

**CHAPTER 3**

**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE  
HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION**

**GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT**

**GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT**

**Home Affairs Bureau**

**GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT**

**Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

**Hong Kong Public Libraries**

**Audit Commission  
Hong Kong  
15 October 2002**

# HONG KONG PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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# HONG KONG PUBLIC LIBRARIES

## Summary and key findings

### Introduction

A. Under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is responsible for providing public library services in Hong Kong. At the end of 2001, Hong Kong had 69 public libraries (hereinafter referred to as Hong Kong Public Libraries — HKPL). The cost of providing the public library services was \$713 million for 2001-02 and it was estimated to increase to \$735 million for 2002-03 (paras. 1.1 and 1.4).

### Audit review

B. Audit has conducted a review to examine: (a) the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the LCSD manages its public library services and (b) whether the HKPL's collection is properly managed (para. 1.10). Audit's findings are summarised in paragraphs C to P below.

### Management of public library services

C. ***Need to ensure that community needs are met.*** Audit has found that the LCSD is formulating a new strategic plan for the future development of the HKPL. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to ensure that the objectives of the public library services meet the needs of the community (para. 2.7).

D. ***Need to develop more useful performance indicators.*** According to the international guidelines on public library services, a number of key performance indicators can be used to measure the performance of public libraries. Audit has found that the LCSD does not have sufficient performance indicators for fully measuring the HKPL's performance. Audit considers that the HKPL need to develop more useful performance indicators with reference to the international guidelines. In addition, the HKPL need to develop more performance indicators to measure their staff's efficiency in handling library items at the various stages of processing and preparing library items (paras. 2.10 to 2.12).

### Addition to library collection

E. ***Need to review quantitative acquisition objectives.*** One of the HKPL's acquisition objectives is to achieve a target provision of two library items per capita in 2007 by acquiring at least 700,000 library items annually. Audit has found that, owing to the HKPL's space problems, if the LCSD continues to pursue this quantitative acquisition objective, there is a risk that the capacities of

individual libraries cannot cope with their expanding collections. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to review this quantitative acquisition objective. The HKPL also aim to achieve a target collection ratio of 80% Chinese books and 20% English books. Audit has found that as at 31 December 2001, 73% of the HKPL's lending books were Chinese books and 27% were English books while in 2001, 86% of the books borrowed from the HKPL were Chinese books and 14% were English books. The turnover of Chinese lending books in 2001 was 2.19 times that of English lending books. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to take into account this noticeable difference in the usage of the HKPL's collection to ensure that the collection of Chinese and English lending books is maintained at an optimal ratio to better meet the needs of the community (paras. 3.7 to 3.12).

F. ***Need to provide more useful management information.*** Audit has found that the Library Automation System could not readily produce usage statistics for specific and current periods to assist the HKPL in evaluating the need for acquiring library materials and the extent of meeting the readers' current demands. Audit considers that such statistics on the usage of library materials can provide useful information for making acquisition decisions in future (para. 3.14).

G. ***Need to monitor the performance of book lamination service.*** The Correctional Services Department (CSD) provides book lamination service for the HKPL. According to the service agreement, the CSD should deliver the laminated books directly to the public libraries within four weeks from the date of collection from the LCSD's Technical Processing Unit (TPU). However, Audit has found that, for 99% of the paperbacks, the CSD took more than four weeks to laminate them, thereby delaying the release of new books for public use. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor the performance of the CSD's book lamination service (paras. 3.17 to 3.20).

H. ***Need to promptly release donated library materials for public use.*** From time to time, the HKPL receive donations of library materials. As there had been a sudden increase in donations in the last few years and the TPU did not have a dedicated team of staff to process the donated library materials, the backlog of unprocessed donated library materials increased by 21% from 124,200 items in December 1999 to 150,459 items in December 2001. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to take action to clear the backlog of unprocessed donated library materials in the TPU so as to release them promptly for public use (paras. 3.24 and 3.25).

### **Management of library collection**

I. ***Need to improve the operating efficiency of processing and preparing new library items.*** Audit has found that some new library items required long processing and preparation time. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to measure the operating efficiency of processing and preparing new library items acquired for existing public libraries by setting target processing and preparation times, and to monitor closely the building up of collections for new libraries under planning so as to ensure that new library items are released promptly for public use (paras. 4.6 to 4.13).

J. ***Need to promptly release inaccessible library items for public use.*** Owing to the limited space available in public libraries, some reserve stocks are kept in reserve stacks. Audit has found that, as such reserve stocks had not been systematically shelved in the reserve stacks, they were not

available for search by the public through the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). As of January 2002, 952,479 library items with an estimated total cost of \$65.8 million, representing 10% of the HKPL's collection, were inaccessible to the public. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to make greater effort to make available all library items accessible through the OPAC. To facilitate the efficient retrieval of reserve stocks, the LCSD needs to set up central reserve stacks for shelving them in a systematic manner. Audit has also found that the significant increase in the collections of small public libraries has aggravated their space problems. As a result, a large percentage of their library items have been made inaccessible to the public. In Audit's view, the LCSD needs to consider reducing the number of library items to be added to the collections of small public libraries in future and to ensure that the capacities of individual libraries can cope with their expanding collections. The LCSD also needs to critically review the rate of growth of the HKPL's collection (paras. 4.19 to 4.30).

K. ***Need to monitor closely the withdrawal of unserviceable library items.*** Audit has found that, apart from back issues of periodicals, some unserviceable library items withdrawn from the HKPL's collection had been acquired for a relatively short period of time. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor closely the withdrawal of new library items from the HKPL's collection. Audit has also found that in 2001, for some public libraries, the withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items, ranging from 9% to 27%, was higher than the HKPL's approved annual withdrawal rate of 5%. The LCSD needs to monitor closely the withdrawal of library items from individual public libraries so as to ensure that the withdrawals are necessary and reasonable (paras. 4.36 to 4.41).

L. ***Need to better manage library items under trace and in transit.*** Audit has found that a number of library items had been under trace or in transit for a long period of time. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor closely the level of library items under trace and promptly locate those library items which have been in transit for a long period of time (paras. 4.45 to 4.50).

#### **Other improvements in public library services**

M. ***Issuing of electronic overdue notices to save costs.*** Audit has found that the LCSD is exploring the feasibility of sending electronic mail to defaulted borrowers to remind them to return overdue library items. Audit considers that using electronic mail would achieve cost savings (para. 5.3).

N. ***Need to improve the cost-effectiveness of mobile library services.*** Audit has found that, while the library vehicles are stationed at the service points, the Motor Drivers operating the eight library vehicles were idle. Audit considers that the present arrangement of employing Motor Drivers solely for operating the library vehicles is not cost-effective. The LCSD needs to consider deleting these posts and employing suitably qualified staff on non-civil-service contract terms to take up both the duties of driving library vehicles and handling library materials. The resultant annual saving in staff cost would be \$3.4 million (paras. 5.7 to 5.9).

O. ***Need to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of outreach programmes and to review the demand for library publications.*** Audit has found that, except for a few courses on computer literacy, the HKPL did not obtain feedback and comments from the participants upon completion of the



outreach programmes. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes so as to ensure that they meet the needs of the community. Audit has also found that as at 31 December 2001, 64,838 unsold copies of library publications with a total sale value of \$1 million were kept in various public libraries. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to critically review the demand for its library publications before printing so as to avoid wastage (paras. 5.13 and 5.14).

P. ***Need to examine the feasibility of recovering the cost of providing the library materials return service.*** The library materials return service enables registered borrowers to return borrowed library items to any public library in Hong Kong. Since October 2001, the LCSD has engaged the Hong Kong Post Office (HKPO) to provide inter-library delivery service for returning library items to the owning libraries. Audit has found that for the six-month period October 2001 to March 2002, the HKPO processed a monthly average of 640,000 items and charged the HKPL a monthly service fee of \$0.95 million. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to examine the feasibility of collecting a fee from the borrowers to recover the cost of providing the service (paras. 5.17 and 5.18).

### **Audit recommendations**

Q. Audit has made the following major recommendations that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:

#### ***Need to ensure that community needs are met***

- (a) in formulating the LCSD's forthcoming strategic plan for developing public library services in Hong Kong, ensure that the objectives of the public library services meet the needs of the community (para. 2.13(a));

#### ***Need to develop more useful performance indicators***

- (b) develop more useful performance indicators for measuring the HKPL's performance, with particular reference to the international guidelines and standards (para. 2.13(c));
- (c) set performance targets to measure the operating efficiency of the HKPL's staff in handling library items during the various stages of processing and preparing library items (para. 2.13(d));

#### ***Need to review quantitative acquisition objectives***

- (d) in revising the HKPL's acquisition policy of library materials, critically review the HKPL's quantitative acquisition objective of providing two library items per capita in 2007 and ensure that the collection of Chinese and English lending books is maintained at an optimal ratio (para. 3.15(a));

***Need to provide more useful management information***

- (e) in the acquisition of library materials, make use of statistics for specific and current periods on the usage of library materials to facilitate the HKPL to achieve better value for money and to better meet readers' current demands (para. 3.15(c));

***Need to monitor the performance of book lamination service***

- (f) request the CSD to improve the efficiency of its book lamination service and monitor the performance of such service (para. 3.21);

***Need to promptly release donated library materials for public use***

- (g) draw up an action plan to clear the backlog of unprocessed donated library materials in the TPU and, in doing so, consider contracting out the processing work (para. 3.26);

***Need to improve the operating efficiency of processing and preparing new library items***

- (h) set target times for processing and preparing new library items acquired for existing public libraries and monitor closely the processing and preparation work so as to ensure that they are released promptly for public use (paras. 4.9(a) and (b) and 4.14(a));

***Need to promptly release inaccessible library items for public use***

- (i) take action to ensure that all library items are accessible through the OPAC (para. 4.31(a));
- (j) reduce the duration of keeping library items inaccessible to the public to a minimum and devise a performance monitoring mechanism by setting target times for releasing these items for public use (para. 4.31(b));
- (k) set up central reserve stacks for the HKPL for shelving reserve stocks in a systematic manner to facilitate the efficient retrieval of library items for public use (para. 4.31(d));
- (l) examine the possibility of reallocating some of the library items of small public libraries to other public libraries and consider reducing the number of library items to be added to their collections in future (para. 4.31(g));
- (m) critically review the rate of growth of the HKPL's collection to ensure that the capacities of individual libraries can cope with their expanding collections (para. 4.31(h));

***Need to monitor closely the withdrawal of unserviceable library items***

- (n) monitor closely the withdrawal of unserviceable library items from individual public libraries so as to ensure that the withdrawals are necessary and reasonable (para. 4.42(b));

***Need to better manage library items under trace and in transit***

- (o) monitor closely the level of library items under trace in the HKPL and promptly locate those library items which have been in transit for a long period of time (para. 4.51(a) and (c));

***Issuing of electronic overdue notices to save costs***

- (p) issue overdue notices to defaulted borrowers by electronic mail (para. 5.4);

***Need to improve the cost-effectiveness of mobile library services***

- (q) consider deleting the posts of Motor Driver in the mobile libraries and employing suitably qualified staff on non-civil-service contract terms to take up both the duties of driving library vehicles and handling library materials (para. 5.10);

***Need to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of outreach programmes and to review the demand for library publications***

- (r) regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach programmes organised by the HKPL (para. 5.15(a));
- (s) critically review the demand for the publications of the HKPL so as to avoid printing excessive copies of these publications and to minimise the expenses incurred in producing and distributing these publications (para. 5.15(c)); and

***Need to examine the feasibility of recovering the cost of providing the library materials return service***

- (t) examine the feasibility of collecting a fee from the borrowers to recover the cost of providing the library materials return service (para. 5.19(a)).

**Response from the Administration**

- R. The Administration has agreed with all of Audit's recommendations.

## **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

1.1 Under Section 105K of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is responsible for providing public library services in Hong Kong. The LCSD comprises two branches, namely the Cultural Services Branch and the Leisure Services Branch, each headed by a Deputy Director. The Libraries and Development Division of the Cultural Services Branch, headed by an Assistant Director, oversees all public libraries in Hong Kong. An organisation chart of the Libraries and Development Division as at 31 March 2002 is at Appendix A. The cost of providing public library services was \$713 million for 2001-02 and it was estimated to increase to \$735 million for 2002-03.

### **Hong Kong Public Libraries**

1.2 The objectives of the public libraries in Hong Kong, collectively known as the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL — Note 1), are to provide free public library services to:

- (a) meet the needs of the community for information, informal education, life-long learning and profitable use of leisure time; and
- (b) promote reading and literary arts in Hong Kong.

1.3 In 1962, the first public library, the City Hall Public Library, was opened. In the early years, the Government's priority was to expand public libraries' collections and provide a balanced spread of service points in Hong Kong. In the 1980s, taking into account the changing needs of the community, the Government placed emphasis on improving the quality of library services by upgrading the libraries' information and reference facilities, organising outreach programmes and providing a specialised Arts Library (Note 2). Presently, the HKPL play a significant role in serving the community, as follows:

- (a) as an information centre and gateway to knowledge where information and the latest development on all subject disciplines are freely and readily made available to the public;

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**Note 1:** *The LCSD was established in January 2000 to take over, among others, the responsibility for providing public library services from the ex-Municipal Councils. The HKPL were established by merging the public libraries of the ex-Municipal Councils.*

**Note 2:** *The Arts Library, established in 1990, was developed into an Arts Resource Centre after its relocation to the Hong Kong Central Library in May 2001.*

- (b) as an effective tool in support of life-long learning and for self-education and continuing education, providing means for self-development by individuals at whatever stage of education and enhancing the knowledge level of the community;
- (c) as a source for the enrichment of everyday living and for the provision of opportunities for personal creative development;
- (d) as a community cultural centre where a balanced range of resource-based library activities are organised to provide information, recreation and relaxation for patrons of all age groups;
- (e) as a centre for the promotion of reading, literary arts and literary research in Hong Kong; and
- (f) as a source of enjoyment for the profitable use of leisure time where library materials may be borrowed for use at home.

1.4 The number of public libraries increased by 28% from 54 in 1990 to 69 in 2001 (see Appendix B). During this period, 16 substandard libraries, mostly in leased premises, were reprovisioned or expanded. As at 31 December 2001, the HKPL had a total of 69 public libraries comprising:

- (a) 61 libraries located inside buildings which included the Hong Kong Central Library (HKCL — Note 3), 5 major libraries with collections suitable for readers up to the graduate level, 26 district libraries with collections suitable for readers up to the undergraduate level, and 29 small libraries for supplementing the library services provided by the district libraries; and
- (b) 8 mobile libraries for serving densely populated areas without proper libraries and isolated population brackets in remote areas.

These 69 public libraries were evenly spread in Hong Kong to provide people of all age groups and walks of life convenient access to the library services of the HKPL.

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**Note 3:** *The HKCL, opened to the public on 17 May 2001, is the largest public library in Hong Kong and forms the hub of the service network for the HKPL.*

1.5 The HKPL provide a wide range of library services, including free lending of library materials, children's library services, newspapers and periodicals services, and information and reference services. Other library facilities include students' study rooms, computer and information centres and multimedia resource centres. As at 31 December 2001, the HKPL had 9.3 million library items, including 8.4 million books and 0.9 million audio-visual items. In addition, the HKPL subscribed to over 5,600 titles of local and overseas newspapers and periodicals. Some of these library items might be borrowed while others were only for reference use in the public libraries. In 2001, 42.5 million library items were borrowed from the public libraries (see Appendix C).

1.6 All the public libraries are interconnected by a bilingual Library Automation System (LAS — Note 4). At the completion of this audit in June 2002, the LAS supported over 1,200 computer terminals. The LAS:

- (a) enables library users to:
  - (i) enquire about the library collection through its Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) Subsystem;
  - (ii) borrow and return a maximum of six library items at any public library; and
  - (iii) renew a maximum of six borrowed library items and reserve a maximum of six library items through the Internet or by telephone; and
- (b) provides the HKPL with online facilities for managing the library collection.

1.7 Outreach programmes also form an integral part of library services. The HKPL regularly organise educational and recreational programmes to promote the use of library facilities, to inculcate life-long reading habits, and to enhance public appreciation of free access to up-to-date information.

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**Note 4:** *To provide an integrated library service for Hong Kong, in 1999, the ex-Municipal Councils decided to replace their computerised library systems by phases with an enhanced computerised system, known as the LAS. The upgrading of the LAS commenced in 1999 and was expected to be completed in 2004 at an estimated cost of \$122.8 million.*

## **Recent developments**

### **Multimedia Information System**

1.8 The HKCL is developing another computerised system, known as the Multimedia Information System, for supporting the use of digital technology to acquire, store, preserve and provide access to library materials published in digital form. The system is estimated to cost \$143.6 million and is scheduled for completion in 2004. The system, initially implemented in the HKCL, will be extended to other major and district libraries by phases.

### **Measures to improve public library services**

1.9 Since their establishment on 1 January 2000, the HKPL have implemented a number of improvement measures to enhance their role of supporting life-long learning and being an information centre in Hong Kong. Details of these measures are at Appendix D.

### **Audit review**

1.10 Against the above background, Audit has conducted a review on the management of the HKPL. The audit objectives were to examine:

- (a) the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the LCSD manages its public library services; and
- (b) whether the HKPL's collection is properly managed.

1.11 Audit has found that there is room for improvement in various areas and has made a number of recommendations to address the related issues.

