

Ryerson Index Inc

Annual Report for FY2025

Presented to the AGM on 1 December 2025

Welcome everyone to our second AGM as a Registered Charity. It is great to see a good rollup of members.

It has been a steady year of consolidation for Ryerson. We continue to maintain our coverage of all the major papers currently in print, while our various back-indexing teams push further towards completing a number of projects. As our database nears ten million records, a target we expect to reach during the second quarter of 2026, we can be very well satisfied with the results of our 27 years of labour.

Our Committee

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

For FY2025, the following Committee was in place:

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

I thank the Committee members sincerely for their efforts during the year. All committee members have re-nominated for FY2026, 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 FY2025, 364,972 records were added to Ryerson, an average of 1,000 per day.

In FY2025, 70 active indexers added an average 5,214 records each.

In FY2025, 38 volunteers carried out 438 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

During the year we activated 4 additional sources (2 newspapers and 2 funeral directors). Subsequent to year-end, we added our 500th source (a funeral director).

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.

I referred last year to the disappearance of a number of ACM mastheads, particularly in regional NSW. In this regard, the major impact to Ryerson during FY2025 was the loss of access to seven ACM mastheads. Following the sale in 2023 of these mastheads to Mid West Media, the new owners subsequently made the decision to put these titles behind a paywall, with no online access to copies via SLNSW and NewsBank. The seven mastheads are *Boorowa News*, *Cowra Guardian* (incorporating the *Canowindra News*), *Forbes Advocate*, *Grenfell Record*, *Parkes Champion Post*, *Young Witness*. Our indexing of these papers is now reliant on people visiting the State Library and copying the notices for subsequent indexing – in the same way we were indexing 25 years ago.

It will not come as a surprise if further ACM papers go the same way.

In general, we are seeing a fall-off in the number of newspaper notices indexed, due to two factors: newspaper closures or access limitations, and the decreasing number of notices being published in the surviving papers. We are going some way towards balancing this with an increase in the number of funeral directors we cover.

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. This year we attended our first “in the flesh” genealogical conference since pre-covid days. This was the AFFHO 17th Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry held in Brisbane, and we are very grateful to say that our attendance there was fully sponsored by one of our strong supporters, Worthington Clark.

Our other major expenses during the year was replacement laptops for the President and Vice-President.

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 without obligation.

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.

Our Client Data Supply

Ryerson continues to supply our data on a weekly basis to a number of organisations who use it in a socially beneficial way. Some of these, but not all, contribute to Ryerson via an annual donation, although this is not a condition for receiving our data supply. To those that do contribute, we say a big thank you. For those who don't contribute, we ask that you consider a contribution.

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 we have two very worthy nominations, with one of them unfortunately posthumous.

The first is Bill Shute, who joined us when we were just four months old. His first contribution was to give us a years' worth of notices from the *Central Coast Express Advocate*, with the advice that we really should start indexing the SMH from 1946, to continue on from the publicly-available BDM indexes. Little did he know that within a couple of months Joyce Ryerson would turn up with her SMH archive, and his suggestion became our new target.

Over the years Bill has worn many hats. Living in Portland, his local paper was the *Lithgow Mercury*, and he indexed that paper for many years. But he was always available to join any back-indexing project we happened to be working on, and so contributed to the indexing of many papers.

A foundation committee member when we incorporated, Bill remained on the Committee until standing down at the 2016 AGM. At the time he had, as well as his indexing duties, the role of Mentor to new indexers, and this he continued to do for some years until ill-health forced his retirement.

The second nomination is the late Alan Nancarrow, who passed away earlier this year. We are not sure just when Alan started indexing, but it was some time before 2004. As a long-time resident of Ballina, he had a particular fondness for his local paper the *Northern Star*. He started out (as many do) indexing forward with the current issues, then decided he could do a bit more so he started back-indexing. Fortunately Alan had the foresight to save copies of all the notices (in the days before .pdfs, when it was necessary to photocopy the daily paper.) In 2004 he floated the idea of carrying out a full back-index, going back to the paper's commencement in 1876. This was our first attempt at covering the complete run of any paper, and Alan did it to perfection. Not only did he complete the indexing single-handedly, he also produced six CDs of images of all the notices and obituaries ever published in the paper. This took many years to complete, and subsequently a set of the CDs was donated to the Richmond-Tweed FHS, as well as being one of the foundation stones of our own RNR.

Alan was a real "Ryerson Pioneer", and an excellent example of the people who have made Ryerson the success it is today, and although he is not here to enjoy the recognition, his Life Membership is thoroughly deserved.

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.

While the number of newspaper notices we index continues to reduce, we expect to add similar numbers overall to Ryerson in the current year.

Thank you to the approximately 75 active indexers and 25 looker-uppers who continue to add almost 1,000 entries per day to Ryerson. Genealogists and other Ryerson users world-wide are in your debt.

John Graham
President

1 December 2025