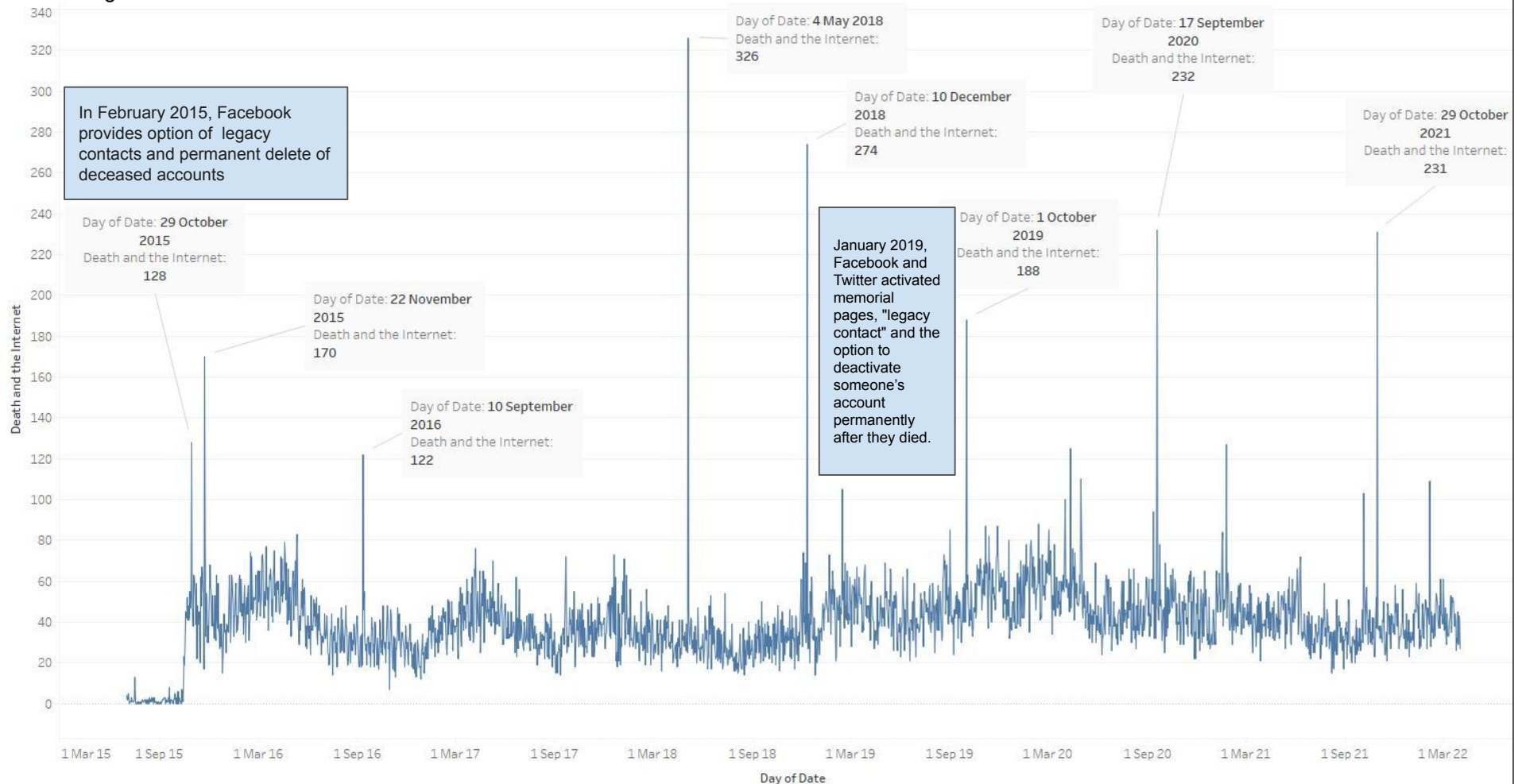
Our initial step was to create a visual timeline of the pageviews of wikipedia article, where we could get an insight of the days that people showed an increased interest along time, which can highlight the dates that played a major role into influencing Death and the Internet.

Further create another timeline that was based on the dates that editors made a revision on the article, to provide a list of the dates with most revisions.