### **General response from the Administration**

1.12 The **Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury** supports Audit's recommendations to improve the cost-effectiveness and the management of public library services in general.

## **PART 2: MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES**

### **Strategic planning of public library services**

2.1 In the “Consultancy report on Culture, the Arts, Recreation and Sports Services in Hong Kong” issued in February 1999, the consultants recommended, among others, to invite overseas experts to advise on the future development of the public library services with a view to mapping out a new cultural strategy for Hong Kong. In 2000, the Government accepted the consultants’ recommendation. Until a new strategic plan is formulated, the LCSD is implementing the ex-Municipal Councils’ plans for developing the public library services.

### **Overall review on public library services**

2.2 The Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC — Note 5) is responsible for advising the Government on overall policies and funding priorities on the development and promotion of culture and heritage in Hong Kong. In November 2000, the CHC established the Working Group on Libraries to study the functional role of the HKPL and the mode of library development in future. With the approval of the Working Group, in October 2001, the LCSD commissioned a consultancy study on the future development of the HKPL at an estimated cost of \$1.66 million. The terms of reference of the consultancy study are at Appendix E. At the completion of this audit in June 2002, the consultants were still finalising the draft report.

### **Planning and evaluation of public library services**

2.3 Proper planning of public library services includes the setting of clear objectives and performance targets to measure and evaluate the results. Setting of measurable performance targets and performance indicators is a key step in the whole management process, which enables the evaluation of the standard of public library services and improves public accountability. According to the LCSD’s 2001-02 and 2002-03 Controlling Officer’s Reports, the performance targets of the HKPL were to:

- (a) foster the development and appreciation of literature;
- (b) enhance the life-long learning and information roles of the public libraries;
- (c) increase the library stock from 8.3 million in 2000 to 8.8 million in 2001, and further to 9.4 million in 2002;

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**Note 5:** *The CHC was established in April 2000. As at 30 June 2002, it had 17 appointed members including 11 members appointed in their personal capacity, 4 ex-officio members and 2 government officials.*



- (d) organise a balanced mix of extension activity programmes for library users, aiming to attract a total attendance of 15.4 million people in 2001 and 17.6 million people in 2002;
- (e) increase the number of library items borrowed from 34.5 million in 2000 to 35.6 million in 2001 and further to 40 million in 2002; and
- (f) develop and maintain close links with local and overseas libraries, cultural organisations and professional library bodies to promote inter-library cooperation and information exchange.

The HKPL reported that they had succeeded in achieving the measurable performance targets in 2001 (mentioned in insets (c), (d) and (e)).

2.4 The HKPL maintain performance statistics on the stock level, the number of registered borrowers and the usage of various types of public library services. According to the LCSD's 2001-02 Controlling Officer's Reports, the key performance indicators include the number of books and audio-visual materials on stock, the number of registered borrowers, the number of library items borrowed, the number of reference enquiries, the attendance at extension activities, and the number of libraries.

### **International guidelines of public library services**

2.5 The Public Library Manifesto (hereinafter referred to as the Manifesto), jointly promulgated in 1994 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO — Note 6) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA — Note 7), provides the fundamental principles of public library services. The Manifesto states that a clear policy must be formulated by defining objectives, priorities and services in relation to the needs of the local community. The Manifesto also states that public library has to be organised effectively and professional standards of operation must be maintained. According to the document entitled "The Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development" (hereinafter referred to as the Guidelines) published by the IFLA in August 2001 (Note 8), a wide range of tools can be used to manage public libraries. The important management tools include:

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**Note 6:** *The main objective of the UNESCO is to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture and communication.*

**Note 7:** *The IFLA is the leading independent international non-governmental association which has formal associate relations with the UNESCO. The aims of the IFLA are: (a) to promote international understanding, cooperation, discussion, research and development in all fields of library activity and information science; and (b) to provide a body through which librarianship can be represented in matters of international interest.*

**Note 8:** *In August 2001, a set of revised guidelines were published to replace the "Guidelines for public libraries" of 1986. These guidelines provide assistance to librarians to develop effective public library services for meeting the needs of their local community.*

- (a) analysis to meet community needs (see paras. 2.6 to 2.7 below);
- (b) monitoring and evaluation (see paras. 2.8 to 2.9 below); and
- (c) performance measurement (see paras. 2.10 to 2.11 below).

Audit assessed the LCSD's management of its public library services by comparing the management tools used by the HKPL with those specified in the Guidelines.

## **Audit observations on planning and evaluation of public library services**

### **Meeting community needs**

2.6 ***IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines.*** The Guidelines state that, to provide services which meet the needs of the community, the public library has to establish the extent of these needs. A community needs analysis is a process whereby the public library collects detailed library and information needs of the community. As needs and expectations will change, community needs analysis will need to be conducted at regular intervals, say, every five years. Planning and policy of public library services are then developed based on the results of the analysis.

2.7 ***Management practice in Hong Kong.*** Before 2000, the ex-Municipal Councils regularly conducted community needs analyses to formulate their five-year plans on public library services for meeting the needs of the community. After taking over the responsibility from the ex-Municipal Councils for the provision of public library services, in October 2001, the LCSD commissioned a consultancy study on the future development of the HKPL (see para. 2.2 above). **Audit considers that the results of the consultancy study will assist the Government in developing its public library policy and formulating a new strategic plan for the future development of the HKPL. In formulating the strategic plan for developing public library services in Hong Kong, the LCSD needs to ensure that the objectives of the public library services meet the needs of the community. The LCSD also needs to develop an operational plan to ensure that the library services of the HKPL are focused on achieving the priorities identified in the strategic plan.**

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

2.8 ***IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines.*** According to the Guidelines, management must continually monitor the performance of public libraries to ensure that strategies and operational results are achieving the objectives. Surveys of community needs and satisfaction and performance indicators (see para. 2.10 below) are valuable tools for monitoring and measuring the performance of public libraries. Techniques should be developed to measure the quality of the services and their impact on the community. All library programmes and services should be evaluated regularly.

2.9 **Management practice in Hong Kong.** The LCSD conducts a benchmark survey once every two years to collect public opinions on its various activities including the HKPL. In addition, dedicated public opinion surveys on public library services are conducted at regular five-year intervals. The LCSD conducted a benchmark survey in December 2000 and a public opinion survey in December 2001. Over 95% of the respondents to the surveys gave favourable ratings to the HKPL. Based on the survey results, the HKPL took appropriate improvement measures to address the issues raised by the public. The HKPL also set up Customer Liaison Groups in the major and district libraries to improve communication and to obtain feedback on public library services.

### **Performance measurement**

2.10 **IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines.** The Guidelines state that performance measurement has been used in public libraries for some time. The availability of reliable performance information is essential for measuring the economy, efficiency, effectiveness and quality of public library services. Collection of statistics relating to resources, services, circulation of library materials and library activities provides data for planning, shows accountability and assists in informed decision-making. Performance indicators are established to measure the input (i.e. the resources devoted to all or particular library services) and the output (i.e. the achieved results) of public libraries. The performance results of two consecutive years are compared to assess the extent to which the quality of the public library services is improving or deteriorating. According to the Guidelines, the following key performance indicators can be used to measure the performance of public libraries:

- (a) **Usage indicators.** These include loans per capita, total library visits per capita, membership as a percentage of the population, loans per library item, reference enquiries per capita, loans per opening hour, and frequency of access to electronic services and other non-printed materials;
- (b) **Resource indicators.** These include total stock per capita, total stock per registered borrower and provision of computer terminals/personal computers per capita;
- (c) **Human resource indicators.** These include ratio of professional staff to population, ratio of full-time staff to population and ratio of full-time staff to library users;
- (d) **Qualitative indicators.** These include enquiries satisfied and user satisfaction surveys;
- (e) **Cost indicators.** These include unit cost for services, unit cost for functions, unit cost for activities, staff cost per function, total cost per capita, total cost per staff member, total cost per visitor and total cost per service point; and

- (f) **Comparative indicators.** These include benchmarking of statistical data against those of other relevant and comparable library services, internationally, nationally and locally.

The Guidelines also state that performance measurement should be a planned process carried out consistently over a period of time. The International Standard entitled “ISO 11620: 1988 Information and documentation, Library performance indicators” provides more details about library performance indicators (Note 9).

2.11 **Management practice in Hong Kong.** The HKPL maintain performance statistics on the stock level, the number of registered borrowers and the usage of various types of public library services. Performance targets and performance indicators are also provided in the Controlling Officer’s Reports of the LCSD (see paras. 2.3 and 2.4 above). However, Audit notes that:

- (a) only some of the performance indicators specified in the Guidelines (see para. 2.10 above) have been used by the LCSD for measuring the performance of the HKPL. As the LCSD’s performance indicators mainly include statistics on the stock level, the number of registered borrowers and the usage of various types of public library services (see para. 2.4 above), the LCSD cannot use them to fully measure the HKPL’s performance; and
- (b) the LCSD has not drawn up guidelines for using performance indicators to measure the HKPL’s performance.

2.12 Based on the HKPL’s performance statistics, Audit attempted to measure the HKPL’s performance during the period 1997 to 2001 using the usage indicators and resource indicators specified in the Guidelines (see para. 2.10(a) and (b) above). During this period, there has been noticeable improvement in the usage of public library services and the provision of library stock (see Appendix F). **However, Audit considers that further improvement can be made in the HKPL’s performance measurement system by developing more useful performance indicators.** For example, the following key performance indicators specified in the Guidelines (see para. 2.10(c) to (f) above) can be used: human resource indicators (e.g. ratio of professional staff to population); qualitative indicators (e.g. enquiries satisfied); cost indicators (e.g. unit cost for services) and comparative indicators (e.g. benchmark statistical data against comparable international library services). **In addition, the HKPL need to develop more performance indicators to measure the efficiency of their staff. This will enable the HKPL to measure their efficiency in handling library items at various stages, such as the processing of library items**

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**Note 9:** *The International Standard, published by the International Organisation for Standardisation, is concerned with the evaluation of all types of libraries. Its main purpose is to endorse the use of performance indicators in libraries and to spread knowledge about how performance measurement can be carried out.*

(see para. 4.8 below), the preparation of library items (see para. 4.13 below), and the release of inaccessible library items for public use (see para. 4.23 below).

### **Audit recommendations on planning and evaluation of public library services**

2.13 At the completion of this audit in June 2002, the LCSD was fine-tuning its public library policy and reformulating its strategic plan for the future development of the HKPL. **In order to further improve the HKPL's services, Audit has recommended that upon completion of the consultancy study on the future development of the HKPL, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

#### *Meeting community needs*

- (a) **in formulating the LCSD's forthcoming strategic plan for developing public library services in Hong Kong, ensure that the objectives of the public library services meet the needs of the community;**
- (b) **develop an operational plan to ensure that the library services of the HKPL are focused on achieving the priorities identified in the strategic plan;**

#### *Performance measurement*

- (c) **develop more useful performance indicators for measuring the HKPL's performance, with particular reference to the international guidelines and standards, so as to fully assess the HKPL's performance in terms of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services provided; and**
- (d) **in particular, set performance targets to measure the operating efficiency of the HKPL's staff in handling library items during the various stages of processing and preparing library items.**

### **Response from the Administration**

2.14 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

## ***General***

- (a) after the establishment of the LCSD in January 2000, there was a need to align the different development plans formerly adopted by the ex-Municipal Councils. In particular, it was necessary to re-engineer the public library services in Hong Kong to better meet the changing needs of the community and the new challenges of the evolving information age. Although the new Guidelines published in 2001 contain a number of performance indicators, there were no such indicators in the original Guidelines published in 1986. All along, the HKPL had to develop a set of performance targets for their own use. To address the above changes and in line with the recommendations in the Consultancy Report on Culture, the Arts, Recreation and Sports Services published in 1999, the scope of the consultancy study on the future development of the HKPL commissioned by the LCSD in October 2001 includes: (i) identifying future community needs, performance indicators, financial indicators and human resource indicators; (ii) formulating a strategic plan on the development of public library services; and (iii) proposing an operational plan for the implementation of the strategic plan;

## ***Meeting community needs***

- (b) the LCSD will formulate a new strategic plan for the future development of the public libraries and an operational plan to achieve the priorities identified in the strategic plan in the light of the Consultants' recommendations. These recommendations will no doubt take into consideration the various needs of the community in the next ten years;

## ***Performance measurement***

- (c) a set of useful performance indicators will be devised with reference to the new Guidelines and the Consultants' recommendations; and
- (d) the HKPL will make reference to the output statistics of the library staff to work out a realistic set of performance targets to measure their operational efficiency.

2.15 The **Secretary for Home Affairs** welcomes Audit's recommendations on the planning and evaluation of public library services from the policy point of view.

## **PART 3: ADDITION TO LIBRARY COLLECTION**

### **Significant increase in library collection**

3.1 In recent years, the HKPL had increased their collection significantly. During the period 1990 to 2001, while the total number of public libraries increased by 28% from 54 to 69 (see para. 1.4 above), the HKPL's collection increased by 132% from 4,040,000 items to 9,367,000 items (with increases of 113% in lending books, 169% in reference books and 327% in audio-visual materials — see Appendix G). The total number of library items borrowed from the HKPL increased by 210% from 13.7 million to 42.5 million (see Appendix C).

### **Fundamental principles of library collection**

3.2 Concerning the collection of library materials, the Manifesto states that:

- (a) high quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental; and
- (b) library collections and services have to include all types of appropriate and modern technology as well as traditional materials. Library materials must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.

### **Acquisition of library materials**

3.3 The HKPL have adopted the ex-Urban Council's policy for the acquisition of library materials, which was formulated in 1996. In the acquisition of library materials, the HKPL follow the principles as stated in the Manifesto. Library materials are selected based on the following five factors: the aims of the HKPL, international standards, advance in information technology, changes in libraries' internal and external environments (such as demographic changes and usage pattern), and publishing trends. The LCSD has appointed library advisers to provide community input in selecting suitable library materials. Members of the public and 66 local professional bodies also make recommendations on the acquisition of library materials in order to strengthen the selection process. In 2001-02, the HKPL acquired some 700,000 library items at a total cost of \$90 million.

3.4 The Stock Editing Board (SEB) of the HKPL decides on the acquisition of library materials. The SEB, chaired by a Chief Librarian, consists of members of the Librarian grade. The SEB appoints Subject Specialist Teams to identify and assess library materials suitable for acquisition by the HKPL. The SEB meets once a month to decide on the library materials recommended/rejected for acquisition, the number of copies of a title to be purchased, and the

distribution of these copies among the libraries. After the SEB's approval, the Technical Processing Unit (TPU) of the HKPL proceeds to procure library materials from the appointed suppliers.

### **Quantitative acquisition objectives**

3.5 Acquisition of library materials is governed by the HKPL's following objectives:

- (a) the HKPL should achieve a target provision of two library items per capita in 2007 by acquiring at least 700,000 library items annually;
- (b) 80% of the library collection should be in Chinese and 20% in English. Furthermore, 70% of the library collection should be for adults and 30% for children;
- (c) 20% of the library collection should be reference books; and
- (d) 10% of the library collection should be audio-visual items.

3.6 At the completion of this audit in June 2002, the HKPL were revising the acquisition policy to take into account the experience gained after the dissolution of the ex-Municipal Councils, the changing needs of the community, and the need to support life-long learning and to develop the HKCL into an information and reference centre. To this end, the HKPL established a working group to review the policy for collection development for the various categories of libraries and the development of special collections in the HKCL and the major libraries. The review is expected to be completed in late 2002.

### **Audit observations on acquisition of library materials**

#### **Quantitative acquisition objective of providing two library items per capita in 2007**

3.7 To achieve the HKPL's objective of providing two library items per capita in 2007 (see para. 3.5(a) above), since 2000, the LCSD has been acquiring at least 700,000 library items annually. However, Audit notes that the HKPL have been confronted with space problems. In January 2002, 10% of their library items were inaccessible to the public (see paras. 4.19 to 4.29 below). **If the LCSD continues to pursue this quantitative acquisition objective of the HKPL, there is a risk that the capacities of the HKPL's individual libraries cannot cope with their**



**expanding collections. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to review this quantitative acquisition objective.**

**Quantitative acquisition objective of providing Chinese and English lending books**

3.8 Audit examined the level of the HKPL's collection in 2001 with reference to the quantitative objectives mentioned in paragraph 3.5(b) and (c) above. As at 31 December 2001, the HKPL's collection consisted of 90% (or 8,441,006) books and 10% (or 925,597) audio-visual items. Of the 8,441,006 books:

- (a) 71% were Chinese books and 29% were English books;
- (b) 73% were books for adults (hereinafter referred to as adult books) and 27% were books for children (hereinafter referred to as children books); and
- (c) 84% were lending books and 16% were reference books. Of the 7,075,871 lending books, 73% were Chinese books and 27% were English books (see Figure 1(a) in para. 3.10 below).

