The 11th Palliative Care Congress
Glasgow 2016

## Session Abstract

# Death, Dying and Grief in the Online Universe
*Dr Elaine Kasket*

Thursday 10 March 2016
1605 - 1705

Industrialised, socioeconomically developed countries are permeated by technology.  We are living in the digital age, in an era of "big data", and I would argue that the existence and impact of digital technologies is the most significant transformative event for the human race since the invention of the printing press and, before that, the emergence of language. Social networking sites like Facebook, which has over a billion regular users, are now a primary means of technologically mediated communication. Multifunctional web-connected devices allow us to capture, store, and access words, images, and other aspects of self-representation on an unimaginably massive scale.  The ease of recording, retrieving, and retaining vast quantities of information has surprisingly profound implications for living and dying; death and remembrance; and the nature and impact of the legacies we leave behind.

This session considers dying, death, mourning and legacy in an online universe, from a variety of vantage points: psychological, ethical, practical, and even legal. In the space where death and technology meet, certain concerns and fears arise, especially when viewed through the lenses of the mass media or through the eyes of wary "digital immigrants".  As the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin wrote, however, "where the danger is, also grows the saving power".  Both sides of this paradox are explored in this talk. All death work professionals, whether they work in palliative care, funeral planning, or bereavement, will benefit from a better understanding of how the modern technological landscape affects their work, and the people that are served by it.  That increased awareness can only result in improvements to professional practice.