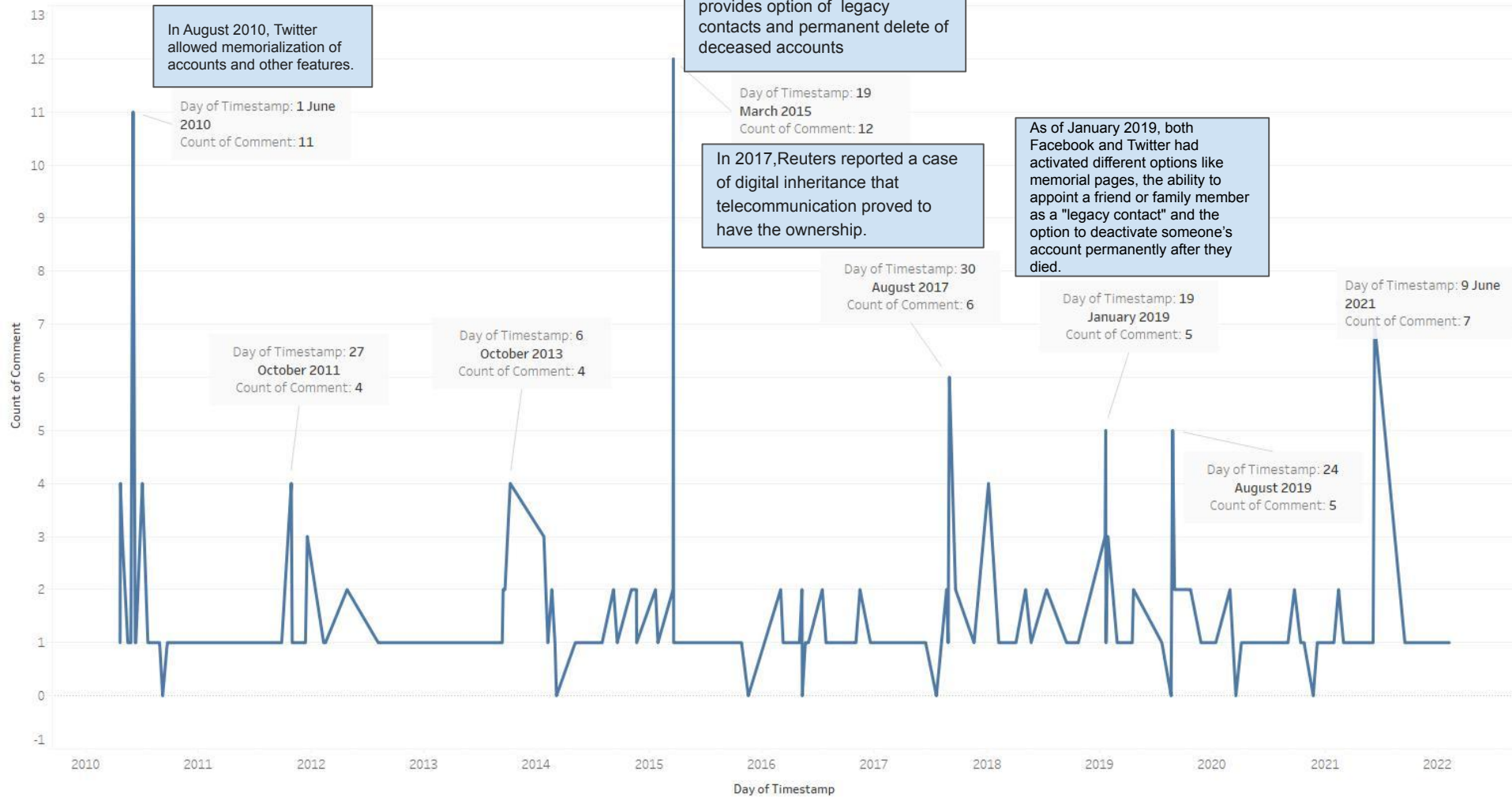
Finally, by comparing these timelines we could identified spikes and how the timelines affect each other and further investigate the dates that directed us to qualitative data in order to create a clearer picture. Wikipedia article provides us with a lot of dates that were related with digital afterlife cases. In order to identify the importance of the spikes we cross referenced the data from the timelines with the qualitative research. However, the data were not enough to map the whole situation, so we proceeded further with another timeline from google trends to add an external view on the topic.