3.9 In response to Audit's enquiry about the deviations from the quantitative acquisition objectives, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) regarding the difference between the ratio of 71% Chinese books to 29% English books (see para. 3.8(a) above) and the target ratio of 80% Chinese books to 20% English books stated in the acquisition policy (see para. 3.5(b) above):
  - (i) the ex-Regional Council had adopted a ratio of 70% Chinese books to 30% English books, while the ex-Urban Council had adopted a ratio of 80% Chinese books to 20% English books. The merging of book stocks of the ex-Municipal Councils had inevitably resulted in a larger ratio of English books;
  - (ii) the HKCL (opened in May 2001) had positioned itself as an information centre and the last port of call for reference materials for the public library system, which was in full support of self-education and continuing education. For this reason, the HKCL had called for a higher initial intake of English library materials to meet the anticipated demand of its target readers because more current reference materials were published in English; and

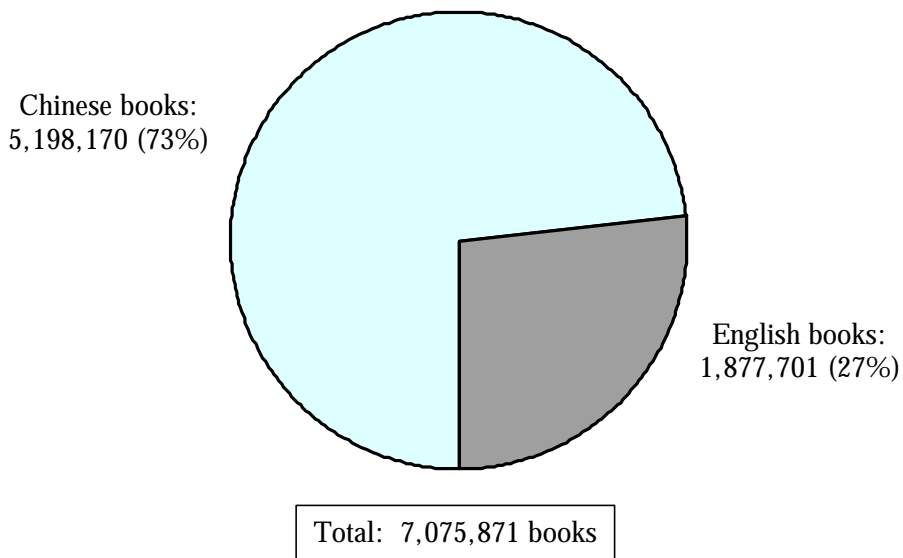
- (iii) the HKPL anticipated no difficulties in achieving the long-term target of 20% for English books;
- (b) compared with the target ratio of 70% adult books to 30% children books (see para. 3.5(b) above), the ratio of 73% adult books to 27% children books (see para. 3.8(b) above) was acceptable, taking into account periodic fluctuations in demand for and supply of the various categories of books;
- (c) there were two reasons for the difference between the position of 16% reference books (see para. 3.8(c) above) and the target of 20% for reference books (see para. 3.5(c) above). First, fewer multiple copies of reference titles were acquired during the stock building process. Second, this had reflected the publishing trend and market supply. As the HKPL were actively building up the reference collections of the HKCL and the other five major libraries with their own subject specialisation, they anticipated that the target ratio would soon be achieved; and
- (d) the purpose of the quantitative acquisition objectives was to set targets for guiding the HKPL in the overall stock development process. The HKPL would make their best effort to achieve these targets within a reasonable time-frame.

3.10 To assess whether the HKPL's collection had matched the readers' demand, Audit compared the proportion of Chinese to English books of the HKPL's lending books as at 31 December 2001 with that of books borrowed from the HKPL in 2001. The results of Audit's analysis indicated that in 2001:

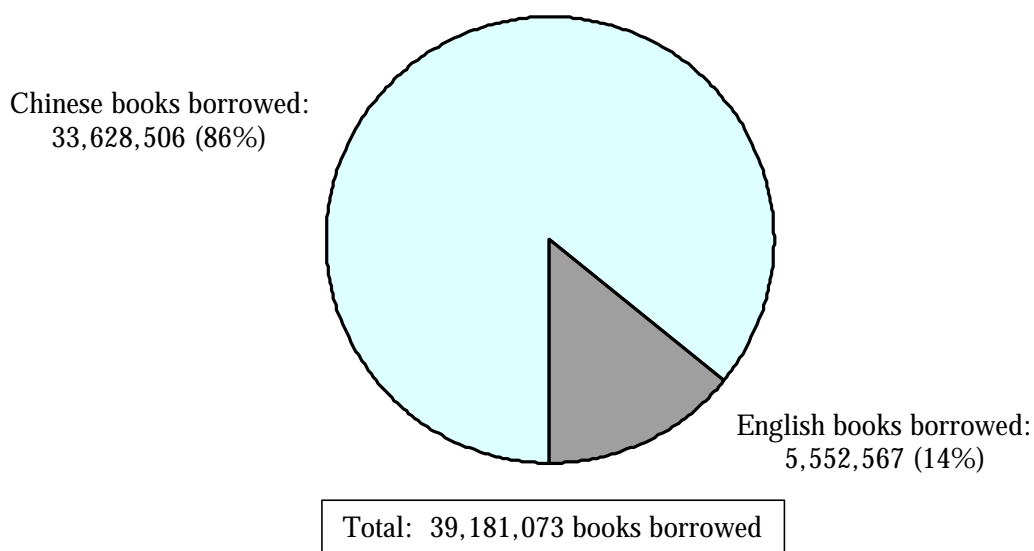
- (a) of the adult books borrowed from the HKPL, 89% were Chinese books and 11% were English books;
- (b) of the children books borrowed from the HKPL, 80% were Chinese books and 20% were English books; and
- (c) of all books borrowed from the HKPL, 86% were Chinese books and 14% were English books (see Figure 1(b) below).

**Figure 1**

**(a) Proportion of Chinese lending books to English lending books of the HKPL as at 31.12.2001**



**(b) Proportion of Chinese books borrowed to English books borrowed from the HKPL in 2001**



Source: LCSD's records

Remarks: The readers' demand for Chinese and English books was not proportional to their provision.

3.11 With reference to the HKPL's lending books as at 31 December 2001, Audit further analysed their turnover in 2001. The results of Audit's analysis indicated that in 2001, on average, each Chinese book was borrowed 6.47 times and each English book was borrowed 2.96 times (see Appendix H).

3.12 Audit noted that as at 31 December 2001, 73% of the HKPL's lending books were Chinese books and 27% were English books, while in 2001, 86% of the books borrowed from the HKPL were Chinese books and 14% were English books (see Figure 1 in para. 3.10 above). The turnover of Chinese books borrowed from the HKPL was 2.19 times ( $6.47 \div 2.96$  — see Appendix H) that of English books borrowed. **Audit considers that:**

- (a) **the LCSD, in revising the HKPL's acquisition policy of library materials (see para. 3.6 above), needs to take into account this noticeable difference in the usage of the HKPL's collection so that their collection of Chinese and English lending books is maintained at an optimal ratio to better meet the needs of the community; and**
- (b) **the LCSD needs to promote the usage of English books in the HKPL because the turnover of English lending books (2.96 times) was only about half of that of Chinese lending books (6.47 times).**

#### **Use of management information**

3.13 Management information on the usage of library materials can assist in evaluating the need for acquiring library materials and in assessing the extent to which the library collection meets the needs of the community. The LAS provides useful management information, including statistics on the usage of library materials, to assist the HKPL in the acquisition of library materials. However, the extraction of such information from the LAS is so resource-intensive that it needs to be carried out during non-peak seasons.

3.14 In the acquisition of library materials, the Librarians use online management information to check the number of titles available on a particular subject, the number of works of a particular author and the usage of library materials of a particular subject or author. At the completion of this audit in June 2002, the LAS only provided cumulative usage statistics since its implementation. The LAS could not readily produce usage statistics for specific periods (say for 2000 and 2001) to assist the HKPL in evaluating the need for acquiring library materials and the extent of meeting the readers' current demands. **Audit considers that statistics for specific periods, particularly for current periods, on the usage of library materials (in terms of type, title and number of copies, and frequency of lending) can provide useful information for making acquisition decisions in future, thus facilitating the HKPL to achieve better value for money and to better meet readers' current demands.** In this connection, Audit noted that the HKPL were taking action to modify the LAS for producing annual usage statistics in late 2002.

## **Audit recommendations on acquisition of library materials**

3.15 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

### ***Quantitative acquisition objectives***

- (a) **in revising the HKPL's acquisition policy of library materials:**
  - (i) **critically review the HKPL's quantitative acquisition objective of providing two library items per capita in 2007, taking into account the space problems which have been confronting the HKPL; and**
  - (ii) **take into account the usage of the HKPL's collection so as to ensure that the collection of Chinese and English lending books is maintained at an optimal ratio to better meet the needs of the community;**
- (b) **promote the usage of English books in the HKPL;**

### ***Use of management information***

- (c) **in the acquisition of library materials, make use of statistics for specific and current periods on the usage of library materials to facilitate the HKPL to achieve better value for money and to better meet readers' current demands; and**
- (d) **review regularly the usage of library materials, especially those items of low usage, and take appropriate follow-up action.**

## **Response from the Administration**

3.16 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

### ***Quantitative acquisition objectives***

- (a) the target of achieving two library items per capita in 2007 was set by the ex-Urban Council in 1996. In view of Hong Kong's rapid population growth from 6.2 million in

1996 to 6.7 million in 2001, as well as the anticipated growth in its population in the coming years, the need to review the target stock provision has already been identified. This review is, in fact, covered by the consultancy study in progress (see para. 2.2 above). The LCSD will revise the target provision for the HKPL, in the light of the availability of accommodation and resources and the Consultants' recommendations;

- (b) the LCSD follows closely the Manifesto to make the HKPL a local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The HKPL's acquisition objective is to achieve a balanced mix of library materials, in both Chinese and English languages. In setting the proportion of Chinese books to English books in the HKPL's collection, a number of factors have to be considered and usage is only one of them. Other key factors include the market conditions of the publishing trade as well as the role and objectives of the HKPL. Due consideration has to be given to acquiring a suitable proportion of English materials in fulfilling the HKPL's role of promoting a bilingual community in Hong Kong, and in supporting Hong Kong's development into an "Asia's World City". It should be noted that there are more publications and up-to-date materials in English than in Chinese, especially on technical and information technology subjects. The LCSD recognises the need to regularly review the proportion of Chinese and English materials. This subject, covered by the consultancy study, will be duly reviewed by the HKPL in the light of the Consultants' recommendations;
  
- (c) a comparison of the turnover of the HKPL's lending books with that of the six public library systems covered in the consultancy study reveals that the usage rate of the book collection of the HKPL has been higher than that of the overseas counterparts. Specifically, in 2000, each library item of the HKPL was borrowed 4.06 times, while for the other public library systems, on average, each library item was borrowed 2.36 times. As far as the usage of English lending books of the HKPL is concerned, the turnover of 2.96 times per library item as mentioned in paragraph 3.11 above compared favourably with that of the HKPL's counterparts whose collections are predominantly in English;
  
- (d) the HKPL have always made efforts to promote the usage of English materials. For instance, in holding thematic book exhibitions and literary activities, booklists covering both Chinese and English titles are produced to provide guided reading for the public. The HKPL also, from time to time, organise outreach programmes in English and actively support the annual Hong Kong International Literary Festival, the programmes of which are predominantly conducted in English. Moreover, with the opening of the HKCL, more resources have been devoted to holding English outreach programmes to better promote the use of English materials. The LCSD's efforts to further promote the use of the HKPL's English collection will continue;

### ***Use of management information***

- (e) the LCSD's library staff have used various means to assess the needs and demand of the community when selecting suitable materials for the HKPL. These means include usage statistics available from the LAS, results of readers' opinion surveys, comments of customer liaison groups, and suggestions on purchase made by individual readers, library advisers and professional organisations. Apart from the production of cumulative usage statistical reports, the LAS is being further enhanced to generate various periodical usage reports by late 2002. The enhanced information system will facilitate a more sophisticated and in-depth analysis of usage of the library materials conducive to the formulation of the HKPL's future acquisition plan; and
  
- (f) regular review of the usage of library materials has always been an important task of librarians. The librarians constantly review and edit the stock profile of libraries by referring to the usage pattern and the needs of the readers identified through surveys, customer liaison groups and daily contacts with them. This task is assisted by the LAS, which produces statistics on various aspects on library usage. While ensuring that library materials acquired cater for the mainstream interests of the community, the HKPL also have the responsibility to attend to the minority interests. As such, less popular but useful library items also have to be procured in order to attain a proper and comprehensive stock profile, which is one of the major principles of the Manifesto.

### **Lamination of paperbacks**

3.17 After the SEB has given its approval for ordering library items, the TPU issues a purchase order to the supplier. Upon receipt of the library items from the supplier, staff of the TPU affix a bar-code label (Note 10) onto each library item. New library items are then passed to the Cataloguing Team for cataloguing (see para. 4.1 below). After cataloguing, books with hard covers and audio-visual items are despatched from the TPU to the public libraries. The Correctional Services Department (CSD) collects weekly from the TPU paperbacks which require lamination to prolong their life span (Note 11).

3.18 According to the terms of Agreement on Lamination of Books for the HKPL (hereinafter referred to as the Agreement), the CSD should deliver directly the laminated books to the public

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**Note 10:** *The LAS uses a bar-code number to create a holding record for each library item (see para. 4.1 below).*

**Note 11:** *Books which will be outdated within a short period of time, such as computer science books, are not laminated. For urgent delivery cases, paperbacks are laminated by the TPU and directly distributed to the public libraries.*

libraries within four weeks from the date of collection from the TPU (Note 12). Staff of the public libraries are required to acknowledge receipt of the laminated books by signing on the delivery notes. For control purposes, one copy of the delivery note is returned by the public libraries to the TPU, which takes follow-up action on discrepancies of the laminated books received by the public libraries.

### **Audit observations on lamination of paperbacks**

3.19 According to the Agreement for the year ended 31 January 2002 for the lamination of 720,000 paperbacks, the CSD collected from the TPU about 13,000 to 14,000 paperbacks weekly. To ascertain whether the CSD had provided the book lamination service within the agreed time, Audit reviewed the records of five lots of paperbacks, totalling 67,702, sent to the CSD for lamination in 2001. Of these paperbacks, Audit found that 99% required more than the agreed time of four weeks to laminate and 10% required more than ten weeks to laminate.

3.20 **The long time taken by the CSD to laminate the paperbacks has delayed the LCSD in releasing new books for public use.** In this connection, Audit noted that the number of paperbacks requiring lamination would increase by 60,000 from 720,000 for the year ended 31 January 2002 to 780,000 for the year ending 31 January 2003. Hence, the number of paperbacks requiring lamination per week would increase by about 1,200 for the year ending 31 January 2003. In view of the long time taken by the CSD to provide the book lamination service in 2001 and the expected increase in lamination workload, it is necessary for the LCSD to closely monitor the performance of the CSD's book lamination service so as to ensure that new books are promptly released for public use. Audit also noted that, although the TPU maintains records of delivery of laminated books from the CSD to the public libraries, the TPU does not monitor the performance of the CSD's book lamination service. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor such performance.**

### **Audit recommendations on lamination of paperbacks**

3.21 **In the light of the long time taken by the CSD to provide the book lamination service, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **request the CSD to improve the efficiency of its book lamination service so that the laminated books can be delivered to the public libraries within the time specified in the Agreement; and**
- (b) **monitor the performance of the book lamination service provided by the CSD.**

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**Note 12:** *Books for public libraries located on Outlying Islands are returned to the TPU for further distribution.*



## **Response from the Administration**

3.22 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** accepts Audit's recommendations. He has said that the LCSD will step up efforts with the CSD to closely monitor the performance of the book lamination service.

3.23 The **Commissioner of Correctional Services** has said that:

- (a) during the period November 2000 to January 2001, the turnaround time of the book lamination service provided by the CSD was around 24 days. In February 2001, in response to the LCSD's request, the CSD took up the book sorting service. In doing so, the CSD closed down a large bookbinding workshop at the Pak Sha Wan Correctional Institution and turned it into a book-sorting centre. The drastic increase in the turnaround time of the book lamination service in 2001 was attributable to the resultant loss of production; and
- (b) it took time to find suitable locations to establish new bookbinding workshops. Over the past year, the CSD opened some bookbinding workshops to take up the displaced workload of the Pak Sha Wan Correctional Institution. Despite the fact that the monthly-in-take quantity in 2002 (53,160 paperbacks) increased by 28%, as compared with that in the last few months of 2000 (41,386 paperbacks), the three completed lots of paperbacks in August 2002 were returned to the LCSD within an average of 34 days. The performance of the book lamination service has gradually improved.

## **Donations of library materials**

3.24 From time to time, the HKPL receive donations of library materials. In 2001, a total of 91,624 items of library materials were donated to the HKPL. Acceptance of donations requires the SEB's approval to confirm that they are suitable for library use. Library staff use the following criteria to assess whether the donated materials are suitable for library use:

- (a) they are in good physical condition (with the exception of rare books);
- (b) they are not pirated editions reprinted or reproduced without the explicit authorisation of the authors, original publishers or producers, and copyright holders; and
- (c) in case of science and technology books, they are not outdated.

