

Ryerson Index Inc

President's Report

Presented to the AGM on 3 December 2022

Welcome everyone to our fourteenth AGM as an incorporated organisation.

The year to 30 Jun 2022 has been our second most prolific ever, with the Index increasing by 566,380 entries – only fractionally below our most prolific year (2017). This came about mainly because of our decision to include the online version of the NSW Probate Index (NSWPI) in Ryerson, a project which has now been completed.

Inclusion of the NSWPI has resulted in a number of bonus gains for Ryerson. In calendar year 2021, the NSWPI recorded 29,280 deaths in NSW, with many of them being from ethnic communities which do not publish a notice in the mainstream media. While some of these would be captured by our Funeral Director inclusions, many would otherwise go unrecorded in Ryerson.

Data from the NSWPI also helps to offset the loss of regional death notices due to the closure of so many non-metro newspapers during the past 2 years. It appears from the number of notices published in the metro dailies that most country deaths have “disappeared” from the print media, so we can catch some of these when probate is applied for.

The entire NSWPI online index (from 2013) has now been added to Ryerson, resulting in the index increasing by more than 700,000 entries (from all sources) during calendar 2022, including more than 280,000 entries from the NSWPI.

Our supply of available ACM daily newspapers via the NLA increased by three during the year, with the Burnie Advocate, Border Mail and Ballarat Courier becoming available in late 2021. It is to be hoped that further ACM papers also join the NLA stable, although a watch on the papers available has not indicated any further availability so far. We live in hope!

We did increase the number of Funeral Directors we include during the second half of the year, with more than 40 being added since January. There is still scope to increase the number of Funeral Directors substantially, particularly from states other than NSW and Qld. This will continue to be our focus, particularly as the News Corp Digital Notices website has not been a great success, attracting only a little over 2,000 notices in 2½ years.

We lost a further two corporate sponsors this year, with “budgetary constraints” cited as the reason, leaving five current supporters. As with last year, our expenses for attending fairs etc are virtually zero, so we again recorded a surplus of income over expenditure. Kathy will provide the full details in the Treasurer's report.

This is the third consecutive year in which I can report our website has recorded zero time offline – we are reaping the benefits of having a simple but effective website, and excellent technical support thanks to Rob McDonnell, when required. Unfortunately the recent one-day outage, due to circumstances at the data centre where we are hosted which were outside our control, means I won't be able to report a fourth consecutive year at next year's AGM.

Now to turn to a very pleasant duty that any President enjoys – giving out accolades. For some time I have pondered over how to best recognise those who contribute “over and above” to Ryerson. A small sub-Committee group has decided on the awarding of Life Memberships for meritorious service, and the Committee has agreed to guidelines regarding qualifications for Life

Membership, and the frequency of awarding them (generally, no more than two being nominated each year, and announced at the AGM.) Provision has been made for special circumstances.

And so it is now my very pleasant duty to announce that our first two Life Members are Sybil Jones and Peter Kettle.

Sybil was our very first indexer, who took on the indexing of the *Daily Telegraph* on the day we formed the DPS group which subsequently became The Ryerson Index. For over eighteen years, Sybil submitted the daily file of indexing for the *Telegraph*, until retiring in late 2016, with over 100,000 entries to her name.

Peter has been my right-hand man for the entire life of Ryerson, firstly in an unofficial capacity, and since incorporation, as Vice President. He managed the incorporation process for Ryerson in 2008, and his retirement from an executive position this year left a very large hole. Fortunately he is still serving on the committee.

Turning now to back-indexing, we are continuing our project to catch up with the SMH Funeral Notices (which were left unindexed on our original pass through the SMH), and this will continue for some time yet, with Robyn Golby, Roy Vickers and Kathy Conroy making inroads into the missing notices.

Back-indexing of *The Age* is our other large current project, and it continues apace, with *The Age* becoming the second paper in Ryerson (after the SMH) to pass one million records. Bob Atkins has covered the details of this project in his report.

Finally, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to two groups of people. The committee members overseeing Ryerson have done another excellent job, and as all current Committee members have nominated for re-election, I urge members to support them.

The second group is you, the indexers and the looker-uppers. Another productive year from the 100 or so active indexers has been instrumental in us recording our most productive year ever in calendar 2022, and our lookup service continues to be well patronised – possibly too well in one particular case.

So, on behalf of the Committee, I thank all of you involved in any way with Ryerson, and I look forward to another successful and challenging year for all of us.

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
30-Jun-18	6,610,628	486,966
30-Jun-19	7,077,033	466,405
30-Jun-20	7,499,168	422,135
30-Jun-21	7,854,783	355,615
30-Jun-22	8,421,163	566,380