

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**CSTB324**

**(Question Serial No. 3810)**

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (5) Public Libraries

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Manda CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism

Question:

While it is proposed in the Blueprint for Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Development (Blueprint) to reshape the function and design of public libraries and cultural facilities, there are views that the Government should turn libraries into “the third public space”, enhance the design of their hardware and build a landmark library of international standard in the Northern Metropolis. Would the Government inform this Committee of the following:

1. What are the specific targets and timetable set out in the Blueprint for reshaping the function of public libraries? What were the usage, number of loans and attendance of public libraries in various districts of Hong Kong in the past 5 years?
2. What are the specific implementation plans regarding the concept of transforming libraries into “the third public space” or “community living room”? How many existing libraries are eligible for such transformation?
3. What was the total investment amount in the digitisation of libraries and application of technology in the past 5 years? What was the share of such investment in the overall budget of libraries? Of the various smart facilities, such as self-borrowing and returning systems and electronic resources catalogues, what were their usage and effectiveness evaluation? What are the specific budget of and projects to be implemented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in upgrading the technological level of libraries in the coming 3 years?
4. What is the planning on libraries under the Northern Metropolis development plan? What is the expected size of population to be served? What are the site area and investment amount to be earmarked?

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen (LegCo internal reference no.: 50)

Reply:

1. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will commence a review of the function and design of public libraries in 2025 to make further service enhancement and to address the public's demand for and expectation of library services. The LCSD will reshape the function of the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) by drawing reference from newly-built libraries in the Mainland and overseas, including their functional positioning, environmental design and the services and facilities provided, with a view to aligning with the public's way of life and meeting the needs of the community, such as adopting spatial design elements to enhance the spaciousness of libraries and designing different reading areas and multi-purpose activities room based on the usage patterns of various reader groups. In addition, new libraries will provide diversified self-service facilities enabled with radio frequency identification (RFID) technology through a new Smart Library System (SLS), providing the public with more convenient services (including 24-hour smart book drops and smart book pick-up lockers, allowing the public to return library materials and collect reserved materials in a self-service manner).

The annual number of loans and attendance of static libraries in various districts of Hong Kong in the past 5 years are set out at Annexes I and II respectively.

2. The LCSD will take into account the demographics and needs of different communities when planning the services and facilities of new libraries, with a view to ensuring that library services are targeted to the needs of the community so that residents of different age groups can enjoy the various library services. For example, considering the greater number of young families in the district, a parent-child reading corner and a game wall are specifically provided in the children's library of Sham Shui Po Public Library commissioned in 2023 where the facilities are tailor-made for paired reading by young readers and families. A leisure reading area is also set up in the adult library to provide a comfortable reading environment for patrons, and a create • info zone equipped with multimedia digital service facilities is provided for the youth. The library also caters for the needs of the elderly in the district by providing desktop video magnifiers in the newspapers and periodicals section to bring convenience to them when reading newspapers and magazines.
3. The HKPL has been applying information and digital technology to enable the public to search, reserve and renew library materials, access digitalised collections and e-resources via computers as well as the web portal and mobile app of the HKPL. The system maintenance cost in the application of technology in 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 (up to 28 February 2025) was \$40.55 million, \$43.11 million, \$41.23 million, \$38.92 million and \$38.75 million respectively, accounting for about 3% in the annual overall operating expenses of the HKPL.

The number of virtual visits (including using online library and electronic resources services) and number of loans of library materials via self-service facilities in the past 5 years are set out in the table below:

Year	Virtual Visits (million times)	Number of Loans via Self-Service Facilities (million items)
2020	18.51	3.36
2021	19.40	6.49
2022	17.14	5.05
2023	20.00	6.93
2024	19.63	7.61

Note:

All public libraries under the LCSD were closed temporarily and intermittently between 2020 and 2022 to align with the Government's anti-epidemic measures.

