

Digital Death



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‘Death’



Why Digital Death?



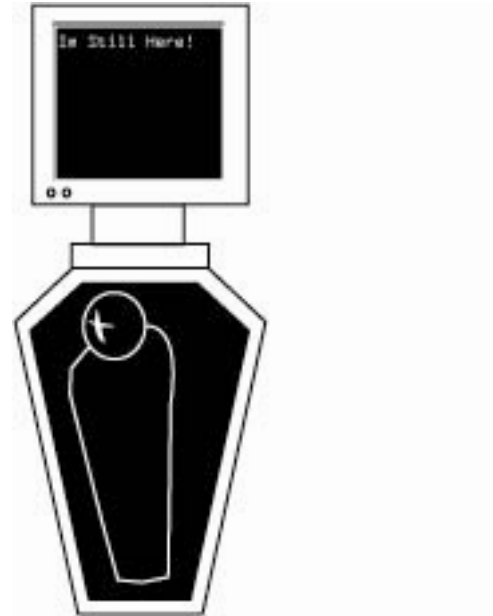
Is death a part of [virtuality](#)?

Does the virtual [representation of death](#) aid in [supporting people](#) and helping them deal with death, or does it inadvertently [leave people feeling a greater sense of isolation](#)?

‘Digital Death’ can be seen as either the death of a living being and the way it affects the digital world, or the death of a digital object and the way it affects a living being.

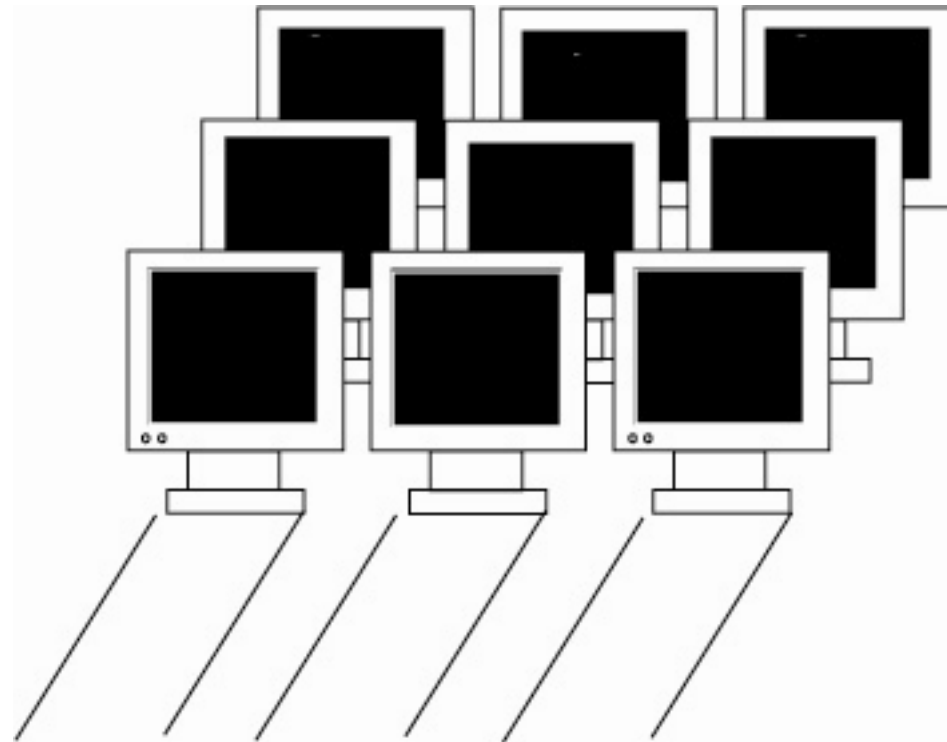
Dimension 1:

Death of a Living Being



Dimension 2:

Death of Digital Information

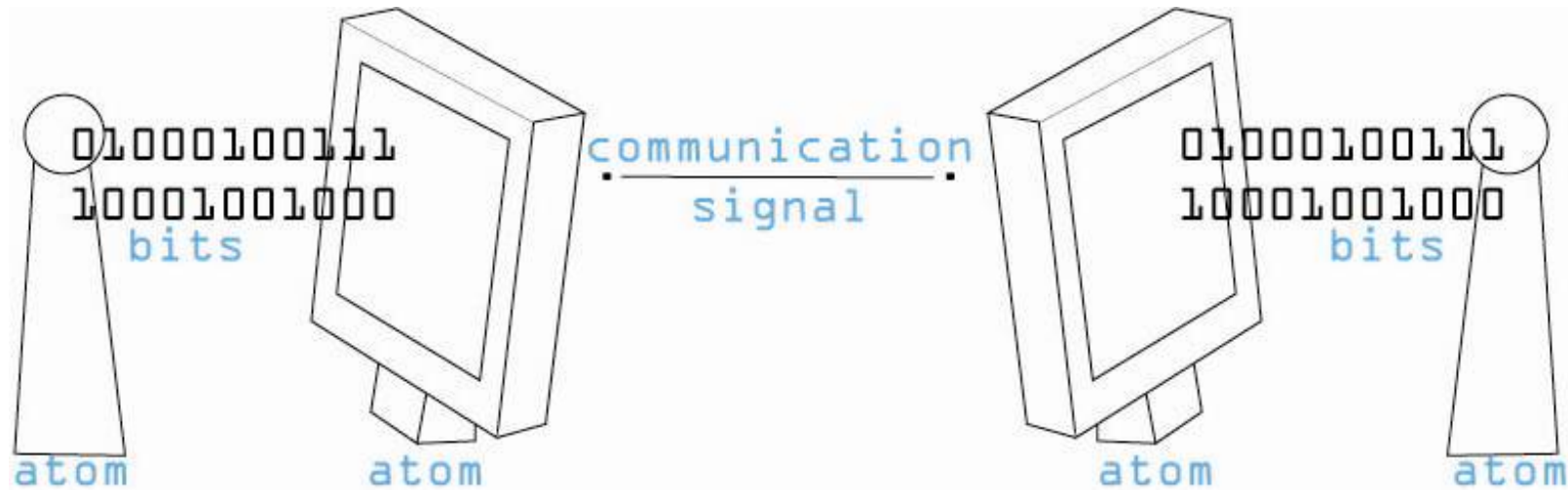


Dimension 3:

Immortality of Digital Information
and the need to Engineer its Death



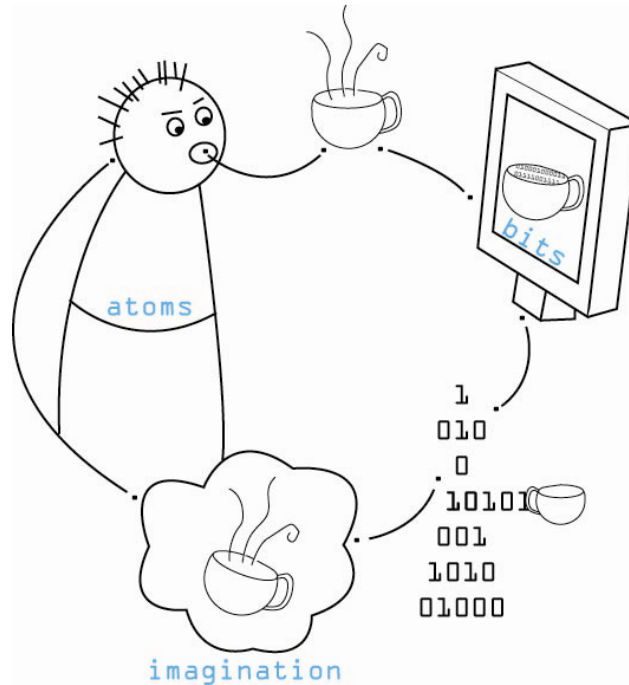
Atoms and Bits



“bits weigh nothing, occupy no space, obey no physical law, can be created spontaneously from nothingness, and can be endlessly replicated.” (Lucky 1994)

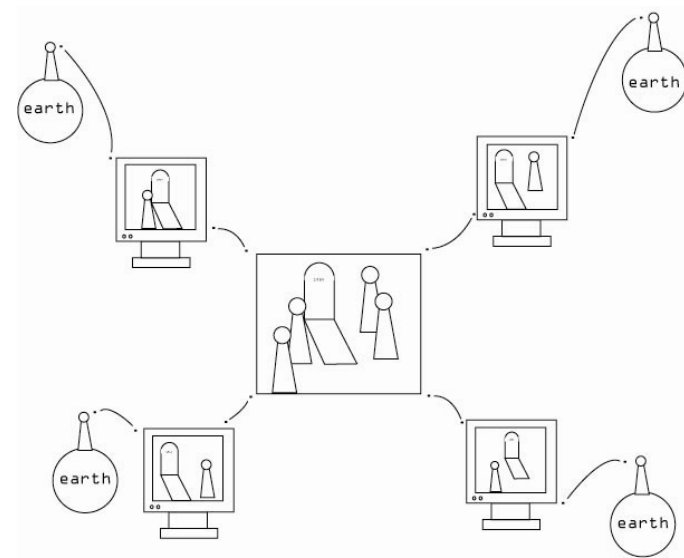
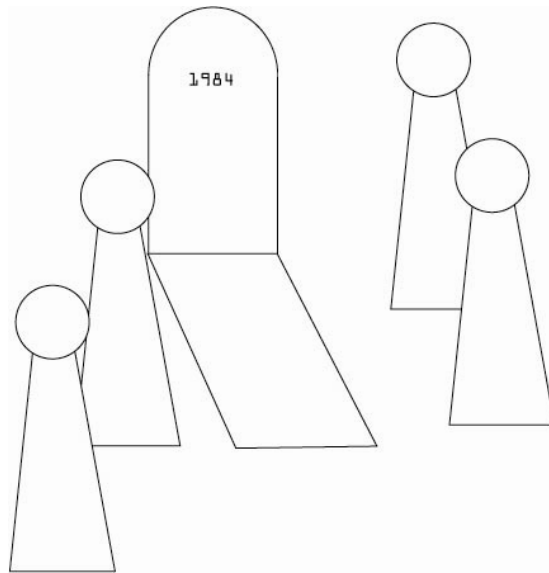


