

**For information
on 17 April 2009**

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Development of Public Library Services

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the development plans of public library services in Hong Kong.

Background

2. On 18 June 2007, we briefed Members of this Panel the key recommendations of the Recommendation Report (the Report) of the Committee on Libraries¹ (CoL) and of the Administration's response to the CoL's recommendations. We accepted in principle all the recommendations put forward by CoL and have been taking follow-up actions since then. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has taken significant steps in formulating a long-term strategic plan, forging an effective partnership with the community, in particular in the co-management of district library facilities with the District Councils, enhancing the provision of libraries and extending public library opening hours. Public library services have also been further improved through the enhancement of library collections, the promotion of reading and lifelong learning, the organization of more cultural programmes, and leveraging on information technology.

Latest Development

The Public Libraries Advisory Committee

3. To take forth the recommendations of the CoL, the Public Libraries Advisory Committee (PLAC) was set up in May 2008 to advise

¹ The CoL was established in November 2004 to advise the Secretary for Home Affairs on strategies and plans for betterment of the Hong Kong public libraries' facilities and services for a tenure of two years. It completed its terms and submitted its Recommendation Report to the Secretary for Home Affairs in May 2007.

on the overall development strategy of Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL). The membership list of PLAC is at Annex. With members coming from different sectors of the community, including educational, cultural, youth, information technology, government and business sectors, the PLAC advises the Government specifically on the formulation of strategies and measures for the development of library facilities and services to achieve the broader cultural mission of the HKPL; the role, functions and management of the Hong Kong Central Library (HKCL); and the encouragement of community support and partnership with different sectors in promoting reading, life-long learning and literary arts.

Provision of libraries

4. The provision of public libraries is currently made with reference to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines (HKPS&G) which states that one district library should be provided for each district and that there should also be a district library for every 200 000 persons. At present, the 7.03 million population in Hong Kong are served by 66 static libraries and 10 mobile library vans. In this regard, the present provision of public libraries in the territory has already met the standard suggested by the HKPS&G.

5. As recommended by the CoL, the space provision has been enhanced for new libraries under planning, from 3,310 square metres to 6,200 square metres for major libraries; and from 2,200 square metres to 2,900 square metres for district libraries. The recommendation for enhanced space provision has accordingly been adopted in the planning for new libraries. In addition, space provision for thematic collections and the youth library in major libraries will also be considered when new services and facilities are being planned.

6. There are five new library projects currently under planning for completion between late 2009 and 2014. They include four district libraries in Tung Chung (late 2009), Tseung Kwan O (early 2013), Tung Chau Street (late 2013) and Yuen Chau Kok (mid 2014) and a small library in Siu Sai Wan (late 2010). In addition, one major, three district and three small libraries are under planning for reprovision to larger premises between 2009 and 2016. In all these projects, more emphases are being put on the provision of spacious and pleasant environment and comfortable seating for research and reading. To encourage the search of information through application of information technology, multimedia workstations and Computer & Information Centres are also provided in all major libraries and most district libraries.

7. Apart from setting up new libraries and reprovisioning some of the existing libraries, there are also ongoing renovation programmes to improve the libraries' facilities and reading environment. Under these programmes, libraries in service for 10 or more years will be renovated by phases. So far, 16 libraries have been renovated.

Management of District Library Facilities by District Councils

8. Library facilities at the district level have been put under the co-management of the District Councils (DC) since January 2008. Under this initiative, the district libraries have established closer collaboration with the local community for developing library services and organizing activities that better meet local needs. The libraries have also been able to enhance their facilities and organize more extension activities to promote reading through DC funding.

Community Libraries Partnership Scheme

9. A community partnership scheme entitled "Libraries@neighbourhood" was introduced in 2005. Through cooperation with non-profit-making local community organizations, community libraries are set up to bring reading materials to the readers' doorsteps. Participating organizations are offered with free block loan of library materials and professional advice for the setting up of the community libraries. As at March 2009, 100 community libraries have been set up in various districts and over 2 million items of library materials have been borrowed through these community libraries.

Extension of library opening hours

10. To better meet the public's demand on library services, the 33 major and district libraries have extended their opening hours to 71 hours a week since 1 April 2009. They now provide 7-day a week library services to the public.

11. Under the new arrangement, opening hours of the major and district libraries in the urban area and the New Territories (NT) region are aligned. Libraries in the urban area now open till 8:00 p.m. in the weekdays, enabling more readers to pay visits to them after work. The closing of libraries at 8:00 p.m. on Saturdays encourages more members of the public, families in particular, to patronize the libraries. The opening of libraries one hour earlier at 9:00 a.m. on 5 weekdays, brings more convenience to

users in the neighbourhood, especially the retirees and housewives. In the NT region, the major and district libraries are now open from 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. on their previous closing day, allowing public access to their services 7 days a week.

Development of library collection and support of lifelong learning

12. Developing a library collection that meets community's divergent needs and anticipated demands is vital to the public library service. At present, HKPL enriches its library stock with about one million new items per year. The provision of library materials per capita has increased from 1.27 items in 2000 to 1.77 items in 2008. Among its 12.34 million items of library stock, 10.73 million are books and other print materials. The remaining are non-print materials such as audio-visual materials and electronic resources. HKPL also subscribes to about 6 000 titles of newspapers and periodicals and about 60 titles of online databases.

