



BENDIGO REGIONAL ARCHIVES CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 2014



Contents

Who we are	2
What we do	2
Our Mission	2
Message from the Chair	3
Management and Staff	4
Highlights	5
Strategic Initiatives 2013-2014	7
Overview - BRAC first five years 2009 - 2014.	11
Measures and Outputs	12
Appendix 1	13

Front Cover Reference



Montage of correspondence from local businesses, Certificate from the Royal Humane Society of Australia (VPRS 16936 – Bendigo Incoming Correspondence), original Council Seal, BRAC Collections.

Bendigo Regional Archives Centre (BRAC)

Preserving our community's history

Who we are

Bendigo Regional Archives Centre (BRAC) was established on 24 October 2007 under the *Associations Incorporations Act 1981* (Vic) through a partnership between Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB) and the Goldfields Library Corporation (GLC) to provide a combined regional archives service for the Goldfields Region.

Our facility was approved under Section 14(1) of the *Public Records Act 1973* as a Place of Deposit (POD) for the better preservation, management and utilisation of public records as specified by the Keeper of Public Records.

BRAC was made possible through a \$1.3 million grant from the State Government Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. This has enabled the building of an onsite repository and public access point within the Bendigo Library, Hargreaves Street, and an off-site archival storage facility at Nolan Street in North Bendigo.

What we do

We aim to collect, preserve and make available regional records of community and local interest, including records of the state and local government, private industry, community groups and individuals in their place of origin, and make them accessible to all researchers.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to:

- Preserve our community's records in their place of origin.
- Provide access to our community's records and encourage their use.
- Build partnerships between government and the community.
- Develop relationships that enable the sharing of community knowledge.

Message from the Chair



This year we celebrated our fifth anniversary, giving us the opportunity to look back and reflect on how far we have come as well as look forward to new opportunities the future brings us. In the next five years, I am seeing opportunities that will develop our collection, improve our resources and engage with our community in new and innovative ways.

Over the next five years we aim to increase the diversity of our collection by encouraging transfers of community records, as well as developing our online resources and spaces to enhance access and enable the sharing of stories.

In January this year we settled into our newly refurbished home within the Bendigo Library and celebrated with the launch of our new website. Since then, our online visitors have more than doubled and we have also seen steady increases in the number of researchers who have visited the Reading Room. This, in part, is due to our enthusiastic volunteers who have added another 273 petitions and nearly 11,000 indexed names to the Petitions of the People online project which is rapidly becoming a popular who's who of Bendigo.

We are increasing the relevance of our collection within the community with our records featuring in the Post Office Gallery exhibition "A cure for all ills: Medicine in Bendigo" and staff delivering several well attended public seminars and talks throughout the year.

What we have achieved together in this partnership has been the result of the great deal of planning, dedication and effort of many people who continue to build this Centre into a valuable resource for the community.

At this five year milestone in our Centre's history, I would like to acknowledge and thank all former and present members of our Committee who have made BRAC what it is today. This year in particular, we said farewell to Carolyn Macvean who, in her role as CEO of the Goldfields Library Corporation, supported BRAC from its very beginning and was a keen advocate of what we set out to achieve. Thanks also go to Acting CEO Sue Howard and to Clare Needham who stepped down from our Advisory Committee.

We welcome Chris Kelly, new CEO of the Goldfields Library Corporation, who joined the Committee of Management this year and has brought with her a new commitment to the success of the Centre. New Advisory Committee member Tansy Curtin will also bring new ideas and guidance for the Centre.

Finally, and on behalf of the Committee of Management, I would like to thank our Operations Committee who do the work that supports our strategic goals, our volunteers who commit their time and skills in making records accessible and our staff who are the public face of our Centre.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justine Heazlewood'.

Justine Heazlewood
Chair

Management and Staff

Committee of Management

The Committee of Management, established under Schedule 5 of the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic)*, is responsible for overseeing the budget and implementing the Corporate Plan.

