# DDB and Technologies in the 21ˢᵗ Century

2 December 2016

## Abstracts

### Jean Genie in a bottle- When Bowie's death met with social media and palliative care

*Mark Taubert*
*Velindre NHS Trust, Cardiff*

When I wrote an open letter of thanks to David Bowie following the singer's death, I had no idea of the international attention it would receive. The letter was shared countless times, featured in innumerable media reports and even prompted Bowie's son Duncan Jones to break his Twitter silence to share it. In the letter, I described how the late star's music had inspired a candid conversation with a terminally ill patient, and praised Bowie's last musical offering, the album Blackstar, saying it was a talking point for people living with terminal illnesses, as well as those who cared for them.

The letter was read out by the actor Benedict Cumerbatch at Hay Literary Festival on Saturday the 28th May 2016. Cumberbatch performed the reading as part of a cultural event called Letters Live, organized by Shaun Usher and Simon Garfield.

I will talk through some of his observations from the time after Bowie's death and what patients and family members told me in my clinical day job. I will discuss how death became more 'speakable', when the entire world was talking about Bowie's death and how, somehow, it marked a good way to start the sometimes awkward topic of dying with palliative patients and families.

### Content analysis of social media responses to TV body donation documentary

*Julie Seymour, Chaitra Dinesh, Trish Green*
*Hull York Medical School*

There is a continuing concern in the UK about the shortage of body donations for medical teaching and research. The number is constant at about 6-700 per year. A Channel 5 documentary "Body Donors – The Journey beyond Death" (29.9.15 and 6.10.15) followed two body donors/families through terminal illness, death, the donation process and the anatomical procedures that followed. We hypothesised that programmes explicitly outlining the donation process

would have an impact on public views of body donation and intentions to donate, both positive and negative. Prior to, during and following the programmes, commentary appeared on social media online newspaper websites, discussion forums, factual information websites and social media websites to reveal contemporary lay attitudes to body donation. These comments were archived and analysed using both content analysis and thematic analysis. Preliminary findings show that such programmes raise awareness of body donation. Family responses to the intention to donate, both positive and negative, strongly influenced individuals' future intentions to donate their body for medical education. Concern about the perceived treatment of bodies during the process was cited as a dominant reason not to donate, but this was contested by those who have been involved in body donation, for example, medical personnel. We conclude that, while promoting considerable social media traffic on the topic of body donation, such television programmes would need to make explicit, or signpost further, the logistics of the process in order to increase actual donations.

## Online after death: practices of (un)controlled presence
*Paula Kiel*
*London School of Economics and Political Science*

In recent years, newly emerging online practices have opened up new possibilities for post-mortem forms of interaction that potentially allow an active participation of the dead in the everyday lives of users of digital media. For example, digital platforms, such as *Safebeyond*, *Deadmansswitch*, and *LifeNaut* allow the dead to "send" emails, "post" on social networking sites and even "engage" in conversations, thus enabling deceased individuals to contribute and participate in online communication with the living. In so doing, these platforms arguably challenge existing practices related to the presence of death and the dead in everyday life. Although the field of research on death-related online practices is significantly growing (for instance: Doka, 2012; Gotved, 2014), very little attention has been given to such practices. This paper offers to fill that gap.

The phenomenon at issue is defined as platforms dedicated for planning post mortem online interaction and presence. These are websites that are designed explicitly to encourage and enable users to think about the world once they are gone, and create ways for them to be active online in it.

A functional typology of 32 websites is presented based on: (1) variety of forms of presence (range of functions) and (2) degree of presence (modes of representation and temporalities). Then, Pauwels's (2012) multimodal framework for analysis of websites is adapted for the analysis of 6 websites.

This project contributes both to the growing field of research of death-related online practices as well as to the long trajectory of media and communications studies linking between death and communication technologies.

**References:**

Doka, K. J. (2012). Foreword. In C. J. Sofka, K. R. Gilbert, & I. N. Cupit (Eds.), *Dying, death, and grief in an online universe: for counselors and educators* (pp. xi–xiv). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Gotved, S. (2014). Research review: Death online - alive and kicking. *Thanatos*, *3*(1), 112–126.

