

Ryerson Index Inc

President's Report

Presented to the AGM on 6th November 2017

Welcome everyone to our ninth 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.

I said last year that 2016 had been “an incredibly successful year for Ryerson”, and looking back on 2017, I believe this year we have topped our achievements of 2016. We have had an extremely busy year.

In no particular order, we have:

- For the fourth consecutive year, added more than half a million new records, with this year's total of 569,258 our best ever
- Established the Ryerson Notice Repository
- Gained a new corporate sponsor in Australian Breast Cancer Tissue Bank
- Strengthened our links with News Corp
- Implemented our new software
- Passed 6 million records

I detailed at last year's AGM the breakdown of discussions between Ancestry and Ryerson, which occurred early in the 2017 financial year. Nothing further has eventuated in that respect, and I don't expect any further developments.

Our major “win” during the year was our link with News Corp. Following their withdrawal of all News Corp papers from PressDisplay in January 2016, we were left scrabbling for reliable access to their daily papers. After some months, during which we had unexpected access to News Corp management at a level sufficient to “make things happen”, our efforts were rewarded with News Corp offering Ryerson a free online subscription to all their Australian publications. This meant we now had the ability to save a .pdf version of the daily notices, exactly as they appeared in print. This has proven invaluable in enabling Ryerson to keep all News Corp papers up-to-date with no hassles.

Our initial News Corp subscription was offered as a 12-month sub. When this expired (two weeks ago), I put the case to News Corp for a renewal, and we were rewarded with a no-cost “on-going” sub, so that we no longer have to request renewal annually. This was an exceptionally pleasing result.

Having the ability to save daily copies of notices from numerous papers, and already having a huge collection of scanned notices, we were faced with the problem of how to best manage this huge and growing collection. The solution decided on was to create the Ryerson Notice Repository (RNR), using Dropbox to make it available to all Ryerson members. We now have somewhere in excess of 150Gb of notices stored in Dropbox – roughly 1.7 million individual notices. This makes the work of our

looker-uppers much simpler, and also provides a great resource for Ryerson members carrying out their own research.

During FY 2017, we continued with the development of our new software. This project originally kicked off in September 2015, when Rex Toomey offered to rewrite our old DOS-based software in a more modern language which would run on Windows 10.

Rex delivered the first version for us to test in March this year, and I spent many months testing and refining the software before we implemented it in September 2017. We had a very smooth changeover, and after running solely on the new software for a bit more than a month, we signed off the project on 23 October.

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 Camden, and I attended the History Queensland State Conference at Southport. We also attended the Unlock the Past fair in Adelaide, and Bob Atkins attended the Botany Bay FHS Fair. Talks were also given by myself and others to various Society meetings during the year.

Our website has survived the past year with a total of 60min of known outages, which represents 99.99% availability. I thought last year's 99.92% was brilliant, but this is exceptional. It is a real tribute to the excellent support provided by Rob McDonell. In addition, our Facebook page has now passed 3,500 Likes, an increase of more than 800 in the past year.

Last year I mentioned that we would be re-looking at our Disaster Recovery Plan following the collapse of the Ancestry agreement. This is in progress, and Stage 1 has already been implemented. Expanded details can be found on the Ryerson website, in the minutes for the Committee Meeting of 6 Nov 2017.

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 Therese to provide the dollar details in the Treasurer's report.

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.

I would also like to thank our team of indexers. The volume of work that you all get through each year amazes me, with most indexers quietly going about their work without any fuss. In the year to 30 June 2017, we added more than 569,000 records – our biggest year ever.

We have two ongoing projects underway with SMH notices (Roll of Honour and Funeral Notices, both of which were left unindexed on our original pass through the SMH), and I thank those involved. 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:

Date	Records	Increase
30-Jun-08	1,750,286	
30-Jun-09	2,091,363	341,077
30-Jun-10	2,503,696	412,333
30-Jun-11	3,066,875	563,179
30-Jun-12	3,559,727	492,852
30-Jun-13	3,990,376	430,649
30-Jun-14	4,500,200	509,824
30-Jun-15	5,033,716	533,516
30-Jun-16	5,563,788	530,062
30-Jun-17	6,133,046	569,258