

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs Meeting on 12 December 2000

**Public Library Policies and Progress on the Preparation for the Opening of the
Hong Kong Central Library**

Purpose

To inform Members of the public library policies and services, and of the progress on the preparation for the opening of the Hong Kong Central Library.

Roles and Functions

2. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is responsible for the provision of public library services in Hong Kong and the management of the Books Registration Office. The public library system, known as the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL), aims to provide public library services to meet the community needs for (a) information, (b) informal/lifelong education and (c) the profitable use of leisure, and to promote literary arts in Hong Kong.

Present Policies and Services

3. There are at present 37 public libraries in the urban area, 22 public libraries in the New Territories (NT), and 8 mobile libraries. Services and facilities provided include free lending of library materials, children's library services, newspapers and periodicals services, reference and information services, students' study rooms, computer and information centres, multi-media resource centres, outreach and literary arts programmes as well as block loan services, etc. The library collection consists of 7.42 million books and 0.63 million multi-media materials. There are 2.44 million registered borrowers. A total of 32.44 million items

of library materials were borrowed from the libraries in 1999/2000. A library services profile is at **Appendix I**.

Provision of Libraries

4. The planning standards for the provision of libraries stipulated in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines are to provide one district library for every 200,000 population. The Government recognizes the need to make library services easily accessible to all members of the community and to provide a balanced spread of service points in the urban area and NT. The LCSD is planning to engage an expert consultant to conduct a review of the public library services. The provision and distribution of libraries will be looked into in the review.

5. In addition, the following new libraries will be opened in 2001:

Hong Kong Central Library	April/May 2001
Tseung Kwan O Public Library (District Library)	Mid-2001
New Chai Wan Public Library (District Library replacing the existing Chai Wan Public Library)	Mid-2001

Provision of Library Materials

6. In the selection and acquisition of library materials, it has been the practice of the public libraries to follow the guidelines drawn up on the basis of the principles stipulated in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) jointly promulgated by UNESCO and International Federation of Library of Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

7. Selection of library materials is made primarily by subject librarians based on information on new library materials obtained from a wide spectrum of sources including printed bibliographies, publishers' catalogues, book reviews in professional journals and related publications, new publication information on the Internet, and recommendations from scholars and readers. The LCSD has also recently appointed Community Advisers to provide community input. At present, the libraries' total stock of 7.42 million books and 0.63 million items of multi-media materials represents a provision of about 1.2 items per capita. Some 750,000 items of library materials are acquired by the HKPL annually.

Library Opening Hours

8. The opening hours of the major and district libraries in the urban area and NT are 61 and 62 hours per week respectively while the opening hours of the small libraries in the urban area and NT are 50 and 39 hours per week respectively. Details of the opening hours of libraries are at Appendix I(2).

9. The opening hours for the major and district libraries in NT are from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm on weekdays with one closing day per week (Monday or Thursday) to facilitate routine maintenance and rearrangement of library materials. Different closing days have been arranged for different libraries in the same district for the convenience of the library users.

10. For the major and district libraries located in the urban area, the opening hours are from 10:00am to 7:00pm from Monday to Thursday. On Friday, the opening hours of these libraries are from 10:00am to 9:00pm to provide a late closing to facilitate library users.

11. The opening hours of the Students' Study Room in the major and district libraries used to be the same as the opening hours of the libraries. To provide further convenience to

the public, the opening hours of the Students' Study Rooms have been extended up to 10:00pm during weekdays with effect from April 2000.

12. The LCSD will conduct a comprehensive review of the opening hours of all public libraries after the opening of the HKCL to facilitate effective use of library facilities by the general public.

Outreach Programmes and Promotion of Literary Arts

13. Outreach programmes form an integral part of the library services. Educational and recreational programmes such as children's hours, book displays and exhibitions, subject talks, interest clubs, organised library group visits, as well as training sessions for library users on Online Public Access Catalogue, online database, Internet and CD-ROM search are regularly organised at the libraries to promote use of library facilities.

14. A reading programme has been organised since 1984 to encourage young people to cultivate regular reading habits. In addition to a wide variety of reading related programmes, a Millennium Reading Pledge Programme was organised during the period from July to October 2000 to further encourage reading among the young people.

15. The libraries play an active role in the promotion of literary arts in Hong Kong. A number of regular literary competitions, including the Awards for Creative Writing in Chinese, the Chinese Poetry Writing Competition, Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature, Competition on Story Writing in Chinese for Students as well as the Hong Kong Literature Festival are presented by the libraries on a regular basis. In addition, 88 Chinese literary books have been published by the libraries since 1980.

16. In all, 8.49 million people took part in the various outreach and literary programmes organized by the libraries in 1999/2000.

Services to the Disabled

17. The libraries provide a wide range of services and facilities for the people with disabilities. Adequate access is provided in all new libraries and most of the existing libraries. A hotline is also maintained by the libraries.