The Committee of Management is represented by members of the three establishing bodies.

Members 2013 – 2014

Justine Heazlewood, Director and Keeper of Public Records, PROV (Chair)
Graeme Hairsine, Assistant Director, Access Services, PROV (returned Oct 2013)
Alison McNulty, Acting Assistant Director, Access Services, PROV (Oct 2012 – Oct 2013)
Marg Allan, Director, Organisational Support, CoGB (Treasurer)
Cr Rod Fyffe, Councillor, CoGB
Carolyn Macvean, CEO, Goldfields Library Corporation (to Dec 2013)
Sue Howard, Acting Chief Executive Officer, GLC (Dec 2013 – May 2014)
Chris Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, GLC (June 2014 - current)
Vivien Newton, Manager, Bendigo Library, GLC (Secretary and Public Officer)

BRAC Advisory Committee

Dr Charles Fahey, La Trobe University, Bendigo (Chair)
Ms Tansy Curtin, Senior Curator, Bendigo Art Gallery (April 2014 - current)
Mr Kevin de Vries, Business representative
Mrs Alleyne Hockley, Castlemaine Historical Society Inc.
Ms Rita Hull, Bendigo Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Inc
Ms Kathryn Mackenzie, Executive Manager, Tourism, City of Greater Bendigo
Ms Clare Needham, Curator, City History and Collections, Bendigo Art Gallery (July 2013 – April 2014)
Mr Bruce Smith, Archive Research Consultancy
Mr David Wright, Local Government record keeping, Public administration

Operations Committee

Tracey Manallack, Manager, Community Archives, PROV
Lauren Bourke, Coordinator, Community Archives, PROV
Dr Dannielle Orr, Heritage Planner, CoGB
Michael Smyth, Manager, Information Management, CoGB
Vivien Newton, Manager, Bendigo Library, GLC
Jordana Lory, Manager, Information Services, GLC

BRAC Archives Officers

Dr. Michele Matthews
Claire McLeod (August 2013 – current)

Highlights

Consolidating the BRAC service in Bendigo Library's new building

From August 2012 to December 2013 Bendigo Library, the Goldfields Research Centre and BRAC operated from temporary premises.

Moving back into the Library in January 2014 saw BRAC staff working alongside the removalists, packing and unpacking hundreds of volumes, correspondence and map boxes. All items were successfully transferred to the Hargreaves Street repository. New location labels were printed and attached to each volume and box. New procedures were developed to allow researchers to order records online and on demand.

The updated facilities and much larger Reading Room have enabled staff to welcome up to 24 Researchers at any one time. From March 2014, Volunteers were able to use the increased space and resources to resume their Petitions and Indexing projects. These projects had to be suspended while the service was in its temporary location.

Celebrating BRAC's fifth birthday in June 2014



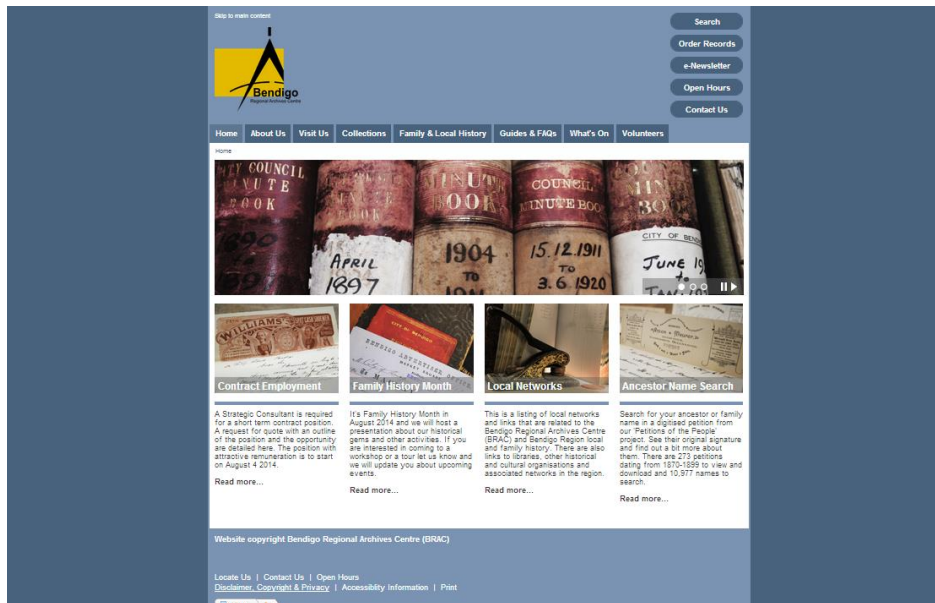
Pictured here are Cr. Rod Fyffe, CoGB, CEO Chris Kelly, GLC, and Graeme Hairsine, Assistant Director, Access Services, PROV.

