

The Ryerson Index

INDEXING INSTRUCTIONS

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Update History

Version 7 – Nov 2019 – major revision to cater for changes in the v7 RyersonIndexer software.

17 Dec 2019 – clarification of the status of Legal Notices (p4)

9 January 2020 – added section on the Mailing List

14 December 2020 – clarified “In Memoriam” indexing

6 February 2021 – clarify “Tributes and Condolences” (p5)

31 December 2021 – revise rules on merging notices

12 February 2022 – clarify multiple nicknames, add special section for The West Australian

4 April 2026 –

Added a “Before You Start” section for newcomers

Rewrite of the section on combining Death and Funeral notices

minor corrections to clarify the cause of some common mistakes

18 April 2026 – clarification of indexing Partial Event Dates

Introduction

These instructions may look daunting, but that is because they are designed to cover all possibilities. In practice they are most likely to be used only as a reference document to refresh one's understanding of the process, or to determine how to handle a difficult or unusual circumstance.

Before You Start

The first thing to do when you are accepted as an indexer is to notify the webmaster that you are ready to start submitting indexing. You will need to identify the newspaper or funeral director which you will be indexing, so that a code for the publication can be allocated.

The address to contact is johngrah@ozemail.com.au.

You will receive two emails in return:

1. An email from the webmaster advising of the publication code for you to use, and which Dropbox folder your input will be loaded into, and
2. An invitation from Dropbox to share the folder where you place your completed indexing for uploading.

If you are also saving notices for the Ryerson Notice Repository (RNR), you will receive a third email, from Dropbox, asking you to share the folder where you will upload your saved notices.

When you follow the instructions in the Dropbox emails, you will find the appropriate folder set up on your computer. They can be accessed using Windows File Explorer.

Next, you will need to set up the Indexing Program correctly (if you haven't already done this as part of your training.). There are only two items of importance.

When you start up the Indexing Program, you will see at top-right a tab labelled "Options". Click on it.

The first field you see is headed "Your Name". This should be your usual given name and surname, eg "John Graham". Do not use just initials, or just your given name (even followed by an initial) – use the full name. It is surprising how many duplicate given names we have in the Ryerson community.

The second field is the name of the folder where you wish to store your output files. This can be anything meaningful to you, because you are the only person who will use it. The purpose of this folder is to store your indexing output files prior to you moving them to the Dropbox folder for submission.

That's it. You are now ready to index.

We aren't just listing data!

What we type must go as smoothly as possible into the uploader. With 10,000+ entries a week, there just isn't time to double-check each one. Your data input needs to be in the format that the updating program accepts. That is why all indexers use standard software - to produce output in a standard format.

We index every notice (subject to the rules on merging, see p15 below), and every day of the week on which the paper would **normally** be published. This means we even index for days like Good Friday and Christmas Day, when many papers aren't published.

To index a day where there are no notices, or the paper wasn't published, is easy.

1. enter the newspaper code and publication date
2. click "Create Text File"

That's all there is to it. The indexing program will generate a daily file which the updating program recognises as a NIL file. This means the date is marked off as complete, and won't show up as "missing" on the newspaper dates page.

If you are indexing consecutive issues of the same paper, do not omit an entry because you remember having indexed it on a previous day. It is important that we index EVERY notice EVERY day.

For some papers (e.g. large metropolitan dailies) the same indexer doesn't index consecutive days and so may not know what was published yesterday. So to maintain consistency between all indexers and all papers, we index every notice.

When in doubt over difficult-to-interpret letters (e.g. i or l, o or e,) think of what you're typing. Alstonville or Aistonville, Sheila or Shella, Marie or Marle. The correct interpretation will usually be obvious.

We always index what is published, without interpretation. This means not adding the state to place names when the state isn't shown in the notice, because places like Richmond and Windsor exist in more than one state.

What Do We Index?

Before we start indexing, it is vital to know just what we index and what we ignore in each paper.

The primary aim of Ryerson is to record death information, in the form of a name and a death date. If the death date is not available, but a close date (such as the date of the funeral) is available, then we index that.

The heading in the paper defines what we index. If a notice is published under the heading of "Death Notices" then we index it as a death notice, regardless of whether it only contains funeral information, or whether it is in fact a misplaced In Memoriam. The heading defines the Notice Type.

