

YOUR DIGITAL LEGACY

For many people the internet is an important part of everyday life. It is used to communicate with family and friends, store and share files, listen to music, read books, trade and do business, and much more. These activities create files which accumulate throughout life and can become important assets.

The question of what will happen to your digital assets when you die is an important issue. In the same manner that you plan for the distribution of your material and financial assets, you also need to prepare for the distribution of your digital assets.

WHAT ARE YOUR DIGITAL ASSETS?

When creating your Will, you may wish to include all of your digital and online assets.

This includes:

- personal emails
- material on social network sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn
- music files on services such as iTunes
- photos and images on services such as Flickr, Picasa and Photobucket
- videos on services such as YouTube
- documents of many kinds on cloud storage services such as DropBox and Google Drive
- books and newspapers on services such as Kindle
- domain names for your personal and business websites
- financial credit on services like PayPal or eBay.

WHY?

If you do not include digital assets in your Will, they may be lost forever. It will also help to prevent identity theft, damage to your reputation and privacy intrusions.



CREATING A DIGITAL REGISTER

1. **Compile a list of all the internet services** that store your digital assets. Consider the breadth of social networking services, cloud services, personal email accounts or blogs, photo and video storage services, online gaming accounts and all other internet services and accounts that may be associated with you.
2. **For each account or service, provide details** of the internet location (URL), the user-name and password, what files are there, and what you wish to be done with them.
3. **Check the “terms of use agreements”** as some disallow the transferring of an account (i.e. a username and password) between individuals, so different steps may need to be taken.
4. **Replace books and music with other copies:** in most cases music and eBook files purchased from iTunes, Amazon, Kindle and so on, cannot be bequeathed, as their licence allows you to use but not own the file.
5. **Nominate someone to act upon the instructions in your digital register.** This should be someone who is of course trusted and responsible, but should also be someone who has the technical know-how to access your accounts, locate your assets, and dispose of them as you have indicated.

You may also wish to consider using commercial services such as Security Safe or Legacy Locker, if preparing a digital register is too difficult for you.

ORGANISING YOUR DIGITAL ASSETS

Your digital assets need to be properly organised if they are to be identified and disposed of according to your wishes. Your digital items can simply be downloaded, placed on a local hard drive and arranged into simple folders that are easy for others to interpret.

You may also want to leave a note within the files that describes what is stored and any other information you consider relevant.



It is good practice to create local archives of your personal digital assets periodically. Remember, digital assets stored on the internet are not under your direct control. Accounts can be terminated, files may be deleted, service providers may go out of business, file types may change and become unusable in the future. This archive can be kept on a removable hard drive in a safe place nominated in the register.



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DO YOU WANT AN ONLINE MEMORIAL?

Your life can be commemorated or memorialised online through a range of services. It is important to indicate if you would like this done, or if you prefer not to.

If you are active on services such as Facebook you currently have three options: your profile can remain active and open just as it was before death, changed to 'memorial status', or removed altogether. Changing your profile to 'memorial status' prevents many of the automatic Facebook features from troubling your Facebook friends, but gives friends and loved ones a comforting way to remember you.

Alternatively, you may wish for a memorial to be hosted on a memorial website, or a dedicated website to be built specifically as a memorial for your friends and relatives. Many funeral directors, online newspapers, and specialist website memorial companies provide these services.

Unfortunately, when many people have access to an online memorial, the site may become a target for family disputes or even online vandalism. Editorial control of comments on a site, also called 'moderation', should be given to someone to ensure appropriate tone and content.

MORE INFORMATION

www.digitalheritage.net.au

Disclaimer:

This information is intended to be general in nature and does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as such.

Your *digital legacy*

What happens to your digital assets after you die?