Pauwels, L. (2012). A multimodal framework for analyzing websites as cultural expressions. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *17*(3), 247–265.

## Passing On in the Virtual World? : The Problems and Paradoxes of Facebook Memorials and Digital Assets

*Heather Conway*
*Queen's University Belfast*

One of the greatest socio-cultural shifts in recent years has been influence of the internet on everyday life. Yet, we sometimes overlook the effect that living in the digital age now exerts on death as well. As memorials and inheritance shift increasingly into the virtual world, both the dead and what they leave behind are no longer 'passing on' in the conventional sense. Facebook memorials are disrupting traditional narratives of grieving and acceptance, as the living communicate directly with the dead who still 'exist' in the virtual world. Meanwhile, inheritance practices are struggling to adapt to the challenges posed by digital assets, and the fact that much of the digital footprint that we generate in life is not transmissible on death.

This paper highlights the fundamental changes produced by these new variant death rituals, before looking at the legal issues posed by the symbolic ownership and management of an individual's post-mortem virtual personna and wealth. As death and bereavement are becoming technologically mediated, the types of disputes that Facebook memorials and digital assets are generating amongst the deceased's family are also having to be legally mediated- between families and the service provider, and within families themselves as conflicts arise over the content of Facebook memorials and who (if anyone) 'owns' or controls the deceased's digital assets. The paper concludes by highlighting the deficiencies in the current law in this area, and argues that effective legal solutions will have to be developed as these problems are increasingly exposed.

## The Pervasive Dead

*Tony Walter*
*University of Bath*

Anthropologist Robert Hertz showed how, in many societies, the dead body, the soul, and mourners reflect and symbolise each other in an integrated symbolic system of practices and meaning. The classic modern western system separated both the dying and the dead from the living - what Ariès termed 'forbidden

death'. This paper shows how a new system of 'the pervasive dead' is emerging, enabled by pervasive digital media, environmentalism and romanticism which together reconfigure how bodies, persons, and technologies intersect.

Twenty first century pervasive social media enable social interaction, any place, any time - not only with the living but also with the dead. The dead thus pervade everyday life. Spiritually, the dead are more available to the living, with the internet allowing messages to be posted to them in heaven, and the dead returning to earth as angels. At the same time, environmental awareness that rubbish is never disposed of but dispersed into the environment we inhabit underlies new physical practices such as ash scattering and green burial. Psychologically and socially, the romantic idea that the living live on in our hearts has re-entered expert discourse in the West.

Scholars have previously described the de-sequestration of the dead, continuing bonds, and social media mourning. This paper, however, is original in showing that each component intersects with the others in Hertzian manner, offering a new paradigm or (Ariès) mentalité of death, or at least of the dead. This does not replace previous mentalités, but supplements and/or conflicts with them in death's evolving cultural, institutional and discursive landscape.

## The Living Dead? Enhancing memorial artefacts with Augmented Reality (AR)
*Phil Wane*
*Nottingham Trent University*

This paper presents research into the potential of Augmented Reality (AR) to enhance physical memorials including cemetery headstones, public memorials and tattoos. The author has experimented with the free Aurasma[1] application, which allows users to overlay an augmented reality image onto a physical object when viewed through a mobile phone. A particular advantage of AR over other technologies, such as the addition of Quick Response (QR) or Bar codes to headstones, is that nothing needs to be added to existing physical artefacts. AR is also non-exclusive such that a family member might see one image and a member of the general public another. This is especially useful where the deceased had a high public profile or where an organisation might want to provide additional information to graveside visitors. For instance AR applied to Commonwealth War Graves could call up images of the deceased, war records, and other information. The research was initially focussed on fixed location memorials (cemetery headstones) but it now includes tattoos as some people commission memorial tattoos as part of their bereavement response. Whether from a personal perspective, or a more formal sociological one, AR can enrich interaction with memorial artefacts; acting as a mediating technology between physical memorials and digital multimedia. AR will potentially enrich and prolong our memories of the deceased while also raising wider sociological questions around the ownership of individual and collective memories.