For every paper, we index:

1. every entry published under the heading “Death Notice” or “Funeral Notice” or “Memorial Service”.
2. Every entry published under the heading of “Obituary”.

For every paper, we do NOT index:

1. Any entry published under the heading of “In Memoriam” (but see below for exceptions).
2. Any news item reporting a death (but see below for exceptions).

Some papers now use the term “Tributes” as the primary heading, but this can be confusing at first. There are two ways Tributes can be shown:

1. Where notices published under the heading “Tributes” relate to recent deaths - these are indexed as Death Notices.
2. Where notices published under the heading “Tributes” relate to deaths one or more years ago - these are really In Memoriams, and as such are not indexed.

It is usually obvious what the column headed “Tributes” means.

Exceptions:

1. For country papers up to c1950, we index deaths reported in columns such as “Local Intelligence” or “General News” or similar. This was a common practice for reporting a death because it avoided the cost of a death or funeral notice. Such deaths are indexed with a notice type of “Other”.
2. **Probate or Legal notices** are a special case, due to the low grade of information available (often only a name and “late of”), and the workload that full indexing of these notices could impose on indexers, for little valuable result. We have set the following guidelines:
 - (a) For any papers published once or twice each week (but no more frequently than twice), we index Probate or Legal Notices. This covers the case where a person dies and is buried between issues of a paper, which sometimes results in no death or funeral notice being published because it would be “old news”.
 - (b) For any papers published more frequently than twice per week (including the metro dailies), we can index Probate or Legal notices in limited circumstances:
 - Due to the volumes sometimes involved (eg historic SMH issues), it is left to the individual indexer whether or not to index these notices
 - Only notices for a name not already in Ryerson should be indexed
 - Only notices containing a death date should be indexed

3. There is an increasing tendency for papers, either by accident, sloppy design, or customer request, to publish the occasional death notice under either the “**In Memoriam**” or “**Tributes and Condolences**” heading. If any of these are found – they can be identified by a recent death date, or a death date not yet close to reaching its first anniversary – they should be indexed as notice type X – Other.

Indexing Conventions

25+ years of indexing have allowed us to develop some common-sense conventions which apply when we index. In no particular order, these are:

- Parentheses, ie (), are used to indicate a name by which the deceased is commonly known, but which is not the first given name. This applies to nicknames, religious names, and the second (or subsequent) given name. In the latter case, we repeat the known-by name (in parentheses) following all given names, eg “SMITH, William Arthur (Arthur)”
- Square brackets, ie [], are used to add information which is not in the notice. They can only be used in the Given Name, At, Late Of and Formerly Of fields, and are used in two specific cases: (1) to expand the given names where none, or only initials, appear in the notice, and (2) to add a comment pointing out an error in the published notice, such as a future death date. **Given names in square brackets must be the only information in the Given Name field**, otherwise the search results will not show the entry in the correct sequence.
- All given names appear together, and before any nicknames, regardless of where the nickname is positioned in the notice.
- If a notice does not contain a surname (eg Mother Theresa), then we index it with a surname of NOSURNAME.
- If a notice doesn't contain an obvious given name (as in many Asian names, and some Aboriginal names), we index the entire name as a surname and leave the given name blank. We don't use the Given Name of (un-named) in these cases, because we don't know whether or not there is a given name.

The Indexing Program

A partially completed index entry looks like this:

The screenshot shows the 'Ryerson Indexer 7' application window. The title bar includes standard window controls and buttons for 'Create Text file', 'Help', 'Options', and 'Font'. The main interface is divided into two panes. The left pane, titled 'Newspaper Code and Issue Date', shows a list of names with 'CIROCCO, Maria' selected and marked with an asterisk. The right pane contains a form for entering details for the selected entry. The fields are as follows:

- Name: CIROCCO, Maria
- Date: 1/11/2019 (with a 'Death' dropdown menu)
- At: Adelaide, SA
- Place of: Location name
- Formerly of: Location name
- Birth date/at: 28/3/1939 (with 'Molfetta Prov, Bari, Italy' in a separate field)
- Age: (empty) Years
- Notice type: Death notice
- Prev name 1: SURNAME, First Names
- Prev name 2: SURNAME, First Names
- Prev name 3: SURNAME, First Names

At the bottom of the form, there is a checkbox labeled 'To be checked - notice partially illegible' which is currently unchecked.