Pageviews of Death and the Internet



Comments per date

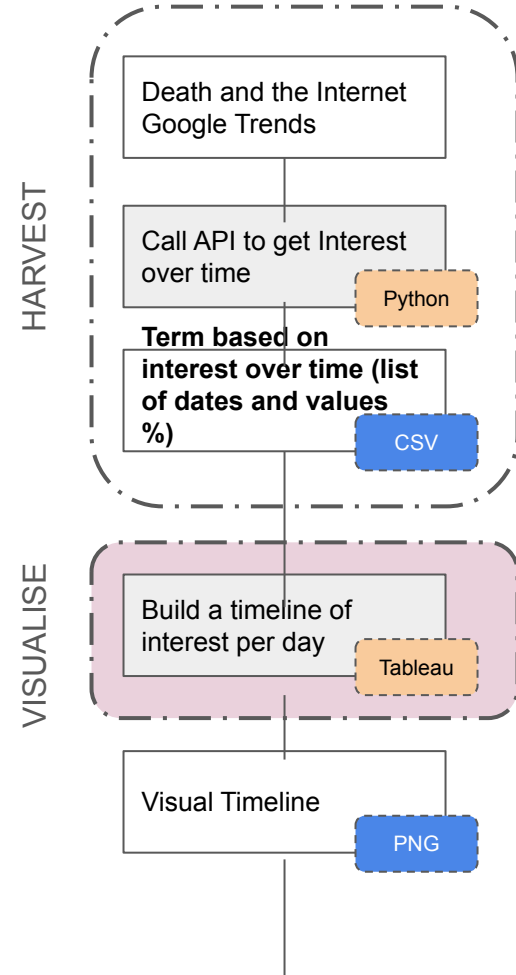


Google Trends

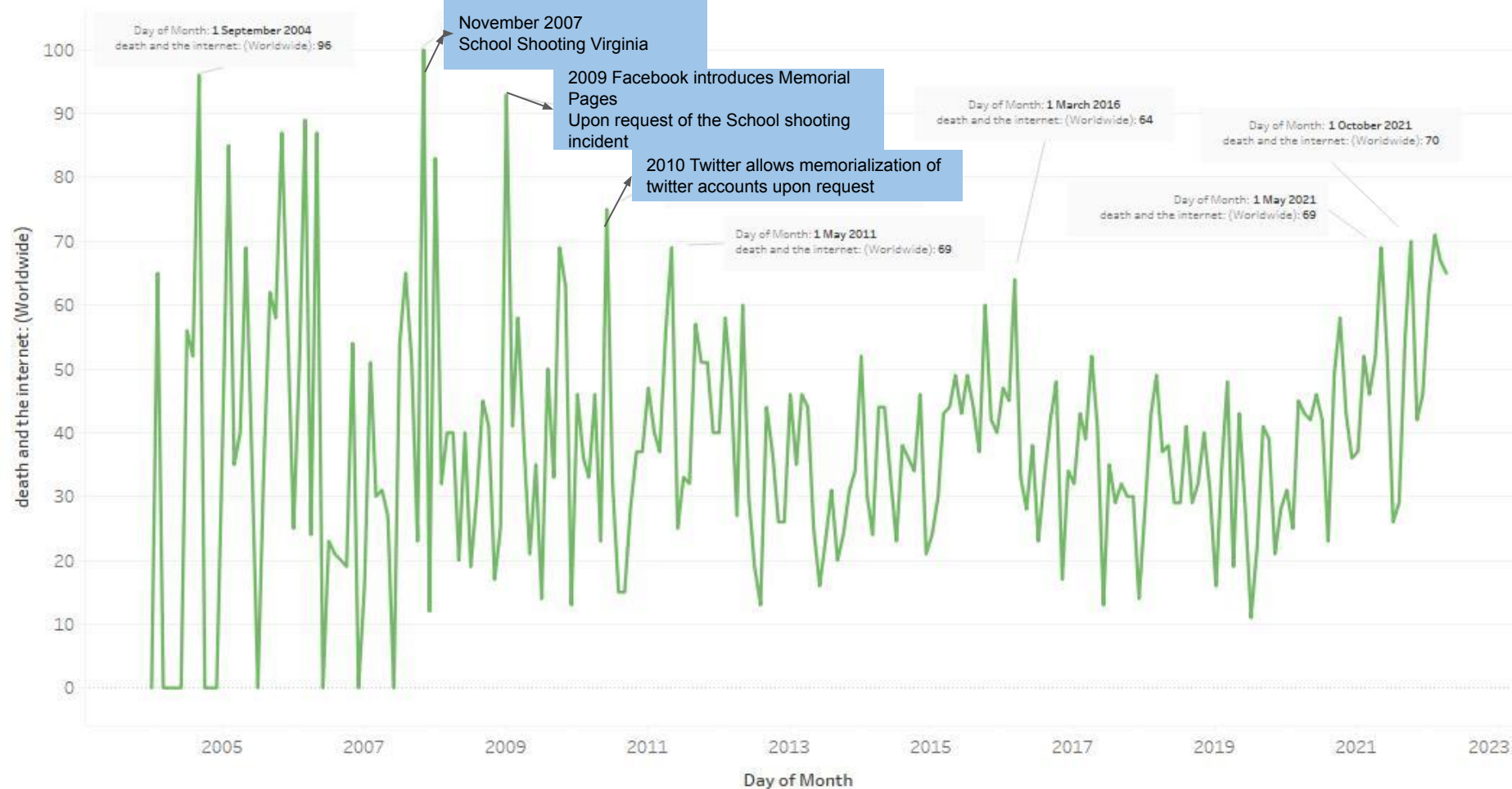
Public interest for the term **Death and the Internet** since 2004.

Instead of solely relying on the pageviews and the revisions list of the wikipedia page “Death and the Internet” we also wanted to examine a wider global interest in the term “Death and Internet” using google trends since 2004 which produced another timeline. By using Google Trends as a tool, we are ensuring that the quantitative data we get are investigated from two different perspectives. What happens in Google and what happens in Wikipedia.

Comparing quantitative and qualitative data by researching possible reasons for the spikes in google trends we see how certain incidents have affected the interest from the public in the topic of digital afterlife as well as, how it affected wikipedia article.



