

# **Ryerson Index Inc**

## **President's Report**

**Presented to the AGM on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

Welcome everyone to our eighth 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.

Firstly I would like to pay tribute to one of our committee, Bill Shute, who has decided not to nominate again due to family reasons. Bill has been on the Committee since incorporation, but has been involved in Ryerson for many years prior to that. While on the Committee, Bill has had a number of roles, with perhaps his most important role being his current one, as mentor to new indexers. There are many indexers out there who have benefited from Bill's accumulated wisdom, and I personally would like to thank Bill for his contribution over the years, and hope that he will continue to be involved in Ryerson as his other commitments permit.

The year just ended has been an incredibly successful year for Ryerson. In no particular order, we have:

- Gained a new corporate sponsor in NSW Trustee and Guardian
- Agreed on a deal for Ancestry to share our data (but more on this later in the report)
- Improved the stability of the Ryerson website with changes to hosting
- For the third consecutive year, added more than half a million new records

But we have also had our setbacks, most noticeably the Removal of all News Ltd newspapers from PressDisplay in January without any warning. That created major problems for us, although we have largely recovered by finding alternative access to the capital city dailies. We have, however, lost our coverage of some of the smaller country papers.

We also saw the passing of three of our longer-serving members during the year, in Graham Barnett, Frank Cardiff and Reg McDonnell. Each of these indexers had contributed materially to Ryerson from the early years, and we extend our sympathies to their families.

In last year's report, I noted that we were very close to completing the indexing of the SMH deaths. That task was duly completed in late 2015, and with more than 2.1 million entries, the SMH remains our largest paper by a long way. Unfortunately the people at the Herald weren't interested in running a story about our achievement, so we didn't get the publicity I think it deserved.

Ryerson was again represented at a number of Family History fairs and other events during the year. Jo and I attended the NSW FHS State Conference at Port Macquarie, and also the Kiama Family History Fair in April. In addition, Dawn Montgomery has done an excellent job of coordinating (and delivering many of) a series of talks on Ryerson at the libraries in the Brisbane area. Others to take on some of the heavy lifting by giving local talks were Bob Atkins, Diana Thomas and Judy Ransley (I hope I haven't forgotten anyone!)

Our website has survived the past year with a total of 6hr 37min of outages, which represents 99.92% availability – an incredible performance by any standard, and one which most commercial websites would kill for. It is a tribute to the excellent support provided by Rob McDonell. We have recently moved the website to a new host, and expect now that the increased bandwidth available means we will have no more outages caused by overload. In addition, our Facebook page has now passed 2,750 Likes, an increase of more than 1,000 in the past year!

Turning now to our financial position, I can report that the strong support we have experienced in previous years from our corporate sponsors has continued, and our net financial position remains very sound. I will leave Peter (in Therese's absence) to provide the dollar details in the Treasurer's report.

I said earlier I would have more to say on the Ancestry situation. Most members are familiar with the details from the emails Peter has sent out, but in essence the agreement on which Ben Mercer and I shook hands in April has, in August, been reneged on by Ancestry. Their reason for renegeing is given as cost, although the basis they use to calculate the cost quoted to us is entirely unconvincing.

As a result, all trust between the Committee and Ancestry has been lost, and we have now discontinued any further discussions with Ancestry. This is a disappointing outcome both for our indexers with the loss of the offered subscriptions, and for Ryerson, as we considered Ancestry to be a viable Disaster Recovery solution for the Ryerson website.

The Committee will now be revisiting the subject of Disaster Recovery, with a view to having a procedure in place by the end of the current financial year.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the outgoing committee for their hard work during the year. In particular, Peter has taken on a large workload in relation to the Ancestry agreement, and I thank him greatly for this. We have an excellent committee which works well together. All committee members except Bill are offering themselves for re-election, and I urge you to support them with your vote.

I would also like to thank our team of indexers. The volume of work that you all get through each year is astonishing, with most indexers quietly going about their work without any fuss. Now that most data is submitted via Dropbox rather than email, the only time I ever realise what has been done is when I look at the website and see paper after paper showing as up-to-date. You really are an incredibly dedicated group!

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

## Appendix A – Year-on-Year Figures

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Increase</b>
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
30 June 2016	5,563,788	530,062