Virtuality and Spirituality in Virtual World



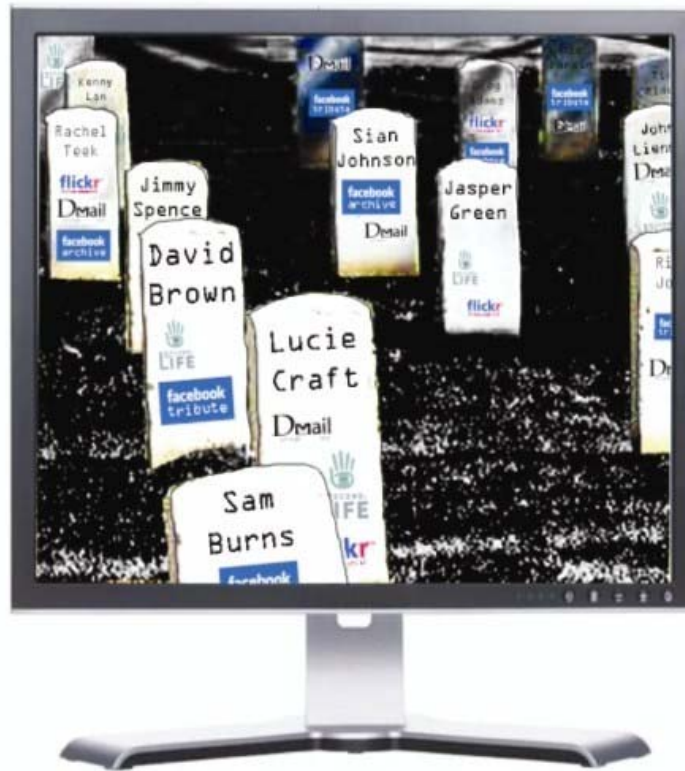
“there is a spirituality of good conversation and real connection with people and that spirituality is not in the least dependant on whether the connection happens in person, by letter, or by playing with avatars in virtual reality” [Robinson \(2007\) of the UU Church of Second Life](#)

Can digitalizing death aid in re-socializing death?



“Humankind's status as social animals can never change; no amount of technology, no amount of virtual reality, can change the fact that humans live in community, and we live for community” [Nikias \(2008\)](#)

We seek to use systems of spirituality and social behaviour which exist within the digital world to create design concepts which deal with digital death, as a 'social relation'.



An Evaluation of Non-Site Specific Mourning



Social networks provide a space in which an individual's [home page](#) can be transformed into a [memorial site with collaborative grieving and sharing](#).

What Happens when Virtual Friends Die?



We have virtual acquaintances, virtual colleagues
and even virtual friends.

If they die, how are we to be informed?



