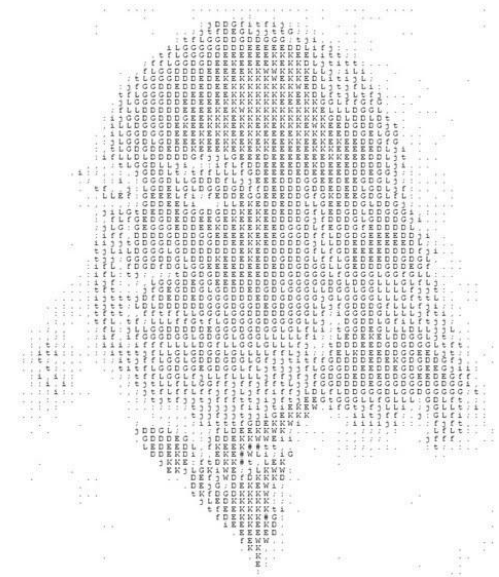


Auto-Icon in the 21st Century

What lessons for the
regulation of the
digital remains of the dead?

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An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn



Digital Remains

- expressions
- possessions
- impressions

that a decedent
leaves behind in
digital media



Death: Rites, Rituals and Norms



Criminal record checks on the dead

2.5.112

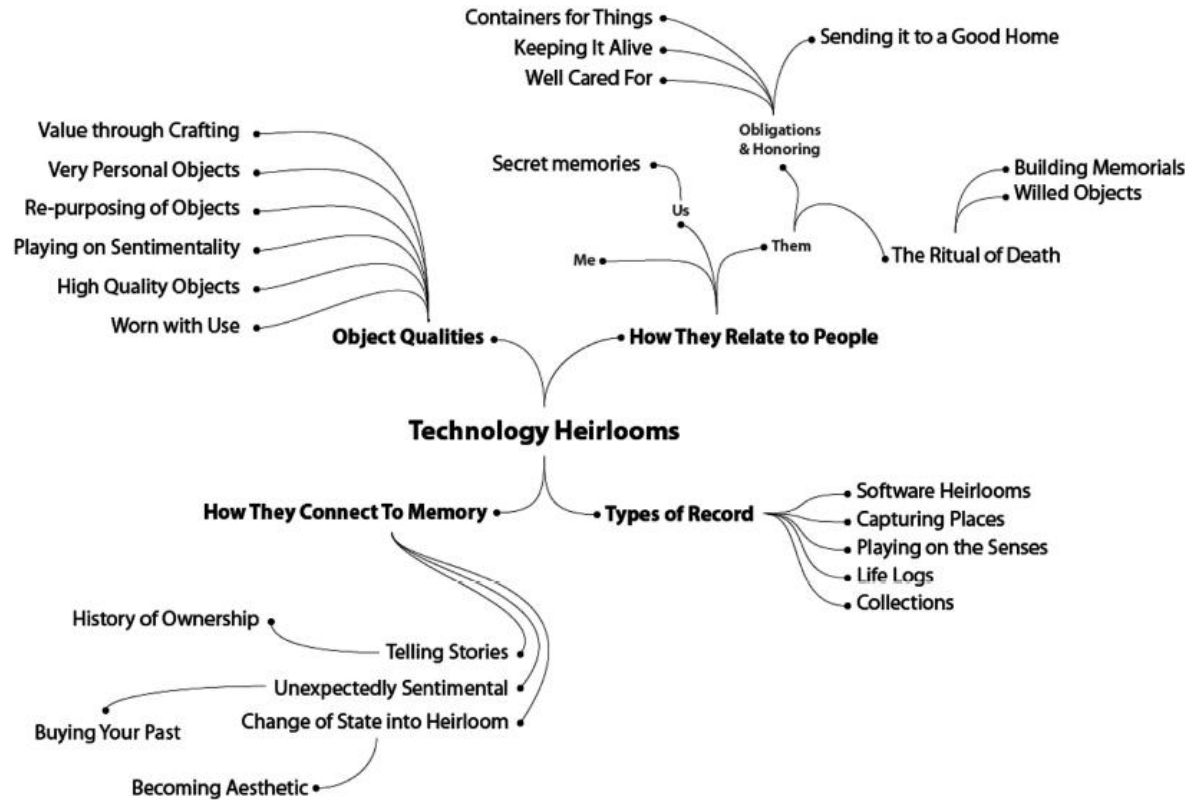
“... a Police National Computer (PNC) check was conducted on all who died at Hillsborough for whom a blood alcohol reading above zero was recorded. It includes a handwritten list of the names, dates of birth, blood alcohol readings and home addresses of 51 of the deceased and provides screen-prints apparently drawn from the PNC. A summary of the results appears on the front page, establishing the number ‘with cons’ (convictions).”

