

Dealing with Digital Death

By Lee Webster

With our online and offline lives blending, privacy and security becomes more critical, and never more so than when dealing with death. This has led to a whole new vocabulary to describe and explore these emerging issues. Check these out:

Dremains — the digital “life” you leave behind on social media, commercial accounts

VAIL — acronym for **Virtual Asset Instruction Letter**, a legal document separate from the will that specifies what you wish to have happen to your Facebook page or PayPal account or photo library stored in the cloud or any number of other accounts, and may list logins and passwords, and who may have access to them. DPOAs do not cover this responsibility and end at death in any case.

Cyber Identity Theft — when others assume a dead person’s online identity. Current law does not provide for family members or members of the court to assume the deceased’s identity to access social sites such as Facebook to learn info that may solve a crime or allow the site to be closed.

Digital Legacies and Assets — For many people, items they valued in life have been stored in the cloud, on social media pages, in their email accounts, blogs, and other locations, including all their photos and writings, memories, and legacies meant for their children and friends. In some cases, this content has financial value that needs to be protected and accessible. Check out www.TheDigitalBeyond.com for more info.

Memorialization Pages — Facebook has created a Memorial page function specifically for inactivating accounts when someone dies that removes active functions such as friend requests, status updates, birthday reminders and other functions that continue to shuffle through their algorithms, and turns the static page into a tribute where friends can post messages. To memorialize a loved one’s page, go to:
<http://www.facebook.com/help/contact/?id=305593649477238>

Virtual Cemeteries — social sites that encourage continuing relationships with the dead online through tribute sites, such as www.MyDeathSpace.com