

RYERSON INDEX INC COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 April 2019 at 2 pm

Skype

The meeting opened at 2 pm

Present :

John Graham, President

Peter Kettle, Vice President

Pauline Kettle, Secretary

Robert Atkins – Committee Member & Special Assignments

Bill Shute – Committee Member & Mentor for new indexers

Apologies :

Therese Delanty, Treasurer

Maxine Honczar – Committee Member & New Index Training Coordinator

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held 5 November 2018 were taken as read and adopted.

Proposed : Peter Kettle

Seconded : John Graham

There were no matters arising from these Minutes.

President's Report

1. Numbers getting very close to 7 million. I will delay the update due Friday 26th for a couple of days if necessary to get to 7m.
2. Corporate Sponsors – we appear to have lost Experian, Monash and Perpetual. Monash may still come good, because our donation is supposedly in the pipeline. Experian has gone away before and come back, and I don't understand Perpetual at all – first they're thinking of using ALL our data, then they don't think they need ANY.
3. Software – small bug found (relating to assignment of newspaper codes) which has been fixed. Also testing some changes to add extra validation to names and places to try and pick up obvious typos – we are checking for unusual combinations of letters.
4. April version of the indexing documentation has been released.
5. A list of proposed changes to the indexing program is attached. These will be submitted to Rob for a quote after we agree on them.

Ryerson Indexer v7 Wishlist

1. **Add and Edit date of birth**

With the increasing inclusion of date of birth in notices, we have taken the decision to add it to the end of the location details. It doesn't justify its own database field, because for the vast majority of

records it will not be present (none in the first 6.5m records, about 10% of current additions). So we add it as a string on the end of the location details, as "(born dd mmm yyyy place)".

The simplest way to enter this in Ryerson Indexer would be two extra fields – a date field and a place field, between Formerly Of and Age (this is the location most of the indexers prefer).

The date field needs to be able to accept:

- (a) Full dd/mm/yyyy
- (b) Just yyyy
- (c) Partial date mm/yyyy

The rules for adding the date of birth details to the output record are simple:

- a) If neither date nor place is present, do nothing.
- b) If the date but not the place is present, append a string in the format "(born dd mmm yyyy)".
- c) If the place but not the date is present, append a string in the format "(born place)".
- d) If both date and place are present, append a string in the format "(born dd mmm yyyy place)".

2. Edit the Prev Name fields in the same way that the Name field is edited.

There are three particular cases which come up too frequently:

- (a) For a maiden name, indexers put in only the surname, in the mistaken belief that Mary SMITH's maiden name was BROWN, not Mary BROWN.
- (b) Probably once per day an indexer inserts a full stop rather than a comma between the surname and the given name in the Prev Name field.
- (c) Even more frequent is the use of lower case for the surname in the Prev Name field.

Editing this field with the same rules as the Name field will make the indexers correct these errors.

Ensure "Sister" entries are entered correctly

The correct way to enter "Sister" is "SMITH, (Sister Mary Paul)" but some indexers insist on entering it as "SMITH, Mary Paul (Sister)". Sometimes the abbreviation "Sr" is used in place of Sister.

All we need is a check for "(Sister)" or "(Sr)" in the name field. If found, an error message saying "Sister format is incorrect" will do the trick. They'll get the message <g>.

3. Make the obituary lifespan box more prominent

When an obituary is entered, a box appears next to Notice Type to allow entry of the lifespan. Some indexers don't see this box – can we have it pre-filled with the string "YYYY-YYYY" to make it obvious what it is?

4. Add extra space to the location fields to reduce scrolling;

Support – email from Lynn Rawson:

Ryerson Indexer screen layout.

Next time that you have an opportunity to review the screen layout of the Ryerson Indexer program would you give some consideration to the vast amount of empty space in the middle of the screen?

The names list on the far left is no problem but if the empty space after the names was reduced it would mean that the data entry section on the far right could be moved more towards the centre of the screen.

This would also possibly allow fields such as 'Formerly' to be shown in full rather than the current scrolling arrangement. It would be much quicker to pick up keying errors in this field which can contain a significant amount of information.

I did try to move the borders of the indexing screen but they seem to be fixed."

My comments:

When you expand the screen (by dragging the SE corner), the table of names on the left expands (with lots of white space) but the data entry fields on the right don't expand. It would be much more useful if the reverse applied.