18. Block loans are arranged for organizations for the disabled. Large print collection of English fiction is made available at the five major libraries for the visually impaired and elderly readers. In addition to the reading machine for the blind and colour image magnifier which are currently available at both the City Hall Public Library and Kowloon Public Library, computer software and equipment such as Refreshable Braille Display Unit, English Voices Synthesizer Software, Computer Magnification Software, and Cantonese and English Voice Sythesizer Software are installed in the major and district libraries for the benefits of the visually impaired readers.

Books Registration Office

19. The main functions of the Books Registration Office are to preserve Hong Kong's cultural heritage through registration of local publications and to monitor the use of the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) system. A quarterly "Catalogue of Books Printed in Hong Kong" based on the publications deposited is published by the Books Registration Office in the Special Supplement No.4 of the Hong Kong Government Gazette. In 1999/2000, the Office registered a total of 10,028 books and 10,672 periodicals, and issued 359 new ISBN prefixes to publishers.

New Initiatives

Library Computerization

20. Both the libraries in the urban area and NT have been computerized. Online catalogue search, renewal of borrowed items and reservation of library materials are available through the Internet 15 hours a day.

21. Good progress is being made to integrate and upgrade the existing library automation systems in early 2001. The new system will be one of the world's largest computerization systems with Chinese and English capability. It will have an initial provision of over 1 500 terminals to provide 24-hour Internet access for search of catalogues of local and overseas libraries as well as information in a wide range of databases; automated renewal of loan of library materials and reservation of library materials. Self-service terminals have been installed at the City Hall Public Library and Kowloon Public Library and will be extended to all libraries to allow readers to borrow library materials by themselves.

Digital Library System

22. A digital Library system is being developed and installed in the HKCL. It will provide audio and video on demand, CD-ROM and online database search and document viewing services. The digital library system will make available a wide range of digitized materials including old newspapers, books and periodicals, photographs, maps, documents, posters and house programmes. The digital library system of the HKCL is an example of the extensive use of complex and advanced information technology and computer application. At the initial stage of the operation of the digital library system, it is expected that some 100,000 A4 size materials, 1.6 million pages of newspapers and some 18,000 CDs will be

made available for search by library users through the 500-plus computer terminals in the HKCL. The system will be extended to other major and district libraries by phases. Ultimately, it will enable users to search the library information through Internet at home or at work.

Enhancing Life-long Learning and the Information Role of the Public Libraries

23. To enhance HKPL's role of being a life-long learning and information centre in Hong Kong, the HKPL has implemented a number of initiatives during the year.

24. The libraries have jointly collaborated with the Education Department to launch a territory-wide reading programme, arrange block registration for library cards at schools and organize language learning workshops in the libraries to promote reading among young people. In addition to providing course materials of the Hong Kong Open University in 15 public libraries for public reference, the public libraries have also provided supporting library services for the "Springboard" project, a bridging programme for secondary school leavers and adult learners funded by the Education and Manpower Bureau and 10 tertiary institutions in Hong Kong.

25. Additional Computer and Information Centres have been set up in four major and district libraries to enable readers to use the application programmes for their own work or use the facilities to search for information on the Internet. Over 150 multi-media workstations have also been added to the libraries for public access to the CD-ROM Databases Network located at City Hall Public Library and for Internet searches.

26. In support of the Chief Executive's Policy Address for 2001/02, the following new measures to further enhance the roles of the libraries in life-long learning and provision of

information have been planned for 2001: -

- (a) the opening of the HKCL which has a Central Reference Library of six subject departments to provide a comprehensive range of reference and information services for Hong Kong in April/May 2001 (see para. 28-29);
- (b) the setting up of a digital library system in the HKCL which will provide audio and video on demand, CD-ROM and on-line services and document viewing services, to be extended to all major and district libraries and made available for remote access by the general public;
- (c) the development of a subject specialization scheme for the major libraries (Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Sha Tin, Kowloon and City Hall Public Libraries);
- (d) the provision of a business and industry library in the City Hall Public Library;
- (e) the setting up of an Education Resources Centre at the Kowloon Public Library;
- (f) the development of the Arts Library into an Arts Resources Centre;
- (g) the publication of a library newsletter to further publicize the library services and facilities, and the launch of a School Culture Day Pilot Scheme by offering programmes and activities for library visits by students during school hours;
and
- (h) the continued provision of more multi-media workstations in the libraries for CD-ROM and Internet searches.

Other New Initiatives

27. Other initiatives on improving the library services which have been implemented include: -

- (a) the organization of a wide range of user education programmes such as training sessions on the use of Online Library Catalogues, Internet and CD-ROM databases;
- (b) the issue of a new library card which facilitates newly registered borrowers to borrow library materials from the libraries in both the urban area and NT;
- (c) the improvement of the library environment by renovating existing libraries which have been in service for more than 10 years, setting up coffee corners in four major libraries, and beautifying existing libraries with more green plants and works of art;
- (d) the setting up of Customer Liaison Group in the major and district libraries with meetings twice a year to improve communication with and obtain feedback on library services from library users; and
- (e) the installation of bookdrops in Tuen Mun and Lai Chi Kok Public Libraries to enable readers to return books on library closing days or after the library opening hours. The bookdrop service will be extended to all libraries in 2001.