Mark Owens

Virtual Death Row



Michele Gauler

Digital Remains



Elliot Malkin

Cemetery 2.0

Conversations

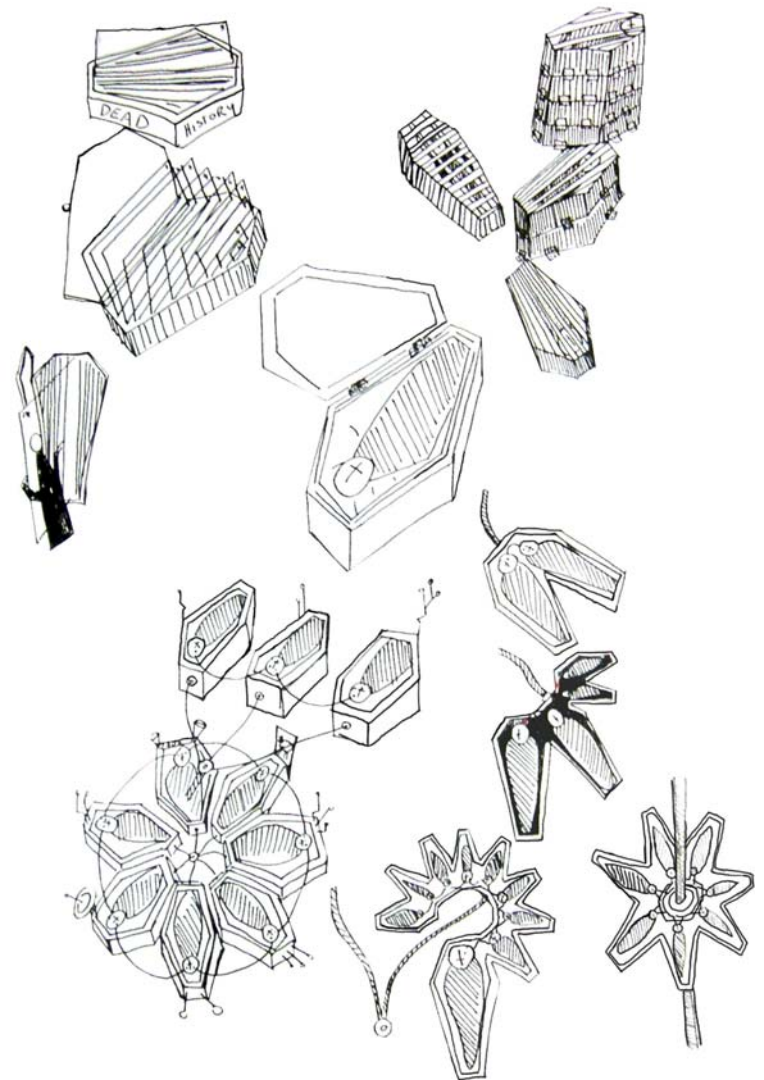
about death, particularly digital death with a range of multi-disciplinary people: funeral director, palliative care nurse, two bereaved partners and an expert in setting up virtual teams.

Interviews

were then set up with people of a specific knowledgeable background: creator of 'pet cemetery' in Second Life, psycho-oncologist, professors of sociology and computer science, a PhD student studying virtual teams, lawyer, on-line bereavement consultant and a group debate (with an extended family)

Online bereavement consultant - Feb 19, 2009

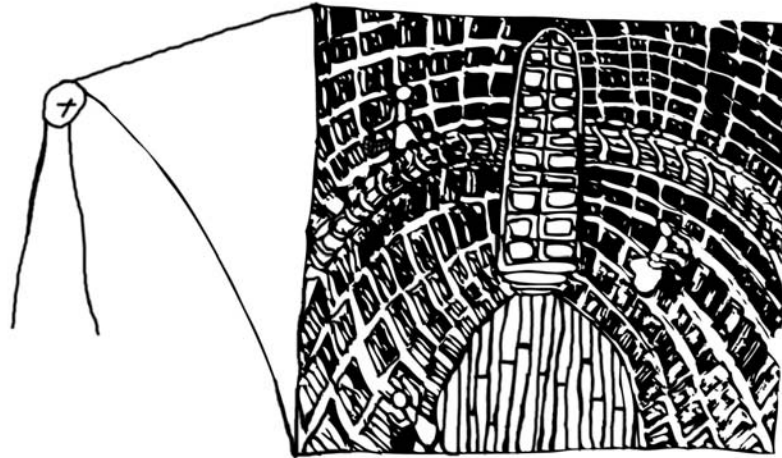
Wow, Stacey! On my first reading of your message I thought it was a hoax email but on looking at it a couple more times I think you are serious. I had not really ever contemplated this idea for clients but I must admit, have thought about what would happen to all my own folders etc, if I was to come to an untimely demise. I am not sure that 'Joe Public' is ready for such ideas just yet but I can see that in the future, this is an area where advice and services may well be needed and requested. I continue to wonder at the speed that modern technology is changing our old manual/mechanical world and appreciate that our young people that have the responsibility of seeing these radical new visions into fruition.



Evaluation and Observations

Dimension One (D1):

Death of a Human



Virtual will for the digital self

'D-mail' or death news mail could be a service that examines how news of ones' death is passed to both virtual and physical friends

Dimension Two (D2):

Death of Information

A service of visual communication to comfort the 'grieving' owner whose personal computer has died could be considered



Dimension Three (D3):

Immortality of Information and the need to Create Death

Design an agreed protocol, or service, which will 'kill' all information that is no longer 'alive'

Design a digital archaeologist

Design an online funeral service

Design a service to 'recreate' or clean a computer

Design a service which would aid a computer in 'committing suicide' after the death of its human master







JULIE FORD
1986 - 2008

Physical death has been a source of curiosity and debate since man appeared on earth. Digital death is a rich and largely untouched field in social informatics. Digital death therefore serves to revitalize this mystique.

Researching this topic is a source of inspiration which can lead to the conception of various systems of logic and social behaviours.

Like death in the real world, 'digital death' promises to be ever-present in our increasingly digital society.



Thank you for
listening

Any questions? suggestions?

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