BRAC Staff presented a variety of events and activities for BRAC's 5th Birthday Celebrations at the end of June 2014. There were open days, tours, workshops, and talks. Radio, print, website and social media publicity generated healthy interest and well attended events. Local ABC radio, the Bendigo Advertiser and PROV extended the reach of the publicity.

The week of activities culminated with the launch of the new website and an official Birthday celebratory afternoon tea, complete with Birthday cake-cutting ceremony.

The BRAC Birthday events were a great success, with significant new interest received from both members of the public and organisations. This was reflected in the number of visitors and enquiries that occurred during and after the Birthday week, including a large spike in website hits.

Completion and launch of the new BRAC website – www.brac.vic.gov.au



In July 2013 the planning, design and delivery of the new BRAC website was developed as a separate project. Claire McLeod was appointed to do this work and was subsequently employed as an Archives Officer when a position became available in August 2013.

The BRAC website was a collaborative project. Claire McLeod with the City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB) Web development staff set up the template and framework. Staff from PROV, BRAC, the Bendigo Library and the CoGB Heritage Department, and Genealogy group volunteers were included in the development of content.

From the time the new BRAC website went live in late February 2014, website usage was very high. 474 hits in February/March 2014 compared to 84 hits in February/March 2012. The website was completed with final changes in June 2014, and the launch event accompanied the BRAC 5th Birthday celebrations on 26 June. With more than 50 people at the launch the event was a great success. Publicity for the website launch and BRAC Birthday celebrations led to a spike in web usage, with 579 hits for June 2014.

The website has greatly enhanced access to BRAC resources and information. Digitised Petitions dating from 1870 to 1899, BRAC information guides, the BRAC e-Newsletter 'Bric-a-BRAC' and photographs of the collection are all easily found.

Website hits have increased from an average of 30 per month in 2012 to an average of 300 per month since February 2014. Statistics show that 70% of users each month are new users. An average of 90 users per month are finding the BRAC website through search engines, 90 users are linking from the GLC website, and 80 users are linking from the PROV website.

Bendigo Regional Archives Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government through the Local History Grants Program for making this project possible.

Strategic Initiatives 2013-2014

Ensure that the BRAC archival collection is developed, preserved and made available to the community.

Preservation of early BRAC volumes

BRAC was awarded a grant of \$5,500.00 from the Frances and Harold Abbott Foundation, which is administered by Sandhurst Trustees Ltd. This grant will be used for the conservation of early Sandhurst Rate Books. Work on the volumes in need of varying degrees of repair will be completed by June 2015.

Petitions Online

Our Petitions' Project continued to grow throughout the relocation. Petitions from the Bendigo Council nineteenth century Inwards Correspondence files (VPRS 16936) are being transcribed, indexed, digitised and placed online. 273 Petitions with 10,977 indexed names were uploaded to the new website in February 2014.

Another 5,000 names and accompanying 22 Petitions have been transcribed and are ready for the digitisation process.

