

How are digital remains experienced after death?

Transcript

My brother Tal Shavit was killed when hit by a car on March 2nd, 2011. He was then 55 and a half years old. After we were notified of his death I'm assuming we did what any family does, we divided the chores between us and each one of us took it upon himself or herself to deal with another different aspect of his death. We had to go through everything in his apartment. To go through the drawers, the cabinets, the closets...just sort all his possessions and make up our minds and divide them. What do we keep? What do we give? What do we throw away? What do we give to another one of the family members? And it's a difficult thing to be going through, am dividing his worldly possessions, going through everything which he left behind. And I took it upon myself to deal with his digital legacy, his digital possessions.

He had a computer at home which was his for a long time and he owned his own website and he gathered in that computer a lot of texts and photographs which he intended to use in his website both of his own creation and just stuff that he came across and gathered for future reference, for future use. He was a very well loved person and had many friends. He was an exceptional photographer. He took pictures of a lot of people and I was requested by some people to get for them copies of pictures that he took of them and he didn't get the chance to give them those pictures himself. And am so he was an exceptional photographer, he took pictures of other people and also for his website and the computer was just filled with valuable information which had value also for his website, but also for his friends because they were professional pictures as well as personal pictures and the computer was just filled with them, like bursting at the seams.

It was difficult for me going into his computer because I feel that nowadays our computer is the most personal and private and intimate that a person leaves behind when he passes away. And I...it was difficult for me to bring myself to even open his computer and get into it because I felt like I was getting into the most intimate and personal and private space that he left behind. I think that now going into someone's computer is even more private and intimate and personal than going into his apartment or his bedroom or even the drawers next to the bed.

I had just no idea what I was getting myself into. I just thought my sister is going into his apartment, I would go through his computer, but it was so difficult. I was not prepared for it. No one else prepared me for it. I didn't expect it to be that difficult, really I just had no idea what I was taking upon myself.