## **Audit observations on donations of library materials**

3.25 As at 1 January 2002, two Librarians and the Clerical staff of the TPU, who were responsible for the acquisition of newspapers and periodicals, were assigned to process the donated library materials. As there had been a sudden increase in donations in the last few years and the TPU did not have a dedicated team of staff to process the donated library materials, the backlog of unprocessed donated library materials in the TPU increased by 21% from 124,200 items in December 1999 to 150,459 items in December 2001 (see Appendix I). **Consequently, a large number of donated library items have not been released for public use. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to take action to clear the backlog of unprocessed donated library materials in the TPU.**

## **Audit recommendation on donations of library materials**

3.26 **In order to release promptly the donated library materials for public use, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should draw up an action plan to clear the backlog of unprocessed donated library materials in the TPU and, in doing so, consider contracting out the processing work.**

## **Response from the Administration**

3.27 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendation. He has said that:

- (a) over the years, the HKPL have been receiving donations from the public on a regular basis. The number of donated items has reached the highest level with the launching of the Document Donation Campaign in January 2001. The Campaign is necessary to tie in with the opening of the HKCL for timely collection of valuable library materials which would otherwise be lost. In the past two years, manpower resources of the HKPL had been mainly deployed to new major projects including the implementation of the new LAS and Multimedia Information System, and the opening of the HKCL and five other new public libraries, thus resulting in the backlog of unprocessed donated materials; and
- (b) with the completion of the major projects, an action plan has been drawn up to deploy existing staff and engage contract staff to clear the backlog of unprocessed donated items. The HKPL will consider contracting out the processing of these donated items if suitable expertise can be identified in the market.

## **PART 4: MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARY COLLECTION**

### **Creation of holding records in the LAS**

4.1 The LAS provides the HKPL with online facilities for managing their collection. As mentioned in paragraph 3.17 above, after the affixing of bar-code labels, new library items are passed to the Cataloguing Team for cataloguing. For each library item, staff of the Librarian grade create a bibliographic record in the LAS, by inputting the basic catalogue data (such as title, author and publisher) into the LAS, and assign to it a call number. Clerical staff then scan the bar-code of the item and input into the LAS other information about the item, including the acquisition date, the call number, the purchase price and the public library to which the item is allocated. Upon completion of the input of these standing data, a holding record for the item is created in the LAS.

### **Status of holding records in the LAS**

4.2 The status of holding records is updated to keep track of the movement of library items within the HKPL. During cataloguing, the status of the holding record of library items is changed to “In processing” to indicate that the items are being processed (hereinafter referred to as library items in processing). The procedures for releasing library items for public use are summarised at Appendix J.

4.3 After receiving new library items from the TPU or the CSD, staff of the public libraries keep them temporarily in a storeroom or a designated place within the libraries, pending preparation work. The preparation work includes stamping the library chop on the inside page and the sides of a book, affixing the due-date slip on the inside page, and placing a theft-detection magnetic strip in the book. The status of these library items in the LAS is changed to “In preparation” when preparation work is being carried out in the public libraries. These library items are hereinafter referred to as library items under preparation.

4.4 Upon completion of the preparation work, the public libraries change the status of these library items in the LAS to “On shelf” to indicate that they are available for lending. For library items which the public can only access through enquiry at the service counters, their status in the LAS is set as “Closed stack”.

### **Library items in processing and under preparation**

4.5 To ascertain the time taken for processing library items before they were released for public use, Audit selected from the LAS holding records of library items in processing and under preparation for examination.

### **Audit observations on library items in processing**

4.6 Table 1 below shows:

- (a) Audit's ageing analysis of the 139,396 library items in processing as at 10 January 2002; and
- (b) the LCSD's ageing analysis of the position of these library items as at 13 May 2002 (Note 13).

Audit notes that as at 13 May 2002, 30% (or 42,060) of the 139,396 library items in processing as at 10 January 2002 were still being processed.

**Table 1**  
**Ageing analysis of library items in processing**

Time taken for processing	Number of library items in processing as at 10.1.2002	Number of library items still in processing as at 13.5.2002	Percentage of library items still in processing as at 13.5.2002
	(a)	(b)	$(c) = \frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%$
Less than 2 years	68,844	36,013	52%
2 years to less than 3 years	26,804	1,485	6%
3 years to less than 4 years	11,781	1,415	12%
4 years to less than 5 years	18,403	1,115	6%
5 years or more	13,564	2,032	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>139,396</u></b>	<b><u>42,060</u></b>	<b>30%</b>

Source: LCSD's records

Remarks: As at 13.5.2002, 30% (or 42,060) of the 139,396 library items in processing as at 10.1.2002 were still being processed. These library items were allocated to three broad groups: new libraries, the HKCL and other libraries (see para. 4.7 below).

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**Note 13:** In January 2002, upon Audit's request, the LCSD extracted from the LAS records of library items for Audit's examination. In May 2002, in response to Audit's enquiry, the LCSD further analysed the position of these library items. This note is also applicable to Tables 2, 5 and 6 below.

4.7 In response to Audit's enquiry about the long time taken for processing the library items, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) as at 10 January 2002, 53,973 library items in processing were held by the TPU. As at 13 May 2002, only 7% (or 3,578 items) were still being processed. The LCSD also said that:
  - (i) as it took a long time to build up the basic collections for new public libraries, the TPU needed to acquire library materials before new public libraries were opened to the public (Note 14). Basic library collection consisted mainly of library materials in humanity subjects and standard works in various subject disciplines, the value of which would not diminish with time. This was particularly true for Chinese books because the majority of them would become out of print soon after publication; and
  - (ii) after the dissolution of the ex-Municipal Councils in 1999, some new library projects originally under planning (3 major libraries and 2 district libraries) were deferred or held in abeyance. To better utilise the existing resources, library materials originally acquired for these public libraries were reallocated to the existing public libraries and other new public libraries to be opened in the near future;
- (b) as at 10 January 2002, 61,418 library items in processing were allocated to the HKCL. As at 13 May 2002, 60% (or 36,967 items) allocated to the HKCL were still being processed. Of the 61,418 items allocated to the HKCL:
  - (i) about 16,000 items were donated materials received from the Document Collection Campaign. As the LCSD had no manpower to process these additional library materials, the creation of catalogue and holding records of these library materials was outsourced to a commercial contractor. Because of their special nature, library staff would need to research on them before releasing them for public use. Processing by the contractor was in progress. Quality control and detailed checking had to be carried out by librarians. Because of the high standard required, as at 13 May 2002, only about 4,000 items had been accepted by the HKCL. The remaining items would continue to be processed by the contractor. Another 15,000 items of bound periodicals would require the cataloguing service of the contractor. While being processed, they were available to the public via a printed catalogue kept at the newspaper and periodical service counter; and

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**Note 14:** *It is a common practice for new public libraries to start building up their collections a few years before they are open to the public.*

- (ii) the backlog of the remaining 30,000 library items in processing was being urgently processed. Although the HKCL was opened on 17 May 2001, there was not enough manpower and space to process all these library items before 10 January 2002. Great effort had been made to clear the backlog. As at 13 May 2002, about 24,000 items had been processed; and
- (c) as at 10 January 2002, in addition to the 61,418 library items allocated to the HKCL, another 24,005 items were allocated to other public libraries. Since January 2002, about 72,000 items in processing had already been processed and despatched to the existing public libraries or reallocated to new public libraries which would be opened within the next two years (such as the Ma On Shan Public Library, the Fu Shan Public Library, the new Tai Po Public Library and the Fanling Public Library). As at 13 May 2002, only 6% (or 1,515) of the 24,005 items were still being processed. Furthermore, the backlog of 500 items of music scores which required special handling would be cleared shortly.

**4.8 Audit considers that the LCSD needs to measure the operating efficiency of processing new library items acquired for existing public libraries by setting target processing times. The LCSD needs to:**

- (a) **monitor closely the processing work so as to ensure that new library items are released promptly for public use; and**
- (b) **monitor closely the building up of collections for new libraries under planning so that library items for the new libraries can be reallocated to other public libraries if changes in circumstances warrant such action.**

#### **Audit recommendations on library items in processing**

**4.9 Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **set target times for processing new library items acquired for existing public libraries;**
- (b) **monitor closely the processing work so as to ensure that new library items are released promptly for public use;**
- (c) **for library items acquired for new public libraries under planning, monitor closely the building up of such collections, so that the library items can be reallocated to other public libraries if changes in circumstances warrant such action; and**
- (d) **for new library items allocated to the public libraries (including the HKCL), promptly clear the backlog of library items in processing.**

## **Response from the Administration**

4.10 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees to implement Audit's recommendations as far as feasible. He has said that:

- (a) presently, the HKPL make use of regular output reports kept by various library units to monitor the performance and service output of their staff. However, it is difficult to ascertain the time required for completing the processing of a particular new library item because library items are delivered to the TPU by the book suppliers in batches of varying quantities at irregular intervals throughout the contract period. Nevertheless, the HKPL have accorded priority to processing library items which are more time-critical (e.g. computer books, yearbooks and directories). Additionally, best sellers and items of current interest are made available within five working days upon receipt from the suppliers;
- (b) the HKPL have adopted a mechanism to closely monitor the progress of stock building for new public libraries. After the establishment of the LCSD in 2000, a number of capital works projects of the ex-Municipal Councils have been re-prioritised. This has, in turn, affected the completion date of a number of new public libraries under planning. To make the best use of resources, the HKPL allocate library items on a flexible basis. For instance, the HKPL have flexibly reallocated books from the Ma On Shan Public Library, the Yuen Chau Kok Public Library and the Stanley Public Library which are still under planning to the HKCL to meet the more imminent and high demand during its first few months of operation. Similarly, the HKPL have also mobilised library items acquired for the new Tung Chung Public Library under planning to the Fanling Public Library, which will be opened in late 2002; and
- (c) the usage of the HKCL has been very high since its opening in May 2001. Over 50,000 readers used its services daily in its first week of operation. Currently, on average, there are 16,000 users every day. With the usage of the HKCL being stabilised, more staff can now be deployed to process the new books for public use. Similar efforts have also been made to expedite the processing of new library items in other public libraries. In fact, most of the previous backlog of library items in processing identified by Audit have now been cleared.

## **Audit observations on library items under preparation**

4.11 Table 2 below shows:

- (a) Audit's ageing analysis of the 137,040 library items under preparation as at 10 January 2002; and

- (b) the LCSD's ageing analysis of the position of these library items as at 10 May 2002 (see Note 13 to para. 4.6 above).

Audit notes that as at 10 May 2002, 31% (or 42,429) of the 137,040 library items under preparation as at 10 January 2002 were still under preparation.

**Table 2**

**Ageing analysis of library items under preparation**

<b>Time taken for preparation</b>	<b>Number of library items under preparation as at 10.1.2002</b>	<b>Number of library items still under preparation as at 10.5.2002</b>	<b>Percentage of library items still under preparation as at 10.5.2002</b>
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>(c) = <math>\frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%</math></b>
Less than 30 days	62,720	12,318	20%
30 days to less than 90 days	38,448	15,304	40%
90 days to less than 1 year	14,352	3,342	23%
1 year or more	21,520	11,465	53%
	} (Note 1)	} (Note 2)	
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>137,040</u></b> (Note 3)	<b><u>42,429</u></b>	<b>31%</b>

Source: LCSD's records

Note 1: As at 10.1.2002, 35,872 (14,352 + 21,520) library items received by the public libraries for 90 days or more had not been released for public use.

Note 2: As at 10.5.2002, 14,807 (3,342 + 11,465) library items received by the public libraries for 90 days or more had not been released for public use.

Note 3: As at 10.1.2002, there were 148,170 library items under preparation. Of these library items, only 137,040 items were analysed. This was because 4,281 items had no relevant data in the LAS and the status of the other 6,849 items was changed shortly after the extraction of holding records from the LAS.

Remarks: As at 10.5.2002, 31% (or 42,429) of the 137,040 library items under preparation as at 10.1.2002 were still under preparation.



4.12 In response to Audit's enquiry about the long time taken for carrying out the preparation work, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) when new books were despatched to the public libraries, preparation work had to be carried out by the library staff before they could be put into circulation. Because of the need to deploy all available manpower to cope with the more pressing front-line public library services and other urgent library activities, backlog for the preparation work of these library items had been accumulated;
- (b) the HKCL, the Tsuen Wan Public Library and the Tuen Mun Public Library had larger percentages of outstanding library items under preparation because in the past two years, there were special projects in progress, as follows:

***HKCL***

- (i) since its opening in May 2001, the HKCL had been heavily patronised by the general public and all available manpower of the HKCL had been deployed to handle those jobs with imminent needs (e.g. crowd control, book transit, book sorting and shelving), particularly the lending and return of library items. During its first year of operation, the library had serviced a total of 5.7 million library patrons. Thus, insufficient manpower could be deployed for preparing the new library items; and

***Tsuen Wan Public Library and Tuen Mun Public Library***

- (ii) book detection systems were installed in these public libraries in 2001. For each library, about 300,000 items had to be inserted with theft-detection magnetic strips before the implementation of the book detection systems. Some library staff were assigned to carry out this task in 2000 and 2001. Consequently, the task of preparing new library items for circulation in these libraries had been affected;
- (c) the problem of library items held under preparation in other existing public libraries was caused by the limited manpower and space available. Some public libraries, such as the Mui Wo Public Library and the Sha Tau Kok Public Library, were very small. They did not have sufficient bookshelves to accommodate all the incoming books. Their staff had to pack up the old, duplicate and less used books as reserve stocks in order to provide

space for shelving the new books. In view of the manpower and space limitations, there was some backlog of library items under preparation in these libraries;

- (d) since January 2002, the number of books under preparation in the HKPL had been reduced. As at 10 May 2002:
  - (i) 59% (or 21,065) of the 35,872 library items, which had been received by the public libraries for 90 days or more but had not been released for public use, had been processed; and
  - (ii) 47% (or 10,055) of the 21,520 library items, which had been received by the public libraries for one year or more but had not been released for public use, had been processed (see Table 2 in para. 4.11 above); and
- (e) it was the HKPL's target to put all the new books into circulation as soon as possible. To address the problem of insufficient manpower, the HKPL had engaged summer-student helpers to help clear the backlog during summer. For example, in 2000 and 2001, summer-student helpers were employed to assist in the preparation work for the commissioning of the HKCL and in the processing of new books in the TPU and branch libraries. More summer-student helpers would be engaged in the summer of 2002 to help clear the outstanding backlog.

4.13 As indicated in Table 2 of para. 4.11 above, as at 10 January 2002, some library items received by the public libraries had not been released for public use for a long period of time. Since then, preparation work for these library items had been completed and these library items had been released for public use. As at 10 May 2002, 31% (or 42,429) of the 137,040 library items were still held up pending preparation work. **Audit considers that new library items received by the public libraries should be released promptly for public use. The LCSD needs to set target preparation times for new library items and monitor closely the preparation work so as to ensure that they are released promptly for public use.**

#### **Audit recommendations on library items under preparation**

4.14 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **set target times for carrying out the preparation work of new library items and monitor closely the preparation work so as to ensure that they are released promptly for public use; and**

- (b) **promptly clear the backlog of library items under preparation.**

### **Response from the Administration**

4.15 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees to implement Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the HKPL will, in consultation with their library staff, work out target time performance indicators for preparation of new library items for public use. It is the HKPL's target to promptly prepare new library items for public use. At present, information on the status of new library items is available in the LAS for monitoring by the library staff. However, due to space limitations, very often, the library staff have to put in extra efforts to select and remove less popular titles from open shelves to make room for the new ones. This tends to be time-consuming. The situation can only improve after the setting up of the central reserve stack now under active planning (see para. 4.22(a) and (b) below); and
- (b) the HKPL accord priority to processing and clearing the existing backlog of library items under preparation. As of August 2002, 84% (or 115,353) of the 137,040 outstanding library items under preparation as at 10 January 2002 identified by Audit had been cleared.

### **Reserve stocks kept in closed stacks**

4.16 Library items of public libraries are usually put on open shelves which are directly accessible to the public. However, it may be necessary for public libraries to maintain a collection of valuable, older and less used library items, which are called reserve stocks, on shelves which are not directly accessible to the public. The public can gain access to these library items through searching the OPAC and making requests at the service counters.

4.17 Normally, reserve stocks of a public library are compactly shelved in closed areas, known as closed stacks, within the library. Owing to the limited space available in public libraries, some reserve stocks are kept in designated closed stacks (hereinafter referred to as "reserve stacks") provided by the HKPL. Details of reserve stacks are at Appendix K.

### **Library items inaccessible to the public**

4.18 Some reserve stocks are not available for search by the public through the OPAC (hereinafter referred to as library items inaccessible to the public) although they can be searched

through library staff's computer terminals. The status of such library items in the LAS is set as "Closed stack not displayed in OPAC" by the public libraries in the urban areas and "Reserved stock" by the public libraries in the New Territories.

## **Audit observations on library items inaccessible to the public**

### **10% of library items inaccessible to the public**

4.19 Audit has noted that a number of library items kept in closed stacks are inaccessible to the public because they are not available for search through the OPAC. Upon Audit's request, in January 2002, the LCSD extracted from the LAS records of such library items for Audit's examination. Audit found that:

- (a) as at 9 January 2002, 416,328 library items had "Closed stack not displayed in OPAC" status; and
- (b) as at 10 January 2002, 536,151 library items had "Reserved stock" status.

Altogether 952,479 library items, with an estimated total cost of \$65.8 million (Note 15), were inaccessible to the public. These represented 10% of the HKPL's collection of 9,367,000 items as at 1 January 2002.

4.20 As indicated in Table 3 below, of the 909,090 library items inaccessible to the public which could be analysed:

- (a) 60% (or 544,176 items) had been inaccessible to the public for one year or more; and
- (b) 30% (or 270,535 items) had been inaccessible to the public for three years or more.