Our volunteers Sandie, Norma, Eileen, Helen, Jo and Bev have continued to work on this project with great enthusiasm. We are indebted to them for their assistance, local knowledge and dedication.

Researchers keen to locate details for their ancestors find these historic documents invaluable in providing a snapshot of the issues that concerned residents and moved them to put pen to paper. The thrill of finding an example of family handwriting adds to the experience.

The remaining 330 petitions are being worked on. At the completion of the project more than 600 petitions with 25,000 names will have been digitised and indexed.

In connection with the Petitions project indexing of the 1856-1899 Bendigo (Sandhurst) Council Inwards Correspondence has continued as a Volunteer project. Volunteer Helen is working her way through the 52 boxes of correspondence.

New Records Available

At the end of June 2014, another 14 series of Local Government records were transferred to BRAC.

For a full listing of these new BRAC series see the Appendix to this report. (p.13)

Develop BRAC capacity and capability to deliver and improve services, and encourage ongoing staff development and learning.

BRAC opening hours extended

The redevelopment of the Bendigo Library has provided an opportunity to extend BRAC opening hours. Since January 2014, BRAC has been open from 10.00 am to 4.30pm Wednesdays and Thursdays, a total of 13 hours per week which is an increase of 5 hours per week.

Researchers have responded to these increased hours with many taking advantage of the morning opening times. Interstate and Melbourne researchers often choose to work in the Reading room for the entire day, taking only a short lunch break.

Presentations

Dr. Michele Matthews' talks were popular throughout the year. In September 2013, Michele presented an overview of the Petitions' project to the Bendigo Historical Society's monthly meeting.

In March 2014, Michele was asked to speak about the BRAC collection to a meeting of Victorian Mercy Archivists, held at Catholic College Bendigo.

In April 2014, the Petitions' project was the subject of a talk to the Bendigo Regional Genealogical Society's monthly meeting.

In June 2014, Michele was a featured speaker for the Post Office Gallery's exhibition "A cure for all ills: Medicine in Bendigo". She used the Council's Health Officer's reports, located in VPRS 16936 Sandhurst/Bendigo Inwards Correspondence, to describe the history of Miners' Phthisis, and the dreadful social impact this disease had on local individuals, their families, and the wider Bendigo and district community.

"Historical Gems held at the Bendigo Regional Archives Centre" was the feature talk for the BRAC 5th Birthday celebrations week in June 2014.



Michele and a Tour group in the Repository.

Staff Professional Development

BRAC staff developed their research and communication skills by presenting talks and workshops throughout the year to a variety of audiences. In October 2013, Claire McLeod received general training at the Ballarat Archives Centre. Claire also received IT and website content management training from CoGB IT staff in January 2014. In June 2014, BRAC staff received training in Occupational Health and Safety, Manual handling, basic Conservation, and Disaster management from PROV staff.

Publicising the Collection

In March 2014, BRAC again participated in the Bendigo AIGS Family History Expo, one of the largest annual regional Family History events in Victoria. Over 60 consultants and specialists were available on the day to help researchers. As part of the Expo, BRAC staff provided information and advice on our collections and services. This event resulted in an increase in both researchers visiting the Reading Room and research requests emailed to BRAC.

Dr Michele Matthews continued to highlight BRAC records, in her monthly column published in the Bendigo Historical Society's e-Newsletter. Series publicised included: the Bendigo Council's Building Registers, the Victorian Gold Jubilee exhibition, Bendigo Council Staff Salaries, Annual Receipts and Expenditure reports, Mining agreements with the Bendigo Council, Committee Minutes, the Court series Cause Lists-Criminal (VPRS 16736) which includes "neglected" children; Decrees, Judgements and Orders (VPRS17031) which is a record of local Divorce cases.

e-Newsletter

In May, staff compiled and sent out the first BRAC e-Newsletter, christened Bric-a-BRAC. Quarterly editions will be produced in August, November, February and May each year. News about BRAC activities, events, updates of new series available and the Petitions' project were all promoted in the first e-Newsletter. BRAC Researchers and website visitors are encouraged to subscribe to Bric-a-BRAC.

