

For information  
on 22 March 2013

## **Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs**

### **Development of Public Library Services**

#### **Purpose**

This paper updates Members on the development of public library services.

#### **Background**

2. At the meeting on 14 June 2010, Members exchanged views with the Public Libraries Advisory Committee (PLAC) on issues pertaining to public library services. The Administration then issued a paper to the Panel on 8 June 2012 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2272/11-12(01)) reporting the progress made on the issues raised at the June 2010 meeting. This paper updates Members on the developments since June 2012. PLAC representatives will attend the Panel meeting for the discussion of this item.

#### **Progress and Development**

3. The Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) continues to devote efforts to providing comprehensive library services and strengthening its facilities and collections, both within and beyond the physical boundary of libraries, with a view to meeting the public's needs in pursuit of knowledge, information, lifelong learning and research.

##### ***(A) Network of Public Libraries***

4. As at 1 March 2013, there are one central library, six major libraries, 28 district libraries, 32 small libraries and 10 mobile libraries.

The library system has over 4 million registered borrowers and a stock of about 13 million library books and multi-media materials. In 2012, 56.15 million items of library materials were loaned.

5. One new library has been opened and two are planned to be opened in 2013 by the LCSD. The Ping Shan Tin Shui Wai Public Library (PSTSWPL), which replaced the existing district library in Tin Shui Wai, was open to the public on 28 February 2013. With a floor area of 6,100 m<sup>2</sup>, the PSTSWPL is the second largest public library in Hong Kong in terms of floor size after the Hong Kong Central Library (HKCL). In addition to the enhanced facilities and services for adults and children, the PSTSWPL provides also a dedicated library for young adults, a user education hall, an exhibition hall as well as an enlightening, outdoor reading environment (see Annex for details). The new Lam Tin Public Library, a district library to replace the existing small library, is scheduled to open on 30 March 2013, while the new Pak Tin Public Library is planned to open towards the end of 2013. By then, library services in Kwun Tong and Shum Shui Po will be greatly enhanced with increases in floor space for library collection, seating and reading areas.

6. In addition, three district libraries in Yuen Long, Tseung Kwan O and Shatin (Yuen Chau Kok) respectively are under construction; while two district library projects in Shum Shui Po and Eastern District (Lei King Wan) are under planning. We will continue to renovate or upgrade existing libraries to improve their facilities and environment as and when the opportunity arises.

7. The current provision of public libraries has in general met the standards suggested by the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines that there should be a district library for every 200,000 people. While major and district libraries remain the backbone of the library network, the Administration will keep in view the need to supplement library services in districts with small and mobile libraries where justified. Furthermore, we will continue to work with district organisations to set up community libraries under the “Libraries@neighbourhood Community Libraries Partnership Scheme”. The Scheme is gaining popularity – by the end of 2012, a total of 212 community libraries have been set up in collaboration with non-government organizations across the 18 districts.

## ***(B) Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure***

8. HKPL's online library services are well received by library users. In 2012, there were more than 133 million visits to HKPL's website, and some 16 million renewals and 0.92 million reservations of library materials transactions were made through HKPL's website.

9. Following the successful launch of the Next Generation Integrated Library System (NGILS) in early 2012, we are actively pursuing the next phase of development with a view to introducing more new service functions such as print management system, electronic reference service system, electronic resources management system, inter-library loan system, online electronic payment and management information system so as to better serve the public. At the same time, the upgrading of the Multimedia Information System (MMIS), which aims to support the development and retrieval of digital content, enhance navigation capabilities, and provide additional channels for the public to access library resources through wireless and mobile technology, is in good progress. These two major IT projects will be completed in 2013.

10. In parallel with the launch of the NGILS, we have been trying out the application of the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology in six selected libraries on a pilot basis since December 2011. The technology is being deployed to handle self-service borrowing and returning of library materials, as well as sorting and inventory control process at the back end. A feasibility study is being conducted to examine the cost-and-benefits of full-scale implementation of RFID at public libraries. The study will be completed in 2013. Subject to the outcome of the study, we will recommend the way forward on whether the RFID technology should be applied in all public libraries.

