

When you've gone, you'll keep tweeting

 By [Evert Lombaert](#)

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While we have become accustomed to the social media marination in our lives, what happens to our online lives when we are no more?

On the day before Reeva Steenkamp died, her last tweet to approximately 7,000 followers was "[@candymck @SandtonMini](#) I'm there like a bear! Yayyyy!!!! X" in reply to a cupcake invitation. However, it was one of her earlier tweets which had stolen much of the public spotlight and eerie fascination - "What do you have up your sleeve for your love tomorrow??? [#getexcited](#) [#ValentinesDay](#)".

While it could be argued that her online community's sudden interest in her timeline is normal; it is nonetheless a surreal and unsettling thought that her number of followers on Twitter at the time of writing this piece stood on 36,829*, approximately a five-fold increase since her death (side note: this number was at 36,828 when I started writing this piece; so one new person had since clicked 'follow').

Communication continues

Most of us have most likely experienced the death of a family member, friend or acquaintance and visited their Facebook profile. Who can forget the real-time Twitter and Facebook posts seesawing whether Michael Jackson was alive, comatose or dead? By October 2010, Facebook had an estimated 5 million profiles inactive due to death. In fact, it is now relatively standard practice to leave posts on the departed's walls, knowing full well that the communication is one-way. Once again, we can only guess that this is a normal human way of expressing sorrow and reaching out.

Last year Ryan Kiesel (an American firmly in favour of formalising legislation around the deceased's online assets and property) sagely stated in a [Mashable](#) interview, "We have shifted away from letters in a shoe boxes to email messages and Facebook. There is a lot more traceable communication floating around." A core argument of Kiesel is that the dead "are leaving behind valuable virtual property that needs tending to in the same way physical property is passed on".

Enter Online company [Liveson](#) which offers social media services to the (pardon the pun) die-hard Twitter fan concerned about their online presence after death. Declaring "when you're heart stops beating, you'll keep tweeting", they'll take care of your 'social afterlife'. While details are sketchy about how the service works (the homepage declares "Begins March 2013"), it seems the company's online Artificial Intelligence will analyse your timeline and focus on "learning about your likes, tastes, syntax". The point is, your timeline will continue even though your lifeline won't.

And if you're more practically minded...

People are starting to include clauses in their will with all their (potentially sensitive or even damaging) email, websites and social media log-in data to custodians (usually more than one lest they die before you) to erase all public digital footprints.

If however, you're not sentimental, are more practically minded and have nothing to hide, you might want to ensure that all your online passwords, log-ins and files be shared with your colleagues, family or friends. In this instance, might we suggest [www.Deathswitch.com](#) - a service that emails you on a pre-set schedule, asking you to enter your password. After zero replies and a set number of times, the system automatically presumes you have passed on and emails your pre-determined custodians all relevant info.

Benjamin Franklin famously stated, "The only things certain in life are death and taxes"; perhaps the time has come to add the fact that our tweets will outlive us all...

**Since this post was written, Reeve's Twitter following has now dropped to 37,644.*

ABOUT EVERT LOMBAERT

Evert is a Social Media Manager at Ctrlroom and GQ Magazine's Film Editor for South Africa. He's left-handed & has Jedi beliefs...and makes a mean burger.

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