

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

HAB417

Question Serial No.

4606

Head: 95 – Leisure and Cultural Services
Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (5) Public Libraries

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Home Affairs

Question:

Regarding the provision of book-drop service at the major Mass Transit Railway (MTR) interchange stations:

1. What is the monthly usage of the book drops at the three MTR interchange stations since the service was launched?
2. What was the expenditure for the service in the past year? What is the estimated expenditure this year?
3. The Administration stated in its reply to the Finance Committee last year that it would “assess the public response to and cost-effectiveness of the scheme, as well as its long-term manpower and financial implications” (Reply Serial No.: HAB180) in order to review the scheme. It has also indicated in this year's Estimates that a review of the service is being conducted and the outcome will be available by mid-2013. With a view to submitting the review findings in mid-2013, how will the Administration assess the public response to and cost-effectiveness of the scheme?

Asked by: Hon. WU Chi-wai

Reply:

1. Since the launch of the book drop service at the three MTR interchange stations in September 2011, a monthly average of 9 372, 11 524 and 4 425 library books were returned through the book drops at the Central, Kowloon Tong and Nam Cheong MTR stations respectively.
2. In 2012-13, the total operating expenditure in providing the book drop service at the three MTR stations was \$4.26 million, which covered the hiring of logistics services for collecting, checking in, sorting and delivering the returned books to the respective libraries. With some streamlining efforts, it is estimated that around \$3.5 million will be incurred in 2013-14.
3. To assess the effectiveness of the trial book drop service, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) conducted a review of the service by examining its usage statistics and the public views collected through an opinion survey conducted at 35 public libraries in October 2012. The findings showed that the service was generally welcomed by the working population, but the monthly usage is only about 29 per cent of the planned capacity, as the majority of readers still prefer visiting the libraries in person to return and borrow books on the same occasion. In view of the high recurrent cost involved (over \$9 per returned book) and the readers' habit, LCSD considers it not cost-effective to extend the service to more MTR stations under the current mode of operation. The Department will nonetheless continue to run the book drop service at the existing three MTR stations until a longer-term arrangement is worked out. A relevant consideration is whether the

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, which is being tried out in six selected libraries, can be applied service-wide so as to enable off-site self-service return and borrowing of books in an efficient and economic way.

Name in block letters: Mrs. BETTY FUNG

Post Title: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

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