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**Note 15:** *Based on the average cost of library materials in the HKPL in 2002-03, the LCSD estimated that the total cost of the 952,479 library items inaccessible to the public was \$65.8 million.*

**Table 3****Ageing analysis of library items inaccessible to the public**

<b>Duration inaccessible to the public</b>	<b>Number of library items with “Closed stack not displayed in OPAC” status as at 9.1.2002</b>	<b>Number of library items with “Reserved stock” status as at 10.1.2002</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 30 days	48,693	20,549	69,242	7%
30 days to less than 90 days	60,216	28,662	88,878	10%
90 days to less than 1 year	99,558	107,236	206,794	23%
1 year to less than 3 years	107,391	166,250	273,641	30%
3 years or more	86,477	184,058	270,535	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>402,335</b> (Note 1)	<b>506,755</b> (Note 2)	<b>909,090</b>	100%

Source: LCSD's records

Note 1: Of the 416,328 library items, only 402,335 items were analysed. This was because 6,964 items had no relevant data in the LAS and the status of the other 7,029 items was changed shortly after the extraction of holding records from the LAS.

Note 2: Of the 536,151 library items, only 506,755 items were analysed. This was because 28,249 items had no relevant data in the LAS and the status of the other 1,147 items was changed shortly after the extraction of holding records from the LAS.

Remarks: Of the 909,090 library items, 60% (or 544,176 i.e. 273,641 + 270,535) had been inaccessible to the public for 1 year or more (see para. 4.27 below) and 30% (or 270,535) had been inaccessible to the public for 3 years or more.

4.21 In response to Audit's enquiry whether, apart from space problems, there were other reasons for making 10% of the library items inaccessible to the public, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) library items with “Closed stack not displayed in OPAC” or “Reserved stock” status were either duplicate copies or library items of low demand in individual public libraries. Therefore, they were kept in closed areas of the libraries in order to make available shelf space for displaying new books;
- (b) it was common for library systems to accommodate relatively less frequently used books in outlying places. For instance, a local university stored most of its less used books at its off-campus depot;
- (c) for the HKPL, although library items with “Closed stack not displayed in OPAC” or “Reserved stock” status were not available for search through the OPAC, they could be readily searched by library staff through the LAS. Usually, these library items were duplicate copies which were of low demand. They were moved away from open bookshelves in order to make available space for displaying new books. Duplicate copies were required for meeting readers’ initial high demand, especially books with a large number of reservations; for meeting the great demand in summer time; and both because of normal wear and tear and as backup reserve for some hot titles (e.g. fictions) which would easily become unserviceable because of their high usage; and
- (d) in line with the practices of libraries worldwide, the HKPL had to remove duplicate copies from the bookshelves after their use had subsided, in order to provide space for displaying new books. The duplicate copies would be put back for public use on a need basis. When it was noted that a particular item was frequently requested by the public, the item would be retrieved from the reserve stocks and put back on the open shelves for public use. In order not to affect public library services, at least one copy of these duplicates was available for search by the public through the OPAC.

4.22 In response to Audit’s enquiry whether it was desirable to set up central reserve stacks at one location to accommodate all the reserve stocks, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) the setting up of central reserve stacks would address the space problems and provide the infrastructure for proper management of the reserve stocks. For this purpose, the HKPL had, in the past years, actively endeavoured to identify suitable accommodation in other government premises;
- (b) the Government Property Agency (GPA), which had been asked to assist in the setting up of the required central reserve stacks, advised that leasing of low-cost storage premises was subject to obtaining the necessary support from the policy bureau. The LCSD was taking urgent action to speed up this process; and

- (c) nevertheless, the HKPL were taking action to make library items available for search through the OPAC shortly, besides planning to set up central reserve stacks. Printed lists for the library items which were packed in boxes would be prepared to facilitate their retrieval. More bookshelves would be added to the libraries to accommodate the library items, whenever possible. Action would also be taken to write off old titles which were of low usage and were considered outdated.

**4.23 Audit considers that the LCSD needs to make greater effort to make available all library items for public use by making them accessible through the OPAC. The LCSD also needs to ensure that all library items made inaccessible to the public should be put back promptly for public use within a short period of time and to set target times for releasing these library items for public use.** In addition, Audit noted that, 30% (or 270,535) of the 909,090 library items had been inaccessible to the public for three years or more (see para. 4.20 above). **In Audit's view, the LCSD needs to promptly examine those library items which had been inaccessible to the public for a long period of time so as to decide whether they should still be kept as reserve stocks.**

**4.24 Audit considers that the LCSD needs to set up central reserve stacks for shelving reserve stocks in a systematic manner to facilitate the efficient retrieval of such library items for public use.** In addition, the LCSD needs to improve the management of reserve stocks in the reserve stacks. This is substantiated by the following audit observations:

- (a) when Audit visited the Shek Tong Tsui Book Stack and the Un Chau Street Book Stack in December 2001, the reserve stocks of some public libraries were packed in boxes. It was difficult to locate a particular library item in these boxes; and
- (b) on the other hand, the City Hall Public Library's reserve stocks were systematically shelved in the Shek Tong Tsui Book Stack. Almost all its library items (99% of the library collection as of January 2002) could be searched through the OPAC.

**In Audit's view, the LCSD needs to examine the feasibility of centralising the management of reserve stacks so that all library items, including the reserve stocks, are accessible to the public.**

#### **New library items inaccessible to the public**

4.25 For the 909,090 library items inaccessible to the public as of January 2002, Audit further analysed the duration for which they had been accessible to the public since their addition to the HKPL's collection. As indicated in Table 4 below, 71% of (or 644,633) library items inaccessible

to the public as of January 2002 had been added to the HKPL's collection for three years or more. However, 3% (or 24,842 library items) were only accessible to the public for less than 90 days, after which time they became inaccessible.

**Table 4**  
**Duration of library items accessible to the public before they became inaccessible**

<b>Duration accessible to the public since addition</b>	<b>Number of library items with "Closed stack not displayed in OPAC" status as at 9.1.2002</b>	<b>Number of library items with "Reserved stock" status as at 10.1.2002</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 30 days	11,726	3,173	14,899	2%
30 days to less than 90 days	3,939	6,004	9,943	1%
90 days to less than 1 year	38,448	25,363	63,811	7%
1 year to less than 3 years	80,331	95,473	175,804	19%
3 years or more	267,891	376,742	644,633	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>402,335</b> <hr/> <hr/> (Note 1)	<b>506,755</b> <hr/> <hr/> (Note 2)	<b>909,090</b>	100%

*Source:* LCSD's records

*Note 1:* Of the 416,328 library items, only 402,335 items were analysed. This was because 6,964 items had no relevant data in the LAS and the status of the other 7,029 items was changed shortly after the extraction of holding records from the LAS.

*Note 2:* Of the 536,151 library items, only 506,755 items were analysed. This was because 28,249 items had no relevant data in the LAS and the status of the other 1,147 items was changed shortly after the extraction of holding records from the LAS.

*Remarks:* Of the 909,090 library items, 3% (or 24,842 i.e. 14,899 + 9,943) had been accessible to the public for less than 90 days since their addition to the library collection and 71% (or 644,633) had been accessible to the public for 3 years or more since their addition to the library collection.



4.26 In response to Audit's enquiry about the reasons for making library items inaccessible to the public after they had been added to the HKPL's collection for a short period of time, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) as at 8 May 2002, a total of 21,742 library items, which had been acquired for less than 90 days, were inaccessible to the public. These items were mostly duplicate copies reserved by the public libraries for putting into circulation later to cope with the heavy demand at peak seasons (e.g. summer vacation, Christmas Holidays and Easter Holidays). These items would remain in the open shelves if the demand remained high after circulation; and
- (b) librarians would, from time to time, review the usage of the library items.

4.27 Audit noted that as of January 2002, 544,176 library items had been inaccessible to the public for one year or more (see shaded figures in Table 3 of para. 4.20 above). Of these library items, 9% (or 48,395) had been acquired for less than one year. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to promptly release them for public use.**

#### **Significant increase in collections of small public libraries**

4.28 In response to Audit's enquiry about the reasons why some public libraries had a large percentage of reserve stocks inaccessible to the public as of January 2002, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) the Tai O Public Library, the Peng Chau Public Library, the North Lamma Public Library, the Mui Wo Public Library and the Sha Tau Kok Public Library were small libraries. Their size ranged from 65 square metres to 140 square metres. Additional new services such as Internet/multimedia terminals were introduced at the expenses of reducing space in the open areas which were originally planned for stock development; and
- (b) less popular books were put as reserve stocks for stock rotation purposes.

4.29 The HKPL, particularly the small public libraries, are confronted with space problems. The significant increase in the collections of small public libraries has aggravated their space problems. As a result, a large percentage of their library items have been made inaccessible to the public. Audit noted that for those small public libraries which had a large percentage of library

items inaccessible to the public as at 10 January 2002, their collections increased significantly in 2000 and 2001, ranging from 30% to 70% (see Appendix L). **Audit considers that, for these small public libraries, the LCSD needs to examine whether some of their library items can be reallocated to other public libraries and to consider reducing the number of library items to be added to their collections in future.**

#### **Review of rate of growth of library collection**

4.30 As mentioned in paragraph 4.29 above, the significant increase in collections of small public libraries in 2000 and 2001 had aggravated their space problems. Consequently, a significant number of library items have been made inaccessible to the public. **While Audit appreciates that it is necessary to add new library materials to the HKPL's collection to meet the needs of the community, the LCSD needs to ensure that the capacities of individual libraries can cope with their expanding collections. Audit considers that the LCSD needs to critically review the rate of growth of the HKPL's collection so as to ensure that all library items added to the collection are effectively used.**

#### **Audit recommendations on library items inaccessible to the public**

4.31 As a matter of principle, the public should have access to all library items. To conform with this principle, Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:

##### ***10% of library items inaccessible to the public***

- (a) **take action to ensure that all library items are accessible through the OPAC;**
- (b) **reduce the duration of keeping library items inaccessible to the public to a minimum and devise a performance monitoring mechanism by setting target times for releasing these items for public use;**
- (c) **promptly examine those library items which had been made inaccessible to the public for a long period of time and decide whether they should still be kept in the library collection. If they are considered suitable for public use, the library staff should make them accessible through the OPAC. Otherwise, the library staff should consider removing them from the HKPL's collection;**

- (d) **set up central reserve stacks for the HKPL for shelving reserve stocks in a systematic manner to facilitate the efficient retrieval of library items for public use;**
- (e) **examine the feasibility of centralising the management of reserve stacks to improve economy and efficiency in the management of reserve stocks;**

***New library items inaccessible to the public***

- (f) **take action to release promptly for public use those new library items which had not been available for search through the OPAC for more than one year;**

***Significant increase in collections of small public libraries***

- (g) **in view of the significant increase in collections of small public libraries, examine the possibility of reallocating some of their library items to other public libraries and consider reducing the number of library items to be added to their collections in future; and**

***Review of rate of growth of library collection***

- (h) **critically review the rate of growth of the HKPL's collection to ensure that the capacities of individual libraries can cope with their expanding collections and that all library items added to the HKPL's collection are effectively used.**

**Response from the Administration**

4.32 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees to implement Audit's recommendations as far as possible. He has said that:

***10% of library items inaccessible to the public***

- (a) the whole issue centres on the lack of central reserve stacks for keeping books of value but of low demand, and manpower resources. To make the best use of the limited shelving space, the libraries need to select older and less popular books from the HKPL's

collection and pack them away in order to make room for shelving new ones. These library items are duplicate copies and their status in the LAS would be changed to "Closed stack not displayed in OPAC" or "Reserved stock". It must be stressed that, in selecting these library items, the libraries have always ensured that they are of low demand and that duplicate copies of the same title would remain in circulation in some other public libraries and searchable on the OPAC. Furthermore, all the items in the HKPL's collection, including those not displayed on the OPAC, are readily accessible by library staff using staff computer terminals. Library staff will arrange to put the inaccessible library items into circulation again, if there are reservation queues for them. Hence, the temporary inaccessibility of these library items on the OPAC would not affect the public library services;

- (b) since the major projects undertaken over the past two years either are completed or are approaching full completion, the HKPL have now redeployed manpower resources to prepare printed packing lists for these inaccessible library items and to make them searchable on the OPAC. As of August 2002, 52% (or 497,255) of such items had already been processed by the libraries and made available for search on the OPAC while the remaining ones are expected to be cleared by late 2002 subject to availability of resources. Eventually, these reserved library items will be properly shelved for easy retrieval in the new central reserve stacks to be set up;
- (c) the HKPL have already set up some small reserve stacks (see Appendix K) and have, in the past years, actively endeavoured to identify additional accommodation to facilitate the storage and retrieval of reserve stocks. Assistance of the GPA has been enlisted to lease low-cost storage space for setting up interim reserve stacks to meet urgent needs. As a long-term solution, the HKPL have made a bid for permanent accommodation for setting up a central reserve stack in the joint-departmental site at Chai Wan East Industrial Area;

***New library items inaccessible to the public***

- (d) it is the practice of the HKPL to release promptly new library items for public use. However, to meet operational requirement, there is a genuine need for the libraries to reserve some new books, mostly multiple copies of popular fiction titles, to meet seasonal increase in demand. It is also a common phenomenon for Chinese and children books to become out-of-print shortly after their publication. For the purpose of stock maintenance, the HKPL would need to selectively acquire more copies for later use by libraries under planning and as replacement for subsequent worn-out copies. As these books are reserved for specific purposes, they are not made available for public search on the OPAC before release. The HKPL will continue to monitor closely the effective use of these library items;

### ***Significant increase in collections of small public libraries***

- (e) to help formulate an efficient plan for the acquisition of library materials, the HKPL have worked out an overall stock development plan for 2002-03 based on the specific requirements drawn up by the individual libraries and the resources available. This would ensure that library materials acquired for the individual libraries meet more effectively their specific development needs. The HKPL will continue to monitor closely the pace of the addition of new, and the replacement of, library materials for all the libraries;
- (f) within the confines of the available space, the small libraries need to maintain a balanced and reasonably updated collection to meet changing community needs. The HKPL have reviewed the needs of the small libraries and will make necessary arrangements to monitor the effective utilisation of their collections by relocating library items among the libraries on a need basis. For instance, the library items of some small libraries on Outlying Islands have been gainfully deployed to the new Chai Wan Public Library when it was reprovisioned and opened in December 2001. The HKPL will continue to monitor the situation closely with a view to ensuring the effective use of resources; and

### ***Review of rate of growth of library collection***

- (g) the LCSD will review the rate of growth of the HKPL's collection with due regard to the Consultants' recommendation and the long-term strategic development plan of the HKPL. At present, the HKPL's provision of library items per capita is on the low side in comparison with the provision of the public libraries in major overseas cities and the standard provision recommended by the Guidelines.

4.33 The **Government Property Administrator** has said that:

- (a) in May 2002, the LCSD requested the GPA's assistance to lease urgently accommodation of 2,000 square metres to set up a temporary central reserve stack. The GPA suggested that the LCSD should examine the feasibility of using surplus accommodation (an ex-market floor) at the Fa Yuen Street Complex. This is still under consideration; and
- (b) in July 2002, the LCSD bid for surplus properties offered by the GPA. The LCSD will be allocated three premises with a total area of some 1,500 square metres for various storage purposes, subject to the establishment of need.

## **Unserviceable library items**

4.34 The HKPL withdraw regularly library items which are either outdated in contents or in poor physical condition from their collection. Librarians are responsible for selecting outdated and unserviceable items for withdrawal. According to the HKPL's guideline, the annual withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items is set at 5% of the total library stock as at the end of the preceding financial year. However, the public libraries may seek the approval of the Chief Librarians for withdrawal of library items exceeding the approved annual withdrawal rate of 5%.

4.35 Unserviceable library items are not displayed on the OPAC. The status of such library items in the LAS is set as "Unserviceable" by the public libraries in the urban areas or "WD — Unserviceable" (i.e. Withdrawn — Unserviceable) by the public libraries in the New Territories (hereinafter collectively referred to as unserviceable library items). Lists of unserviceable items to be withdrawn from the HKPL's collection are generated by the LAS on a quarterly basis. After obtaining the necessary approval, the public libraries arrange for the disposal of unserviceable library items.

## **Audit observations on unserviceable library items**

### **Withdrawal of new library items**

4.36 As at 10 January 2002, the LAS recorded 1,308,155 unserviceable library items (see Note 13 to para. 4.6 above). Of the 1,306,367 library items on which an analysis was carried out (Note 16), Audit found that:

- (a) 1,543 items had been added to the library collection for less than six months;
- (b) 9,035 items had been added to the library collection for six months and less than one year;
- (c) 31,189 items had been added to the library collection for one year and less than two years; and
- (d) 1,264,600 items had been added to the library collection for two years or more.

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**Note 16:** *Only 1,306,367 items were analysed because 23 items had no relevant data in the LAS and the status of 1,765 items was changed shortly after the date of extraction from the LAS.*

4.37 In response to Audit's enquiry about the reasons for withdrawing library items which had only been added to the library collection for a short period of time, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) library items which were withdrawn shortly after they had been added to the library collection were mostly back issues of periodicals put into circulation. Back issues of selected popular periodicals (normally those being referenced for over six months, but still with browsing interest) were added to the lending stock so that readers could read them at home. Because these back issues were of ephemeral nature, they usually became unserviceable shortly after their circulation. As at 10 January 2002, back issues of periodicals withdrawn included:
  - (i) 69% (or 1,063) of the 1,543 unserviceable library items which had been acquired for less than six months (see para. 4.36(a) above);
  - (ii) 80% (or 7,227) of the 9,035 unserviceable library items which had been acquired for six months and less than one year (see para. 4.36(b) above); and
  - (iii) 74% (or 23,018) of the 31,189 unserviceable library items which had been acquired for one year and less than two years (see para. 4.36(c) above).

