

LCQ12: Provision of Internet workstations and computer facilities at public libraries

Following is a question by the Hon Sin Chung-kai and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (October 17):

Question:

In recent months, the mission of public libraries has been revised to include, among other things, providing a gateway to information for the general public and supporting continuing education for the community. Members of the public have conveyed to me that additional application software should be installed in the computers in public libraries to enable the public to collate information. However, Computer and Information Centres/Areas ("CIC/As") are available in only 20 of the 76 public libraries in the territory. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the total numbers of Internet workstations in the public libraries and computers in various CIC/As, their utilization rates, as well as the situation of overbooking of such facilities, as at the end of each of the past three years;

(b) whether it will set up CIC/As in all static libraries and install application software in all Internet workstations to accomplish the above-mentioned mission; if it will, of the number of additional CIC/As to be set up, the number and locations of Internet workstations to be installed with additional application software, as well as the implementation schedules concerned; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c) whether it will standardise the services provided in various CIC/As and install application software for word processing, spreadsheet, database, presentation, web authoring, image and photo editing, drawing and publishing; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply :

Madam President,

(a) At present, the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL) operates 20 Computer and Information Centres/Areas (CIC/As), providing a total of 400 computer

workstations. The 66 static libraries across the territory are also equipped with 431 Internet workstations for public use.

Over the past three years, the number of Internet workstations and that of computers installed in CIC/As have increased from 385 and 313 in 2005 to 431 and 400 in 2007 respectively.

The total numbers of Internet workstation and CIC/A users in each of the past three years are as follows:

Year	Number of Internet workstation users	Number of CIC/A users
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2005	3 160 555	665 672
2006	3 282 564	749 222
2007	2 280 852	571 189

(from Jan to Aug)

Seven days' advance reservations by telephone or in person are accepted for the use of the above facilities. The utilisation rates of CIC/As and Internet workstations under the HKPL have all along remained at a satisfactory level. At present, the HKPL has no statistics on the situation of overbooking.

(b) The HKPL will continue to expand the CIC/A services. In particular, more computer facilities will be provided in libraries being renovated or newly established. Over the past five years, the HKPL has altogether set up nine additional CIC/As and installed 176 additional computer workstations.

In the coming year, the HKPL will set up new CIC/As in five district libraries undergoing renovation, including To Kwa Wan Public Library, Fa Yuen Street Public Library, Shui Wo Street Public Library, Lockhart Road Public Library and Quarry Bay Public Library. A total of 65 additional computer workstations will be available for readers' use.

Internet workstations in the HKPL are set up for the purpose of providing readers access to library electronic resources and Internet reference materials, and facilitating their acquisition of knowledge and information in various disciplines. In view of the

high demand for Internet workstations and to avoid any adverse impact on the accessibility to this Internet information service, application software will not be installed in Internet workstations for the time being. However, the services will be kept under review in order to keep in pace with the community's development and demand.

(c) The CIC/As under the HKPL have always been providing the public with a comprehensive range of computer information services. At present, application software installed in the computer workstations of all CIC/As is standardised, including the commonly used office software for word-processing, spreadsheet, presentation, web-authoring, general image, photo-editing and processing, etc. Apart from this, application software for database, engineering drawing, advanced web-authoring, publishing, image and photo-editing, etc. is also available in major CIC/As.

The HKPL will regularly upgrade the software and hardware of the computer workstations with a view to better meeting the public's needs on information technology.

Ends/Wednesday, October 17, 2007