The top row has the usual Windows buttons to minimise or adjust the size of the window, and to close the program.

One may move from field to field either by using the mouse, the movement buttons at the top or by using the keyboard. The actions performed by the buttons should be self-explanatory, however their purpose can be revealed by holding the cursor on any of them. You may find it easier and quicker to create a new record by using Ctrl+N rather than using the mouse to select the 'Plus' sign.

The 'Create Text File' button is covered later. The 'Help' button gives brief instructions which are not as comprehensive as this file.

The 'Font' allows one to change the font size and typeface. A larger font may help those with 'tired eyes' and a different typeface may help in distinguishing between 'l' and 'i'.

The Newspaper Code

Each newspaper has a 2 character code, mostly 2 letters but some have a numeral. This is entered in the field under 'Newspaper' and the date is entered into the next field. It is in the form dd/mm/yyyy. The date may also be entered by using the date picker at the RH edge of this field. Note. When creating the .txt file, the paper and date entries are subsequently converted into the form XXyymmdd, e.g. MV150204, to facilitate computer indexing and searching. The same information is also included in the header record of the file, although in a slightly different format.

Names

The Family Name (Surname) is entered in uppercase followed by a comma and Given name(s) in the conventional 'Sentence case'. Every comma must be followed by a single space. HTML does not recognise a comma as a word separator, and will treat two words separated by a comma but no space as a single word.

For the same reason, always leave a space between the given name and the bracket before a nickname, so HTML uses the space as a word separator. If there are two or more nicknames enter each one within its own brackets, with a space between.

Do not leave two spaces anywhere between words - one space is all that is required.

Sometimes the deceased's given name is not known, but other useful information is available (e.g. the deceased was Mrs John SMITH). In this case we use parentheses to indicate the given name is not the actual name of the deceased. Mrs John SMITH is indexed as "SMITH, (Mrs John)"

Where there are no given names but only initials (e.g. SMITH, J. L.) do not include the full stops after the initials, i.e. index as SMITH, J L

Similarly, if there is a full stop within a surname, we replace it with a space, eg ST. JOHN would be indexed as ST JOHN (noting only one space, not two, within the surname.)

Nicknames

When entering a nickname, always enter it in round brackets (parentheses), regardless of how it is shown in the paper. Do not leave a space between the bracket and the start of the nickname, or between the end of the nickname and the final bracket.

If there are multiple nicknames, enter each one separately, eg "William (Bill) (Bluey)".

Nicknames are always placed **after all given names**, regardless of where they appear in the notice. For example, "William (Bill) Edward" is indexed as "William Edward" (Bill).

Obvious family-type nicknames (Aunty Mary, Gran, Nana etc.) are not indexed. "Pop" is a difficult one, because it is often applied because of age, rather than a family relationship. If in doubt, include it. Similarly for "Aunty", an increasingly common term for an indigenous elder.

When deciding whether a name is a nickname or a maiden name, look for the comma (or implied comma) between surname and given names. The normal convention is that (in the absence of a categorical statement such as nee or formerly) a name in brackets or quotes to the left of the comma is a surname, and to the right of the comma is a given name or nickname.

Titles and decorations/ Religious Names

Do not include titles and decorations. Dr, OAM, etc. can all be ignored.

The only exceptions are "Sister" and "Brother" as a religious title, included in brackets with the given names. For Sister, this is to avoid confusion when a male given name is used, e.g. "BROWN, (Sister Mary Paul)". For Brothers, only include it when the religious name is not the same as the given name.

Religious sisters/mothers, and sometimes brothers/fathers, can have two different sets of names, such as "Iris HOPPER, Sister Mary Paul" or "Alfred HOPPER (Brother Ignatius)". But sometimes we

only have the religious names, and sometimes we don't even have a surname (e.g. the Mother Superior of a convent is often known only as (say) Mother Theresa).