5. Have larger buttons at the top when the screen is expanded

We can expand the size of the screen (by dragging the SE corner), but when doing so the buttons at the top aren't proportional – they stay the same small size. Some indexers have trouble hitting the correct button every time – it would help if the buttons expanded with the size of the screen.

IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION ONLY AT THIS STAGE

1. A spellchecker for the location fields

I can see why indexers would want this, but I'm not sure how difficult it would be to implement. I guess an online version of the postcode book would be a good start.

The only way I can see it working would be if the spellchecker learnt as we indexed - each time a word appeared in the location field and it was not in the dictionary, it was queried and the indexer had the option to either correct it or add it to the dictionary. But first we would have to populate a standard dictionary, which ideally would be kept in the cloud and so consistently available to all indexers (but what if you wanted to index while not online?)

Proposed : Peter Kettle

Seconded : Robert Atkins

There were no matters arising.

Secretary's Report

Received basic enquiries regarding names not found on site. This is due to the enquirer not using the various help lists found on Ryerson front page.

Errors found on site.

Advice of forthcoming Family History Fairs.

Seven applications to index.

Proposed : Robert Atkins

Seconded : John Graham

There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the Treasurer Peter Kettle read the prepared report summarised below:

RYERSON INDEX

Financial position FY 2019 up to 16 April 2019

INCOME

Interest

ING Business Optimiser	114.79
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ING Term Deposit	415.18
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Donations

Corporate	1,290.00
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FHS	50.00
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Personal	1,564.92
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TOTAL	3,434.89
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OUTGOINGS

Running expenses	820.06
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Promotion	2,494.52
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CAPEX (Projector)	252.98
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TOTAL	3,567.56
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BANK ACCOUNTS

ANZ	1,257.31
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ING Business Optimiser	9,945.47
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ING term Deposit	15,792.24
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TOTAL	26,955.02
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Proposed : Peter Kettle

Seconded : John Graham

There were no matters arising.

Admin Report (Peter Kettle)

Very much the same as previous reports

14 Typos

3 reports of an error which were not errors

2 lookup requests not done

3 problems with using the index and/or lookup system

Proposed : John Graham

Seconded : Robert Atkins

There were no matters arising

Back Indexing Report (Peter Kettle)

Scans provided by Sharren Williams have provided an opportunity to do back indexing of many country newspapers. Of note are Goulburn Post, Area News (Griffith) and Blayney Chronicle.

Significant progress has been made on SMH Funerals, particularly 2000-2006 and 1900-1940s.

There has been progress with The Age but only to the extent of the notices available on Ancestry. The period from 1987 to 2005 is very patchy. This is the least satisfactory of the Capital City Dailies. The only other source that I have identified is newspapers.com which is a pay site (\$60 US for 6 months).

Proposed : Pauline Kettle

Seconded : John Graham

There were no matters arising

Training Co-Ordinator's Report

In the absence of Maxine Honczar from incoming applications the Secretary recorded that 7 applications to index had been received since 5th November 2018. None of these applicants had been referred back to commence indexing.

Proposed : Peter Kettle

Seconded: John Graham.

Matters Arising – The Secretary was asked to contact those applicants who had applied from that date.

Special Assignments (Robert Atkins)

1. **March 2nd, 2019** saw the end of a year where we can reflect on a number of achievements.

On this day, **The Hornsby Shire Family History Indexing Group** came into being with 9 new indexers completing a full day workshop. This group had been preparing for 2 weeks beforehand so that a full day of training produced an excited group who have already started submitting their work. They accepted the challenge to back index the **Hornsby Advocate** to its inception in 1962. It emerged when the **Cumberland Argus** ceased production. Thanks are due to **Shari-Lea Maclean** for valuable assistance on the day.

Thanks are also due to **Colin Keating** who has taken on the role of **coordinator** and is doing an excellent job. In consultation with me **Colin Keating** has produced an **App for Macintosh Computers**. This has been extensively tested and is being used by 3 members of this group.

The group is sponsored by the Hornsby Shire Library which holds films from the present day back to 1962. This provides a challenge in itself and 3 members have undertaken to produce scans for the RNR and material for the whole group to index.

This means that in order to get started, whilst the scans are being produced, the members have started back indexing the Cumberland Argus from Trove from 1962 backwards.