Timeline of google trends for Death and the Internet



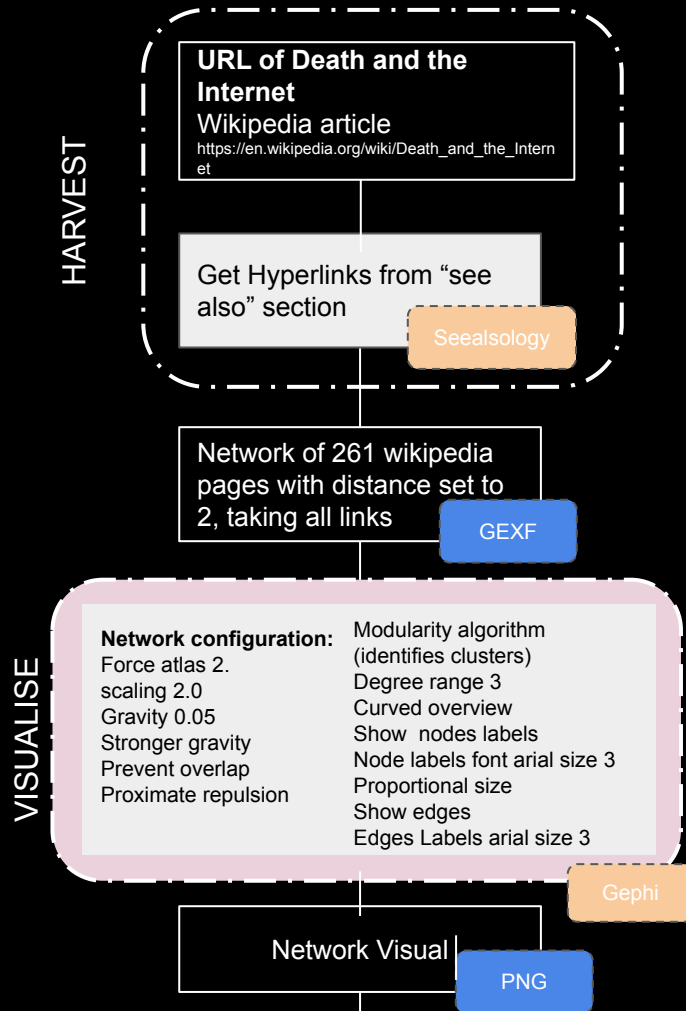
The trend of sum of death and the internet: (Worldwide) for Month Day.

Timeline of the factors that affected the current situation of Death and the Internet

source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_and_the_Internet

By researching the spikes of interest and the days of revisions we identified some of the incidents that affected Wikipedia article and digital afterlife industry.

- Following the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, in **October 2009**, Facebook introduced “memorial pages” after multiple users requested this.
- **Before 2010**, Twitter did not have any policy on how to handle deceased user accounts, and only deleted the timelines of the deceased users. In **August 2010**, Twitter provided the option of memorialization of accounts after they were requested by family members, and also gave them the option of either obtaining a backup of the deceased person’s posts or deleting the account.
- In **April 2013**, Google introduced the 'Inactive Account Manager' that allows the users to set up a process in which the ownership and control of the accounts that are inactive is transferred to a chosen user. Google allows the users to submit requests regarding accounts that belong the dead users and also works with immediate family members to deactivate online accounts of deceased people and in some cases they also provide some of content from said account.
- In **2014**, Twitter provided the option to be able to delete a deceased user’s photographs.
- In **February 2015**, Facebook provided users with the option to appoint a friend or family member as a "legacy contact". This person would then have the ability to manage the deceased person’s account and be able to delete it if they wanted to.
- In **2017**, it was reported by Reuters that a German court rejected a mother's demand to have access to her deceased daughter's memorialized account declaring that the right to *private telecommunications outweighed the right to inheritance*.
- As of **January 2019**, Facebook had activated all three of the different options like memorial pages, the ability to appoint a friend or family member as a "legacy contact" and the option to deactivate someone’s account permanently after they died.
- As of **January 2019**, Twitter provided only the option of deactivating the accounts of dead people. An option that was given to family members after the provided documentation that indicated that the owner of the account is indeed deceased. The posts are not removed and it is noted by Twitter that they do not provide account access to anyone, but only allow people having the login information of the account in order to be able to continue posting. A well known example is Roger Ebert’s wife that maintains his account.



