

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

HAB526

(Question Serial No. 4253)

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:

The Government estimated that the number of registered borrowers of public libraries is 4.4 million in 2016, which maintains at about 60% of the population. However, the research brief released by the Legislative Council Secretariat indicated that usage of local public libraries faced downward pressure. For example, the numbers of books and multimedia items on loan have fallen by a cumulative 11% or 51 million books and 52% or 1.9 million items respectively between 2005 and 2014. Will the Government earmark expenses and manpower to enhance the promotion of public library services, nurture a reading culture and examine the reasons for the decline in the number of loans? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai (Member Question No. 89)

Reply:

The Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) will continue its efforts in promoting public library services and nurturing a reading culture through a basket of measures:

- (a) the HKPL will organise a wide variety of territory-wide reading activities. Territory-wide reading activities include Reading Programmes for Children and Youth, Reading Clubs, Paired Reading Talks and Workshops, Thematic Storytelling Workshops, "Meet-the-Authors" Talk Series, "Summer Reading Month", "4.23 World Book Day Creative Competition", etc. Thematic panels as well as roving exhibitions of books with tie-in recommended booklists are scheduled for display at various libraries. The expenditure borne by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in organising extension activities and other publicity work in 2016-17 is estimated at \$8.91 million;
- (b) the HKPL will foster closer collaboration with the District Councils (DCs) and local bodies to organise reading activities to cater for the needs and characteristics of individual districts. Such activities include Summer Reading Programme in Sham Shui Po District, Tuen Mun Reading Festival, Summer Reading Fun in Sai Kung

District and Reading Carnival@Tung Chung. In 2016-17, public libraries in 18 districts will secure a total of \$1.64 million from DCs for organising diversified extension activities to further promote the public library services in the communities. In order to foster reading habits among the public and to optimise the use of the library collection, the HKPL will enhance its block loan service to schools and community organisations and the establishment of community libraries in collaboration with non-profit making local community organisations so as to further extend the public library services to individual communities;

- (c) the HKPL will continue to maintain a balanced and diversified library collection. In 2016-17, the HKPL plans to acquire about 830 000 items of new print and audio-visual library materials as well as acquire or subscribe to 8 e-book collections (covering about 240 000 titles) and 63 e-databases, with a view to building up the basic stock for new libraries and replenishing the stock for the existing libraries. The acquisition entails an estimated expenditure of \$102.80 million. In addition, the HKPL will continue the digitisation of about 1 000 hours of audio-visual recordings and 90 000 pages of printed materials for the digital library Multimedia Information System in 2016-17;
- (d) the HKPL will continue to leverage on the use of technology to offer more convenient public library services to the public via the on-line and mobile platforms. In addition to introducing the self-charging terminals for borrowing of library materials across the library network, the HKPL plans to provide 3 self-service library units, one each on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and in the New Territories, on a trial basis with a view to exploring the feasibility and benefits of providing round-the-clock library services on borrowing, returning, picking up reserved library materials, and the payment of library fees and charges through Octopus. The pilot service is expected to be launched in 2017-18. The locations for placement of the 3 units are being identified where places with high pedestrian flow and convenient access to public will be given priority for selection; and
- (e) with a view to further promoting reading among the elderly, starting from late 2016, the HKPL will enhance by phases the reading environment and supporting facilities such as seating and reading-aid equipment, taking into account the needs of the elderly. At the same time, the HKPL will also enrich the library collections and organise various library activities and workshops suitable for the elderly and their carers in a bid to encourage life-long learning, thereby helping the elderly to master various skills, integrate into the community and enrich their cultural life.

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