If we consider the religious name is no different to a nickname, then indexing these cases becomes simple:

No surname – we index with a surname of NOSURNAME, followed by the religious name, eg “NOSURNAME, (Mother Theresa)”

Religious name only – treat as a nickname, e.g. “HOPPER, (Sister Mary Paul)”, “HOPPER, (Brother Ignatius)”

Full name – index as usual, e.g. “HOPPER, Iris (Sister Mary Paul)”, “HOPPER, Alfred (Brother Ignatius)”

Previous Names

The Previous Name fields require a FULL NAME. Remember they are headed Previous Name, not Previous Surname! We can't just assume that the given names given in the Name field apply to Previous Name fields. It may be a full alias, with different surname and given names.

How to Handle a Missing Given Name

When there is no given name in the notice, we have two ways of handling the entry:

1. the preferred way (when the death was more than 30 years ago) is to check the BDM index for an entry which matches the known details in the notice – surname, date of death, and locality. If an **unambiguous** match can be made in the BDM index, we can insert the BDM given names into the Ryerson entry using square brackets [] to indicate this data has been inserted by us and is not part of the actual notice, eg “SMITH, [William H]”. If there is any doubt at all about a BDM entry matching the notice, then do not use the BDM details, and go to option 2 below. In the special case of overseas military deaths, the CWGC website is an acceptable alternative to the BDM index.
2. the alternate way to index it is "(un-named male)" or "(un-named female)" when you can work out the sex, or just "(un-named)" when you can't. When only "Mr" appears in the notice, this identifies him as an adult male, and is more specific than just "(un-named male)". Similarly with "Mrs" - because as well as identifying her as female, it also indicates married. In this case, it's better to use "(Mrs)" because it provides more information. Similarly with Miss - use "(Miss)" in preference to "(un-named female)". Sometimes only the husband's name or initials are given, e.g. Mrs John SMITH. This is indexed as "SMITH, (Mrs John)", the brackets indicating it is not her name. Try to include whatever information you can glean (sex, marital status, and approximate age) in the description, rather than just saying "(un-named)". Using the () means these entries appear at the top of a list by surname, and so everyone knows where to look for them.

Expanding a Vague Given Name

The same process used for a missing given name can be used when we have a vague given name, such as BROWN, J L” or “JONES, (Mrs John)”. We have a surname and a death date, so we can check the BDM indexes for an unambiguous match.

The difference here is that we **must** index what was published as the primary entry. If we have an unambiguous result from the BDM index (or other reliable source), we can add this result in square brackets in the Prev Name field, so we generate a cross-ref entry linking the two. In these cases, the primary name field must **not** contain square bracketed information.

As an example, if we found the only BROWN entry with a matching death date and a given name starting with J was John Leslie BROWN, then we would index like this:

Name: BROWN, J L

Prev Name 1: BROWN, [John Leslie]

Event Date

The date is entered in the same format as that of the newspaper, i.e. dd/mm/yyyy. The date picker can also be used for this field.

Partial Event Dates

Sometimes we don't have a full date – we may have only a month and year, or we may just have a year. The indexing software requires a full date to complete the entry, so in the case of a partial date we enter any valid date to get the record accepted, then we adjust the entry in the .txt file using any text editor (such as Notepad) as follows:

- (a) if we only have month and year, we replace the dd portion of the date with two hyphens (--)
- (b) if we only have a year, then
 - a. if the year is the same as the year in the publication date, we use the publication date (on the basis that it will more closely relate to the actual date than does just a year)
 - b. if the year is prior to the year in the publication date, we replace the ddmmyy portion of the date with five hyphens (-----)
- (c) and to avoid misunderstanding, if we have no date at all we use the publication date. We NEVER use “-----“.

Event Type

There are 6 options for the event type on a drop down menu and the program defaults to 'Death' as this is the most common and the most useful. The others are Funeral, Memorial Service, Cremation, Birth and Publication. If it is a funeral do not index the place where a funeral is to be held - the "at" field is for the place of death only. Birth is no longer required (it has its own field), so if the only date in the notice is a birth date, use publication date for the event date, and enter the birth date in its own field.

Location

The Location Search means that we need uniformity in how we enter place names. The Committee has decided the standard to follow is that set by the NSW Geographic Names Board (GNB), which (among other things) decrees that the apostrophe is not used in a place name to indicate ownership (e.g. Milson's Point is now Milsons Point). We have settled on this standard because people searching today will use today's spelling – that's what they know. It is a waste of their time, and puts increased load on our website, if we make people conduct two separate searches to find "Five Dock" (current spelling) and "Fivedock" (earlier spelling). Better to just go with the current spelling. However this does not necessarily apply to foreign names, in particular UK and Italian placenames often have apostrophes.