SEEALSOLOGY

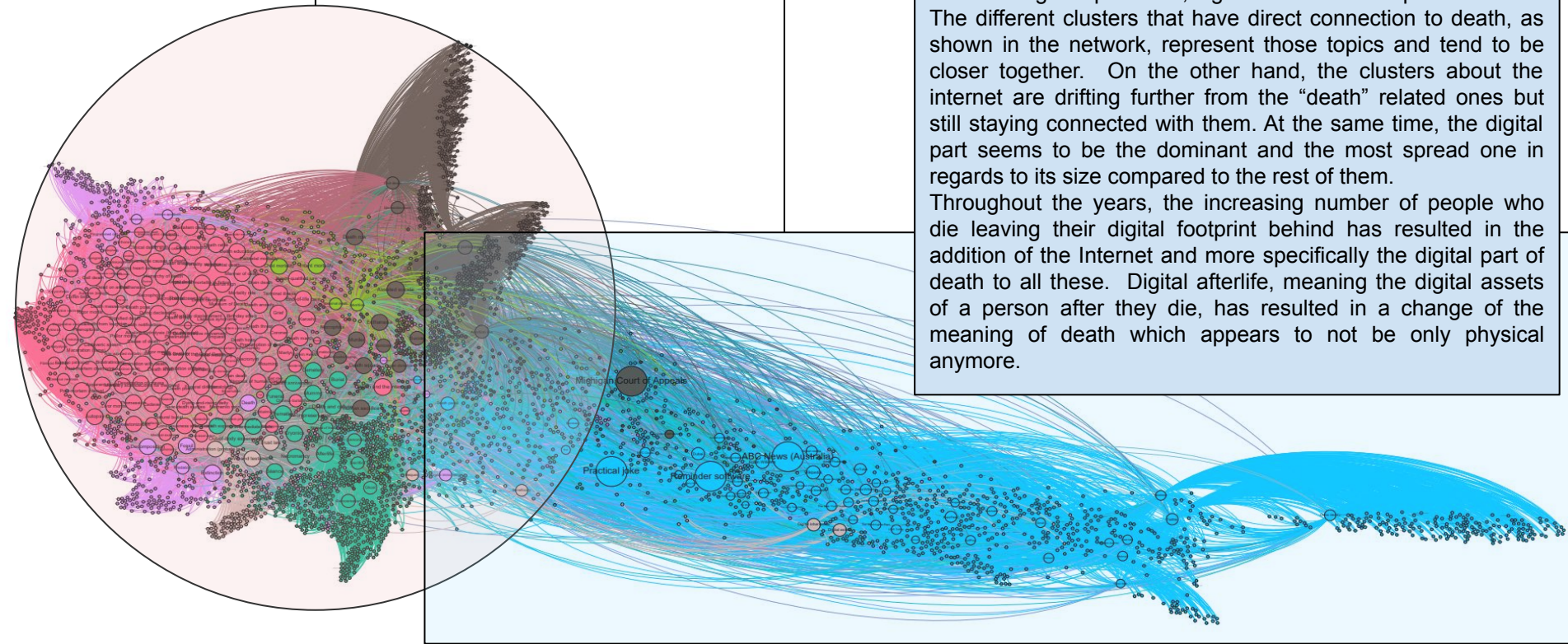
Extract the hyperlinks from "See also" Section of the wikipedia article **Digital Afterlife/ Death and the Internet** to create a visual map of the network.

After establishing a knowledge of the field based on our previous findings from the timelines we investigated, we also had to present a visual understanding of the current situation of Death and the Internet, so we can match our qualitative data to our quantitative data. Furthermore, in order to provide a map, we used the "see also" section in wikipedia article, as it represents the relevant links of the field and we created a network setting the distance at 2 from death and the internet. The analysis and identification of the clusters highlights that there is a controversy of inheritance in regards to the ownership, where it leads into a very specific intersection between inheritance and digital relation to death, that both are probably being affected by the cases mentioned before.

In order to understand what are the clusters representing in this network and identify the controversy we had to understand their topics and how that directs us to isolate the two important topics of our interest, digital inheritance and the relation of digital technologies around Death and the Internet.

Death and the Internet

When talking about death the most common discussions include but are not limited to the different causes of death, cultural/religious practices, legal and inheritance processes. The different clusters that have direct connection to death, as shown in the network, represent those topics and tend to be closer together. On the other hand, the clusters about the internet are drifting further from the “death” related ones but still staying connected with them. At the same time, the digital part seems to be the dominant and the most spread one in regards to its size compared to the rest of them. Throughout the years, the increasing number of people who die leaving their digital footprint behind has resulted in the addition of the Internet and more specifically the digital part of death to all these. Digital afterlife, meaning the digital assets of a person after they die, has resulted in a change of the meaning of death which appears to not be only physical anymore.



- Death And Culture
- Death And Law
- Post Death
- Physical relation to death
- Mortality from abortion and childbirth
- Inheritance
- Digital relation to death