## ***(C) Trial Book Drop Service at Three MTR Stations***

11. Since late September 2011, a trial book-drop service has been provided at three major Mass Transit Railway (MTR) interchange stations, namely, Central, Kowloon Tong and Nam Cheong to make it more convenient for readers to return borrowed books outside library premises. In the first 15 months after its launch (i.e. up to 31 December 2012), a monthly average of 25 250 library books were returned through the book

drops at the three MTR stations. The average number of books collected from each of the three stations on each weekday is around 332, while the daily average on weekends and public holidays is about 161. The higher usage rate during weekdays indicates that users of the trial service are mainly the working population.

12. We have recently completed a review of the trial book drop service by examining its usage statistics as well as the public's views collected through an opinion survey<sup>1</sup>. The review findings show that the monthly usage of the bookdrop service has been on the rise gradually since its launch in September 2011, but the average monthly usage during the period is only about 29% of its planned capacity (25 250 items as compared to 86 400 items). Among the three MTR stations, Kowloon Tong has the highest usage rate and Nam Cheong the lowest. Both the usage statistics and the opinion survey reveal that only a small portion of library patrons have chosen to return their borrowed library items through the book drops at the MTR stations<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, the majority of readers still prefer visiting the libraries in person to return and borrow books on the same occasion.

13. Whilst the trial book drop service is generally supported by the public as noted from the opinion survey, the cost of providing this value-added service is high. In addition to the one-off set up expenditure of \$0.8 million<sup>3</sup>, the service incurs substantial recurrent expenditure of around \$3.43 million per annum<sup>4</sup>, averaging around \$9 per returned book. The high recurrent cost is mainly due to the need to collect and transport the library items from the MTR stations to a central processing centre for check-in twice a day, before the items are delivered to their respective home libraries.

---

<sup>1</sup> An opinion survey on the trial book drop service was conducted at 35 public libraries located in all the 18 districts in October 2012. A total of 2,035 library users aged 12 or above were successfully interviewed.

<sup>2</sup> From 1 January to 31 December 2012, about 60 500 borrowers returned library items through the book drops at the MTR stations. Among some 1.5 million items returned by these 60 500 borrowers during the period, only 21% of them were returned through the book drops at the MTR station, while the majority of their borrowed items were returned direct to the libraries (71%) or via the book drops located outside libraries (8%).

<sup>3</sup> The one-off cost was for the design and production of book drops, and for hiring of fire engineering consultancy services to evaluate the technical feasibility of installing book drops at the three MTR stations.

<sup>4</sup> To ensure that the loan records of returned books can be timely updated in the HKPL's computerized system, a logistics system is developed by engaging HongKong Post (HKP) to collect returned books from the book drops at the three MTR stations twice a day and to check-in the collected books at a processing centre. HKP is also required to deliver the books back to their home libraries within 4 to 6 working days. Substantial recurrent expenditure is therefore incurred for hiring the required logistics services.

14. In view of the high recurrent cost involved and the readers' habit (prefer to return and borrow books on the same occasion), it will not be cost-effective to extend the service to more MTR stations using the current mode of operation. Nonetheless, it is envisaged that the cost-effectiveness of the service can be enhanced when there is a sophisticated back-end infrastructure supporting online verification and updating of books and readers' records. As mentioned in paragraph 10 above, a feasibility study on the business case of service-wide adoption of RFID is being conducted which will shed light on whether instant updating of readers' records as well as more advanced self-service book return cum lending/pick up services can be provided outside the libraries in an economical way.

15. Given that the book drop service is generally supported by the public, we recommend that the book drop service at the three MTR stations should be maintained until a longer-term arrangement is worked out. To boost the usage of the book drops, we have launched another round of publicity campaign in early January 2013 to further promote and enhance the public's awareness of the service.

***(D) HKPL as a Knowledge Hub***

16. The positioning of the HKCL, being the flagship of the HKPL system and the information hub of the territory, remains important as ever. Since its opening in 2001, HKCL's collection size has doubled from an initial stock of 1.2 million to 2.5 million items. It continues to offer specialized reference and information services as well as a wide range of facilities, and serve as a territory-wide institution for learning, knowledge, archive preservation and cultural exchange.