There are only a few simple rules to follow when entering place names in Ryerson.

If the spelling in the notice looks wrong, it probably is. Check the Postcode list, or (even better, because many tiny places do not have their own postcode) Google the spelling. You will either find it verified, or you will be given the correct spelling. If it's wrong in the notice, correct it.

The name of a hospital, nursing home or retirement village is indexed as published. Again, if you think the name looks wrong (such as transposed letters), Google it and correct if necessary. These names often contain an apostrophe (e.g. St Vincent's Hospital) – because these are organisations and not places, they are not subject to the GNB rules, and so the apostrophe stays.

The name of a property, or the name of a house (this generally applies to pre-WWII notices) is entered in single quotes (even if not in quotes in the notice), and is tied to the town or suburb name by the absence of a comma between the two. An example – *late of 'Emoh Ruo' Parramatta* or *at 'Ourplace' Gulargambone*.

Generally street names are NOT indexed. The ONLY exception is where there is no other information other than the street or road name – in this case it is indexed as being better than nothing. This will usually only apply to some country notices, or city notices prior to WWI.

Do not include street addresses in locations, unless the street name is part of a larger name (e.g. The South Street Hostel). Do not include street numbers.

Property names, however, are included. If shown in the notice within double quotes (""), then we index the property name within single quotes (') rather than double quotes. Sometimes what appears to be a property name appears without quotes and with a town following - in this case, Google the suspected property name and the town name together – this will usually confirm whether the property name is really a property name (in which case it goes in single quotes) or a locality (in which case a comma is inserted between the locality and the town name. NEVER use full stops, eg use NSW instead of N.S.W. This rule greatly simplifies location searching.

Abbreviations in Place Names

GNB place names do not abbreviate words like Mount, Creek, or River.

They do abbreviate words like Street (St), Road (Rd), and Avenue (Av).

And if you are still confused, join the club. Who can give a logical explanation for the place name Mount St Thomas (a suburb of Wollongong)? Or St George (Qld)?

If in doubt, the best advice is to refer to the *Gazeteer of Australian Place Names* at <https://placenames.fsdf.org.au/>

Location Fields

There are 3 Location fields; 'at', 'late of' and 'formerly of'.

At

When "at" and "late of" are identical, do not index "at" (e.g. "at Berry, late of Berry" is indexed as "late of Berry".) Otherwise, we index both places, even if the difference is slight (e.g. "at Berry Hospital, late of Berry" is indexed as "at Berry Hospital, late of Berry".)

We do index a named hospital, nursing home etc. appearing in the location fields (but not the non-specific "at hospital", "at a nursing home") because, particularly in the case of a nursing home, this is likely to be the location where the deceased last lived.

If the death notice gives the death place as "at sea" do not enter the "at" – it is already there.

We do not index the place where a funeral is to be held. The location fields are solely for details of where the deceased lived.

Late of

"Late of" is generally taken to mean the last place a person lived. However you may find instances where someone is recorded as late of 2 or more places, if so index it as such. If you can clearly identify the latest residence then use that for 'late of' and put the others into 'formerly of'.

We take "of" to be "late of". There are occasions where the deceased is shown as being "of" (and possibly "late of") several places and a phrase such as "more recently of" another place. Use the "recently of" location as 'late of' and the other(s) as 'formerly of'.

Formerly of

Most places which need to be entered into 'formerly of' will be clear once the 'late of' position has been clarified.

Birth Details (Date and Place)

In the past, few notices gave birth details, but now many do – and the prevalence is increasing – so we include it where it is available.

The Birth Date field is flexible enough to allow partial dates – if you only have a year, then type just the year. If you have a month and year, then enter the month and year in the format mm/yyyy.

If you have a full birthdate, enter it in the format dd/mm/yyyy.

The leading zero in the month is optional – it will be added if necessary when the date is formatted.

Age

Most ages are given in years and this is the default position. However the drop down offers Months, Weeks, Days, Infant and Stillborn. In cases such as "3½ months" index as "3 months", do not convert into weeks.