Our Records on Show

In February-August 2014, records from our collection were displayed as part of "A cure for all Ills: Medicine in Bendigo" exhibition staged at the Post Office Gallery. Specifically, the Bendigo Council Infectious Diseases volume, Children's Baby Health Centre cards, and a Staff salaries volume were used for this exhibition. BRAC is committed to supporting the historical exhibitions in the Post Office Gallery.

Researching at BRAC

BRAC records continue to be used for wide ranging research.

Examples include:-

Using Expenditure reports to trace the cost of the furniture in the original Council chamber in the Bendigo Town Hall;

A study of Racism towards local Chinese residents by a La Trobe-Bendigo student;

Using Court records to locate details of a 1908 Divorce;

The City Curator identifying records most suited to be used in Post Office Gallery exhibitions;

Staff salary volumes were used to trace the work history of an ancestor;

Rate books and Building Registers were used by CoGB consultants preparing the White Hills Heritage study;

A NSW researcher used Heathcote Rate books to trace her ancestors' details;

A Perth researcher used Cause List-Criminal volumes to trace a family manslaughter case;

A La Trobe University honours student used Bendigo Rate Books for her study of Long Gully residents;

The 20th century Correspondence was used for a book about the Kennington branch of the Red Cross;

And Bendigo Council Plans were used to trace the history of Wattle Square.

BRAC Advisory Committee

Since 2010, BRAC has been fortunate to have the voluntary services of a group of highly experienced people from a range of fields with an interest in Archives. This Committee have shared their expertise with BRAC staff and management, and promoted BRAC's services through their own professional and business networks.

The BRAC Advisory Committee meets twice a year, in May and November. Discussions over the last 12 months ranged across the many facets of BRAC operations, statistical analysis of BRAC Researchers, the development of the new website, the plans for the fifth Birthday celebrations, means of promoting BRAC both locally and further afield, funding avenues for BRAC into the future, and suggestions for other people to be co-opted onto the Advisory Committee in the future.

All Committee members are thanked sincerely for their constructive and enthusiastic contributions to the continuing development of BRAC.

Overview - BRAC first five years 2009 - 2014.

Year	Researchers	Visitors*	Volunteers	Phone/Email Queries	Web Hits	Records Picked
2013-2014	243	340	178	467	1808	1062
2012-2013	183	124	164	404	557	965
2011-2012	293	220	531	244	499	1506
2010-2011	258	224	383	233	528	1241
2009-2010	186	261	223	38	268	821

*The definition of a Visitor is anyone who attends the BRAC Reading room in person, to ask questions, find out about the records held at BRAC, to make a private donation, or requires assistance with the PROV online catalogue. (These are only a few examples of the many reasons people visit BRAC.)

BRAC was only open for four days in December 2013 and two days in January 2014. Considering the relocation to Hargreaves Street, the Researcher (243) and records picked (1062) figures for 2013-2014 are impressive. BRAC has had 340 Visitors during 2013-2014 due to interest in the new Reading Room, together with it being the venue for the June Birthday tours and workshops. The number of Phone and email queries in 2013-2014 (467) is a long way from the humble beginnings of 2009-2010 (38).

