

# Ryerson Index Inc

## Annual Report for FY2024

### Presented to the AGM on 18 November 2024

It is with a real sense of pride that today I deliver our first Annual Report as a Registered Charity.

Ryerson has come a long way since that first meeting in October 1998 at Parramatta RSL. While we still continue to serve genealogists worldwide, our focus has widened to encompass the supply of our data free of charge to numerous organisations, both charitable and commercial, where we can see the opportunity for societal benefit.

In this regard, I would like to direct your attention to our Mission Statement, now available on our website.

#### *Our Committee*

During our 16 years since incorporation, we have been blessed with a wise and stable committee.

For FY2024, the following Committee was in place:

President	John Graham
Vice-President	Bob Atkins
Secretary	Pauline Kettle
Treasurer and Public Officer	Kathy Conroy
Committee Members	Therese Delanty Paul Kean Peter Kettle

The following sub-committees were also in place:

Social Media	Shari-Lei McLean
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Our Secretary , Pauline Kettle, has announced her intention to retire following this meeting, and I would like to personally thank Pauline for the wonderful work she has done, much of it behind the scenes, in supporting Ryerson since Day 1. I'm very pleased to say that Pauline has agreed to continue her role in training and mentoring new indexers.

Therese Delanty, a former treasurer, has also retired.

The remainder of the committee have re-nominated, and I urge you to support them with re-election.

## *Our People*

Ryerson has had, ever since inception, a workforce comprised entirely of volunteers. The number of active volunteers fluctuates slightly during the year, but the following numbers are illustrative:

In FY2024, 359,870 records were added to Ryerson, an average of 986 per day.

In FY2024, 69 active indexers added an average 5,215 records each.

In FY2024, 38 volunteers carried out 547 lookups for users requiring a copy of a notice.

This force of approximately 100 volunteers (some carry out both indexing and look-ups) is the reason Ryerson exists. Without them, we would be nothing.

## *Our Data Sources*

FY2024 has been a 'steady-as-she-goes' year in relation to our data sources, with our indexers continuing to source newspapers, particularly regional, which were not yet included in Ryerson. We have also identified a number of Funeral Directors whose websites can provide us with a useful supply of data.

During the year we activated 7 additional sources (3 newspapers and 4 funeral directors).

We have also progressed well with our back-indexing projects – *The Age* (Melbourne), and *Sydney Morning Herald* funeral notices (which were not included in our original pass of the SMH.)

We continue to save and index all notices from News Corp papers and their *My Tributes* website Australia-wide, and we are most grateful to News Corp for this access.

However, in post-30 June news, Australian Community Media (ACM) took the axe to many NSW regional newspapers, with possibly more still to close. These closures have, of course, removed some of our data sources. Detailed comment on this will be in our FY2025 Annual Report.

## *Our Finances*

Ryerson, as most know, survives on donations from our satisfied users. It has ever been thus. We are most grateful for the support we receive, and are pleased to say that our finances are in a sound state.

Our expenses are not excessively large, with Covid having helped in that regard with very few Genealogical Conventions being held during the past four years. That situation is now starting to normalise to the way it was pre-Covid, and so we expect our expenses to increase in the next few years as we "show the flag" at more events, starting with the 3-day Brisbane fair in March 2025.

We very much appreciate the fact that some of our corporate users see fit to donate towards our costs, even though we supply our data to them free of charge and without obligation. In that regard, I would particularly like to mention Worthington Clark, who are sponsoring our attendance at the Brisbane fair.

## *Our Educational Courses*

Ryerson continues to provide online lectures via Zoom to Genealogical and Family History Societies around Australia, and in person (on request) in the Sydney and SE Queensland regions. These lectures are always well-received, as they provide instructions on the many tools available within the Ryerson website with which many users are unfamiliar.

This year Ryerson conducted six Zoom sessions to Societies down the Eastern seaboard, from Queensland to Tasmania, and two live seminars in NSW.

## *Our Client Data Supply*

Some years ago, Ryerson was approached by an external organisation, enquiring as to whether our data was available for other than genealogical purposes. After considering the matter, the then-Committee decided to make our data available if the planned use was socially beneficial.

Since then, a number of other organisations have seen the value of our data to their operations.

Ryerson has quite an eclectic band of institutions and businesses who receive a data feed free of charge every week as part of our update process. In order of length of association, during FY2024 we supplied data to:

- A direct marketing company, to cleanse their mailing lists before a mailout (12 years)
- A credit reference bureau (10 years)
- A university medical study on using Aspirin to reduce medical events in the elderly (8 years)
- A trustee and wealth management company (4 years)
- An Australian university, to help in managing their alumni records (4 years)
- A legal firm specialising in eliminating obsolete wills in solicitors' offices (3 years)
- A university medical study into whether Statins can prevent a first heart attack (2 years)
- A genealogy company specialising in probate genealogy and beneficiary research (1 year)

Other medical and educational projects have been and gone over time, either because the project concluded, or was closed down because of a funding cut.

We are especially pleased to have such a long-term association with many of these organisations, which we take as a testament to the value of our data.

## *Our Life Members*

As is customary, each year we nominate a member or members on whom is bestowed Life Membership, in recognition of service to Ryerson over many years.

This year there is only one nomination – not because there are no other worthy members, but because this member deserves ALL the accolades, having been with Ryerson since Day 1, and having always filled a leadership role, even when we were a rag-tag group of indexers.

I refer of course to our retiring Secretary, Pauline Kettle.

Pauline put up her hand on Day 1 to be an indexer for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and continued this role until 2018, after 20 years of the SMH. But alongside that paper, for a number of years Pauline saved the notices from the *West Australian* in Word format, before we had access to the .pdfs. She also acted as a “fill in” indexer on a number of regional papers.

As if that wasn't enough to fill her days, Pauline volunteered to be Secretary when Ryerson incorporated in 2008 – another 16-year role. And we could not have found a better person for that role. Everything from the usual mundane secretary tasks to training and mentoring new indexers (a task she intends to keep doing) – Pauline cheerfully did it all.

Congratulations Pauline, and we hope you enjoy your retirement.

### *The Outlook*

The next year promises to be as busy as ever for our band of volunteers, as we head inexorably towards a database of ten million notices – a number not even remotely in any of our thoughts all those years ago.

The ACM decision in July to close a number of predominantly-NSW papers has made life just that little bit more difficult for us to source contemporary death details. Even so, since the beginning of FY2025 we have added 13 new sources to Ryerson (both regional papers and funeral directors), and expect to add more in the coming months.

We will also be attending the Connections 2025 Conference in Brisbane next March – the first 3-day genealogical conference in Australia since 2019 – and look forward to seeing many of our users there.

John Graham  
President, Ryerson Index Inc

29 October 2024