When a birthdate is given, but no age, then we don't calculate the age, for two reasons: (1) there are too many incorrect birthdates published for us to always get it right, and (2) if we did, it would have to be enclosed in square brackets.

When an age is given as "in his 90th year", the age to enter is 89, not 90. Remember you do not complete your 90th year until your 90th birthday - you are aged 89 throughout your 90th year.

Notice Type

The purpose of this field is to guide the researcher to the correct part of the newspaper in order that the notice can be easily found. This may not be a big issue with country papers, where all the deaths and funerals are easily covered on the one page. But for a paper the size of the "*Sydney Morning Herald*", the "*Herald Sun*" or the "*West Australian*", Death Notices and Funeral Notices quite often appear on different pages. Legal notices may be in a different place altogether.

In the Good Old Days, it was simple. A Death Notice was published to advise of a death, and a day or two later a Funeral Notice was published to advise the funeral details. When the newspapers started to increase the cost of publishing a notice people cut out one of the notices, and combined the death and funeral notices into a single notice. They may appear under either "Death Notices", "Funeral Notices" or "Death and Funeral Notices". Some current papers have separate Death and Funeral notices adjacent to each other but some older editions (e.g. SMH in 1800s) have the 2 types of notices in different parts of the paper. Legal notices are similarly in different locations in the paper.

As we index these combined death/funeral notices, there may be confusion as to whether to label the notice a Death Notice or a Funeral Notice.

So, bearing in mind the purpose of the Notice Type, the type to select becomes simple. If the notice is published under the heading "Death Notices", then it is a Death Notice. If the notice is published under the heading "Funeral Notices", then it is a Funeral Notice. If the heading is "Death and Funeral Notices" we use the 'Death Notice' code. It doesn't matter that the notice published under the "Death Notices" heading looks just like a funeral notice. It is the heading which matters, nothing else.

There are five possible values in the dropdown box which the Notice Type can take:

- Death Notice (this is the program default)
- Funeral Notice
- Legal Notice (sometimes published under the headings Probate Notice, or Distribution of Estate, or Transmission by Death)
- Obituary
- Other

The first four are obvious, based on the heading under which the notice is published.

The "Other" notice type is to cover the various headings which are now starting to appear in newspapers, such as "Bereavements". We have taken the approach of using a generic term "Other" rather than try and accommodate the different descriptions used by different papers, both now and in the future.

If you come across a notice which does not clearly fit under one of these headings, please ask via the mailing list.

And - most importantly - remember that any notice published under the "In Memoriam" heading with a death date more than one year ago is NOT indexed, under any circumstances.

Previous Names

The most common previous names are those of married women. The notice will be under their married name but include the Birth Family Name (i.e. nee) and a previous married name or two. Occasionally there are quite different names which may be aliases or pseudonyms. Frequently the birth given names of religious sisters are shown. These are all indexed. Previous names all require the full name i.e. Family Name and Given Name(s) in the same format as the principal Name field.

Merging Entries

When there are multiple entries **of one type** (eg Death or Funeral) on the same day for the same person, and where the indexer is convinced that these notices relate to the same person, the data from these notices can be merged into a single entry in Ryerson.

The operative word is "convinced". There will be cases that fall into the "is it the same person or not?" category. The simple solution - if you are in any doubt at all, then index each notice separately. Only if you are completely convinced should the notices be merged.

General guidelines to decide whether or not to merge are:

- the surnames in each notice must be identical. This is non-negotiable - different surnames mean no merging.
- any given names in the notices must be the same (allowing for variations like an extra given name, or a nickname).
- any dates given in the notices must be identical (i.e. if a death date is given in both, then the dates must be identical). If only one has a death date, then look at other data to decide.
- names of parents, siblings or children, if given, must be similar. However, we need to allow for variations in given names like William and Bill, Elizabeth and Betty, etc., and we also need to remember that, with multiple marriages, children from one marriage may not be listed in a notice submitted by their step-siblings or step-parent.
- location details, if given, must be similar (allowing for variations like "at St Leonards" and "at RNSH", or "at hospital" and "at Westmead Hospital").
- age, if given, must be the same - or at least very close, if other evidence is compelling.

Remember, **the merging process applies only to notices for the same notice type and person on the same day**. We do not merge details from notices published on different days - every day is treated as a separate instance for indexing purposes.