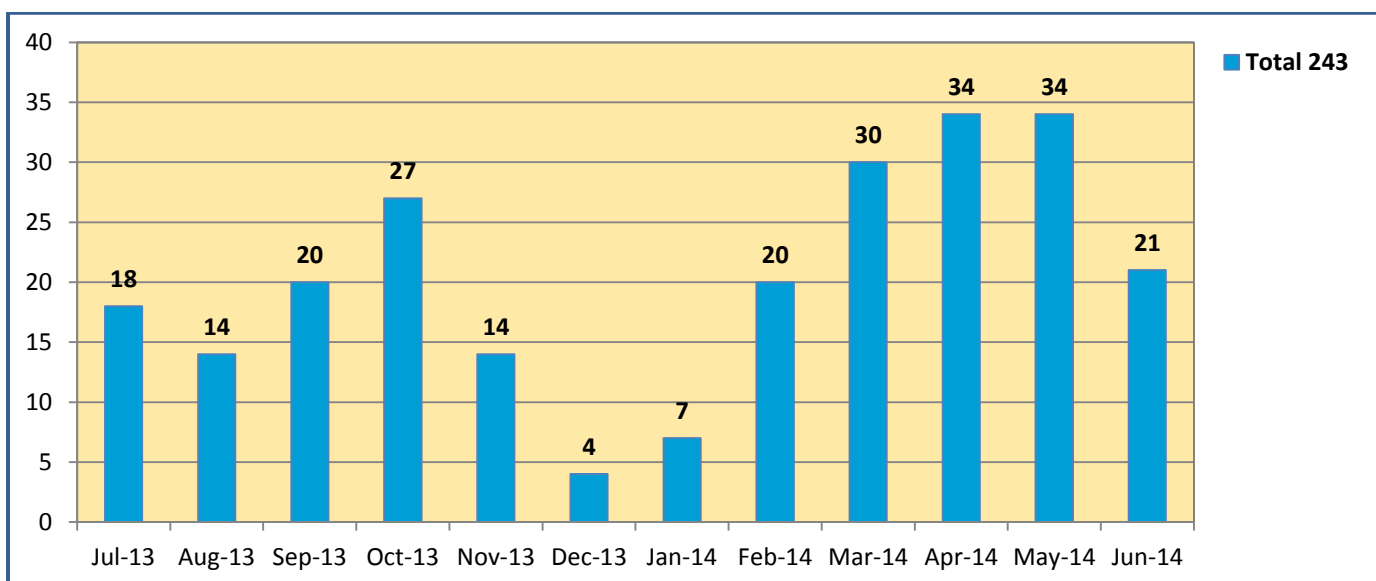
Since the return to the new Library in January 2014, Researcher, Visitor and Volunteer numbers have all steadily increased. Researcher numbers increased by 51% compared to the last half of 2013. Interest in visiting our newly renovated Reading Room has been high. Researchers comment on the extra space, the longer opening hours and the greater variety of records available on demand since the most highly used records have been returned to the Hargreaves Street repository. There is no doubt that the usage figures in 2014 are at least equal if not somewhat higher than 2012 figures, meaning BRAC usage is now as high as it has ever been.

Nolan Street houses the lesser used records. These can be ordered the week before a researcher visits BRAC. They are then couriered to the Hargreaves Street Reading Room.

2013-2014 Volunteer numbers (178) have slightly exceeded the levels set in 2012-2013 (164), even though all Petitions' volunteers and the Bendigo Regional Genealogy Society Indexers only returned to their work in March 2014.

