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### Replies to initial questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2023-24

Director of Bureau : Director of Administration  
Session No. : 3

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 3136)**

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

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

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Brian LO)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

Regarding the work of the Government Records Service, please advise on the following:

- 1) Regarding the “departmental records management studies/reviews” conducted only twice a year, please explain their operation and whether there is any mechanism to follow up on the implementation arrangements after the studies/reviews.
- 2) Regarding records reference and research services rendered to the public, what is the establishment for such services? Given that only several thousand visitors were recorded each year, did the Government conduct any review on whether the services could be provided in other forms?
- 3) What are the establishment and related expenditure for the services of microfilming records? Regarding the current storage area for microfilms, what are the gross area and operating expenditure? Has any consideration been given to storing the records in other computerised formats to improve the accessibility of the data?

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 52)

Reply:

- 1) Starting from late 2012, the Government Records Service (GRS) conducts in-depth reviews on the records management work of 2 bureaux/departments (B/Ds) each year. During the reviews, the staff of GRS will visit the selected B/Ds to review their records management documentation, conduct on-site examination of their recordkeeping systems and records management procedures, and carry out interviews and group discussions with staff concerned, thereby assessing the departmental management and frontline staff’s awareness of, commitment to and involvement in practising good records management, and evaluating their compliance with the mandatory records

management requirements and adoption of good records management practices with a view to identifying areas for improvement. Upon completion of the reviews, the Director of Administration will convey the findings and recommendations for improvement to the heads of the B/Ds concerned, who will need to submit progress reports on the implementation of the recommendations to GRS every 6 months until all improvement recommendations have been fully implemented.

Given the extensive scope, complexity and time-consuming nature of the tasks mentioned above, in-depth reviews on records management work could only be conducted for 2 B/Ds each year. Nevertheless, GRS also monitors the compliance of records management requirements by B/Ds through other measures, such as requiring all B/Ds to complete a self-assessment or Compliance Checklist annually. In addition, since 2019, GRS has been reviewing the records retention and disposal schedules of all B/Ds in batches to determine the definite disposal action of the records concerned and consolidate some of the disposal schedules, which aims to improve the records disposal procedures and facilitate the timely and effective transfer of records with archival value to GRS for permanent retention.

- 2) As at 1 March 2023, the establishment of the Search Room, which provides reference and research services to the public and their scope of work are as follows:

<b>Scope of work</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Establishment</b>
(a) Providing research and reference services	Senior Assistant Archivist	1
	Assistant Archivist	2
(b) Implementing public education and publicity programmes	Clerical Officer	1
	Clerical Assistant	4
(c) Processing applications for reproduction and use of archival records	Workman II	1
	Total:	9
(d) Preparing finding aids		

The main users of the GRS Search Room are scholars who study the history and development of Hong Kong as well as teachers and students. The Search Room has all along been providing sufficient seats and facilities to meet the demands of the users. Besides, according to the users' survey forms collected in the past 3 years, over 80% of the respondents rated the Search Room services as very good (45.7%) or excellent (35.3%).

In addition to the reference and research services of GRS holdings available on-site, GRS has always been committed to providing these services to the public via electronic means.

For access to holdings, for example, members of the public may register for a user's account, reserve holdings and request access to GRS collections through the online catalogue "@PRO" without having to visit GRS in person. After digitisation of holdings, GRS will gradually make available digital copies of records which can be open for public inspection and endeavour to upload them to its online catalogue "@PRO" under the principle of protecting copyright and personal privacy. The online catalogue is equipped with an efficient search engine and a convenient interface that facilitate easy and quick retrieval of archival records and library items as well as viewing and downloading of a range of digital holdings. In 2022, the online catalogue "@PRO" recorded 920 000 page searches and views. GRS also regularly develops digital holdings/photo albums and online exhibitions on various topics, and uploads them to the GRS website for viewing by the public. In 2022, GRS produced a 360° virtual tour allowing the public to view the holdings displayed at the GRS Exhibition Hall online. Moreover, GRS launched the Public Records Office Facebook page ([fb.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice](https://www.facebook.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice)) in 2020 for sharing its holdings with the public. The online digital holdings recorded a total of 1.76 million access rate in 2022. Meanwhile, apart from organising on-site group visits to GRS and educational workshops for the public, teachers and students to introduce and promote the use of archival records for conducting research on Hong Kong's development in different areas, GRS also organises a number of online group visits and educational workshops. For example, in 2022, a total of 23 online group visits and educational workshops were organised, where 3 182 participants were introduced to the GRS services and holdings. For the convenience of those who cannot visit the Hong Kong Public Records Building to view the exhibition, GRS has set up roving exhibitions at major libraries in various districts, such as the Hong Kong Central Library and the Ping Shan Tin Shui Wai Public Library.