Combined Death and Funeral Notices

It is common these days to find one notice which contains both death and funeral information.

It also happens that sometimes both a death notice and a funeral notice is published on the same day for the same person. This practice has now almost died out, in favour of a combined notice, but can still be found when back-indexing.

This is a guide to indexing these two cases.

For many years, we did not index the funeral date when both a death date and a funeral date appeared in the same notice. This was in line with our concentration on DEATH details. However, indexing both dates can sometimes give a researcher another avenue to follow up if required, so we need to be able to record the funeral date.

If a Combined notice contains both death and funeral date:

We index one entry using the death date, with whatever location details are present.

We then index a second notice, containing only the name and funeral date. The name can be copied from the first notice and pasted into the second notice, to save time. We don't repeat the location details.

Note that both entries will have the same notice type, depending on the heading under which the combined notice is published. The presence of a funeral date in a death notice does not make the notice a funeral notice.

If a Combined notice contains only a funeral date:

We create one entry showing the funeral date, and any other indexable information in the notice, with the notice type still dependent on the heading under which the notice is published.

If a Combined notice contains no date:

We create one entry showing the publication date, with the notice type still dependent on the heading under which the notice is published.

Separate Death and Funeral Notices for the Same Person on the Same Day

We no longer combine information from a death notice and a funeral notice for the same person.

Each notice is indexed individually.

To be checked

The only reason this field should be ticked is if the printing in the notice is unclear – a tick will generate the words “[poor image]” at the end of the location fields.

Obituaries

In relation to the date field, more obituaries have a birth and death range than have a precise death date, and we can only show one of them on the website because they use the same database field. The simple way out when you have a precise death date and place is to include it, and ignore the pop-up field which requests the birth-death year range.

Obituaries are indexed in the same way as other notices, with one exception:

1. (a) For the **SMH only**, enter the headline of the obituary into the 'At' field. Place information and birth details are not required for these types of notices.

(b) For **non-SMH** obituaries, place and birth details can be extracted from the body of the obituary and indexed in the usual way.

If a precise death date is present, then index it. However, many obituaries include only a span of years (e.g. 1929–2015) so if this is all we have, then we include it. When the notice type is set to Obituary, an additional box will open up. Enter the birth year followed by a dash and then the death year (e.g. 1929–2015) in this box, and leave the death date box with its default date (it will be ignored when the .txt record is created). Ignore the death date warning if it appears.

The precise way to enter an obituary **without** a date range sometimes causes problems. This is the correct way to enter the notice:

- Enter name, death date, birth date, location etc (whatever is available) and select "obituary", then click +.
- (Maybe) Get the message about the death date being more than a month ago - accept it.
- Get the message about the date range, **do nothing to the field**, just click +.
- (Maybe) A repeat of the message about the death date being more than a month ago - accept it.
- Entry complete, and ready to enter the next entry.

Back-Indexing

There is a vast (and growing) supply of past issues of newspapers available online, particularly via Trove. Many indexers decide at some stage to take one or more of their papers backwards from their starting point – most commonly because they have a personal research interest in the locality.

We encourage this in every case – but if you intend to do so, please contact the Secretary (at secretary@ryersonindex.org) to register your interest, so that we avoid doubling up of effort.

It is not surprising, particularly with the older papers, to find gaps in the publication sequence available via Trove, or on the microfilm reels. Some early issues of papers have not survived. Should you come across this situation, where there is no paper available on a scheduled publication date (and the paper wasn't published a day earlier or later), then the correct procedure is to notify the webmaster (at johngrah@ozemail.com.au) of the missing issue, so a note can be made on the newspaper page. Under no circumstances should you submit a NIL return, because that tells users that the date has been checked and nothing was found, which is definitely not the case when the issue is missing.

Indexing The West Australian

This paper is sufficiently different in its organisation to warrant special indexing instructions. The main points of difference are:

1. It is the practice in Perth for a wide range of relatives, friends and associates to insert their individual Death Notice – up to 10 for the same person on some days. The vast majority of these contain no indexable information aside from the name, which is often a nickname only. Usually only the notice submitted by the immediate family contains most of the usual indexable information.
2. Most notices are repeated, often every day for a week.
3. Death Notices have their own index, and Funeral notices have their own index.
4. Entries in the Death Notice index are prefixed by an asterisk if this is the first publication of a notice for that person.