Apart from back issues of periodicals, there were also library items which required withdrawal due to wear and tear; and

- (b) library items with "Unserviceable" or "WD — Unserviceable" status were no longer suitable for use by the readers. These unserviceable library items would be physically removed from the public libraries and would not be available for search by the public through the OPAC. Their records would be deleted from the LAS upon completion of the formal withdrawal procedures. The pace of completing the formal withdrawal procedures and updating the stock records in the LAS depended, to a large extent, on the availability of manpower. The completion of the formal withdrawal procedures was not a priority item for the public libraries because these library items were inaccessible to the public.

4.38 Audit noted that, apart from back issues of periodicals, some unserviceable library items had only been acquired for a relatively short period of time. For example, 31% (or 480) of the 1,543 library items acquired for less than six months (these items were not back issues of

periodicals — see para. 4.37(a)(i) above) and 22% (or 2,288) of 10,578 (1,543 + 9,035) library items acquired for less than one year were withdrawn in 2001 (see para. 4.36(a) and (b) above). **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor closely the withdrawal of new library items from the HKPL's collection.**

#### **High withdrawal rate of some public libraries**

4.39 In 2001, the LAS recorded 486,368 unserviceable library items, representing 6% of the library collection of 8,306,000 items as at 31 December 2000. Audit analysed the withdrawal of these unserviceable library items by individual public libraries in 2001. Audit found that in 2001, for some public libraries, the withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items ranging from 9% to 27% was higher than the HKPL's approved annual withdrawal rate of 5% (see Appendix M).

4.40 In response to Audit's enquiry about the reasons for some public libraries to have withdrawn a high percentage of unserviceable library items in 2001, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) for stock building purposes, the HKPL had all along adopted the assumption of withdrawing 5% of the total library stock annually. However, this was not a hard and fast rule but a guideline for library staff. In fact, the percentage of library items withdrawn by individual libraries varied, depending on their years of service, condition of the physical stock, and the available manpower and usage of the libraries; and
- (b) the HKPL had always paid attention to achieving a balanced stock development plan. Towards this end, acquisition and withdrawal were two integrated components. The HKPL had tried to follow the 5% annual withdrawal rate in order to make room for the newly acquired items. However, during the past three years, the total number of unserviceable library items withdrawn in all libraries was generally below 5% of the total stock of the HKPL. The overall withdrawal rate in 2000 and 2001 was below 4%. While the libraries had always exercised proper control on the withdrawal of library items, the fact that the HKPL had taken on a number of new tasks before and after the establishment of the LCSD in 2000 had, to a certain extent, reduced the availability of manpower for withdrawal work. The LCSD would endeavour to keep up with a better withdrawal strategy in future in order to complement the overall stock development plan, by stepping up withdrawal and scheduling withdrawal more evenly.

4.41 **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor closely the withdrawal of library items from individual public libraries so as to ensure that the withdrawals are necessary and reasonable.**



## **Audit recommendations on unserviceable library items**

4.42 **To improve control over the withdrawal of unserviceable library items in the HKPL, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

### ***Withdrawal of new library items***

- (a) **monitor closely the withdrawal of library items, especially those which have been released for public use for a short period of time, so that any irregularities can be detected earlier; and**

### ***High withdrawal rate of some public libraries***

- (b) **having regard to the approved annual withdrawal rate of 5% for unserviceable library items, monitor closely the withdrawal of unserviceable library items from individual public libraries so as to ensure that the withdrawals are necessary and reasonable.**

## **Response from the Administration**

4.43 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

### ***Withdrawal of new library items***

- (a) the HKPL have all along closely monitored the withdrawal of library items and have followed strictly the standard government procedures stipulated in Financial Circular No. 4/2002 for writing off unserviceable library items. Some library items, especially children books and periodicals, naturally have shorter shelf-life and are more vulnerable to normal wear and tear due to high usage. The HKPL will step up user education on the care of library items to minimise wastage; and

### ***High withdrawal rate of some public libraries***

- (b) the 5% annual withdrawal rate of library items applies to the total stock rather than to individual libraries. Books for withdrawal are screened carefully by the librarians as

well as staff of the Government Supplies Department according to the established guidelines. As a general rule, the last copy of a particular title, even in poor physical condition, is not withdrawn from the HKPL's collection but is kept permanently in reserve stacks.

### **Missing library items**

4.44 Library items which have been found missing during library operation are recorded in the LAS. These library items are not displayed on the OPAC. Their status is set as "Trace" in the LAS, indicating that they are being traced by the public libraries.

### **Audit observations on missing library items**

#### **Library items under trace**

4.45 Audit examined the LAS records of those library items with "Trace" status (hereinafter referred to as library items under trace). As at 10 January 2002, there were 67,740 library items under trace, of which 97% (or 65,701 items) were still being traced by the public libraries (Note 17). Audit conducted an ageing analysis of the library items under trace (see Note 13 to para. 4.6 above). As at 10 January 2002, of the 55,099 library items under trace which could be analysed (see Table 5 below):

- (a) 26% (or 14,128 items) had been under trace for one year or more; and
- (b) 11% (or 5,904 items) had been under trace for three years or more.

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**Note 17:** *The status of the other 2,039 items was changed shortly after the date of extraction from the LAS.*

**Table 5**

**Ageing analysis of library items under trace**

<b>Duration under trace</b>	<b>Number of library items under trace as at 10.1.2002</b>	<b>Number of library items still under trace as at 10.5.2002</b>	<b>Percentage of library items still under trace as at 10.5.2002</b>
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>(c) = <math>\frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%</math></b>
Less than 1 year	40,971	32,427	79%
1 year to less than 3 years	8,224	6,191	75%
3 years or more	5,904	2,422	41%
	(Note 1)	(Note 2)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,099</b>	<b>41,040</b>	<b>74%</b>
	(Note 3)		

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Note 1: As at 10.1.2002, of the 55,099 library items, 26% (or 14,128 i.e. 8,224 + 5,904) had been under trace for 1 year or more and 11% (or 5,904 items) had been under trace for 3 years or more.*

*Note 2: As at 10.5.2002, of the 41,040 library items, 21% (or 8,613 i.e. 6,191 + 2,422) had been under trace for 1 year or more and 6% (or 2,422 items) had been under trace for 3 years or more.*

*Note 3: Of the 65,701 library items under trace, only 55,099 items were analysed because 10,602 items had no relevant data in the LAS.*

*Remarks: As at 10.5.2002, 74% (or 41,040) of the 55,099 library items under trace as at 10.1.2002 had still not been located.*

4.46 In response to Audit's enquiry about the large percentage of library items under trace in the public libraries, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) "Trace" was a status set for library items which had been found not available when they were requested, through reservation or on-site enquiry from readers or staff;
- (b) after a thorough examination, it was found that some public libraries, such as the Electric Road Public Library, the Chai Wan Public Library and the North Point Public Library,

had wrongly set the status of duplicated copies to “Trace”. The status of these library items had been reset to “Closed stack”. As at 10 May 2002:

- (i) only 19% (or 638) of the 3,398 library items under trace as at 10 January 2002 in the Electric Road Public Library had not been located; and
- (ii) only 11% (or 143) of the 1,288 library items under trace as at 10 January 2002 in the Chai Wan Public Library had not been located.

A review on the status of library items had been completed. A guideline would soon be issued to public libraries to avoid unnecessary confusions on the use of library item status in future; and

(c) continuous efforts would be made to locate the following library items:

- (i) 61% (or 8,613) of the 14,128 unavailable items as at 10 January 2002, which had been under trace for one year or more as at 10 May 2002; and
- (ii) 41% (or 2,422) of the 5,904 unavailable items as at 10 January 2002, which had been under trace for three years or more as at 10 May 2002 (see Table 5 in para. 4.45 above).

4.47 Consequent upon Audit’s enquiry, the LCSD made efforts to locate the library items under trace, identified in January 2002. The LCSD decided to issue a guideline to ensure the proper use of library item status in future and to make arrangement to write off items which had been traced for over one year. Notwithstanding that book detection systems have been installed in most public libraries to prevent theft, some library items are still untraceable after a long period of time. As at 10 May 2002, 74% of the 55,099 library items under trace as at 10 January 2002 had still not been located. Of these 41,040 items, 21% had been under trace for one year or more and 6% had been under trace for three years or more (see Table 5 in para. 4.45 above). **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to monitor closely the level of library items under trace in the HKPL. For library items which have been untraceable for a long period of time, the LCSD needs to take write-off action and consider acquiring replacements to ensure that the HKPL’s collection always meets the needs of the community.**

### **Library items in transit**

4.48 Library items borrowed from the HKPL can be returned to any public library. Through the sorting and despatch service, the returned library items are despatched to the libraries which originally possess these items (i.e. the owning libraries). Audit extracted from the LAS records with “In transit” status for examination (see Note 13 to para. 4.6 above). Audit’s ageing analysis

of the 106,546 library items with “In transit” status (hereinafter referred to as library items in transit) as at 10 January 2002 indicated that:

- (a) 23% (or 24,804 items) had been in transit for six months or more; and
- (b) 10% (or 10,342 items) had been in transit for three years or more (see Table 6 below).

**Table 6**

**Ageing analysis of library items in transit**

<b>Duration in transit</b>	<b>Number of library items in transit as at 10.1.2002</b>	<b>Number of library items still in transit as at 10.5.2002</b>	<b>Percentage of library items still in transit as at 10.5.2002</b>
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>(c) = <math>\frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%</math></b>
Less than 6 months	81,742	6,920	8%
6 months to less than 3 years	14,462	6,900	48%
3 years or more	10,342	6,087	59%
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>106,546</u></b>	<b><u>19,907</u></b>	<b>19%</b>

Source: LCSD's records

Note 1: As at 10.1.2002, of the 106,546 library items, 23% (or 24,804 i.e. 14,462 + 10,342) had been in transit for 6 months or more and 10% (or 10,342) had been in transit for 3 years or more.

Note 2: As at 10.5.2002, of the 19,907 library items, 65% (or 12,987 i.e. 6,900 + 6,087) had not been located for 6 months or more and 31% (or 6,087) had not been located for 3 years or more.

Remarks: As at 10.5.2002, 19% (or 19,907) of the 106,546 library items in transit as at 10.1.2002 had still not been located.

4.49 In response to Audit's enquiry about the library items in transit, in May 2002, the LCSD informed Audit that:

- (a) since the computerisation of the public library systems in 1992, the ex-Municipal Councils had provided a very convenient service to readers for borrowing library items from and returning them to any public library within their own library systems. This borrow and return service was supported by an inter-library delivery service. Since the establishment of the LCSD in 2000, this inter-library delivery service had been extended to cover a total of 69 public libraries. Because of this very complex matrix, library items in transit from one library to another could sometimes be wrongly delivered to a wrong destination, resulting in longer time and more efforts to locate a missing library item. Recently, the LCSD had successfully recovered a number of misplaced library items. As at 10 May 2002, there were 6,900 library items which had been in transit for a period ranging from six months to less than three years, representing a 52% decrease as compared with 14,462 items as at 10 January 2002 (see Table 6 in para. 4.48 above). As the total number of in-transit library items handled in the past three years was over 17.1 million, 6,900 items represented only 0.04% of all the items handled;
- (b) before October 2001, the inter-library delivery service for in-transit library items was contracted out to commercial contractors and the efficiency and effectiveness of the service was less than satisfactory. Since October 2001, this service had been subsequently contracted out to the Hong Kong Post Office (HKPO) with a view to achieving greater efficiency and better control. The HKPO was required to sort and despatch library items to the owning libraries within five working days. Moreover, a stringent check and control system was in place to minimise the loss of in-transit library items. These measures had significantly improved the efficiency of the inter-library delivery service and the integrity of the entire library collection; and
- (c) in addition, the HKPL had drawn up a guideline for handling library items. For those library items which had been in transit for more than three months, the LAS would now automatically change them to "Trace" status. Library staff would print out a list of the missing items regularly to check if they could be located on the bookshelves. Arrangements would be made to write off those items which had been accorded "Trace" status for over one year.

4.50 Consequent upon Audit's enquiry, the LCSD made efforts to locate the in-transit library items, identified in January 2002. The LCSD had established procedures to tighten the control over these library items. However, as at 10 May 2002, 19% of the 106,546 in-transit items as at 10 January 2002 had still not been located. Of these 19,907 items, 31% had not been located for three years or more. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to promptly locate those library items which have been in transit for a long period of time. To minimise the risk of losing**

**library items in transit, the LCSD needs to ensure that the public libraries and the HKPO properly handle in-transit library items.**

### **Audit recommendations on missing library items**

4.51 For better management and safeguarding of the HKPL's collection, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:

#### ***Library items under trace***

- (a) **monitor closely the level of library items under trace in the HKPL so that timely remedial action is taken to redress any irregularities identified;**
- (b) **write off those library items which have been untraceable for a long period of time and consider acquiring replacements to ensure that the HKPL's collection always meets the needs of the community;**

#### ***Library items in transit***

- (c) **promptly locate those library items which have been in transit for a long period of time; and**
- (d) **monitor closely the library items in transit to ensure that the public libraries and the HKPO properly handle such library items.**

### **Response from the Administration**

4.52 The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services agrees with Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

#### ***Library items under trace***

- (a) of the 65,701 library items under trace as at 10 January 2002, 46% (or 30,132) had been successfully located so far. The remaining library items under trace may have been misdirected to other libraries and packed together with the "closed stack" items or

reserve stocks there. It is expected to take some time to conduct a thorough search to locate these library items. Continuous efforts will be made in this respect;

- (b) arrangements will be made to write off library items which have been untraceable for over one year. Suitable replacements will be made for library items withdrawn according to the established library guidelines (i.e. to acquire the most up-to-date titles on the subject or the current edition of the title);

***Library items in transit***

- (c) of the 106,546 library items in transit as at 10 January 2002 identified by Audit, 89% (or 94,541) had been located so far. The remaining library items are likely to be misplaced on the shelves of the libraries. Continuous efforts will be made to locate these items; and
- (d) since the HKPO has taken up the inter-library delivery service in October 2001, the LCSD has been closely monitoring the service with a view to ensuring that books are not misplaced during transportation. During the past eleven months, the performance of the HKPO has been very satisfactory. There has been no report on improper handling of library items in transit and the turnaround time of five working days as stipulated in the service level agreement has been met.

4.53 The **Postmaster General** has said that:

- (a) a proper system has already been put in place to control the flow of books between the libraries and the HKPO's sorting centre. The log sheet and the computer system currently in operation are effective means to account for the books collected from the libraries, processed at the sorting centre and subsequently returned to the owning libraries; and
- (b) the HKPO will continue to work closely with the LCSD to ensure that all in-transit library items are properly handled at all times.



## **PART 5: OTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES**

### **Lending service**

5.1 The HKPL provide lending service of books and audio-visual items to registered borrowers. With a valid library card, a registered borrower can borrow each time a maximum of six library items from any public library for two weeks or from any mobile library for four weeks. If no other reader has reserved a borrowed item, it can be renewed up to five times. The number of library items borrowed from the HKPL increased by 210% from 13.7 million in 1990 to 42.5 million in 2001 (see Appendix C).

### **Issuing of overdue notices**

5.2 Library items borrowed from the HKPL need to be returned to the public libraries within the borrowing period. An overdue fine is imposed on a borrower for any late return of borrowed library items (Note 18). The LAS generates overdue notices in respect of borrowed library items not returned by the due date, according to the name and address records of the defaulted borrowers. The Readers' Registration Unit of the HKPL sends overdue notices to the borrowers by post. In 2001, 117,427 overdue notices were mailed.

### **Audit observations on issuing of overdue notices**

5.3 Audit notes that the LCSD is exploring the feasibility of sending electronic mail to defaulted borrowers to remind them to return overdue library items. **Audit considers that using electronic mail would achieve cost savings.**

### **Audit recommendation on issuing of overdue notices**

5.4 **To achieve cost savings, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should issue overdue notices to defaulted borrowers by electronic mail.**

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**Note 18:** *For library items borrowed from the public libraries, an overdue fine at the rate of \$1.50 per day up to a maximum of \$130 per item is imposed on each adult lending item, and at the rate \$0.50 per day up to a maximum of \$25 per item is imposed on each junior lending item. For library items borrowed from the mobile libraries, the overdue fine is calculated on a "per visit" basis, instead of a daily basis.*

## **Response from the Administration**

5.5 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendation. He has said that action is in hand to enhance the LAS so that by early 2003, borrowers will be given the choice to be notified of overdue library items either through electronic mail or by post.

## **Mobile libraries**

5.6 The HKPL operate eight mobile libraries. Each mobile library, including its library vehicle and base, is manned by one Assistant Librarian, two Assistant Clerical Officers, two Cultural Services Assistants and one Motor Driver. Through regular visits to designated service points, mobile libraries, which mainly provide basic lending service and library supportive service, supplement the services provided by public libraries located in the districts. In 2001, the eight mobile libraries served 71 service points.

## **Audit observations on mobile libraries**

5.7 Each mobile library team visiting a service point is staffed by one Assistant Clerical Officer, one Cultural Service Assistant and one Motor Driver. Taking into account the operational need for relief drivers, ten Motor Drivers with a total annual staff cost of \$2.2 million at 2001-02 prices are required for operating the eight library vehicles. Audit notes that, while the library vehicles are stationed at the service points, the Motor Drivers are idle.