2. An **outcome from last year's State Conference of the NSW/ACT FHS Association, Cheryl Stokes** from **Milton-Ulladulla FHS** has commenced back indexing of the **Milton-Ulladulla Times**. She had previously completed scanning the paper for 2017.

This group will have 3 more indexers in a few months after they complete the current book project they have been working on.

Diana Thomas from Nowra assisted me at the workshop last November and will continue current indexing until Cheryl gets on her feet.

3. Of course we must not forget the **Maitland and Beyond Indexing Group** which commenced one year ago whose members are producing scans and indexing at a regular rate. They are capably managed by **Mark Farley** who does most of the scanning and allocates the papers to his members. Their first project is to complete the years from now backwards to 2000 and thence to back index the Maitland Mercury to its inception.

With the successful production of the **Ryerson Indexer App for Macs**, I have installed a copy on one Maitland member's computer. She has now completed back indexing the 2000 Maitland Mercury with this program.

4. **Melanie Dunstan**, who back indexes **The Spectator** (Hamilton- Vic) and now lives in Cairns, Queensland has asked for a copy of the **Macintosh** software and I have today mailed a USB stick to her.

5. Also, following a **link from last year's conference** and follow up by Steve Bone from Maitland, we are now setting up a program to scan and index the **Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest** paper known as the '**News of the Area (NOTA)**'. It is now published under the name of **Myall Coast Nota**.

6. **Sharren Williams**. came on the scene in 2019 wanting to pay back something to Ryerson for the value that she had received over the years.

A summary of her contributions to the RNR

Newspaper Titles	PDFS
Totals	5440
Area News (Griffith)	604
Blayney Chronicle	612
Border Chronicle (Bordertown) - SA	378
Dubbo Daily Liberal	1505
Myall Coast Nota	244
Naracoorte Herald - SA	414
MidCoast Observer	92
Southern Highlands News (Bowral)	94
Grenfell Record	144
Cootamundra Herald	30
Manning River Times	67
Whyalla News	209
Goulburn Post	678

RNR – Summary

November 2018....190 gigs.... 14,548 folders....229,096 files

17 April 2019.....221 gigs.....17,060 folders....290,234 files

Bob Atkins' proposed program for the year ahead.....

May 11	Botany Bay FHS Annual Heritage Festival at Gynea - Ryerson table	
June 1	Ku-Ring-gai FHS at Gordon	Monthly meeting - Guest Speaker
June 17	The Hills District Historical Society	Monthly meeting - Guest Speaker
July 4	East Gosford Probus Club	Monthly meeting - Guest Speaker
August 24	Blue Mountains FHS at Springwood Bi-Annual seminar - 4 speakers - Guest Speaker	
October 13-15	NSW/ACT FHS Association Annual Conference - Knox College - Ryerson table	

After further expansion of the topics reported by Bob, no further matters ensued.

John Graham thanked Bob for the excellent work and results of the tasks he is undertaking.

Proposed : Peter Kettle

Seconded : Pauline Kettle

Submitted Written Special Report forwarded by Current Indexers Co-Ordinator – Dawn Montgomery

The only indexers who (a) haven't responded to the call for information for the CI spreadsheet, or (b) that I haven't been able to ascertain what is happening, are:

(a) Gail RIDDELL – Albury Border Mail; Wagga Daily Advertiser; Griffith Area News [now being done by David Bales]; Young Witness

(a) Eric THORN – Inverell Times – last submission 02/2018.

(a) Clare STAPLETON was supposedly gathering 1998 The Age, no response – this year now finished by John Kneale except for 3rd April which I'll get for him soon.

Generally, I try to keep up with what people are doing by looking at files as they come through Dropbox, or looking at John's statistics after updates.

An 'in Limbo' list of papers which are not being indexed currently is being drawn up and will be sent to the Committee in due course.

Quite a few papers are available via website, according to RI location screen, but tend to be confusing.

General Business

Bill Shute proposed that a projector be purchased for John Graham in view of John's involvement with Family History presentations. John Graham thanked Bill for his proposal but he is already in possession of a projector for such purposes.

Bob Atkins requested that more Ryerson business cards be ordered. It was suggested that due to Bob's increasing involvement with Family History talks that any new cards should also include personalised cards.

The meeting was closed at 3.30pm