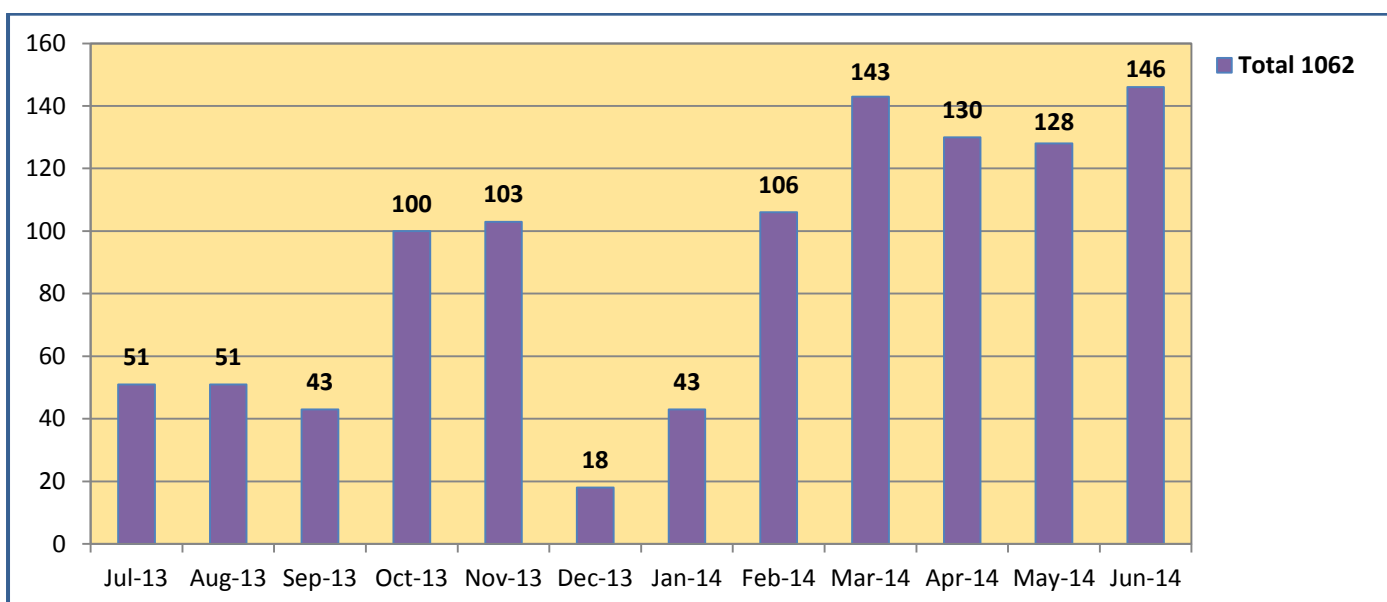
Measures and Outputs

Researcher Statistics July 2013 – June 2014



In the first half of 2014 Researcher numbers were well up from the last half of 2013. Researchers increased by 51% from 97 (July to Dec) to 146 (Jan to June).

Records Retrieved July 2013 -June 2014



In the first half of 2014 the numbers of records retrieved almost doubled compared to the last half of 2013. Records retrieved increased by 90% from 366 (July to Dec) to 696 (Jan to June).

Finances

BRAC does not hold separate financial records. All financial dealings are undertaken by the City of Greater Bendigo.

Appendix 1

New BRAC series available 2013-2014

www.prov.vic.gov.au

1.	VPRS 7006/P2, Mclvor Rate books	9 vols.	1878-96;1903;1910
2.	VPRS 7010/P2, Mclvor Minute books	51 vols.	1927-1994
3.	VPRS 7015/P2, Mclvor Letter books	24 vols.	1977-1994
4.	VPRS 17059/P1, Eaglehawk Valuation	1 vol.	1871-1882
5.	VPRS 17060/P1, Strathfieldsaye Valuations	5 vols.	1870-1879
6.	VPRS 17061/P1, Marong Valuations	19 vols.	1870-1988
7.	VPRS16137/P1, Strathfieldsaye Minutes	52 vols./boxes	1864-1994
8.	VPRS 17058/P1, Marong Committee Minutes	4 vols.	1881-1911
9.	VPRS 17062/P1, Sandhurst Council Valuations	6 vols.	1856-59; 1862-63
10.	VPRS 17063/P1, Sandhurst/Bendigo Protest book	1 vol.	1889-1974
11.	VPRS 17064/P1, Bendigo Town Clerk's Reports	29 vols.	1968-1986
12.	VPRS 17065/P1, Sandhurst/Bendigo Registers of Inwards Correspondence	5 vols	1876-1915
13.	VPRS 17066/P1, Raywood Rate books	3 vols.	1865-83; 1896-1915
14.	VPRS 17067/P1, Raywood Minute books	5 vols.	1865-1915