5.8 To ascertain the idle time of Motor Drivers, Audit compared their actual driving time with their actual duty hours for November 2001. On average, of the 225 duty hours of Motor Drivers in November 2001, 85% (or 191 hours) were idle time (see Appendix N). In a nine-hour working day, the Motor Drivers were idle for about 7.6 hours.

5.9 **Audit considers that the present arrangement of employing Motor Drivers solely for operating the library vehicles is not cost-effective because they are idle when the library vehicles are stationed at the service points. To ensure better use of resources and improve operational efficiency, the LCSD needs to consider:**

- (a) **deleting the posts of Motor Driver in the mobile libraries; and**
- (b) **employing suitably qualified staff on non-civil-service contract terms to take up both the duties of driving library vehicles and handling library materials.**

**Audit estimates that the resultant annual saving in staff cost at 2001-02 prices would be \$3.4 million (Note 19).**

### **Audit recommendations on mobile libraries**

5.10 **To ensure better use of resources in operating the mobile libraries, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **consider deleting the posts of Motor Driver in the mobile libraries; and**
- (b) **consider employing suitably qualified staff on non-civil-service contract terms to take up both the duties of driving library vehicles and handling library materials.**

### **Response from the Administration**

5.11 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendation on the employment of non-civil-service contract staff to handle both the driving and library duties for the mobile libraries. He has said that:

- (a) a pilot scheme was introduced in the late 1980s to engage serving Cultural Services Assistants to perform both driving and library duties. They were given training to obtain the necessary driving licence. However, the response was poor. Only one Cultural Services Assistant participated in the scheme which was eventually discontinued due to the drop-out of this participant; and
- (b) the Motor Drivers serving the library vehicles are currently provided by the Government Land Transport Agency. To enhance drivers' effectiveness, the Agency has recently launched a trial scheme to employ two non-civil-service contract drivers for the mobile libraries. The LCSD will work with the Agency on the feasibility of employing

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**Note 19:** *Based on the Staff Cost Ready Reckoner No. 2001/1, if the equivalent of 16 Cultural Services Assistants II were employed on non-civil-service contract terms to replace the existing 10 Motor Drivers and 16 Cultural Services Assistants II, the annual saving in staff cost would be:*

*Annual staff cost of 10 Motor Drivers + Annual staff cost of 16 Cultural Services Assistants II – Annual staff cost of 16 non-civil-service contract staff = (\$18,349 per month × 12 months × 10 staff) + (\$18,096 per month × 12 months × 16 staff) – (\$12,000 per month × 12 months × 16 staff) = \$3,372,312, say \$3.4 million.*

multi-skilled non-civil-service contract drivers capable of performing both the driving and library duties.

## **Outreach programmes**

5.12 As mentioned in paragraph 1.7 above, the provision of outreach programmes is an integral part of public library services. With a budget of \$12.6 million for 2001-02, the Extension Activities Unit of the HKPL organised a wide range of outreach programmes, including reading, educational and recreational programmes and literary competitions. Every year, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services approves the annual plan for organising the outreach programmes.

## **Audit observations on outreach programmes**

### **Evaluation of outreach programmes**

5.13 The annual plan for outreach programmes states that the plan is drawn up on the basis of feedback from participants in the previous year and comments from advisors on literary arts. However, the Extension Activities Unit has not regularly evaluated the effectiveness of the programmes. Audit notes that, except for a few courses on computer literacy, the HKPL did not obtain feedback and comments from the participants upon completion of the programmes. **Audit considers that the LCSD needs to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach programmes so as to ensure that they meet the needs of the community.**

### **Unsold library publications**

5.14 Since 1981, selected winning entries of literary writing competitions have been published for sale to the public. On a non-profit-making basis, the selling prices of the publications cover the production and distribution costs. Audit notes that as at 31 December 2001:

- (a) 64,838 unsold copies of these publications with a total sale value of \$1 million were kept in various public libraries; and
- (b) 1,588 (or 53%) of the 3,000 copies of the winning entry of Competition on Story Writing in Chinese for Students, which were published by the LCSD in 2000, had still remained unsold.

**Audit considers that the LCSD needs to critically review the demand for its library publications before printing so as to avoid wastage.**

## **Audit recommendations on outreach programmes**

5.15 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

### ***Evaluation of outreach programmes***

- (a) **regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach programmes organised by the HKPL so as to ensure that they meet the needs of the community;**

### ***Unsold library publications***

- (b) **critically review the need for keeping unsold copies of library publications in the HKPL and, if the publications are considered no longer saleable, donate them to other interested parties; and**
- (c) **critically review the demand for the publications of the HKPL so as to avoid printing excessive copies of these publications and to minimise the expenses incurred in producing and distributing these publications.**

## **Response from the Administration**

5.16 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

### ***Evaluation of outreach programmes***

- (a) presently, the HKPL hold review meetings with joint organisers and collect evaluation questionnaires from participants in all territory-wide outreach programmes and literary programmes. Statistics on the number of participants in all events are always kept for evaluation and future reference. Consideration will be given to extending this practice to all outreach programmes held in the branch libraries at regular intervals;

### ***Unsold library publications***

- (b) the HKPL are considering distributing unsold copies of library publications as souvenirs to participants in the library reading programme and other library outreach programmes, exchanging some copies with overseas libraries and cultural organisations, and donating some copies to schools and charitable organisations; and

- (c) library publications have the specific purpose of promoting reading and literary arts. The LCSD will critically review the printing arrangement for future library publications, taking into consideration the option of making them available through the library homepage.

### **Library materials return service**

5.17 As mentioned in paragraph 4.48 above, the HKPL provide a service to their registered borrowers whereby the borrowers can return the borrowed library items to any public library in Hong Kong (such service is hereinafter referred to as “library materials return service”). To facilitate the provision of the library materials return service, since October 2001, the LCSD has engaged the HKPO to provide the inter-library delivery service for collecting, sorting and despatching the returned library items to the owning libraries within five working days. According to the five-year service level agreement between the LCSD and the HKPO, the service charge for processing (including collecting, sorting and despatching) a library item is \$1.50, provided that the HKPO is the sole agent for providing the service and a minimum of 5 million items are processed each year. The service charge would remain unchanged for the first two years and the HKPO would review the service charge for the third and subsequent years. Audit notes that for the six-month period October 2001 to March 2002, 4 million library items were processed by the HKPO at a cost of \$6.1 million. Excluding the delivery of library items between the TPU and the public libraries, each month, the HKPO processed an average of 640,000 items and charged the HKPL \$0.95 million for providing the library materials return service.

### **Audit observations on library materials return service**

5.18 The library materials return service has been well received by the public. Audit notes that during the period October 2001 to March 2002, on average, 21% of the library items borrowed were returned to libraries other than the owning library. To provide the library materials return service, the LCSD incurs a significant cost in engaging the HKPO to provide the inter-library delivery service. **Audit considers that there is a need for the LCSD to examine the feasibility of collecting a fee from the borrowers to recover the cost of providing the library materials return service.** In this connection, Audit notes that the LCSD charges a fee of \$2.50 for the reservation of each library item.

### **Audit recommendations on library materials return service**

5.19 **In view of the significant cost incurred in providing the library materials return service, Audit has recommended that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services should:**

- (a) **examine the feasibility of collecting a fee from the borrowers to recover the cost of providing the service of delivering the returned library items to the owning libraries; and**

- (b) **as the number of library items to be processed by the HKPO each year may fall below the guaranteed minimum of 5 million items if a fee is charged for the return service, negotiate more flexible conditions of service with the HKPO so as to reduce the minimum service charge which the LCSD has to pay to the HKPO.**

### **Response from the Administration**

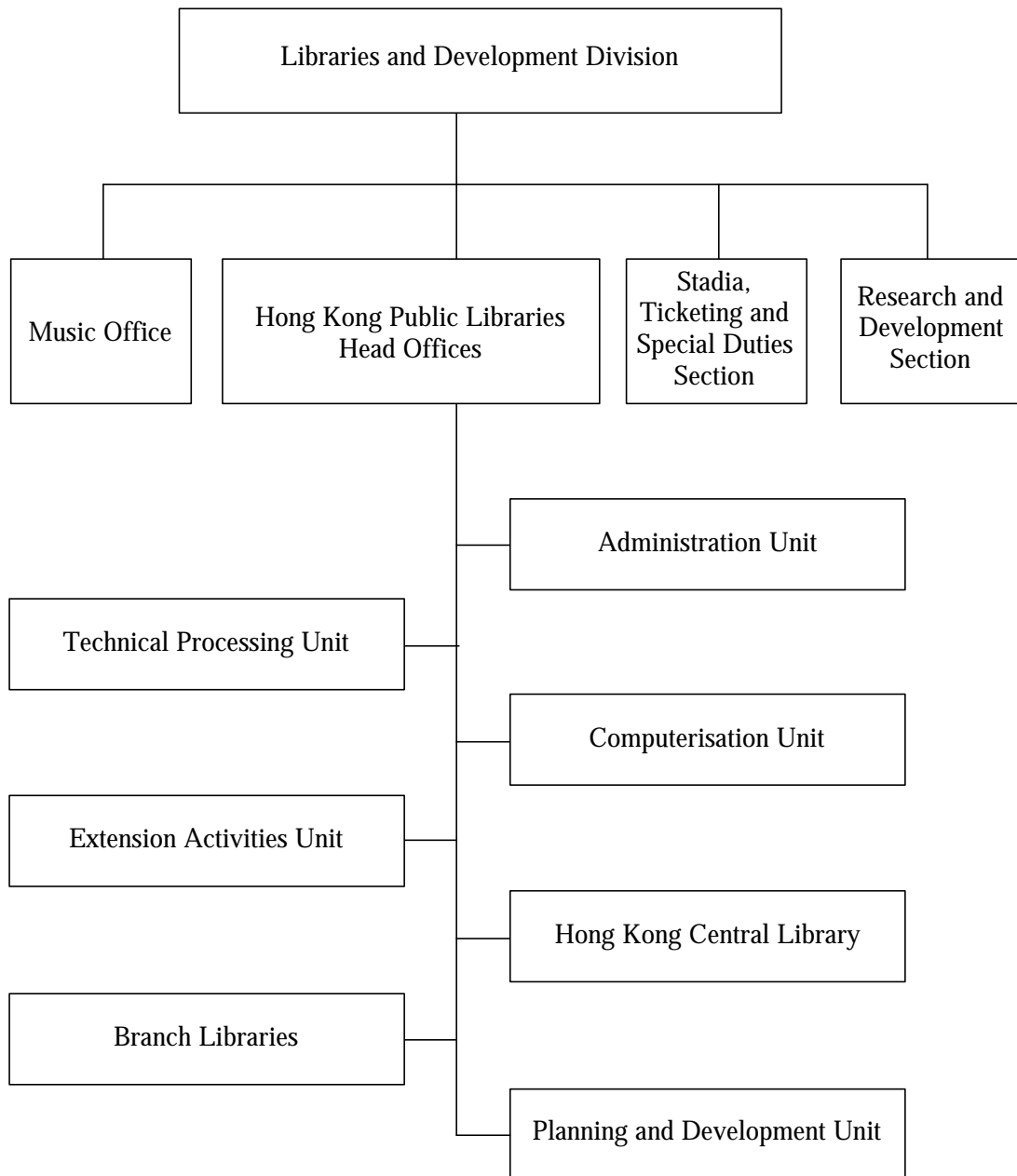
5.20 The **Director of Leisure and Cultural Services** agrees with Audit's recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the LCSD will critically examine the option of collecting a fee from borrowers for returning library items to libraries other than the ones from which they were borrowed to recover cost;
- (b) as the library materials return service has been made available free of charge to the public since 1995 and is well received by them, strong reaction is expected if they are charged for this service. As a matter of fact, this service is offered free to the public by most of the public libraries overseas; and
- (c) the LCSD has initiated discussions with the HKPO in June 2002 to review the pricing mechanism for the existing inter-library delivery service with a view to reducing the unit charge for items exceeding the minimum quantity of 5 million items as stipulated in the service level agreement. Further negotiation with the HKPO for new conditions of service will be arranged, if necessary.

5.21 The **Postmaster General** has said that:

- (a) the condition of guaranteeing a minimum number of library items for processing is essential to the HKPO to ensure the viability of the inter-library delivery service; and
- (b) notwithstanding this, the HKPO is prepared to negotiate with the LCSD further if a fee is to be levied on the borrowers for the library materials return service.

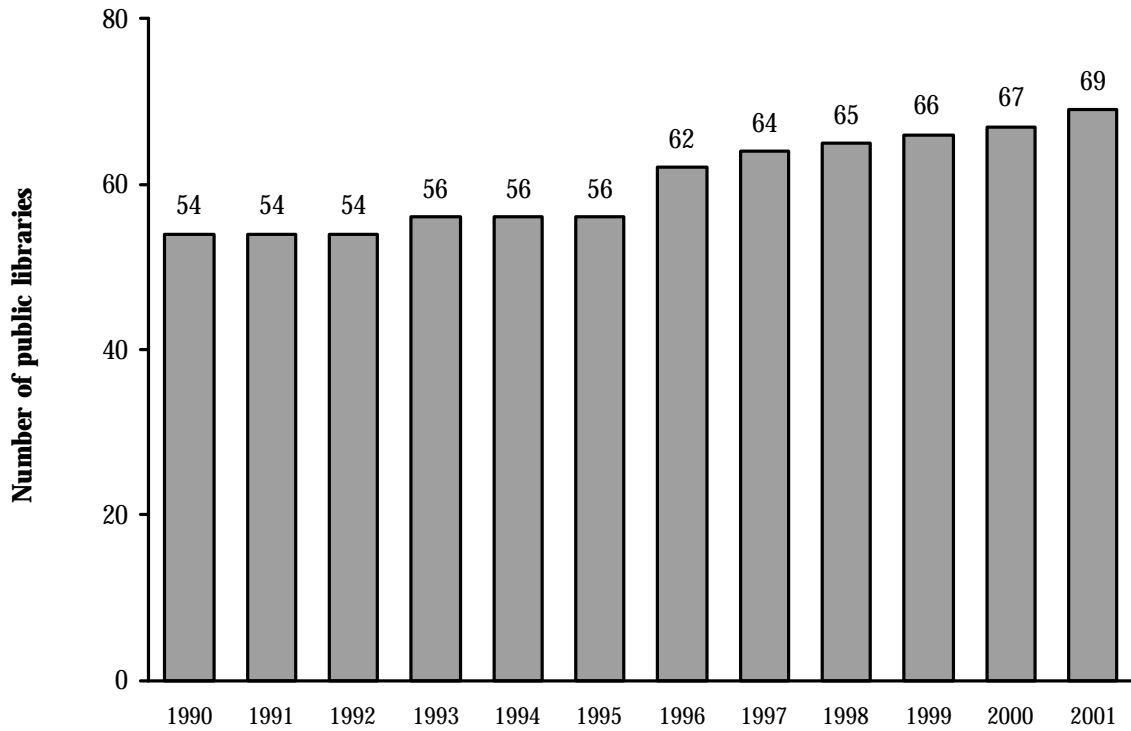
**Organisation chart of  
the Libraries and Development Division as at 31.3.2002**



*Source: LCSD's records*



**Number of public libraries during the period 1990 to 2001**

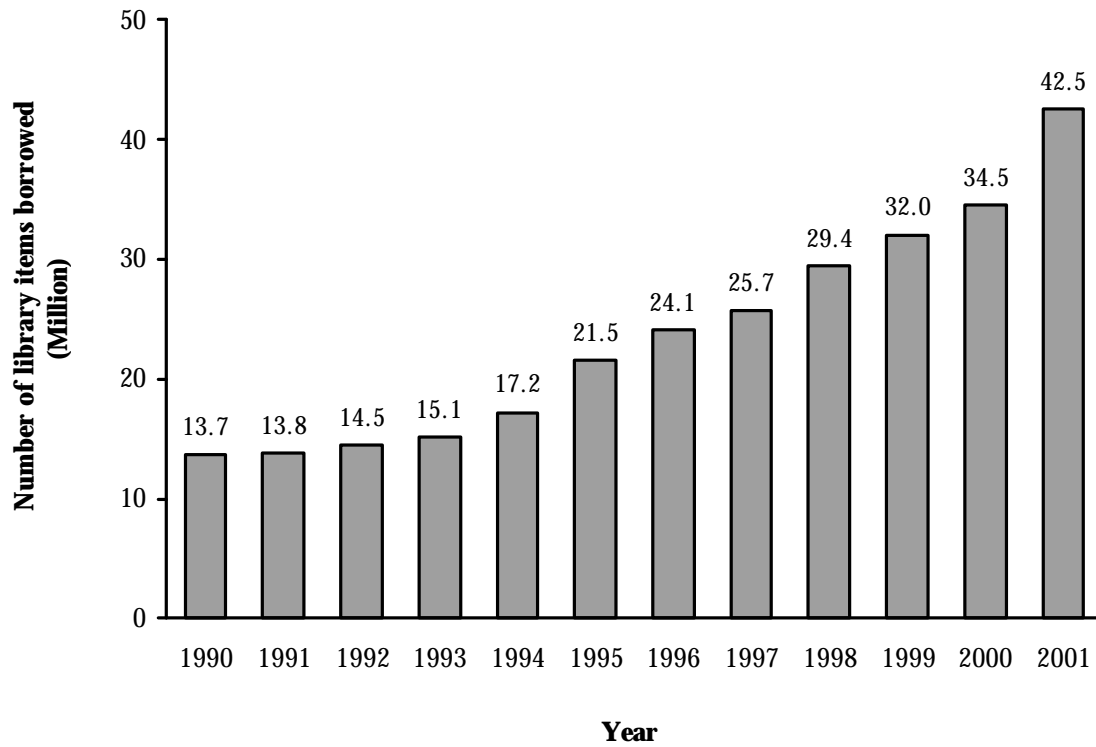


**As at 31 December**

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Remarks: The number of public libraries increased by 28% from 54 in 1990 to 69 in 2001.*

**Number of library items borrowed  
from the HKPL during the period 1990 to 2001**



*Source: LCSD's records*

*Remarks: The number of library items borrowed from the HKPL increased by 210% from 13.7 million in 1990 to 42.5 million in 2001.*

**Measures to improve public library services**

The measures include:

- (a) collaborating with the Education Department to launch a territory-wide reading programme, to arrange block registration of library cards at schools, and to organise language learning workshops in the public libraries to promote reading habits among young people;
- (b) providing supportive library services for the Springboard project (which is a bridging programme for secondary school leavers and adult learners), in addition to providing course materials of the Hong Kong Open University for reference;
- (c) setting up additional Computer and Information Centres in major and district libraries for enabling readers to use computer applications for their own work and for search of information on the Internet;
- (d) establishing six new public libraries, completing the renovation of four libraries and setting up five coffee corners in major libraries and the Chai Wan Public Library;
- (e) providing book drop service in public libraries to facilitate the return of borrowed items after opening hours;
- (f) extending the opening hours of major and district libraries in urban areas during public holidays to align with the practice of those libraries in the New Territories and the opening hours of the HKCL from 69 hours to 74 hours per week;
- (g) providing electronic book service, 24-hour library service through the Internet and free access to online/CD-ROM databases for search of information;
- (h) improving the lending service from a maximum of five to six library items and launching the lending service of CD-ROMs; and
- (i) publishing a library newsletter to promote the library services and facilities.