To further enhance library services through the application of new technology, the new SLS is being developed by the LCSD to replace the existing library systems. As an integrated library system, the new SLS supports the daily operation of all public libraries, including collection management, borrowing and return of library materials and online electronic resources. The new SLS will be implemented in phases, with the Digital Resources Management System, the Integrated Library Core System and multi-functional self-service equipment enabled with RFID technology expected to be rolled out in 2025. Other systems including the event planning and management system and the business intelligence system are expected to commence operation in 2026. The estimated expenditure on the development of the new SLS is about \$591 million. Upon the implementation of the new SLS, the recurrent expenditure on the maintenance of computer systems is tentatively estimated to increase by about \$9 million.

4. The Government is planning to build a cultural complex in the Northern Metropolis, with a major library included in the initial proposal. The project is currently at the preliminary planning stage. The LCSD will plan library services and facilities appropriately having regard to the development and population size of the Northern Metropolis.

**Annual Number of Loans of Static Libraries in Various Districts (2020-2024)**

<b>District</b>	<b>Number of Loans</b>				
	<b>2020<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>2021<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>2022<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Central & Western	650 854	881 065	753 778	883 181	882 503
Eastern	788 154	1 068 968	877 975	1 049 392	1 136 059
Southern	573 359	701 475	524 012	610 199	621 748
Wanchai <sup>(2)</sup>	773 746	1 107 948	915 743	1 195 834	1 192 150
Kowloon City	774 402	956 650	823 518	1 022 940	1 045 624
Kwun Tong	778 711	1 173 988	1 027 955	1 207 238	1 212 933
Sham Shui Po <sup>(3)</sup>	721 617	978 165	882 327	1 324 064	1 328 395
Wong Tai Sin	675 021	975 323	796 638	997 462	983 324
Yau Tsim Mong	665 497	1 006 883	791 740	914 614	885 006
Islands	321 851	488 279	400 929	448 521	474 038
Kwai Tsing	634 753	845 007	733 707	849 630	851 286
North	427 028	652 188	553 510	667 105	655 702
Sai Kung	1 086 755	1 480 918	1 205 258	1 286 725	1 337 463
Sha Tin	1 204 306	1 712 628	1 353 363	1 530 457	1 549 475
Tai Po	260 994	406 879	332 247	396 017	413 024
Tsuen Wan	551 988	705 246	531 903	618 798	679 161
Tuen Mun	761 297	1 048 919	883 458	968 525	953 313
Yuen Long	839 993	1 173 980	967 771	1 128 646	1 053 848

**Notes:**

- (1) Due to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, all public libraries under the LCSD were closed temporarily and intermittently between 2020 and 2022 to align with the Government's anti-epidemic measures.
- (2) Includes the Hong Kong Central Library.
- (3) Sham Shui Po Public Library (District Library) came into operation on 30 March 2023.

**Annual Attendance of Static Libraries in Various Districts (2020-2024)**

<b>District</b>	<b>Attendance</b>				
	<b>2020<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>2021<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>2022<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Central & Western	369 150	615 822	617 618	1 053 854	1 128 890
Eastern	447 624	737 892	662 099	1 167 563	1 321 221
Southern	207 038	344 196	273 794	514 736	684 340
Wanchai <sup>(2)</sup>	849 644	1 699 965	1 223 751	2 430 750	2 735 721
Kowloon City	399 353	562 942	487 719	1 139 823	1 172 971
Kwun Tong	458 930	761 351	685 700	1 361 787	1 504 475
Sham Shui Po <sup>(3)</sup>	423 634	715 010	595 688	1 895 173	2 101 373
Wong Tai Sin	412 285	745 260	626 170	1 174 249	1 389 300
Yau Tsim Mong	317 204	622 436	596 056	988 297	1 073 651
Islands	184 852	323 142	259 955	417 545	497 044
Kwai Tsing	392 507	955 847	827 475	1 228 139	1 219 299
North	324 223	696 583	592 900	1 038 937	1 102 826
Sai Kung	398 743	950 456	775 502	1 155 838	1 202 105
Sha Tin	641 088	1 354 428	1 099 431	1 682 404	1 771 719
Tai Po	232 298	451 221	404 779	608 273	658 989
Tsuen Wan	283 781	549 997	409 735	641 623	759 106
Tuen Mun	452 479	832 709	709 465	1 145 958	1 192 206
Yuen Long	513 347	985 028	835 696	1 585 274	1 953 943

**Notes:**

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