As for the research services, apart from sending enquiries on holdings and services by email, starting from 2022, members of the public are able to receive copies of their ordered holdings via email upon making payment of reproduction fee, thereby further facilitating electronic access to the GRS holdings for research by the public.

GRS will continue to explore different ways to provide reference and research services of holdings to the public in the future.

- 3) The Government Microfilm Centre (GMC) aims at providing customer-oriented microfilming services for B/Ds with genuine needs. GMC adopts the American National Standards Institute/Association for Information and Image Management (ANSI/AIIM) standards in its microfilming operation to ensure the durability, usability and court admissibility of the microfilm records it produces. Sections 39 and 40 of the Evidence Ordinance (Cap. 8) stipulate that microfilms of government and business

records are court admissible provided that they are produced as permanent records and the source documents are disposed of afterwards. Microfilm masters, reference copies and digitised copies can also be made for various purposes subject to the records disposal requirements of B/Ds. The digitised copies will be in Portable Document Format (PDF) file, which can be viewed in most computer environments, for easy access.

The production team at GMC are trained full-time staff whose expertise and efficiency should result in cost savings, better work quality, and assurance to security and confidentiality of the records. The establishment is as follows:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Establishment</b>
Assistant Curator	1
Clerical Officer	1
Clerical Assistant	2
Workman II	1
Senior Photographer	1
Photographer I	2
Photographer II	1

In 2021-22, the operating expenditure of GMC was \$5 million. GMC also provides microfilm storage service for B/Ds in need. The size of the store is about 50 square metres and the related expenditure has been included in the operating expenditure.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 0881)**

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

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

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Brian LO)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

- (a) Did the Government procure any archival records on the history of Hong Kong from other places in 2022-23? If so, what are the contents of the records and the related expenditure? Please also provide the estimated expenditure for the procurement of archival records relating to Hong Kong from other places in 2023-24.
- (b) It is stated in Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2022-24 that the Government will implement public education and publicity programme on Hong Kong's documentary heritage. What specific publicity programme will the Government launch to achieve the objective?

Asked by: Hon MA Fung-kwok (LegCo internal reference no.: 5)

Reply:

- (a) Since 2009, the Government Records Service (GRS) has been procuring copies of archival records relating to Hong Kong from other archives to enrich its holdings. So far, about 4 000 copies have been procured. In view of the considerable number of copies of archival records procured over the years, and having regard to the relevant arrangements of various archives in the Mainland and overseas, factors such as the existing holdings of GRS, the need to acquire records and the actual usage as well as the access status of relevant records kept by other archives, GRS did not procure copies of archival records in 2022-23. GRS will keep in view the new releases of archival records kept by major archives in other regions and consider the procurement of copies of archival records relating to Hong Kong on a need basis. Meanwhile, GRS is discussing with the Second Historical Archives of China on the arrangements of the procurement of copies of archival records.

In 2023-24, GRS has earmarked \$160,000 for the procurement of copies of archival records.

- (b) GRS organises exhibitions, seminars, workshops, group visits and other educational activities regularly to promote the documentary heritage of Hong Kong. Details of GRS' public education and publicity programmes scheduled for 2023-24 are set out below:
1. organise about 30 onsite or online group visits to GRS with an estimated number of more than 2 000 participants;
  2. conduct about 5 onsite or online educational workshops for teachers and students, facilitating them to use the archival records kept by GRS to conduct researches on Hong Kong's development in different areas. The estimated number of participants in each onsite workshop and each online workshop is 40 and 150 respectively;
  3. organise an annual thematic exhibition cum roving exhibitions and set up an online Reference Resources Page to help the public better understand, appreciate and utilise the local documentary heritage and archival records kept by GRS;
  4. enrich the online Educational Resources Portal to enable more people to view the archival holdings and information therein. Frequently used and popular holdings will be digitised for more convenient access; and
  5. enrich the content of the Public Records Office Facebook page ([fb.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice](https://fb.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice)) to attract more online viewers to like, follow and share the page and posts, so as to strengthen connection and interaction with the public.

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