To cut down on the amount of work for the indexers, and because most notices after the first day are usually from associates and contain little indexable information, we have decided to index the first occurrence of a death notice only – because this is easily identified by the asterisk in the index.

The saving in time for our indexers by not indexing repeat notices is considerable. We appreciate this may in some cases result in the information from the immediate family notice not being included in Ryerson because it was not published on the first day notices for a person were published. It is also possible that a subsequent notice may correct an error in the original notice – we will miss these too. But we also expect researchers to have the nous to think to look at subsequent issues of the paper for further information.

The usual rules regarding merging of notices apply within the Death Notices grouping, and within the Funeral Notices grouping (where occasions to merge are almost non-existent – one person, one funeral notice.) As with other papers, merging does not apply across both groups of notices, but only within each group.

The normal sequence of events to index an issue of The West Australian is thus:

1. Index all death notices where the name has an asterisk in the index, merging information from multiple notices for the same person.
2. Index all funeral notices

If indexing multiple issues of this paper, it is vital (as it is with all papers) not to carry information across issues. We can only index what is published on the day.

Create Text File

This button does what it says – it creates a .txt file in the format expected by the database update program.

When you click 'Create Text File' a new window appears. It will show a folder with the name you define for 'Unsent Data', containing a text file of the indexing with a name in the XXyymmdd format described above in the "The Newspaper" section. The text file is generated from a hidden file of the data. The top line will show the program version (e.g. !Rlv7.0) the newspaper day/date code and your identifying name.

You should check your work in the text file, particularly for misspellings in the name and place fields. Any errors may be corrected in the text file, but it is recommended that you go back to the indexing program and make corrections there before using 'Create Text File' button again. This is because corrections made in the text file do not change the hidden file - therefore if you have corrections in the text file do NOT go back to the indexing program and re-create the text file or your changes will be removed.

Submitting Your Indexing

The preferred method of submission is via Dropbox, using the "Ryerson Files" folder. This link would have been established for you following your training course. As you complete each day's indexing, copy the .txt file(s) to the Ryerson Files folder - that's all you need to do. The files within this folder will be picked up by the daily update run and added to the database.

If you do not use Dropbox, then all files **must** be submitted in zipped format, using either Winzip, or similar software. You can download a copy of Winzip (the final free version, not the current paid version) from 'Resources for Indexers' if you don't already have it installed. However probably the simplest approach is to highlight the files, right click and 'Send to' Compressed (zipped) folder and rename the folder to something that makes sense to you. If you are indexing more than one paper in a session, do not zip and send each file separately. Only send a single .zip file at the end of your indexing session, containing all the .txt files you have created in that session.

When you have sent your submission you should move the sent files into the 'Sent' folder. Do not delete them until you have ensured that they have been entered into Ryerson Index on the web. You can easily do this from 'Newspaper coverage' on the RI front page and checking the details for your newspaper.

You can easily check the details for each issue from Resources for Indexers -> Particular paper and date link. When you have submitted lots of small files during a period, a spot check that all is OK is sufficient – we don't expect that you check EVERY file. But please spot check a few files from each different newspaper you have submitted – we have had cases of incorrect newspaper codes being used.

The Mailing List

Ryerson operates a mailing list for all members, and it is a requirement of membership that you subscribe (and stay subscribed) to the list.

The list has two main uses:

1. So that the Committee can communicate with ALL indexers quickly and easily, on items that affect all members (such as the release of a new version of the indexing software).
2. So that individual indexers can ask questions if they are unsure of what to do in any particular circumstance. Asking via the mailing list means that other indexers (who may have the same issue) will see the answer, and everyone is then kept up to speed.

We accept that some people like to unsubscribe from all mailing lists if they will be away for a period, but we do require that you re-subscribe when you return and are ready to start indexing again.

To subscribe go to http://www.freelists.org/list/ryerson_index and enter your email address in the space provided. Leave the Action at "Subscribe" and click "Go". You will get an email asking you to confirm your subscription. You must confirm, and this must be done as soon as you get the email or the offer will expire. When you have subscribed you will get a welcome email so that you will know that you are on the list.