US State Probate Laws

State	Effective Date	Scope of the Law
Connecticut	1 October 2005	e-mail accounts only
Indiana	1 July 2007	Documents or information of a deceased person which are stored electronically
Rhode Island	2 July 2007	e-mail accounts only
Oklahoma	1 November 2010	Accounts on any social networking website, any microblogging or short message service website or any e-mail service websites
Idaho	1 July 2011	Accounts on any social networking website, any microblogging or short message service website or any e-mail service website

Understanding Digital Remains

FIGURE 1. A theme map for technology heirlooms.



Regulating Digital Remains

- How do we transfer our real world interests and values to the digital realm?
- How do we reconcile the dignity and interests of the deceased with those of the living?
- What interests should we protect and why?



Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Selected works:

- 1776 A Fragment on Government
- 1787 Defence of Usury
- 1789 An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation
- 1791 Panopticon: or, The Inspection-House
- 1808 Scotch Reform
- 1817 Plan of Parliamentary Reform
- 1818 Church-of-Englandism
- 1822 Codification Proposal
- 1827 Rationale of Judicial Evidence
- 1830 Constitutional Code

- Transcribe Bentham Project (60,000 manuscripts)

Auto-Icon - “a man who is his own image”

Extract from Bentham’s will:

“My body I give to my dear friend Doctor Southwood Smith The skeleton he will cause to be put together in such a manner as that the whole figure may be seated in a chair usually occupied by me when living, in the attitude in which I am sitting when engaged in thought in the course of time employed in writing. ... to be clad in one of the suits of black occasionally worn by me ... and for containing the whole apparatus he will cause to be prepared an appropriate box or case. If it should so happen that my personal friends and other disciples should be disposed to meet together ... my executor will ... cause to be conveyed to the room in which they meet the said box or case”



Auto-Icon in context

- Topical debates:
 - Anatomical dissection
 - Body snatching
 - Anatomy Bill
 - Humanism
 - Death penalty
 - Plight of the poor
 - Prisoners
 - ...
- Personal interests:
 - Preserve his place in posterity - immortality
 - New media and new technology – pop-culture

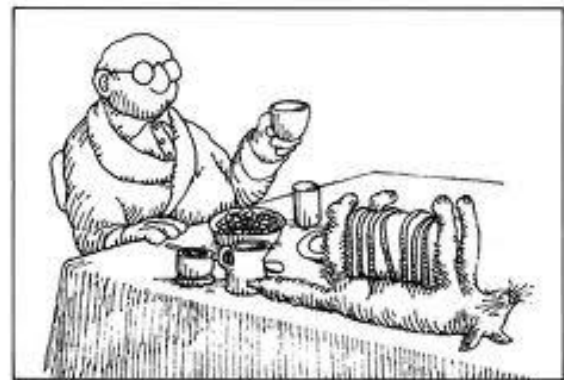


EXECUTION of the notorious WILLIAM BURKE the murderer, who supplied DR. KNOX with subjects.

Auto-Icon and related writings

Farther uses of the Dead to the Living

- Moral
 - Political
- Honorific and dehonoric
- Economic
 - money saving and lucrative
- Commemorative
- Genealogical
- Architectural
- Theatrical
- Phrenological
- Medical



Honorific and dehonoric

Remembrance and memory are not fixed

- *“Public opinion changes: public opinion is enlightened by experience, by knowledge, by philosophy. ... prejudices of our age pass ...
... admiration of one generation might become objects of detestation to another.”*
- *“How instructive would be the vibrations of Auto-Icons between the two temples!”*

Economic

- The value maximising question
 - Cost of dealing with remains of the dead
 - Cost of being part of the Church (network)
- Property
 - Spick and span new subject-matter of property
 - Intellectual Property?
 - Real Property?

“In truth so various and perplexing are the questions of property ... that it is humbly suggested to the influential and writing few to anticipate grievances, and provide remedies by an Auto-Icon statute law.”

Theatrical: dialogues of the dead



- Instructive
- Moral uses

“The good report obtained by good conduct will attach to the man after death, - he will not be consigned to oblivion,”

Integrity of identity (presentation of the self)

“Auto-Icons cannot be invented, cannot be forged.”

- Auto-biography
- Auto-thanatography
- Auto-graph
- Auto-Icon – “a man who is his own image”

- “Is not identity preferable to similitude?”

Lessons

- Preservation
- Public good of re-use (re-purposing)
- How to reconcile interests
 - Presentation of the self
 - Control (only while alive)
 - Maintain integrity of the remains
 - Rank/judgement by society

Comments ...

You seem to have died. Would you like me to alert your emergency contact?

- Yes
- I am not in a position to answer that question, Mr Clippy



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