

## **Ryerson Index Inc**

### **President's Report**

**Presented to the AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

Today represents the completion of the first full year of the Ryerson Index as an incorporated association.

This time last year, I was telling you that the numbers associated with Ryerson represented record progress. Today I can repeat those words – it has been another year of record progress.

12 months ago we covered 152 papers. Today we cover 177.

12 months ago we had 2.14m entries. Today we have 2.55m, an increase of 410,000 records during the year. Once again, this has been our biggest year yet, easily surpassing last year's 340,000.

Our long-term average, taken over the past 3½ years, is just under 1,000 records per day being added to the database, and the rate is slowly increasing. But more importantly, the daily average over the past year is 1,240 records per day, up from 1,030 per day this time last year. That is a significant increase, and now leads us to expect to pass the three million mark in the third quarter of 2011. This is a rate of progress which we didn't dream of even two or three years ago, and all the indexers are to be congratulated for their efforts.

Last year I mentioned a project which was just beginning, to incorporate into Ryerson approximately 25,000 records from an index to the "Goulburn Post" held by the local Library. I am very glad to say that Stage 1 of this project is now complete – Ryerson now includes a full run of the "Goulburn Post" from 1930 to 2010. There are still some corrections to be applied to the data as a result of checking being carried out by the staff of the Goulburn Library, and once this has been completed we will start to think about Stage 2 of the project – how to include the local index entries for the pre-1930 period.

During the year, Ryerson has stepped up its presence at family history shows and fairs. Whereas not too many years ago it was only Peter, Pauline and myself who waved the flag, a look at the Calendar of Events on the website will show that we now have a wide variety of members prepared to deliver talks on Ryerson, or man a table at a fair. It is very pleasing to see such an increase in those prepared to be involved. Ultimately, I would like to see most indexers being in a position of being able to talk about Ryerson at their local society's meeting, or at any genealogical fairs in their area.

These talks to societies serve at least three purposes. Firstly, we are there to educate the members on what Ryerson is, and how to use Ryerson in the

most effective manner. Secondly, we are trying to recruit new indexers. And thirdly, we are there to hear what the genealogical community thinks of Ryerson – are we achieving our objectives, and what can we do better.

Sometimes the comments coming from these talks are very interesting. At one talk I gave this year, a member of the audience told me over a cuppa that Ryerson was “the best web site on the internet.” Without trying to define “best”, I pointed out that the NLA newspaper site was, in my opinion, the number one site for genealogists and historians – but that we would be very happy to claim the number two spot!

Probably the biggest event of the year, although it wasn't planned that way, was the release of version 5 of the indexing program. It is fair to say that the results achieved so far have not been up to expectations. While a small number of testers had no trouble with the program, many in the wider user group, with a much larger range of operating systems and email programs, had serious difficulties in getting the program to do everything expected of it. While most indexers have now worked out a method of sending their data, we have referred the results of the recent survey to Rob for his analysis. We await the results.

Earlier this year I was asked to provide an article on the future of Ryerson for a society magazine, and I thought it appropriate that I should today give a very brief summary of what I see as the future direction of the Ryerson Index. In brief, I see five key points which will drive us over the next few years:

- To continue to index notices as they are published for all papers currently included in Ryerson. This is our *raison d'être*, and will always be our primary objective.
- To include currently-unindexed papers in Ryerson as opportunities permit. This means in particular, expanding our representation in states other than NSW and Queensland – although we will never knock back an offer to index any Australian paper, wherever it is published.
- To continue our back-indexing program for those papers currently being indexed. Our current teams are making great advances in this area, and we are always happy to take on new indexers who are prepared to index within their own period and locale of interest.
- To include new papers in the back-indexing program as resources permit. We have found in the past that this flows naturally, as new indexers decide to back-index their local paper.
- To maintain the Ryerson Index as a free resource for all genealogists.

In relation to our future, I am in the process of compiling a list of all newspapers currently in print in Australia. The current count is 747, and as we have 177 newspaper (both past and present) included in Ryerson, it can be seen that there is still a vast scope for us to expand our coverage.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the outgoing committee for their hard work during the year. We may not have as many committee meetings as some organizations, but everything gets done with the minimum of fuss.

During the year Pat Schinkel retired from the committee, and today you will be asked to elect her replacement. All other committee members are offering themselves for re-election, and I hope you will support them with your vote.

So, on behalf of the Committee, I thank you all for your efforts during the past year, and feel confident in saying that we can all look forward to another record year.

John Graham