13. Regarding the development of more thematic collections, on top of those in HKCL, the City Hall Public Library and the Kowloon Public Library, HKPL has introduced a Sports and Fitness collection at the Sha Tin Public Library in 2008. A dedicated website has been set up to provide the public with easy access to the on-line catalogue, the related e-books and e-journal databases, as well as quick links to news and information on sports and fitness compiled by the reference librarians. Readers may also use the on-line "Ask a Librarian" service for making enquiries. A Food and Nutrition collection and a Modern Living collection will be developed respectively for the Tuen Mun Public Library and the Tsuen Wan Public Library in due course.

Preserving Local Cultural Heritage

14. On the preservation of local cultural heritage, the HKCL is actively exploring new ways of collaboration with other cultural institutions to preserve and promote Hong Kong's cultural and historical heritage. Special collections have been set up by the HKCL to promote Hong Kong studies and to preserve the documentary heritage of Hong Kong by collecting reference materials of different formats on the study of Hong Kong's history, culture and heritage for reference and research by members of the public. Continuous efforts have been made to promote the Music Collection Campaign and the Documents Collection Campaign through which valuable historical documents on Hong Kong as well as materials related to music, Chinese arts and literature are collected. HKCL will intensify its effort to digitize more library materials related to local history

and culture for putting into the Multimedia Information System for public reference.

Leveraging on the Use of Information Technology

15. HKPL has leveraged extensively on the use of information technology for the effective delivery of library services to the public since early 90s. A funding of \$196 million was approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee (FC) in February 2007 for the replacement of library automation system. The project is now in the process of tendering for the replacement of its legacy Library Automation System (LAS). A pilot test on the use of the radio-frequency-identification (RFID) technology will be carried out in parallel with the replacement of the LAS tentatively scheduled for 2010-11. Based on the results of the pilot test, the LCSD will study the feasibility of introducing RFID technology in all libraries.

16. With FC's funding approval for \$93 million in January 2009, a major upgrade of the HKCL's Multimedia Information System will be carried out to enhance its functions and to enable the provision of better digitized information services across the library network and on the Internet. The target is to have the upgraded system launched by 2012-13.

Promotion of Reading and Literary Arts

17. HKPL has continued to fulfil its commitment in promoting reading and literary arts by providing a rich and balanced collection and organizing a diversity of cultural activities on a regular basis. It has also established close partnership with various outside organizations in promoting activities on reading and literary arts.

18. More reading promotional activities are being planned for various reader segments including the elderly people, housewives and working adults, and particularly through the involvement of DCs and in cooperation with NGOs. Reading programmes, workshops and reading clubs organized have been extended to include creative writing, drama appreciation and storybook creation in English. HKPL also further strengthens connections with the Education Bureau and related educational bodies like the Hong Kong Teacher-Librarians' Association and the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union to foster more intensive promotion of library activities to students and teachers.

The Strategic Plan of Hong Kong Public Libraries 2009-2018

19. In consultation with the PLAC, a Strategic Plan of Hong Kong Public Libraries 2009-2018 has been developed to specify the vision, missions and key strategies for guiding the planning of library developments. The missions and strategic goals endorsed by the PLAC are set out as follows –

- (a) To provide a wide network of public libraries to serve all residents of Hong Kong:
 - To provide an accessible, user friendly and technology enabled network of public libraries to serve all residents of Hong Kong;
 - To further develop library services for special groups; and
 - To promote staff development for service enhancement.

- (b) To support and encourage lifelong learning:
 - To support and encourage lifelong learning through a wide range of collections and services.

- (c) To promote a knowledge-based community through reading:
 - To bring a culture of reading to different levels of the community.

- (d) To provide a gateway to information and knowledge:
 - To provide ready access to global information and knowledge.

- (e) To enrich the documentary heritage of the history and culture of Hong Kong:
 - To bring culture to the community; and
 - To further develop the Hong Kong Central Library as a territory-wide institution for learning, information, documentary heritage preservation and cultural interchange.

- (f) To promote Hong Kong literature:
 - To further enhance the promotion of Hong Kong literature.

- (g) To leverage on new technology and the use of IT to enhance public library services:
 - To develop electronic services and to serve our community as a “Library without Walls”.

- (h) To enhance public involvement and partnership in public library services:
 - To serve the community, especially special groups, by partnering with NGOs; and
 - To market the library services to different user segments.

Way Forward

20. The above Strategic Plan will be the “roadmap” that provides guidance for the development of the HKPL in the coming decade. Business plans and action plans will be devised to systematically and progressively implement the missions and meet the strategic goals. Progress will be closely monitored by year-end reviews and appropriate adjustments to the Plan will be made to meet the changing conditions and emerging needs of our community. A review of the Plan will be conducted at 3-year intervals to enable adjustments to the on-going medium to long term planning of library services.

Home Affairs Bureau
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Membership of Public Libraries Advisory Committee

Chairman:	Prof LEONG Chi-yan, John, JP
Vice-Chairman:	Mr CHEUNG Chi-kong
Members:	Dr CHAN Kin-wai
	Prof CHAN Kwok-kou, Leonard
	Dr CHAN Man-hung, JP
	Ms CHIU Wai-kan, Yolanda
	Dr KAN Lai-bing, MH
	Ms KWAN Sau-king (YU Fei)
	Prof LEE Kam-keung
	Mr LEE Wai-kwong, Sunny
	Prof LO Wai-luen
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