## Mediating death in the museum: the 'Prehistoric Grave Goods Project'

*Melanie Giles and Karina Croucher*
*University of Manchester/University of Bradford*

One of the earliest encounters with death that many people will have is in a museum: Egyptian mummies, Bronze Age cremations and Iron Age chariot burials form the staple of both national and provincial galleries. In personal life we may have become distanced from death but most museums expose children and adults alike to mortuary practices and beliefs from past cultures. Whilst archaeology as a discipline has engaged critically with the ethics of this, rethinking policies and practices relating to the display of the ancient dead, we now face a series of future conceptual challenges. This paper reports on two (AHRC-funded) projects which consider the role of displays of the dead in modern contexts.

The 'Grave Goods Project' seeks to explore the role of objects associated with the prehistoric dead across the British Isles. One of its main outputs will be the re-display of burials in the British Museum's prehistory gallery, alongside a series of visualisations and poems targeted at school-groups, featuring key burials with spectacular finds and fascinating stories. How can we best tell the story of the ancient dead? What did the objects buried with them tell us about past perceptions of dying and the afterlife? How did 'things' help the living renegotiate both social relationships and necropolitics, in the wake of loss? And is there a way of sensitively using such exhibits as an arena to engage with modern issues of mortality and bereavement?

The Continuing Bonds project is investigating how archaeological case studies can facilitate conversations around death dying, breaking down taboos, and particularly informing healthcare professions. It includes investigating the use of images of the dead and grave goods in exploring the creation of legacy, memorialisation, and ancestors, and how the dead inform the living through concepts of 'continuing bonds'. This paper will discuss the conceptual challenges and museological technologies we intend to deploy in the projects, as well as exploring the role of technology in the past in mediating grief and bereavement, seeking critical feedback from contemporary practitioners involved in dealing with the modern dead.

## Ethical challenges faced by community nurses using anticipatory medications in the home environment at end of life

*Eleanor Wilson*
*Nottingham University*

In the UK anticipatory or 'just in case' medications can be prescribed and held in a patients' home/care home. These can be used to control common end of life symptoms such as pain, agitation and nausea. This advancement in technology allows the medication and all the necessary equipment to be readily available to

manage symptoms quickly and efficiently without the need for hospital admission or medical call out. Nurses take a key role in this process. Whilst nurses valued these anticipatory medications and recognised their contribution to quality end of life care, their use raised a number of ethical issues. An ethnography involving interviews (n=72) and observations (n=83), and a survey of 575 nurses were used to gather views from community nurses involved in the use of anticipatory medications at the end of life. In working with these controlled drugs, nurses reported being challenged by issues around both over, and under, medicating patients. Many expressed concerns about giving the right level of medication to manage the symptoms but not sedate the patient or hasten death. Timing was also an ethical challenge, and some nurses reported making sure that the medications were only used for symptoms brought about by the process of dying, and, that could not be relieved in any other way. A further priority was to make the decision about whether to use the medication without the influence of others, such as the patient's family. Nurses valued support from colleagues and specialist palliative care teams to undertake this role.

## Sorting Ourselves Out: The recovery and recycling of orthopaedic implants post-cremation
Hannah Rumble
University of Bristol

Whilst a death necessitates the practical need and ritualised process of sorting through and reorganising the material life of the deceased, many of us probably give little thought to the literal process of sorting through post-cremated remains, despite the fact that since the 1990s, commercial recycling companies have been doing just that. By focusing on the recovery and recycling of post-cremated orthopaedic implants in contemporary Britain, the theoretical discourse that assumes the final 'disposal' of human remains is undermined. I will argue that on the contrary, the recycling of orthopaedic implants following cremation, 'disperses' human remains via processes of sifting, separation and transformation. Originating as part of the corpse, these 'orthopaedic implants' are separated out from cremated human remains to become 'surplus metallic waste'. Subsequently, following an industrial process of metal recycling involving collecting, sorting and smelting, this surplus metallic waste is transformed into a 'valuable resource' as 'scrap metal', devoid of its original human identity and materiality. This re-classification and material transformation of orthopaedic implants, from charred (human) remains to metallic commodities, resists their original hybridity since the biological and non-biological are reinstated as discreet material domains. Quite literally then, upon cremation, our material remains are sorted out to continually circulate beyond the human, achieving afterlives of their own.