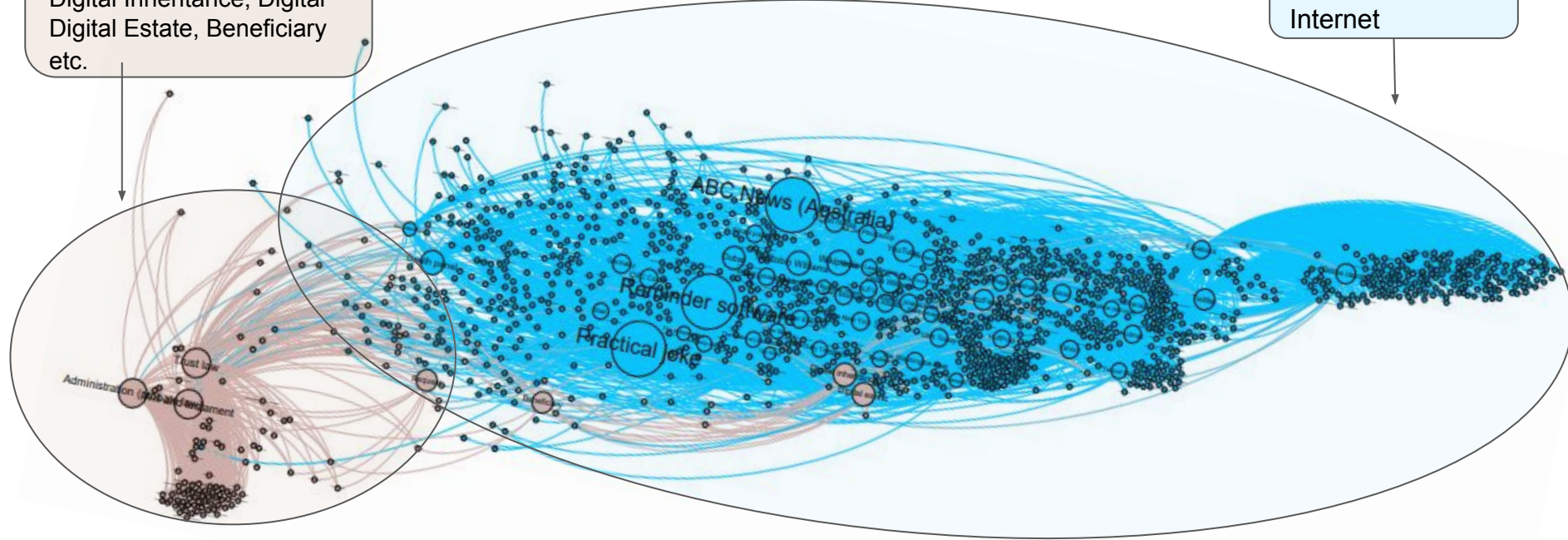
A closer look in the network

Digital afterlife has become a topic of discussion that changed not only the meaning of death but also the meaning of owning and inheritance. The network above indicates this shift of inheritance from only having physical assets like personal belongings, money and houses to owning digital assets as well. Our digital afterlife, includes files, photos, email and social media accounts etc. are of similar importance. The nodes from the Inheritance part are intersecting with different parts of the Internet, however a gap is still visible between them.

Inheritance

The part of it that is closer to the Internet is about Digital Inheritance, Digital Digital Estate, Beneficiary etc.

Digital Relation of Death and the Internet



Wikipedia

Timeline for **Death and the Internet / Digital Afterlife** of the editors and their comments, since 2004.

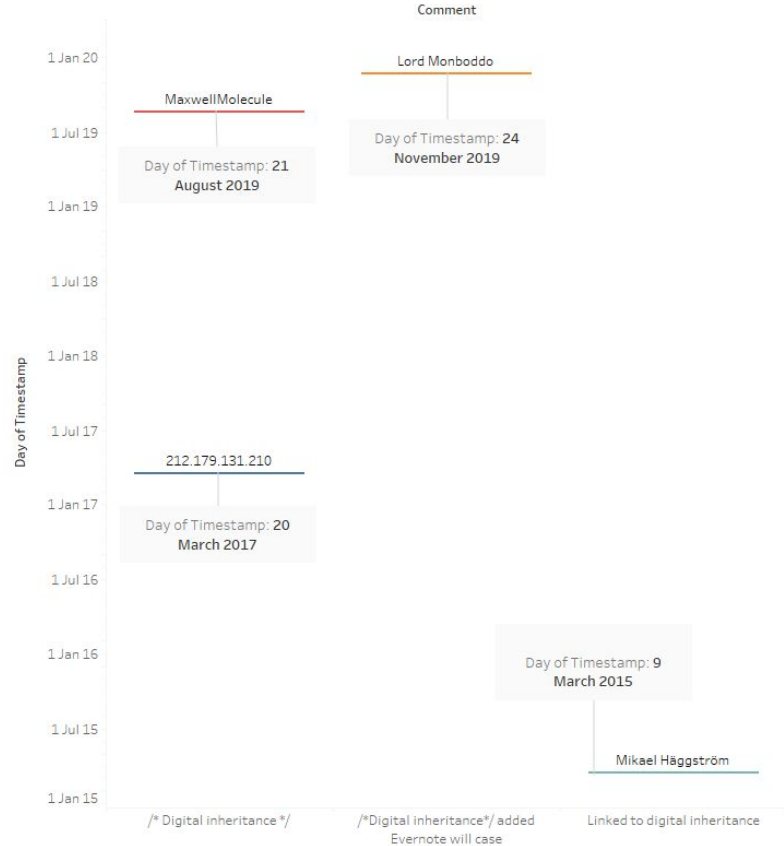
With the visual mapping of the network, once again we reassured that there is a controversy around inheritance something that directed us into using the revisions we harvested from wikipedia article “Death and the Internet” and create a timeline of the revisions that include the word inheritance.

