

## **Ryerson Index Inc**

### **President's Report**

**Presented to the AGM on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

Welcome everyone to our third AGM, and let me start out by thanking Annet for her hospitality in providing such an excellent venue. Thank you Annet.

It is becoming a habit to report record progress at our AGMs, and this year is no exception. I said at last year's AGM that we expected to pass the three million record mark during the third quarter of 2011, and we romped in, achieving that landmark on May 28<sup>th</sup>. As I write this, we now have over 3.24 million records, and the index is growing by about 1,700 entries per day. That represents 580,000 new records in the past 12 months – a magnificent achievement.

In addition, we continue to expand our newspaper coverage, with 192 papers now being indexed. It is particularly gratifying to see an increase in the number of local libraries who are assisting us, with Yarra Plenty Regional Library in Victoria leading the way with a sponsored program for the backindexing of their two local papers.

The major event of the year was the completion of indexing of the Hervey Bay based "Fraser Coast Chronicle" (previously known as the "Maryborough Chronicle"). This paper commenced in 1860, and with the exception of a few issues which do not appear to have survived, has now been fully indexed for a period of almost 152 years. That achievement should give all other back-indexing teams something to strive for, and the team of people involved are to be congratulated. The team responsible for the work is Sheryll Fox, Robyn Golby, John Kneale, Fran Myles and Barbara Neil.

Back indexing continues apace, and it would be remiss of me if I didn't mention the great work done by Bill Shute in the position of Back Indexing Co-ordinator. Bill has now relinquished the position for health reasons, and we are fortunate to have a very able substitute in Alan Nancarrow.

While on the subject of retirements, Doug Laidlaw has indicated his desire to step down from the Committee, having served us well with his legal advice from our pre-incorporation days. Thank you Doug for your help.

During the year, Ryerson has been well-represented at family history shows and fairs. At last month's state conference at Inverell, I was pleased to see a drop-off in the number of visitors to our table who had never heard of Ryerson, and a corresponding increase in the number of visitors who wanted to praise us! I think knowledge of our activities is slowly filtering through. Next week, on our way home, I'll be talking at the Richmond-Tweed FHS meeting, where I'll be able to point out that their local paper, the "Northern Star" is now

the second most complete paper in Ryerson, being fully indexed from 1940. Your Committee has also agreed that we will present a set of scans of notices from the "Northern Star" 1940-2010 to the RTFHS, as a donation from Ryerson Index Inc.

If there is one disappointment this year, it is the fact that our website has not had the changes made which we requested back in January. Our plan is to incorporate "load balancing", whereby we have two identical sites and requests are automatically sent to one site or the other, to ensure neither site becomes overloaded. We see this as essential to the future well-being of the website, as we all have horrible memories of the 2009 site outage. Your Committee continues to try and achieve this goal.

At last year's AGM, I mentioned that I was in the process of compiling a list of all newspapers currently in print in Australia. The list is slowly coming together, but I have found that there is more change in the newspaper industry than I thought would occur, with new papers being started and existing papers closing down. So it's a moveable feast, but I can still say with absolute certainty that there remains vast scope for us to expand our coverage from the present 192 papers.

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.

All committee members except Doug Laidlaw are offering themselves for re-election, and we have a new face hoping to fill Doug's vacancy in the form of Alan Nancarrow, the Back Indexing Co-Ordinator. I hope you will support them all 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 highly successful year.

John Graham