17. The two collection campaigns launched by HKCL, namely the "Document Collection Campaign" and the "Music Collection Campaign", have resulted in the collection of over 210,000 items of cultural and heritage importance. To promote the campaigns and to arouse public awareness in the preservation of heritage materials, the HKCL organized a wide array of extension activities throughout the year. The thematic exhibitions such as the "Hong Kong Musicians Series", the "News Stories Series", the "Hong Kong Literary Authors Series", the "Heritage Documents Series" and subject talks held in the past year were well received by the public. In

early 2013, the “Thirteen Hongs of Canton: selected pictures and documents exhibition” was jointly organised by HKCL and the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province to introduce the history of foreign trade of China in the 18th and 19th centuries.

***(E) Cultural Exchange***

18. The HKPL continues to strengthen ties with its Mainland and overseas counterparts. Apart from close collaboration with Guangdong and Macao under the auspices of the Greater Pearl River Delta Cultural Co-operation Meeting, the LCSD will sign a cooperation agreement with the National Library of China (NLC) in late March 2013 to strengthen co-operation between the NLC and HKPL. Under the agreement, over 40 items of digitised ancient rare books and several special collections of NLC will be presented in the new MMIS of the HKPL upon its upgrading in 2013. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding on library cooperation has just been signed between the HKPL and Bavarian State Library of the Federal Republic of Germany in January 2013.

**Way Forward**

19. Building on the staunch support of the library patrons and readers, the PLAC, District Councils and other stakeholders/partners, the HKPL will continue to strive for improvement with a view to providing the best possible hardware, software and services to meet the changing needs of the society.

Home Affairs Bureau  
Leisure and Cultural Services Department  
March 2013

**Facilities and Services Provided in  
Ping Shan Tin Shui Wai Public Library**

Type of Library	Major
Area (sq m)	6,100
<b>Printed Materials Services</b> ✓ Adult Library ✓ Young Adult Library ✓ Children’s Library ✓ Reference Library ✓ Newspapers and Periodicals Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A collection of over 300,000 items comprising printed books and non-print materials for adults, young adults and children</li> <li>● Over 400 local and overseas newspapers and periodical titles to keep readers abreast of current affairs or news of interests</li> </ul>
<b>Electronic Services</b> ✓ Library Catalogue ✓ Internet / Electronic Resource Service ✓ Multimedia Information System ✓ Multimedia Library ✓ Computer and Information Centre ✓ Children's Multimedia Information System ✓ Internet Express Terminals ✓ Government Wi-Fi Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Over 60 workstations for access to Internet/electronic resources</li> <li>● 32 Multimedia Information System workstations to access a vast selection of digitized resources in the system</li> <li>● 3 Internet Express Terminals for quick and convenient browsing of the Internet</li> <li>● 35 Library Catalogue Terminals to facilitate searching of in-house and system-wide library materials</li> <li>● 13 Self-charging terminals on all library floors, except the Reference Library, to facilitate self-borrowing of library materials</li> </ul>
<b>Ancillary Services</b> ✓ Reception Counter ✓ Express Check-in Service ✓ Self-charging Terminals ✓ Book Drop ✓ Electronic Locker Service ✓ Self-service Photocopying Service ✓ Extension Activities Room ✓ Students' Study Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A seating capacity of 228 in the Students’ Study Room</li> <li>● Other facilities such as special aiding devices for the visually impaired to facilitate internet browsing and use of computer facilities including screen</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Exhibition Area</li> <li>✓ User Education Hall</li> <li>✓ Coffee Corner</li> <li>✓ Computer Facilities for the Visually-impaired</li> </ul>	<p>magnification software, Cantonese and English voice synthesiser software, desktop magnifier, height adjustable reading tables, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Library extension activities for different user groups and community involvement projects in collaboration with community organization in promotion of library services and reading</li> </ul>
--	--



Outlook of the Library Compound –



*(photo 1)*

Lively ambience and bright environment to enhance reading pleasure –



*(photo 2.1)*



*(photo 2.2)*

*Open space*



*(photo 2.3) Atrium*



*(photo 2.4) Courtyard*



Adult Library –

*(photo 3)*

Children's Library –



*(photo 4.1)*



*(photo 4.2)*

*Picture Books Corner*



*(photo 4.3)*



*(photo 4.4)*

Newspapers & Periodicals Section – Reference Library –



*(photo 5)*



*(photo 6)*

Computer & Information Centre –



*(photo 7)*

Other facilities, such as the User Education Hall, Exhibition Area and Students' Study Room –



*(photo 8)*



*(photo 9)*



*(photo 10)*