

Ryerson Index Inc

President's Report

Presented to the AGM on 10th August 2015

Welcome everyone to our seventh AGM as an incorporated organisation, held again at Baulkham Hills, thanks to the hospitality of Peter and Pauline. Welcome especially to those attending by Skype.

The year just ended has, in my opinion, been our biggest year ever. As well as adding the second-highest number of records ever in a single year, we passed five million records in total, a number undreamed of in our early stages. I believe our database is now the largest repository of Australian death information in existence – we certainly have more death records than any of the state BDM registries, and while it is difficult to judge the total content of commercial sites like Ancestry and FMP, I believe we are probably larger if we look solely at death information.

We have also improved our search functionality during the year with the addition of the “updated since” filter. This has already proven to be a boon to local historians, who can now monitor the site for changes since the last update, without having to look at the complete list of results and try to determine what is new. We believe this functionality was the last big ticket item missing from our search screen, but of course we are always willing to listen to users who have suggestions to improve the site.

Looking at the figures for the number of records indexed over the past few years, we have:

Date	Total	Increase
30 June 2008	1,750,286	
30 June 2009	2,091,363	341,077
30 June 2010	2,503,696	412,333
30 June 2011	3,066,875	563,179
30 June 2012	3,559,727	492,852
30 June 2013	3,990,376	430,649
30 June 2014	4,500,200	509,824
30 June 2015	5,033,716	533,516

2015 was our second biggest year ever, an exceptional result. .

During the year, we have also increased the number of newspapers covered, from 236 to 285. The bulk of this increase came about because of access to PressDisplay through the NLA and various State Libraries. PressDisplay has enabled more indexers to undertake more papers, because the notices remain available (with free access) for up to 12 months, and the range of papers available is large (although significantly, no Fairfax papers are available.)

Last year saw us complete the indexing of Lismore's *Northern Star*, and are very close to completing the SMH. This paper now has approximately 470 days outstanding, spread over just 7 years. We expect to complete the SMH by the end of 2015.

Turning now to our financial position, I can report that we have re-gained one of our corporate sponsors after a two-year absence, and we are also talking to another potential sponsor, although nothing has been finalised yet. This means our net financial position remains very sound. I will leave Therese to provide the dollar details in her Treasurer's report, along with the details of our budget for 2015-16.

Our website has survived the past year with a total of 19hr 4min of outages, which represents 99.78% availability – an excellent performance by any standard.

Ryerson was again represented at a number of Family History fairs during the year. I attended the NSW FHS State Conference at Fairy Meadow (our major event for the year), and we again received many comments along the lines of how reliable the website was, and how easy to use. It was also pleasing to meet (mostly for the first time) some of our indexers who live down that way.

I also recorded a webinar for SAG in June, giving a guide on how to best use the Ryerson website, and I believe this is available for viewing via the SAG website.

Our Facebook page has now passed 1,750 Likes, and continues to be an effective method of disseminating information, particularly in relation to the weekly update, and also in relation to website outages. It also provides us with a public forum for announcements, and allows public responses to be made to questions from users who may not completely understand how to get the best from the website.

The year just started shows promise of being every bit as big as 2015. We are consistently averaging over 2,000 new records per day, something we haven't done for more than a day or two at a time in the past. Also, we will shortly be introducing a new initiative in an attempt to persuade more Family and Local History Societies to index their local paper for Ryerson, an area where we haven't had stellar success in the past.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the outgoing committee for their hard work during the year. We have an excellent committee which works well together. All committee members are offering themselves for re-election, and I urge you to 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 highly successful year.

John Graham
President