By finding these data from the revision file we further investigate the what where the dates, the comments and the users and by checking previous versions of the wikipedia page we found some interesting comments that contribute into the discussion..

In the following slides you can find the comments and the dates from every editor. We also include previous/later comments that do not include inheritance but are from the same editors. That happened to provide a better understanding of the editors interest.

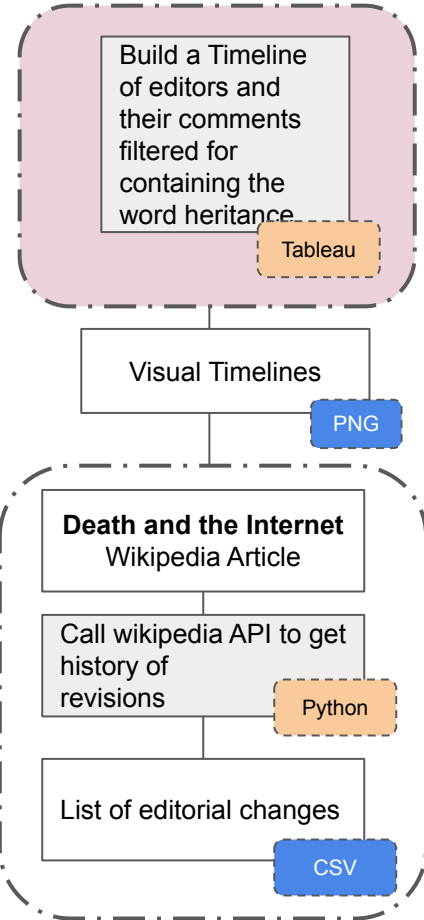
ANNOTATE

Dates that editors made a comment including the word Inheritance



Timestamp Day for each Comment. Colour shows details about User. The marks are labelled by User. The view is filtered on Comment, which keeps / Digital inheritance */ /*Digital inheritance*/ added Evernote will case and Linked to digital inheritance.

VISUALISE



HARVEST

The `"Data Inheritance"` function from `SecureSafe` gives an `"activator code"` that the customer will hand to another trustworthy person of personal choice, and in the event of death that person then enters the code into `Secure Safe's` system to get access to the deceased person's digital inheritance. `<ref>{cite web |url=http://whathype.com/when-you-die-will-your-digital-die-with-you/|title=When You Die Will Your Digital Data Die With You?|last1=|first1=|last2=|first2=|date=|website=whathype.com|publisher=|access-date=2015-03-18}|</ref>` Legacy Locker requires two verifiers who both must confirm the death, as well as providing a death certificate, before any passwords will be handed out. `<ref name=Duffy2012>`

19 March
2015

eClosure Wishes is a new and free service where an individual can pre-determine what they want to do with their digital assets after their passing. By completing the online form, the individual is able to attach the form to their will.

www.eclosure.com.au/wishes/

This has changed and now Twitter only allows account deactivation for the deceased.

~~<ref>[<ref>http://support.twitter.com/groups/33-report-a-violation/topics/148-policy-information/articles/87894-how-to-contact-twitter-about-a-deceased-user/</ref>](http://support.twitter.com/groups/33-report-a-violation/topics/148-policy-information/articles/87894-how-to-contact-twitter-about-a-deceased-user)</ref>~~ There are several documentations that Twitter requires to proceed with cancellation requests. They include: username of account, copy of the deceased's death certificate, copy of one government-issued ID of the user and a signed statement of authorisation from the executor. The final step is to send all this documentation by mail to the address:

"Twitter, Inc"

c/o: Trust and Safety

1355 Market Street, Suite 900.

<ref><https://eclosure.com.au/twitter-death/></ref>

- + ==Digital inheritance==

```
+ {{Main|Digital inheritance}}
```

+ "Digital inheritance" is the process of handing over (personal) [[Digital media|digital assets]] to (human) [[Beneficiary|beneficiaries]]. These digital assets include [[digital estate]]s and the right to use them. <ref>van Niekirk, A.J. (2006) The Strategic Management of Media Assets: A Methodological Approach. Allied Academies, New Orleans Congress, 2006</ref> It may include bank accounts, writings, photographs, and social interactions.

Wikipedia timeline of edits.

These edits are from the editors from previous graph, including edits that might be before or after the date of the comments that include the keyword inheritance.

The text that is inside **blue lines**, is something **added** from the editor.
The text that is inside **yellow lines**, is something **removed** from the editor.