**Terms of reference of  
the consultancy study on the future development of the HKPL**

The consultants were required to:

- (a) examine the existing public library system;
- (b) carry out research on the operation of overseas public library systems in at least six leading cities, including New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Tokyo and Singapore;
- (c) review the existing roles, functions and services of the HKPL, including the HKCL, and taking into account the Government's overall policies, define the roles and functions of the HKPL in the next ten years and formulate an appropriate strategic plan for the development of public library services in Hong Kong;
- (d) explore the feasibility of corporatisation and other alternative management options of the HKPL and make recommendations on the preferred option, having regard to parameters such as economic, social, demographic, cultural, educational and technological factors; and
- (e) analyse the implications of the recommended option on the future management of public library services in Hong Kong.

**HKPL's performance during the period 1997 to 2001**

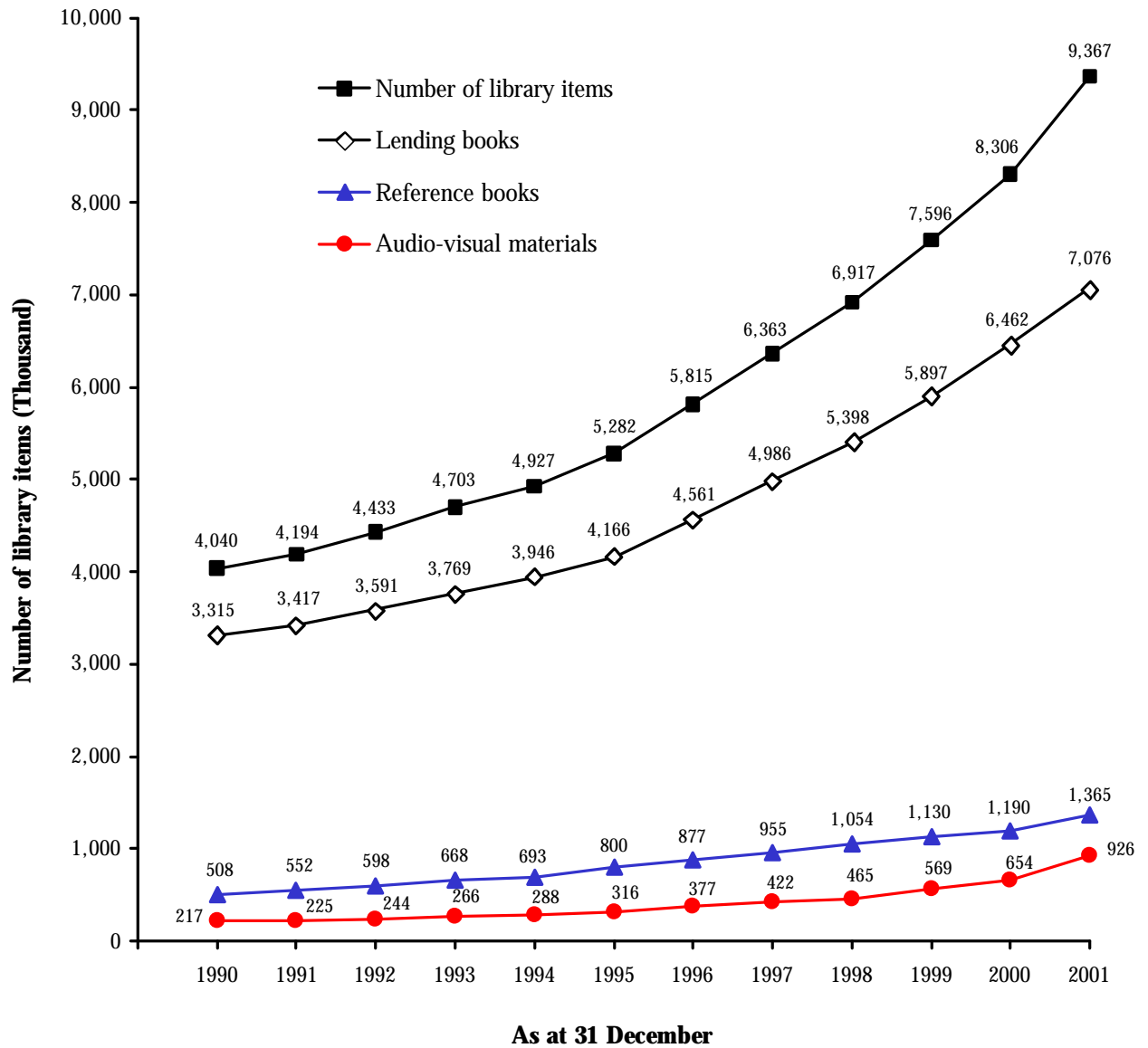
	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>(A) Usage indicators</b>					
Number of library items borrowed per capita	3.97	4.49	4.84	5.18	6.32
Number of library items borrowed per registered borrower (Note)	11.13	11.53	13.87	13.88	16.68
Membership as a percentage of population (Note)	36%	39%	35%	37%	38%
Number of reference enquiries per capita	0.10	0.12	0.14	0.16	0.39
Number of reference enquiries per registered borrower (Note)	0.27	0.32	0.40	0.43	1.02
Attendance at extension activities per capita (Note)	1.22	1.25	1.29	2.30	2.61
Attendance at extension activities per registered borrower (Note)	3.42	3.22	3.69	6.16	6.90
<b>(B) Resource indicators</b>					
Total stock per capita	0.98	1.06	1.15	1.25	1.39
Total stock per registered borrower (Note)	2.75	2.71	3.30	3.34	3.68

*Source: LCSD's records and Audit's computation*

*Note: Calculations for 1997, 1998 and 1999 were based on figures as at the end of the financial years instead of the calendar years because no relevant statistics were kept by the ex-Urban Council.*

*Remarks: During the period, there has been noticeable improvement in the public library services.*

**HKPL's collection during the period 1990 to 2001**



Source: LCSD's records

Remarks: During the period 1990 to 2001, the HKPL's collection increased by 132% while (a) lending books increased by 113%, (b) reference books increased by 169%, and (c) audio-visual materials increased by 327%.

**Turnover of lending books in 2001**

	<b>Number of books borrowed from the HKPL</b>	<b>Volume of the HKPL's lending books as at 31.12.2001</b>	<b>Turnover of lending books</b>
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>(c) = (a) ÷ (b)</b>
Chinese books	33,628,506	5,198,170	6.47 times
English books	5,552,567	1,877,701	2.96 times

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Remarks: The turnover of Chinese books borrowed from the HKPL was 2.19 times that of English books borrowed.*

**Appendix I**  
(para. 3.25 refers)

**Backlog of unprocessed donated library materials in the TPU**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Donated library items received</b>	<b>Donated library items processed</b>	<b>Unprocessed donated library items as at year end</b>	<b>Percentage increase since 1999</b>
	<b>(Number)</b>	<b>(Number)</b>	<b>(Number)</b>	
1999	—	—	124,200 (Note)	—
2000	42,040	26,207	140,033	13%
2001	91,624	81,198	150,459	21%

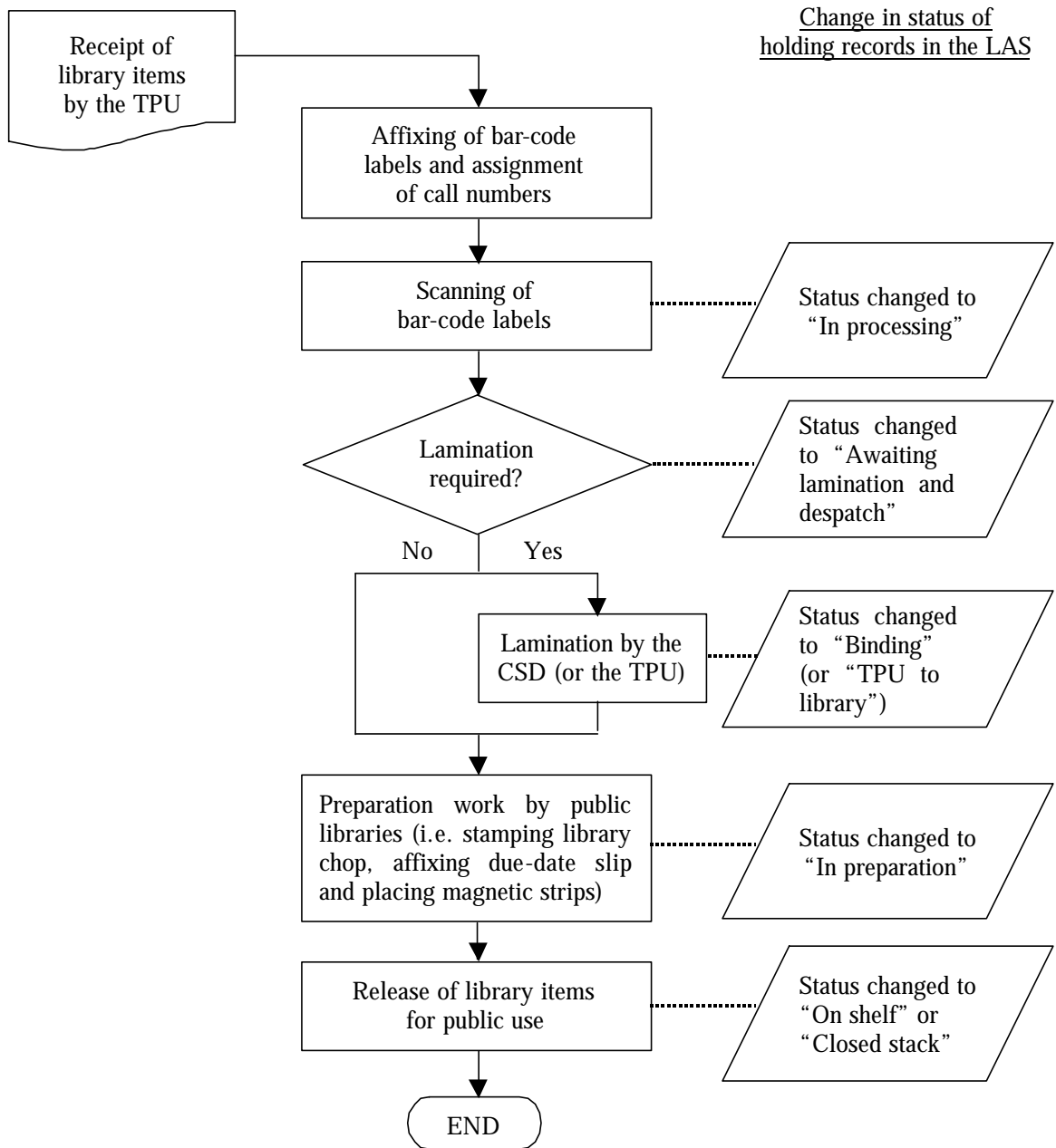
*Source: LCSD's records*

*Note: These were brought forward from the ex-Municipal Councils.*

*Remarks: A large backlog of unprocessed donated library materials had been built up in the TPU.*



**Procedures for releasing library items for public use**



Source: LCSD's records

Remarks: The status of holding records in the LAS is updated to keep track of the different stages in processing library items before they are released for public use.

**Reserve stacks**

<b>Name/Location</b>	<b>Public libraries for which the reserve stocks are kept</b>
Central Book Stack in the HKCL and Chai Wan Book Stack	HKCL
Kowloon Public Library Book Stack	Kowloon Public Library
Shek Tong Tsui Book Stack	Public libraries on Hong Kong Island
Un Chau Street Book Stack	Public libraries in Kowloon

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Remarks: Owing to the limited space available in public libraries, some reserve stocks are kept in reserve stacks.*

**Appendix L**  
(para. 4.29 refers)

**Increase in collections during the period  
1.1.2000 to 31.12.2001 of small libraries which had a large  
percentage of library items inaccessible to the public as at 10.1.2002**

<b>Public library</b>	<b>Library collection as at 1.1.2000</b>	<b>Library collection as at 31.12.2001</b>	<b>Percentage increase in library collection</b>	<b>Percentage of library items inaccessible to the public as at 10.1.2002</b>
	<b>(Number)</b>	<b>(Number)</b>		
South Lamma Public Library	7,666	13,015	70%	23%
Sha Tau Kok Public Library	12,789	18,911	48%	25%
Tai O Public Library	16,643	23,916	44%	43%
North Lamma Public Library	12,906	18,506	43%	30%
Mui Wo Public Library	17,132	23,818	39%	27%
Peng Chau Public Library	19,425	25,340	30%	38%

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Remarks: For small public libraries which had a large percentage of library items inaccessible to the public as at 10.1.2002, their collections increased considerably during the period 1.1.2000 to 31.12.2001.*

**Public libraries which had a high withdrawal rate  
of unserviceable library items in 2001**

<b>Public library</b>	<b>Library collection as at 31.12.2000 (Note)</b>	<b>Unserviceable library items recorded in 2001</b>	<b>Library collection as at 31.12.2001</b>	<b>Withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items</b>
	<b>(Number)</b>	<b>(Number)</b>	<b>(Number)</b>	
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>(c)</b>	<b>(d) = <math>\frac{(b)}{(a)} \times 100\%</math></b>
Sai Kung Public Library	72,573	19,851	62,737	27%
Lek Yuen Public Library	54,500	11,206	49,931	21%
To Kwa Wan Public Library	137,040	24,101	131,076	18%
Electric Road Public Library	92,598	16,130	81,471	17%
Shek Wai Kok Public Library	48,637	7,213	47,420	15%
Fa Yuen Street Public Library	155,407	17,667	160,002	11%
Ngau Chi Wan Public Library	133,591	14,597	114,039	11%
Lockhart Road Public Library	178,693	16,578	160,567	9%
Fanling Public Library	53,336	4,926	53,784	9%
Yuen Long Public Library	189,369	16,654	190,025	9%

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Note: According to the LCSD's guideline, the stock figure as at 31.3.2001 should be used to calculate the withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items in 2001-02. On a similar basis, Audit used the stock figures as at 31.12.2000 to calculate the withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items in 2001.*

*Remarks: For some public libraries, the withdrawal rate of unserviceable library items was higher than the HKPL's approved annual withdrawal rate of 5%.*

**Appendix N**  
(para. 5.8 refers)

**Idle time of Motor Drivers of mobile library vehicles in November 2001**

<b>Mobile Library (ML)</b>	<b>Actual duty hours</b>	<b>Actual driving hours</b>	<b>Idle duty hours</b>	<b>Percentage of idle duty hours</b>
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>(b)</b>	<b>(c) = (a) - (b)</b>	<b>(d) = <math>\frac{(c)}{(a)} \times 100\%</math></b>
ML1	207	18	189	91%
ML2	234	32	202	86%
ML3	221	20	201	91%
ML4	190	33	157	83%
ML5	156	24	132	85%
ML6	260	38	222	85%
ML7	264	50	214	81%
ML8	268	57	211	79%
<b>Average</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>85%</b>

*Source: LCSD's records*

*Remarks: In November 2001, on average, 85% of the duty hours of Motor Drivers were idle time.*

**Acronyms and abbreviations**

Agreement	Agreement on Lamination of Books for the HKPL
CHC	Culture and Heritage Commission
CSD	Correctional Services Department
GPA	Government Property Agency
Guidelines	Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development
HKCL	Hong Kong Central Library
HKPL	Hong Kong Public Libraries
HKPO	Hong Kong Post Office
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
LAS	Library Automation System
LCSD	Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Manifesto	Public Library Manifesto
ML	Mobile Library
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalogue
SEB	Stock Editing Board
TPU	Technical Processing Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation