

Online Afterlife

In my final paper, I will focus on the online afterlife of a deceased. I will use Facebook as my point of reference throughout the paper. I will begin the paper by covering the process of reporting a person's Facebook profile as dead and try to understand why they have chosen this process. The next thing I'm going to address in my paper, is what a social media profile consists of. Later I will investigate the data which is produced and stored by Facebook. I will use this to answer a question which the first section provides through the investigation of reporting a deceased: Why do Facebook want so bad to keep me online? This question is followed up with a discussion of why Facebook should or shouldn't own collected data. The last section of my paper will look at the political aspect of being active online. I will look into what is being done politically to change the ways of being online. How will the future be?

Finally, I will discuss the conclusion from each section and try to reflect upon how the online afterlife has been perceived and what we might expect as a future part of the online community of deceased.

To be a social profile from beginning to death

The first step a person will take when they are going to report a deceased person's Facebook, is looking at Facebook's help page.¹ By having a quick glimpse upon the process of reporting a deceased it is quickly revealed that Facebook rather wants to keep the profile online by memorializing it. By looking at *figure 1*, it is easy to see that they try to do this by hiding "removing the account" on the bottom of the page with only 2 lines written and 9 lines for memorializing. If the person then finds its way to delete Facebook, they will head to a new page where they can see what is needed to delete a deceased account. This includes a lot of personal data which have to be sent to Facebook staff, which then can accept to delete the account. But does this then mean the data which the profile has produced is deleted and gone? Probably not. Even though they state that everything will be deleted, they also write "*copies of some material (example: log records) may remain in our databases but are dissociated from personal identifiers*". But how do I then completely escape this grasp Facebook got on my data? That is something Audrey Samson

¹ https://www.facebook.com/help/1111566045566400/?helpref=hc_fnav

addresses in her artwork: “NE.ME.QUITTES.PAS”. I will have a closer look at the piece and understand how she criticises issue of data surviving us. I will also look critically at the article which claims, that there are no way of completely deleting a persons data:

<https://www.quora.com/Can-Facebook-honestly-explain-how-long-they-store-data-from-deleted-accounts>

Who owns my remaining data?

As numerous people, can be quoted for saying about Facebook ‘‘If it is free, then you are the product’’, but what is left unanswered is; what does me as a profile then consist of, since it can become a product? The easiest way to get some sense of this it to be looking at what Facebook logs about you. This is accessible data which can be found on any Facebook profile. I’ve downloaded 1,8 gb of the data which I have generated since I signed up in 2008. This consists of all my pictures, private messages through messenger, my phone contacts, all my friends with specific dates for becoming friends and much, much more. Facebook have been selling this data to what most believed were limited to advertisers. The owner of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, repeatedly justified the data collection by saying it’s also for the interest of the persons which data is being harvested, through adds which are personalized. By this Facebook states that they have all rights to use and sell the data which a user has created. This is the reason why they want to keep you online. You are not a client, but a product which is redeemable for a lot of money, which the creator of this data never will see. Another issue with the data collection is, that by looking at the Cambridge Analytics scandal, that the selling of data isn’t limited to exclusively adds but also to gain sensitive information about citizens of a country and have become something which have become decisive for elections. This way the data has become much more than money, but also an issue of power and politics. This explains why data is valuable, but is it righteous that Facebook grabs data which you provide. I will investigate by looking looking at the text: *The Author as Producer* by Walter Benjamin in *New Left Review*. The very personal data which is provided will under non-digital times be extremely personal. Pictures of you, your activities and every person who you contact. People would never accept that this information was to be released to an unknown person, but the matter of fact is that have already been released a company which have distributed the information about them, without the users knowing. When you leave Facebook as a deceased the data which is kept by Facebook will still be used and you won’t be able to do anything about. Facebook will forever be the owner of your digital remains. This answers some questions but leave many open

which I will further investigate in the paper. I will use David Berry, “Real-time Streams” to understand what we become as a social media profile, in Berry, op. cit., pp. 142-171, David M. Berry, “The Idea of Code”, in *The Philosophy of Software: Code and Mediation in the Digital Age* looking at how he describes how everything becomes data and finally articles about the data analytics scandal, to look at how they have become misused, which will lead to the final section.

The future of the online afterlife

It has been discovered that in previous election deceased persons have been registered as voters, which is of course a huge issue. Who controls these persons and how is it possible to keep them virtually alive? The new GDPR Law issued by EU, makes the data which a user creates their own. A user will in the near future be able to withdraw their own data and delete what they won't wish to be stored on platforms like Facebook. Will this change Facebook? Will other governments also issue these enforcements? But more importantly what about the deceased? Facebook have the ownership over the data which these profiles have made. How can they defend themselves? Will they keep being exploited? In the future Facebook, might look completely different. At some point Facebook might have more dead than living people, maybe #deleteFacebook have made Facebook close or maybe people will begin to adjust their life accordingly to Facebooks guidelines. In this section I will look at cases of dead-voter, the new GDPR law and further discuss the future. I will look at the texts: *Facebook after death: an evolving policy in a social network*, by Damien McCallig and *Death on Facebook: Examining the roles of social media communication for the bereaved* by Kelly R. Rossetto, Pamela J. Lanutti and Elena C Strauman. Both of these text will function as my main reference point through this paper.

Attachments:

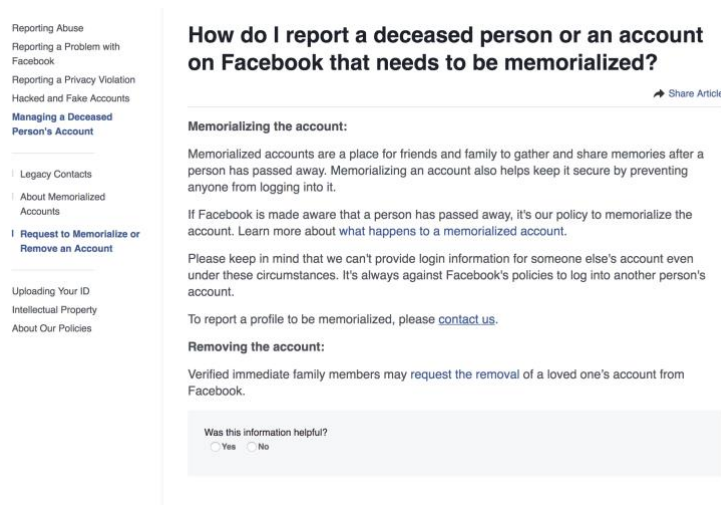


Figure 1 Screenshot 24/3/2018 kl.12.57 <https://www.facebook.com/help/requestmemorialization>

How do I request the removal of a deceased family member's Facebook account?

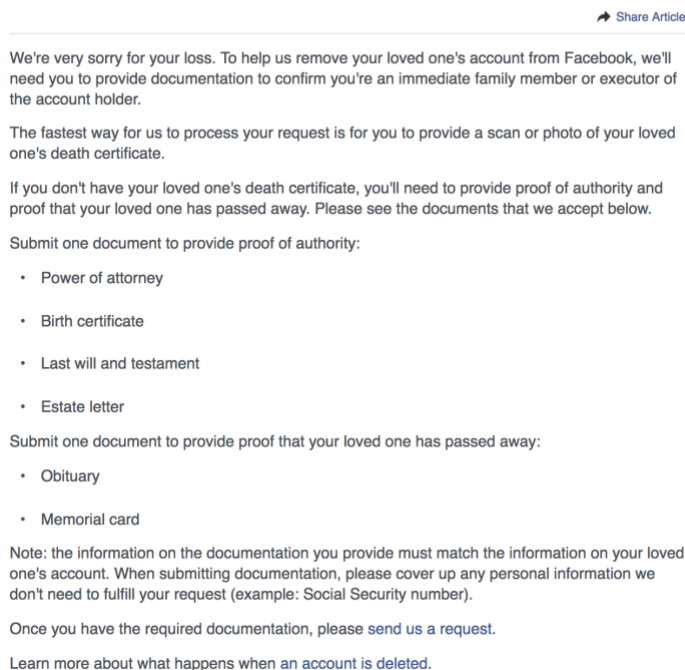


Figure 2 Screenshot 24/3/2018 kl.1318 https://www.facebook.com/help/1518259735093203?helpref=faq_content