

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

HAB451

(Question Serial No. 3887)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (5) Public Libraries

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Ms Michelle LI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Home Affairs

Question:

Regarding the provision of public library service for persons with difficulties in reading printed works, will the Government inform this Committee:

- (a) of the number of audio books and e-books which can be read with a screen reader in the present public library collections, with a breakdown by individual public library;
- (b) whether resources have been earmarked for the acquisition of audio books or e-books in 2016-17; if so, of the content of the acquisition plan and the estimated expenditure involved; if not, of the reasons for that;
- (c) whether the Government will strengthen the promotion of the public library services for persons with difficulties in reading printed works to the groups with such need; if so, of the content of the action plan; if not, of the reasons for that?

Asked by: Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Member Question No. 376)

Reply:

- (a) The number of physical audio books in the library collections of the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) is about 137 000. Besides, the HKPL currently acquires or subscribes to 7 e-book collections, and members of the public may make use of the Internet workstations that are equipped with screen reader software to read about 6 000 e-books including 1 500 audio books. These collections are acquired for the entire HKPL system and a breakdown by individual public library is not available.
- (b) In 2016-17, the HKPL plans to acquire or subscribe to 8 e-book collections (covering about 240 000 titles) and 7 000 physical audio books. The estimated expenditures for the acquisition of or subscription to physical audio books and e-book collections are \$4.5 million.

- (c) The HKPL will strengthen the promotion of the public library services for persons with difficulties in reading printed works through the following measures:
- (i) the HKPL will continue to collaborate with relevant non-government organisations serving the visually impaired people by providing block loan service and arranging library visits for their members. The HKPL will also step up promotion through various publicity channels or during reader engagement activities such as user education sessions, school visits and workshops;
 - (ii) the HKPL will enhance special aiding devices to facilitate people with difficulties in reading printed works. These facilities include screen magnification software and the Cantonese and English screen reader software which are installed at Internet workstations in 34 public libraries. Desktop video magnifiers are also provided in 28 public libraries for people with visual impairment to read printed materials such as newspapers, books or periodicals; and
 - (iii) the HKPL will continue to increase library resources in different format such as audio books and audio e-books which are suitable for people with visual impairment.

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