User:
212.179.131.210
Revision 21 March 2017

```
|url=http://whathype.com/when-you-die-
will-your-digital-data-die-with-you/
|title=When You Die Will Your Digital
Data Die With You? |last1= |first1=
|last2= |first2= |date=
|website=whathype.com |publisher= |access-
date=2015-03-18}}</ref> Legacy Locker
requires two verifiers who both must
confirm the death, as well as providing a
death certificate, before any passwords
will be handed out.<ref name=Duffy2012>
{{cite web
|url=http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,
2410635,00.asp |title=Get Organized:
Passing on Your Passwords |last1=Duffy
|first1=Jill |last2= |first2= |date=2012-
10-08 |website=[[PC Magazine]]
|publisher=PCMag Digital Group, Inc.}}
```

```
|url=http://whathype.com/when-you-die-
will-your-digital-data-die-with-you/
|title=When You Die Will Your Digital
Data Die With You? |last1= |first1=
|last2= |first2= |date=
|website=whathype.com |publisher= |access-
date=2015-03-18}}</ref> Legacy Locker and
\[https://www.safebeyond.com/ SafeBeyond\].
require two verifiers who both must
confirm the death, as well as providing a
death certificate, before any passwords
will be handed out.<ref name=Duffy2012>
{{cite web
|url=http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,
2410635,00.asp |title=Get Organized:
Passing on Your Passwords |last1=Duffy
|first1=Jill |last2= |first2= |date=2012-
10-09 |website=pcmag.com |publisher=
PCMag.com |access-date=2015-03-18}}</ref>
```

MaxwellMolecule
Revision 19 August 2019

- With the heavy increase in social media use, social media is affecting the way deaths are treated. "Virtual funerals" and various other forms of previously physical memorabilia are being introduced into the digital world.<ref>{{Cite web|url=https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/08/how-social-media-is-changing-the-way-we-approach-death/278836/|title=How Social Media Is Changing The Way We Approach Death|last=Bisceglia|first=Paul|date=2013-08-20|website=The Atlantic|language=en-US|access-date=2019-03-25}}</ref> Information about the person and details of their death, life, and everything in between can now be found circling the internet. <ref>{{Cite journal|last=Dilmac|first=Julie|date=2016|title=The New Forms of Mourning: Loss and Exhibition of the Death on the Internet|url=|journal=Journal of Death and Dying|volume=77|pages=280-295|via=EBSCOhost}}</ref> After someone dies, on almost all of their social media accounts you can find condolences and final messages to the person or family. Families of deceased or dying people are receiving messages of encouragement and disbelief from friends and family around the world, and sometimes from people they haven't spoken to in a long time. <ref>{{Cite web|url=http://time.com/4376810/social-media-death-dying/|title=We Live On the Internet. We Die Alone.|website=Time|language=en|access-date=2019-03-25}}</ref> Social media has been having a huge impact on the way that we live and it is now affecting what happens after we die. The world is changing rapidly, so the traditional ways of the past and changing as well. Funerals and memorials were always done physically, but the internet has added freedom and allows people to perform the same tasks from all other the world.

Revision 24
August 2019

+ More broadly, the heavy increase in social media use is affecting cultural practices surrounding death. "Virtual funerals" and other forms of previously physical memorabilia are being introduced into the digital world, complete with public details of a person's life and death.<ref>{{Cite web|url=https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/08/how-social-media-is-changing-the-way-we-approach-death/278836/|title=How Social Media Is Changing The Way We Approach Death|last=Bisceglia|first=Paul|date=2013-08-20|website=The Atlantic|language=en-US|access-date=2019-03-25}}</ref><ref>{{Cite journal|last=Dilmac|first=Julie|date=2016|title=The New Forms of Mourning: Loss and Exhibition of the Death on the Internet|url=|journal=Journal of Death and Dying|volume=77|pages=280-295|via=EBSCOhost}}</ref><ref>{{Cite web|url=http://time.com/4376810/social-media-death-dying/|title=We Live On the Internet. We Die Alone.|website=Time|language=en|access-date=2019-03-25}}</ref>

Revision 12
February
2021

- *[[https://memories.com.au/ Memories™]]

Lord Monbodd
Revision 25 November 2019

+ In July 2018, the [[Michigan Court of Appeals]] found that an [[Evernote]] document the decedent had typed into his phone shortly before committing suicide was enforceable as valid will.<ref>{{Bluebook journal |first=|last=Note|title=Recent Case: Michigan Court of Appeals Holds Electronic Document to be Valid Will Under Harmless Error Rule|volume=132 | journal=[[Harvard Law Review|Harv. L. Rev.]] | page=2082 | url=https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2082-2089_Online.pdf| year=2019}}.</ref>

Conclusion

Using digital methods examining the field of the Digital Afterlife we have come to the conclusion, that controversies do exist when it comes to how the services are provided within the field of digital afterlife. The controversy we have identified deals with data protection and the autonomy of users who have passed away. We attempted to pin down what part of the digital afterlife that is interesting and controversial, this being inheritance of data.

The public dispute around the phenomenon of data protection was made clear, with the help of the editorial history of the wikipedia page “Death and the Internet” and the timelines regarding the public interest. Furthermore, the visual network of “Death and the Internet” through Seealsoogy gave us a better understanding of the related wikipedia articles that people are interested in. Through digital methods we finally highlighted how some historical events have affected the general interest of the digital afterlife, and by triggering some reaction, thus making digital inheritance an important issue for individuals and organizations.