Hong Kong Central Library (HKCL)

28. The 12-storey HKCL building with a gross floor area of 33,800 square metres will be the main library of the HKPL and an information centre in Hong Kong. Major facilities of the HKCL will include Children's Library, Toy Library, Adult Lending Library, Map Library, Young Adult Library, Central Reference Library, Arts Resources Centre, Multi-media Production Room, Newspapers and Periodicals Reading Areas, Microform Production Room, Microcomputer Room, Audio-visual Library, Language Learning Centre, Central Book Stack, Hong Kong Literature Room, Reference and Information Enquiry Centre, User Education Hall, Exhibition Gallery, Lecture Theatre, Extension Activities Rooms and Music Practice Rooms. The HKCL will have a capacity for over two million items of library materials. It will initially provide some 1.2 million items of library materials upon commissioning.

29. The construction of the HKCL started in August 1996. The library was originally estimated to be opened around December 2000. After the Architectural Services Department had completed the builder's works and the electrical and mechanical installation works in March 2000, the library building was handed over to LCSD for preparation of commissioning which includes, inter alia, the installation of an advanced digital library system and the supply and installation of specialist electrical and electronic systems and equipment. The LCSD had, upon its setting up in January 2000, immediately reviewed the progress of the various preparation work of the project. It is now estimated that the HKCL will be opened to the general public around April or May 2001. The following points are worth highlighting: -

- (a) Digital Library System

The Digital Library System is an advanced and complex information system which will be the largest of its kind in Hong Kong after completion. After the contract of the design and installation of digital library system was awarded in December 1999, the contractor and LCSD had jointly made thorough and detailed study on the various functions of the system to work out details of the best mode of operation and ways for the provision of the specific services to ensure that the system would meet users' needs. At that important stage, both parties found it necessary to provide more time for the system development and testing to ensure that it would perform to the satisfaction of the users when open for public use. After negotiation with the contractor, it was agreed to allow an additional four months for system development and testing. Hence the system is expected to be completed for user acceptance test by late March 2001.

(b) the Need to Conduct Open Tender for the Specialist Electrical and Electronic Systems and Equipment

Instead of adopting the normal arrangement of engaging the services of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), the ex-Provisional Urban Council had, in late March 1999, decided to put the required consultancy service for the provision and installation of specialist electrical and electronic systems and equipment to open tender. The process of open tender had taken an additional time of six months. The tender was eventually awarded in late April 2000. The successful tenderer, EMSD, is currently arranging for the purchase and installation of the wide range of specialist electronic equipment for the HKCL including CCTV, book detection system, multi-media projection system, film projection system, sound and PA systems, video recording system, simultaneous interpretation system

etc. It is anticipated that the installation of all related facilities will be completed in February 2001 for testing.

Review of Public Library Services

30. With a view to further improving the public library services, LCSD plans to commission a consultancy study on an overall review of public library services. The Department is also in the process of consulting the Culture and Heritage Commission on the way forward.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
December 2000

Profile of the Public Library Services1. *No. of libraries :*

Major Library	5
District Library	25
Small Library	29
Mobile Library	8
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2. *Staff establishment :*

Permanent establishment	886
Contract post	<u>293</u>
	1179

3. *Registered borrowers : 2.44 million*4. *Total stock : 8.05 million*

Books	7.42
Audio-visual materials	<u>0.63</u>
	8.05 million

5. *Annual circulation volume (1999/2000): 32.44 million items*6. *No. of reference enquiries handled (1999/2000) : 0.92 million*7. *No. of reference materials consulted (1999/2000): 2.87 million*8. *Attendance at library outreach programmes (1999/2000): 8.49 million*

Appendix I(2)9. *Opening hours*

Urban Libraries	NT Libraries
<p>(1) <u>Major/District /Specialized Libraries</u> (61 hrs/week)</p> <p>Mon – Thur 10am – 7pm Fri 10am – 9pm Sat & Sun 10am – 5pm PH Closed</p>	<p>(1) <u>Major/District Libraries</u> (62 hrs/week)</p> <p>Mon – Fri 9am – 8pm (closed on Mon or Thur) Sat 9am – 7 pm Sun & PH 9am – 5 pm</p>
<p>(2) <u>Small Libraries</u> (50 hrs/week)</p> <p>Mon – Wed 10am – 7pm Thur Closed Fri 10am – 7pm Sat & Sun 10am – 5pm PH 10am – 1pm</p>	<p>(2) <u>Small Libraries</u> (39 hrs/week)</p> <p>Mon, Wed & Sat 10am - 1pm & 2pm – 6pm Thur Closed Tue & Fri 1pm – 8pm Sun & PH 9am – 1pm</p>
<p>(3) <u>Mobile Libraries</u>(42 hrs/week)</p> <p>Mon – Sat 10am – 1 pm 2pm – 6pm Sun & PH Closed</p>	<p>(3) <u>Mobile Libraries</u>(42 hrs/week)</p> <p>Mon – Sat 10am – 1 pm 2pm – 6pm Sun & PH Closed</p>

10. *Books registration (1999/2000)*

New books registered : 10,028
Periodicals registered : 10,672
ISBN issued : 359