

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 0967)

Head: (95) Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (5) Public Libraries

Controlling Officer: Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Vincent LIU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism

Question:

It is mentioned in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2023-24 that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department will continue to promote reading culture in the community through outreach and online programmes. In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following:

- (a) The estimated "registered borrowers as percentage of population" for 2023 is 62.88%, representing a decrease of approximately 3% over the actual figure of 2022. What method did the Government adopt in obtaining this estimation? Did the Government assess the reasons for such a decrease?
- (b) What and how many outreach and online programmes were conducted by the Government to promote a reading culture in the past year? What was the number of participants of these programmes and the expenditure involved? Did the Government evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes? If yes, please provide the details. If no, what are the reasons?
- (c) What are the details of the programmes to be held in the current financial year and the estimated expenditure to be involved?

Asked by: Hon MA Fung-kwok (LegCo internal reference no.: 28)

Reply:

- (a) When estimating the number of registered borrowers for the coming year, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) made reference to a number of factors, including demographic changes, the usage of libraries and the number of newly registered borrowers in the past year. When an estimation of the number of newly registered borrowers for 2023 was made by the Department, Hong Kong was still affected by the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic, with an increasing number of newly confirmed cases and a decreasing number of library-goers. As such, it was estimated that the number of newly registered borrowers would be less than that of the previous year. Notwithstanding an estimated increase of over 20 000 newly registered

borrowers, there is a decrease in the “registered borrowers as percentage of population”, as the increase in the number of newly registered borrowers is lower than the increase in the number of projected population for 2023.

- (b) In response to the post-epidemic new normality, the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) enhanced the use of its online platforms. With “Reading is Joyful” Facebook and Instagram pages as well as the LCSD Edutainment Channel, interactive storytelling and educational videos were produced, including the themed series of “life/LIBRARY”, “Interactive Story Zoom”, “4.23 Let’s Listen, Let’s Make Series”, “Stories-On-Board – Storytellers”, “Fun Reading • Handicrafts” and “Joyful Reading Moment”. Large-scale reading programmes such as “Summer Reading Fiesta” and the “Hong Kong Library Festival 2022” were organised online and in-situ to promote reading. Moreover, the HKPL also produced the “101 Academy Series on Literature” to lightly present various topics in literature to the audience, and organised a promotion activity of “60 e-books of Librarians’ Choice x eReading Corner”, offering a selection of e-books for unlimited access, to promote the e-book collections. The HKPL also arranged live webcast for some of the reading activities held in libraries or produced videos of these activities for online viewing.

The HKPL continued to enhance its outreach programmes, which included “Library-on-Wheels”, “Pop-up Library”, and thematic block loan to schools, to promote theme-based reading, e-books, e-resources and online services to local communities and schools. In 2022-23, around 18 000 library extension activities were organised by the HKPL with participation of around 9.4 million, involving an expenditure of around \$30 million. To evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes, the HKPL used questionnaires to collect participants’ views for usage and data analysis. Generally speaking, members of the public were satisfied with the online and outreach services provided by the HKPL.

- (c) In 2023-24, the HKPL plans to collaborate with academic institutions, professional organisations, schools, non-governmental organisations, community organisations, etc. to offer around 19 200 reading promotion activities, with an estimated expenditure of around \$21 million. Highlight programmes include:
- (i) launching large-scale reading promotion programmes: organising the “4.23 World Book Day Creative Competition” to encourage children and young people to broaden their scope of reading; working with schools, the publishing sector and community partners on reading promotion in organising a rich array of reading promotion activities at libraries in various districts and on online platforms on the “4.23 World Book Day” and during the “Hong Kong Book Fair”, so as to integrate reading into our daily lives and build a persistent reading habit;
 - (ii) through the HKPL’s outreach reading service, providing more easily accessible library service for the general public in different local communities so that they can enjoy the fun of reading;
 - (iii) enhancing the promotion of e-reading and the recommendation of online reading resources: participating in the “Hong Kong Book Fair” in 2023 to promote the e-resources of the HKPL to the public; and recommending e-books and e-databases on various topics to readers on relevant webpages of the HKPL.